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"Wearing A Mask to Each Other": Masculinity & the Public Eye in Victorian Sensation Fiction

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“WEARING A MASK TO EACH OTHER”:
MASCULINITY AND THE PUBLIC EYE
IN VICTORIAN SENSATION FICTION

DISSERTATION

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
in the College of Arts and Science
at the University of Kentucky

By

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ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

“WEARING A MASK TO EACH OTHER”: MASCULINITY AND THE PUBLIC EYE IN VICTORIAN SENSATION FICTION

Sensation fiction, as a genre, offers a field to explore the ways in which ideologies of masculinity are negotiated, contested, and enforced. The Victorian man has no respite from social surveillance; the public is always watching, always evaluating the performance. As these sensation fiction novels build on each other, a portrait of male claustrophobia in response to unceasing surveillance is revealed. The pressure this constant scrutiny puts on Victorian men is immense and sensation novels derive many thrilling plot twists from the dramatic lengths men to which men must go to protect themselves from this gaze. These habits persist even when the actions of the men are relatively innocent or disconnected from the secrets they keep. These patterns of concealment and displacement craft a protective distance from society, but fundamentally isolate the men involved. Rather than effortlessly assuming patriarchal authority, male characters act in desperate ways to maintain their position and their manliness, highlighting the fractures and contradictions inherent in Victorian gender ideology. These strategies of concealment mirror the division between the private and public spheres and England and the colonies, exhibiting a foundational pattern of concealment in Victorian society.

KEYWORDS: Victorian Literature, Sensation Fiction, Masculinity, Secrets, Surveillance

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“The Cult of Character”:

Victorian Masculinities & Sensation Fiction

George Bernard Shaw wrote, “why ... a man should desire to act on the stage when he has the whole world to act in, is not clear to me” (612-13). This configuration of masculinity and the public eye emphasizes both the performative nature of masculinity and its ever-present audience. Masculinity is an inherently external quality, since it is reliant on the perception of others. Society at-large participates in the evaluation and recognition of masculinity, although it is primarily confirmed in homosocial situations. As a quality subject to the ongoing approval of others, masculinity is inherently unstable. Masculinity, then, becomes a collaborative performance between the man and his audience, with gender exhibited as a series of actions and visual displays. Ideologies of masculinity are negotiated throughout literature, as authors explore the bounds and burdens of gendered roles. Victorian literature highlights this gender performance and the conflict it can create between an authentic interiority and an effective public display. This internal division plagues men throughout Victorian literature, and sensation fiction in particular shows how it limits their abilities to create intimate interpersonal relationships.

Sensation fiction is known for its outlandish plots, and it is in this excess that the genre is able to explore the breadth, and limits, of gender ideologies and contemplate alternatives. A popular, if short-lived, genre of the 1860s and 1870s, sensation fiction combined the supernatural foreboding of the Gothic romance, the heightened emotion of melodrama, the criminality of a Newgate novel and the scandal of silver fork novels to create a shocking and irrepressible genre that was serialized in all the popular magazines and decried in all the proper newspapers (Brantlinger 1). The plots were often ripped

from the headlines of sensational newspapers, as sensation authors trafficked in true stories of murder, adultery, bigamy, and divorce, while adding fictional flourishes in their chaotic and elaborate plots. Despite sensation fiction's entanglement with current events and cultural concerns of the day, the genre as a whole has been considered to avoid political action, using those elements for melodramatic suspense, rather than social change (5). In general, sensation fiction has been figured as subversive more for its negative portrayal of family, a cornerstone of Victorian ideology, than for actual political activism. When political statements are present, as is quite common in the works of Wilkie Collins and Charles Reade, they are generally deemed to have made the novel a worse book, rather than an effective political endeavor. Serious engagement with Victorian concerns, much less characters developed enough to realistically deal with these controversies or effectively represent their consequences, has most often been considered outside the scope of sensation fiction.

However, sensation fiction, as a genre, encompassed a variety of ideological ends. Collins and Reade overtly dealt with legal and social inequalities, such as the status of illegitimate children, marriage law, violence against women, labor rights, and the treatment of the insane. Even the more conventional female authors, such as Mary Elizabeth Braddon and Ellen Wood have subversive tendencies, highlighting the legal vulnerability of women and questioning the security of domestic space. While many critics have commented on the often conventional endings of sensation novels, which reaffirm social order and the domestic space, the Gothic heritage of sensation fiction makes the family ideal ambiguous, given that the danger lurks within the family (Wagner 225). The private and public lives of men prove inextricable, as secrets infiltrate both.

Recent scholarship has argued that a number of sensation novels share an interest in money, value, and manliness, exploring the economic foundations of character, and therefore, gender (Walsh 3). This focus on the commodification of character, and individuals, was resonant for a society working to understand the effects of a market economy. Masculinity is particularly entangled in economics given its centering in the middle classes and the resulting focus on profession, purpose, and independence. While scholars such as Patrick Brantlinger have dismissed characterization in sensation fiction as reduced or abridged (22), more recent scholars identify the sensation novel's preoccupation with memory, emotion, and identity as deeply invested in psychology (Walsh 6). This genre focus on the construction of identity makes it a prime area of study to understand the constraints gender ideologies place on personal identity formation.

The critical conversation regarding sensation fiction often focuses on female suffering.¹ Women in sensation fiction are frequently subjected to violence, imprisoned in insane asylums, deprived of money or their children, and threatened with exposure of personal secrets. However, male characters too suffer trials, frequently at the peril of their manly identities. From men hiding their illegitimate birth to idle adults who lack purpose, sensation fiction revolves around men who seek to secure their class position through an effective masculine performance. With its dynamic women and weak men, sensation fiction anticipated the modernist crisis of masculinity that would come at the turn of the century (Fantina & Harrison xxi). Since constructions of masculinity changed dramatically over the period, sensation fiction's use of doubling and rival male figures also served as a way to explore and compare different ways of being a man. The

¹ See Hughes, pp. 45-7; Milbank, pp. 25-9; Hedgecock, 86-91; Kucich, pp. 163-7.

masculinity of men in sensation fiction is consistently in crisis, reflecting the numerous changes ideologies of masculinity undergo in the mid- to late-Victorian period (Hill 77). D.A. Miller argues that the frequent cross-gender characteristics of main characters creates women-in-men and men-in-women, as female protagonists exhibit a 'masculine' independence and strength of will and male characters exhibit a 'feminine' passivity and nervous conditions (130). These characters must learn to embody a normative gender performance by the end of the novel, reflecting Victorian anxieties about manliness. Gero Bauer further explores the ways that the sensation novel's preoccupation with secrecy mirrors the need, implicit in masculine self-fashioning, to control one's identity for public consumption (101). The melodramatic plots of sensation fiction allow for a range of action that realist fiction does not, and it is in these socially nonconforming actions that characters have the room to explore varied gender performances. My dissertation uses the sensation fiction of Wilkie Collins, Mary Elizabeth Braddon, Ellen Wood and Charles Reade to examine the instability of men in the Victorian world, as they struggle to fulfill ideologies of masculinity.

Both sensation fiction and ideologies of gender focus on the middle-class home. As the middle classes emerge and consolidate in the early Victorian period, they encompass a wide range of social positions based on the professional status and the amount of wealth. As a result, ideologies of gender become significant in class formation (Hall 95). The middle-class codes of conduct focus on economic production, purpose, and respectability in order to differentiate themselves from the other classes. Sensation fiction, a genre marketed towards middle-class readers, reflects these values, even while incorporating upper- as well as middle-class characters. In accordance with this, my study

centers on middle-class masculinity, although I discuss both upper- and middle-class men. Working-class men largely fall outside the scope of my research, although I touch on them briefly to isolate the elements of masculinity that cross class boundaries. Ideologies of Victorian manliness were highly classed, and as such, an in-depth study of masculinities across multiple classes is too broad a topic for a project of this scope.

My dissertation relies on gender theory, particularly recent studies of Victorian masculinities and the often conflicting, frequently redefined, ideologies on which it was built. The past few decades have seen increasing attention to the insecurities inherent in male power and the efforts required for men to claim their social and patriarchal position. I draw on John Tosh's work on the homosocial nature of masculinity, as well as the variants of masculinity that are displayed in different contexts to categorize male behaviors in different spaces. I build particularly on the work of James Eli Adams, with his focus on the spectacle of masculinity and the emphasis on public reading of the Victorian gentleman. His discussions of secrecy and reserve have also informed my interpretations, as his analysis of the seductive power of reserve in the public sphere provides a framework for my identification and examination of the tensions between privacy and intimacy in domestic relationships. However, my focus on sensation fiction offers a realm of male behavior that contrasts with the aggressive self-control on which his argument centers. In sensation fiction, many of the strong-willed, turbulent protagonists in need of self-control are women, while male protagonists are more likely to be indolent and drifting. Rather than needing to exercise self-control, these men must find their purpose and strength of will. The process by which these male protagonists forsake this passivity in order to become Victorian men of character and occupy their

proper social place by the end of the novel, is intertwined with how, and if, they can perform masculinity to Victorian standards.

In this dissertation, I focus on male character, both how it is formed and displayed. When I use the word character, I am referring to the Victorian cult of character, which focused on male moral virtue, self-reliance, and productivity projected to an implied public audience (Tosh, *Manliness* 65). Being a man of character carried with it a specific standard for appropriate male behavior, in public and private. The multivalenced term invokes the overlapping constructions of identity, masculinity, and moral behavior. Character frequently refers to fictional literary characters, the subject of my dissertation. My focus is not on the lived experiences of men and women, but on the ways in which fictional characters allow authors to explore the variance within, and ramifications of, Victorian gender ideologies. However, Deidre Lynch argues that these fictional characters were a crucial way by which readers made meaning of their own identity within a market economy, giving them a significant impact on the lives of Victorian individuals (5). In a broad sense, a person's character is a combination of identity and reputation, so it is common to discuss an individual as having a good or bad character or to examine the elements that make up their character. I use the term identity if I'm focusing on the individual's sense of self and the term reputation if I'm focusing on the assessment of them by others.

Becoming a man, according to normative gender ideologies, was no small feat in Victorian England. Phillip Mallett describes Victorian masculinity as "a state of permanent crisis, a site of anxiety and contradiction as much as a source of power" (vii). Although gendering was pervasive throughout society, governing places, actions,

occupations, and nearly every other element of daily life, Victorians were highly conscious of the fact that these were not natural states, but ways of being that required specific training and upbringing to achieve. As a result, attaining masculine ideals was fraught. The pamphlet *How Men are Made* (1859) by Baptist minister Williams Landels describes the process of becoming a man as “the putting forth of an internal force which resists and masters, if it cannot change, the outward” (qtd. in Tosh, *A Man’s Place* 111). This is not a passive growth, but an effort of will. This effort is not meant to reveal an inherent interior quality, but is necessary to accomplish masculinity as a learned set of actions. A challenge, with every chance of failure. This difficulty proves fertile in sensation fiction, as many novels explore the growth of a boy into a man over the course of the plot. Sensation fiction’s focus on adult men narratively coded as aimless or impulsive children highlights the dangerous social ramifications of unrestrained desires, emphasizing the importance of such growth. This emphasis on the proper attitudes and behaviors of a man, as opposed to a boy, illustrates a pervasive Victorian preoccupation with the need to channel and control emotional impulse.

Masculinity was consistently changing throughout the Victorian period, from the paterfamilias to an expressive Evangelicalism to gentlemanly politeness to muscular Christianity (Tosh, *Manliness* 42). Normative masculinity, called manliness in the Victorian period, was characterized by strength, will, independence, and self-control. Both physical and moral strength was required, but different versions of masculinity prioritized these types of strength differently. Evangelical manliness emphasized moral character, in response to concerns that a masculinity that relied on reputation, the esteem of the others, encouraged sinful, and worldly behavior. In contrast, muscular Christianity,

which developed in response to Evangelical masculinity, emphasized physical strength and connected it to martial virtues, courage, and defense of Queen and country. This negotiation of gendered narratives occurs throughout society, an explicit topic of conversation. Leading Victorian figures like Thomas Carlyle and John Stuart Mill wrote extensively on the proper attributes of manliness, arguing that it provided the foundation of the national character. While both men stressed the importance of masculine independence, they defined that independence quite differently. For Carlyle, masculinity necessitated action, strength, and an independence reliant on not needing, or accepting, help from others (Hall 266). Carlyle's focus was on the maintenance of the social order through racial and gendered hierarchies. For Mill, on the other hand, masculinity was based on an independence that came from being an individual subject with freedom of action. Significantly, he believed that this individual agency and independence was attainable by everyone, regardless of race or gender (Hall 280). This focus on equality differentiated Mill's conception of masculinity from the majority of other ideologies of gender. As theorists and literature explored the roles and ramifications of gender, these ideologies intersected with discussions of race, class, and nationality, highlighting the complexities of Victorian identity.

Although the public and private spheres are usually discussed in gendered terms, scholars have long been aware that this is a problematic construction. Mary Poovey highlights the artificial nature of this division and the many slippages between spheres (57). Many women had active public lives, and the domestic space played a crucial role in men's lives. The domestic sphere may have been the wife's domain, but Victorian ideology placed the husband at the head of the family. Marriage was a milestone in a

man's life, confirming his status as an adult. Becoming the head of a household and assuming responsibility for dependents cemented, in theory, a man's place in the world. Marital authority was the husband's, in contrast to the wife's domestic authority. Potential conflicts between these realms of authority were resolved by constructing the husband as the governor of the family and the wife as the manager, preserving marital hierarchy (Tosh, *A Man's Place* 63). Although the wife was responsible for running the household and caring for family members, the husband had ultimate authority over the space and the marriage. Thus, the domestic space offered both a realm in which to exercise that authority much theorized as an integral part of masculinity and so contested in the public sphere, as well as a reserve of love and care. I explore the ways the public and private spheres are embedded with each other and the surveillance that penetrates both, so the emotional lives of men and their place in the domestic space is crucial to my analysis. This emotional component of the domestic space becomes significant as, throughout these novels, there is a pervasive emphasis on the significance of the emotional lives of men. Regardless of the variations of masculine performance, what is consistent is a focus on male emotions and their connection, or the obstacles they can create, to healthy intimate personal relationships, both platonic friendships and romantic marriages. Through an exploration of empty and lacking relationships, these novels illustrate that a full life must contain an emotional component, a frequently underplayed aspect of masculinity.

The critical emphasis on male mobility and control in the heavily patriarchal Victorian society has masked many of the ways men navigated their own changing and conflicting roles, making this a productive area for study. Sensation fiction highlights the

need for masculine self-control, although it troubles the belief that such a thing is possible. Sensation fiction's use of amnesia, madness, and doubled identities provides an increased awareness of the obstacles to achieving a cohesive identity, yet men consistently exhibit considerable emotional and psychological growth throughout these novels. Since ideologies of masculinity were in flux, sensation fiction was able to put them in competition with each other, representing them through different characters and showing the results of these different ways of being. Through doubling, sensation novels often contrast two men to explore different types of masculinity, highlighting both the homosociality and rivalry intrinsic in masculinity.

Braddon's *Aurora Floyd* (1863) provides an example of these shifting definitions of masculinity, a significant factor in the instability of male position. Through its two male protagonists, and rivals for Aurora's hand, Talbot Bulstrode and John Mellish, the novel contrasts changing ideologies of masculinity to illustrate how men can be isolated as the world is redefined around them. Talbot, with his "pride of birth, which was utterly unallied to pride of wealth or station, had a certain noble and chivalrous side" (31). Talbot represents an older model of masculinity, based on family lineage and a morality theoretically grounded in heritage. However, this older model of masculinity is highlighted as insufficient because Talbot "like all proud men who repel the warm feelings of others in utter despite of themselves, ... was grieved and wounded because his comrades did not become attached to him" (39). Despite his many good qualities, Talbot lacks warmth and is unable to form close personal relationships, either platonic or romantic. "He wished that some good and pure creature would fall in love with him, in order that he might marry her" (39-40). He wants to establish intimate, emotionally

reciprocated relationships, but people do not form emotional attachments to him. Not even his parents, it turns out, have given him the emotional connection this novel poses as necessary. Rather, “they have been proud of me, but they never loved me” (39). Not only does the novel consistently reiterate the need for an emotional dimension to men’s lives, but, more significantly, it poses that emotional depth as inherently contradictory to the older model of masculinity, highlighting the need for this newer model of masculinity.

In contrast to Talbot, John Mellish is presented as the epitome of the new hegemonic masculinity, muscular Christianity. Promoted in the novels of Charles Kingsley and Thomas Hughes, muscular Christianity sought to combat feminized notions of religious men with an emphasis on physical strength (Kimmel 152). John is explicitly connected to this new model of masculinity, and is described as looking like he was “just let loose from some public academy of the muscular Christianity school” (57). More so, “the Rev. Charles Kingsley would have delighted in this big, hearty, broad-chested young Englishman” (57). It is not merely in physique that John is presented as a prime male specimen, but also in terms of his relationships to others:

"He seemed a creature especially created to be prosperous; to be the owner and dispenser of wealth, the distributor of good things... He was perpetually paying for things he neither ordered nor had, and was forever being cheated by the dear honest creatures about him, who, for all they did their best to ruin him, would have gone through typical fire and water to serve him, and would have clung to him, and worked for him, and supported him out of those very savings for which they had robbed him, when the ruin came." (58)

His wealth is abundant and his social position secure, so his lack of intelligence and business sense is posed as insignificant. What matters, and where John excels, despite his intellectual shortcomings, is his ability to form the close emotional bonds that Talbot

cannot. It is this quality in him that lets him succeed where Talbot fails in winning Aurora's hand and establishing a marriage based on trust and devotion. Social and romantic relationships are primary, which provides the foundation for John's success as an individual, and particularly, as a man. Over the course of the novel, Talbot must learn to be more like John and open his heart to his friends, and eventually, his wife.

Not all sensation novels considered muscular Christianity so positively, however. Collins' *Man and Wife* (1870) again contrasts an old and new hegemonic masculinity, but presents significant reservations about muscular Christianity. One of the two male main characters, Geoffrey Delamayn was a "modern gentleman... young and florid, tall and strong... He was deep in the chest, thin in the flanks, firm on the legs – in two words, a magnificent human animal, wrought up to the highest pitch of physical development, from head to foot" (60-1). He is the physical embodiment of muscular Christianity, and like the oft-cheated John Mellish before him, his face was "as perfectly unintelligent as human features can be" (61). However, there are much more significant flaws in Geoffrey, and by correlation, muscular Christianity as practiced in the British context, than a lack of intellectualism. Geoffrey has no loyalty to others, as he attempts to save himself from a marriage promise he regrets by tricking his best friend, through some legal maneuvering and the vagaries of Scottish marriage law, into accidentally marrying Geoffrey's fiancée. However, the solution proves temporary and when that legal knot is untangled, Geoffrey imprisons his wife in his house and plots her murder. England would not have a law preventing the imprisonment of wives by their husbands until 21 years after the publication of this novel, so Collins is working well within the accepted legal and social possibilities for masculine behavior.

Geoffrey is viewed positively by the majority of characters within the novel, emphasizing the way muscular Christianity's focus on physical strength can cloak deficiencies in character. Although Geoffrey's villainous actions are revealed to the dismay of society by the end, not all characters have been so taken in by this new model of masculinity. Sir Patrick was "a gentleman of the bygone time... distinguished by a pliant grace and courtesy unknown to the present generation" (57). A holdover from an older masculinity characterized by "an independent habit of mind, and ... a carefully-polished capacity for satirical retort," he represents a focus on the life of the mind, not the body (57-8). He critiques Geoffrey, and muscular Christianity, saying:

Your friend is the model young Briton of the present time. I don't like the model young Briton. I don't see the sense of crowing over him as a superb national production, because he is big and strong and drinks beer with impunity, and takes a cold shower bath all the year round. There is far too much glorification in England, just now, of the mere physical qualities which an Englishman shares with the savage and the brute... We are readier than we ever were to practise all that is rough in our national customs, and to excuse all that is violent and brutish in our national acts." (68-9)

Given the focus on masculinity as the model for the national character, the elements that are prized in normative masculinity have far-reaching implications, and Sir Patrick sees muscular Christianity as a devolution, rather than progress.

Ultimately, this issue is posed as being larger than the individual character of Geoffrey. The narrative voice of the novel examines a fundamental flaw in the focus on the muscular part of muscular Christianity, commenting "No other human pursuit is so hostile to the influence of the sex as the pursuit of athletic sports. No men are so entirely beyond the reach of women as the men whose lives are passed in the cultivation of their own physical strength" (338). Since women were posed as the moral center of Victorian England, this separation between men and women would have read as a distinct area of

concern for a Victorian audience. Homosocial spaces, such as boys' schools and the military, were seen as essential to the development of masculinity as boys grew into men, but the influence of women, through marriage and family, was needed for the stability, and morality, of adult male lives. As sensation novels explicitly work through these social changes in gender roles and moral behavior, they frequently resist the focus on sports, aggression, and physical strength often found in normative masculinity, in favor of a masculinity that emphasizes emotional connection.

Even when these novels seem to cement a normative masculine performance into their resolutions, they often leave space for alternative masculinities. Mary Elizabeth Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret* (1862) is often cited as a prime example of the maturation of the male protagonist through his dominance over a woman. Robert Audley, the protagonist of *Lady Audley's Secret* is initially characterized as: "Indolent, handsome, and indifferent, the young barrister took life as altogether too absurd a mistake for any one event in its foolish course to be for a moment considered seriously" (57). The narrative concern with Robert is his lack of desire, in contrast to the social emphasis on manly purpose and ambition. Robert resists familial and social urging to marry a beautiful heiress and pursues his career lackadaisically. Although critics have read Robert's marriage and professional success at the end of the novel as evidence for a traditional emotional maturation throughout the course of the novel, I argue that his character presents an alternate masculinity that embraces traditionally feminine qualities such as whimsy and the imagination. At the close of the novel, the family estate, Audley Court, is closed down and inhabited only by a housekeeper, while the family is scattered in London, the country, and abroad. Robert's new house, in which he lives with an

assortment of friends and family, is described as “a fairy cottage...amid a little forest of foliage, ... a fantastical dwelling place of rustic woodwork” (444). This description is markedly different from a Victorian estate, even a country one, in its scale, the inhabitants of the house, and the otherworldly nature of its charms. This is not Audley Court, the estate which Robert was being groomed to inherit according to social expectations. Even his professional success deviates from the expectations of normative masculinity. His renowned case is noted because he “convulsed the court by his deliciously comic rendering of the faithless Nobb’s amatory correspondence” (445). Although he is now a successful lawyer, his delivery is posed as light entertainment, not an effort of intellectualism. Throughout the novel, Robert resists societal pressures to perform his manhood according to normative masculinity and manages to retain his alternative masculinity within the confines of social expectation. The fact that he can persist in his behavior and still achieve the traditional Victorian happy ending of marriage and children, while making lasting friendships and preserving familial bonds, is evidence for the potential viability of other ways to successfully enact manhood, despite the often claustrophobic social confines.

These close readings offer a brief sampling of the way various sensation fiction authors explore changing definitions of masculinity and variances within masculine performance. There is no consensus within the genre, no definitive answer. However, by analyzing the range of representations within the genre, we can more clearly understand how ideologies of masculinity are negotiated, contested, and enforced. I argue that male characters in sensation fiction feel unsafe in the public and private spheres due to ongoing social and domestic surveillance that demands normative gender performance. Despite

their relative freedom from physical danger, compared to women in sensation fiction, men perceive threats all around them and act defensively. Fear of this scrutiny causes men to hide information about themselves, keep secrets from their wives and close friends, and attempt to conceal their movements by travelling at night or under assumed names. These habits persist even when the actions of the men are relatively innocent or disconnected from the secrets they keep. These patterns of concealment and displacement craft a protective distance from society, fundamentally isolating the men involved. These strategies of concealment mirror the division between the private and public spheres and England and the colonies, highlighting a foundational pattern of concealment in Victorian society. Public life relies on a network of actions and information hidden below the surface. To explore this dynamic of the seen and unseen, the spoken and the silent, the known and the unacknowledged, I analyze the limits of secrecy; surveillance in, and of, the domestic space; and patterns of escape and retreat.

Chapter One, “‘The Keeping of a Miserable Secret’: Male Secrets Shielded & Displaced,” analyses male secret-keeping, highlighting the way men manage damaging personal information to protect their public information. Significantly, male secrets prove to be notably more stable than female secrets, offering these men protection from guilty actions. Their secrets tend to be geographically or temporally distanced from them or displaced onto men in other classes or generations. This protects the reputation of these guilty men and allows them to build public lives, yet it also leaves them isolated. Rather than the bonding power of family secrets that is often seen in Victorian literature, these male secrets cause family bonds to fragment, illustrating the destructive nature of secrets, even if they aren’t publicly revealed. In these novels, men keep these secrets with a focus

on protecting their public reputations, largely ignoring the effect on their private lives. I establish this pattern through readings of Mary Elizabeth Braddon's *Henry Dunbar* (1864), *The Trail of the Serpent* (1860), and *Dead Man's Shoes* (1876), supplemented by *To the Bitter End* (1872) and *Thou Art the Man* (1894). These novels are complemented by Wilkie Collins's *Armadale* (1866), *The Moonstone* (1868), *Basil* (1852). As two of the most prolific, and celebrated, sensation fiction authors, Braddon and Collins are foundational to my dissertation.

In Chapter Two, “‘The Very Hedges Had Eyes’: Marital Intimacy & Domestic Surveillance,” this focus on secrecy and surveillance shifts from the public to the private. As men are surveilled by the public even in their supposedly private space, these men also face surveillance from their wives and family members. Rather than offering a retreat from surveillance, the domestic space only increases it. This surveillance, and the secrecy it prompts, proves especially damaging to the marital bond, destroying the trust and intimacy of the marriage. In this chapter, I use two novels as case studies to explore the ongoing conversations surrounding trust and transparency within sensation fiction. While Ellen Wood's *Within the Maze* (1872) argues for complete transparency within marriage, Wilkie Collins's *The Law and the Lady* (1875) models individual privacy, and the maintenance of personal secrets, even between husband and wife. Both novels negotiate the bounds of marital trust and intimacy, emphasizing the necessity of this affective bond within marriage.

In response to the ongoing social pressures explored in Chapters One & Two, Chapter Three, “‘Restored to Society’: Rehabilitating Masculinity through Sequestration in the Novels of Charles Reade,” follows a fantasy of male escape. The removal of the

male protagonist from the plot for extended periods is common in sensation fiction. Male mobility allows men to move freely in and out of the plot, often strengthening their social and financial position through a stabilization of their masculinity while they are away. Charles Reade is the author who most fully creates these alternate spaces for his male protagonists, so this chapter explores his novels, *A Terrible Temptation* (1871) and *Foul Play* (1869). In Reade's novels, insane asylums and deserted islands offer the fantasy of escape, a seeming complete rejection of Victorian society. However, men strengthen themselves in these spaces by learning to perform normative Victorian masculinity more effectively. These social pressures can be navigated, but not escaped.

Unlike a theatrical actor who can step off the stage and out of the public gaze, the Victorian man has no respite from social surveillance. The public is always watching, always evaluating the performance. As these novels build on each other, a portrait of male claustrophobia in response to unceasing surveillance is revealed. Victorian society's rigid social standards imprison men in narrow roles and penalize their deviance. The pressure this constant scrutiny puts on Victorian men is immense and sensation novels derive many thrilling plot twists from the dramatic lengths men to which men must go to protect themselves from this gaze. To conform to these expectations, men frequently sacrifice their emotional lives, highlighting a problem with normative masculinity that persists to the present. Distanced from their loved ones, both platonic and romantic, and blocked from their own interiority, these men sacrifice individual identity for Victorian character and a public reputation. Rather than effortlessly assuming patriarchal authority, male characters act in desperate ways to maintain their position and their manliness, highlighting the fractures and contradictions inherent in Victorian gender ideology.

“The Keeping of a Miserable Secret”:

Male Secrets Shielded & Displaced

Introduction

Sensation fiction is known as the “quintessential novel-with-a-secret” (Pykett 4). The precursor to detective fiction, the genre revels in the secrecy and the unknown. Less focused on solving crimes or enacting legal justice, these novels emphasize uncovering hidden information and knowing the truth. Yet, for all their focus on knowing, these novels rarely end with a public unveiling, instead choosing to “conceal, rather than reveal” (Tomaiuolo 92). These novels explore how private information is concealed, managed, transmitted, and ultimately, protected. While highlighting secrets as inherently unstable and prone to dangerous consequences, these novels ultimately make an argument for the validity of family privacy. Individual secrets may be deeply suspicious, but the resolution of many sensation fiction novels is a communal keeping of the secret within the family.

Secrets are highly gendered in sensation fiction, and much of the critical discussion centers on women with secrets. Winifred Hughes notes that “whether heroine or villainess, it is always a woman who demands the spotlight in the typical sensation novel” (45). These transgressive women exert power in the text through the secrets they hold about others, but are equally likely to be brought down by secrets from their own past. Jennifer Hedgecock argues that Braddon’s use of femme fatales illustrates the way women need secrets to fulfill, or seem to fulfill, the restrictive gender norms of Victorian England (102). This secret-keeping is pivotal in the novel as women with secrets are then scrutinized by male

characters, locking them into oppositional relationships (Tomaiuolo 79). Male character is built, Hedgecock argues, by exposing female secrets and restoring social order (101).²

While discussions of secrecy in Victorian literature often center on the dangerous women with guilty secrets of sensation fiction, male characters too have an abundance of secrets within this genre. Yet for men, the sense of danger and risk of exposure is minimized, the consequences are significantly less, and the narrative structure cooperates to shield these secrets and protect the male characters.³ Since these secrets remain more under the control of these men, they are less often shared with their families or others, nor do they often require elaborate strategies to maintain them. These are often personal secrets, as female characters tend to have: secret marriages and sexual indiscretions are common. However, the secrets men keep also encompass their professional lives, such as illicit business dealings and criminal activity, particularly financial crime. While social position often protects men from public scandal or legal proceedings due to the esteem of the community, such protection is as precarious as the position.

Strengthening this protection, men's personal secrets are distanced by time and place, which secures the secret and offers a seeming stability to male secret-keeping that contrasts with the frequently fraught efforts of women. The mobility common to male public lives allows for more separation between various aspects of their lives. As a result, the secret actions tend to have taken place farther geographically and further temporally than they do for women, inherently providing a safer distance between the man and his past. This is particularly true for colonial secrets, as this geographic distancing leads to

² This dynamic has been discussed at length by many critics, with Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret* functioning as the prime example.

³ This is in stark contrast to the way that the secrets of women, whether those secrets are about women or merely held by them, are emphasized in sensation fiction narratives and become the focal point.

colonial lives which can seem utterly separate from life in domestic England.⁴ Since the secrets of these men are often an ocean away, seemingly part of a different life, they seem to be more secure than the secrets of women, which are generally only a few years and towns behind them. Narratively, men's secrets frequently extend until the next generation, preserving the secret and protecting the original men involved. This temporal distance not only offers the original secretive man the freedom to build his life unhindered, but it further screens him from the consequences of his secret by placing them on a later generation.

In contrast to the national conception of Englishmen in Victorian ideology as frank and open,⁵ I argue that male characters in sensation fiction benefit from patterns of concealment and displacement that create and maintain a protective distance, both figurative and literal, between themselves and others. These patterns of displacement, through social position and temporal and geographical distance, mutually reinforce each other, narratively shielding male secrets, without direct action by the men. This protection allows them to work, marry, build a family, and live a productive life in society and among family, in distinct contrast to women with secrets who are often driven to desperate acts and end the novel locked away in an insane asylum. However, despite these men's immersion in society and family circles, their reticence about their pasts and their secret guilt creates a barrier between them and even their closest relationships. They are unable to be fully honest and their actions lack authenticity.

⁴ This colonial mobility, an asset for male characters, operates to endanger a woman's secret, as her husband could return from the colonies at any moment, the precipitating action of Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret*.

⁵ Such descriptions appear in *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, *Dombey & Son*, *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel*, *A Phantom Lover*, to name titles ranging from political nonfiction to realistic fiction to gothic fiction. The range of genres that feature this trope speaks to its prevalence in Victorian culture.

Instead, they focus on enacting a persuasive performance of a virtuous public man. This emotionally-distancing performance overlaps greatly with Victorian conceptions of masculine self-control and reserve. Victorian gender ideologies not only carve out space for male privacy, but explicitly endorse and encourage male secret-keeping.

Since secrets are a central element of sensation fiction and the circulation of secrets is a primary action of plot, not only do multiple secrets frequently exist, but multiple characters become entangled in any one secret. As various people come into possession of the secret, the source of the secret is often obscured. In fact, many of the notable women with secrets of sensation fiction are concealing men's secrets.⁶ Men's secrets⁷ take many forms. Men can possess a secret about themselves or possess a secret about others. Those who possess a secret about others can do so for their advantage or to protect someone else.⁸ All of these constitute secret-keeping, yet create fundamentally different orientations to the secret. In this chapter, my focus is on men who keep secrets about their own pasts, the means they use, and the consequences of those choices. I analyze characters who are protagonists in the novel, rather than antagonists. Since I examine the way the narrative protects and minimizes these secrets, protagonists are best suited for this analysis.⁹ The secrets of antagonists are treated distinctly differently from those of protagonists and often receive much less narrative time. I will, however, use

⁶ For example, Collins's *The Woman in White*, in which the plot centers on Anne Catherick's knowledge of a secret about Sir Percival Glyde.

⁷ For the purposes of this chapter, I am using the term secret to refer to solely to guilty information, as keeping innocent information to oneself is more related to privacy than secrecy. Privacy and secrecy are closely related concepts still developing during the Victorian period, as discussed in the Introduction and Chapter Two.

⁸ The way that male homosocial groups protect the secrets of women, akin to the way family secrets are kept, warrants further critical study, but is outside the scope of this chapter.

⁹ A significant percentage of male characters who engage in secret-keeping in sensation fiction are protagonists, so this focus reflects their representation in the novels.

characters who are antagonists or secret-protectors to contextualize broader representations of secrecy and masculinity in the novels.

In this analysis, I also make a distinction between passive and active secret-keeping. I use the term passive secret to indicate instances when a character has information about themselves they prefer not be made public, but that information is under their control, under no immediate threat of discovery, and/or the character takes no consistent action to preserve the secret. Frequently, all of these characteristics exist simultaneously, but any one of them suffices to render a secret passive. These secrets do not occupy their attention, nor are they narratively presented as threatening. Active secret-keeping, on the other hand, indicates that the information is actively under investigation or is possessed by untrustworthy individuals and is therefore no longer under the male character's control. As a result, he makes repeated efforts to hide or destroy any evidence and prevent the information from being made public. He is rarely successful in this endeavor. While active secret-keeping is common for women with secrets, it is infrequent for men. Rather, these patterns of distancing and displacement often prevent such a need, so most of the secrets analyzed in this chapter are held passively. When engaged in active secret-keeping, characters experience consistent fear and anxiety; passive secret-keepers exhibit little to no emotional response to the secret nor does it occupy a significant portion of their attention.

Secrecy in the sensation novel, with its focus on control over personal information, mirrors the self-control and construction of identity characteristic of Victorian ideologies of masculine self-fashioning. Victorian men needed to control their identity for public consumption, both personally and professionally. How they were read

by others was crucial for their continued position and success. Since manliness is a homosocial designation, requiring public affirmation, one's identity relies on one's control over what is revealed and what is concealed. Since that conferring of legitimacy is external, inherently out of reach of the individual, and subject to revocation by others at any moment, the individual man uses secrecy as a tool to manage his public identity (Bauer 118). For the middle-class Victorian man, the challenge was to craft an identity that would be read by the public in a way that would be beneficial professionally and socially. Although Victorian ideologies of manliness stressed aggressive self-control (Adams 9), self-control was insufficient in the public sphere. Rather, it was necessary to also have control over one's image. The key to this control is the ability to reveal only certain pieces of information while reserving significantly more. In fact, masculine reserve in the Victorian period is posed as a positive, even hypnotic, quality that attracts people and draws them in, building relationships. For the Victorian individual, secrets were a legitimate way to maintain domestic privacy against the public world, making secrecy and privacy intertwined concepts. These novels explore the degrees to which men are entitled to keep information private and the circumstances in which such lack of disclosure is permissible.

Since my argument posits a pattern throughout sensation fiction, this chapter references a wide selection of novels to establish this recurrence. I focus on the novels of Mary Elizabeth Braddon and Wilkie Collins, two of the most prolific, and foundational, authors of sensation fiction. I use Braddon's *Henry Dunbar* (1864) and *The Trail of the Serpent* (1860) to study displacement through position. Braddon's *Dead Man's Shoes* (1876), supplemented by *To the Bitter End* (1872) and *Thou Art the Man* (1894),

illustrates the geographical distancing of male secrets. Although Braddon is most known for her focus on female criminality and secrecy (Talairach-Vielmas, "Introduction" x), a study of her lesser-known works highlights a sustained engagement with male secret-keeping. From there, I turn to Wilkie Collins, looking at some of his well-known novels. I use Collins's *Armadale* (1866) to explore generational displacement, a frequent preoccupation of his. *The Moonstone* (1868) brings these threads together and demonstrates the ways these various types of distancing and displacement interact to create a network of protection. Finally, I close with an examination of Collin's *Basil* (1852). As the rare male character who is unprotected by this pattern, since another's man secrets have displaced onto him, Basil exemplifies the need for this protection and his fall emphasizes the stark contrasts between male and female secret-keeping trends. This assemblage of novels establishes a pattern by which male characters are narratively protected from their secrets through distancing and displacement.

Displacement through Position

Braddon's *Henry Dunbar* illustrates the power of social position to displace secrets and guilt from wealthy men onto men of a lower class, protecting the upper-class men involved. Displacement through position highlights the privilege that rank and wealth provide. This type of displacement is rarely used with intent. Rather, it is privilege automatically conferred with status, based on the way the man is perceived by society. Since this privilege is based on perception, and closely linked to reputation, this displacement is as precarious as a man's position is. While the privileges of rank are common in the Victorian novel, it is worth noting how conscious sensation fiction is of

this privilege, and how consistently it seizes on the places it breaks down. Given that sensation fiction focuses on the upper and middle class, position is an advantage many protagonists possess, and it is a fundamental part of the mobility that permits plot complications to ensue. What is key here is the way that position functions as part of a pattern of displacement from which male protagonists benefit. Position is precarious, and the protection it offers is likewise unstable. However, the wealth that supports a man's position also enables his mobility, so displacement by position frequently occurs in conjunction with other means of displacement, strengthening the protection offered. This tension also highlights the complex interaction of wealth, class, social status, social standing, character, and reputation that combine to create a man's position. This complexity gives position resilience, but the external nature of most of those characteristics also makes it inherently unstable. *Henry Dunbar* emphasizes the power of position to cloak illegal or immoral male actions.

Despite its eponymous title, *Henry Dunbar* is the story of three men: Henry Dunbar, the wealthy, unprincipled heir to a bank; Joseph Wilmot, the bank clerk turned criminal whose life Henry ruined; and Clement Austin, the man whose love for Joseph's daughter leads him to both unravel the mystery and protect the secret. The events of the novel center on a betrayal that took place 35 years prior, when Henry Dunbar involved Joseph Wilmot in a criminal act of forgery and then left him to face the legal consequences alone. Due to his family's standing, Henry's involvement was covered up and he was sent to manage holdings in India. Since that time, Henry has lived a pleasant, privileged life in the colonies and is now returning to take over his inheritance. Joseph, with his criminal background, has been unable to find steady professional employment,

feels outcast from society, and, under the assumed name James Wentworth, struggles to survive in poverty with his daughter Margaret. When a chance encounter at a train station leaves Joseph in a position to meet Henry Dunbar when he lands in England, he seizes the chance. 24 hours later, a body is found and Joseph Wilmot is declared dead. Convinced that Joseph was murdered by Henry Dunbar, Clement Austin and Margaret Wentworth track Henry throughout England to discover the truth.

Critical discussions of *Henry Dunbar* focus on its position as an early detective novel, particularly the way that it explores familial privacy as it stages confrontations between invasive police officers and pure women in the domestic space. Anthea Trodd argues that Margaret acts morally in trying to protect her father, despite his crimes. Her ability to outwit the detective through feminine disguise and facilitate a private resolution asserts the privilege of handling domestic affairs within the home. Saverio Tomaiuolo extends that argument to explore the panopticon effect created by ongoing surveillance, highlighting the variety of detectives that Braddon uses in exploring the varying degrees of social control represented by these investigations. Given the focus on social control and surveillance, Sarah Lennox continues the conversation by noting the misleading physiognomic body that prevents characters from correctly interpreting the class status or moral standing of others. Material culture proves similarly deceptive, as the novel repeatedly presents the failures of characters, detective and amateur, to read the people and situations they encounter based on clothing and possessions. My analysis connects this failure to read surfaces to the overwhelming influence of position, which presents a surface through which characters are unable to read individual character.

Henry Dunbar affirms the power of social position while highlighting the instability of reputation. For Henry, an upper-class man, generational wealth based on a family bank has created financial security that he can take for granted and this social position confers privileges. Henry and Joseph share the same crime, but their differing social positions result in significantly different outcomes. After conspiring to commit forgery and embezzlement, Henry Dunbar is sent away to India by his family. There, he marries well and continues his professional and personal life largely unaffected. His removal from England effectively cloaks his crimes, which are not spoken of as a secret that needs to be hidden, merely as a personal matter about which all concerned choose to be discreet. This a subtle difference, but significant, because it means that Henry is never engaged in active secret-keeping. His family immediately renders the information passive and Henry does not feel threatened or endangered by it. Protected by his family and his wealth, his social position is unchanged. His accomplice, Joseph Wilmot, on the other hand, a clerk at the bank, is convicted and transported to Australia. Even after he has completed his sentence, he spends the rest of his life living under an assumed name. Since his financial situation depends on his employment, which is irrevocably harmed by his conviction, he falls into poverty and loses his social position. As a result, he has no protection from his actions and is forced to try to keep an inherently unstable secret. He is unable to build a stable life because “he cannot long escape from the hateful past. No! In the day and hour when he is the proudest of the new name he has made, and the respect he has won for himself, some old acquaintance, once a friend, but now an enemy, falls across his pathway. He is recognized” (18). His inability to keep this secret is posed not as a personal failing, but as an inevitable result of living in society.

For Henry Dunbar, however, not only do his wealth and position camouflage his past but they also act to preempt any potential accusations he might face. When his traveling companion is murdered, and it is requested he stay for the inquest, public opinion reflects shock at the imputation that he could in any way be involved. Society “protested loudly and indignantly against the idea of the bare possibility that any suspicion, or the shadow of a suspicion, could attach to such a man as Mr. Dunbar” (81). He is not accused of any crime, either formally or informally, and it is hardly unusual for the man who was the last to see the deceased to stay and testify. Regardless, his requested appearance is read as a slight on his character and assumed to be unfounded, solely based on his wealth and position. In fact, “they knew nothing of him, of course, except that he was Henry Dunbar, chief of the rich banking-house of Dunbar, Dunbar, and Balderby, and that he was a millionaire” (81). His position, and the public confidence it breeds, is not based on personal knowledge of him or public knowledge of his family. Henry is traveling when the murder takes place and is unknown in the neighborhood. However, his wealth is inextricable from his position and is taken as its own evidence of his virtue. After all, “was it likely that a millionaire would commit a murder? When had a millionaire ever been known to commit a murder? Never, of course!” (81). Henry’s wealth,¹⁰ the sheer, unassailable amount of it, so secures his social position that it is seen as precluding him from any fear, any jealousy, any perceived necessity to act criminally to protect himself. He is figured by society as a man above ordinary temptation or any need for secrecy. Thus, even in the absence of any viable other suspect or identified

¹⁰ Although the quotes focus on Henry’s wealth, I connect his wealth to his position as two necessary halves of a whole. Without his family position, which is based on generations of wealth, the possession of newly-made wealth would be insufficient to place him above suspicion. Likewise, without his wealth, his non-aristocratic family name would also be insufficient to protect him.

culprit, any suspicion of Henry is displaced, and the criminal investigation redirected, onto an assumed unknown, lower-class stranger that the town decides must have committed the crime. This displacement repeats the displacement of Henry's initial crime, highlighting the ongoing protection position offers. In this way, men of position in sensation fiction have their secrets displaced onto unnamed others, as society assumes that wealth and property is sufficient to prevent the need to commit crimes.

In fact, the security society presumes of rich men is rarely a part of male protagonists' lives, and they often have the most need to protect their reputations through secrecy. Sensation fiction is rife with seemingly invulnerable men whose lives, and identities, are built on inherently unstable secrets.¹¹ In *Henry Dunbar*, the true secret is not what Henry has done, but who he is. Henry is the victim of the murder, not the murderer, and Joseph Wilmot has impersonated him.¹² By assuming Henry's clothing, his bearing, and his wealth, Joseph effortlessly assumes his position, and with it an ascription of virtue that is unearned and unwarranted. The ease with which this position can be impersonated emphasizes its artificiality. "The laws of society are inflexible," says Joseph, "there is no forgiveness for a man once he is found out" (18). And yet, what this novel actually demonstrates is that the laws of society are quite flexible, at least for those whose class and social position is above suspicion and, therefore, above the law. It is key that this reaction comes not from a particular character, but is attributed to the general

¹¹ Perhaps the most famous example of this is Sir Percival Glyde in Wilkie Collins' *The Woman in White*, whose secret illegitimacy propels the novel.

¹² Henry has been in India since his crime. Only senior clerks at the bank remember his crime and there is no public knowledge of it. In the 35 years that have passed, his father and uncle have died, as have senior members of the business, so no-one left in England knows him well enough to recognize him, beyond general height and hair color. There are also no known portraits of him. The body is identified only by the clothes it is wearing and there is no-one to identify either man. Joseph spends the novel avoiding Margaret so that she will be unable to identify him.

voice of society, illustrating how conventional this dynamic is. This social voice goes far beyond merely excusing or ignoring the immoral and illegal actions of privileged men; it entirely rejects the possibility that such actions are possible. Rather than seeing that a high position offers these men all that more to lose, society insists on a stability of position that is intrinsically impossible for middle-class men. Without birth to anchor their position, as it does for the upper-class, no social position so reliant on an interplay of wealth, profession, and character can be truly stable. This inherent instability is the very thing that drives middle-class men to use secrets to control their reputation and public persona. As such, the displacement offered by position is as precarious as the position itself, emphasizing the uncertainty of public life and the vulnerability of masculine identity.

However, secrets in this novel are more than a public relations strategy; they're a commodity. Just as the market encourages men to keep secrets and construct a public identity, market forces turn these secrets into a product. The public's belief that Henry must be innocent is not solely based on a correlation between position and virtue, but a practical assessment of the buying power of his wealth. After all, "Henry Dunbar could afford to buy all the secrets that ever were kept. Secrets are like every other sort of article: they're only kept to sell" (153). The social voice reduces interactions between men to a series of financial transactions. Even a magistrate, when Margaret appeals to him to investigate the murder, defends Henry's innocence by reaffirming the power of his wealth. He argues that "Money is a very powerful agent, and can buy almost anything," again denying the existence of a motive (106). Men are not machines, however, and this focus on buying power neglects the emotional component of human motivation. A man

who possesses another's secret can desire revenge, rather than profit, as Joseph seeks when he murders Henry.¹³ A guilty man of position can be too arrogant to bother purchasing his own secrets, as Henry declines to do when Joseph attempts to blackmail him. Wealth and position cannot, in fact, solve all of one's problem or make one a good person.

Clement, the moral male voice of the novel, acts in opposition to the secret-keeping practices of Henry and Joseph. Henry and Joseph are perfectly comfortable using secrets to maintain or improve their lives, although they vary significantly in effectiveness. Clement, on the other hand, abhors a secret. He believes in honesty and openness, and practices this within his professional and domestic lives. Clement's home is described in marked contrast to the home Margaret has grown up in with her father: unlike Joseph's home, there is "no overshadowing fear, no horrible unspoken dread, no half-guessed secrets always gnawing at the heart" (153). The secrets Joseph feels compelled to keep, those of his identity and criminal past, are condemned as fundamentally harming the domestic space and its inhabitants. While Joseph may be sympathetic,¹⁴ given the way he was betrayed by a man he trusted, the relative guilt or innocence of the secrets is irrelevant. Secrecy itself, given the constant threat of exposure, is posed as inherently damaging and a state to be avoided.

Clement's openness is linked to his integrity and insight. Of all characters, he is the one able to see through Henry's position to the man behind it. Upon meeting Joseph, who is successfully masquerading as Henry, Clement comments that "he is either a very

¹³ Although he does profit financially by assuming Henry's identity, his primary motive is revenge, with the financial component secondary.

¹⁴ Madge is reflecting on a time before the murder happens, so Joseph's guiltiest secret is not part of this construction.

great man, or a very wicked one. I almost fear to ask myself which” (84). Rather than seeing greatness and wickedness as disparate states, as society does, Clement identifies the “iron” that underlies both (84). Though these are divergent qualities, they are linked ones. While displacement by position is largely effective for these characters, Clement’s moral eye remains skeptical. However, the novel resists settling on such a pat condemnation of secret-keeping. Significantly, by the end of the novel, Clement has come to accept the necessity of secrecy. He and Margaret keep the secret of her dead father’s crimes “hidden in our own breasts – a dark chapter in the criminal romance of life, never to be revealed upon earth” (358). They want to protect her reputation from the consequences of her father’s sins, fearing the social reaction if this knowledge was made public. However, this is a secret Clement keeps not just from judgmental, moralistic society, but also from his mother, who knows and loves Margaret. This seemingly unnecessary reserve emphasizes the degree to which Clement has changed over the course of the novel, while the conventional narrative conclusion with his marriage assures the reader that this change is proper and appropriate. Despite condemning guilty individual secrets, the novel concludes by making space for family secrets, particularly to protect innocent family members from further scandal. Protecting oneself from the consequences of one’s own actions through secrecy and displacement is destructive, but maintaining family solidarity against a prying society is posed as fundamentally different.

This dynamic in which secrets are commodities that are displaced through wealth and position is not confined to *Henry Dunbar*. Braddon’s first novel, *The Trail of the Serpent* (1860), follows the machinations of Jabez North as he attempts to acquire wealth

and position through a variety of nefarious means.¹⁵ Once he has achieved that, he believes that a new name, a strategic marriage, and a move to France will make him invulnerable. He is now the wealthy Raymond de Marolles, related by marriage to a Marquis, and “of course, a man with his aristocratic connections and enormous fortune is respected and trusted” (255). His position enables him to cloak numerous crimes. He parallels the Marquis de Cevennes, another man with a secret – his secret marriage and illegitimate children. However, their paths diverge directly due to their social position. While the Marquis de Cevennes has a stable secret, passively kept, Raymond is ultimately unable to keep his secrets concealed and is prosecuted for his crimes. Critical attention to this novel has focused on disability and liminal characters, since the central detective is non-verbal and communicates only through sign language. Saverio Tomaiuolo argues that Braddon’s liminal characters are more apt investigators due both to their mobility and the way they are undervalued by society. Although discussions of liminality tend to focus on the detective, Raymond de Marolles is another liminal character, moving between worlds as he climbs the rank of society. His character arc highlights the conservative tendencies of displacement by position and the limits of social mobility.

In this novel, like *Henry Dunbar*, we see the focus on the secrets as commodities, as one character holds the Marquis de Cevennes’ secret as an appreciating financial asset: “Such a secret. Gold, gold, gold, as long as it’s kept; and gold when it’s told, if it’s told at the right time, dearie” (78). She has no agenda, no personal mission, she is solely focused

¹⁵ This novel has a truly elaborate plot, featuring identical twins, multiple orphans drowned in rivers, an insane asylum, stolen identities, a blackmailed marriage, a mute detective, numerous murders and poisonings, and ever so many people supposedly dead who appear later in full health with a new name. Much of the plot is outside the scope of this analysis, but it warrants further study.

on the profit motive, saying “I mean to sell it some day, for it’s worth a mint of money! A mint of money!” (82). In fact, she holds onto the secret for too long and it depreciates, rendered harmless through both time and the position the Marquis de Cevennes achieves. Since secrets are treated narratively and by characters as commodities, the implication that a wealthy man is able to protect himself from anything is strengthened. The Marquis de Cevennes knows that his position is secure and he is able to reject the blackmailer with impunity. Raymond de Marolles, however, lacks the stable position to act similarly. Since he lacks a family name and background, his position, based only on wealth and marriage, is precarious; he struggles, and fails, to preserve it. His lack of success highlights that position, over wealth, is the key element by which upper-class men distance their secrets and render them benign, mirroring the power dynamics of *Henry Dunbar*. In addition, the crimes of murder that Raymond attempts, and fails, to hide, rather than the more benign, successfully maintained, sexual secret of the Marquis de Cevennes illustrates the limits of displacement by position.

Geographical Displacement

The colonial project, commonly figured as a proving ground for masculinity and a source of the wealth necessary to maintain one’s position, also operated as a means by which an individual’s secrets could be protected from the prying eyes of the Victorian public.¹⁶ The geographical distance provided a level of safety, as well as often corresponding to a temporal distance. Not only were past misdeeds thousands of miles

¹⁶ This dynamic most commonly focuses on activities that occur in the colonies, but also applies to men who go to the colonies to avoid actions that took place in England. Key to this, however, is mobility between places and the maintenance of social position, so transported convicts do not benefit from this geographical distancing.

from a character's current life, but the near complete separation of social networks created a barrier to the transmission of personal information. As with displacement by position, this is rarely a displacement that characters wield with intent. Instead, it is a protection created by the literal distances involved. In sensation fiction, the colonies occupy a significant position. While colonial activities are often figured as a misspent youth, a characterization meant to excuse them, their consequences impact the mature man. Colonial pasts consistently refuse to stay hidden, ultimately following men back to domestic England. Although the personal secret proves unstable, it is notable that the colonies are posed as both masculine and illicit, and that actions that occur there cannot be relegated to a separate space indefinitely. Colonial, and therefore masculine, actions have domestic consequences. Always an imperfect division, male mobility entangles these worlds, as colonial activities become family secrets. Male secrets reveal a persistent tension between the supposedly separate spheres and an attempt to reconcile the divided loyalties inherent in a life both public and private, domestic and colonial. Despite the geographical and temporal distance, men cannot leave their pasts, and secrets, behind them forever. This distancing is based on a physical remove between the two continents, but the networks of colonialism repeatedly show that the countries are inextricably linked.

Although secrets are most often geographically displaced onto the colonies, particularly when the secret involves wealth or criminality, secrets are also displaced onto continental Europe. This is most common when the secret is an illegitimate child or sexual immorality. In Braddon's *To the Bitter End* (1872), Sir Lucas has a secret marriage and secret son in Italy. Although his son eventually follows him to England, Sir

Lucas's secret remains contained and his position is secure. Similarly, in Braddon's *Thou Art the Man* (1894), Sir Joseph Higginson has a secret illegitimate daughter in France.

These are not incidental, background secrets, but are integral to the novels' plots.

However, since these secrets are displaced geographically, and the men remain in control of the information, the child's whereabouts, the circumstances of the child's arrival in England, and the official story of their identity or relationship, the secret stays secure and the men's positions and reputations are unaffected.¹⁷ While these secrets are stable, they still result in destruction for others, highlighting the unsustainability of secret-keeping.

Sir Lucas's secret son, Hubert, seduces and kills a local girl, resulting in Hubert's murder. Sir Joseph's secret daughter is murdered and her death becomes the vehicle of another man's ruin. Merely containing a secret, or preserving one's personal reputation, while attainable, proves insufficient to escape the negative consequences of secret-keeping.

Braddon's *Dead Man's Shoes* (1876) uses the colonial locations of India and Australia to highlight the possibilities, and dangers, of colonial ventures. Despite Braddon's popularity in the colonies, her novels rarely spend extended narrative time in the colonies, so her consistent use of the colonies as a repository of secrets is significant.¹⁸ *Dead Man's Shoes* is the story of Stephen Trenchard, who returns to England after retiring from a lifetime in trade in India. His relatives flock to him, anticipating inheriting his vast fortune after what they assume will be an imminent death. Among them is his niece, Sybil, who leaves her husband and hides the fact of her

¹⁷ The same is not true of women with these secrets. For instance, in Braddon's *Aurora Floyd*, Aurora's secret is a secret marriage in France. However, she has no control over the information or the movements of her husband and his unexpected arrival in England spurs the events of the novel.

¹⁸ Perhaps the most famous example of this is *Lady Audley's Secret*, in which the return of George Talboys, Lady Audley's secret husband, from Australia, is the center of the plot.

marriage, presenting herself as a single woman and expecting to be Stephen's heir. After being abandoned by Sybil, Alexis Secretan, her husband, leaves for Australia, hoping to improve his financial position. As characters circle, jockeying for wealth, the novel ends in patricide, when Stephen's illegitimate son murders his father. Stephen, it is discovered after his death, is penniless, while Alexis has built a stable financial position through his work in Australia.

While the thematic focus of *Dead Man's Shoes* is greed, the novel rests on the secrets that become an intrinsic part of many characters' relationships to wealth. Stephen is known for his colonial wealth, and his reputation rests on this. His family and neighbors speculate about his actions in India, saying he "was sure to have married a begum without telling anybody, and to die in India, leaving all his money to horrid copper-coloured children" (1:13). They suspect him of violating Victorian morality while in India, but are content to leave whatever he may have done in past, back in India. As with displacement by position, this protection does not come from the actions of the secretive men, but from society's willing disregard. Stephen is also physically changed by his time in India, returning "yellow, wrinkled, withered, and eccentric in manners and habits" (1:10). However, his family welcomes him back and he is an esteemed member of community, with all assuming that his time in India must have resulted in wealth. Businesses extend him credit, men court his nieces based on their assumed inheritances, and he lives comfortably on the expectations everyone has of him, actively encouraging them to believe so. However, his public reputation is entirely false. In reality, Stephen left India as his business failed, withdrawing what funds he could salvage and leaving it insolvent. His debts far outstrip his savings, and he is in full knowledge of that fact. At

his death, he leaves a statement for the community, describing his plan: “With a few thousands at my banker’s, and the reputation of unlimited resources, I was able to command all that the town could give. Redcastle laid its riches at my feet ... Every year left me a little deeper in their debt” (2:201). The geographical distance, and the assumptions domestic England has about the colonies, enable him to maintain his secret and execute his scheme.

Stephen’s insolvency is not the only secret he keeps, but merely the outer marker of a larger immorality. The fortune he once had was created through business practices ranging from morally unsavory, such as the opium trade and the slave trade, to illegal, such as scuttling ships to claim the insurance. Such business would not withstand public knowledge in domestic England, but at the colonial remove, society does not inquire too closely as to the origins of a man’s fortune. This highlights the way that domestic England actively participates in the displacement, and maintenance, of colonial secrets. The ‘purity’ of domestic England relies on illegal, immoral, and exploitative colonial actions, a hypocrisy Victorian England abides. Stephen’s immorality is furthered illustrated in the sexual realm by the existence of his illegitimate, mixed-race son, Joel. While Joel is acknowledged in India and taken into the business, Stephen’s return to England alters their relationship, rendering it a liability and, therefore, a secret. Stephen not only hides Joel’s parentage, presenting him as the son of a friend and a business acquaintance, but also attempts to extort money from him. These actions result in Joel murdering him, and, once caught, he reveals all his and his father’s secrets in a suicide note. Once again, illegitimate children prove a destructive force and highlight the domestic repercussions of colonial lives.

In contrast to Stephen is Alexis, whose time in Australia avoids colonial tropes. Not only does he not engage in illicit activities or return to England trailed by secrets, he also does not make a fortune. While he leaves England destitute and improves his financial position in Australia, it is made clear that his hard work has resulted in a comfortable, stable financial position, but not wealth or fortune. He is rewarded for his virtue by his unexpected inheritance of a family estate, Cheswold Grange. By associating wealth and immorality through Stephen and restricting the virtuous Alexis from wealth, the novel highlights the degree to which such colonial wealth relies on these secrets. If wealth and immorality are inextricable, and colonial wealth underpins domestic England, a network of secrets, comfortably displaced, underlies Victorian society. These novels highlight the dangerous consequences implicit in these secrets and the unavoidable influence of the colonies on domestic England.

Generational Displacement

Generational displacement manifests predominately as a narrative technique that displaces the sins of the fathers onto the next generation, often replicating the initial actions as well as the consequences. An extension of temporal displacement, this movement of the consequences to the next generation acts to protect the original man with a secret. For the first generation, the secret-keeping is passive. In most cases, the secretive man suffers no consequences during his life, with all the consequences falling on the unsuspecting next generation who knew nothing of their family past. For children who do not discover they are illegitimate until after their parents' deaths, as in Collins's *No Name* (1862), this generational displacement can be grounded in practical realities of

secret-keeping. However, it frequently goes beyond that, drawing disconnected characters together to replicate or resolve the crimes and secrets of the previous generation. This type of displacement is out of the control of any of the subjects. The first generation, who benefits, cannot control the consequences nor would they condemn their children to suffer for them, if they had the choice. The second generation, who pays the price, is generally ignorant of the secrets and has seemingly little control over their actions as their lives are affected by past crimes and betrayals. This displacement is exemplified by Collins's *Armadale* (1866).

Armadale features, in the first generation, two men named Allan Armadale, rivals for an inheritance and a bride. Given that the novel contains four Allan Armadales (two in each generation), it is fortunate that many of them have aliases. For the purposes of this chapter, I will refer to Allan Armadale, the murder victim, as Fergus Ingleby, an alias he assumes. I will refer to Allan Armadale, the murderer, as Allan Wrentmore, his legal name before he receives the family inheritance. I will refer to his son as Ozias Midwinter, the name he chooses and carries throughout the novel. After this synopsis, Allan Armadale will refer solely to the son of the murdered man. Allan Wrentmore murders Fergus Ingleby in a jealous rage, after Fergus marries Allan's intended. With this action, one Allan Armadale murders the other, a crime that goes unpunished. Allan marries another and has a child who is named after him. After learning that Fergus's widow bore a son and also named him Allan for his father, Allan Wrentmore becomes obsessed with the fact that the next generation also features two Allan Armadales and is convinced they are doomed to destroy each other. He leaves a deathbed letter for his son, pleading with him to stay far away from the other Allan Armadale. And yet, his son, under the assumed

name Ozias Midwinter, meets and befriends Allan Armadale, son of the murdered man, before he ever receives the letter. Ozias, once he learns what his father did, believes in a curse and hides all information from Allan. However, he is unable to bear leaving him permanently. The novel chronicles Ozias's attempts to prevent any harm from coming to Allan as he draws toward destruction, his life intertwining with that of the actors in the first generation's drama.

Armadale is one of Collins's major works and has garnered much critical attention. Identity is a potent theme throughout the novel, as critics explore gender identity, sexual identity, class identity, and national identity. Lydia Gwilt, arguably Collins's ultimate femme fatale, is a frequent critical focus. Discussions of gender in this novel emphasize the aging female body and Lydia's use of cosmetics to seduce the protagonist, with Lisa Niles arguing that this preoccupation with cosmetics and sexuality illustrates Victorian concerns about personal identity within a market economy. I argue that this focus on the unreliability of surfaces extends throughout the novel, as the male characters consistently misread and are misread in turn. Critics such as Marc Ducusin read beneath surfaces to explore the homoerotics of the novel, based as it is in the most intimate of male friendships. Similarly, Maria Bachman and Don Cox discuss hereditary transmission in terms of sexuality, arguing that homosexuality is the true secret, and sin, of the novel, creating the bond that connects each generation of Armadales. Discussions of heredity and inheritance are a significant focus for critics, making this a prime example for my analysis of generational displacement. Julian Wolfreys investigates the way Englishness is constructed in the text, with many critics paying particular attention to representations of colonialism in the text. Caroline Reitz argues that, by the end of the

novel, moral Englishness is based on the ability to recognize colonial mistakes and acknowledge the guilt. This focus on guilt extends to an analysis of the uses of inheritance in the novel, with Noa Reich arguing that inheritance become symbolic not only of heredity but of the credit economy, with the potential ill consequences of a legacy. While she discusses the limited liability of corporations, her focus on inherited guilt dovetails with the criticism on colonialism and homosexuality to highlight the significance of inheritance and generational transmission in this novel. My analysis examines the generational transmission not only of secrets, but of their consequences, as the novel makes literal the visiting of the sins of the father on the next generation.

This generational displacement is figured as Fate, a destiny which characters can neither control nor avoid. Although sensation fiction often features plots reliant on high degrees of coincidence, this goes beyond that and is presented narratively as exerting a power over the characters. Peter Thoms argues that Collins upholds Providence as the ultimate order (8), while Philip O'Neill argues that the conflict between superstition and reason cannot be resolved and its very ambiguity is what gives the novel its power (19). Allan Wrentmore is obsessed with the legacy he is leaving behind for his son, begging him to "Never let the two Allan Armadales meet in this world; never, never, never!" (84). He is convinced that to do so would mean destruction for both of them; that his son has been fashioned by fate as a tool of evil. He fears "My Crime, ripening again for the future in the self-same circumstance which first sowed the seeds of it in the past; and descending, in inherited contamination of Evil, from me to my son" (36). This sentiment is repeated throughout the novel and the narrator traces this thread through the unfolding stories, feeding into this characterization. Although Allan Wrentmore believes this can be

avoided if the two men stay far apart from each other, he presents it as an inevitable result of them meeting. Since the two Allans have already met, and bonded, before the warning is received, the plot seems to be moving towards a predetermined conclusion, as hard as they try to fight it. As seemingly insignificant moments occur in the text, the narrator is careful to note that “Before they had risen again from their places, they had taken the first irrevocable step together on the dark and tortuous road of their future lives” (92) and that “in this way had Midwinter’s victory over his own fatalism ... actually favoured the fulfilment of the Second Vision of the Dream” (259).” In stark contrast to ideologies of masculine control, these characters are presented as helpless in the face of larger forces.

This tension between control and destiny is a central concern of the novel, and Ozias struggles to reconcile his personal agency and his sincere love for Allan with the ominous past that hangs over them. Allan is entirely unaware of Ozias’s true name or the connection between their fathers, so he moves unknowingly through the dangers that Ozias sees everywhere. For Ozias, this conflict strikes at the heart of who he is as a man:

Which am I – now that the two Allan Armadales have met again in the second generation – an instrument in the hands of Fate, or an instrument in the hands of Providence? What is it appointed me to do – now that I am breathing the same air, and living under the same roof with the son of the man whom my father killed – to perpetuate my father’s crime by mortally injuring him? or to atone for my father’s crime by giving him the devotion of my whole life? (86)

Everything in Ozias is devoted to Allan. All his desire, motivation, and ambition are to help and support Allan. He is, perhaps, the truest friend in sensation fiction. That his sincere affection for Allan is shown to be compatible with the secret he keeps from him, corresponds to Braddon’s endorsement of family protection of others’ secrets. Yet, he is constantly afraid that he does not actually control himself or his actions and that, despite his best intentions, he will act against the interests of his friend. This fear is so strong that

he feels he must condemn himself to solitude and live a transient life on the outskirts of society, rather than stay in his stable position as steward of the estate. Although this conflict is figured here as a religious or metaphysical question, it strikes at the heart of ideologies of masculinity, particularly as regards middle-class men. At once expected to be in control of their lives and households, they are also at the mercy of market and industry forces and cannot accurately predict the consequences of their actions. Given the widespread social change in the Victorian period, the question of the degree to which a man can control his own fate is a timely one.

A primary way that a man is supposed to be able to control his public and professional life is through management of his public image and reputation, and *Armada* is consistently skeptical of men's ability to do so. Both Allan and Ozias are regularly misread by the public; Allan cannot live up to his position and Ozias cannot display emotion effectively to connect with other men. Allan is "easy and open in his disposition ... quaintly and inveterately good-humoured," which are generally positive qualities, particularly for a young man (45). As "one of those noisy, rosy, light-haired, good-tempered men," he seems to be the picture of the young Victorian gentlemen, before marriage and family has steadied him (250). However, he is described as rash and impetuous, and he has little patience for social convention. A minor flaw as a youth, this becomes significant when he unexpectedly inherits a large estate and assumes a position in which navigating such social niceties is key. Unaware of the necessity that he participate in these social rituals, he manages to offend the entire town within hours of his arrival, leaving him to conclude that "what I might be in other places I don't know – I'm the wrong man in the wrong place here" (175). The novel gives us no reason to disbelieve

him, and the discrepancy between his actions and the expectations of his position continue to blacken his reputation throughout the story. However, the reader is assured repeatedly of Allan's good heart and general virtue, so rather than this being presented as a character flaw that must be redeemed, it suggests that the measures by which society judges a man are unreliable.

This focus on the unsound judgement of social perception is furthered in the negative way other characters react to Ozias. In the only favorable description of him, he is "little and lean, and active and dark, with bright black eyes which say to me plainly, 'We belong to a man with brains in his head and a will of his own'" (253). He is intelligent, driven, and committed to his purpose. In stark contrast to the boyish representation of Allan, Ozias is a man. However, he lacks the ability to display his good character in a way that can be read by society. Although he is uniformly moral, loyal, and sincere in his affections, he lacks the popularity that characterizes Allan. Instead, others see "a fatal reserve": "His look is lurking, his manner is bad" (84). He is "a secret, sullen fellow" (121). This sense of his character is purely based on how inner character is visually read through physical display, not on his actions. This perception has been consistent throughout his life, since he was a child, so it is disconnected from any active secrecy on his part. He is critiqued for lack of eye contact, for looking down and away from his audience, and for the spatial distance he keeps between himself and others. Because he cannot perform masculinity effectively by converting his inner character into a public display, he is consistently misread and misunderstood.

The consistent misreading of both Ozias and Allan's characters is notable in the larger context of how their fathers were perceived. Both Ozias and Allan are good men

with good characters, despite differences in their personalities and social standing. Their fathers, on the other hand, were both morally bankrupt men, with seemingly little difference between them. Fergus Ingleby, the original Allan Armadale, “had disgraced himself beyond all redemption; had left his home an outlaw; and had been thereupon renounced by his father at once and for ever” (20). However, the man who inherited in his place, Allan Wrentmore, seems hardly better. “He has passed the greater part of his life in the West Indies – a wild life and a vicious life, by his own confession” (9). Few details are given about Allan Wrentmore’s life, as his first appearance in the text is on his deathbed, and the information provided is through his dying statement, so it is unclear to what degree he has engaged in secret-keeping. However, it is clear that, whatever his actions in the West Indies, he has benefitted from the geographical remove of the colonies to cloak those actions and is still accepted in polite society. Controlled by impulse, his “boyhood and youth were passed in idleness and self-indulgence” (20). Even his guilt over the murder he commits does not seem to reform him or act as a steadying influence. Both men are implicated in the guilt that is passed down to the next generation, as Allan Wrentmore sees “danger in the future, begotten of the danger in the past – treachery that is the offspring of *his* treachery, and crime that is the child of *my* crime” (35). Yet, these are the men whose sins pass largely unseen and unprosecuted onto the next generation. Both of them make wealthy marriages and have sons. While Fergus dies shortly after his marriage, Allan Wrentmore lives unremarked in society until his death.¹⁹ As discussed earlier in the chapter, their position protects them from any sort of legal

¹⁹ Since Fergus is murdered so quickly after his marriage, it is unclear what the long-term social consequences of his actions would be. However, he makes an advantageous marriage after he is disinherited, so it is reasonable to assume that he would be able to leverage a stable position in society from that, even if he is no longer the heir to his family estate.

prosecution and their social status proves resilient to what are deemed youthful indiscretions. Reputation and position are highlighted here as capricious and disconnected from the virtue on which it is supposed to be based. That this generational displacement operates to protect guilty men by placing the consequences on good men highlights the lack of control men have over the circumstances in which they find themselves, extending the novel's exploration of the degree of control that men have over their lives. Although the letter from father to son conveys knowledge of the larger context, it is not responsible for the coincidences that drive the plot. Numerous incidents connect Ozias and Allan to each other, and to other characters from the first generation's drama, that predate or are outside the scope of the letter. As the text constantly reiterates, Fate seems to draw them together because of the unresolved crimes of the previous generation, posing this displacement as the cause of these generational consequences.

Although the novel concludes by emphasizing free will, as Ozias is able to save Allan from adventuresses and harm, the overwhelming impetus of the plot is based on the power of this generational displacement. The two men are drawn together, across England, for their chance meeting. Allan inherits an estate he had only a distant claim to through the unexpected deaths of three men; their deaths are accidentally caused, but directly linked, to the actions of a woman who was caught up as a child in the deceptions of the first generation. A prophetic dream warns Allan of his fate, and each piece of that dream is fulfilled over the course of the novel. While a man's future may not be fixed, these forces are still shown to be incredibly powerful. Only Ozias's heightened awareness and fixation is capable of avoiding the multiple marriage plots and murder attempts that the adventuress levies against Allan. Allan's escape offers hope of avoiding these perils,

but a marginal hope, and one that emphasizes the numerous ways that a man can lose everything he has. Successfully navigating these forces, whether that is society, profession, the market, the colonies, or the many other avenues in which men must compete, requires constant watchfulness, bordering on paranoia. Men in the Victorian world must always be on guard.

Although fate is foregrounded in the novel, *Armada* also highlights gossip and scandal as the most significant social forces from which men must protect themselves, emphasizing the need for privacy, at the very least, and justifying a tendency to secrecy. In addition to the unjust manner in which society condemns Allan and Ozias, the novel goes further to emphasize the prying eyes of social surveillance and the destruction that can ensue. A private detective is described as “the vile creature whom the viler need of Society has fashioned for its own use. There he sat – the Confidential Spy of modern times, whose business is steadily enlarging ... a man professionally ready on the merest suspicion (if the merest suspicion paid him) to get under our beds, and to look through gimlet-holes in our doors” (460). Not only is he described in uniformly negative terms regarding his profession, he is a character whom we are predisposed to think poorly of, based on his earlier betrayal of his family.²⁰ He is established as a character without “a sense of pity or a sense of shame” (460). The reader’s dislike and mistrust of the detective is significant because he is employed to discover information about the villain

²⁰ His father, Mr. Bashwood, is a secondary character in the text. An older man, he lost his position as steward after he offered security for his son’s employment in an office. When his son behaved dishonorably, his employer fired him and called in his security to cover their loss. When Mr. Bashwood was required to pay such a large sum, he borrowed to meet the debt, couldn’t pay back the loan, and had his house and belongings seized by creditors. This reflected poorly on his employer, so he was then let go from his position as steward. Although his son is now employed, he expresses no regret for his previous actions and makes no attempt to make restitution to his father. That he would treat his father so poorly enhances the reader’s dislike and suspicion of him.

of the novel. The private detective is key to finding the information to stop her, which the reader wants, yet the fact that his information gathering can be put to good use does not change the negative portrayal of him and his profession. Instead, the lengths to which these detectives go, particularly in their invasion into men's private spaces, is emphasized. In particular, the mercenary motives of detectives is at issue, linking back to secrets as commodities. When even men's private lives are subject to market forces, there is no reprieve from the surveillance of the public sphere, the repercussions of which I discuss in Chapter Two.

Armada indicts society as a whole as culpable for this surveilling force and the way it inspires, and then feeds on, secrets. Although the previous quote focused on the vile nature of private detectives, the quote also stressed that “the viler need of Society has fashioned” these men, making them a symptom of the problem, not the cause (460). Once social actors have discovered others' secrets, either through their own machinations or hired eyes, secrets become scandal, a force as difficult to control as the fate which has been manipulating the plot. Scandal is so powerful because it so pervasive throughout society: “The influence exercised by the voice of public scandal is a force which acts in opposition to the ordinary law of mechanics. It is strongest, not by concentration, but by distribution. To the primary sound we may shut our ears; but the reverberation of it in echoes is irresistible” (343). Characters in sensation fiction are expert at fending off the plots and advances of individual villains, coming through these trials to achieve conventional marriages and social positions. This social force, however, is too widespread and disembodied to be effectively combatted. Instead, it represents a danger so ubiquitous as to be indomitable. Scandal feeds on information, so it opposes silence,

reading it as guilt and secrecy, even when such silences are motivated by personal privacy, obligation to another, or to protect others.

The narrative resolution of *Armada*, however, rests on secrets kept and silence respected. By the end of the novel, any danger to Allan has passed. The adventuress, the last link to the crimes of the first generation, is dead and Ozias is secure in his knowledge that he is not a destructive force on Allan's life. However, he still chooses not to reveal his true name to Allan or their complicated family history. Throughout the novel, he has been uncomfortable with secrets, so this represents a significant change. His relationship with Allan represents the closest love and affection in the novel, so it is noteworthy that the secret between them is not portrayed as an obstacle to their intimacy. This acceptance of secrecy is not confined to Ozias. Although Allan does not know what the secret is, he is aware there is a secret. He knows that Ozias, when he married, married under the name Allan Armadale, certainly a suspicious circumstance to someone who thinks he is the only man of that name. However, he refrains from asking Ozias why he did so, trusting in his friend. Ozias requests that he be content to never know why, assuring him that any explanation would show that Ozias was blameless and asking him to trust both his word on that and his reasons for not disclosing the full circumstances. Allan does so wholeheartedly, and the novel closes with the two men secure in the knowledge that "while we live, brother, your love and mine will never be divided again" (595). By the end, the generational secrets have been defused and no lasting consequences affect Ozias and Allan. Their bond is such that it allows for a respect for personal privacy, rather than an insistence on openness. This framework poses their relationship as a familial, fraternal one, connecting this acceptance of secrets to the keeping of family secrets. However, in

this case, the secret is not shared between members of the family and their trust allows for individual secrets within their bond. This willingness to allow personal privacy, rather than insisting on transparency, is a dynamic that marital relationships will struggle with, as I explore in my discussion of marital trust and intimacy Chapter Two.

Intersections of Displacement

Although I have examined each type of displacement in isolation thus far, they frequently co-exist and mutually reinforce each other, strengthening the protection they offer. Collins's *The Moonstone* (1868) exemplifies this interaction through the interplay of multiple male characters with secrets. *The Moonstone* is perhaps the most studied novel in Collins's oeuvre, and much critical attention has been paid to gender, empire, disability, and the self in this canonical text. Deemed "the first, the longest, and the best of modern English detective novels" by T.S. Eliot, critics have also explored it as detective fiction, analyzing the role of the police, eyewitness testimony, amateur detection, surveillance, and the nature of crime, both in the novel itself and in the tradition of the genre. Discussions of gender often focus on Rachel Verinder, the woman whose secrecy and silence are a narrative focus of the novel. However, despite the focus on Rachel Verinder as the woman with a secret, she is merely the keeper of the secret, not the subject of it. I argue that this is not a novel of women with secrets, but of secretive men. While the narrative focus is on Rachel's protection of a secret, the secrets that motivate the plot of *The Moonstone* are all male secrets: Colonel Herncastle's theft of the jewels, Godfrey Ablewhite's embezzlement, and Franklin Blake's debts.²¹ This is a prime

²¹ Franklin's debts will not feature in my analysis as Franklin does little to hide them and they quickly become open knowledge. His secret-keeping is not a significant part of the plot and his focus throughout is

text to study male secrets, since they layer throughout generations and are hidden by multiple characters. Colonel Herncastle's original theft of the jewels is the foundational secret which underlies the action of the plot. During the storming of Seringapatam,²² the Colonel murders palace guards and steals the Moonstone,²³ bringing it back to England with him. His secret is originally shielded by position, since his military position allows him to plunder the palace with little fear of consequences. Despite attempts to stop looting, it was a regular occurrence among military in the colonies, enabling his actions. His secret is then distanced geographically when he leaves India to return to England, further protecting him from anyone who might recognize the jewel and make a complaint. Ultimately, his secret is displaced generationally, as the consequences of this theft, both direct and indirect, fall onto his niece when she inherits the jewel. The direct consequences of this theft are that the Brahmins, who have been tracing the jewel through the years, follow it to England to retrieve it by any means necessary, including murder. Indirectly, the theft of this gem sets in motion a series of events that result in scandal, surveillance, suicide, and broken engagements. Colonel Herncastle is shielded from all of this, however, because his theft is displaced on multiple levels, protecting him from resulting harm.²⁴

on sharing information, rather than concealing it. However, it was worth noting as part of a gendered pattern of secrecy.

²² This battle ended the siege of Seringapatam, which took place from April 5th to May 4th, 1799, resulting in a British victory. It was the final action of the Fourth Anglo-Mysore War, between the British East India Company and the Kingdom of Mysore.

²³ The Moonstone has a history of theft, making its way to Seringapatam through numerous hands, after it is stolen from its rightful place in a shrine in Benares (modern-day Varanasi). The gem is said to be a curse to those who possess it illicitly.

²⁴ His public reputation is impacted by rumors surrounding the acquisition of the jewel and he is estranged from his family, but he maintains possession, faces no legal repercussions, and lives according to his pleasures, so I characterize the consequences as minor, particularly for a sensation novel.

The other notably secretive man in the novel is Godfrey, who strategically uses displacement by position, cloaking his malfeasance with his philanthropic actions and social engagement. His public reputation is such that suspicion falls on numerous members of the household, from domestic staff to guests to family members, but Godfrey is above suspicion for the majority of the novel. Most often, displacement happens around male secrets as a product of Victorian social norms, without the man concerned needing to take additional action. In fact, the actions men consciously take to camouflage their secrets are generally ineffective, so Godfrey's ability to manipulate these social forces is notable. To the public world, he was "a barrister by profession; a ladies' man by temperament; and a good Samaritan by choice. Female benevolence and female destitution could do nothing without him ... the most accomplished philanthropist (on a small independence) that England ever produced" (111). Personally, professionally, and philanthropically, Godfrey seems to embody the masculine ideal. These actions are the basis for his public reputation and the esteem in which he is held: "He loved everybody. And everybody loved *him*" (111). However, this public persona hides a private life in which he spends extravagantly, maintaining a mistress with funds he has stolen from a trust he manages. His philanthropic actions both cloak his actions and provide him with access to wealthy dowagers who might be charmed into leaving him a legacy. As strategically as he wields his social reputation, position alone cannot prevent discovery indefinitely and his actions become increasingly desperate as the expiration date of the trust approaches, ending in his death. The limits of these tactics, even when used consciously, highlight the consistent representation of secrets as perilous and destructive.

The Dangerous Repercussions of a Lack of Displacement

While this chapter has explored patterns of displacement by which male characters are shielded from public exposure, not all men benefit from this protection. *Basil* (1862)²⁵ emphasizes the need for displacement by illustrating the dangerous ramifications men face when their secrets are immediately upon them. Throughout the various types of displacement, none of the men who have had others' secrets displaced onto them can further displace them, and Basil is no different. Basil's secrets are directly linked to his father's secrets; since his father's secrets were displaced generationally onto Basil, Basil cannot further displace them. This novel, Collins's first sensation novel, follows Basil, a younger son of a wealthy and proud middle-class family, as he secretly courts and marries Margaret, a shopkeeper's daughter. Since Basil is unable to marry her openly and bring her home to his father, due to their class difference, her father agrees to the marriage on the condition that Basil marry Margaret, but then leave her in her family home for a year, not consummating the marriage, and seeing her only with a chaperone. This is supposed to give Basil time to tell his family about the marriage, while ensuring that she is protected. After a year has passed, he can claim his wife and start their married life. Over the course of this year, his secret isolates from his family before he discovers that his wife is unfaithful to him with Robert Mannion, a man who has sworn to destroy him. Not only is Robert in love with Margaret, but Robert blames Basil's father for the ruin of the Mannion family²⁶ and has sworn himself their enemy. Devastated by this

²⁵ *Basil* was first published in 1852 and then again in 1856. Before a third publication in 1862, Collins revised the text. The revisions were focused on style and did not impact plot or character. My chapter uses the 1862 edition.

²⁶ Robert's father was a family friend of Basil's father, who promised to help him advance professionally and attain a government post. The promised help was not forthcoming, Robert's father fell into poverty, and, believing that the help would come in time, forged a bond with Basil's father's name. He was prosecuted for his crime and executed, events which drove Robert's mother mad and leading to her early

discovery, Basil attacks and permanently mutilates Robert. Disowned by his family and fleeing public scandal, both for his secret marriage and his assault of Robert, Basil hides himself in the country and ends up on his deathbed. Although he is reconciled with his family by the end of the novel, he never remarries or rejoins society, preferring to live in seclusion with his sister.

As one of Collins's earliest works, *Basil* has received significant critical attention. Although often dismissed as a failed, early attempt at the later works that made his name, particularly the noted *The Woman in White*, *Basil* was Collins's declaration of a new type of fiction. Critical attention has been paid to the various forms of adaptation Collins uses, from Tamar Heller's analysis of *Basil* as an adaptation of the female Gothic to reflect the anxieties of a male author amidst women writers (74) to *Basil* as an adaptation of Disraeli's *Sybil* (Dolin & Dougan 15). Collins's literary style also draw much critical attention. He wanted to avoid romanticism and sentimentalism and instead write fiction that dealt with the realities of modern life, a philosophy he elaborates on in the Introduction of *Basil*. Although critics, both contemporary and current, question the realism of sensation fiction, much of the criticism on *Basil* focuses on the novel's reflection of and response to the anxieties of modern life. Tim Dolin and Lucy Dougan argue that Collins's focus on realism is influenced by his friendships with the Pre-Raphaelites as he juxtaposes the actual with the ideal before figuring a retreat from modernity by the end (19). Laurence Talairach-Vielmas, in *Wilkie Collins, Medicine, and the Gothic*, examines the way *Basil* functions as a modern Gothic that conceives of its

death. Robert was orphaned and the scandal followed him throughout his life, preventing him from establishing friendships, employment, or a family. Robert blames Basil's father for the damage done to him and his family.

hauntings and superstitions in medical terms, diagnosing characters in lieu of embracing the supernatural (35). Jenny Bourne Taylor's *In The Secret Theater of Home* analyzes Basil's struggle for a cohesive identity given the lack of stable authority in the modern world. These discussions of the pressures of modernity are foundational to my analysis of the construction of masculinity in the public eye and the secrets that follow.

For my purposes, I want to focus my discussion of identity on representations of masculinity in *Basil*, exemplified by the contrasts between Basil and Robert. Just as the novels discussed in this chapter have negotiated the fine line between privacy and secrecy, *Basil* explores the tension between reserve and secrecy. Self-restraint was conceived of as an integral part of masculinity, and it was expected that men took steps to manage their public image. Still, frankness and candor were respected qualities and too high a degree of reserve was considered suspicious. The overlap between reserve and secrecy was too significant, the threat of what could be lurking behind that reserve too dangerous. It is key, then, that when Basil is first introduced, we learn that he has a reputation for two things: "indolence and reserve" (4). Neither of these character traits is admirable for a Victorian man and they lead directly to his fall. Since he lacks purpose and profession, he is aimlessly riding omnibuses for amusement when he encounters Margaret, the shopkeeper's daughter. When his actions become intentionally deceitful, his nature of reserve cloaks this shift as his friends and family are used to his reticence and lack of openness. Once engaged in his deception, his emotions make him "insensible ... careless of exercising the smallest self-restraint," furthering his distance from the manly ideal (38). In many sensation novels, this would be the foundation for him to

mature and build his character over the course of the novel, finally accepting the social position and obligations of a middle-class man. This is not that novel.

Basil showcases the dangerous escalation that occurs when men have no distance from their secrets. This is not a secret from a distant colonial life or experiences years before. Instead, the novel follows Basil as he engages in his secret affair and traces the immediate consequences it has. Constructed as an autobiography, the novel is described in the opening lines as “the story of an error, innocent in its beginning, guilty in its progress, fatal in its results” (1). Foregrounded in this novel is the way one decision, one error in judgement, escalates to dire consequences. Unlike most secrets in sensation fiction, which generally take place before the action of the novel, leaving the novel to focus on their consequences, Basil’s secret marriage and its immediate consequences are the primary action of the novel. He has no distance from them, either temporally or geographically. Immediately upon beginning this sustained secret-keeping, Basil feels trapped by it. He speaks of “the burden of deceit, the fetters of concealment,” highlighting the impact on himself of carrying a secret (74). A chance encounter with his sister in their home leaves him feeling “as if I had been detected in a crime,” even though he is not doing anything incriminating or suspicious at that moment (38). Rather than acting as an independent man, he feels controlled by the secrets, saying, “And as deceit counselled, so I acted” (52). Even his innocent actions become colored by his secrecy as he begins to think of them as alibis, disguises for his time away from the household, even when they are his normal course of action and motivated by his love for his family. Throughout this process, he loses his sense of self and his ability to act freely and rationally. He cannot even be sure of his own desires and motivations. He sees the

damage being done but is unable to stop because “my position changed with the change in my life, and became a passive one” (101). Instead of the indolent young man finding his purpose, he has fallen further and is feminized as a passive object, rather than an active agent.

Basil’s secret-keeping is destructive not only to his inner character, but his family circle. His father is a proud man, nearly obsessive in his sense of duty to the family name. Significantly, he despises men of rank. His pride is based on family honor and position, unbroken through a chain on ancestors, not on a ranked lineage. As a result, he rejects both the upper- and lower-classes for not having earned social status: the aristocracy for not needing to earn position and the working-class for not achieving position. He is class proud, but specifically of middle-class status, teaching his children that they must continue to earn and live up to the ancestors who established the family position. The father’s focus on the duty and obligation he and his children have to their ancestors highlights the instability of middle-class position and the need to constantly maintain and defend it with their actions. Upon learning of his son’s marriage, he reacts strongly, saying, “My son’s infamy defiles his brother’s birthright, and puts his father to shame” (202). Basil’s marriage is irresponsible, certainly, heedless, reckless, a variety of things that younger sons in Victorian literature often are. On the face of it, his father’s reaction seems excessive, and words like ‘infamy’ and ‘defile’ inordinate to the action. His father’s sense of betrayal is so strong that he tears Basil’s page from the treasured family history and disavows him completely. His father rejects him from the family circle and considers him “only as an enemy to me and to my house” (203). Basil is banned from seeing his siblings or visiting any of the family estates. His dishonor is posed not only as

damaging to him, but as introducing a taint that could spread to the rest of his family.

Given the breakdown of his marriage, the loss of his family leaves Basil utterly isolated.

Basil's isolation is furthered when his secrets render him an outcast from society, highlighting the pernicious nature of secrets. While a secret marriage is merely fodder for gossip, the assault he has committed, permanently disfiguring Robert, is a grave offense. Though his responsibility for the crime is not widely known, Robert taunts Basil with the potential repercussions of his actions, should they become public. Although the crime is most significant to the public shame Basil would face, the secrecy is the key element that creates the life of uncertainty and paranoia in which Basil now lives. Since Basil is now a man with criminal secrets, his future is described as a permanent exile:

the foul stain of your disaster clinging to you wherever you go ... You may leave your home, and leave England; you may make new friends, and seek new employments; years and years may pass away – and still, you shall not escape ... The terrible secret of your dishonor, and of the atrocity by which you avenged it, shall ooze out through strange channels, in vague shapes, by tortuous intangible processes; ever changing in the manner of its exposure, never remediable by your own resistance, and always directed to the same end – your isolation as a marked man, in every fresh sphere, among every new community to which you retreat.
(250-1)

The constant fear of exposure means that nowhere that Basil goes will be safe. He can build no new relationships, establish no community, engage in no profession. Without a way to displace his secrets, he cannot outrun them either. This social endangerment is not merely a threat hanging over his head, it is precisely what happens when he tries to settle in Cornwall. As part of a self-imposed isolation, he moves to a remote location and keeps to himself. However, his nature is such that he slowly wins local respect and favor and begins to imagine a stable, if secluded, life. However, his peaceful retirement is disturbed when his secrets are revealed and spread through the community, causing his neighbors

to reject him personally and insist he leave the area. Basil considers Robert “the deadliest and most determined enemy that man ever had,” but this is a more apt description of the secrets that follow him (327). The “fatal” consequences Basil evokes in the opening lines are not merely to his social position, but to his sense of self (1). Robert describes the pervasive toxicity of being haunted by secrets: “the poison-influence, as slow as it is sure, of a crafty tongue that cannot be silenced, of a denouncing presence that cannot be fled, of a damning secret torn from you and exposed fresh each time you have hidden it” (251). It is a “hunting through life, that never quite hunts you down,” leaving a man constantly looking over his shoulder, trapped and lacking purpose (251).

The lasting negative impact of Basil’s secret-keeping is seen in his inability to rejoin society at the end of the novel. While his situation as the novel’s climax approaches is dire, sensation fiction has countless protagonists who endure similar or worse and are similarly outcast, yet are able to reintegrate into society by the conclusion of the novel. Matured by their experience, both male and female characters make advantageous, romantic marriages and conclude the novel inhabiting their designated social position. It is significant then, that Basil does not. He reconciles with his family, but that reconciliation is conditional, requiring silence regarding the “events of which we never afterwards spoke ourselves” (338). This silence encompasses more than Basil’s guilty acts; it is a complete silence on the actions of his family, their separations, even their reconciliation. Family secrets are powerful bonding agents because of the way they are shared communally. Insisting on a silence that borders on denial prevents such bonding, leaving Basil still isolated. By the end of the novel, his wife and his enemy are both dead and the scandal of both his marriage and violence, which never spread far, has

been forgotten. There is no plot reason that he cannot remarry an appropriate woman and be redeemed, as so many protagonists are. Yet, he remains at a small country estate, Lanreath Cottage, with his sister, “still resolved to live in obscurity, in retirement, in peace” (342). Basil utterly rejects society, feeling that he is no longer fit for it, nor for family. The novel is highly conscious of the irregularity of this ending, addressing the fact that “in the novel-reading sense of the word, my story has no real conclusion. The repose that comes to all of us after trouble – to me, a repose in life; to others how often a repose only in the grave! – is the end which must close this autobiography: an end, calm, natural, and uneventful” (339). Basil equates his retirement in the country with the rest many find in the grave, indicating that his life, in the terms that society would conceive of it, has ended. The man that he was, rash and indiscreet though he may have been; the man that he could have become, granted the opportunity or influence to mature: these men have effectively died, destroyed by his secret-keeping.

Given the way the novel links secrecy and reserve, it is significant that Robert, the villain of the novel, is the character most known for and most effective in his display of reserve. The doubling of Basil with the villain highlights the dangerous nature of this quality. When Basil meets Robert, he is struck by the fact that “never had I before seen any human face which baffled all inquiry like his. No mask could have been made expressionless enough to resemble it; and yet it looked like a mask” (110). Robert epitomizes masculine reserve throughout the novel and other characters are unable to penetrate it. The closest anyone comes to discovering his true nature is Mrs. Sherwin, who is deeply suspicious of him, but she is unable to determine what drives him or what he intends to do. While Mrs. Sherwin finds his reserve repellent, Basil is drawn in by it.

He knows little about Robert, and has reason to be concerned about his relationship to Margaret, yet “it seemed as if the most powerful whet to my curiosity were supplied by my own experience of the impossibility of penetrating beneath the unassailable surface which this man presented to me” (114). In the Victorian period, masculine reserve was a key part of middle-class masculinity, conceptualized as part of self-control. It was a small step from exerting control over one’s self to exerting control over others, and while this reserve could be harmless social tool, it was also a suspect one, prone to dangerous uses. Although Basil’s secret-keeping occupies much of the narrative attention, Robert, just outside the narrative eye, is controlling the action and manipulating the characters. Basil says of Robert that his “was a character that ruled,” (112) and he does exert a powerful influence on the novel. He exhibits the most agency in his actions, the most ambition, the most purpose, the most charisma, and is, in many ways, the most compelling character. Yet, he is unmistakably, and unabashedly, the avowed villain of the novel. His obsessive pursuit of Basil diminishes what sympathy his background provides; the audience is not inclined to excuse his actions. This emphasis on his villainy, and the power his reserve gives him, showcases the way secrecy, in its many forms, tends towards evil uses.

Throughout the novels of Mary Elizabeth Braddon and Wilkie Collins, there is a significant pattern of guilty male secrets displaced or distanced, shielding these men from the consequences of their actions. Unlike the sexual or marital secrets of female characters, which are often excused or rendered sympathetic as youthful indiscretions, these secrets are almost universally criminal, ranging from fraud to murder. While the secret may stay contained, the criminality and violence these men exhibit persist into the present actions of these men. Not only are these secrets not worth protecting, but they

indicate an ongoing danger. Yet few of these men face any public or legal punishment during their lives because of the ways their secrets are shielded. This displacement of male secrets cloaks the actions of men, narratively subordinating them. Even the most innocent of secrets, as we see with Basil in *Armadale*, escalates wildly into crime and violence. While female secrets can be contained within the domestic space by the family, male secrets are more volatile. Although a domestic maintenance of the secret is possible, even then, these men cannot be fully integrated into a domestic space. These novels usually end with the men's deaths, rather than a cohesive, intimate family circle. Although these men are able to avoid the legal consequences, even social knowledge, of their crimes, their lives are permanently marred by their actions and they are unable to fully inhabit their masculine position. This pattern emphasizes the increased freedom men have, both to sin and hide those sins, but insists on the inevitable consequences of such choices, even without exposure.

“The Very Hedges Had Eyes”:

Marital Intimacy & Domestic Surveillance

Introduction

Victorian men have long been studied as public actors, subject to the eyes of society. These unrelenting public eyes demand performance, and Victorian upper- and middle-class men work to project the proper image of masculinity, of honor, of social mores. However, while public surveillance is a given, the domestic space, according to Victorian domestic ideology, is supposed to offer privacy. Instead, the eyes of society continue watching the domestic space. In fact, this surveillance only increases as marital surveillance builds on social surveillance, preventing men from finding the promised refuge. From the public watching the individual, to the domestic servants watching the family, to the detective watching the suspect, the layers of surveillance accumulate in Victorian sensation novels, ever expanding even to wives watching their husbands, silently and suspiciously. Ellen Wood's *Within the Maze* (1872) and Wilkie Collins's *The Law and the Lady* (1875) highlight the way surveillance contaminates the idealized moral purity of the domestic space, jeopardizing the marriages and the public standing of the male protagonists. The unsettling of their positions as husbands corresponds to unstable public reputations, and both their public and private positions can only be secured if these men can fulfill their emotional roles as husbands and inhabit the domestic space on terms of trust and intimacy with their wives. This chapter analyzes the way these novels negotiate the terms of that trust and intimacy by exploring the potential for individual privacy inside the marital bond. While Wood's *Within the Maze* ultimately highlights transparency as the only secure means of intimacy, Collins's *The Law and the Lady*

modifies its initial focus on transparency to allow individual privacy. Since public surveillance proves unavoidable, these novels explore the bounds of individual privacy and the resilience of the domestic space as it adapts to surveillance within and without.

Surveillance in these novels, while focused on the domestic space, entangles watchers both inside and outside the home. Surveillance by the public, as a general force, accomplished through gossip, scandal, and newspaper coverage, exerts a significant pressure on male characters in both novels as they attempt to maintain a public reputation that relies in part on the activities and success of their private lives. However, individuals also conduct surveillance of the domestic space with motives ranging from curiosity to jealousy to professional interest. *Within the Maze* highlights both professional watchers, such as private detectives, and amateur neighborhood watchers. Friends and connections who are guests in the home have access to the family circle, further penetrating the domestic space. These guests evidence little loyalty to the family circle, taking advantage of their physical proximity to uncover private knowledge. Servants too are implicated as watching, even judging, eyes. This accumulation of surveillance exerts considerable pressure on the male characters, compelling them to keep secrets from their wives, even when they have committed no dishonorable actions and despite the fact that public surveillance is ongoing and not directly related to their acts. Motivated by a desire to protect their wives and preserve their marriage, the male reliance on secrets nearly destroys the marriage instead. These secrets, in turn, produce additional surveillance, as wives become suspicious of their husbands' newly secretive behavior.

Despite the focus in Victorian criticism on observers of the family, surveillance does not happen merely of the family, but within the family. In sensation fiction, secrets

multiply and family members become suspicious of each other. If the family member with suspicions is a cousin or nephew, he generally becomes the amateur detective who untangles the mystery and restores the family. Such is the case in Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret* (1862), in which an idle nephew grows suspicious of his uncle's new wife. He investigates, discovers that she is guilty of bigamy, arson, and murder, and has her committed to an asylum. By the end of the novel, the family circle is not only restored, but strengthened as the nephew marries his heiress cousin, assumes his social position, and begins to run the estate. However, that family dynamic is complicated if the surveillant is the wife, and surveillance is conducted of men, not by men. Since domestic harmony is predicated on marital love and intimacy, suspicious surveillance of a spouse erodes the trust on which that bond relies. In this chapter, I trace the way surveillance contaminates a space presumed to be both filled and tasked with moral purity, since a suspicious, doubting wife is not capable of the spiritual support and uplift that, according to Victorian domestic ideology, a wife is meant to provide for her husband. Although watching overlaps with wifely devotion, this surveillance goes far beyond a wife's duty to care for her husband and, instead, undermines the husband's marital authority and peaceful life. This persistent surveillance means that men must maintain a successful performance, both as a man and as a loving husband, to the wife's satisfaction or risk the stability of their home. Since marital disputes have the potential to become public gossip and unsettle public position, the stakes for domestic harmony go beyond marital intimacy. Whether or not this surveillance is motivated by suspicion, husbands become suspects and must respond by trying to project the imagined desired persona.

The secrets men are driven to keep destroy the intimacy between husband and wife and threaten the marriage. Victorians idealized marriage, maintaining that the only basis for marriage was romantic love.²⁷ Despite the fact that class, title, reputation, family lineage, and financial status were significant factors in upper- and middle-class marriages, love was idealized as the only valid motivation. As coverture maintained that a man and wife were one flesh, and novels of all genres advocated for complete openness in marriage, carving out an individual space ran against ideologies of marriage. However, men in these novels manage a variety of loyalties, from professional obligations to family commitments, and are not always able to share every aspect of their lives with their wives. These conflicting loyalties create an environment in which tensions between privacy and intimacy trouble relationships, and identity. Wives tend to view a husband's secrets as deception; however, husbands defend personal privacy²⁸ as a means to protect their wives. Victorian novels reiterate the importance of the intimacy created by this secret-sharing, as they continuously stress the need for complete transparency between a husband and wife. Sensation fiction, however, while trafficking in the same rhetoric, explores the potential for secrets within marriage.

Privacy was a developing concept in the Victorian period and sensation novels attempt to work through the bounds of privacy and secrecy. Wood's *Within the Maze* and Collins's *The Law and the Lady* explore the degree to which one is entitled to refrain from divulging information in the context of a marriage, potentially the most intimate of

²⁷ Victorians distinguished true romantic love from sexual passion, of which they were highly suspicious. Romantic love was meant to add emotional depth and affective connection to the 18th century ideal of marriage based on rational esteem (Schaffer 42). This focus on the appropriate affective choice is the central device in Victorian marriage plots, which, despite a focus on love, reiterate the need for class compatibility and cannot escape the financial considerations involved in marriage.

²⁸ This defense of personal privacy tends to be limited to the husband's own secrets, as husbands in sensation fiction are generally unforgiving of wives having secrets.

relationships. What a modern audience might consider privacy is often coded as secrecy in Victorian novels, with the corresponding negative connotations. Secrets were viewed with great suspicion by Victorian audiences, and sensation fiction, a genre obsessed with personal secrets, almost uniformly condemns such secret-keeping as a moral failing. Characters who keep personal secrets, usually women, are blackmailed, ruined, and driven to desperate acts of murder in order to maintain their secrets, highlighting the destructive nature of secrets. The Victorian conception of privacy, in contrast, was communal and domestic, centered on secrets shared among the family (Cohen 3). This focus on domestic privacy made a virtue of reticence and discretion to the outside world as means of maintaining appropriate barriers between private and public. Sarah Stickney Ellis highlights this privacy as a key quality of the domestic space: “Not only must an appearance of outward order and comfort be kept up, but around every domestic scene there must be a strong wall of confidence, which no internal suspicion can undermine, no external enemy break through” (26). Her discussion of domestic space shows an awareness of ongoing domestic surveillance, as she specifies both maintaining an appearance for the outside world, and the potential for individuals within and outside of the family circle to damage the intimacy of the family. This emphasis on domestic privacy, however, excluded individual secrets, leaving Victorian men struggling to reconcile their lives before marriage with their domestic roles. Given the importance of the domestic sphere in the emotional and moral lives of men, the stakes of this negotiation are high.

Wood’s *Within the Maze* and Collins’s *The Law and the Lady* offer neither unanimity nor a definitive solution. However, pairing these novels allows me to explore

varying types of surveillance and divergent responses to it. Both these novels emphasize ongoing anonymous social surveillance and the threat of public scandal, social forces the male characters see as a threat and react against. However, the characters' heightened awareness of this anonymous social surveillance actually cloaks the targeted watching male characters undergo, both from the public and their wives. While they are consumed with worry about the watching public world, male characters are blind to the individuals who actively watch them. As the men, and marriages, in these texts struggle for stability under scrutiny, the interaction between surveillance of the domestic and surveillance within the domestic intensifies this insecurity. Spouses must find their own ways to reconcile individual privacy and marital intimacy. Ultimately, domestic harmony is not necessarily provided by sharing secrets, but sometimes by accepting that the secret exists and will remain. Peaceful domestic spaces rely on trust, which does not always require transparency. Public surveillance proves inescapable, but marital surveillance can end if spouses can learn to communicate and trust each other. A happy marriage, and the corresponding intimacy, cannot be created through watching and uncovering undisclosed information.

Untangling Marital Suspicion

Surveillance in Wood's *Within the Maze* begins as a vague social force and becomes increasingly focused and individualized as it layers throughout the novel. *Within the Maze* centers on two brothers, Adam and Karl Andinnian. Adam, the heir and favorite son, secretly marries a village girl, Rose, and then kills a man for harassing her. Convicted of murder, Adam reportedly dies trying to escape prison and Karl ascends to

the baronetcy. Only after Karl's engagement does he discover that Adam faked his death and is alive and secretly living with Rose in a house in the middle of a hedge maze on the family estate, Foxwood. Karl swears an oath to keep his brother's secret, regardless of the cost to his own marriage. His wife, Lucy, knows and accepts that her husband has a secret but, fed by lies from a jealous rival, believes that Karl and Rose are having an affair and refuses to let her husband speak and share his secret. These secrets draw the surveillance of neighbors, detectives, and Lucy herself. Not only does surveillance beget surveillance, spreading ever wider, but as it infiltrates the domestic space it threatens the seemingly stable identity, and marriage, of even the most laudable of men. The only party able to defy his surveillants is Adam, exiled from society and in seclusion. For men who must circulate in society, surveillance cannot be avoided and weapons against it are limited.

From the outset, the contrast between the two brothers establishes a baseline for Victorian ideals of masculinity. Karl, the younger brother, is "everything that's good and noble and worthy;" "all his instincts are those of a gentleman" (vol. 1, ch. 1). As a lieutenant in the military, he has a profession that gives him purpose. He is the model of the middle-class man: ambitious, successful, conscientious. He exemplifies this not only in the public world, but in the domestic space. He is a good and dutiful son, even though his mother "has never cared much for him" (vol. 1, ch. 1). While Adam's position as the favorite son, and heir to the title and fortune, could have caused rivalry or resentment between the brothers, "few brothers loved each other as did Adam and Karl Andinnian" (vol. 1, ch. 1). Not only does he do his duty by his family, but he acts with honor in pursuing marriage. When he begins to fall in love with Lucy, "he, the obscure and nearly

portionless young soldier, had the sense to see that he would be regarded as no fit match” and he refuses to act on his feelings or entangle Lucy in a romance that can have no legitimate future (vol. 1, ch. 2). Karl’s ability to exercise self-control and act according to honor and duty establish him as an exemplar of middle-class masculinity.

His older brother Adam, however, is in limbo between upper-class and middle-class masculinity, with few of the usual benchmarks of masculinity available to him. His uncle, from whom he will inherit a title and estate, comments, “I wish from my heart he had some profession to occupy him” (vol. 1, ch. 1). As heir to a baronetcy, pursuing a profession in law or the military is denied him, but he does not have an estate to run yet, leaving him idle. Grown “frivolous and foolish,” and prone to “unaccountable fits of passion,” he has only a gardening hobby on which to spend his time (vol. 1, ch. 1). At thirty-three, he has reached an age when society emphasized marriage and family, but instead of pursuing an appropriate match and establishing a household, he has secretly married a village girl and continues acting the part of a single man. Even when he inherits Foxwood, he “declined to be shaken out of . . . his inertness,” seeming indifferent to the change in his position and deciding to delay a few days before travelling to the estate to assume his responsibilities (vol. 1, ch. 3). Although his actions in defending Rose from what twenty-first-century readers would consider sexual harassment and assault²⁹ seem laudable, the narrator connects them to boyish impulse, unrestrained desire, and, that favorite of Victorian rationales, a moment of madness. These are not the disciplined decisions of a man, but the romantic impulses of a boy. Victorian social mores were rigid

²⁹ The victim, Martin Scott, has been repeatedly accosting Rose, physically restraining her and forcing kisses on her. Adam warns Martin that he will shoot him if Martin attacks Rose again. When he does so at a garden party following a day of shooting, Adam immediately takes up one of the guns and kills Martin.

and prescriptive, offering few paths to alternative behaviors. Adam's besetting fault is his unwillingness to fulfill his social role.

Social control over individuals is an intrinsic part of surveillance, an ever-present potential threat shadowing the lives of men. Surveillance, a preoccupation of the Victorian world, is usually configured along public/ private lines. Individuals are on display in the public world and must conform their actions to socially acceptable ones in order to maintain, or improve, their position. Society is potentially always watching, so individuals are required to project the proper public image. However, this surveillance goes far beyond mere watching. Surveillance encompasses observation, inspection, and supervision. This is not a neutral eye, but one that monitors with purpose and can punish. Foucault argues that society acts as a disembodied force, "a multiple, automatic and anonymous power, for although surveillance rests on individuals, its functioning is that of a network of relations" (176). He focuses on the mechanisms by which the public spectacle of punishment becomes hidden, operating under the surface and thus all the more pervasive. Foucault highlights the way that social norms act as both a regulating force and a strategy of punishment, creating a "technology of power" that constrains the actions of individuals in a subtle and pervasive fashion (24). The power dynamics involved mean the surveillant and the surveilled struggle for control over information and, therefore, control over one's public identity. The public sphere becomes an environment in which someone may always be watching; the individual is created by navigating these social constraints.

When Adam shoots Rose's assailant, the consequences of his secret marriage and private actions thrust him, and his family, into the public eye. The fact that he has killed a

man and the resulting trial makes public attention inevitable. However, this crime is a direct result of his secret marriage, as is the public reaction to it, making the larger concern his private life and the consequences of his actions in that arena. While Adam's marriage to Rose gives him the standing to defend her, her public position as a single woman contributes to the unwelcome romantic attention she receives. The crime had "unusual notoriety" due to speculation over the motive and "the young lady said to be mixed up in it" (vol. 1, ch. 4). The public seizes on Adam's personal life to sensationalize the crime, turning it into summer entertainment. Adam's crime becomes a scandal, and the public reaction to the news is rabid, as "the country town was filled from end to end: thousands of curious people ... thronged in" (vol. 1, ch. 4). Public surveillance is threatening because of potential scandal and the resulting consequences, exemplified here. Gossip and newspaper coverage, though differing in their reach and formality, spread private news to public ears, jeopardizing public identities, linking them to this public surveillance. This crime is so much the property of the crowd that although the shooting takes place in public, for the reader, it happens entirely outside of the narrative eye. The reader only accesses it through the reports of others. The reader experiences it not just through formal eyewitness testimony, but also through repeated instances of household gossip and speculation, emphasizing the ongoing public consumption. Society condemns Adam's actions, yet its voracious appetite for the misfortunes of others, including those they acknowledge to be blameless, like Karl, implicates these respectable, gossiping, citizens in this social disorder. Society's power as a regulatory force is shown

to be both excessive and self-serving, as they feed off the behavior they are supposed to eradicate, turning it into entertainment.³⁰

Indeed, surveillance is represented not merely as the byproduct of a public life, but as a social consciousness in itself. While Adam's murder conviction entirely excludes him from society as a result of his crime, rejected as a man "of whom every other man must be the enemy," his brother Karl is now subject to additional scrutiny from the vague social masses (vol. 1, ch. 6). Karl too "must go through life henceforth as a marked man ... liable to be pointed at by every stranger as a man who has a brother a convict" (vol. 1, ch. 5). Not only can this social stigma be visually read on the body, but that visual presentation allows anyone who encounters Karl to access this information and act accordingly. While convicts are frequently constructed as marked men, in a metaphorical sense, the degree to which this marking extends to their family members, is noteworthy. While Victorian women have notoriously fragile reputations,³¹ a man's character is usually more resilient. While a man's own actions can tarnish his reputation, it is less common to see the damage done secondhand. This expanded network goes beyond the traditional formulation of the public eye as an audience against which men must create and perform their character. Instead, a man's individual character is intertwined with others' and the public can read information that the helpless subject can neither control nor hide.

³⁰ Sensation fiction was often condemned by Victorian critics for trafficking in such scandals and secrets. However, by incorporating this concern into the novel, the reader is personally implicated in this critique.

³¹ Consider Lady Isabel Vane in Wood's *East Lynne* (1861), Magdalen & Norah Vanstone in Collins's *No Name* (1862), Aurora Floyd in Braddon's *Aurora Floyd* (1863), and Catharine Peyton in Reade's *Griffith Gaunt* (1866). The appearance of impropriety or a family association with impropriety is enough to seriously damage a woman's social standing. Actual improper behavior, such as Lady Isabel's affair, is irredeemable and has devastating consequences.

Wood's novel underscores how anonymous public surveillance exists as a constant, a condition of Victorian life that heightens the stakes of the repeated infiltration of the domestic sphere by individuals. Foucault's analysis of surveillance and social control focused on the public sphere, but Victorian novels reveal the invasiveness of that surveillance and the difficulty in finding space away from it. While Adam's scandal illustrates public consumption of the domestic as entertainment, Karl's life subsequent highlights the claustrophobic accumulation of surveillance by individuals within and without the domestic space. Although the focus on public surveillance usually posits an external observer, the family circle also had an audience within the domestic space. Many critics have examined household staff as a system of domestic surveillance. Although they have full entry to the private space, they are not part of the family, resulting in family dramas playing out in front of an audience. Karl and Lucy frequently discuss this ongoing watching and worry about how servants might interpret their actions. Housemaids were ordered to stay out of rooms when members of the family occupied them to give the illusion of privacy, yet lady's maids, valets, and footmen regularly observed family members in the course of serving them. Not only was this surveillance a concern of Victorian novels, but Victorian household manuals also warn of eavesdropping servants (McCuskey 359). In fact, servants were frequently called to testify in divorce trials, awakening fears of the secrets household staff held and the potential that servants long dismissed could return and threaten the family with damaging information (Chase & Levenson 39). D.A. Miller identifies servants as a network of informal surveillance that replicates police surveillance but exists even in the absence of crime or scandal, underlying the regular functions of the household (45). However, recent

criticism argues that by creating servants as a domestic police force, the Victorian novel makes more palatable the Panopticon effect by embodying it in a social class which the middle-class has control over, rather than being controlled by³² (McCuskey 363). Less controllable, however, are the actions of household guests who have similar access to private family information.

Although the surveillance Karl experiences links to Adam's secret, much of it is not directly triggered by the public scandal, emphasizing the potential all men face for surveillance. The most active surveillant in the novel is Miss Blake, a woman who fantasized that Karl reciprocated her love and now resents his marriage. Her surveillance precedes suspicious behavior from Karl, rather than following from it. Although Karl does possess a secret, it is not, technically, his secret. He was not part of Adam's escape or the plan for him to live in hiding on the family estate. He inherited this secret from his family and acts now out of love to protect his fugitive brother. He is so conscious of the potential dishonor of keeping this secret³³ that, upon learning this information, he immediately tells Lucy, then only his fiancée, that he has a secret which he cannot share with her, that it will certainly cause scandal and dishonor if discovered, and that she must decide if she is still willing to marry him under these conditions. The novel repeatedly stresses that Karl is "as honest and honorable a man as any in this world" and that he could not have honorably acted other than he did (vol. 1, ch.10). Rather, the inciting

³² McCuskey acknowledges the transient power that a servant in possession of damaging information may have over their employer but weighs it against the ongoing control of domestic servants by the middle-class, a power which is enforced by perpetual supervision in the house, wage controls, and influence over future employment through references.

³³ Although Karl seems generally opposed to keeping secrets, he is most horrified by this secret because of the impact on his public position. Lucy's parents only agree to their marriage because Karl is now a peer; since Adam is alive, Karl has not, in fact, inherited that position. His marriage, therefore, occurs under false pretenses. In addition, he fears the public dishonor that would follow discovery that his brother is a fugitive.

incident of Miss Blake's surveillance is her discovery of a gate on the property. The mere presence of a gate makes her want to try it. When she discovers it is locked, she must know who lives there. Once she knows the inhabitants lead a secluded life, she inquires after them throughout the neighborhood and, ultimately, sneaks past the gate when it is opened for a delivery. Only after she has done all of this, motivated solely by her own inquisitiveness, not any reasonable suspicion, does she see Karl leave the maze and finally believes she has cause. Once she feels validated in her suspicions, she begins questioning Karl's finances, watching his comings and goings, and undermining the trust and happiness of his bride. The fact that this surveillance begins before Karl even resides at the estate, much less has done anything to trigger it, highlights surveillance's potential to injure any man, even an innocent one.

Miss Blake's surveillance is overtly linked to social discipline. Noted repeatedly for her penetrating gaze and ability to discover information, she "might have been a successful police detective" (vol. 1, ch.11). Although a distant relative of Lucy's and therefore technically a member of the family, her function throughout the novel is one of investigation and punishment, not family solidarity. When she sees Karl enter the hedge maze on the family estate, she assumes a negative intent, suspecting an extramarital affair. "I'll watch," she mentally said. "In the interests of religion, to say nothing of respectability, I'll watch" (vol. 1, ch. 13). The moral framework of her rationale, coupled with her focus on social norms, connects her watching to a Foucauldian system of social control. Watching inevitably becomes reporting, as silence, to Miss Blake, would be "countenancing and administering to the sin" (vol. 1, ch. 14). Not disclosing negative information, however gained or however loosely verified, seemingly implicates the

surveillant in the crime, “making her a third in the wickedness” (vol. 1, ch. 14).

Surveillants, whether or not they were trying to discover wrongdoing, feel a need to act on information they discover, heightening the danger for men misrepresented or falsely accused. The disciplinary component of surveillance is unavoidable.

Surveillance within the domestic space, then, becomes particularly dangerous, as it introduces an external governing force into a theoretically private, male-controlled space. Since surveillance is theorized as a feature of the public world, and a means of social discipline, the private sphere, supposedly, provides relief from that omnipresent gaze within a domain under the control of the male head of household. The separate spheres do not solely mark out gendered domains for the middle-class, they also theoretically delimit the bounds of public surveillance. In this space, if in no others, a man is fully independent and in full authority. This masculine authority is so ingrained that a British proverb dating back to the 1600s claims that ‘an Englishman’s home is his castle.’³⁴ The continued resonance of this expression can be seen in the writings of Carlyle and Ruskin,³⁵ who both assert this sovereignty. This expression of masculine authority was marshalled against both external threats to authority and wifely domestic authority. Surveillance is enmeshed with both of these rivals to masculine authority in the home; public surveillance, and therefore social regulation, intrudes on the family space, and wifely management of the home has the potential to manifest as surveillance of family members.

³⁴ This was first documented in a legal opinion from Sir Edward Coke in 1644 (qtd. in Vickery 154).

³⁵ This sentiment is expressed in Carlyle’s poem “My Own Four Walls” (1830), as he ponders man’s independence from society when safe with his wife in his domestic space. Ruskin explores both the independence and the moral virtues of the domestic sphere in his essay “Of Queens’ Gardens” (1864).

Surveillance consistently destabilizes Karl's position, leaving him struggling to find a place in the world. Ongoing public surveillance following his brother's notoriety forces him to resign his position in the military. His inherited peerage and marriage to Lucy enable him to take charge of the estate and build a family. His grounding in the domestic space, along with his inheritance of the title and estate after his brother's death, allow him to rebuild his identity after his brother's scandal, transforming him from worthy but poor soldier to a peer of the realm. However, this rebuilding of his reputation is then disrupted by Miss Blake. Acting out of jealousy, Miss Blake revels in the information she thinks she has discovered and seeks to damage Karl's marriage. Once she has told Lucy of Karl's alleged infidelity, she turns her surveilling eye on them, trying to determine if the state of their marriage. She expects Lucy to leave Karl, disrupting his home and exposing him to renewed gossip and speculation. Karl strongly fears this; although discussions of their marriage occasionally mention their love for each other, Karl and Lucy repeatedly discuss their fear of exposure as the reason for staying together. For the couple who initially felt "as pure and passionate and ardent a love as ever was felt on this earth," their marriage has devolved into "a farce" (vol. 1, ch. 2; vol.1, ch. 18). They do not discuss how to repair their marriage or have any expectation that the situation between them will improve. Instead, their only concern is public scandal and the effect that it would have on their lives.

Karl and Lucy's focus on public perception of, and preoccupation with, the state of their marriage is well-founded. Despite being designated as the private sphere, the domestic space was of great interest to outside observers. Karen Chase and Michael Levenson disrupt the notion of private spaces to elucidate the many ways that the private

world was inextricable from the public world. Political crises, including the trials of Caroline Norton³⁶ in 1836 and the Queen's Bedchamber Crisis³⁷ of 1839, highlighted the public, and political, ramifications of private lives. Both these events centered on private lives in domestic spaces yet the political affiliations of these private lives caused political crises in the highest levels of government. Domestic space was not a refuge from politics, but another space of political contest. Domesticity also functioned as a prime source for entertainment, highlighting the ongoing public implications of private lives. In literature, Victorian fiction romanticized the domestic space, yet through newspaper reports and the Divorce Court, society avidly consumed the scandals behind the ideal. Scenes of domesticity, both fictional and real, were active sites of public engagement.

The efforts to hide the truth of their marriage showcase Karl and Lucy's awareness of this omnipresent social surveillance. Although characters prove oblivious to individual surveillance such as Miss Blake's, they are highly conscious of this more diffuse surveillance. Not only do they continue a façade for the public world, when they are mingling with society, but they are also concerned with the opinions of their household staff. Although they rarely speak, avoid each other in the house, refrain from physical contact, and even sleep in separate rooms, they tell the servants that Karl is merely occupied with family affairs and the sleeping arrangement is due to the extreme heat. This subterfuge extends to Miss Blake. Despite Miss Blake's alleged knowledge of

³⁶ After separating from her husband, Caroline Norton was accused of infidelity with the Prime Minister, Lord Melbourne. Although the trial focused on intimate details of their married life, the breach between the Nortons was both personal and political, as they had family alliances to opposing political parties (Chase & Levenson 34).

³⁷ When Robert Peel replaced Lord Melbourne as Prime Minister, he expected to replace the Queen's ladies-in-waiting with high-ranking women from Tory families. The Queen objected, preferring to keep the ladies-in-waiting, predominately of Whig families, that she already knew, and defended her position by claiming her bedchamber as a closed domestic space outside the purview of the public politics (Chase & Levenson 55).

the infidelity, Lucy does not tell her they are living separate lives or reveal any further information about the current state of her marriage. Karl and Lucy's actions take place against the background of numerous conversations about avoiding their own public scandal. This is not a passing concern, nor one that is backgrounded. It is their most significant concern throughout this phase of their marriage. Amazingly, all concerned believe them, and neither friends, family, nor staff see through their performance. They project to the public eye an effective, but entirely fictitious, image of domesticity.

The power that surveillance has to compel the actions of characters is remarkable given its failures as an information source. For all the people watching other people, none of them actually discover either the information they are looking for or other incidental truths. All of the surveillants draw false conclusions from the surveilled, whether the surveilled are actively trying to deceive them or not. Miss Blake gathers evidence, but makes little effort at interpretation or verification, leaping, wrongly, to infidelity. Her actions are the first in a layering of surveillance in the novel, as Miss Blake then begins watching Lucy and Karl together, Lucy begins watching Karl, Karl begins watching the estate manager³⁸, and a private detective comes to town and begins watching the hedge maze. Although not all of these surveillances are directly linked, they build on each other, indicating that surveillance begets surveillance, trapping people in an ever-widening, yet increasingly personal, accumulation of surveillance. Ultimately though, surveillants fail to achieve their purpose. Lucy surveils Karl, attempting to monitor his visits to the maze,

³⁸ Karl and Rose become suspicious that the estate manager, who was appointed by Adam & Karl's mother and has been part of Adam's fugitive plan from the beginning, is also an escaped convict. Karl fears that the presence of an escaped convict, one who is being actively pursued by police, will draw attention to the neighborhood and expose Adam. In attempting to investigate this possibility, Karl himself raises suspicion and draws private detectives to the area.

but entirely misunderstands what she sees. Karl, in turn, becomes suspicious of the estate manager and begins watching him, convinced erroneously that he is actually an escaped convict. Karl's surveillance and investigation of the estate manager draw a private detective to the neighborhood, and Karl begins watching him too, imagining, again incorrectly, that the private detective is in pursuit of his brother. The private detective, unaware that he is also being watched, watches the maze, thinking he's found the fugitive Philip Salter and entirely unaware of the fugitive Adam Andinnian. No one watching the house, from Miss Blake to Lucy to Karl to the detective, ever realizes that the old gardener they see working around the house in plain sight is Adam in disguise.

That this surveillance so consistently leads to false conclusions does not negate its effects, however. Adam states that "No one can know what it is to live under a hanging sword, as I have, unless they experience it" (vol. 2, ch. 20). Although he describes his position as a fugitive in hiding, his experience evokes the state of men under surveillance as well. Adam and Karl both reflect on the mental strain of living under such conditions. Adam describes nights of terror and sleeplessness, while Karl is haunted by nightmares. Adam has "not a moment of the day or night" without fear (vol. 2, ch. 9). Karl begins to feel "that the very hedges had eyes to watch him" (vol. 1, ch. 18). That surveillance has proven to be difficult to detect and prone to false accusations enhances the dangers men face. Since surveillance often precedes a suspicious act, innocence provides no defense. Foucault notes that "the suspect, as such, always deserved a certain punishment; one could not be the object of suspicion and be completely innocent" (42). This leaves all men vulnerable, potentially under surveillance at any point, and liable to suffer real damages from false conclusions. Karl imagines the life of a fugitive, despairing at the

“life of miserable concealment; of playing at hide-and-seek” that his brother now faces, but those words are as apt a description of his life feigning a happy marriage for the public eye as they are of his brother’s life (vol. 1, ch. 6). For Karl, his empty marriage means that “look where I will, abroad or at home, there’s not as much as a single ray of light to cheer my spirit, or the faintest reflection of it” (vol. 2, ch. 13). The domestic space cannot provide the emotional and spiritual sanctuary it should, because it has become a performance for the public, rather than a retreat from it.

The domestic sphere was idealized as a place of comfort and refuge for men, an escape from the rough public world. Victorian gender ideology posed men as tainted by their work in the public spheres, at the mercy of an amoral marketplace that offered success at the expense of a man’s character. The financial considerations of that marketplace intertwined with all aspects of society, causing the Victorian middle class to be deeply suspicious of the effect of money on morality. The domestic space was supposed to offer an alternative to the mercenary public world by being a haven for moral guidance and recuperation (Tosh 4). If husbands were figured as world-weary and morally troubled, wives were conceived as ‘angels of the house,’ a benevolent influence who could restore the emotional and spiritual health of their husband through their own moral purity. However, this need for spiritual guidance and development had the potential to render the husband as inferior to his wife, rather than as her superior, so the figure of the wife-mother resolved this tension (71). By focusing on the maternal aspects of the wife, a crucial part of her role in the domestic space, Victorian ideology posed her husband, in spiritual terms only, as one of her children, able to receive her nurturing love and care. Dependence on a wife troubled masculine independence, but dependence on a

mother-figure tapped into the maternal ideal, which was powerful at any age. The moral imperative of domesticity, therefore, also made imperative the protection of the domestic sphere. The domestic space was not only conceived as essential to the emotional and spiritual lives of men but provided the foundation for their public lives.

Karl and Lucy founded their marriage on individual privacy, as Lucy freely accepted Karl's secret. However, the novel links privacy to lack of communication, making this reticence a weakness that society can exploit. Although Karl was honest with Lucy that he possessed important information that he could not share, his natal family secret allows for miscommunication and mistrust in his marital family. When Miss Blake approaches Lucy alleging Karl's infidelity, Lucy makes no connection between what Miss Blake has observed and Karl's secret. Miss Blake has built a damning case against Karl out of rumor, assumption, and misleading statements and Lucy believes her. She confronts Karl, saying only "I – I – I know all about your secret at the Maze" (vol. 1, ch. 15). From that statement, he thinks she knows the true secret and begs her not to speak of it. This lack of communication continues as she refuses to tell him how she learned this information. Whenever he tries to discuss the secret with her and share the burden, she refuses to let him speak, since she still believes he keeps a mistress in the hedge maze. Private information becomes a site of silence, which ultimately renders the marriage empty. Karl refuses to discuss his secret and Lucy refuses to discuss the accusations against him, making it impossible for them to understand or trust each other. Reconciliation can only happen when Karl and Lucy can be fully honest with each other, keeping nothing back. Karl says "If there is to be an explanation between us, Lucy, it must be full and complete. I insist on its being so... Speak out, Lucy. It must be so, you

see, if there is to be a renewal of peace between us” (vol. 2, ch. 22). They finally reveal all to each other, talk through all the misunderstandings they have labored under, and vow never to withhold information again. While exploring the potential for privacy, *Within the Maze* ends by emphasizing transparency as the only reliable path to marital intimacy.

The resolution of the novel does away with all the secrets that have been kept, but nothing suggests that the patterns of surveillance will be disrupted. Adam’s death by natural causes frees Karl from continued illegal actions in hiding a fugitive and stabilizes his right to the hereditary aristocratic position³⁹ he has been publicly occupying. Although Adam’s faked death is never publicly revealed, his actual death makes the knowledge unimportant and the secret, now free of consequences, essentially vanishes. Rose leaves the house in the hedge maze to live a quiet life in a different part of the country. When Karl speaks of Adam’s death to Lucy, it prompts a conversation that reveals the misunderstandings under which the couple had been suffering, allowing them to rebuild their marriage. These plot points provide narrative closure by revealing or undoing the secrets that have driven the plot, establishing a stable foundation on which the remaining characters can build their lives. However, while Karl and Lucy’s renewed intimacy after the reveal seems to advocate for transparency in marriage, much of the surveillance was unrelated to actual secrets kept. Rather, mere suspicion, unfounded or not, can cause unrelenting surveillance. As Karl notes, “A suspicion once awakened would not end” (vol. 2, ch. 9). Since even the smallest behavior can cause unwarranted suspicion, no man can be safe from surveillance, either in the public world or the

³⁹ Adam and Rose only have one child, a son who dies at a few months old, so they produce no heir to the title. Upon Adam’s death, Karl legally inherits the title he has been occupying.

domestic sphere. However, through the creation of an intimate and trusting domestic space, men can withstand these prying eyes and build a successful, stable life.

Marital Trust & Individual Privacy

While *Within A Maze* focuses primarily on domestic surveillance from the outside, whether as an anonymous social force or as instantiated in individuals with access to the domestic space, *The Law and the Lady* emphasizes the danger of surveillance within the marriage itself. Collins's novel focuses on the two marriages of Eustace Macallan. His first marriage is to Sara, a woman desperately in love with him whom he marries out of pity and obligation, after his first love, Helena, marries another man. Their marriage is so unhappy that Sara commits suicide by taking arsenic. Her suicide note disappears,⁴⁰ and Eustace is tried for her murder. Three years later, he meets and marries Valeria under an assumed name. When she discovers that he was accused of murder, she devotes herself to clearing Eustace's name from ongoing public suspicion. Although Collins's novel shares Wood's concerns about public surveillance, Eustace Macallan's two marriages allow for a more focused analysis of surveillance between spouses and the negotiations of privacy that take place within marriage. In both of his marriages, suspicious surveillance from his wives prompts unsuccessful attempts to perform his role as husband. Rather than offering a retreat from public surveillance and the performative identity that necessitates, his domestic space only intensifies the scrutiny he faces. However, this surveillance cannot be eliminated through complete openness.

⁴⁰ Although Sara leaves a suicide note, it is hidden by a gentleman friend of hers who hates her husband. Since her death is due to arsenic poisoning, a murder trial commences.

Instead, spouses need to redefine the terms of marital trust to allow for differences and individual privacy.

Eustace's murder trial showcases the invasive public consumption of domestic space. Since Eustace is on trial for murdering his wife, the investigation goes to the heart of domesticity, focusing on the quality of his marriage by bringing in testimony from family members and household staff regarding their observations of this most private and intimate relationship. These are individuals that Eustace knew and trusted, who are now recreated as watchers in his house, revealing their speculations about his domestic life to the public world. This investigation spends little time on factual information, since the timeline, means of death, and individuals present are established, and instead pursues highly subjective information about the emotional state of the marriage. In order to do so, the court seizes Eustace's journal and turns his own private writings against him in order to impugn his marriage and his character. The invasive nature of this action cannot be overstated. Not only does this put his private life on display, but his most private thoughts are publicly revealed and become fodder for ongoing gossip. The trial resolves with a verdict of Not Proven, a vagary of Scottish law that allows the jury to indicate belief in guilt but a lack of evidence sufficient to convict, leaving Eustace the subject of ongoing public attention and suspicion.

The spaces, both physical and metaphorical, which Eustace has believed to be outside of public access are exposed, which causes him significant damage, both personally and socially. Public scandal affects not only how society sees a man, but how he sees himself. His friends comment that "the Trial made another man of Eustace" (258), specifically because of "the infamy and torture of a public accusation," as a lawyer

characterizes it (402). This trial comes between Eustace and his family, as well as preventing marriage between him and Helena, now a widow. Neither family objections, legal complications, nor even ongoing social commentary provide this obstacle. It is not even due to Eustace's perception that a future wife would fear and mistrust him, which becomes a concern later. Helena still loves him and wants to marry him. Rather, Helena "had been a witness of the public degradation of him. That was enough to prevent his marrying" (258). The public exposure, not the facts of the case or his own behavior, damages his sense of self so fundamentally that he feels incapable of maintaining existing relationships or establishing future ones. This exposure drives him to assume a new name, which a male friend describes as a "refuge" from the publicity (100). Such a refuge is untenable, however, as he cannot cloak his identity indefinitely or create any sort of a stable life, public or private.

The Law and the Lady espouses conventional ideologies of marriage, advocating for marriage based on love, esteem, and transparency. Victorian notions of romantic love and marriage made the union of husband and wife a powerful metaphorical concept. However, this principle was not neutral with respect to gender. Legally, the wife became part of her husband's persona; the reverse was not true. Similarly, expectations of openness were highly gendered. While wives were expected to have no secrets from their husbands, the public lives of men meant that much of their life was distinct from the domestic space and not shared with their wife. This left room for husbands to choose which information to disclose and which information to keep outside the home and marriage. However, sensation fiction tends to elide that difference and, as we saw in *Within the Maze*, advocate for complete openness in marriage, irrespective of gender.

The Law and the Lady consistently reiterates the rhetoric of transparency in marriage, in which intimacy relies on having no secrets from each other. Eustace defines a successful marriage as a couple living “on terms of mutual confidence and mutual esteem” (112). A romantic connection is insufficient without shared trust, and both parties define trust as openness and a willingness to share secrets. Eustace states that “there must be no secret between us” (19). Valeria, his second wife, shares this belief in complete openness, and asks Eustace to “give me all your confidence. I know that you love me. Show that you can trust me too” (45). They both distinguish between love and trust, while highlighting the necessity of trust as a condition to sustain love. Both Eustace and Valeria repeat these words throughout the novel, constantly returning to this demand for transparency and maintaining that their marriage cannot function without it. Sara, his first wife, identifies this lack in their marriage, saying “you have never encouraged me to come to you with any confidences of mine” (387). Valeria echoes this, saying “as long as I am shut out from your confidence ... we cannot live happily” (54). However, despite the portrayal of Eustace and Valeria’s marriage as successful, their marriage never features this idealized openness.

Both of Eustace’s marriages are plagued by surveillance, secrets, and pretense, preventing trust or intimacy and rendering the domestic space hollow. Eustace marries his first wife, Sara, as an act of pity and honor to protect her reputation after their relationship becomes a subject of gossip.⁴¹ He proposes to avert scandal, a response to

⁴¹ Sara falls in love with Eustace while he stays as a guest in her uncle’s home. When her unreciprocated attachment becomes apparent, Eustace returns to London at the request of her uncle to extricate himself from the situation and protect her reputation. She follows him to London and visits his rooms, where she is discovered. Once the matter becomes public knowledge, Eustace declares that they are engaged in order to stop the scandal. Sara’s family holds Eustace blameless for the entire situation and repeatedly comments on the honorable way he acted.

prying public eyes with a consistent history of reading personal information in a negative light. Rather than building a marriage based on emotional sympathy, Eustace is “fettered to a woman with whom I have not a single feeling in common” (161). He keeps this a secret, however, as “any sense of disappointment, in connexion with my marriage, which I might have felt privately, I conceived it to be my duty,⁴² as a husband and a gentleman, to conceal from my wife” (151). In his eyes, he performs his obligations as husband: “I do keep my temper. I am never hard on her; I never use harsh language to her” (163). But he cannot effectively perform emotion, which is essential to the role of a husband. For him, a successful performance merely completes the actions associated with a role; the performance does not need to correspond to an internal state. Eustace tries, but “I tenderly embraced her this very morning – and, I hope, poor soul, she did not discover the effort that it cost me” (165). His inability to summon emotions of love or care negate his dutiful actions. This unconvincing performance both responds to and further inspires surveillance from his wife, as she watches his behavior with her, his behavior with others, and, ultimately, reads his journal. Her suspicious surveillance parallels the behavior of the court, emphasizing the punitive nature of such actions.

While the lack of true emotion was a flaw in his first marriage, Eustace’s second marriage illustrates that marital secrets cause these ineffective performances. Eustace’s marriage to Valeria is supposed to be everything a marriage should be. Despite his previous marriage and a discarded first love, he vows to Valeria that “I have never found

⁴² Eustace’s actions are always honorable, a point which the text reiterates, but his lack of love for his wife becomes disdain over time, especially once his first love is widowed. He feels trapped in his marriage and it is clear to his wife that he is only going through the motions. Despite his positive motivations for the marriage, this is an inherently cruel dynamic. Fear of social scandal prevents divorce, so Eustace’s focus on acting in all parts as a husband, despite his personal feelings, at least indicates his commitment to his duty to his wife.

in any other woman the sympathy with me, the sweet comfort and companionship, that I find in you” (20). Yet he marries her under an assumed name, prevents her from meeting any of his family or friends, and tells her nothing of his previous marriage or the trial. Although their married life seems perfect, the secret keeping is unsustainable and soon Eustace finds himself trying to perform his role. Valeria sees through it as easily as did Sara, knowing “It was all forced; it was all unnatural” (32). Immediately, she begins to question, “Is my husband beginning to deceive me? is he acting a part, and acting it badly, before we have been married a week?” (32). Her concern here is the fact that he is performing at all, rather than being able to be genuine. As innocuous as his attempts at normalcy are, Valeria considers his performance a “violence ... to his true nature” (36). The domestic space cannot be a refuge or a space of moral recuperation if the men inside it are unable to be authentic.

For Eustace and Sara, surveillance and performance made the domestic space empty; for Eustace and Valeria, they make the domestic space unattainable. Four days into their marriage, Eustace’s secret-keeping comes between them; two days later, when Valeria finds out about the trial and the Scotch verdict, he leaves her. They have been married less than a week before they part and are separated for the majority of the novel. During their brief week together, they have been on a wedding journey, so they have not yet begun to create their domestic space. Eustace fears that if she knows his history, they will never be able to, saying:

if you ever discover what I am now keeping from your knowledge – from that moment you live a life of torture; your tranquility is gone. Your days will be days of terror; your nights will be full of horrid dreams – through no fault of mine, mind! Through no fault of mine! Every day of your life, you will feel some new distrust, some growing fear of me – and you will be doing me the vilest injustice all the time. On my faith as a Christian, on my honor as a man.” (54-5)

Eustace argues that Valeria's inevitable fear of him will inherently taint the domestic space and make their marriage impossible. Significantly, he connects this not to any actions of his but to ongoing public speculation. He fears that the public suspicion will transfer to Valeria, and she too will watch him suspiciously. The damage to his public reputation renders him unable to sustain private relationships. Indeed, from the moment that Valeria discovers the trial, "the embrace was not returned; the kiss was not returned ... He released himself deliberately from my arms ... with the mechanical courtesy of a stranger" (102). As far as Eustace is concerned, their marriage is over. He can no longer perform his role as husband. Although his fears cause him to preempt this damage, the novel validates his perception in general. Multiple friends discuss the persistence of these rumors and his inability to function in the public world after being "branded a murderer" (180). Even Valeria, despite her wholehearted, and surprisingly fervent, belief in his innocence, dreads having to tell a future son of his father's reputation and the ongoing public suspicion, highlighting the persistent repercussions.

Given the heightened focus on suspicious surveillance within marriage, it is significant that *The Law and the Lady* simultaneously emphasizes the intimacy of watching and validates it as a natural expression of romantic love. When Sara discusses her loneliness in the marriage, she complains "you never looked at me at all," a sentiment she repeats multiple times. (393). Eustace confirms this distance, saying, "the effort of my life is not to notice her, in anything she does or says" (163). This lack so devastates Sara that she states multiple times that any sort of visual connection with Eustace could have prevented her suicide, telling herself, "if he looks at me kindly, I will confess what I have done" (393). This visual intimacy is so powerful, that even without a returned gaze,

the sight of him is almost enough to stop her. She writes, “my courage failed me at the sight of you,” and “I had another moment of weakness when I saw you,” among other similar statements (392, 393). Visual metaphors repeatedly highlight the emptiness of the marriage. Like Sara, Valeria also needs visual connection with her husband. The power of a loving gaze is so strong that Eustace’s mother implores Valeria to “let him see the dear face that he has been dreaming of, looking at him again with all the old love in it; and he is yours once more,” believing a moment of mutual visual connection will reunite Eustace and Valeria (312). Although Eustace refuses to see her while she investigates Sara’s death, Valeria draws strength as a wife because “now and then, I had a peep at Eustace, while he was asleep, and that helped me ... those furtive visits to my husband fortified me” (314). This one-sided watching overlaps considerably with the public surveillance and suspicious wifely surveillance so condemned throughout the novel, especially since Valeria watches Eustace secretly, yet the novel recodes this as a lover’s gaze.

Trust, too, is reconceptualized to accommodate personal privacy. Despite the constant avowal of transparency as the only evidence of trust, the novel’s resolution dissolves the tension between privacy and openness by allowing spouses to keep their secrets and their silences. After spending the bulk of the novel separated, when Eustace and Valeria reunite, “the last shadows of distrust melted away out of our lives” (373). Not only do they begin a new honeymoon, but they date their marriage from that date, not their wedding date, erasing the months of separation. However, Eustace still refuses to discuss his past or the trial and Valeria continues to investigate his first wife’s death, which she pointedly refrains from telling him. None of the issues or actions that separated

them have changed, only their perspective on trust and openness has. When Eustace inquires about her investigation, Valeria asks him to show his trust in her by letting her keep the information to herself. Her actions convince him of her love and commitment to their marriage, so he agrees, on the condition that she will tell him eventually. When she finally finds Sara's suicide note, the evidence that will clear his name, rather than publish it for the world to see, her "one hope was that he might never see it! My one desire was to hide it from the public view!" (395). Ultimately, "the Confession itself has been kept a sealed secret from [Eustace], out of compassionate regard for his own peace of mind" (410). Although Valeria now knows everything about Eustace's first marriage and the trial through her investigation, she has learned by the end to respect his boundaries and avoids discussing his previous marriage. She has achieved her goal of finding the truth about Eustace and Sara's marriage, but she relinquishes her original commitment to publish her knowledge and restore his public reputation. Instead, she appreciates the need for both family and individual privacy and keeps the information to herself. Eustace, who argued for transparency while trying to keep his own past cloaked, has to reconcile his conflicting beliefs. The ongoing social condemnation has made him afraid of rejection and hesitant to trust, but Eustace overcomes that. He learns that marital trust relies not on complete transparency but on allowing space for individual privacy. He releases Valeria from her promise to tell him the results of her inquiry in favor of trusting her. Although both Eustace and Valeria made unilateral decisions and deceived each other at the beginning of their marriage, their future is based on mutual respect and personal privacy. The backdrop of public surveillance is unchanged, and Eustace's public reputation

remains shadowed, but the strength of his marriage and the harmony of his domestic space allow him to build a stable and happy future.

Both of these novels highlight the public consumption of the private, a state under which men struggle to find stable ground. Although these novels offer different solutions to the conflict, they both highlight the pressure that watching eyes, whether societal or individual, put on marriage. Neither of the men under surveillance in these two novels possesses guilty secrets or commits dishonorable or illegal actions.⁴³ Yet the demands of protecting their families and maintaining their public reputations drive them to keep secrets from their wives. Tensions between public and private, privacy and intimacy, reveal contradictions in Victorian ideologies of masculinity and marriage. The refuge of the domestic space is compromised by the public lives of men and the surveillance that follows them. The masculine performance demanded by the assemblage of watchers proves incompatible with the emotional roles men must play in the household, undermining the moral value of the domestic sphere. Surveillance is repeatedly shown to be unreliable in its judgements and excessive in its damages, yet public surveillance proves inescapable. Similarly, a wife's loving gaze has the potential to slip into suspicion, highlighting a need for a true space of male refuge or retreat. Whether trying to find relief from the public gaze or negotiating the terms of intimacy in marriage, men are hemmed in, breeding a claustrophobia that has no guarantee of relief in either the public or private spheres.

⁴³ The only man hiding guilty information about himself is Adam Andinnian in Wood's *Within the Maze* and he continuously escapes surveillance and lives in hiding successfully. No one not already privy to his whereabouts discovers his presence and his secret is never in serious danger of exposure.

“Restored to Society”:
Rehabilitating Masculinity through Sequestration
in the Novels of Charles Reade

Introduction

Insane asylums. Colonies. Coal mines. Desert islands. Sensation fiction is associated with extreme plots and, importantly for this chapter, extreme places. While much critical attention has been paid to the way British masculinity is proven and produced in a colonial context,⁴⁴ sensation fiction offers a range of outlandish settings in which masculinity could be tested. In the novels of Charles Reade, these spaces provide a distance from Victorian society which offers a relaxed demand for Victorian norms. In this respite, these men have the opportunity to learn to enact a normative masculine role, the proper performance of which stabilizes their previously shaky reputations. Reade explores both the potential, and limits, of these spaces to reveal the bounds of Victorian masculinity. While spaces like these occur throughout sensation fiction, Reade’s novels are particularly well-suited to this exploration due to the amount of narrative time spent in these distanced, alternate spaces, which is significantly higher than his contemporaries. Rather than masculinity as an essential, internal quality, these novels highlight the performative nature of masculinity and the range of audiences for whom men must perform.

⁴⁴ See discussions of masculinity and empire in Catherine Hall’s *White, Male, and Middle Class: Explorations in Feminism and History*, Anne McClintock’s *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* and John Tosh’s *Manliness and Masculinities in Nineteenth-Century Britain*.

Victorian masculinities were highly classed and writers focusing on gender, such as Sarah Stickney Ellis,⁴⁵ John Stuart Mill, or John Ruskin,⁴⁶ centered their discussions on the middle class. The middle class used respectability as a means of class differentiation, contrasting themselves with the reputed licentiousness of the upper-class and the immorality of the working-class⁴⁷ (Hall 91). Upper-class, aristocratic masculinity was associated with unearned wealth and excessive leisure. Despite the negative associations of upper-class masculinity, which were often focused on bachelors and younger sons, aristocratic men had a social role to fulfill. Titled men with estates were held to have a social obligation to maintain Victorian institutions by carrying on aristocratic family lines and ensuring the running of country estates and the villages attached to them. They also facilitated the religious institutions of the Victorian world as they held the power to grant clergyman positions at local churches. Duty, honor, and authority were the hallmarks of upper-class masculinity.

While upper-class men held social power by virtue of their position, middle-class men relied on economic power to supply them with the social position not assured to them by birth. Middle-class masculinity, therefore, emphasized ambition and purpose. To be a Victorian man of character meant to be independent; to be the head of a household, which is to say, to have dependents; to have a positive public perception (Poovey 52).

⁴⁵ Although Sarah Stickney Ellis's books, *The Wives of England*, *The Women of England*, *The Mothers of England*, *The Daughters of England*, focus on femininity, her discussions of ideal feminine behavior and the separate spheres rely on a discussion of the man's role as well, both in the home and in the public world.

⁴⁶ Although most known for his writing as an art critic and social theorist, Ruskin's lectures on the nature and roles of men and women, collected in *Sesame and Lilies*, are classics of conservative Victorian gender ideology.

⁴⁷ This is not meant to suggest that these class descriptions are accurate representations of Victorian lives, merely that the respective classes had these reputations, circulated and popularized in the media, and these descriptions recur in Victorian class narratives.

However, this conception of masculinity offered an inherently tenuous position. The emphasis on independence ran counter to the actual experiences of men in the market, as their working lives as employees necessitated taking orders from another. In addition, their class standing was fragile, reliant as it was on their financial position and therefore subject to economic forces outside their control. For the middle-class Victorian man, the challenge was to craft a character that would be read by the public in a way that would benefit him professionally and socially. For men of all classes, it was necessary to control not only one's self, but one's image.

As actors in the public world of Victorian England, men were constantly subject to social surveillance and needed to be able to perform their roles effectively. Projecting the proper public image as a man of character was foundational to both a man's business interests and his social standing. Victorian masculinity was constructed in three primary areas –work, home, and homosocial association (Tosh, *Man's Place 2*). The public and domestic aspects of a man's life were closely linked, and damage to one would almost certainly unsettle the other. The domestic space was supposed to offer a refuge from the demands of the public sphere, giving men a respite from the pressures of public surveillance and the constant performance that demanded; however, these spaces instead required their own domestic performance of the roles of husband and father. The need for continued performance for an audience, even as the domestic space made the audience more intimate, troubles the distinction between public and private. This unabating social pressure exerted a seemingly inescapable force, as neither sphere offered a suspension of these demands.

This constant need to enact masculine roles, whether professional or domestic, highlights the degree to which Victorian masculinity is performative. Judith Butler theorizes gender as “an identity instituted through a stylized repetition of acts” (“Performative Acts” 519). Gender is inherently public, a reciprocal performance which both demands an audience and is demanded by that audience (526). As gender is performed, its reality is constituted, not as an expression of an interior self but as an external, socially enforced display (*Gender Trouble* 34, 45). My analysis of gender in this project uses Butler’s framework to examine how male characters navigate ideologies of masculinity and the social roles underwritten by those ideologies through masculine performance. This approach also builds on a Victorian understanding of gender.

Although Victorian gender theorists such as Ruskin and Ellis argued for the interiority of masculine identity, performativity was also an integral part of Victorian identity. Rather than performance masking the true self, or the lack thereof, Victorian critics such as George Henry Lewes believed that theatricality and authenticity were linked, and that through spectacle and display, one could express a sincere interiority (Voskuil 11). Self-control, a key component of upper- and middle-class masculinity, was an essential quality in creating an effective performance. Thus, ideologies of masculinity are directly linked to performance. Since belief in an interiority of gender was prevalent in the Victorian period, I will be discussing male characters who work to redeem an interior, essentialist masculinity. However, the narrative focus, and the focus of my analysis, is on how they do so through public performance. Butler argues that gender is “a practice of improvisation within a scene of constraint,” and it is precisely the force of such constraint that underlies my study of sequestration (*Undoing Gender* 1).

In times of crisis, male characters in Reade's novels often find that sequestration offers access to alternative spaces less governed by Victorian mores. In these spaces, men are safe from the demands, and eyes, of Victorian society, whether their struggles are social, financial, or legal. This offers them a reprieve from the need to actively construct and perform Victorian masculinity. In using the term sequestration, I rely on the range of associations the word has: removal, isolation, and imprisonment. The removal offered is often more metaphorical than it is a physical distance, however these are spaces outside of conventional Victorian society. The isolation springs from this removal. In this context, isolation does not necessarily mean solitude; rather the absence of one's usual social and professional networks is key. Although the presence of other people fluctuates, the overwhelming feeling is one of isolation from the public mass and from prying eyes. The removal is often imposed, so connotations of imprisonment underlie these spaces, even as the male characters themselves seem not to feel trapped. Given the imposed removal, sequestration could be coded negatively and parallel the imprisonment in asylums female characters of sensation fiction often face. Instead, male characters often choose to remain, rather than availing themselves of options to leave, indicating that sequestration, however imperfect, offers them something unavailable in conventional Victorian society.

This reprieve is temporary; they do return to their lives eventually. Sequestration thus becomes an interlude in which men can strengthen their position, not a viable permanent alternative. Victorian society, with all its restrictive structures, is inescapable. Yet this transient removal seems to enable men to pause the outside world and rejoin it at their leisure after they improve their masculine performance. Significantly, sequestration

and the protection it offers cross class lines. The characters I study here include an aristocrat, middle-class men, and working-class sailors. This pattern across classes poses the process of sequestration as endemic to masculinity, rather than being situated as a component of class, as many masculine qualities are. The recurrence of this trend for men of all classes showcases the need for an alternative space, while the inherent lack of permanence in this reprieve highlights the totalizing power of Victorian society and its rigid social norms.

Reade's *A Terrible Temptation* (1871) and *Foul Play* (1869) explore the nuances of male sequestration, examining class variances and the limits of this freedom. These novels weave together the strands of secrecy and surveillance, highlighting the power of retreat from both the public sphere and the domestic sphere to rehabilitate masculine character. The men in these novels are branded lunatics and criminals for their incomplete masculine performances, emphasizing the precarity of masculinity and the seriousness of the stakes involved. However, these men are able to find power in their exile, using it to their advantage and strengthening their position. In *A Terrible Temptation*, Sir Charles's time in an insane asylum allows him to learn to actively perform his masculinity by exercising a marital authority that he had been unwilling to accept previously. His continued performance of marital authority after his return to domesticity stabilizes his marriage, which finally produces a long-awaited heir. *Foul Play*, on the other hand, shifts confinement from the insane asylum to the colonies, examining imprisonment in an Australian penal colony and the isolation of being shipwrecked on an uninhabited island. Although the colonies are generally linked to heightened masculine performance, Robert's position as a convict during his time in

Australia complicates this, as he loses status, mobility, and independence, key elements of Victorian middle-class masculinity. It is only when sequestered on a desert island that he is able to regain these qualities. Taken in conjunction, these novels use sequestration to trace the confines and demands of Victorian normative masculinity, highlighting male mobility while illustrating the suffocating gender norms that underpin it.

Masculine Authority

A Terrible Temptation follows the marriage of Sir Charles and Bella Bassett, as it is entangled with the rivalry between Sir Charles and his cousin, Richard. After wooing Bella away from Richard, Sir Charles settles into a country life with his wife. However, they are unable to conceive a child and the marriage, and Sir Charles' mental state, begin to weaken. Richard takes advantage of this to have Sir Charles committed to an insane asylum as part of a plot to wrest control of the estate, Huntercombe Hall. Sir Charles is not insane, but has been convalescing since a fall, which is all the pretext needed for his cousin Richard to have him falsely certified by two doctors. However, as his involuntary commitment becomes a de facto choice to stay, even when escape is offered, Sir Charles learns to actively perform his masculinity by exercising marital authority. Once he has returned home, his now fully enacted masculine performance cements his control over his estate and the appearance of an heir stabilizes his family line.

Throughout *A Terrible Temptation*, Sir Charles struggles to fulfill the societal expectations of an aristocratic man. At the opening of the novel, it is made clear that his hedonistic lifestyle has begun to take its toll: "His features were well cut, and had some nobility; but his sickly complexion and the lines under his eyes told a tale of dissipation.

He appeared ten years older than he was” (7). Even for a nobleman, his lifestyle is one of excess and he needs to reform. His marriage to Bella spurs him to make these changes: he moves from London to live at the family estate, establishes a household, and becomes an active part of the social life of the country. Sir Charles also begins serving as a local magistrate, fulfilling the public position to which his rank and estate entitle him. He has taken his place in the social order and seems to be embodying the quintessential Victorian man: “now Sir Charles was useful as well as ornamental” (41). After the significant changes to his lifestyle, Sir Charles inhabits the prescribed masculine role in the public sphere.

Despite his successful public performance, his role in the private sphere is incomplete. He is unwilling to fully perform his role as a husband and wield marital authority. His marriage is marred from its beginning by a disagreement between him and Bella: “Each wanted to obey t’other” (18). Conventional Victorian gender ideology was very clear that marital authority belonged to the husband, and Bella begs him to fulfill that role, pleading that: “A gentle tyrant – that is what you must be to Bella Bassett” (19). However, Sir Charles’ refusal of such a role is so complete that he concocts an elaborate plot instead:

I’ll accommodate you. I have thought of a way. I shall give you some blank cards; you shall write on them ‘I think I should like to do so and so.’ You shall be careless, and leave them about; I’ll find them and bluster, and say ‘I command you to do so and so, Bella Basset’ – the very thing on the card, you know.” (19)

But this is a performance which both the performer and the audience know to be empty, and it cannot satisfy Bella’s need to submit or fulfill Sir Charles’ prescribed masculine role. This failing is presented as a significant one. Not only is Sir Charles unwilling to exercise marital authority, but this craving to please his wife in all things overrides his

public responsibilities, damaging his public performance as well. When she asks about cutting down a few trees for a small building project, he urges her: “Cut down every stick on the estate if you like. The barer it leaves us the better” (45). Her pleasure is his priority, even over his duty to the estate. This submission to her is the crucial flaw in his masculine performance and until it is resolved, there can be no stability to his masculine identity. This lack of masculine performance is narratively connected to his performance in the marriage bed as well. Despite years of trying, Sir Charles is unable to father a child and continue his family line. His lack of an heir so preoccupies him that he withdraws from society entirely and retreats into his home.

However, Sir Charles’ attempt to seclude himself in the domestic sphere is viewed by society with suspicion and alarm and weakens his position.⁴⁸ This isolation provides the pretext for his commitment to an asylum, as well as an obstacle to his release, since, ““They say, why was he hidden for two months, if there was not something very wrong?”” (93). His chosen seclusion follows an epileptic fit instigated by his cousin and brought on by severe emotional strain, after which Sir Charles refrains from social commitments, feeling himself “unfit for society” (100). Although Victorians often linked epilepsy and madness, that correlation is underplayed here.⁴⁹ Rather, his seclusion is connected to his obsession with having a male heir and his fear of public scrutiny. He is convinced that “‘twas writ on his face as he had no children” (100). After the fit, “Sir Charles continued to brood on his one misfortune. He refused to go out-of-doors, even

⁴⁸ Although I focus on the novels of Charles Reade, this unsuccessful and/or damaging domestic isolation can also be seen in Wilkie Collins’s *No Name*, in which multiple men retreat into their homes as a means of defense, a strategy which fails in each instance.

⁴⁹ There is some discussion of insanity as a potential outcome of an epileptic episode, but the doctor never so diagnoses him and the reader has already seen Sir Charles have a seizure and fully recover earlier in the novel, which minimizes those fears.

into the garden, giving as his reason that he was not fit to be seen” (81). Significantly, his avoidance of the public gaze is gendered, as he says: “I don’t mind a couple of women ... but no man shall see Charles Bassett in his present state” (81). This gendering indicates that it is his masculinity which Sir Charles fears will not pass inspection. Since masculinity is as much a homosocial designation as a patriarchal one, Sir Charles must maintain his manhood in front of other men. Retreating into the feminized domestic space is not the solution, however. The decision to do so makes him vulnerable, as Sir Charles rejection of his public role is read suspiciously by the public and provides the pretext for Richard to arrange his confinement in an asylum.

The insane asylum is the quintessential prison of sensation fiction. For all the plots involving murder, fraud, impersonation, bigamy, and assorted other criminal acts, sensation fiction has little to do with prisons, either as plot settings or narrative resolution. Instead, insane asylums fill these functions. In fiction, they are associated with unchecked abuses of authority and extreme physical restraint, heightening the sense of danger for victims unfortunate enough to be committed unjustly. As a plot setting, insane asylums are frequently portrayed as prisons for inconvenient persons, usually innocent ingenues falsely imprisoned by a male relative who seeks to control their fortune or behavior, such as in Wilkie Collins’s *The Woman in White* (1859), Sheridan Le Fanu’s *The Rose and the Key* (1871), and Mary Elizabeth Braddon’s *Taken at the Flood* (1874). Asylums are also used as a means of criminal justice that avoids the legal system; imprisoning violent madwomen there often provides the narrative resolution of a novel, as in Braddon’s *Lady Audley’s Secret* (1862) and Ellen Wood’s *St. Martin’s Eve*

(1866).⁵⁰ This dual representation of insane asylums has been part of the genre since its inception and the implicit violence and coercion of the asylum as prison are foundational for fictional representations.

The preoccupation with confinement in sensation fiction magnifies fears about widespread social changes of the time. The Victorian period's focus on social discipline and disciplinary institutions is well documented⁵¹ from the growth of the police force and its pervasive presence in Victorian communities to the increase in prisons as penal transportation to Australia ended.⁵² In 1829, the Metropolitan Police was founded and 3000 men began to patrol London and implement preventative policing. With the Municipal Corporations Act of 1835 and Rural Constabulary Act of 1839, this police presence became embedded in provincial communities as well, although many boroughs took decades to fully comply with the creation of local forces.⁵³ Through ongoing surveillance, policemen identified suspicious people and behaviors and intervened, preventing criminal action with preemptive police action. This model of preventive policing required a much larger police force than a detecting police force designed to intervene after a crime had taken place, and many Britons were concerned about the proliferation of police throughout the country (Steedman 18). With the growth in police came a growth in the prison system. Between 1842 and 1877, more than ninety prisons

⁵⁰ Critics have questioned whether these women truly are medically insane, arguing that female violence and criminality, often associated with sexuality, is coded as madness.

⁵¹ See Foucault's *Discipline and Punish* and D.A Miller's *The Novel and the Police* for a discussion of social discipline and conformity in the Victorian period.

⁵² Penal transportation was phased out port by port, with transportation to New South Wales ending in 1840, transportation to Van Diemen's Island (Tasmania) ending in 1853, and transportation to Western Australia ending in 1868 (Hughes 161).

⁵³ Although the Metropolitan Police was founded as an unarmed, civilian police force, provincial police had significant links to the military and were often deployed as a martial force (Steedman 3). Therefore, there are fundamental differences in the employees, methods, and uses of city and county police.

were built or enlarged (Storey 12). Over the course of the Victorian period, over fifteen million people were admitted into local and national prisons (9). This diffusion of social control throughout society was strongly felt, and the associated fears manifested in Victorian fiction of all genres.

Sensation fiction, with its elaborate plots of murder, blackmail, and bigamy, offers many opportunities to explore various means of justice and imprisonment. Studies of confinement in sensation fiction generally center on female imprisonment, a danger rampant in the genre.⁵⁴ Given the increased mobility that men's existence in the public and private spheres offer, the experience of confinement is highly gendered. Although my focus is on male confinement, an understanding of tropes of female imprisonment is crucial to understand the gendered reactions to these conditions. Not until the Clitheroe decision in 1891 was imprisonment of a wife by a husband held to be unlawful, and sensation fiction plots reflect Victorian fears about the abuses of patriarchal authority. Wives throughout sensation fiction are imprisoned in their homes and denied any contact with the outside world. In Collins's *Man and Wife* (1870), the imprisonment of Anne Silvester by her husband, Geoffrey Delamayn is attended with immediate foreboding. Before she even enters the house, it is described as "ill-omened," a "lonely house, isolated amid its high walls" (526). This description cues the reader to be concerned about the ramifications of this isolation. Once there, her situation becomes dire: "The one way out of the high walls all around the cottage, locked. Friends forbidden to see her. Solitary imprisonment, with her husband for a gaoler. – Before she had been four and

⁵⁴ This trend is discussed in *In the Secret Theatre of Home: Wilkie Collins, Sensation Narrative, and Nineteenth-Century Psychology* by Jenny Bourne Taylor, *Daughters of the House: Modes of the Gothic in Victorian Fiction* by Alison Milbank, and *Victorian Sensation Fiction* by Jessica Cox, to give a brief sampling.

twenty hours in the cottage, it had come to that. And what was to follow?" Her fears are well founded, as this imprisonment is the first step in her husband's plan to murder her. The implicit threat of this imprisonment is felt by many characters in the novel as both friends and acquaintances try to breach the literal and figurative walls that Delamayn has imposed. This danger is further underscored by the history of the house, in which repeated domestic violence with no avenue for escape has already driven one wife to kill her husband. Although the domestic space is conceived of as the wife's domain, her authority in it is conditional and an imposed restriction to it is perilous.

This danger is heightened in fictional representations by the easy way that domestic confinement can transform into medical imprisonment with commitment in an insane asylum. In Braddon's *John Marchmont's Legacy* (1864), a woman is abruptly confined in her home, a punitive measure underscored by the menace of permanent committal. As a widow, Olivia is past the threat of excessive marital authority, but in the domestic space, the new male head of the household, her husband's cousin, still has the power to threaten her. When Olivia refuses to conspire with him to steal her stepdaughter's inheritance any longer, Paul Marchmont responds by locking her in the room, saying, "No, no, my dear Mrs. John; you shall not leave this house, nor this room, in your present state of mind. If you choose to be violent and unmanageable, we will give you the full benefit of your violence, and we will give you a better sphere of action. A padded room will be more suitable to your present temper, my dear madam. If you favour us with this sort of conduct, we will find people more fitted to restrain you" (407-8). Paul tries to intimidate Olivia and control her behavior by threatening her with commitment, even on little provocation. Olivia is not mad; neither is her step-daughter, Mary. Yet

because of the cultural associations between femininity and madness, both women face the threat of commitment in an asylum, a recurrent danger in sensation fiction.

Although madness has long been linked to femininity, both in fictional narratives and psychiatric theories, England has a specifically male conception of insanity as well. Identified by George Cheyne in 1733, “the English malady’ was the natural result of English, which is to say, masculine, sensitivity, ambition, and intellect” (7). Madness plagued Englishmen precisely because of the economic and intellectual pressures of ‘civilization.’ As a result, England took a perverse pride in this national reputation for madness (7). However, in the Victorian period, as industrialism irrevocably altered male economic roles and men struggled to find security in the market economy, doctors cited financial strain and job insecurity as a significant cause of male madness (Goodman 155). In fact, despite the literary preoccupation with madwomen, the majority of patients in private asylums were men (152). This masculine insanity was an acknowledged threat to ideologies of masculinity that emphasized independence, self-control, and rationality. Therefore, physicians overtly resisted a feminization of male patients. Instead, madmen were considered as children,⁵⁵ in need of education and maturation. Treatments in the asylum split along gender lines, with male treatment focusing on sports and other physical activity as a way of restoring masculinity (151).

In contrast to their depiction in fiction, insane asylums in Victorian England were at the forefront of medical treatment and particularly focused on inducing normative gender performance. At its peak from the 1830s through the early 1870s, Victorian

⁵⁵ Although the infantilization of men would seem to be as problematic as a feminization, this conception played into the idealization of the wife-mother who nurtured her husband and her children in the home. Therefore, this conception maintained existing gender roles.

psychiatry was known for humane treatment and a cutting-edge approach to treating insanity.⁵⁶ Doctors came from around the world to study and work at English asylums (Showalter 25). Legislative reforms, such as the Madhouse Act of 1828, focused on preventing false committal by establishing the Board of Commissioners in Lunacy to license and inspect public and private asylums, as well as requiring the signature of two doctors to commit an individual (26). Medical reforms refocused treatment on a domestic model, characterizing doctors as fathers caring for child-like patients (28). Physical restraint was replaced with discreet monitoring, ensuring patient safety through supervision, rather than force (33). During this period, madness was considered a temporary lapse of reason and part of the human experience, quite capable of being cured through education and moral guidance⁵⁷ (29). Long-term or permanent commitment was considered an exception to the rule. Committal was designed as a temporary measure, after which patients would return to their families and once more be productive members of society.

In accordance with the historical realities of Victorian asylums, Sir Charles Bassett's committal to an insane asylum does not endanger his physical and mental health. Any potential reader concerns about such treatment, based on sensation fiction tropes, are dismissed when his wife pays the asylum staff to "be kind to him" (93). Instead of the expected representation of restraint and isolation, Sir Charles maintains regular contact with the outside world, receives visitors, and continues correspondence.

⁵⁶ This was a relatively brief high point, in between Augustan institutions such as Bedlam, famed for its abuses and lack of actual medical treatment, and late Victorian asylums that would struggle to cope with overcrowding (Showalter 98).

⁵⁷ In contrast, the Darwinian psychology that would develop later in the century focused on a "hereditary taint" and viewed insanity as an incurable genetic disease (Showalter 104). This approach distanced doctors from patients and coincided with the deterioration of asylum architecture, so this later period is known for poor asylum conditions and mistreatment of residents.

In fact, his social interactions with visitors, asylum staff, and other patients actually decrease the self-imposed isolation he had been experiencing in Huntercombe Hall. The asylum provides him an opportunity to maintain social contact and public position, while still offering an alternative to the public and private spheres, both of which had become untenable to him. That this alternative space provides him a valuable refuge is illustrated by his choice to stay even when escape⁵⁸ is readily available to him. In his time at the asylum, he observes the irrational, uncontrolled behavior of other patients which enables him to perform his masculinity more successfully, according to Victorian norms, than he was before.

The description of the insane asylum to which Sir Charles has been committed highlights the relative freedom Sir Charles feels. Rather than the conventional description of an asylum as the “most horrible of all false imprisonments” (Collins, *Woman* 28), in this asylum “great ingenuity had been used to secure the inmates without seeming to incarcerate them. There were no bars to the lower front windows ... The sentinels were out of sight ... All was apparent indifference, and Argus-eyed vigilance” (Reade, *Terrible* 92). Although this description does affirm the surveillance and restrictions implicit in an asylum, the attendant dangers are de-emphasized in favor of replicating Victorian life, hollow though it may be. Throughout Sir Charles’ stay, however, this seeming normalcy does reflect his experience. His correspondence with his wife is full of amusing anecdotes and stories of the people he has met, as letters while travelling recreationally would be.

⁵⁸ Sir Charles has the option to be smuggled out by a visitor or to bribe asylum staff to let him go and chooses not to take advantage of either of those opportunities. If he left, he would only have to stay hidden for two weeks to legitimize his freedom, so the lack of an official medical discharge is not a barrier to resuming his public life. After that two weeks, it would require a new examination by doctors to recommit him; both his friends and enemies acknowledge that he would pass that examination and there is no medical reason he is in the asylum.

He is on good terms with the presiding doctor and the staff, establishes positive relationships with other patients, and seems to feel no ill effects from his confinement. His mobility is curtailed certainly, but the asylum resembles a convalescent home more than a prison. Although this conforms to historical asylums of the period, this portrayal is notable in sensation fiction, and particularly in the works of Charles Reade, in which asylums are generally presented as prisons.

Sir Charles himself is remarkably unaffected emotionally by his confinement. The highest emotional register induced by this treatment is a “chaf[ing] with impatience,” a significant diminishing of the horror and despair imprisoned women feel in sensation fiction (128). In fact, his confinement is a nominal one. The opportunity for escape is so assured that it is openly discussed as the simplest solution to his committal, “but Dr. Suaby’s whole conduct had been so kind, generous, and confiding, that this was out of the question. Indeed, Sir Charles had for the last month been there upon parole” (128). Sir Charles stays willingly, rather than through force, despite his initial forced committal. The ease of escape is such that when his cousin maneuvers to have him transferred to a dangerous asylum, “a place where the old system of restraint prevailed,” Sir Charles instead immediately leaves and returns home, a move which is swiftly followed by an official discharge from the Commissioners on Lunacy ending all discussion of his sanity and freedom (131). This is a stark difference from the dangers female characters face. Throughout his time at the asylum, he is physically safe, emotionally unconcerned, and free to leave when he chooses with no difficulty, ultimately resuming his prior life with ease.

Given asylum conventions in sensation fiction, confinement in an asylum could be portrayed as feminized passivity, and therefore unmanly. However, the narrative instead focuses on Sir Charles' successful masculine performance. Sir Charles "carries a soul not to be quelled by three months in a well-ordered mad-house" (120). Despite the fact that his seizure, and the malaise that followed, had left him "not the man he had been," on his wife's first visit, "this doughty baronet claimed his rights of manhood" (107). This is a sudden shift from the brooding, obsessive recluse portrayed previously. Now Sir Charles exhibits strength in his difficulties and acts to comfort and reassure his wife, rather than asking for help or needing comfort. Rather than hindering his masculine performance, his time sequestered at the asylum actually increases his displays of masculine strength, independence, and authority. Unwilling to wield marital authority at the start of their relationship, Sir Charles has no difficulty doing so while imprisoned. Managing his household and estate, even from within the asylum, he overrides his wife's objections on subsequent visits by saying "It is a command; and, although you are free, and I am a prisoner – although you are still an ornament to society, and I pass for an outcast, still I expect you to obey me when I assume a husband's authority" (116). Sir Charles poses this authority as specifically masculine and by describing it as something he "assumes," calls attention to the performance of masculinity, as well as its fraught nature (116). Similarly, he presents his current status as outcast and prisoner as mere roles, highlighting his sense of ongoing public scrutiny and the distinction he draws between how he is perceived and his own sense of self. The authority he has the potential to wield as a husband is unchanged by his imprisonment, and friends and family alike recognize that patriarchal authority and submit to it, once Sir Charles chooses to accept

that role. His willingness to assume this authority, and more fully inhabit Victorian masculine ideology, increases while he is imprisoned. However, this change is not posed as the result of any medical or psychiatric treatment.

Rather, Sir Charles finds power in becoming the watcher, instead of being subject to the critical eyes of others. Freed of the need to perform for an audience, Sir Charles studies social behavior through observing the other inmates of the asylum, critiquing the effectiveness of their performances, or delusions, as well as their ability to maintain social interaction. While this dynamic ignores the medical eyes that should be on him as a patient, the text participates in that blindness. Sir Charles is not discussed as the object of observation. Instead, he spends the preponderance of his time studying male patients and finds madmen incapable of forming relationships, noting that “they keep apart because a madman is all self, and his talk is all self; thus egotisms clash” (110). This self-centeredness means that the madmen are cut off from a crucial component of a healthy and successful masculine life, as the need for stable social and romantic relationships is consistently highlighted in Victorian writings. Furthering his personal development, “contemplation of insane persons had set him by a natural recoil to study self-control,” a quality which was a cornerstone of Victorian masculinity. By learning how to control himself, and thereby project the proper gender performance to an audience, Sir Charles is able to regulate a masculine identity that has been shaky throughout the novel. His increased self-control is linked to his new willingness to exercise his marital authority and control others. When he returns home, he continues to perform masculinity according to Victorian norms, which is posed as crucial to the success of his marriage and his now peaceful life. When he and his wife disagree and his personal desires conflict with what is

best for his wife, he “restrained himself by a mighty effort” and “played the man” (206). Again, although the novel connects it to an interiority of gender, the focus is on how he performs a social role.

Crucially, Sir Charles’s experience is not an anomaly. He is not the only sane man in the institution, nor the only one who feels free to come and go as needed. Another inmate, Vandeleur, has committed himself to the asylum in order to avoid his gambling debts. An essential component of Victorian manliness is position, an integral part of which is wealth. Vandeleur is middle-class, but he is a gentleman of leisure: “Mr. Vandeleur, six feet high, lank, but graceful as a panther, and the pink of politeness, was, beneath his varnish, one of the wildest young men in London – gambler, horse-racer, libertine, what not? – but in society charming, and his manners singularly elegant and winning” (10). Although many of these descriptions seem negative, they reflect the life of many young, wealthy Victorian bachelors, so little social judgement is implied. As he is a young man, he does not have the same social expectations Sir Charles does for a family and an heir. In fact, as the quote attests, he is popular in society. References to Vandeleur throughout the novel repeatedly call him an “obliging youth,” and it is easy to imagine him following the path to become a proper Victorian man as he ages (10).

While he is still young and wild, however, Vandeleur’s reputation is threatened because he has incurred excessive gambling debts. Gambling debts are debts of honor, which gentlemen must attend to in order to maintain their character. A gentleman may run up unpaid debts with merchants and tradespeople, living on credit, without impugning his position, but debts between gentleman must be settled to maintain one’s position. Vandeleur explains, “Sloman had seven writs out: I was in a corner. I got a

friend that knows every move to sign me into this asylum” (129). Vandeleur uses his ‘imprisonment’ in the asylum as a strong position from which to negotiate, as “they thought it was all up then, and he is bringing them to a shilling in the pound” (129). He is as unconcerned with effecting his release when he desires it as he was with his initial committal. This is merely a strategy in the way that he navigates social expectations of his behavior.

Female characters react differently to even a nominal imprisonment, however. Just as Sir Charles’ wife fears for his safety, a former mistress of Vandeleur’s hears of his committal and rushes to him, alarmed. Her emotional register is quite different from his, as “in came Vandeleur, with his graceful panther-like step, and a winning smile he had put on for conquest” (129). While the asylum represents a place of possibility for him, she cannot see it as other than inherently dangerous. Imprisonment, even of others, remains threatening for female characters; beneficial sequestration is reserved for male characters. As with Sir Charles, Vandeleur’s time in the asylum is a temporary, and chosen, retreat, from which he will return to his public life in a more secure position.

A Terrible Temptation does not seek to erase the dangers of imprisonment in an asylum. Dr. Suaby’s asylum is explicitly contrasted with the dangerous one run by Burdoch, and Reade takes this opportunity to comment on unjust imprisonment and the perils of these unlicensed, quasi-medical, private prisons for inconvenient family members.⁵⁹ However, Dr. Suaby’s asylum is the only one in which the narrative spends any time and it is presented not as an exception to the rule, but merely the beneficial

⁵⁹ Reade was an advocate of asylum reform, arguing that asylums used excessive physical violence and restraint; he also believed they chronically imprisoned the sane. This critique of asylums appears in many of his novels, most notably *Hard Cash* (1863), as Reade believed that a primary purpose of the novel was to induce a reforming impulse in its readers (Fantina 2).

counterpart to other harmful institutions. What is notable is that even though the retreat is initially a forced one, rather than chosen, male characters are able to use this removal from the public world to their favor.

Masculine Position

Foul Play follows the tumultuous life of Robert Penfold as he attempts to clear his name after he is framed and wrongly convicted of forgery. At the beginning of the novel, Robert Penfold⁶⁰ is a clergyman without a church, temporarily employed as a college tutor. After he is made an unwitting accomplice by his pupil, Arthur Wardlaw, he is convicted of forgery and transported to Australia.⁶¹ After he serves his sentence, he is paroled and begins working as a gardener, trying to rebuild his life. There, he falls in love with Helen Rolleston, and his desire to protect her spurs an incessant series of heroic actions. When he finds that she is engaged to the man who framed him, he leaves Australia and boards the ship on which she will travel back to England, planning to reveal Arthur's treachery and end the engagement. Before he can do so, the ship is scuttled on Arthur's orders as part of a plan to commit insurance fraud, not realizing that his fiancée is traveling on that ship. Robert and Helen are shipwrecked on a deserted island, which becomes the source of Robert's ability to clear his name, make his fortune, and return to England a respected, vindicated man, and Helen's husband.

⁶⁰ Robert assumes a number of aliases throughout the novel, renaming himself James Seaton when paroled and Reverend John Hazel when he leaves Australia. Although the text refers to him by the alias he is using at the moment, I will consistently refer to him as Robert Penfold.

⁶¹ The Australian portion of the novel is set in Sydney, New South Wales, despite the fact that penal transportation ended there in 1840, almost 30 years before this novel was written. This is not posed as a historical novel and no specific time frame is established.

Foul Play offers an extreme version of removal, stranding the main character on an uninhabited island from which he can successfully reintegrate into Victorian society. From clergyman to convict to gardener to clerk, on a roller-coaster of social positions, Robert spends the novel attempting to redeem himself from that convict status. Although “many persons had risen to wealth and consideration in the colony from such situations,” his criminal history places limits on his rise (23). Rather, it is Robert’s dominion over an unclaimed island in the Pacific which allows him to restore his reputation and ascend to a higher financial and professional status than he originally possessed. Despite the emphasis on his intelligence, bravery, and physical abilities, only social respectability can restore his position and redeem the man he was when he was transported: “a creature imbittered, poisoned” (13), enabling him, by the end of the novel, to ascend to a unique class position of merchant priest, a “scholar, hero, and worthy,” pardoned of all crimes (226). Through imperialist actions in a space distinct from England, the protagonist is able to rewrite his social position. The novel focuses on the rehabilitation of Robert’s social standing, rather than his internal character, emphasizing the degree to which masculine character is an external performance. By moving the borders of Victorian society to the borders of British empire, the novel showcases the reach of the Victorian world and the lengths required to escape it.

Unlike Sir Charles, who needed to rehabilitate internal qualities of masculinity, Robert is presented throughout the novel as the epitome of masculinity. He is “a miracle of goodness, self-denial, learning, and every virtue that a lady might worship” (162). He is a clergyman, which gives him moral authority; possesses a University education, which gives him intellectual prowess; and plays cricket, which showcases his physical abilities.

Robert lacks only financial stability, which makes him dependent on others and creates the situation in which he can be framed for forgery. As long as this external quality is missing, even his exemplary masculine performance cannot compensate. Middle-class masculinity was particularly precarious, given the wide range of social and financial positions that the Victorian middle-class encompassed. As an aristocrat, Sir Charles was assured of his position, which offered a significant degree of protection from scandal or financial straits. However, middle-class status was unstable and relied heavily on respectability and wealth. Without family lineage to anchor class status, the middle-class emphasized morality and fortune. Only by increasing his wealth and status can Robert stabilize his masculine identity. He attempts to do this in Australia, famed for its potential for fortune, but underwritten by its association with criminality. This criminality prevents it from offering a full path to rehabilitation, so Robert must create his own colony to master his identity.

The colonies have long been figured as a proving ground for masculinity. Anne McClintock argues that Western imperialism disseminated patriarchal power in a process that is inextricable from ideologies of race, class, and gender (2, 5). Control over the colonies becomes figured as English male control over colonial women, both literal and figurative. Since colonized land is feminized, imperial success is predicated on gendered control, perpetuating ideologies of masculine authority and feminine submission. Tosh emphasizes the colonies' function as a place to find the financial success necessary to secure masculine position (*Manliness* 177). He also elaborates on the qualities necessary to be successful in the colonies: "resolution, courage, perseverance, and self-reliance," and the perceived masculine nature of those qualities (179). The colonies do more than

facilitate the external qualities of masculinity; they are also connected to internal qualities. The colonies are so linked to masculine identity that literary representations, including *Foul Play*, depict a homosocial world virtually free of women, despite the fact that female emigration was a significant focus of settlement plans, with Australia succeeding in attaining a balanced sex ratio⁶² (176).

Australia was founded as a penal colony in 1788, and over the next 80 years, more than 160,000 men, women, and children would be transported overseas in an effort to rid England of the criminal class. Penal transportation peaked in the 1830s, but the publication of the Molesworth report,⁶³ which highlighted abuses of the penal system, began to turn public opinion against the system. By 1840, the system was on the decline and by 1868 it had ended entirely. Once in Australia, convicts were assigned to labor for private settlers in Australia, or, less commonly, for the government (Hughes 283). With good behavior, convicts could qualify for a ticket-of-leave, which excused them from working as part of the assignment system. A ticket-of-leave allowed a man to engage in the work of his choice, anywhere in the colony, as long as he did not leave Australia (307). This parole was subject to revocation at any time and needed to be renewed yearly. Only with an absolute pardon at the end of this term was a convict allowed to return to England. Most commonly, after the term of their sentence expired, a convict was issued a conditional pardon, establishing that their sentence had been fulfilled but barring them

⁶² Assisted emigration to Australia between 1833 and 1860 created a balanced sex ratio in the population, which was distinctly different than most other colonies (Tosh, *Manliness* 176). At the time this novel is set, then, the population is fairly evenly split between men and women, despite its consistent portrayal as a masculine space.

⁶³ The Molesworth report was published in 1838. Created in order to justify the home secretary's plan to abolish penal transportation, the report was highlighted the horrors of convict labor, including floggings and chain gangs, and the effect on colonial morality, tainted by unchecked criminality, sodomy, and atheism (Hughes 493-4).

from return. This resulted in an Australian population made up of government officers and their families, British settlers attracted by the free convict labor, and convicts and their descendants.

In Reade's novel, no narrative time is spent on Robert's time in jail or during his period of assigned labor in the penal colony, which functions to de-emphasize his life as a convict in favor of exploring the possibilities inherent in the fictionalized colonial setting. The text glosses over that period after his sentencing and picks up when he receives his ticket-of-leave and is essentially paroled. He must stay in the territory, but he is free to leave the prison and choose his own work. This gives Robert relative freedom of movement and a degree of independence, restoring his ability to make his own choices, rather than be under the control of others. As he regains control over his life, so too does he regain control over his public image and he immediately enacts a superlative public masculine performance. He promptly finds a job, acquits himself honorably, stops a robbery, protects the innocent, improves his position by exchanging physical labor as a gardener for intellectual labor as a clerk, and excels at his work. His employers "stumbled on a treasure" in him and he begins buying and selling real estate, always making a profit (Reade, *Foul Play* 23). He is a successful man from a business standpoint and is well on his way to rebuilding his reputation, but that is insufficient.

Despite the seeming promise of the colonies and his financial success, his status as an ex-convict creates a bar between him and society. This barrier to full social integration is maintained not just by society, but by Robert as well. Since his conviction, he has been "taciturn and bitter" and "shunned his fellow-servants" (15). As a result of his false conviction, he is unable to trust others or form close relationships and withdraws

from society. Not only does he feel limited in his ability to reintegrate into society after his conviction, but he is prevented from any chance of returning to England or engaging in his intended profession as a clergyman. Further, he feels betrayed by a man that he loved, respected, and trusted. He has lost his faith in British justice and nearly lost his faith in God. His spirit has been damaged as much as his reputation has. While he is the victim of a miscarriage of justice and his reputation is tainted, he struggles to believe in the institutions of Victorian society and the people who inhabit them. Until he can be accepted by society and freed from social stigma, he cannot reintegrate into society, even on the terms allowed to him.

Robert's position is the very problem he needs to rehabilitate, and he cannot do so in Australia. The colonies have been theorized as an "anachronistic space," space that operated in a different historical time, incompatible with modern England (McClintock 40). They are "realms of possibility," where imperialists can live out fantasies of wealth and possession (Said, *Culture* 64). However, while they may be viewed that way by English eyes, the experience of living in Australia replicated, in many ways, life in England. Historian Robert Hughes argues that "the issue of class loomed large in penal Australia – a society traversed by confusingly rapid movements of individual status, where tides of men and women were constantly flowing from servitude into citizenship and responsibility, from bitter poverty to new-found wealth. By the 1830s, Australia was as class-obsessed a society as any in the world." (322). Robert may be able to make his fortune in Australia, but, branded as an ex-convict, he is limited in his ability to improve his class standing and he is unlikely to be able to legally return to England. A full restoration of his position is impossible.

The connection between position and gentility was contested in the Victorian period as upper-class aristocrats lost their fortunes and the wealthy middle-class aspired to new social heights. *Foul Play* similarly works to separate the concept of a gentleman from its association with wealth and status. However, rather than defending aristocratic gentility despite diminished wealth as the Victorians often did, Reade resets the argument to highlight the working-class roots of any ancient family. As Robert muses in a feverish delirium, “is a gardener a man to be looked down upon by upstarts? When Adam delved and Eve span, where was then the gentleman? Why, where the spade was. Yet I went through the Herald’s College and not one of our mushroom aristocracy... had a spade for a crest.” (135). This focus on the origins of the aristocracy, and the linking of labor to position, serves to validate the colonial enterprise and its ability to make a gentleman out of a nobody, if they are capable enough to make their fortune. This construction of gentleman status endorses Robert’s attempt to raise his position.

The novel insists on the interior nature of a gentleman, a degree of character that is intrinsic and distinct from status, offering a critique of the class obsessions of England. Robert’s internal qualities of masculinity are unchanged by the external events that disrupt his life, despite the emotional impact, and he maintains his superlative external performance of masculinity throughout his false conviction, his time in jail, and his life in the penal colony. His inner gentility becomes heroic action as he repeatedly refuses to engage in criminal activity and goes out of his way to protect innocent people, saving the life of the ingenue, Helen. Even when he is a ticket-of leave man, working as a clerk, he is still “a gentlemen and a scholar” (Reade, *Foul Play* 23). This internal gentility can be read externally, with a barber commenting, “But, I’ll tell you what, taking off this beard

shows me something. *You are a gentleman!?*" (29). Phrenology was resurging in England in the 1860s and 1870s, and the barber believes that the shape of Robert's head and facial features is indicative of his moral character. According to Reade's ideology, Robert's position should be assured based on his character, but Victorian society demands more. Just as gentility can be read externally, it is judged externally, and the novel's focus on the inner qualities of a gentleman is undermined by the consistent demands of Victorian society for external reputation and financial status. Since middle-class masculinity was centered on position and reputation, Robert must redeem both his financial and social standing. However, due to his status as an ex-convict, the Australian colony is insufficient to fully offer Robert that potential.

Rather, he needs to go beyond the reach of England and its empire in order to enact his own imperial mission. He finds such a space when he is shipwrecked on an unknown island in the middle of the Pacific. After Robert leaves Australia,⁶⁴ his ship is scuttled by sailors in an insurance scheme. Robert, Helen, and six sailors escape in a lifeboat. After fighting off starving sailors who want to murder and eat Helen, they spot a land-bird and follow it to the island. By the time they reach the island, only Robert, Helen, and one sailor are alive. The sailor dies a few days later, leaving Robert and Helen alone on the island. This island is "not known to navigators nor down on any chart" (98). However, the distance from the British Empire is not the only element that allows Robert to flourish. Descriptions of the island consistently portray it as fantastical and otherworldly. It is "An island reflected in the sky" (145). "It was a happy dream" (50).

⁶⁴ Although the terms of Robert's release prohibit returning to England, he boards a ship under an alias in hopes of clearing his name once he is in England.

And like Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, Robert and Helen⁶⁵ “had landed in paradise” (86). If the ideal expression of masculinity is “unfettered action in a world out of time and place” (Mallett 156), Robert has finally found the space to maximize his masculinity and surpass the limits that British society has put on him.

Robert embraces the extreme isolation that the island offers him, seeing it as a welcome alternative to Victorian society. Robert and Helen are stranded on the island, “in ... deep isolation from the human race” (126). No-one knows where the ship went down, how far they made it in the lifeboat, whether they’re alive or dead. They have no discernable means of communication with the outside world. And yet, Robert is at peace with this state of affairs. He considers living on an uninhabited island to be a viable option and does not want to rejoin the world. The miniature world he creates around the two of them is sufficient for him. Repeatedly, Robert describes the divine providence that sent them to a habitable island on which he can take care of Helen and she can provide companionship for him. He desires the seclusion, saying “if I had my wish, you and I should never leave this island, nor any other person set a foot on it.” (149). Although he welcomes Helen’s presence, Robert is equally content to stay on the island alone. As with Sir Charles and Vandeleur in *A Terrible Temptation*, Robert’s comfort with removal and confinement remains a distinctly masculine quality. Helen begs him to concentrate not on “painting and patching my prison; but bring it all to bear on getting me *out* of my prison. Call sea and land to our rescue. Let them know a poor girl is here in unheard-of,

⁶⁵ The relationship between Robert and Helen is complicated. Robert is disguised as John Hazel, so Helen is unaware they have met before the ship’s voyage. He is desperately in love with her, but knows he has no chance of winning her love as an ex-convict. Helen is engaged to Arthur Wardlaw, the man who framed Robert and arranged to sink the ship. During their time on the island, Robert and Helen occupy different dwellings and live as brother and sister.

unfathomable misery – here in the middle of this awful ocean” (103). She does not want to make life habitable on the island; she wants to escape.

Robert quickly masters the island environment and engineers an escape for Helen, but he continues to reject Victorian society. Since his ingenuity knows no bounds, Robert crafts a plan whereby he catches ducks, attaches notes with the island’s coordinates on them, and, when concerned that the ducks might fly all the way to America without resting, ties sacks of rocks to the ducks’ legs so they will tire sooner and land on the deck of a ship. After only 48 ducks, his plan is successful and he draws a rescue boat to the island. However, in all his notes, he refers only to the existence of Helen and when help arrives, he chooses to remain on the island. Although he is the master of the island, he is still unable to return to England, as his position in society remains unchanged. “He has been driven from society by a foul slander,” and he has yet to rehabilitate his external position (179). While living on the island, Robert has achieved mastery of his environment and gone far to bring in the comforts and routines of England. However, in his contentment on the island and desire to stay, his actions suggest an inclination for island life in accordance with English fears of ‘going native,’ rather than the colonizing mission at the heart of imperialism. British imperialism retains domestic England as the center of the world, morally and sentimentally. Colonial spaces are meant to be used for their resources but kept at a distance. They are not intended to replace England. In order to redeem his position, Robert must fully embrace his imperial potential.

He does just that on the island, embarking on a colonial fantasy that borrows heavily from *Robinson Crusoe*, the prototypical colonial novel. Said argues that “the imperial quest” is at the heart of *Robinson Crusoe*, which links imperialism to the fantasy

of mastering a space and creating one's own world⁶⁶ (*Power* 243). In true Robinson Crusoe fashion, Robert's skills are seemingly unlimited. He makes bellows and begins blacksmithing, makes ink from cochineal, distills laudanum, creates a waterproofing material, blows glass, makes cement, and harvests blubber from a beached whale. He also replicates the conventional patterns of Victorian life, fashioning a sundial to keep track of time and holding church services with Helen. He makes himself master over his environment, fashioning it in the image of Victorian society. Helen acknowledges this mastery, "like a subject paying homage to her sovereign," providing external confirmation of his conquest and his masculinity (150). It is in this colonial fantasy that Robert will be able to fashion a new identity, along with this new world.

Significantly, Robert's ability to thrive on this island is directly linked to his English education which emphasizes English ways of knowing and the corresponding mission to spread civilization. His "learning and fortitude, strengthened by those great examples learning furnishes, maintained a superiority, even in the middle of the Pacific" (74). Although he is referred to as an inventor repeatedly, his creative power, which makes his dominion of the island possible, is ultimately connected to his education, not his ingenuity. He explains, "I do things that look like acts of invention, but they are acts of memory. I could show you plates and engravings of all the things I have seemed to invent. A man who studies books instead of skimming them can cut a dash in a desert island" (137). While the reader might be hard pressed to take this statement at face value, particularly considering the wild duck escape plan, the novel repeatedly insists on the

⁶⁶ Notable studies of *Robinson Crusoe* and imperialism have also been done by Martin Green and Patrick Brantlinger.

need for a University education. It is his British education, the novel reiterates, that allows Robert to shape the island to his desires.

Robert controls not only the island space, but depictions of it as well, giving him full command. During their time on the island, Robert and Helen explore widely and make a map of their new land, both marking and naming the various geographic features. Maps are a significant force for the perpetuation of imperial power, as they both claim territory and disseminate those claims (Jackson 5-6). The spread of territory across a map made a powerful visual assertion of power. In making his map, Robert takes liberties with the representation, filling in spaces as he imagines them to be. When Helen objects to this, he “pleaded that all geographers, when they drew maps, were licensed to fill in a few such touches, where discovery had failed to supply particulars. Helen had always believed religiously in maps, and was amused when she reflected on her former credulity” (116). In his map-making, Robert turns his conception of the island, one that he acknowledges to be partially based in the imagination, into an authoritative physical document. He lays claim not only to all the land he sees, but land that he merely imagines as well. By likening his map to the maps of all other newly discovered places, Robert highlights the tenuous nature of imperial claims. This undercurrent troubles the seeming stability of British imperialism.

Godsend Island, as Robert and Helen name it, is the ideal imperial space precisely because it is fictitious and control over it can never be lost. Said notes the double-edged sword of referencing colonial spaces, because “British power ... made passing references to these massive appropriations possible; but the further lessons are no less true: that these colonies were subsequently liberated from direct and indirect rule” (*Culture* 66).

Even before movements for independence were successful, multiple instances of rebellion⁶⁷ undermine a stable sense of power. Godsend Island, however, has no native population to rebel. It is the empty space that historical colonies were so often imagined to be, a land full of wealth and resources to be claimed. Not only does this erasure of native peoples cloak the abuses of imperialism, the name itself poses the imperial mission as a God-given one.

Colonial Australia may be insufficient for Robert's ascension, but his colonial activities on this uninhabited island enable his improved financial situation, the restoration of his reputation, and his return to England, all of which combine to strengthen his masculine identity. Robert's time on the island gives him access to the evidence he needs to clear his name, the crucial step in restoring his position⁶⁸. This evidence is material to his criminal case but, more broadly, reveals the continued dishonorable actions of the man who framed him, which provides motivation for the legal system to reopen Robert's case. Without this evidence, Robert's return to England would be impossible, given the legal prohibition against convicts returning. Once his legal issues can be resolved, financial status becomes key. Even with his name legally cleared, the scandal associated with it would impede his finding a position as a clergyman. Robert needs the professional independence that wealth offers. He achieves this by claiming land rights to the island and leasing them to a Californian company after he departs. Although

⁶⁷ By 1869, when Reade was writing this England had dealt harshly with the Indian Rebellion of 1857, an event which unsettled many of the colonial assumptions of domestic England. They were also in the process of ceding portions of governmental control to Canada and Australia through the policy of responsible government.

⁶⁸ Two sailors on their deathbed leave a sworn statement in a prayer-book testifying that the ship was deliberately sunk. Robert also finds a letter from Arthur Wardlaw on the island that he uses to establish Wardlaw forged the original note. These pieces of evidence work together to uncover the pattern of embezzlement and forgery that Wardlaw has committed and clearing Robert's name.

this uninhabited island is not a traditional colony, both the strong links to *Robinson Crusoe* and Robert's exploitation of its natural resources to build a domestic fortune mark this as a colonial enterprise. Victorian novelists "aligned the holding of power and privilege abroad with comparable activities at home" (Said, *Culture* 76), and imperial dominion offers Robert a place in English society. Since he possessed the internal qualities ascribed to masculinity so superlatively throughout the novel, and yet was unable to meet Victorian social standards, empire is posed as a way to circumvent the rules of domestic England.

Robert's struggle to redeem his public reputation plays out against a background in which personal identity is both highly fraught and highly prized. Robert is convicted of forgery and multiple characters reiterate that this crime is worse than murder (164, 181). Although no reason is given by the characters who so assess the weight of this crime, the parallels between this action and the mimicry skills of Arthur Wardlaw, the villain, are striking. The initial introduction of Arthur notes that he "was blessed or cursed with Mimicry; his powers in that way really seemed to have no limit, for he could imitate any sound you liked with his voice, and any form you liked with his pen or pencil" (6). It immediately goes on to say that "he was one man under his father's eye, and another down at Oxford" (6). It is certainly not unusual for a son to use the freedom of college to stretch the boundaries of proper behavior or parental approval, but the fact that Arthur can convincingly become a different man, rather than merely behaving differently, is significant (6). The first use of these powers we see is Arthur imitating "the exact tones" of Mr. Champion, the vice-president of the college, in order to mock him and he is nearly expelled for this offense. The next use of these skills is when Arthur forges the financial

note that leads to Robert's conviction. Throughout the novel, Arthur's mimicry is never used for positive ends. At the end of the novel, when his multiple crimes, from forgery to insurance fraud to scuttling a ship and killing the passengers and sailors aboard, are revealed, he becomes insane and spends his time in the asylum writing letters "in the handwriting of Charles I, Paoli, Lord Bacon, Alexander Pope, Lord Chesterfield, Nelson, Lord Shaftesbury, Addison, the late Duke of Wellington, and so on" (226). In the words of his father, "God has punished him," and his own identity is gone, lost among identities he can only borrow. The ease with which Arthur can assume new identities reveals a grave instability in Victorian society. The focus on public surveillance of a man's character was based on the belief that a man could be assessed, and known, through such means. Victorian business and society was predicated on being able to read other people. Public performance was theorized to align with private selves and a person's interior qualities. If knowledge of others is so uncertain, the social and professional decisions men make are inherently insecure.

If assuming another man's identity is such a heinous crime, there are serious implications for Robert's actions as well. Over the course of the novel, he assumes two different aliases, James Seaton and Reverend John Hazel. This cloaking of his actual identity is so effective that the narrator refers to him solely by his aliases, even though the reader is aware that these 'other' men are, in fact, Robert Penfold. The narrator only reverts to using his given name when other characters learn his true identity. His unmasking is associated with intense emotions, leaving his "manly and intelligent countenance pale and dragged with agony and shame" and causing the "sudden terror and repugnance" of his beloved (161). While this horror is tied in part to Robert's convict

status, it is clear that the misdeed is not just what he was hiding, but the fact that he was hiding anything at all. General Rolleston, the instantiation of British authority as a governor of the penal colony warns Robert that “Now you see the consequences of deceit; it wipes out the deepest obligations” (162). Robert can only have a stable position if his true name can be publicly known.

Transgressive Masculinity

This chapter has so far focused on the rehabilitation of various aspects of masculine performance through temporary removal to a separate space, after which men return to Victorian society having strengthened their performance of normative Victorian masculinity. However, some men are unable to reintegrate because their identity cannot be publicly performed. For these men, a separate space is insufficient. *Foul Play* features “two sailors, messmates, who have formed an antique friendship” (37). Although homosexuality is never explicitly mentioned in the text, the nature of their relationship is made clear, both to the reader and other characters. References to the antique or ancient world were common code in Victorian writings for homosexuality, given the association between Hellenism and homosexuality (Dellamora 23). Characters in the novel identify them as a pair, always referring to them together. They are “the inseparables, Welch and Cooper” (38). Despite a consistently positive portrayal which highlights their effective masculine performance and validates the depth and sincerity of their love, there is no path to normative masculine performance for Tom Welch⁶⁹ and Samuel Cooper. Reade’s novels highlight the public spectacle of masculinity, as well as the need to be known and

⁶⁹ This character is introduced as John Welch but referred to as Tom throughout the novel.

seen. However, Tom and Sam are barred from that public performance. There is no path to open, visible, and active homosexuality in Victorian England.⁷⁰ Tom and Sam can only be integrated into society if they commit to a life in hiding, constantly under the threat of legal action.

Victorian masculinity was rigidly heteronormative and England was notable among Western nations for the harshness of its legal punishments for homosexuality. Sodomy was punishable by capital punishment until 1861, although the last executions occurred in 1835 (Lafitte 16). Despite this, sodomy laws were underenforced out of a desire to keep even a discussion of homosexuality out of the public sphere (Adut 222). The Victorian preoccupation with respectability hinged on the concept of family privacy. As long as immoral behavior, whatever its particulars, was not spoken of publicly or made official in any way, there was an equally unspoken allowance for it to happen behind closed doors. Homosexuality was treated in this same way, although the unspeakability was heightened. The need for silence was so dramatic that legal documents and journalist reports referred to it as the ‘unmentionable’ or ‘nameless’ crime (223). Not only did Victorians fear the effect of public discussion on the morals of populace, but they also feared for the national reputation. As a result, despite the harsh potential penalties, this avoidance encouraged juries to construe the evidence in any other way possible and acquit defendants. In 1856, for instance, the overall conviction rate was 77%, but only 28% of defendants charged with sodomy were convicted (Radzinowicz 330). These convictions were highly classed, as middle- and upper-class men had more

⁷⁰ Even Oscar Wilde, later in the century, whose sexuality was an open secret, eventually faced legal repercussions which destroyed his health and drove him from England. His behavior was tolerated for so long because of his class, success as an author, and the unofficial nature and relative discretion of his sexual actions (Adut 227-8).

opportunity for a private space in which to meet. The majority of the convictions were working-class men meeting in lodging houses or other semi-private spaces.

Foul Play was published in 1869, two decades before homosexuality as we now conceptualize it was a salient identity category. Eve Sedgwick dates modern homosexuality from 1891, with the appearance of *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and *Billy Budd* (*Epistemology* 49). Prior to this, homosexuality was a matter of sexual acts, rather than a recognizable subculture or distinct identity. Although the aristocracy had the beginnings of a homosexual subculture, protected by their wealth and privilege, the middle- and working-classes did not associate homosexual sexual acts with a particular personal style (Sedgwick, *Between Men* 173). By introducing two working-class men in a long-term, romantic homosexual relationship, Reade argues against Victorian views of homosexuality as deviant and unspeakable and anticipates the turn of the century preoccupation with homosexual identity. He presents these characters as exemplary men who otherwise fulfill normative Victorian masculinity, while posing their relationship as an important aspect of their personal identity. This portrayal rejects a heterosexual/homosexual difference and validates the relationship as significant.

As working-class men, Tom and Sam are subject to different expectations of masculine behavior from those of the upper- and middle-class men previously discussed. For working-class men, there is a larger focus on physical strength and labor. Working-class masculinity also has many negative associations, including excessive drinking and violence. Tom and Sam fulfill the positive attributes of masculinity, including strength and bravery, without being implicated in the negative qualities, as other sailors on the ship are. Sam is described as “rugged” and as having a “great brawny hand,” indicating

his physical strength and manly physique (83, 38). His character is equally strong, as his “heart was stout” (53). Although they are shown to be proficient in physical violence, they engage it only to protect themselves or others, defending themselves and saving Robert and Helen when they are attacked by the cannibal sailors. They excel at performing normative masculinity, with the sole exception of their sexuality. However, Reade argues that sexual orientation is not an aspect of a man’s character that needs to be redeemed, despite the inability for it to be publicly known.

Significantly, homosexual love in this novel is presented as genuine and worthy of respect. The narrator describes Tom and Sam’s relationship as “a friendship as of the ancient world, tender, true, everlasting: that sweetened his life and ennobled his death” (82). Despite the consistent characterization of their relationship as friendship, the romantic overtones are clear. Rather than rendering homosexuality unspeakable, the novel validates the depth, strength, and sincerity of their relationship. The narrator presents this love not as a vice, but as a positive quality, describing it in the same terms as heterosexual love and valuing it accordingly. Characters in the novel do the same, with Robert describing it as “really a tender and touching sentiment” (37). Helen, the moral center of the novel, decorates Sam’s grave, touched by the love the sailors have shown each other. Written in a period that abhorred homosexuality, such a positive portrayal of homosexual love, from so many voices, is notable. Despite the degree to which the text validates their love, Tom and Sam still end the novel dead. There is no path to a sustained, public, homosexual relationship in Victorian England.

The only place of which the novel can conceive where they can be together, never to be separated, is the grave. Sam’s dying words to Tom promise this reunion, saying,

“‘Messmate,’ said he, in a voice that was now faint and broken, ‘you and I must sail together on this new voyage. I’m going out of port first; but’ (in a whisper of inconceivable tenderness and simple cunning) ‘I’ll lie to outside the harbor till you come out, my boy.’ Then he paused a moment. Then he added softly, ‘For I love you, Tom’” (82). After Sam’s death, Robert, acting in his position as a clergyman, holds a funeral service that feels more like a marriage ceremony: “Welch repeated those beautiful words after Hazel, and Hazel let him. And how did he repeat them? In such a hearty, loving tone as became one who was about to follow” (87). Joined, if only in death, the last image of Tom is on Sam’s grave, “his arms hanging on each side of the grave, and his cheek laid gently on it ... a loving smile on his dead face” (94). This final line presents a bittersweet marriage bed for the lovers’ embrace. With no potential to rejoin society, this is the only ending possible for them. Although many sailors die in this novel, both when the ship is scuttled and on the lifeboat, no other burials receive such narrative attention. Sedgwick argues that the literary focus on gay death reveals “a fantasy trajectory toward a life *after the homosexual*” (*Epistemology* 127). If domestic England desires uniformity in its national character, Reade highlights the tragic costs of such exclusion, opening the door to alternative masculinities.

This fantasy of exclusion is part of a pattern of fantasies on which sequestration rests. While sensation fiction is known for its wild plots, which make insane asylums and desert islands a possibility, these spaces are uncommon in Victorian life, so this process of sequestration idealizes a male escape fantasy from an always gendered, always public world. Although they seem to offer a distinct space from Victorian society, these alternate spaces are invested in replicating the same roles and routines from which these

men fled. Sir Charles watches the other patients in the asylum with the judging eyes of Victorian society. Robert immediately begins enacting Victorian social and religious rituals on the island. There is no sense of possibility for what island life could be. In Robert's hands, it will invariably be a microcosm of English life. In the same vein, Sir Charles' time at the asylum sidestepped the explicit training in Victorian norms that these institutions provided. Replication and repetition are so ingrained in the model of the insane asylum that it is a fundamental principle of patient treatment. The asylum is overtly invested in replicating these behaviors and releasing patients only when they have conformed to societal expectations. Sequestration offers a pretense of freedom, but an authentic self proves indistinguishable from public performance. This fantasy of sequestration, of a separate space, cloaks the mechanisms of Victorian society and naturalizes Victorian social roles by presenting them as inevitable.

This fantasy is only possible because Reade rewrites these spaces to obscure the sinister elements. On the face of it, Sir Charles in *A Terrible Temptation* and Robert in *Foul Play* act bizarrely. Sir Charles' calm demeanor in the asylum is a peculiar reaction to being forcibly removed from his home, declared insane by doctors he has never met, and taken to an asylum. Robert's desire to spend the rest of his life as a castaway on an uninhabited island ignores all the realities of what it would take to survive such conditions. But even more peculiar than these reactions is the fact that the narrative endorses them by providing these men the safety they presuppose exists. Rather than expose the dangers in these spaces or highlight the precarity of these men, the narrative cooperates in the fantasy. That these men are rewarded for their increasingly normative masculine performance with increased status and stability would seem to indicate an

endorsement of Victorian gender roles, but this is troubled by the recurrence of confinement as a key piece of this sequestration.

The male characters in these novels may remain confident in their personal safety during these separations, but the recurrence of asylums, prisons, and uninhabited islands undercuts the positive presentation of the sequestered spaces, intimating the threat of force with which these masculine roles are deployed and policed. Sir Charles, Vandeleur, and Robert may choose to stay in their confinements, but these spaces double as prisons, evoking the rigidity and repression of Victorian institutions and gender roles. By highlighting both who is excluded from these roles and the ever-present potential for harsh enforcement, Reade offers a critique of normative Victorian masculinity and its narrow definitions. Once learned and rehearsed, masculinity is exercised as control over others, whether that is a husband's authority or colonial rule. Rejoining society is conditional on a reconstruction of identity through normative masculine performance and position. Alternate spaces seem to offer freedom, but it is illusory and serves only to reify the standards from which they sought release.

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