

Bound by Narrative: 'Reading' the Female Body and Genre in Nineteenth-Century
British Literature

Charlotte Eliza Brake Kelso

Submitted in fulfilment of the Degree of Masters of Philosophy in the School of
Humanities, Department of English and Creative Writing

The University of Adelaide

September 2019

Table of Contents

Abstract	4
Thesis Declaration	5
Acknowledgements.....	6
Introduction: The female body, the male gaze, and discourses of femininity	7
Chapter One: George Eliot’s <i>The Mill on the Floss</i> and the Overflow from the Realist Body	27
Chapter Two: The Uncontainable Female Body in Henry Rider Haggard’s <i>She: A History of Adventure</i>	67
Chapter Three: Self-Fashioning New Woman Identity in George Egerton’s “The Regeneration of Two”	103
Conclusion	141
Works Cited	147

Abstract

In George Eliot's 1860 realist novel, *The Mill on the Floss*, Henry Rider Haggard's 1887 adventure romance *She: A History of Adventure*, and George Egerton's 1894 New Woman short story, "The Regeneration of Two", the female body becomes a representative surface upon which is inscribed the discourses and conflicting ideologies of the social context. This thesis examines authors' engagement with conventional narratives of femininity in their representations of the physical female body, and in its absence or presence. The representation of female characters within frameworks of genre both reflects and represents changing concerns about bodily identity, gender, and national identity.

Thesis Declaration

I certify that this work contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in my name, in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text. In addition, I certify that no part of this work will, in the future, be used in a submission in my name, for any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution without the prior approval of the University of Adelaide and where applicable, any partner institution responsible for the joint-award of this degree.

I give permission for the digital version of my thesis to be made available on the web, via the University's digital research repository, the Library Search and also through web search engines, unless permission has been granted by the University to restrict access for a period of time.

I acknowledge the support I have received for my research through the provision of an Australian Government Research Training Program Scholarship.

Charlotte Eliza Brake Kelso 08/07/2019

Acknowledgments

This thesis would not have been possible without the support of a number of significant people. Firstly, my supervisor, Associate Professor Mandy Treagus, and co-supervisor Dr Maggie Tonkin, for their guidance, encouragement, and patience, and for motivating me to pursue postgraduate studies through their inspiring courses during my time as an undergraduate. I am also incredibly grateful to the University of Adelaide and the Australian Government for the financial and educational support I have received during my candidature, and to the staff of the Department of English and Creative Writing and School of Humanities.

Thank you to Dr Felicity Brake and Associate Professor Richard Kelso, Mum and Dad, for their constant, unwavering support of my education, and for encouraging me to pursue any and all of the many and varied things I fill my life with. To Fergus Kelso for keeping me updated on memes, to Robert Macfarlane, my love and my ever-dedicated 2am proofreader, to Céline Zerna for her constant support, and to my devoted partners in writing, Beatrice, Timmy, and Tim Tam.

Introduction

The female body, the male gaze, and discourses of femininity

“The discourse of man is in the metaphor of woman.”

(Spivak 44)

Cultural understandings of the embodiment of femininity have undergone major shifts and changes throughout history, though perhaps none so significant to modern conceptions of femininity as in the Victorian period. From scientific understandings of the female body as evolutionarily inferior to male bodies, the physically and mentally restrictive modes of dress, and the ideology of separate spheres, to the emergence of feminism and women’s suffrage at the *fin de siècle*, the Victorian period was a time of both regression and progress in gender equality, and of ambivalent expectations of women. The female body and its performative signifiers of identity were thus sites of conflict and subjects of contention, with Victorian women’s bodies both bound to and shaped by narratives of morality and propriety. These narratives, whether implicitly or explicitly, converge upon the Victorian feminine ideal, a “golden mean” (Thayer 159) of womanhood “poised over contradictory discourses which the rise of capitalism brought to climactic excess” (Talairach-Vielmas 5). This thesis examines the female body as a representative surface upon which the discourses and conflicting ideologies of the social context are inscribed. The position of the female body in the Victorian period is both reflected in and upheld by its representation and presence in cultural products such as literature, which demonstrate and perform the changing social standing of women through narrative.

The physical body is as much constructed by ideological systems as it is by its biological and physiological makeup. As “a microcosm replicating the anxieties and vulnerabilities of the macrocosm” (Warwick and Cavallaro 14), the body is bound to the context in which it functions. As Alexandra Warwick and Dani Cavallaro suggest, the individual body “can never be assessed, studied, indeed enjoyed, according to extralinguistic criteria: its representations are always incarnations of belief systems and always bear witness to a society’s validation of certain attitudes and stigmatising of others” (6-7). At the same time, the body both “practices and signifies identity” (P. Gilbert 15), combining and replicating tropes and signifiers of identity as a method of self-fashioning. As a representative surface that both performs identity and subjectivity, while also reflecting the dominant cultural ideology, the body then exists as a text that both inscribes and is inscribed by the “discourses and material practices that constitute its social environment” (Cranny-Francis 2). The Victorian woman’s body, represented within contemporaneous texts, is thus represented in relation to dominant understandings of femininity – whether in support or subversion of those ideals.

This thesis uses the symbolic re-writing of the female body as a point from which to explore how Victorian texts represent women’s narratives. Through close readings of literature written between 1860 and 1894, namely George Eliot’s *The Mill on the Floss* (1860), Henry Rider Haggard’s *She* (1886-7), and George Egerton’s short story “The Regeneration of Two” (1894), this project explores feminine embodiment in the second half of the Victorian period. These three texts, examples of Victorian literary realism, Adventure romance, and New Woman fiction respectively, span a time period during which the position of women and indeed, of Victorian Britain, underwent a great shift. As Casey Finch has suggested, “[t]he

body's relation to itself, to its clothing, to reproduction, to its political and architectural environment, is reshaped in the second half of the nineteenth century" (340). Issues of bodily identity, boundaries, and image are "basic concerns which are periodically foregrounded, coming into sharper focus in periods of particular tensions" (P. Gilbert 2), and during this period these issues, and the tensions that accompanied them, became pervasive anxieties that would shape the social and legal world for the next century. During this time, Britain saw the publication of Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* (1859), the death of Prince Albert in 1861, the passing of the Second and Third Reform Acts (1867, 1884), and the Married Women's Property Acts of 1870 and 1883. In this period, the First Boer War broke out (1880-1), and amidst the passing of the Labouchere Amendment condemning homosexuality between men in 1885, and the growing of the women's suffrage movement, the social climate was one in which anxieties about sexual deviance, cultural degeneration, and women's social position came to the fore, challenging deep-seated conceptions of masculinity and national identity. As Pamela K. Gilbert suggests, "the more highly charged the discourse ... the more anxiety is displayed in the discussion of what the "essential" properties, including boundaries, of the body are" (16). Thus, during a time of changing perceptions of women's power and their social and legal entitlements, contemporary texts reflect and comment upon these issues.

Though the nineteenth century was ostensibly a time that privileged scientific discourse and rational thought, the Victorian cultural imagination was "essentially mythic, though it trie[d] to be scientific, moral, and "real"" (Auerbach, *Woman* 1), saturating its cultural products and discourse with "clichéd rhetoric ... conveying Victorian ideology in narratives of all sorts, whether fantastic or realistic, fictional or

nonfictional, from advice manuals to political, economic, or scientific essays” (Talairach-Vielmas 39). In turn, in a period characterised by contradictory and prescriptive discourses surrounding femininity, the Victorian female body is symbolically constructed by and physically inscribed by these narratives and discourses. Women in Victorian Britain were bound by strict codes of gender, determined by conservative morality and behavioural mores. They had limited legal rights, even after the Married Women’s Property Acts, which granted them the right to own property and inherit and keep money independently from their husbands, and were disenfranchised until 1928. The ‘Angel in the House’ was a persistent cultural ideal throughout the Victorian period, originating in Coventry Patmore’s 1854 poem of the same name. The ideal woman was seen as delicate and small, submissive and meek-willed yet loving, and spiritual in her corporeality, existing within the domestic sphere. Following the publication of Darwin’s *Origin of Species*, and with the popularity of physiognomy as a study of character, scientific and evolutionary discourses reinforced conceptions of women as physiologically and mentally inferior to men. This further reinforced the Biblical view of women as inherently more prone to sin, while also perpetuating the image of woman as fragile and suited to the domestic world. In this way, the female body was a body perceived to have inherent tendency towards immorality, and at its core weaker and more unstable than the male body, with unknown but latent and transgressive sexual agency. Thus, Victorian ideology about women aimed to contain and nullify this agency through using discourses that emphasised a dichotomy of (good) women’s incorporeality and submissiveness, effectively disembodiment and desexualising the female body, while condemning sexual agency and desire.

Since the publication of Laura Mulvey's *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema*, Gaze Theory and the concept of the Male Gaze has come to prominence not only in film and literary studies, but also in popular culture. For Mulvey, the traditional power dynamic between men and women is one where men are active and women are the passive bearer of the gaze: "women are simultaneously looked at and displayed, with their appearance coded for strong visual and erotic impact ... [both] as erotic object for the characters within the screen story, and as erotic object for the spectator within the auditorium" (837-8). While having clear applicability in visual mediums such as film and art, this gaze is also present within fiction, with women becoming bearers of the gaze both by characters within texts and by the reader. Though Mulvey's theory was originally formulated in relation to film studies, the way women are represented in texts relies on visual codes that display women as if being observed or looked over by the narrator-as-spectator. This thesis thus utilises Mulvey's theory to examine women's visual representation in texts. As expressed in Gayatri Spivak's statement that "the discourse of man is in the metaphor of woman" (169), the ways in which women are portrayed and textually represented express patriarchal discourses about women and femininity, not only in social perceptions of how women should look, act, and inhabit space, but also in the representation of women as objects of male desire.

As critics such as Michie, Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, and Laurence Talairach-Vielmas have established, Victorian texts overwhelmingly represent the female body according to a system of symbolic representational codes that "betray[] at all times the doxa of its culture" (Talairach-Vielmas 39). These codes form a system of description in which cliché, metatrophe, synecdoche, and fragmentation act

to objectify, de-sexualise, sexualise, or colonise the female body (Michie 84): as

Talairach-Vielmas suggests, this

rhetoric of feminine description aimed at erasing the female body through endless series of metonymies, litanies of body parts that annihilated the heroine's physicality ... [T]he descriptions of the female body reflect contemporary ideology: female bodies appear only to disappear, female flesh vanishes behind tropes and figures that contain improper corporeality. Through the codes of physiognomy, through the use of dead metaphors and synecdoches, from the prototypical heroine's golden hair to her cloudless blue eyes, feminine representation laces up bodies. (39)

Through textually representing the physical female body via symbol, or through replacing one (taboo) body part with a more innocent body part, the woman's corporeality is compromised and de-sexualised, becoming instead associated with imagery that distances the reader from the female body being described. This creates a "space between signifier and signified" that contains the female body within the bounds of propriety, removing her individuality and agency, and thus her potential for transgression (Michie 84). These same codes can be used to draw attention to the woman's physical form through its eroticisation via fragmentation: as Mulvey suggests, women become "a perfect product, whose body, stylised and fragmented by close-ups, is the content of the [text], and the direct recipient of the [reader's] look" (841). In both these cases, the woman's individuality and agency is removed, with power displaced onto the spectator, or reader of her textual/sexual body. Through this "mapping of sign upon sign" (Stewart 4), female bodies are thus rewritten as symbolic and intangible, or eroticised and objectified in a colonial 'conquest' of the female body.

This thesis examines how authors critique and explore the limited narratives available to women. These narratives involve not only the actual narrative trajectories that the female characters follow, but also the narratives and discourses

implicit within representations of the physical female body and its inextricable associations with femininity, class, race, sexuality, and agency. I also explore metatropes, and how tropes of feminine representation are used to disrupt or uphold other tropes. Helena Michie defines the metatrope as a form of “double metaphor ... where the figure used to describe a heroine is conventionally recognisable as itself a chain of metaphors ... provid[ing] a double frame, two layers of code through which the heroine must be “read”” (87): if a heroine is likened to an artwork, sculpture, or a mythical or literary figure, the author alludes not only to the direct image of that figure, but the layers of meaning and tropes associated with that image. For example, likening a character to Medusa not only draws upon the image of an angry, deadly woman with snake-like hair, but the myths and social connotations of the Medusa image, connecting the associated woman to a long line of other deviant female characters depicted as Medusa. However, while Michie sees metatropes as a distancing strategy, with authors encoding the female body within meaning so multilayered it becomes inaccessible, I examine metatropes further for the ways in which authors draw upon tropes to challenge and subvert textual conventions, facilitating the disruption of “tropes that have hardened in meaning and become inflexible ... so as to articulate new meanings and explode discursive simplifications” (Gilbert and Rossing 98). When used conventionally, a trope or an image of femininity upholds what it was intended to depict. When subverted, parodied, or deconstructed, the author exposes the assumptions and flaws inherent in the trope, and the expectations it sets up within the text. I explore how Eliot, Haggard, and Egerton draw upon images of femininity and allude to intertextual figures and tropes to depict their heroines, and how through the use of metatropes to

disrupt or uphold conventional narratives, they rewrite narratives of femininity and the female body.

Within texts, women's narratives were largely confined to the domestic sphere, being limited to "procreative and genealogical fables of inheritance, marriage, and death" (Showalter, *Sexual* 18), with a plot that ultimately ended in the woman fulfilling one of the latter options. The female body was bound by not only strict codes of propriety and class, but also by racial and evolutionary discourses that posed the female body as inherently lesser to the male body. As will be further discussed, the material fashioning of the body is also significant within and to these discourses. Material culture physically bound the female body, at a time when corsetry and restrictive clothing limited a woman's range of movement and ability to undertake exercise, asserting and upholding her position within the domestic sphere through keeping women physically weak, delicate, and submissive. In this thesis, I establish the influence of these discourses upon the embodied female subject in literature, and examine how these anxieties shape and are shaped by the female body and its representations.

As each chapter explores a different text, so do they explore different genres, and the generic conventions and frameworks the authors use (or, indeed, subvert): Victorian literary realism, Adventure romance, and the New Woman short story. Each genre's distinct set of conventions contributes to the exploration of themes and issues within the text, and so each genre and its framework performs an ideological function. The different genres of each of the texts are thus significant for their representation of femininity. Genre "has less to do with intrinsic properties of particular texts than the needs and concerns of readers reading those texts – a

particular era and cultural group, its concatenation of fears and desires and market forces which take shape from and feed those trends” (P. Gilbert 3-4). Like texts, then, genres are gendered and classed, being “a meta-reading, or a set of reading instructions, that coexists with a text and limits the range of its multiplicity” (5). As a set of instructions about how to interpret a text or a narrative, it also becomes instructions on how to interpret the female body: as the domestic angel, as the demonic and transgressive *femme fatale*, or as a figure of agency and feminine power. Genre thus not only reflects structural and narrative conventions, but also the ideological function of the text and its socio-political intentions. I consider realism, adventure romance, and the New Woman short story, examining their responses to traditional narratives of femininity. The project also explores how the presence or absence of the physical female body, and the body’s representation within metaphor, metatropes, synecdoche, or literal description, uphold the genre’s ideological function, reflecting the contemporary position of women and either critiquing or upholding conventional narratives of femininity through the female characters’ narrative trajectories and physical representations.

In Victorian texts, the “intense, anxious focus on the represented and representative body interpenetrate the discourses of literature and the differentiation of genre” (P. Gilbert 17) and in the texts chosen, this is particularly evident. The physical bodies of the female characters, the perceptions of their bodies within the narratives, and the textual representations of their appearance, are all significant to the text’s themes, to the narrative, and to the genre and ideological function of the text. In *Mill*, Maggie’s physical difference is narratively significant, with her dark hair and skin and tall stature both placing her outside of the bounds of normative femininity, and reflecting her rebellion against it. Her physical transformation from

wild “Bedlam creatur” (Eliot, *Mill* 60) to an exceptionally beautiful “nymph” (484) is reflected in her inability to be contained by the conventional narratives demanded by the material constraints of Eliot’s mode of publication, with Eliot drawing upon intertextual narratives and other generic frameworks in order to provide a means for Maggie to transcend restrictive narratives of femininity. In *She*, Ayesha is the white queen of an African nation, whose beauty is so powerful that she must veil herself. Her appearance is constructed through metaphors and references to Biblical, mythological, and contemporary cultural and racial ideology, depicting her as a *femme fatale* whose sexuality and power pose a threat not only to hegemonic masculinity, but also to white British power. Her intellect and matriarchal rule over the Amahagger also posit Ayesha as a New Woman, a developing phenomenon at the time. However, Haggard’s self-stated aims were to make masculine an “emasculated” literary field (“About Fiction” 175), and his use of contemporary evolutionary theory is seen in Ayesha’s ultimate downfall and Darwinian devolution in the Pillar of Life. Conversely, Egerton’s short story, “The Regeneration of Two”, critiques narratives of femininity both structurally and narratively, with protagonist Fruen undergoing a regeneration and transformation from society woman to New Woman, not only growing in mental fortitude and independence, but also in physical strength and majesty through abandoning her corset and becoming the leader of a commune of outcast women. By examining the presence of the female body in these texts, the thesis demonstrates what this presence indicates in terms of broader social context, and how authors use this presence to forward a specific narrative of femininity.

This project explores “the interplay between the unrepresentable and its representation... [and its centrality] to both the depiction and erasure of female

sexuality” (Michie 9-10) in relation to *The Mill on the Floss*, *She*, and “The Regeneration of Two”. I examine theories of genre, exploring how genre both reflects cultural understandings of texts, and creates a framework by which to understand the text and its function within a context. Further, the thesis demonstrates how different generic frameworks represent different narratives of femininity, both through how the physical body is represented, and through demanding certain narratives to fulfill or subvert generic conventions. As a “basic text for the reading of self” (P. Gilbert 5), the body and its representations can be understood as a reflection and construction of the social context. This thesis reads the body as a representative surface, analysing how tropes and signifiers of identity are both inscribed upon the body and by the body as means of self-fashioning. Victorian studies has predominantly focused on femininity as a construct, with the representation of the female body secondary to her function in the text. This thesis recognises the female body and embodiment as crucial to the representation of women in texts, and provides original contributions to the field in its discussions of the three major texts.

I also examine descriptions and representations of the Victorian female body and its physical and narrative construction via narratives of self-fashioning, discussing how dress acts as both signifier and metaphor for female agency and its absence. These fictional representations of women are compared with scientific literature and conduct manuals of the period, demonstrating how women’s narrative possibilities were constructed according to ideological and social agendas. Through critical analysis, the project explores how fictional representations reflect socio-political agendas of the late-nineteenth century, and how authors draw upon and contribute to existing scientific and ideological discourse to represent narratives of femininity and female bodies in certain ways. In doing so, this research resists the

current critical tendency to read female bodies and their representations as entirely symbolic, created according to and existing solely in relation to the myth of the Victorian feminine ideal, and contributes to a field with limited extant knowledge. This thesis understands the body both as a text upon which narratives are inscribed, and as a physical body existing in relation and reaction to those narratives, with dress as an extension of both those narratives and of the body itself.

The body's material fashioning via dress is significant both narratively and structurally, forming a means of interpreting the wearer's position and narrative trajectory through its signification of not only identity, but also relating the wearer to tropes of material fashioning and contemporary ideology about clothing. As Madeleine C. Seys examines in *Fashion and Narrative in Victorian Popular Literature: Double Threads*, women's dress and its details function "not as frivolous embellishment but as signifiers to be read within their narratives" (1). Within texts, dress functions as "expression of or analogy for individual character, disguise, socio-political and sexual symbol, and metaphor for narrative and representation themselves" (1). Dress plays "symbolic, communicative and aesthetic roles" and expresses the character's psychology: "indeed it knots them together, and can express all simultaneously" (Wilson 3). As a woman's dress reflected her identity, then, so was ideal femininity in the Victorian period "gauged by its relationship to the world of beauty and fashion" (Talairach-Vielmas 5). On an implicit, symbolic level, the bodily restrictions and framing strategies of Victorian women's clothing are not merely "form[s] of external control"; rather, "those strategies are internalised to the extent that the subject is fashioned from the inside no less than from the outside" through the "creation and cultivation of distinctive modes of behaviour and systems of belief" (Warwick and Cavallaro 15). Similarly, Warwick and Cavallaro

argue that dress “contributes to the symbolic translation of materiality into cultural images or signifiers ... aid[ing] the construction of subjectivity as *representation*” (3, italics in original). Both the physical garment and its symbolism shapes the wearer’s physical body and narrative, while fashioning the body according to cultural formulations of normative gender performance and ideal femininity. As gender is “an identity tenuously constituted in time ... produced through the stylisation of the body ... [gender] must be understood as the mundane way in which bodily gestures, movements, and styles of various kinds constitute the illusion of an abiding gendered self” (Butler 140). In this way, Victorian womanhood and gendered identity are constructed by the physical body and its material fashioning, constructed either according to contemporary ideals of femininity or in subversion of those ideals.

This project builds upon critical feminist approaches developed in *The Flesh Made Word* and *Moulding the Body in Victorian Fairy Tales and Sensation Fiction*, extending upon both Michie’s and Talairach-Vielmas’ approaches to texts, and scholarship on the texts in question. These texts were published in 1990 and 2007 respectively, with limited extant work following similar critical approaches since then. In this thesis I develop and shed new light upon understandings of femininity and the female body in late-Victorian literature, as well as providing an holistic feminist lens for contextual analysis of women’s representation and embodiment in Victorian texts. While extant works have focused on the representation of femininity, and of its adherence to or subversion of ideals, I work through how these femininities are enacted and negotiated through the female body and its representation and manipulation via corsetry and dress, in order to understand the nature of gender performance and bodily representation at a time of cultural crisis. Michie’s *The Flesh Made Word* is formative in its uncovering and consideration of “gaps between the

representation of the female body and its ‘realities’”, and explores modes and codes of representation and description, such as metaphor, synecdoche, and cliché (8). Michie argues that the representation of the female body in Victorian texts “is no simple case of *différance*, but a historically aggravated instance of the violent and marked separation of signifier and signified” (84). I follow this argument, but extend the discussion to consider how Eliot’s *Mill* negotiates the limitations of the conservative moral codes demanded by her publishers, and how she challenges conventional representations of the female body by drawing upon non-realist forms of narrative in order to transcend these limitations. Additionally, I discuss Haggard’s *She* in terms of its politics of feminine erasure, considering how the female body is first glorified and then degraded as a means to both posit a hypermasculine literary form and react against the changing status of women. Finally, I explore how in “The Regeneration of Two”, New Woman author George Egerton actively subverts the symbolic erasure of the female body to posit new forms of feminine subjectivity, and examines how the short story form allows for these new subjectivities.

The thesis also furthers extant work in establishing a feminist methodology for the analysis of the female body in Victorian literature that reassesses the absence of embodied, physical experience in Victorian representations of women. The failure to recognise the physical female body continues a trend originating in the Victorian literature itself, wherein descriptions of bodily experience are scarce, taken as taboo and replaced with symbolism and rhetoric, “reced[ing] into an overproduction of signs” (Talairach-Vielmas 40). In doing so, it expands on current theoretical understandings of the female body in literature, demonstrating how the body confers these meanings upon the environment, and the nature of its relation to the social context – namely, the way in which identity is self-fashioned rather than imposed,

but also how these meanings and signifiers of identity are physically imposed upon the body via social codes of dress. I explore the physical manifestations of these signifiers and their representation in fiction, examining how they are used to both create the façade of a coherent identity, and to show the deterioration or unveiling of the ‘true’ nature of this identity. My analysis both contributes original work on each major text, and develops an important critical approach that has seen limited scholarship in Victorian studies.

I frame this project within a theoretical understanding of the “author function”, as laid out by Pamela K. Gilbert (7). In considering authorial presence, the project resists undertaking an analysis based on authorial biography, a “traditional sexist tendency” of and “one of the most serious failures of feminist criticism as a corpus” (P. Gilbert 7). Rather, the thesis follows Gilbert’s methodology in examining the function and intention of the author as it relates to the context and purpose of the text, discussing how authorial gender is “implicated in the construction of their readership, their market position, their generic placement, and finally their position outside [or, in the case of Haggard, inside] the “canon” – and the construction of the canon itself” (7). While Chapter One explores how Eliot negotiates the boundaries and limitations of her position as a female writer within the conservative literary market, Chapter Two examines Haggard’s intentions to reinstate hegemonic colonial masculinity through writing Adventure romance. Chapter Three focuses on Egerton’s holistic and female-centred representation of New Womanhood, consistent with her self-stated aims to write woman “as she knew herself to be, not as man liked to imagine her” (“A Keynote to *Keynotes*” 58). As “the act of naming [genres] is also an act of reading the bodies of authors and readers by whom the text is produced and consumed”, New Woman fiction both represents new narrative possibilities for

women, and demonstrates the author's own political and social motivations (P. Gilbert 4).

Chapter One of the thesis explores *The Mill on the Floss*, George Eliot's 1860 novel. Although Eliot works within the broad generic frame of Victorian literary realism, her novel pushes the boundaries of this frame, firstly in order to demonstrate the limitations of the marital plot and *Bildungsroman* modes for female development, and secondly, to provide means for protagonist Maggie to transcend these limitations and achieve a narrative trajectory bound to different forms of development. Eliot uses elements of fantasy, the Gothic, and fairy tales to extend the world of 'the real' to realms of memory and the imagination, and Maggie's in-text escapes into her romanticised worlds of books, renunciation, and music, reflect these generic escapes into non-realist and traditionally 'feminine' forms. Furthermore, both Maggie's sensual experience and her physical appearance drive the narrative. Through Maggie's physical appearance, and the symbolic use of mirrors, the gaze, and dress and clothing, Eliot represents Maggie as having her own agency, holding an active and consuming gaze that subverts the traditionally passive stance of the ideal Victorian 'angel'. However, her narrative conclusion does not, and fundamentally cannot continue this trajectory within the realist form and the contemporary social context. Her subversive embodiment of femininity refuses to be contained within realist paradigms and ultimately critiques the very tenets of the genre itself. As Eliot's writing was bound by the material constraints of her conservative distribution networks, the content of her novels, particularly in regards to gender and women's social position, had to occur within strict limits. By ostensibly adhering to conventional narratives while using fantasy and myth to expand the narrative limits,

Eliot is able to work within generic and material constraints to provide Maggie with a more hopeful ending than conventional narratives would allow.

The adventure romance genre of the 1880s used narratives of colonial adventure and discovery to reinforce national identity and masculinity. In writing the “manly, martial” adventure romance novel (Stevenson 73), authors such as Henry Rider Haggard asserted a hypermasculine identity linked to the colonial narrative of discovery and conquest. Chapter Two analyses Haggard’s novel *She*, considering its representation of gender in relation to both the contemporary context, and Haggard’s own concerns about the role of literature. The representation of the eponymous character in the text speaks to anxieties of imperialism, racial degeneration, and of the breakdown of traditional femininity. Generically, the adventure romance reacts to the feminisation of literature by the domestic novel, and Haggard’s depiction in *She* of the hypermasculine conquering the feminised landscape enacts that which he calls for in his essay, “About Fiction”. I provide original insight into areas that are currently lacking in extant scholarship, focusing not only on Ayesha’s physical body and representation via dress, but her negotiation of new forms of femininity alongside racialised discourses of empire and imperialism. I suggest that it is her embodiment of contradicting narratives of femininity, and thus her inability to be contained and controlled, that poses a challenge to the status quo, and leads to her downfall at the conclusion of the novel. In contrast to Eliot’s representation of Maggie as transcending and overflowing from the restraints of traditional realism and femininity, Ayesha, though unable to be held by conventional femininity, is disallowed by the adventure romance form to prevail against white masculine power, and she is ultimately thwarted by the biological fact of her sex. The chapter explores how through representing and glorifying, and subsequently demeaning and erasing

the female body, Haggard upholds traditional conceptions of women, and does so by enforcing these discourses upon the physical female body itself. My discussion of how these discourses are inscribed on the female body and how Ayesha's body becomes a locus for fin-de-siècle anxieties about women provides original contributions to the field of knowledge.

As a New Woman author, George Egerton resists reductive explanations of femininity in favour of new narratives that re-write the female body and embodied feminine experience into the text. New Woman fiction took "a distinctively woman's standpoint", portraying female characters who were not "mere addenda to the heroes", but "had an independent existence, and ... a soul of her own" (Stead 64-65). Chapter Three considers her New Woman short story, "The Regeneration of Two", from the 1894 collection *Discords*, for its embodied representations of female characters, examining how Egerton writes against the symbolic erasure of the female body in Victorian domestic novels and makes present the female body in the text by re-writing women's narratives through narratives of self-fashioning. In the physical, mental, and social transformation of her heroine, Fruen, Egerton critiques normative femininity and the limited narratives that women are afforded within Victorian fiction, using the female body as an interface for the exploration and transformation of Victorian femininity and identity. In the text, the languages of dress and self-fashioning are used to explore identity and subjectivity, while also critiquing the conflicting expectations of women and the artificial performativity of the angelic feminine ideal. In Fruen's growth towards self-actualisation, her body acts as an interface of not only her own negotiation of identity and its signifiers, but also of Egerton's exploration of women's narratives and the systems and conventions that create and uphold limiting ideals of femininity. I undertake an original analysis of the

symbolic and narrative function of dress in Egerton's short story, and discuss the way her body and its shaping by dress is both represented and made present in the text. These are facets of the text that have not been previously considered in extant scholarship, and thus my work provides an original contribution to knowledge. The chapter also considers the text within the generic framework of the New Woman novel, discussing the genre as a reaction to the domestic novel and the limited narratives of femininity it promotes.

In the three texts, the representations of the female characters speak of the position of women within the changing Victorian social world. Through critiquing or breaking free from the limited narratives allowed to women, or as in the case of Haggard, by reasserting these narratives, Eliot, Haggard, and Egerton expose the function of these limited narratives as means to control women's desire through the erasure or containment of their bodies. However, each author's use of these discourses of erasure is contingent upon the generic framework of each text and the literary and ideological function of each genre. This thesis explores how the presence of the physical female body, and the interplay of generic, conventional, and intertextual narratives represents feminine agency and its embodiment in texts.

Chapter One

George Eliot's *The Mill on the Floss* and the Overflow from the Realist Body

In this chapter, I consider Victorian literary realism and its representation of the female body by addressing three main ideas: the conflicts of realism and the *Bildungsroman* for a female development; 'feminine' deviations from realism; and representations of the physical female body within Eliot's narrative.

Victorian literary realism developed at a period in Britain's history with a strong sense of nationalism and national identity, driven by colonial expansion and economic growth – and, as Pam Morris states, “a pleasing sense of inherent superiority over the rest of the world” (76). The novel form had begun its development in the late-eighteenth century, but gained traction as a serious form of literature around the mid-nineteenth century. The 1832 Reform Act extended parliamentary democracy to the middle class, and in 1867 to working-class men (“Key Dates”). Along with rising rates of literacy due to increased rates of school attendance, this saw the growth of an economically powerful middle class with disposable income and leisure time, forming a new demographic of readers that in turn contributed to the popularity of print media, aided by the development of the mechanised printing press making possible the mass distribution of inexpensive print publications. Middle- and working-class lives were thus afforded a new significance as not only the dominant readership, but also the subject of literature. Rather than the idealised, fantastical world of the courtly Romance, literature now brought its focus to everyday lives, speaking to contemporary concerns of the individual's position within a changing society, and the subjective experience of historical occurrences.

The three-volume realist novel is the distinct and characteristic genre of the Victorian era. Francis O’Gorman effectively summarises the form thus:

Realism is a mode of writing embedded in history. It attaches itself to empirical and observable life. Its watchword is credibility. In the nineteenth century realism belongs among the agnostics. It is unconvinced that there is more than what can be known on the earth. . . . Realism proposes the reality of tangible experience. It offers language as that which can call up simulacra of existence in which its readers can believe. . . . It endeavors, at least on the surface, to disguise its own fictiveness, to hide its nature (485).

Its content and form are testament to the period’s values: it aimed to represent life as it was, striving for verisimilitude and particularity through representing the individual within an historical context. This was often achieved through the use of an omniscient narrator and free indirect discourse to provide insight into characters’ interior lives, and to express what would otherwise be unspoken or unarticulated. The shift from a focus upon the expression of universal truth to the exploration of “the individual apprehension of reality” (Morris 77), Ian Watt notes as being influenced by philosophers such as John Locke and René Descartes, who assume the position that “truth can be discovered by the individual through his senses” (12). Realism offered coherent and credible explanations for cause and effect, with clear reasoning of action and consequence based in characters’ psychological motivations and their position within a social and historical context. Similarly, realist narratives moved towards a cohesive and tidy ending, being structurally linear, with conclusions bringing a definite sense of resolution.

Realism has often been considered a traditionally male genre for its place within the androcentric literary canon. As the dominant form of the nineteenth century, and as a form largely preoccupied with encoding the dominant ideology, so did it reflect contemporary concerns and views about women. The ideal Victorian

lady, maternal, and angelic, was expected to marry, to have children, and to exist within the domestic sphere – as distinct from the public world of work, politics, and hegemonic masculinity inhabited by her husband. This femininity was both contingent upon the body's appearance, yet disconnected from a woman's sensual and sexual embodied experience, and fictional representations of women both reflected and contributed to this ideology. Present in the framework of the realist novel was a narrative of femininity and a system of description that provided limited possibilities for women, portraying female characters often solely in their relation to the male characters of the novel, and describing their characters and bodies within a symbolic system of representation that coded the female body and desire.

Structurally, the triple-decker novel “dictated a vision of human experience as linear, progressive, causal, and tripartite”, which upheld and enforced restrictive narratives and limiting possibilities for women (Showalter, *Sexual* 16-17). Conventional narrative endings demanded that a heroine be married by the conclusion of the novel, or to find her way to (an often early, but beautiful) death – to “gently expire from one of those quasi-symbolic brain fevers so apt in the period to strike down heroines with brain enough to be enfevered” (Boumelha 86). Female characters thus tended towards the physically small, angelic, blonde heroine, or the dark-haired, outspoken, morally dubious fallen woman – tropes that, as I will discuss, Eliot draws upon and critiques.

For M. H. Abrams, realism “is written to give the effect that it represents life and the social world as it seems to the common reader”, using subject matter focusing on “ordinary experience”, “the commonplace and the everyday, represented in minute detail” (260-1). Thus, realist novels do not simply reflect contemporary

experience and ideology, but also interpret and expose ideology and its function within society. As Morris points out,

popular novels written in a realist mode can function to naturalise a banal view of the world as familiar, morally and socially categorised and predictable ... reproduc[ing] the gender, class and racial stereotypes that predominate society at large; waywardness and unconventionality of any kind are shown, by means of the plot structure, to lead to punishment and failure of some kind, while morally and socially condoned patterns of behaviour are those rewarded by wealth and opportunities in the case of heroes and love and marriage in the case of heroines. The implicit epistemological message of such realist writing is to insist 'this is how it is', this is 'just the way things are and always will be'. (19)

The realist text is assumed to have been interpreted by the reader as a representation of life 'as it is', and therefore speaking to a readership connected by shared values:

chief among the tactics of the classic realist or readerly text is a form of closure – not simply formal, but ideological – by which the reader is continually produced and addressed as a unified individual human subject, through such means as the convergence at a single and uniform ideological position of a set of hierarchised discourses of which one is always a controlling 'truth-voice'. The dissembling of fictionality and textuality, and a theory of language in which words correspond unproblematically to pre-existing referents in the world ... serve, by obscuring the written nature of the work, to consolidate such naturalising ideologies as the 'nature of things' or 'human nature' (Boumelha 78-9).

As Zelda Austen argues, "Art is not simply descriptive, but also perpetuates what it imitates ... literature often carries with it a tacit endorsement of what it portrays" (554). These assumptions and ideological functions associated with realism contribute to its status as a genre that has historically been linked with a repression of women's voices, one that enforces a patriarchal status quo and a literary tradition where "feminist protest and feminine desire are located only in the interstices of the realist text" (Boumelha 80). Realism has been a contested category, particularly in early feminist criticism, where Toril Moi has found a tendency towards being "unduly censorious of the works of women writers who often wrote under ideological conditions that made it impossible for them to fulfil the demands of the

feminist critics of early 1970s” (49). As I discuss, Eliot’s writing has been subject to these criticisms, and the material constraints and conservative ideological conditions of her writing indeed circumscribe the content of her novels as much as the generic frame.

As a female writer whose works came to define the realist genre, Eliot’s negotiation of femininity within realist frameworks is particularly fraught. Her novels are often criticised for demonstrating the disadvantaged position of women in society, but without following through: as Calder states, “she does not commit herself fully to the energies and aspirations she lets loose in these women. Does she not cheat them, and cheat us, ultimately, in allowing them so little?” (158).

Furthermore, Eliot’s unconventional personal life is often contrasted with her ostensible conservatism. June Skye Szirotny effectively summarises the conflict thus:

How is it possible that a woman who renounced her family’s religion, lived with a married man in violation of the most sacred customs of her society, and pursued ... a profession, in violation of male prerogative, could yet in her fiction seem to support the most conventional view of woman’s mission? (30)

Feminist critics of the 1970s such as Elaine Showalter, Kate Millett, and Calder have criticised Eliot’s feminism, or lack thereof. Showalter argues that in *Maggie*, Eliot “identifies passivity and renunciation with womanhood ... find[ing] it easier, more natural, and in a mystical way more satisfying, to destroy herself”, to the point that “even death is preferable to the pain of growth” (*Literature* 131). Millett comments that Eliot “lived the revolution ... but did not write of it” (139). In contrast, Szirotny’s 2015 biographical study of Eliot’s feminism argues that “however ambivalent George Eliot was about practical matters, she strongly accepted most of the ideals of contemporary feminists” and suggests that “she is more feminist than usually thought” (32). While feminist analysis of Eliot during the 1980s and 1990s

began to broaden debate, Juliet Atkinson has noted that feminist analysis of gender in Eliot's work has slowed since 1996 (84). I note this also, and bridge past and present perspectives to provide a contextual analysis of Eliot's work in which the constraints placed upon her writing allow her to critique and explore the possibilities within those constraints. My analysis takes into account how Eliot works within restrictions both material and ideological to critique and explore the systematic limitations of feminine representation, in order to portray her intellectual and passionate protagonist Maggie Tulliver. In this way, the assumption of a text representing reality "the way things are and always will be" (Morris 19) allows Eliot to work within existing frameworks to represent women's voices.

As a genre read by women, and pioneered and developed by woman novelists such as George Eliot, Elizabeth Gaskell, and the Brontë sisters, realism was the means by which these novelists could assert women's narratives for an audience of women. Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar find that the heroines of Eliot, Gaskell and the Brontës are often "caught between the twin distinctively female temptations of angelic submission and monstrous assertion", with authors placing "a very special emphasis on the problematic role of women in a male-dominated culture" (*Madwoman* 444). A feminist reading "must be grounded in an awareness of the historical and formal possibilities of writing and reading if it is genuinely to explore the relation between the world and the society that produces it and its reading" (Boumelha 81), and this chapter explores Eliot's negotiation of the historical and formal possibilities and the material limitations of her writing. Most of Eliot's novels, *The Mill on the Floss* included, were published by William Blackwood and circulated via Mudie's Select Library. Both modes of publication and distribution demanded that the content of the novels circulated upheld conservative moral and

ideological standards, “exert[ing] control well beyond the physical format of the novel by imposing a strict code of middle-class values on authors and publishers” (Bassett 73). As each novel’s circulation and profit were contingent on their being deemed acceptable by these publishers, there were thus limits to the content Eliot could explore or the social values she could challenge, particularly in regards to gender and women’s position in society. Furthermore, as Penny Boumelha explores in her essay “Realism and the Ends of Feminism”, “even as she stayed largely within the conventions of nineteenth-century realism, Eliot’s writing was able to explore its limits, subject its idea of representation to scrutiny and question its practices” (83). This idea is key to my analysis, as I explore the systems of representation and its limitations, particularly in regards to the portrayal of the protagonist Maggie and her physical body, and to Eliot’s navigation of women’s roles and narrative possibilities.

The Mill on the Floss was first published in three volumes in 1860. The narrative centres upon Maggie Tulliver, and to a lesser extent her older brother, Tom, and their childhood and young adulthood, growing up in a small village in England in the 1820s and 1830s. Each of the three volumes details a different phase of their lives: their childhood, their family’s downfall and Maggie’s renunciation of the self, and Maggie’s re-awakening of her selfhood and subsequent fall and death. The novel can be described as a *Bildungsroman* (“novel of formation”), a narrative form following an individual’s growth and development from childhood to maturity, and a form often used in realist novels of the period. The conventional narrative focuses on “the development of the protagonist’s mind and character ... often through a spiritual crisis” and concludes in “recognition of one’s identity and role in the world” (Abrams 193). In *Mill*, Eliot uses a dual *Bildung* narrative, tracing Maggie and Tom’s lives from childhood into adulthood; however, Eliot’s use of the form

complicates and critiques the conventional narrative. While critics such as Charlotte Goodman argue that Eliot places “virtually equal emphasis on both a male and a female protagonist” (30), it is Maggie whose interior world and character “carries [the reader] through” (Fraiman 141). Tom’s narrative throws off her centrality in an unbalanced doubleness, and this conflict and tension reflects both the characters’ relationship, and Maggie’s relationship to the narrative mode. The sense of unequally weighted doubling in *Mill* thus unsettles the *Bildungsroman* reliance upon the central (male) character, with Maggie’s position at the centre of a complicated *Bildung* not only “contest[ing] the very definition of the *Bildungsroman*, to which a single, central character has been seen as fundamental”, but also unsettling “Tom’s particular story [and] the genre as a whole and its implied values” through its direct gendered comparison (Fraiman 141).

As the meritocratic aims of social mobility and career growth were possibilities largely inaccessible to women, the traditional *Bildungsroman* narrative is inherently connected to a male development. Despite being “twice as ‘[a]cute as Tom” (Eliot, *Mill* 59), in the absence of adequate education, Maggie fundamentally cannot reach the same self-actualisation that is accessible to her brother. Throughout the narrative, Maggie wishes to learn Latin, craves the education Tom receives, and tries to earn money via sewing, all vain attempts to enter the *Bildung* trajectory that is given Tom. While Tom has the potential to follow the conventional *Bildung* narrative trajectory, Maggie is distanced from the genre by the fact of her gender. Eliot thus critiques the limitations of this narrative form through the direct comparison of Maggie and Tom’s growth, with Maggie’s intellectual prowess, and her father’s reluctance to educate her, throwing Tom’s access to education and lack of scholarly aptitude into sharp relief. Whereas Maggie’s prospects are tied to

marriage, for Tom, and for the male protagonist more generally, “marriage is not a goal so much as a reward for having reached his goal; matrimony symbolises his gratification” (Fraiman 140). Whereas the male narrative of development is one based in individual success, there is no parallel for women outside of the marriage plot. In the absence of a fulfilled marriage plot, Maggie remains trapped within the confining expectations of her gender, and her subsequent inability to fulfill the conventional narrative demanded by the generic mode. The tension between Tom and Maggie and their respective narrative possibilities is thus also a generic tension: if Tom represents the realist *Bildungsroman* mode, Maggie’s attempts to be accepted by Tom also speak of her inability to access that narrative possibility.

Though some critics have identified *Mill* as a “distinctly female version[] of the *Bildungsroman*” (Abel et al. 5), like Fraiman, I read *Mill* “less as a wholly alternative structure [of the *Bildungsroman*] than as an ironisation and interrogation of the old ... locat[ing] the continual collisions between gender and received genre in *The Mill on the Floss*, to examine the stress points, the blockages and jammings” (Fraiman 139). Unlike the male-centred *Bildungsroman*,

wherein the protagonist undergoes continuous moral development towards the goal of an integrated personality, Eliot’s novel moves disjunctively among various moments in the conflict-ridden life of Maggie Tulliver. There is a stepped chronology, but no continuity and little promise of durable social adjustment. (Esty 148)

The disjointed temporal trajectory and continual sense of frustrated hope demonstrate the tensions and failings at the core of the male-focused *Bildung*. While Tom is able to explore opportunities, and to travel and to traverse the public space freely, Maggie’s life is one of “agonising, claustrophobic circularity” (Fraiman 141) in which the *Bildung* narrative poses more problems than it provides development. It is

these problems and Maggie's struggle with the dominant patriarchal paradigm that critique the form's tenability. Maggie's life is told in a series of ruptures: rather than a narrative of growth towards self-development, her narrative is one of tragedy in which she is constantly denied what she most requires, leading to an extreme reaction in which she attempts to either escape from or conform to the status quo. The novel is structured "as a series of colloquies, intimacies, disputes suggest[ing] not a lone figure pushing past a painted backdrop but a girl hedged in, defined at every point, by a certain cultural discourse" (Fraiman 146). Rather than a development of growth, *Mill* poses Maggie's internal development as one of an individual in conflict with pre-existing narratives: her girlhood defined against Tom's boyhood, her passionate nature against discourses of ideal femininity, her character against the lack of a viable narrative. After Maggie accidentally kills Tom's rabbits, she offers him money, and he refuses, stating: "I always have half-sovereigns and sovereigns for my Christmas boxes, because I shall be a man, and you only have five-shilling pieces, because you're only a girl" (Eliot, *Mill* 87). While Tom has money and a future destination of individual growth ("I shall be a man"), Maggie has no future tense and little hope for financial wealth. Under the male-centred development narrative, elusive to Maggie despite her attempts to adopt it, she remains "only a girl" (87).

In an 1856 review, Eliot defines realism as "the doctrine that all truth and beauty are to be attained by a humble and faithful study of nature, and not by substituting vague forms, bred by imagination on the mists of feeling, in place of definite, substantial reality" (626). However, in *Mill*, Eliot's study of nature and representation of "definite, substantial reality" are made possible by imagination, by these "mists of feeling" and the forms they create in memory and in myth. The novel

is framed as an account of past events told by the omniscient narrator, and is therefore bound in memory and in the mythical past of St. Ogg's. *Mill*'s realist narrative is therefore not strictly dependent upon the direct experience of reality, but allows for non-linear, non-scientific ways of knowing and interpreting subjective experience such as memory, fantasy, and myth. Through drawing upon the myths and legends tied to the narrative's setting and its community, Eliot extends the sense of reality not only from the everyday subjective experience of the world, but to the ideology, cultural knowledge, and shared memory that makes up and shapes this experience. Just as the narrator is "in love with moistness, and env[ies] the white ducks that are dipping their heads far into the water here among the withes, unmindful of the awkward appearance they make in the drier world above", so does Eliot abandon the 'drier world above' for submergence in a hazy, 'moist' world of memory, mist, and myth (Eliot, *Mill* 54). As the child Maggie refuses the conventional world and its expectations, "dip[ping] her head into a basin of water ... in vindictive determination that there should be no more chance of curls" (78), so does the narrative voice "exchange ... a clear vision for a swimming vision, a submergence in experience at the cost of objectivity and judgment" (Auerbach, "Power" 151). As Nina Auerbach suggests, "Maggie's pull on the novel causes George Eliot to relinquish her sharply defined moral perspective in favour of a sense of immediate immersion in 'the depths of life'" ("Power" 150). As *Mill* is Maggie's story, so must we inhabit her world and her perspective.

This sense of "plung[ing] into the moment" informs the structure of the narrative (Auerbach, "Power" 151). As the complicated *Bildung* is structured according to these moments of rupture, so do these vividly-felt moments become moments of overflow from the realist narrative. As the narrator of *Mill* emphasises a

“conflict between the inward impulse and outward fact” (Eliot, *Mill* 367) that exists within Maggie, and the “painful collisions [that] come of it” (320), so does this translate into a generic collision between the “provincial respectability” of the realist narrative (Auerbach, “Power” 154) and the explosive intensity of Maggie’s character and sensations. In these ruptures or scars, Maggie’s “inward impulse[s]” are manifest (Eliot, *Mill* 367): as Michie states, within the narrative “the body and sexuality assert themselves ... through pain and scarring. In learning to read the scars we read desire” (29). Throughout the text, Maggie’s character and physical body overflows from boundaries, being “beyond everything” as she breaks from convention both socially and within the structure of the realist form (Eliot, *Mill* 297). This growth is significant, forming a distinctly positive transformation alongside Maggie’s inability to develop along conventional narratives. While the traditional development narrative of the *Bildungsroman* is inaccessible to Maggie, Eliot poses alternative models of growth through using intertexts. By drawing upon narratives that provide opportunities within different cultural paradigms or fantastical and mythical realms, Eliot demonstrates other models of growth and means of escaping the limited narratives available to women.

As Annette R. Federico has argued, *Mill* appears to “produce ambivalence, to be constructed in ambivalence, to originate in ambivalence” (359): torn between the realist aesthetic and the varying escapes into non-realist genres, and between the imaginary and real worlds of “the unendurable ordinary” and “the irrational energies of desire” (Levine 46). The narrative thus “offers not only a story about a divided character but a narrative divided against itself” (Bodenheimer 279). This conflict is clearly expressed in the text, where “life-struggles ... almost entirely within [Maggie’s] own soul”, “painful collisions”, “fierce battle[s] of emotion”, and “the

conflicts of young souls” (Eliot, *Mill* 405, 320, 582, 275) abound. The structure of the novel also reflects this constant conflict. As Sullivan suggests,

[i]n the early and middle chapters of the novel objective and subjective are kept in polar tension: Maggie’s childish romanticism colours Reality; her escapism distorts the message of her books. But she is saved from herself by the counteracting balance which Reality and Books maintain with her romantic psyche. But in the last third of the novel, the objective world no longer contradicts Maggie’s subjective visions ... the world created in their different ways by Lucy and Stephen corresponds to Maggie’s inner romanticism. What had once been a tension of opposite forces dissolves as inner and outer worlds coalesce. (236-7)

As the narrator states, Maggie’s life consists of “the triple world of Reality, Books, and Waking Dreams” (Eliot, *Mill* 367). These three abstractions are chronological delineations of the stages of Maggie’s life and the structure of the novel, with Reality the world of her childhood, Books her attempt at renunciation through a Kempis, and Waking Dreams her passionate sweeping into the sensual world of music and love, and the point at which the two worlds of the real and the imagination coincide in a ‘waking dream’. In the first two sections of the novel, Maggie struggles with different forms of entrapment and escape, expressed both narratively and in her attempts to break from the realist narrative into other generic forms. As she concludes that “the world outside the books was not a happy one” (*Mill* 320), so does Maggie deny both reality and the realist form, with ruptures of realist generic conventions becoming escapes from restrictive narratives. In the final section, rather than passion and fantasy being an episodic escape from reality, Maggie’s immersion in the world of romance and fantasy, as evidenced by her absorption in the world of music and of the passions, leads to her denial of reality and of social norms. These threefold worlds also reflect the generic influences upon the realist narrative: the *Bildungsroman*, the Gothic, and the fairy tale. As the *Bildungsroman* is conceived of as a traditionally masculine genre, associated with logic and rationality, while the

Gothic and the fairy tale are considered feminine, associated with worlds of feeling, imagination, and passions, Eliot further plays out the conflict of gender and genre within a structural lens.

Maggie's escapism or denial of the realist narrative "not only manifests a conflict between realist forms and genres of feeling; it also sets up a series of debates *between* different non-naturalistic literary forms" (Mahawatte 102). Many critics such as Auerbach, Fraiman, and Royce Mahawatte have explored Eliot's use of the Gothic, examining Eliot's negotiation of realist narratives alongside Gothic conventions in relation to Maggie and to the novel's structure as a whole. Through the use of the Gothic form, Eliot is able to extend and expand Maggie's narrative possibilities to transcend the limitations of realism and the implied status quo, or as Morris puts it, "the way things are and always will be" (19). As Carol Margaret Davison suggests, the predominant image emerging from Victorian Gothic texts "is of women imprisoned, circumscribed sexually, intellectually and legally", resulting in "debilitating self-division or the perversion of natural, healthy feeling" (128). This critique is evident in *Mill*, where Maggie experiences "key tensions of the Gothic abstraction": extreme emotions of "a consuming spiritual thirst and intellectual need; and yet [she has] to negotiate these feelings with similarly powerful urges towards unspoken anger, rebellion, and sexual desire", all within restricted and restrained circumstances (Mahawatte 100). Her struggle is founded on her self-division and her inner conflict between her passions and her environment. As a Gothic heroine set amongst a realist narrative, Maggie is represented in her fundamental otherness, not only from those within the novel but from the generic form and its conventions. Similarly, her fixation on witches and devils, and her relations to mythological and demonic women such as Medusa and the Pythoness all assert her relationship to the

Gothic, but this demonism is “planted in her very womanliness” (Auerbach, “Power” 171). Rather than “reify Maggie the witch as evil”, the realist setting of St. Ogg’s reframes this demonism “as systematic defiance” (Fraiman 138). Willis sets out the Gothic as central to the creation of meaning within realism, being key to “supporting its complex epistemology that figures the real as the multiple convergences of natural and unnatural, ordinary and extraordinary”, as to read characters, locations, and objects within texts is “not simply to read the text’s surface, but to see moments of splitting which reveal the novel’s unconscious and its divisions” (18-19). In this way, the use of Gothic conventions anchors the realist narrative within a lens of social critique both narratively and structurally. Despite “her aspirations to *Bildung*, Maggie is continually returned to a place of terror, reenclosed in a familiar prison” (Fraiman 141) marked by its restrictive social conventions – that of the realist narrative. In contrast, the Gothic allows Maggie an existence outside of these conventions, with “non-naturalistic writing ... a means of escaping the social and psychological constraints that curtail Maggie’s development” (Mahawatte 103).

Maggie’s character holds a strong relationship with the past, both in relation to the mythological and historical past, and her own past. Eliot’s use of mythological allusions begins within the text itself, with the origin myth of the town of St. Ogg’s and its patron saint. The legend of the flood and of St. Ogg’s meeting with the Virgin Mary is parallel to Maggie’s narrative at several points, notably in Maggie and Stephen’s boat journey, and lastly in Maggie and Tom’s death. The description of the beggar-woman’s transformation reflects Maggie’s own: while initially “she was clad in rags, and had a worn and withered look”, upon her transformation “her rags were turned into robes of flowing white, and her face became bright with exceeding beauty, and there was a glory around it, so that she shed a light on the water like the

moon in its brightness” (Eliot, *Mill* 182). Similarly, Maggie’s face is described as having “a strangely worn look” (265), while the Virgin’s shining glory recalls the “coronet” of braids wrapped around Maggie’s head (388). This “ready cohesion between the legendary world of St. Ogg’s and the actual one” (Alley 195) is emphasised in Maggie’s dream, wherein

She was in a boat on the wide water with Stephen, and in the gathering darkness something like a star appeared, that grew and grew till they saw it was the Virgin seated in St. Ogg's boat, and it came nearer and nearer, till they saw the Virgin was Lucy and the boatman was Phillip – no, not Philip, but her brother, who rowed past without looking at her; and she rose to stretch out her arms and call to him, and their own boat turned over with the movement, and they began to sink (Eliot, *Mill* 596)

While initially, the parallel between Maggie’s life and the legend provides a sense of hope for Maggie’s safe ferrying across the storms of her life, as “henceforth whoso steps into [the] boat shall be in no peril from the storm” (182), within the holds of Maggie’s imagination, it becomes clear that the allusion is far more complex. As Henry Alley notes, “because of the childhood experiences with which the dream closes, Maggie blindly holds on to the belief that [Tom] will change, come to love her again, and thus all is lost” (195). Her nostalgic connection to childhood and to her brother Tom is a constant thread throughout the text, culminating in their return to an idyllic (and false) childhood past “when they had clasped their little hands in love, and roamed the daisied fields together” (655). This connection to a past bound in mythic formations is illustrated in the narrator’s location of Maggie and her struggles within an Homeric narrative:

Maggie’s life-struggles had lain almost entirely within her own soul ... So it has been since the days of Hecuba, and of Hector, Tamer of Horses: inside the gates, the women with streaming hair and uplifted hands offering prayers, watching the world’s combat from afar, filling their long, empty days with memories and fears. (405)

Maggie thus inhabits a position within the narrative present, the historical past, and the fictional world of literature and imagination, “los[ing] the distinction between what is living in the past and what is dead” (Alley 193). As I will further discuss, in her sympathetic relation to these multiple worlds, her narrative also becomes analogous not only with the narrative forms used, but with the figures alluded to.

Music plays a significant role in Maggie’s narrative, providing a commentary on Maggie’s emotions and sexuality through intertextual references to pieces of music and characters within musical works. The narrator expresses Maggie’s character flaws through the language of music, from the fact that her “sensibility to the supreme excitement of music . . . made her faults and virtues all merge in each other – made her affections sometimes an impatient demand” (Eliot, *Mill* 514), to her tendency to hurry the tempo (517) reflecting her uncontrollable desires. As William J. Sullivan notes, “the psychological effects of music construct[] a paradigm of Maggie’s character”, illustrating Maggie’s complex emotional life and her passionate, intense, and sympathetic spirit (232). Music is also the vehicle for Maggie’s remarks about her own passionate nature, stating that she “never felt that [she] had enough music – [she] wanted more instruments playing together – [she] wanted voices to be fuller and deeper” (Eliot, *Mill* 428). It also demonstrates a continuity in her character through her consistent “eager, passionate longings” for music (320), with these longings growing strongest as she awakens to love and her own sexuality throughout Volume Three. As Maggie escapes reality through literature, through running away, and through attempted renunciation, so does music become a form of sensual escapism, with musical exploration “defin[ing] the elements that stimulate and satisfy her” (Gray 33).

Eliot also makes specific reference to particular musical works to “articulate critical aspects of the structure and theme of the novel” (Sullivan 233). Georg Frideric Händel’s *Acis and Galatea* is alluded to throughout the first two volumes of *Mill*. With a plot adapted from Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, the pastoral opera focuses on the tragic story of the two eponymous characters, while the self-referential parody and humour come from the comic minor characters – much like *The Mill on the Floss* itself. The plot centres on the love of Acis, a shepherd, and Galatea, a water nymph, and the jealousy of the giant Polyphemus, who is in love with Galatea. When Polyphemus crushes Acis with a stone, Galatea transforms Acis’ body into a fountain, thereby rendering him immortal. As Sullivan notes, the allusion both reflects the pastoral world of St. Ogg’s, and reflects the legend’s themes of metamorphosis and transfiguration (238-9). It also reflects Maggie’s own position. In Maggie’s childhood, her uncle’s snuff-box plays Galatea’s aria “Hush, ye pretty warbling choir”, and while the lyrics reflect her use of music as escapism, it also expresses her yearning for more, and foreshadows that “the pastoral world she inhabits [is] insufficient for her passionate heart” (Sullivan 238):

Hush, ye pretty warbling choir!
 Your thrilling strains
 awake my pains
 and kindle fierce desire.
 Cease your song and take your flight,
 bring back my Acis to my sight! (Händel 12-15)

In a second reference to the opera, whilst meeting in the Red Deeps, Philip sings Maggie the tenor aria that he had sung to her in their childhood at King’s Lorton, “Love in her eyes sits playing” from Act 1, casting himself as Acis to Maggie’s Galatea. The lyrics are suggestive of Philip’s love for Maggie:

Love in her eyes sits playing
 and sheds delicious death;
 love on her lips is straying

and warbling in her breath;
love on her breast sits panting
and swells with soft desire;
no grace, no charm is wanting
to set the heart on fire. (Händel 22-24)

However, as Sullivan points out, at this point in the narrative “the innocence of a pastoral childhood has passed. Just as the Red Deeps themselves are ... a miniature and fallen version of the child’s once-wide world, so the conventions and associations of the pastoral love-song become in part a painful reminiscence” (239). So too will Philip, like Acis, never be truly joined to Maggie. When Tom finds out about their secret meetings, Tom is posed as the Polyphemus of the story as Maggie fears “her tall strong brother grasping the feeble Philip bodily, crushing him and trampling on him” (Eliot, *Mill* 447). While in the opera, Galatea survives, in the Ovid myth, she drowns herself to be immortalised as an ocean spirit alongside Acis’ river spirit. As a “tall, dark-eyed nymph” (Eliot, *Mill* 484), Maggie’s connection to the water of the river Floss is constantly emphasised. Allusions to Handel’s opera and the Ovid myth thus foreshadow her fate, while also offering an alternative interpretation of her death. As Galatea escapes Polyphemus through death, so does Maggie avoid being confined within a restrictive narrative, escaping the possibility of a life of self-denial and social castigation.

Throughout *Mill*, Maggie only sings as a child, whilst “up in that attic ... a-singing and talking to herself, and forgetting all about meal times”, “sing[ing] to herself like a Bedlam creatur” and “whirling round like a Pythoness, and singing as she whirled” (Eliot 90, 60, 79). Maggie’s singing becomes an example of her wildness as it “threatens her social propriety” (Crenna 40). Notably, while Lucy is a soprano, Philip a tenor, and Stephen a baritone, the adult Maggie primarily takes the

passive role of listener as others around her create a musical world for her romantic escapism. As Sullivan states, “the world created in their different ways by Lucy and Stephen corresponds to Maggie’s inner romanticism”, causing her “inner and outer worlds [to] coalesce” within the metaphor of music (Sullivan 237). As Stephen and Lucy are likened to “Adam and Eve unfallen, in Paradise” (Eliot, *Mill* 474), their romantic and innocent play-world becomes Eden before the fall, but “only apparently parallels the innocent world of Maggie’s childhood ... a world to which she vainly seeks admittance” (Sullivan 243). Stephen hums Adam’s aria, ‘Graceful Consort’, from Haydn’s *The Creation*, in falsetto, the ‘false’ affectation of his voice reflecting the “sugared complacency and flattering make-believe” of not only the piece (within Philip’s eyes), but also the romantic world of ‘Waking Dreams’ that they create and Maggie is caught within (Eliot, *Mill* 474). In the oratorio, Lucy “will sing the whole duty of woman, - ‘And from obedience grows my pride and happiness’” (474), fulfilling the conventional idea of femininity. Conversely, Maggie does not sing with the trio, and nor does she fulfil this conventional, obedient femininity. In Chapter Seven, Stephen and Philip sing a duet from *Masaniello*, or *La muette de Portici*, a French grand opera by Daniel Auber, which Lucy says “will suit [Maggie]” (531). The plot of *Masaniello* involves a brother and sister being separated and reconciled before their death and suicide respectively –this has clear parallels to *Mill*, as “in their death, brother and sister are not divided” (Gray 47). Significantly, the main female character is Fenella, a mute girl – who is not played by a singer, but a dancer, and who like Maggie, is “both mutely the emotional centre, and the cause of future actions” (47). Like a dancer, Maggie responds to the music, it “vibrate[s] in her still” (Eliot, *Mill* 495), but she does not create the music herself unless she plays Stephen’s accompaniment, in which case she hurries the tempo, driven by desire (517). This

reflects Maggie's relationship to reality. Maggie is often passive: she is "most consistently portrayed in attitudes of tableau which underscore the irony that her quest for immediate action has only paralysed her further" (Alley 194), and is instead swept up in the romantic world of imagination. When she does take action, as she does at the final, fatal flood, it is drastic and hurried, and brings Maggie's own song to its conclusion.

Musical allusion also becomes a stand-in for sexual desire, particularly her desire for Stephen Guest. His voice "sh[akes] her like a sudden accidental vibration of a harp close by her" (Eliot, *Mill* 551) and when he sings, she is "borne along by a wave too strong for her" (534). Upon hearing his voice, Maggie is rendered unable to work on her sewing, and the music "make[s] her at once strong and weak; strong for all enjoyment, weak for all resistance" (532). She reacts as if in a state of sexual climax:

When the strain passed into the minor, she half started from her seat with the sudden thrill of that change. Poor Maggie! She looked very beautiful when her soul was being played on in this way by the inexorable power of sound. You might have seen the slightest perceptible quivering through her whole frame as she leaned a little forward, clasping her hands as if to steady herself; while her eyes dilated and brightened into that wide-open, childish expression of wondering delight which always came back in her happiest moments.
(532)

Maggie's attempts to distract herself from her passion for both music and for Stephen via her sewing work fail, and she finds herself "making false stitches and pricking her fingers" (534). As an activity associated with conventional femininity, her attempt and subsequent failure to complete this activity at a moment of heightened passion reflects the association of sewing with "repressing and controlling the self" and of "the sacrifice of physical self and the repression of bodily urges" (Michie 41). With Maggie trapped between her passions for Stephen and her

feelings of care and moral obligation towards her childhood love Philip, her desire for Stephen is thus represented as unladylike and indecorous, yet uncontrollable. Significantly, through exploring Maggie's desire through the metaphor of music, Eliot is able to discuss female sexual and sensual urges openly and in relatively explicit terms.

As a baritone and tenor respectively, Stephen and Philip's voice types are significant. Tenor voices are usually assigned to the love interest of the work, whilst baritone voices are assigned to playboy-like or morally dubious characters. In an allusion to Bellini's opera *La Sonnambula*, Philip sings Elvino's aria, "Ah! perche non posso odiarti", to Maggie, and he explains the significance of his song choice to their relationship and to the narrative: "the tenor is telling the heroine that he shall always love her although she may forsake him. You've heard me sing it to the English words, "I love thee still"" (Eliot, *Mill* 533). The opera parallels the novel both in the heroine Amina's somnambulism alluding to Maggie's perception of reality through 'Waking Dreams', and in the voice types of the male leads: Elvino, a tenor, is Amina's childhood sweetheart, while Rodolfo, a dashing and romantic Count, is a bass, corresponding to Stephen's lower voice. In contrast to Philip's "pleading tenor", Stephen sings "with saucy energy" (533, 534). In casting Maggie as Amina, however, as Sullivan suggests, "the differences between the opera and the novel, and especially between Maggie and Amina, are more important to George Eliot's purposes than their similarities" (244). In her sleepwalking,

Amina is an absolutely innocent victim who has no possibility of controlling her behavior and is unjustly accused of immorality by suspicious neighbors and friends. Maggie's case is just different enough to make the point: although she is certainly victimised and unjustly accused, Maggie is not absolutely innocent. Her problem is a moral and emotional one, the solution of which lies in "self-command". The difference between the opera and the novel is (by an aesthetic *trompe l'oeil*) the difference between the world of

romance to which Maggie aspires and the real world in which, perforce, she must live. (244-5)

As Amina lives within a world of romance, she lives on happily. Despite her attempts to transcend the narrative through fantasy and imagination, Maggie exists within a realist framework, and her reputation cannot be restored so simply. Living within her 'Waking Dreams' and denying reality, Maggie's "entire want of ... prudence and self command" (Eliot, *Mill* 367) and thus deviance from ideal narratives of femininity ultimately leads her towards her fall.

As well as drawing upon female characters from other art forms, Eliot also draws upon images of women and tropes of femininity perpetuated throughout literature and culture, doing so to bring attention to the inequality inherent in women's position. In Mr Tulliver's explanation of having married his wife "because she wasn't o'er 'cute ... 'cause she was a bit weak, like; for [he] wasn't a-goin' to be told the rights o' things by my own fireside" (Eliot, *Mill* 68), the ideal woman is thus represented as "a buxom wife conspicuously [her husband's] inferior in intellect" (73), while "an over [a]'cute woman's no better nor a long-tailed sheep" (60). Maggie's difference from the ideal is thus thrown into sharp relief. Upon her renunciation of her self and passions, it becomes clear that her suffering brings her closer to the ideal Evangelical heroine. Though she has become "so submissive, so backward to assert her own will" (387), Mrs Tulliver sees her as "growing up so good" (387), and grows "fond of her tall, brown girl, the only bit of furniture now on which she could bestow her anxiety or pride" (388). Rather than a woman, Maggie has become a silent, passive object, and yet this is considered to be a sign of 'goodness' and fitness for marriage. While the narrator's remark upon "those antiquated times" (388) locates the misogynistic values in the past and relates them

to an uneducated working class perspective, the tone is one of ironic comment on their continued cultural currency. As Moi has suggested, “woman writers have known how to exploit, for their own subversive purposes, the stereotypes of them ... created by men” (35). While these stereotypes are perpetuated by patriarchal literary and cultural traditions, by drawing upon the image of the ‘ideal’ woman, Eliot questions their continued validity both in literature and culture.

In scholarship on realism and the *Bildungsroman*, there has been a tendency towards the marginalisation of the body in favour of a focus on intellectual development. This itself is associated with gender: as intellect is associated with masculinity, the physical body and its passions and sensations requires transcendence. For women, spiritual transcendence of the corporeal form becomes imperative, with society demanding a denial of the passions and sexual agency, or else they succumb to immoral wantonness. In texts, then, the physical body is also denied, separating the representation of the body from its corporeal form via figurative language, “transform[ing] feminine identity into a literary exhibit where the woman’s body is only figured in sets of similes” (Talairach-Vielmas 6). Much scholarship on the development novel has regarded the body as “a contingent attribute of the self that does not merit special attention”, disregarding the physical aspects of a character’s maturation and upholding a “masculine and bodiless conception of the self” (Houser 551). Indeed, in his analysis of the *Bildungsroman* form, *The Way of the World*, Franco Moretti emphasises the necessity of the protagonist’s unremarkable qualities, requiring characters to be “*very Common Persons*” (190, italics in original). In *Mill*, Eliot draws attention to and subverts this convention: while Tom, the traditional male focus of the *Bildung* is “one of those lads that grow everywhere in England” (84), it is made clear that Maggie Tulliver,

the true focus of the (albeit complicated) development narrative, both in her wild childhood and beautiful adulthood, is anything but prosaic in appearance. Her body and her striking appearance are as significant to her narrative as her complicated spiritual and emotional development. While feminist scholarship has critiqued this erasure of the body in the *Bildungsroman* narrative, the critical focus on *Mill* has been on the narrative of internal progression “structured around withdrawal, repetition, or self-destruction” (Houser 554), without due attention paid to Maggie’s physical, corporeal growth. Indeed, though the conventional *Bildung* narrative fails her, reading her body and her physical development as text provides a distinctly feminine, positive model of growth.

In literature of the Victorian period, a character’s appearance was highly significant for the reader’s ability to infer information about their identity and personality. The study of physiognomy, or the pseudo-scientific reading of facial and skull shape and appearance, had great influence upon understandings of how character could be read literally through a person’s appearance. As such, a woman’s appearance was inextricable from her narrative. Heroines of novels typically embodied the image of the ideal Victorian woman: small and slender, with pale skin and angelic blue eyes and blonde hair. Eliot uses the language of physiognomy in her descriptions of Maggie and Tom, demonstrating his unremarkable character through describing him as having “a physiognomy in which it seems impossible to discern anything but the generic character of boyhood; as different as possible from poor Maggie’s phiz, which Nature seemed to have moulded and coloured with the most decided intention” (*Mill* 84). Maggie’s appearance and therefore character is remarkable, and reflects her position as an ‘other’ in discourses of femininity and of race, contrasting her starkly with her small, fair-haired cousin, Lucy, and with

traditional representations of Victorian heroines. Dark-haired, dark-eyed, dark-complexioned, and tall, Maggie “literally stand[s] out from the crowd of tiny women who serve as the moral focus for so many Victorian novels” (Michie 27). Her appearance manifests ideas and fictional tropes of gender, race, and power, with her size and appearance attesting to “an inner rebellion against normative femininity” (27) and the narratives that uphold this femininity, and drawing on racial stereotypes of ‘Gypsies’ or Romany people. In a moment of metafictional self-consciousness, Eliot draws attention to the significance of a woman’s appearance, and to what it means for both Maggie and Lucy’s narratives in terms of the marriage plot: as Maggie points out when she returns *Corinne* to Philip, “the blond haired women carry away all the happiness” from “the dark unhappy ones” (*Mill* 433). Philip’s suggestion that she “avenge the dark women in [her] own person: carry away all the love from [her] cousin Lucy” and Maggie’s response that she “always care[s] the most about the unhappy people: if the blonde girl was forsaken, [she] should like her best” (433) foreshadow the events to come. Eliot attempts to “restore the balance” by “giv[ing] ... some story, now, where the dark woman triumphs” (433), and while ultimately, the romance plot fails Maggie and she is unable to triumph within conventional narratives, Eliot is able to reconfigure the image of the dark woman outside of traditional ideals of beauty.

Throughout the text, Maggie is more often related to non-white, racially ‘other’ cultures such as the gypsies, than those of white, genteel culture. As a narrative trope within Victorian fiction, Maggie’s running away to join the gypsies capitalises on their status as exotic and romanticised figures. Mrs Tulliver considers that “Lucy takes more after [her] nor [her] own child does” (Eliot, *Mill* 61), while Maggie’s dark hair and complexion leads to her being referred to as a “gypsy” (Eliot

125) and “a mulatter” (60). In an allusion to the Hans Christian Andersen fairy tale, *The Ugly Duckling* (1843), while Maggie is considered unlike her own family in appearance, when she runs away to join the gypsies and sees the gypsy mother, she sees herself, being “reassured by the thought that her Aunt Pullet and the rest were right when they called her a gypsy; for this face, with the bright dark eyes and the long hair, was really something like what she used to see in the glass before she cut her hair off” (172). This poses Maggie as a pseudo-changeling, “the unwanted offspring of a foreign egg put into the wrong mother’s nest” (Houser 555). However, upon meeting the gypsies, she feels it “impossible she should ever be queen of these people” (Eliot, *Mill* 175). Wandering away from her family, by whom she is considered wild and uncontrollable, yet too British for the gypsies, she is both literally and figuratively ‘out of place’. Her appearance thus acts as “a disruptive and transgressive element that challenges the normative laws of gendered identity (of the proper good girl), of national identity (of proper white Englishness), and of civilised society (as a could-be changeling)” (Houser 555-6). Adhering to Victorian racial stereotypes of the Romany people, Eliot represents them as non-realist characters by locating Maggie’s journey within the fairy tale form: Maggie wishes that anyone could come and save her, “even if Jack the Giantkiller, or Mr. Greatheart, or St. George who slew the dragon on the half-pennies, would happen to pass that way” (Eliot, *Mill* 176). However, as “these heroes were never seen in the neighborhood of St. Ogg’s; nothing very wonderful ever came there” (176), once again Maggie’s non-realist world of imagination conflicts with ‘reality’ and the civilised world of the realist narrative. The fairy-tale world, though being idealised and a source of escape for Maggie and providing a paradigm in which her body and appearance are

understood and accepted, ultimately cannot provide an alternative narrative for her development and therefore a true escape from the realist *Bildung* narrative.

As “the outward sign of the woman’s inner self, the text that explains her”, women’s hair was also of great significance to Victorian writers and their representation of character (Gitter 941). Within literature, representations of women’s hair were “an expression or encoding of femininity” (Ofek x). While “golden hair became the crowning glory of the mythologised Victorian Woman” (Gitter 936), dark colouring was associated with sensuality, “wildness and inappropriate feminine sexuality” (Houser 557) – a trope clearly influenced by colonial ideals of race and the equivalence of whiteness with purity. In novels, dark-haired women were often portrayed as ‘fallen women’, their “tangled, disorderly hair” reflecting their “sexually and emotionally volatile” nature (Gitter 941). The representation of Maggie’s hair is thus narratively significant, both “associate[d] ... with her self-conception” (La Belle 145) and marking “her resistance to both social and aesthetic conventions of femininity” (Ofek 155). As a child, her hair is a “stand-in for Maggie’s behaviour, defying the norms of proper girlhood” (Houser 557), reflecting her refusal or inability to act “like a little lady” (Eliot, *Mill* 61). Her “reluctant black crop” (78) resists her mother’s attempts to tame or curl it, metonymically standing in for Maggie’s own resistance to convention. Whereas the well-behaved, blonde Lucy has “a row o’ curls round her head, an’ not a hair out o’ place”, Maggie’s hair is wild and “won’t curl” (60-61), emphasising her angelic cousin’s ability to stay within the boundaries of ideal femininity, and Maggie’s comparative unconformity. Similarly, just as Maggie’s intense and passionate nature is ‘too much’ in the eyes of society, Maggie’s Aunt Pullet thinks “the gell has too much hair”, and that it should be “thinned and cut shorter ... [as] it isn’t good for her

health” (118). By drawing the connection that her having too much hair is “that as makes her skin so brown” (118), Aunt Pullet suggests that beyond merely reflecting Maggie’s wildness, her mass of hair distances her from polite, white society and ideal femininity, and enforces her connection to non-white racial identities.

Maggie’s hair also connects her to images of demonic and immoral women. Her hair is likened to the serpent tresses of Medusa, and she looks “like a small Medusa with her snakes cropped” (161). These parallels with Medusa, a beautiful woman both actively erotic and aggressively powerful, poses Maggie’s hair as “an emblem of destructive powers she is only half aware of and unable to control” (Auerbach, “Power” 156), while also giving her hair a life of its own. Within conventional Victorian texts, “the woman herself is without individuality, silent and spiritualised: her potency is concentrated in the disembodied hands, eyes, breathings, and, of course, hair” that both distance the reader from her physical body and create a broken image of woman as object (Gitter 942). Whilst rebelling against her mother’s wishes to curl her hair, Maggie plunges her head into water; when she finally grows sick of her aunts’ admonitions, she cuts it short. At these instances, Eliot resists the tendency to de-individualise Maggie; rather than using her hair as disembodied metonym for Maggie’s power, her hair, like Medusa’s snakes, has power of its own. Her acts upon her own hair become active and violent assertions of not only her own individuality, but a reshaping of her identity when her body and her position as a woman “has become an untenable and painful problem which demands an urgent solution” (Dobbins par. 8). As La Belle suggests, “to change one’s hair ... is to alter the sense of one’s identity” (145). Maggie’s act of cutting her own hair functions as a defiant act in which she inscribes her individuality and identity both

upon and through her physical body, her feminine self operating “simultaneously as the object and subject of her rebellion” (Dobbins par. 2).

As an adult, Maggie’s dark hair is portrayed in a very different light. Described as a “bright black coronet” (Eliot, *Mill* 425) and a “jet crown” (393), the transformation of Maggie’s hair from being “too much” into an ornament of royalty shows the metamorphosis of typically negative attributes into core elements of her striking beauty. In a challenge to racial hierarchies and the valorisation of whiteness, Maggie’s dark skin is also part of this beauty. At the bazaar, Maggie is “clad in a white muslin of some soft-floating kind” (Eliot, *Mill* 547), the conventional dress of the innocent, white angel of the house. As a cloth bound to colonial narratives, being a product of the British colonisation of India and China, muslin’s whiteness speaks of the racist narratives its existence was founded upon. However Maggie’s temporarily white appearance is merely borrowed, having “come from the stores of Aunt Pullet’s wardrobe” (547), and cannot supersede her essential darkness. There remains “something undefinably coarse in the style of her beauty” that cannot be written over by narratives of chaste, idealised white femininity (548). Maggie also borrows her aunt’s black brocade gown, but is “so much broader across the shoulders” than her aunt that the gown requires alteration; we are already aware that her beauty cannot be physically contained within existing ideals (492). Eliot thus “replaces the fair angelic lady with an alternative mythologised version of the dark and rejected woman ... transform[ing] the literary type of the dark lady on multiple levels” (Houser 558).

Within the language of the Victorian realist novel, wherein conservative morality demands that women’s bodies are represented in “a series of tropes or

rheterical codes that distance it from the reader in its very act of depiction” (Michie 5), Maggie’s arms serve as metonymies for that which cannot be expressed. When Maggie and Stephen walk in the conservatory, and Maggie reaches towards a rose, the narrative “fetishises Maggie’s arm on Stephen’s behalf” (Homans 175):

Stephen was mute; he was incapable of putting a sentence together, and Maggie bent her arm a little upward toward the large half-opened rose that had attracted her. Who has not felt the beauty of a woman’s arm? The unspeakable suggestions of tenderness that lie in the dimpled elbow, and all the varied gently lessening curves, down to the delicate wrist, with its tiniest, almost imperceptible nicks in the firm softness. A woman’s arm touched the soul of a great sculptor two thousand years ago, so that he wrought an image of it for the Parthenon which moves us still as it clasps lovingly the timeworn marble of a headless trunk. Maggie’s was such an arm as that, and it had the warm tints of life.

A mad impulse seized on Stephen; he darted toward the arm, and showered kisses on it, clasping the wrist. (Eliot, *Mill* 561)

As the object of Stephen’s “mad impulse”, Maggie’s arm is not referred to as such, but is objectified as “the arm”, and further so in its comparison with a headless statue, objectifying and sexualising Maggie as a static body and object for his own male gaze. While for Margaret Homans, Maggie’s arms “serve as genteel metonymies for her breasts” (175), for Michie, they “are equally sinister synecdoches for the fully sexualised female body” (98). As Stephen cannot “put[] a sentence together”, so are the true subjects of his desire “unspeakable” (Eliot 561). Though the narrator appears to ascribe to this language of erasure, the statement of “the unspeakable suggestions of tenderness” clearly lays out the function of the metonym: hiding what cannot be expressed within not only realist discourses, but within Victorian conceptions of propriety more generally. Just as Eliot works within generic and ideological constraints at the same time as critiquing these constraints, so does she expose the function of discourses of erasure through exploiting the language used to create that very erasure.

Throughout the novel, Maggie has a complex, ambivalent relationship to the mirror, which changes according to her relationship with her sense of self and security in her identity. In her childhood, her reflection is a source of humiliation after she cuts her own hair, and the mirror becomes a reflection of social norms she wishes to escape. As Tom chastises her, stating that she “look[s] like the idiot we throw out nutshells to at school” (Eliot, *Mill* 120), “the male enlists the power of his ally, the mirror, to define the female as a visual image. Tom tells her, and the mirror shows her, that the world will continue to define her through her looks” (La Belle 145). As an act attempting to reshape her identity, an act “created before and first registered in a mirror” (145), her distance from the ideal instead makes her appearance more significant than if she had conformed to social expectations. Unable to define herself outside of norms of femininity, her revolt against the mirror ultimately fails “because she did not understand the power of the glass to establish the relationship between appearance and identity” (La Belle 177). Similarly, Maggie’s renunciation period is one in which she “steadily refus[es] ... to look at herself in the glass” (Eliot, *Mill* 388), expressing a refusal of her identity and of the self. As Michie suggests, “the mirror is itself, of course, simultaneously presence and absence, depiction, inversion, and distortion of the body. It is also an image of the body (vanity/surface) and of an attempt to move beyond the body (reflection/contemplation)” (8). In Maggie’s attempt to remain indifferent to her appearance, she harkens back to her childhood likeness with Medusa: seeing her own reflection would confront her with the truth of her unchanged self, and with the fact of her “dream of renunciation ... [being] just as romantic as her earlier dream of love and beauty and glamour” (Hardy 55-6). In Volume Three, she gazes upon her own beauty: “[she] look[ed] at the full length of her tall beauty, crowned by the night of

her massy hair. Maggie had smiled at herself then, and for the moment had forgotten everything in the sense of her own beauty” (Eliot, *Mill* 555). By gazing at her own image and deriving pleasure from her appearance, rather than rejecting the mirror or her image altogether, Maggie instead comes to reclaim it. Similarly, when Stephen gazes upon her for the first time, she “receiv[es] the tribute of a very deep blush” and returns the gaze with “a new brightness in her eyes, and a very becoming flush on her cheek” (484). While the conventional position of women in relation to sexual desire is one in which a “beautiful woman automatically and simultaneously functions as both an aesthetic object and a sexual object” (Mitchell 16), Eliot poses Maggie as having sexual agency and awareness of her own beauty, and as gaining pleasure from it via her own desiring gaze. Just as Maggie is “quite wicked with roses; [as she] like[s] to gather them and smell them till they have no scent left” (Eliot, *Mill* 561), so is her gaze active and consuming. Her “direct glance” at Stephen reflects the desiring power of her own gaze: not only does their exchanged blush “effectively creat[e] a living mirror” (Alban 68), but she actively and directly looks at Stephen, rejecting a passive stance of being looked at and consumed. She is thus “a desiring subject rather than simply a desired object” (Houser 561).

Though within the realist *Bildung* narrative “the novel’s physicality is inaccessible” (Michie 90), in the fairy tale narrative, the female body becomes present and significant. The Hans Christian Andersen fairy tale *The Ugly Duckling*, an intertext of *Mill*, provides an alternate model of growth with the physical body a core element of the process. Maggie’s physical transformation from a “Bedlam” child into a “simple, noble beauty” (Eliot, *Mill* 60, 547), conforms to a fairy tale trope in which the ‘ugly’ duckling, abused and neglected by its kin, grows up into a swan, becoming a creature of beauty and admiration. Upon our first meeting Maggie

as a child, she is referred to as a “small mistake of nature” (61); however, as she matures, her body becomes tall and not only strikingly beautiful, but sexually developed. Her growth narrative thus extends beyond the development of her education and social position into legitimising the body and its corporeal maturation as a form of growth. Distinctly feminine and embodied, Maggie’s growth into beauty is not reduced into “a mere metaphor for the heroine’s spiritual and moral elevation”, but instead has a story of its own, in which a “literal, physical transformation” takes place (Houser 553). Her body becomes a source of pleasure, through which she is able to claim attention and desire from others:

It was becoming very pleasant to dress in the evening and to feel that she was one of the beautiful things of this springtime. And there were admiring eyes always awaiting her now. She was no longer an unheeded person, liable to be chid, from whom attention was continually claimed and on whom no one felt bound to confer any. (Eliot, *Mill* 513-514)

Rather than a passive object of others’ gazes, Maggie actively claims the visual gaze – and as we have seen, actively returns it. Eliot also uses Maggie’s dark appearance and its cultural connotations of “threatening female sexuality” (Ofek 159) to normalise and establish Maggie’s active sexuality. Though her desire towards Stephen is unexpected, so too is her physical transformation; here, “the subtext of *The Ugly Duckling* implies that Maggie’s non-normative active desire is actually a natural development of the body. Just as the dramatic change into a beautiful swan is natural, though unexpected, so too is the birth of pleasure and desire” (Houser 561). While within conservative morality, Maggie’s sensuality is unacceptable, her fairy tale transformation connects her newfound beauty to her active sexuality. This allows her agency and desire to be cast positively, through framing it within a transformation into the more socially acceptable physical beauty.

However, figured in Philip's wonderings at what it was "that made Maggie's dark eyes remind him of the stories about princesses being turned into animals" (Eliot, *Mill* 253), her transformation within the fairy tale paradigm is not without conflict; here, the direction of transformation is significant. Whereas physically, Maggie's appearance has transformed from a child "very much like [a] young animal[]" and with "the air of a small Shetland pony" (91, 61), to a "divinity" with a "jet crown" of hair (426, 393), her internal life, now further restrained by the social expectations of a young, beautiful woman, has been suppressed. Indeed, what the narrator states has triggered this association was that "her eyes were full of unsatisfied intelligence, and unsatisfied beseeching affection" (253). Though Maggie becomes beautiful, and her gaze active and desirous, her position has not improved. As Houser suggests,

there is an obvious opposition between Maggie's physical beauty, reflecting growth and improvement, and her internal spiritual conflicts and self-defeating choices ... The trajectory of Maggie's development is thus fragmented and even contradictory. It is the tension between the fairy-tale corporeal metamorphosis and the *Bildungsroman* plot of feminine growing up – or to be more accurate, 'growing down' – that creates this narrative chasm. (560)

Maggie's growth into beauty does not come with a social and mental adjustment to the norms of conventional femininity and behaviour. This is particularly evident in the final section of the novel, where Maggie's failure to realise how "the world's wife" (620) will interpret her returning from elopement with Stephen begins what Elizabeth Ermarth calls a "long suicide" (587) driven by a conflict between Maggie's status as an attractive woman and her inability to fulfill the social requirements of being a "young lady" (Eliot, *Mill* 513). While as his surname would suggest, Philip Wakem is cast as the prince who rouses Maggie into life again from her renunciation (Mahawatte 107), this awakening both awakens her desire for Stephen, therefore

thwarting Philip's designs on Maggie, but also awakens her to the desire that ultimately leads to social censure and death. Moreover, upon her return from her journey with Stephen, her appearance is refigured according to social convention: "To the world's wife there had always been something in Miss Tulliver's very *physique* that a refined instinct felt to be prophetic of harm" (Eliot, *Mill* 621). Caught between her desire for Stephen and her moral consciousness, and suspended between the worlds of romance and practical reality, in spite of her active sense of desire, Maggie is ultimately "cut down to size by forces far larger and more powerful than [her]; patriarchy, destiny, and the conventions of the Victorian novel all converge to reshape [her]" (Michie 27).

In Chapter Three, Eliot draws connections between Maggie and the witches in Daniel Defoe's *The History of the Devil*. As a metaphor for Maggie's future position as a fallen woman, the witch reflects the hypocrisy and inescapability of her circumstances: "if she swims she's a witch, and if she's drowned – and killed, you know, - she's innocent, and not a witch, but only a poor silly old woman" (Eliot, *Mill* 66). Following her and Stephen's boat journey, she is deemed fallen and unrespectable, despite nothing sexual having happened. Whether they had eloped or not, and whether she marries him or not, society deems her unacceptable, while he escapes scrutiny. Like the blacksmith in the picture, it is not the woman herself who is responsible for her own position, but those who condemn and restrict her. Maggie continues: "what good would it do her then, when she was drowned? Only, I suppose she'd go to heaven, and God would make it up to her" (66-7). In Maggie's death, then, is Eliot 'making it up to her'? As the title of the ultimate chapter, "The Final Rescue" suggests, through Maggie's death, Eliot rescues Maggie from future disappointments, but also from the "uncomfortable fit" (Fraiman 125) of

conventional representations of women's narratives. Though for many feminist scholars, this is perceived as an oversimplified ending adhering to the narrative that demands that fallen women meet death, through her refusal of the marriage plot, and her unexpected and ambivalent use of the flood as a *Deus ex machina*, Eliot "forestall[s] the conversion of Maggie into a mature 'angel of the house'" (Esty 153). This places *Mill* in a position of generic uncertainty that fundamentally evades both the tidy narrative conclusion of the realist novel, and the idealised conclusion of the fairy tale, locating Maggie within a narrative that refuses to be contained by social constructions of femininity. Furthermore, by seemingly adhering to narrative conventions, Eliot ostensibly works within the ideological constraints of her conservative publishers, thereby transcending and expanding the limits of conventional realism not only within her text, but also in her material practice, and effectively "testing ... the potentialities and limits of the realist mode for the representation of the desires and aspirations of women" (Boumelha 90).

As a final conflict both narratively and generically, the flood brings together the multiple influences and genres that shape Maggie's character and identity. In the lack of an adequate conclusion, we are confronted with "a final orchestration, through event and metaphor, of incompleteness, a quality entirely foreign to the standard ... form" (Alley 194). In a scene of "ontological breakdown" (Mahawatte 116), the flood becomes "the logical extension of Maggie's Gothic consciousness" (116) and collides with the conflicted *Bildung* narrative:

Onward she paddled and rowed by turns in the growing twilight . . . her streaming hair was dashed about by the wind, but she was hardly conscious of any bodily sensations — except a sensation of strength, inspired by mighty emotion. Along with the sense of danger and the possible rescue . . . there was an undefined sense of reconciliation with her brother: what quarrel, what harshness, what unbelief in each other can subsist in the presence of great calamity. (Eliot, *Mill* 652)

In a reversal of the traditional rescue narrative of fairy tales, the knight in shining armour is Maggie herself. As she fails to rescue him, the realist genre asserts itself, and her attempt becomes both a subversion of the fairy tale and an extension of the fantasy itself. The final act of the fairy tale is thus to be proven false under the dictates of realism and of conventional narratives for women, within which the woman should be rescued, not rescuer. As such, in the absence of a marriage plot, and in the failure of the fairy tale narrative, we are not provided a happy ending: Maggie and Tom's simultaneous deaths "mark a moment when the narratives ... collide for the last time ... [in] the negation of a story that, failing to work for Maggie, is finally discarded altogether" (Fraiman 147). After their death, the narrator returns to the pastoral world of myth and legend, but the story of "the days when [Maggie and Tom] had clasped their little hands in love, and roamed the daisied fields together" (Eliot, *Mill* 655) is entirely untrue: though idyllic and narratively satisfying, its falsity draws attention to the failings of the narrative form and of the contrived textuality of conventional narrative endings. Just as Maggie has "a blind, unconscious yearning for something that would link together the wonderful impressions of this mysterious life and give her soul a sense of home in it" (320), she is ultimately denied it, and so are we as readers denied any true resolution. As the novel's conclusion "does not seem an inevitable consequence of [Maggie's] faults and limitations as much as the result of an early decision of the author to end the book in a particular way", the ending functions as "an indecorous reminder, in the context of the realistic novel, that a novel is not a natural phenomenon," challenging the fundamental tenets of realism as a mimetic portrait of life (Wasserman 267). Thus, through "the ambivalent fantasy of Maggie's extinction and transcendence", and subsequently Eliot's critique of social and literary conventions, "Eliot's ending[]

bring[s] into fiction the collision of the unsatisfied, perhaps even illimitable, desire of her heroines with the restricted possibilities of the world as it could be imagined by realism” (Boumelha 90). Eliot’s self-stated aim as a writer was “to give a faithful account of men and things as they have mirrored themselves in my mind” (qtd. in Morris 80), and in *Mill*, her account exposes not only where realism fails as a representative medium, but also critiques how society itself fails women, and indeed, fails Eliot as a female writer representing women’s experience.

As Maggie “hold[s] forces within her as the living plant-seed does”, throughout *Mill*, these “make a way for themselves, often in a shattering, violent nature” (Eliot 320). Just as she cannot fit into her aunt’s dress or resign herself to renunciation, neither is she able to fit into the realist narrative, nor conservative prescriptions of ideal femininity, and must overflow from them. In addition to her unconventional appearance, Maggie holds a desiring and consuming gaze that speaks of her active agency, a characterisation in direct contradiction to the passive, meek ‘angel of the house’. While neither the realist paradigm nor the conservative ideological conditions Eliot writes within are able to sustain Maggie’s narrative trajectory, ultimately leading to her death, this does not come as a fulfilment of the fallen woman narrative, but as an escape from the marital plot and from constraints of traditional narratives. Maggie’s transcendence of realism moves into the worlds of myth, the Gothic, and the fairy tale, all narrative forms that privilege feeling over rationality, and thus the feminine over the masculine. Eliot thus moves into a form that destabilises realist tropes and privileges women’s experience through focusing on a distinctly embodied femininity, while also drawing upon mythological narratives that negotiate the conflict between passions and morality outside of realist conventions. As I go on to discuss in Chapter Three, this conflict and disconnect

between the inner and outer self is a constant thread in women's expression of their position and of the limitations of their social conditions. Though these non-realist forms cannot provide a resolution to restrictive social conditions and the narratives that they both uphold and are upheld by, their unsettling of the male-centred *Bildungsroman* narrative creates ruptures that allow Eliot to demonstrate the limitations of the patriarchal system of feminine erasure. Maggie's escapism from reality reflects Eliot's own overflow from conventional generic structures and from the material constraints of her means of publication. Through negotiation of the discourses available to her, Eliot is able to critique and to push the boundaries of the patriarchal systems that limited the outward expression of women's inner struggle. By being "beyond everything" (Eliot, *Mill* 297), physically, socially, and as we have seen, generically, Eliot brings Maggie beyond the constraints of traditional narratives of femininity, while also challenging the realist form and its assumptions.

Chapter Two

The Uncontainable Female Body in Henry Rider Haggard's *She: A History of Adventure*

As a genre coming to prominence in the 1880s, the adventure romance speaks as much of the trends of the literary marketplace as of the cultural anxieties of the *fin-de-siècle*. The genre's popularity arose from a number of factors. Not only do adventure romance novels nostalgically look back to an earlier age of the empire's expansion that had produced adventure novels such as Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) and Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* (1726), furthering the narrative of British superiority that "play[ed] such a remarkable part in the imperial quest" (Said xxv), but the genre also betrays fears of the empire's decline. During this period, the Irish Home Rule movement, the annexing of the Zulu territory in 1887, the fall of Khartoum, and the development of a world market in which Europe was growing in power, all posed a threat to British national identity. Within Britain itself, the push for suffrage and women's emancipation, the Jack the Ripper murders, and the Decadent movement, contributed to growing moral panic about racial miscegenation, sexual degeneration, and national decline. In reaction, British identity developed a "national egoism" that reacted against these changes (Haefele-Thomas 73). The sense of anxious nationalism and masculine superiority, no longer as certain or as hopeful in the face of Britain's weakening hold over the Empire, exposes the anxieties of national security and cultural and racial degeneration. While the adventure romance harkened back to a nostalgic imperial past in which white masculine identity held power seen to be unthreatened by the Other – namely, women, non-heteronormative identities, and non-white, non-British races – the different manifestations of the adventure narrative within the 1880s context instead

demonstrate the insistent displacement of contemporary British anxieties onto other nations, races, and subjects of cultural fears. As Benjamin Disraeli stated in his 1872 Crystal Palace speech, England was ostensibly “a great country, an Imperial country” (qtd. in Stott, *Fabrication* 3), and the Imperial conquest was vital to the cultural narratives that Britain depended upon to instate its own sense of superiority. The adventure narrative itself performs a colonial function, being what Martin Green calls “the generic counterpart in literature to empire in politics” (*Dreams* 37): through telling stories of adventure and conquest of other lands, authors uphold a sense of national superiority over the ‘Other’. Like the idea of empire, adventure narratives instate an expansive sense of hierarchy over the conquered and claimed lands and the enslaved and subjugated bodies of the native people, and uphold the mythology of the male adventurer expanding and impressing the white, masculine, ‘rational’ view upon ‘unenlightened’ cultures. Through writing narratives outside of Europe, authors both diverted attention “away from severe social problems within Britain” (Stott, *Fabrication* 6), and upheld British colonial identity through keeping the narrative of Britain conquering other nations within the cultural imagination.

Many critics have traced a change in *fin-de-siècle* adventure romance in comparison to previous iterations of adventure narratives, namely in the genre’s “recurring theme of regression, its persistent xenophobia and stress on the precariousness of civilisation”, and its “strange mixture of nostalgia, nationalism and fear” (Stott, *Fabrication* 5). As Victorian concerns around empire and colonial expansion changed, so did these novels. Rebecca Stott notes a “fatalistic” spirit in the adventure romances of the period, reflecting and confirming “the effects of a changing perception of [Britain] as a nation, as a nation in decline, slipping from

power and fearful of the consequences” (*Fabrication* 4). As Ronald Robinson and John Gallagher state,

Whereas the earlier Victorians could afford to concentrate on the extension of free trade, their successors were compelled to look above all to the preservation of what they held, since they were coming to suspect that Britain’s power was not what it had been ... The African empire of their successors was the product of fear lest this great heritage should be lost in the time of trouble ahead. (472)

Martin Green similarly finds late-Victorian adventure romances characterised by an “anxiety of possession”, of holding on to the status quo – and notably, while “in Defoe [this anxiety] was an individual thing; by the time of Wells and Haggard it was national” (*Dreams* 234). Patrick Brantlinger suggests that 1880s adventure romances “betray anxieties characteristic of imperialism both as an ideology and as a phase of political development” (“Imperial” 244). While earlier iterations of the adventure narrative convey a sense of excitement at conquering the ‘Other’ to the advantage of the empire, with the fear located in how it may harm the explorers, 1880s adventure romances betray an insistent sense of reclaiming what is lost and attempting to keep the ‘Other’ outside of the empire, with fear not for the adventurers’ lives but for the safety of Britain itself. The adventure romance, then, reflects the insecurity of the Victorian empire at the turn of the century, and the narratives of these novels are charged with contemporary ideological concerns.

Furthermore, towards the conclusion of the century, exploration and colonial expansion rapidly declined, being replaced by an industry of tourism and travel. As James Anthony Froude states in his 1886 *Oceana: or, England and Her Colonies*,

We had no adventures ... The great ocean steamers are not driven into port by stress of weather, but go straight upon their way. Voyages have lost their romance. No Odyssey is possible now, no ‘Sinbad the Sailor,’ no ‘Robinson Crusoe,’ not even a ‘Gulliver’s Travels.’ Only a Lady Brassey’s Travels. (78)

The transformation of the heroism and adventure of imperialism into trade and commodified tourism signalled a loss of the glory and high militaristic ideals that Britain had based its national identity upon. For Brantlinger,

the vanishing of frontiers, the industrialisation of travel and warfare, the diminishing chances for heroism, the disillusionment with civilisation and the civilising mission – these late Victorian ... themes point insistently toward another: the decline of Britain's position in the world as an industrial, military, and imperial power. (*Rule* 43-44)

With the loss of colonial exploration came the loss of a major part of British identity, and a fundamental part of British hegemonic masculinity. The adventure romance novel asserted both this Victorian colonial past and the associated form of masculinity, “tak[ing] the reader out of Britain and into Africa, typifying British romantic notions that ‘virgin’ spaces not yet conquered by white men still existed” (Haeefe-Thomas 76). The novels involved “experience beyond the law, or on the very frontier of civilisation” (Green, *Seven Types* 3), with the term ‘adventure’ “the high-spirited way of naming that experience and ... the feeling of power that can go with it” (3). The adventure romance thus became “the energising myth” of imperialism and British nationalism (Green, *Dreams* 21).

In the face of the major cultural changes of the *fin-de-siècle*, masculinity was now “rendered vulnerable to fears of national degeneration (with its connotations of male impotence) and considered to be under threat from feminism” (Moylan 138). The adventure romance, “with its high premium on vital and virile male characters, and its codes of chivalry and forbearance” (138), recaptured the essence of white British masculinity as associated with empire and conquest. Both women and ‘feminine’ domestic concerns were excluded from narratives: as traditionally male spaces such as the workplace were now being “invaded by women” (Gilbert and

Gubar, *No Man's* 35), and Cambridge University allowing women to matriculate and undergo examinations in 1881, the adventure romance created distinctly male spaces that either capitalised on the erotic appeal of women of colour, or excluded women altogether. In the first chapter of Haggard's *King Solomon's Mines* (1885), Allan Quatermain reassures the readers that

there is no woman in it—except Foulata. Stop, though! there is Gagooola, if she was a woman, and not a fiend. But she was a hundred at least, and therefore not marriageable, so I don't count her. At any rate, I can safely say there is not a petticoat in the whole history. (ch. 1)

There are no marriageable white women in the novel, and therefore men are safe to behave as they wish, unencumbered by either the marriage plot or the domestic life that women signify. Haggard signals to the reader that in this narrative, “men will be men because there are no women to restrain or encumber them ... It is a man-centred discourse, clearly focused on the experience of the white male out on the imperial frontier” (Stott, “Dark” 71). These novels upheld and maintained traditional gender and race ideology, with Africa “a place for men to prove themselves” (Haefele-Thomas 76), where “British boys could become men and British men ... could behave like boys with impunity” (Brantlinger, *Rule* 190). In adventure narratives, “[a]ny male had to strive always to be a man and not a boy ... a man and not a coward, a man and not a mouse, a man and not a woman” (Green, *Seven Types* 41). The return to the adventure narrative both provided a nostalgic harkening to a past un-haunted by fears of degeneration, and attempted to resurrect hegemonic male identity through writing male characters whose imperial narratives reinforced traditionally masculine attributes. As Green argues, adventure romance “belong[ed] to men (and vice versa)” (3).

Furthermore, adventure romance novels “took the place of fable” in children’s literature, being specifically aimed at young boys: the adventure romance “focused its attention on the Empire and the Frontier; and the virtues it taught were dash, pluck, and lion-heartedness, not obedience, duty, and piety” (Green, *Dreams* 220). While magazines such as *The Boys’ Own Paper* reinforced militaristic and Imperial ideals in young boys, the adventure romance was “the *rite de passage* from white boyhood into white manhood, and the ritual of that religion of manliness which in mainstream books of the nineteenth century quite displaced Christian values” (Green, *Seven Types* 41). Indeed, Haggard’s novel *King Solomon’s Mines* is dedicated to “all the big and little boys who read it”, consciously acknowledging his audience as both child and adult. Adventure romance novels thus “contain[ed] the myths [society] want[ed] to shape [boys’] imaginations and orient their drives . . . activating certain forces in their mind and repressing others” (Green, *Seven Types* 38), and reinstating the hegemonic masculinity of the golden age of colonial conquest. In addition to these novels, adventure romance authors published essays encouraging a return to ‘masculine’ literary styles, such as the epic and adventure genres, believing that “[f]iction is to the grown man what play is to the child”, and that through reading novels, “he changes the atmosphere and tenor of his life” (Stevenson 77). These essays, such as Haggard’s “About Fiction” (1887), Robert Louis Stevenson’s “A Gossip on Romance” (1882), and Andrew Lang’s “Realism and Romance” (1887), make explicit the purpose of their writing. Through the “manly, martial” adventure romance novel (Stevenson 73), these authors asserted a hypermasculine identity linked to the colonial narrative of discovery and conquest, aiming to influence the (male) readership to seek these experiences, and assert traditional hegemonic masculinity and the homosocial bond between men. Thus, the

gendered aims of texts such as Haggard's *She: A History of Adventure* can be analysed not only for their content and context, but also for the way they demonstrate and further the author's aims and agendas.

Throughout the nineteenth century, the domestic novel became "the center of the system of literature" (Green, *Dreams* 57). Particularly towards the *fin-de-siècle*, and with the rise of the New Woman, feminism, and the women's suffrage campaign, "a different kind of change occurred in the heroine, which involved a more complex development in the story ... the girl becomes more substantial", both "physically and morally ... figures to be admired rather than pitied" (61). With these novels being grounded in the domestic space, women, and the domesticity associated with femininity, were the core of the threat to masculine imperial power. Adventure romance novelists sought to bring fiction out of the feminine domestic sphere, and back into the masculine sphere of empire and expansion, writing within "a discourse that emphasises the importance of male camaraderie and which implicitly warns of the debilitating effects of woman" (Stott, "Dark" 70). As Stevenson states in 'A Gossip on Romance', "English people of the present day are apt ... to look somewhat down on incident, and reserve their admiration for the clink of tea-spoons and the accents of the curate" (73), connecting national idleness with the presence of the feminine domestic sphere in novels. In Haggard's essay, "About Fiction", he denounces "the tinkling of modern society verses" and the "feeble", "faint and delicate" atmosphere of three-volume novels, calling instead for "the swiftness, and strength, and directness of the great English writers of the past" (175). He perceives male characters within contemporary literature as "emasculated specimens of an overwrought age ... with culture on their lips and emptiness in their hearts", and as "many a man's whole life is influenced by some book read in his teens", "it would be

difficult to overrate the effect ... produced upon the national character” by novels (“About Fiction” 175). In writing adventure romance narratives, Haggard both fought against domesticity, and implicitly, the domestic novel, and sought to make masculine the literary field, using colonial narratives of discovery within a generic form that anxiously upheld the militaristic, patriotic masculinity of the high-Victorian adventurer, and “react[ed] against the woman-centred woman-gets-her-man Victorian novel” (Stott, “Dark” 71). In the adventure romance, these conflicts emerged in the pervasive theme of the reinstatement of masculine hegemony over female power.

Henry Rider Haggard’s adventure romance novel *She: A History of Adventure* was first published in serial form in *The Graphic* magazine in 1886, and then in novel form in 1887. Since this initial publication, it has maintained popularity and never been out of print, and has inspired several sequels, both by Haggard and by other writers. The novel tells the story of Horace Holly, a professor at Cambridge, and his ward, Leo Vincey, who with their manservant, Job, travel to the heart of Africa to find the lost civilisation of Kôr, and its queen, known as ‘She-who-must-be-obeyed’. An immortal “virgin goddess” (Haggard, *She* 144) and powerful sorceress, ‘She-who-must-be-obeyed’, or Ayesha, is beautiful to the point of being hypnotic, and thus she must wrap herself in “soft white, gauzy material” (146) lest she should drive men mad. The novel engages with conventions of the adventure romance, and betrays anxieties about women and power, sexuality and race, national and evolutionary decline, the loss of the British Empire’s power, and the invasion of both the national and the masculine body. As author E. M. Forster stated, while the novelist “sen[ds] down a bucket into the unconscious; [Haggard] installed a suction pump. He drained the whole reservoir of the public’s secret desires” (qtd. in Pocock

245). In both structural form and narrative, the novel colonises literal and figurative bodies of the 'Other'. Haggard's representation of Ayesha is particularly significant, using her material fashioning and the layering of signifiers both physical and metaphoric to destabilise feminine power and reinstate masculine hegemony.

Haggard portrays Ayesha as a woman whose power is derived from her embodiment of conflicting narratives of femininity and sexuality – only to degrade her using biological and evolutionary discourse, with her sex and its perceived inferiority placing her within the single undermining category of 'woman'. Like Tamar Heller's analysis of Ayesha's "hybridity", my analysis explores how seemingly antithetical forms of femininity Ayesha embodies are inseparable and crucial to the complex representation of anxieties surrounding changing ideas of womanhood at the *fin-de-siecle*. These conflicting narratives are inscribed and played out upon Ayesha's body, made literal through discourses of self-fashioning and dress and through allusion to other female figures of power. Through the representation of Ayesha's female body, Haggard comments upon contemporary concerns about women, drawing upon cultural ideology of the New Woman and anxieties about female power to reinstate patriarchal law and uphold traditional conceptions of women. The majority of extant work on *She* has been published between 1970 and 2000, with some more recent analysis in regards to gender and sexuality. Little to no extant work exists in relation to the complex representation of Ayesha's physical body, and thus my research provides an original contribution to the field.

In Haggard's colonial quest narrative, the landscape is represented as a physical body to be objectified and conquered by the masculine explorer, describing

Africa within a male colonial gaze. As Richard Patteson suggests, “[t]he exploration of hostile territory is often described in terms of sexual conquest”: since “the earth is the eternal feminine – the body to be conquered, penetration followed by possession”, the masculine explorer is the conqueror and penetrator (121). This gaze is characterised by discourses of “entering into, penetrating, colonizing, conquering and the dominating of colonised peoples ... draw[ing] upon sexual discourses for the expression of suppressed sexual and imperial anxieties” (Stott, “Dark” 84). The land in *She* is not simply described for its literal appearance, but likened to body parts: the sea has a “brood[ing] ... bosom” (Haggard, *She* 64), and in the caves at the centre of Kôr is a cleft that goes to “the very womb of the world” (278). When the explorers find Kôr, the path into the city is a “line of roadway running straight towards the base of the mountain” (129), and the act of entering the city a sexualised act of penetration. The land is thus embedded with symbols for the female body, with “breast-like volcanoes, vaginal chasms, and a treacherous swampy terrain” (Heller 57). It is also racialised with symbols of “unambiguous blackness” (57): as the explorers reach their destination, they approach a mountain called “the Head of the Ethiopian”, “shaped like a negro’s head and face” (Haggard, *She* 66). These descriptions pose Africa as not only the feminised, penetrable body, but as the colonisable body of the African people, with the act of looking and “survey[ing] territory about to be both penetrated and appropriated” (Stott, “Dark” 84) demonstrating a voyeuristic dominion over the land. Haggard’s textual gaze is thus an “imperialist gaze”, and the pornographic, dominating gaze of the white male explorer within the novel is mirrored in both the implied male audience imposing their gaze upon the narrative, and the cultural gaze of the British empire (Stott, “Dark” 84).

The adventure romance novel displaces anxieties of race, gender, imperialism and the fall of empire onto both the African landscape and the female body. Africa becomes “the testing ground for white male adventure, the landscape of adolescent fantasy” (70), upholding narratives of white British superiority and conquest, while also perpetuating racist and colonial myths of non-white cultures. These cultural myths, upheld by scientific and evolutionary discourses, betray “a man-made discourse, expressing male fantasies, fears, [and] anxieties” (Stott, “Dark” 70). Brantlinger finds three key themes in adventure romance novels: “‘atavism’ — psychological and social regression ... the theme of invasion, often in the form of demonic powers from the past ... [and] the theme of the degradation of adventure” (Brantlinger, “Imperial” 245). All of these themes speak to late-Victorian concerns about degeneration, feminisation, and invasion, and contribute to representing Africa as a domain of ‘Otherness’, both geographically and symbolically. In ‘Othering’ Africa, the adventure romance upheld British national identity as “active, healthy, and masculine”, while foreign identities were considered “passive, fevered, or feminine” (P. Gilbert 2), being sexually, evolutionarily, and biologically degenerate, and eminently colonisable. The Other was “everything designated as *outside* late nineteenth-century British culture, moral systems, and normality ... naming – classifying – the Other as the abnormal, the pathological” (Stott, *Fabrication* 27, italics in original). As Victorian cultural mythology hinged on “[the white] race’s expansion [as] *the* epic story of modern history” (Green, *Seven Types* 11, italics in original), colonisation of the Other was both consistent with contemporary ideology, and acted as a means to diminish the threat of non-British power. The landscape of Africa thus “act[s] as [a] screen[] on which to project the anxieties and desires that underlie the dominant discourse of Empire” (Stiebel 2): the “frequent fetishistic

repetition of setting, of attempted assertion of dominance” speaks of “a vacillation between desire and fear” that betrays the anxiety that simultaneously drives and undermines the colonial project (5).

She, like many adventure romance novels, was published in serial form. Thus, the novel was “read along with the news of the day – the major political and economic events, the murders and sex scandals” (Green, *Seven Types* 19). In *She*, as in other adventure novels such as Alexandre Dumas’ serialised *The Three Musketeers* and *The Count of Monte Cristo* (both 1844) and Sir Walter Scott’s *Ivanhoe* (1819), the narratives are offered “sometimes as fact and sometimes as fiction ... [with] adventure fiction and adventure fact reflect[ing] and feed[ing] each other” (23) to blur the lines between factual events and the fictitious, often supernatural, occurrences within the novels. Authors such as Haggard and Stevenson used maps and images of fictitious historical artifacts, structuring their novels within frame narratives or using a documentary writing style to present their novels as historically grounded or plausibly factual. The claim made in the title of Haggard’s *She: A History of Adventure* encourages the reader to view the narrative as both historical and factual from the outset, firstly naming the novel as a historical document, and secondly, through including an introduction wherein the (fictional) editor claims the text to be a manuscript of the protagonists’ journey. In Holly’s letter to the editor, he claims that “everything is described in the accompanying manuscript exactly as it happened” (Haggard, *She* 14), to which the editor responds that “the story seems to bear the stamp of truth upon its face” (15). As such, a narrative of colonial conquest, adventure, and sexual and racial degeneration, with an ambiguous balance of fact and fiction, was published alongside the factual and “notoriously jingoistic” news of the day (Stott, *Fabrication* 6-7). This leads the

readers to draw parallels between factual and fictional accounts, giving the adventure romance novel additional weight, not only as a quasi-factual account documenting a particular moment in colonial British history, but also as reflecting and bringing together the widespread anxieties brought to the fore by these events. In a letter written to Haggard in 1888, the anonymous writer connects the events of *She* with the Jack the Ripper murders, not only drawing parallels between the “sickening” content of the novel and the murders, but blaming Haggard’s novel for causing them:

My Dear Rider – Having read your books with much interest, I crave the permission to write you a few lines of friendly criticism. I consider your books are clever and amusing; ... rather too much of the ‘bloody head and marrow bones’, but still one must pander to the public taste! ... as regards *She*, it is a tissue of the most sickening trash that was ever printed ... None but a foul-minded liar could invent such sickening details. I trace a good deal of the diabolical murders that have been lately committed to the ideas promulgated by your foul trash. (qtd. in Haefele-Thomas 94)

Readers of adventure romances, then, were actively aware of the close connection between the novels and the cultural climate, and the reactionary nature of the texts in their obsession with “horrific imperial and sexual landscapes” (Haefele-Thomas 75).

Not only did the adventure romance “affirm existing interests and attitudes by presenting an imaginary world that is aligned with those interests and attitudes” (Cawelti 35), but also displaced the source of the cultural anxieties from within the unstable social milieu to the external world of the (racial, sexual, culturally degenerate) Other. As Brantlinger suggests, “it was precisely the power of capitalism to protect its interests by deflecting discontent onto alien or overseas targets ... Nationalist fervor and race-thinking came to overshadow class consciousness and the struggle for domestic reform” (“Imperial” 245). As Britain’s political future became less certain, Brantlinger notes that nineteenth-century novels shifted focus from “domestic realism and concern with social reform ... [to] imperialist adventure

stories for adolescents and adults alike” (Brantlinger, *Rule* 35). This redirected attention from domestic and class-based conflict onto racial and international concerns, with imperialism “an ideological safety valve, deflecting both working-class radicalism and middle-class reformism into noncritical paths while preserving fantasies of aristocratic authority at home and abroad” (35). As the domestic situation in Britain became more fraught, adventure narratives displaced these anxieties onto external bodies, while also anxiously revealing them in the representations of both the British adventurers and the bodies of the colonial ‘Other’. Adventure romance novels thus “reveal themselves to be political documents ... [that] reflect, and are reflected in, all the white nations’ feelings about their status as nation-states and about the imperial venture they were jointly engaged in” (Green, *Seven Types* 23-24).

Fears about the racial ‘Other’ are also found in the adventure romance’s treatment of gender. At a moment when theories of evolution, cultural degeneration, and sexuality were emerging and merging, in adventure romances the body, and particularly the female body, are represented according to these discourses. While the African landscape appears in narratives as the conquerable, submissive female body, also inscribed upon the landscape is a racialised discourse of “primitive”, and therefore dangerous, non-white sexuality, feared to be “the true nature ... concealed beneath the implied passivity” (Stott, “Dark” 79). The novels’ negotiation of corrupt and dangerous sexualities speak of contemporary anxieties of female sexuality and sexual agency, both in terms of white British women, and women of colour. The female body becomes the literal site upon which discourses of evolution, race, and sexual and moral degeneration are imposed and conflated, registering “fears not only about racial difference, but, importantly, about the threat that female sexuality, and

the female power that it tropes, poses to British manliness” (Heller 56). In *She*, the eponymous Ayesha manifests these anxieties, and her body becomes a metaphoric and literal “intersection of anxieties about imperial power and ... masculine power” (Heller 55). As Heller suggests, “since the ideology of imperialism was undergirded by late-Victorian ideals of manliness”, the threat that female sexuality and power posed to imperial power was equally a threat to male identity (55). Ayesha’s power, and the fear she invokes, thus hinges upon her threat to British masculinity both sexually and politically.

Ayesha’s appearance encodes racial discourses of both whiteness and non-whiteness that Heller calls “hybridity” (55). Before entering Ayesha’s chamber, Holly states his uncertainty as to whether he would encounter a “naked savage queen,” a “languishing Oriental beauty,” or a “nineteenth-century young lady drinking afternoon tea” (Haggard, *She* 145), ascribing Ayesha with a tripartite racial identity that connects three distinct and contradictory gender, class, and racial identities. As a white Arabic woman with dark hair and eyes, her appearance provides her with a racial ambiguity that allows her body to be inscribed with proper Victorian femininity, the eroticised, objectified body of the “Oriental” woman, and the “savage” woman of colour. As a construct, Orientalism in the nineteenth century bore “only a tenuous relationship to any actual reality, and, in fact, [said] more about the culture that produced it than the object of study” (Stiebel 3). Ayesha’s “Oriental” identity thus bears the fetishising and colonising gaze of the male British explorer, viewing the “exotic” woman as both sexually available and Other. Piya Pal-Lapinski has suggested that the “exotic body”, as encoded in Ayesha’s form, “has always been inscribed ... by a kind of *métissage*, a racial elusiveness” (xv). Inherent in this elusiveness or ambiguity is a series of assumptions and anxieties about both women

of colour and white women. As Heller states, “[t]o the extent that she is depicted as a racial Other, Ayesha is an image, as were women of colour in the Victorian period, for sexual promiscuity and aggressiveness” (56). Her ambiguous Orientalism also provides allowance for her representation as a sexually desirable and eroticised body: while the white, domestic, British woman could not be portrayed as wearing only “her lovely hair about her like a garment” (Haggard, *She* 290), or ask a man to wrap their hands around her uncorseted waist, her presence in Africa and ambiguous racial identity mean She can be portrayed and sexualised outside of British conventions and representational taboos. Kelly Hurley asserts that Orientalism and blackness are “synonymous with sexuality in the same way that ‘Woman’ is synonymous with sexuality: to each is attributed the sort of gross corporeality, both in terms of generative power and a sexualised identity, that masculinised Western culture disclaims in itself” (128). In each case, the source of cultural anxiety is located in the body of the Other.

Upon revealing that Ayesha embodies an ambiguous combination of all three culturally constructed images of women, Haggard insistently emphasises her whiteness and closeness to the Victorian ideal woman. Though Ayesha describes herself as Arabian “by [her] birth” (*She* 150), Haggard continually describes Ayesha as “pure”, a symbolically loaded adjective reflecting contemporary theories and anxieties of whiteness, miscegenation, and racial purity (158). She has “ivory” skin that is “white as snow” (145) she speaks an Arab dialect that is “purer and more classical” (145), and is of a “true” and therefore pure Arab descent (150). Even her bodily form is pure: “her gracious form swelled up in lines as pure as they were lovely” (309). Though she is a racial Other, her Otherness is tempered by her whiteness, which heightens her association with the “nineteenth-century young lady

drinking afternoon tea” (145). Similarly, though Leo has a Greek mother, Haggard insists upon his whiteness. Holly emphasises his golden curls and Hellenic features, having “nothing of the supple form or slippery manner of the modern Greek about him” (213), a description “serv[ing] the same function of diluting racial Otherness as Haggard’s careful whitening of Ayesha’s skin” (Heller 58). As well as her whiteness, her physical description as “beautiful, surpassingly beautiful” (Haggard, *She* 159) and “lovely as no other woman was lovely, or ever had been” (96), with a “childish glee” (152), and a waist so small that Holly’s hands can fit around it, align her physically with the Victorian ideal of the domestic angel. She is also a virgin, having waited for the reincarnation of her lover, Kallikrates, to return to her and consummate their love. Her clothing also reflects this characterisation: under her “corpse-like wrappings”, she wears a kirtle “of clinging white”, reminiscent of the white muslins worn by young, unmarried Victorian women (158). This symbolically loaded cloth and its significant whiteness speak of “innocence, youthfulness, purity and virginity” (Seys 31), and contributes to the portrayal of Ayesha as upholding ideal Victorian femininity.

As I have explored, a “rhetoric of feminine description aimed at erasing the female body” exists within Victorian fiction, creating descriptive distance between the reader and the woman’s body and thus further distancing the reader from the latent threat of unacceptable sexuality (Talairach-Vielmas 39). In *She*, however, Haggard reverses this discourse of erasure – not, as Egerton demonstrates in “A Regeneration of Two”, to rewrite women’s bodies and narratives to provide them with agency – but in order to eroticise and colonise Ayesha’s body. In describing every part of Ayesha’s body in detail using literal description and metaphor, her physical form is erotically displayed as sexual object and image for both Holly and

the reader. Her body is made present for her sexuality and sensual power, not as a positive reflection of her powerful femininity and agency, but as a symbol and symptom of her assertive, transgressive femininity, which associates her with Otherness and calls upon racist assumptions of people of colour. In collapsing the “space between signifier and signified” and drawing upon narratives of other *femmes fatales* (Michie 84), Haggard ascribes her with a bodily narrative of both transgression and innocence. In this eroticising and objectifying discourse, Haggard illustrates the white, colonial male gaze acting upon the woman-as-Other.

In Ayesha’s first appearance in the novel, her body is described in detail, from her feet to her hair, following a discourse Mulvey refers to as the “male gaze” (837). The description follows Holly’s gaze as it travels up her body:

my eyes travelled up her form, now only robed in a garb of clinging white that did but serve to show its perfect and imperial shape, instinct with a life that was more than life, and with a certain serpent-like grace that was more than human. On her little feet were sandals, fastened with studs of gold. Then came ankles more perfect than ever sculptor dreamed of. About the waist her white kirtle was fastened by a double-headed snake of solid gold, above which her gracious form swelled up in lines as pure as they were lovely, till the kirtle ended on the snowy argent of her breast, whereon her arms were folded. I gazed above them at her face” (Haggard, *She* 158)

Her body is “stylised and fragmented by close-ups”, becoming “a perfect product ... [and] the content of the [text], and the direct recipient of the [reader’s] look”

(Mulvey 841). As “the virile hero of adventure romance [takes] his role as a surveyor of the land about to be explored, mapped out, or built upon”, so do Holly’s eyes “travel” over her form, mapping out Ayesha’s body for both Holly and the readers (Moylan 140). Haggard describes Ayesha’s body with a scopophilic gaze in which not only is “looking itself ... a source of pleasure” (Mulvey 835), but also places Ayesha as image, and Holly as spectator:

The determining male gaze projects its phantasy on to the female figure which is styled accordingly. In their traditional exhibitionist role women are simultaneously looked at and displayed, with their appearance coded for strong visual and erotic impact so that they can be said to connote *to-be-looked-at-ness*. Women displayed as sexual object is the leit-motiff of erotic spectacle: from pin-ups to strip-tease ... she holds the look, plays to and signifies male desire. (837, italics in original)

Unveiled, Ayesha's visual erotic impact is so strong as to cause Holly to "shr[i]nk back blinded and amazed" (Haggard, *She* 158). Her stance in the unveiling scene, with her arms lifted above her head, is a classic pose used in pornography to display the female form. Her body is presented "for the delectation of the reader" (Browne 35). The second time she unveils for him, she dances and shakes her hair in a strip-tease-like performance, knowingly placing herself as erotic object in order to bring Holly "upon [his] knees before her" (Haggard, *She* 193). In these scenes in which "[a] woman performs within the narrative, the gaze of the spectator[/reader] and that of the male characters in the [text] are neatly combined without breaking narrative verisimilitude" (Mulvey 838), immersing the reader in a homosocial bond over the shared view of the displayed female body. However, while Ayesha is positioned as the erotic focus of the male gaze, she is not simply the passive object of his gaze, and the typically hierarchical power dynamic becomes complicated by her active receipt and consumption of that gaze.

Significantly, Ayesha actively displays her physical form, remaining covered until she decides to unveil her image for the man's pleasure or destruction, an act from which she derives pleasure. Rather than being simply the passive object of the gaze, she demands or rejects the spectator's look, "command[ing] the absolute erotic devotion of any man who looks upon Her unveiled" (Gilbert and Gubar, *No Man's* 15), actively engaging in "that dear pleasure which is our sex's only right" (Haggard,

She 193). Nor can Holly's gaze visually consume her form without consequence: he covers his eyes with his hands and "stumble[s] from her presence" (161), "babbling confusedly" and "gurgle[ing] feebly", stating that he has "looked on beauty, and [is] blinded" (160). Ayesha's visual appearance, though "coded for strong visual and erotic impact" (Mulvey 837), has a power in itself that is emasculating and dangerous. Her image is not yet colonised or owned by the spectator: as she veils and unveils herself, she has her own agency in the bestowing of her image and its power, with her physical form and beauty thus as much a part of her power as her sorcery. Far from being the passive object of the male gaze, unveiled, Ayesha is not consumed by the spectator, but rather consumes and takes power from their gaze. Her powerful gaze entrances, and she willfully manipulates the men around her through taking advantage of the male gaze and the erotics of her own body. She asks Holly to look at her and to

sit so, and tell me, am I not beautiful? ... consider well the point; take me feature by feature, forgetting not my form, and my hands and feet, and my hair, and the whiteness of my skin, and then tell me truly hast thou ever known a woman who in aught, ay, in one little portion of her beauty ... is justified to hold a light before my loveliness? (Haggard, *She* 192-3)

As she knows he is "but a man, and she was more than a woman", his attraction to her is such that he "would give his immortal soul to marry her, which at that time [he] certainly would have done, and so, indeed, would any other man, or all the race of men rolled into one" (193). Ayesha's empire "of the imagination" (179) is thus maintained by exploiting her own seductive and erotically powerful femininity.

Ayesha's gaze is not only entrancing, but holds its own desirous power: after having "blasted [Ustane] into death", she "fixe[s] her deep and glowing eyes upon Leo's eyes, and ... his clenched fists unclasp[ed], and his set and quivering features

relax[ed] beneath her gaze”, holding him within the “iron bonds” of her gaze (Haggard, *She* 227, 228-9). Held in her gaze, her “dread” beauty “take[s] possession of his senses ... and overpower[s] him”, and has the power to leave him “utterly cowed, as if all the manhood had been taken out of him” (229, 227). She is likened to “Aphrodite triumphing”, to “Venus Victrix”, and called a “modern Circe” (Haggard, *She* 192, 153, 163), all figures of autonomous female desire and unearthly power. Gilbert and Gubar suggest that while male authors and artists had often avoided “dramatis[ing] encounters with the goddess of love ... because they found her female erotic autonomy both ‘alarming’ and ‘alluring’”, authors such as Haggard at the *fin-de-siecle* used the image of Aphrodite, Venus, and other powerful women “to objectify new fears about female power” (*No Man’s* 112). The men’s emasculation is reflected in their nominal transformation into animals: like Circe transforming Odysseus’ men into animals, Holly becomes “Baboon”, Leo “the Lion”, and Job “the Pig” (Haggard, *She* 196, 245), and they are forced to crawl before her, “reduced to their beastly essences” (Gilbert and Gubar, *No Man’s* 15). In the power of her physical image, Ayesha “embodies the deadly power men attribute to insubordinate women” (*No Man’s* 140), using the feminine sexual power derived from her beauty and her female form to emasculate those who challenge her, and to control and contain the objects of her desire. She is thus “not simply [the] desirable object but desiring subject” (Heller 59).

In adventure narratives, the image of the *femme fatale* is a powerful and pervasive image. While it ostensibly “returns to woman a quality of force and of active existence”, autonomous and powerfully erotic women are instead portrayed as “the personification of sin” (Dijkstra 252, 313). The *femme fatale* is “a powerful and threatening figure, bearing a sexuality that is perceived to be rapacious, or fatal to her

male partners ... She is characterised above all by her *effect upon men: a femme* cannot be *fatale* without a man being present” (Stott, *Fabrication* viii). As the adventure romance was a genre “constitut[ing] a reactionary flight from a modern world in which women were perceived as increasingly assertive ... the *femmes fatales* of male romance [are situated in] a context of a conservative ‘backlash’ against social and cultural change” (Reid 363). These conservative anxieties of female power and of the threatening of the hegemonic white male body are thus displaced onto the female body, whether the body of the colonised landscape, or the body of the woman-as-Other. As the *femme fatale* is “always Other” (Stott, *Fabrication* 37), as an image she is intrinsically connected to the racial Other. As Rebecca Stott states,

Within the representation of the *femme fatale* there is a whole series of cultural projections taking place: where the *femme fatale* is black, there is a simple projection of Western repressed [anxieties] on to the black woman. Where the *femme fatale* is white, she bears the qualities of ‘blackness’: in other words ... the image of the black female (bearing a black, ‘predatory’ sexuality) is superimposed upon the white woman (*Fabrication* 42)

As a woman of autonomous erotic desire and emasculating power, “murderous to her rivals but irresistible to her lovers” (Showalter, *Sexual* 86), Ayesha is the archetypal *femme fatale*. Her white skin alongside her transgressive, and thus non-white, sexuality is more of a narrative threat:

Ayesha’s whiteness, however, renders her sexuality even more dangerous than if she were unambiguously Other. If, underneath a surface gentility, the “nineteenth-century young lady, drinking afternoon tea” is as oversexed as a “naked savage queen” or the denizen of an Oriental harem, the boundaries that separate white and black, “pure” and sexual woman, blur and disturb the intertwined racial and sexual hierarchies defining Victorian culture. (Heller 56)

Her whiteness is all the more unsettling to the Victorian audience as it raises the possibility that the Victorian domestic angel’s white skin may hide the sexual

aggression and licentiousness associated with women of colour. Beneath their idealised white gentility, any angelic Victorian *femme* may be *fatale*.

Despite being the powerful and irresistible *femme fatale*, throughout the novel, Ayesha's gender is used to undermine her strength and authority. Her emotions, and specifically, her love for Kallikrates and Leo, are used as evidence that she is "only a woman", prone to "sudden access[es] of womanlike trembling and agitation ... [and] sob[bing]" and frivolous "weakness" (Haggard, *She* 160, 201). As Holly states upon seeing one of these "womanlike tremblings", "I saw that after all she was only a woman, although she might be a very old one" (160). Despite her supreme intellectual, sexual, and magical power, and her immortality, the use of the adverb "only" diminishes her power: underneath it all, Ayesha is no more than her (biologically and evolutionarily lesser) gender. Ayesha herself states after "burst[ing] into an awful flood of tears ... yet looking lovelier than ever as she did it" in her delicate femininity, that "after all [she] is a very woman" (201). As Patrick Brantlinger states in his introduction to the Penguin Classics edition, Ayesha is "an unattainable and yet eternally faithful lover, who is at once blindingly beautiful, dangerous, magical, all-powerful ... and yet far more vulnerable than she realises" (xiii). After Leo accepts Ayesha's love, she becomes the very image of the submissive domestic angel:

Indeed, her whole manner changed. ... All that she did was to attend to his wants quietly, and with a humility which was in striking contrast with her former imperious bearing, addressing him always in a tone of something very like respect, and keeping him with her as much as possible. (Haggard, *She* 212).

As a domestic angel, she is a viable and available white woman for the hero: Ayesha is not only a powerful, seductive, all-knowing woman, but a white virgin, and

“despite her Medusean powers, the sweetly beautiful but fatal Ayesha has been angelically loyal to her Kallikrates for a millennium” (Gilbert and Gubar, *No Man’s* 89). After She heals Leo, she “kisse[s his] brow with a chastened abandonment of tenderness” (Haggard, *She* 202) and “cast[s] herself down on her knees beside [his] form” (169-170) in a “metamorphosis from castrating virago to dutiful spouse and upholder of motherhood” (Murphy 68). White, beautiful, submissive, with both the weakness of being “only a woman” and the power of being “more than human” (Haggard, *She* 160, 158), Haggard creates a distinct sense of “the Anglo-Saxon hero’s feeling that for a man like him there must be something better waiting than an Anglo-Saxon woman” (Green, *Dreams* 394).

However, Ayesha is not merely a domestic angel, nor a *femme fatale*, but rather a combination of both: she is the innocent virgin with the “first flush of ripened beauty”, and has the erotic and sexual agency of a woman of “unutterable experience” (Haggard, *She* 159). In her “awful loveliness” (162), Ayesha embodies both ideal and transgressive forms of Victorian white femininity, becoming “an odd mixture of the two types – an angelically chaste woman with monstrous powers, a monstrously passionate woman with angelic charms” (Gilbert and Gubar, *No Man’s* 6). Each image coexists with the other, making her sexuality more threatening: as Holly states, “[n]ot even the lovely smile that crept about the dimples of her mouth could hide this shadow of sin and sorrow” (Haggard, *She* 159). Within the Victorian cultural imagination, these forms of femininity had been mutually exclusive, but with the breakdown of traditional femininity through the emergence of the New Woman and the suffrage movement, “the mad rebellious woman and the sane submissive woman were now really inhabitants of the same body”, and this “adulterating female essence ... threaten[ed] the integrity of gender roles and the stability of Victorian

culture” (Gilbert and Gubar, *No Man’s* 89; Murphy 31). Ayesha’s refusal to be contained into a discrete category of femininity or race means that she transgresses the boundaries clearly delineated by Victorian discourses on gender and imperialism, and “[i]n whichever of her shifting incarnations, then – as a figure for whiteness or blackness, overpowering sexuality or its suppression – the threat that Ayesha poses to male power must be contained in order to quiet the interlinked sexual and racial anxieties she evokes” (Heller 56). As Stott states,

we can read the various (medical, scientific) attempts to define a woman acting outside established norms for female behaviour as an attempt to incorporate the threat into the ‘empire’ of knowledge. The naming of this Other is an attempt to triumph over her Otherness. To name the deviant woman as *femme fatale*, prostitute, suffragette, New Woman, virago, degenerate, Wild Woman, Free Woman, is both to deny her difference and to regulate it. (*Fabrication* 48-49)

Her inability to be contained and thus her refusal of masculine patriarchal structures is her threat, and “such a *femme* must be punished with ‘devolution’ precisely because she is *fatale*” (Gilbert and Gubar, *No Man’s* 35).

Ayesha’s emasculating power and disregard of masculine patriarchal law connects her to the New Woman of the *fin-de-siècle*. As a form of femininity “distinct from, yet related to” the *femme fatale* (Stott, *Fabrication* viii), both images are of women who refuse to be controlled by masculine power structures, and so pose a threat to the status quo. Though the term ‘New Woman’ was not in common usage until Sarah Grand and Ouida coined the term in 1894, it is appropriate to analyse the connections between Haggard’s representation of Ayesha and the conceptions of the New Woman, as “the appellation reflects the heightened debate over the Woman Question and burgeoning anxieties over gender roles that

characterised the 1880s as well as the following decade” (Murphy 32). As Davison explains,

in an era that saw the passing of the Married Women’s Property Act of 1882 which significantly altered the common-law doctrine of coverture to allow a married woman to own, buy and sell her own property, New Women were considered a serious threat to the status quo. Labelled by one writer as a ‘sublimated Frankenstein’s monster’ (Caird, 1996: 288), the New Woman called into question the established idea of an essential female nature, women’s limited professional and employment opportunities, and their right of choice in relation to marriage, maternity and sexuality. H. Rider Haggard’s *She* (1887) provides what is perhaps the most compelling example of ... engagement with the New Woman question. (138)

Ayesha, an “avatar of the New Woman”, is “an adulterating female essence who threatens the integrity of gender roles and the stability of Victorian culture” (Murphy 31). Ayesha’s aggressive femininity and autonomous sexuality are also “traits that underscore her emasculating New Womanhood” (Heller 56). As the New Woman posed a threat to the masculine hegemony of Victorian England, invading traditionally masculine spaces and spheres of work, so does Ayesha pose a threat to masculinity and to the Empire. In coexistence with her white, domestic, angelic femininity, Ayesha’s New Womanhood speaks of fears that “the learned and crusading ‘new woman’ may incarnate as well the awakened powers of the old, adored woman” (Auerbach, *Woman* 37). The anxiety that her “mysterious autonomy” evokes is thus not simply that of the New Woman, but “everyman’s worry about *all* women” (Gilbert and Gubar, *No Man’s* 7, italics in original).

The fashioning of Ayesha’s body and clothing develops these ambivalent and contradictory ideals of femininity. The polarised views of women as either ‘angel in the house’ or *femme fatale* converge at the woman’s waist: as Anna Krugovoy Silver has explained, a woman’s waist was “a highly unstable and contested site that both sexualised and desexualised the body” (38), signifying “woman’s ethereal nature”

(44), and “mark[ing] a woman as sexually attractive” (40). These “prevailing and antithetical constructions of femininity ... positioned [women] as either virginal or dangerously sexual” (Summers 122). As a sign of incorporeality and spirituality, a small waist reflected a small appetite, both in terms of food consumption, and sexual appetite. Ayesha’s diet further complicates this: as Heller suggests,

Rather than [simply] symbolising the chaste sexuality of the domestic woman, which is subject to male control, Ayesha’s anorexic eating habits recall the discourses of Victorian feminists who sought to make women independent of male appetite. In this sense, both Ayesha’s desire and her ability to suppress it encode an autonomy that reflects the late nineteenth century climate of changing female roles. (56)

Ayesha’s characterisation reflects these conflicting ideas, being both “sexual and non-sexual, physical and non-physical” (Silver 40). However, in her embodiment of these contradictory ideals, Ayesha highlights their hypocrisy: though women “must simultaneously appear angelic and alluring” (McEachern 113), they must appear alluring within an angelic sexuality that does not pose a threat to propriety or masculinity. Her tiny waist and incorporeal appetite, symbols of innocence, become instead symbols of transgression and erotic power.

As mentioned, Ayesha has also achieved the cultural ideal of the “hand-span waist”: “But see, give me thy hands—so—now press them round me, and there, with but a little force, thy fingers touch, oh Holly” (Haggard, *She* 172). Though a small waist was the ideal, for most women it was only achievable by corseting. Ayesha’s lack of a corset further immerses her waist within layers of contemporary ideology about women’s bodies and propriety. Though a small, corseted waist was a sign of purity, the uncorseted waist was considered “slovenly” and a sign of sexual licence (Haweis 49). As Leigh Summers explains, “stays were, as their name suggests, designed to make unruly female flesh ‘stay put’ and in doing so were also thought to

arrest the potentially unruly and recalcitrant female mind ... while denying and/or repressing sexual desire in the women and girls who wore it” (5-6). Ayesha’s unruly flesh and mind is unencumbered by stays and consequently unencumbered by social convention or patriarchal law. While the corseted and thus “contained” female body was perceived as “tractable and obedient ... [and] did not appear to threaten the political or sexual status quo”, the uncorseted female body “appeared as its potentially destabilising, ideological opposite” (Summers 147). Though she is a destabilising and sexually emasculating presence upon the men who gaze upon her, Ayesha is more politically threatening to the British empire: her uncorseted, uncontrollable, and uncontained body threatens a reversal of the imperial process in which her body in all its power invades the British body. As she is unable to be held by the bounds of conventional femininity, thus transgressing masculine power structures, Ayesha’s female body becomes the physical manifestation of her threat to white British masculinity.

Ayesha’s physical and material fashioning draws heavily upon the image of the snake. The snake is a multi-layered symbol, particularly in relation to women, sexuality, and the *femme fatale*, where it becomes “the inevitable dualistic opposite of the image of virginal purity” (Dijkstra 216). Perhaps the most pervasive of the snake’s symbolic meanings relates to its Biblical roots: Eve and the snake in the Garden of Eden as symbol for original sin and woman’s transgression. Ayesha’s physical movements are characterised as snakelike: she moves “with a certain serpent-like grace which was more than human” (Haggard, *She* 158), and “her entire frame seemed to undulate, and the neck did not bend, it curved” (146). After she unveils herself, she emerges “shining and splendid like some glittering snake when it has cast its slough” (192). Bram Dijkstra explores the relation of snakes and

transgressive women throughout art and literary history, finding that “[a]mong the terms to describe a woman’s appearance none were more overused during the late nineteenth century than ‘serpentine’, ‘sinuous’, and ‘snake-like’”, as “[i]n the evil, bestial implications of her beauty, woman was not only tempted by the snake but was the snake herself” (305). The image also builds the association between Ayesha and Medusa, both being *femmes fatales* with paralysing eyes and “threatening the male viewer even as he was being lured by the enticements of bestial forgetfulness emanating from ... this ultimate siren” (Dijkstra 310). Ayesha’s embodiment of the serpent, a symbol of women’s transgression, and of Medusa, reflects her emasculating sexual power. She is both Eve, the tempted, and the snake, the tempter.

Significantly, Ayesha’s waist is physically bound by a “double headed snake of solid gold” (Haggard, *She* 158), both containing her physical body, and binding it to conflicting narratives of feminine desire and masculine control. The double-headed snake, also known as the amphisbaena, is a significant and charged symbol. The word amphisbaena translates from the Greek to ‘to go both ways’, and as has been demonstrated, She fulfils this ‘both-ness’ in her embodiment of conflicting narratives of femininity and race. In Greek mythology, the amphisbaena was thought to have sprung from the blood of Medusa’s head as Perseus carried it over the desert – which then, after confronting Cato’s army, fed on the dead. In John Milton’s *Paradise Lost*, after tempting Eve and Adam in the Garden of Eden, Satan and his fallen angels transform into “complicated monsters” – most notably, the amphisbaena:

for now were all transform’d
Alike, to serpents all, as accessories
To his bold riot: dreadful was the din
Of hissing through the hall, thick-swarming now
With complicated monsters, head and tail,

Scorpion and asp, and amphisbaena dire,
Cerastes horn'd, hydrus, and elops drear,
And dipsas (519-526)

The amphisbaena is thus an image of monstrosity: a creature spawned both of aggressive, monstrous feminine sexuality, and of its destruction by the male hero, and a creature associated with the loss of innocence and sinful betrayal of fallen angels. In Aeschylus' Greek tragedy *Agamemnon*, Cassandra says of Clytemnestra:

Such boldness has she, a woman to slay a man. What odious monster shall I fitly call her? An Amphisbaena? Or a Scylla, tenanting the rocks, a pest to mariners, a raging, devil's mother, breathing relentless war against her husband? (1227-1230)

The amphisbaena thus connects Ayesha with murderous feminine rebellion against men and patriarchal structures. As her waist, the locus of her sexuality, is held by the amphisbaena and its intertextual narratives, Ayesha and her eroticised female body are physically bound by and bound to the narratives of monstrous femininity, both the destructiveness and destruction of female power, and the fatal threat of the powerful, sexually assertive woman to masculinity. Its Biblical connotations further transform Ayesha's waist and material body into one tied to original sin and the fall of innocence into lustful sexuality and death. The layers of Ayesha's material fashioning thus clothe her in narratives of lost innocence and female transgression, and connect her both to a line of historical women betraying mankind to sin, and to the masculine anxieties about women's propensity towards sin. While in *The Mill on the Floss*, Eliot's use of intertextuality expands Maggie's narrative possibilities by including forms of femininity outside of realist paradigms, in *She*, Haggard draws upon intertextual narratives that limit Ayesha's. Instead, she is cast within tropes of femininity that uphold the confining discourses of the time, reflecting the adventure romance's purpose of maintaining patriarchal power.

Among these multi-layered symbols, the snake is also a phallic symbol. As Ayesha's waist becomes the intersection of anxieties of women's transgressive potential, so does the snake belt and its attempted hold of Ayesha's uncontrollable sexuality make literal the symbolic and systematic restrictions imposed upon her body by patriarchal conceptions of female power and femininity. However, the belt is too large for her waist: it "is too large, and doth not bind it as it should" (Haggard, *She* 193), and thus is unable to contain her within narratives of innocence or transgression, neither as domestic angel nor as *femme fatale*. As she resists the restriction of the belt, she acknowledges that "it is a wise snake, and knoweth that it is ill to tie in the waist" (193) in a self-conscious acknowledgement of British anxieties about the sexual Other, and the fear of patriarchal culture's inability to control and contain powerful femininity. The snake, the amphisbaena itself, and thus the symbols of transgression and ideal femininity, are ill-suited to contain She-who-cannot-be-contained. However, as her power is thus inherently connected with her uncontainable femininity and her sexuality, her sexuality must be contained in order to nullify her power. Her fate "is not death ... but reduction" (Miller 91): reduction into containability and categorisation, and thus a restoration of the patriarchal status quo.

Throughout the narrative, Ayesha goes through a process of unveiling, not only in the act of undressing, but also in the layers of her character. At first, she appears wrapped in "grave-clothes" (Haggard, *She* 146), hiding her hypnotic beauty from the Amahagger, and later, in her meetings with Holly and Leo, she unveils herself to manipulate and entrance them. In what seems to be her final act of unclothing before stepping into the Pillar of Life, she removes her white kirtle and presents herself wrapped only in her hair and the golden snake belt. Wrapped in

signifiers of her non-white Otherness and erotic transgression, she undergoes a final unveiling: a process of Darwinian devolution that sees her first aging, then turning “dirty brown and yellow”, then into a creature “no larger than a baboon”, before dying (292). Her ambiguous ontological identity is thus revealed and resolved: as “for Darwinism the Other is imagined as the spectre of degeneration signaled by the ape” (Stott, *Fabrication* 48), she is demonstrated to have been the non-white, “savage” Other all along (Haggard, *She* 145). Her final state as “monkey” reduces her to the lowest evolutionary position and reinstates the hierarchy of white man over her feminine degeneracy, now finally contained within the Otherness of the woman of colour, and proven to be “only a woman” at her core (160).

The Pillar of Life, “the very flame of life that has heretofore preserved Her ... [is] an almost theatrically rich sexual symbol” (S. Gilbert 448), a phallic signifier of masculine power that causes Holly, in an orgasmic burst of his spirit “soar[ing] to the empyrean of its native power”, to rejoice “in splendid vigor of a new-found self” (Haggard, *She* 287). While her power was previously sustained by exploiting the masculine gaze, she is now nullified and destroyed by the Pillar:

She is, metaphorically speaking, destroyed during a moment of unholy intercourse with the phallic “pillar of life” whose sexual comings and goings ... eternally shake the secret “womb of Earth” ... this perpetually erect symbol of masculinity is not just a Freudian penis but a Lacanian phallus, a fiery signifier whose eternal thundering return bespeaks the inexorability of the patriarchal Law She has violated in Her Satanically overreaching ambition. (Gilbert and Gubar, *No Man's* 20)

As the Amahagger men “worship” their women until “up to a point, till at last they get unbearable ... [then] we rise, and kill the old ones as an example to the young ones, and to show them that we are the strongest” (Haggard, *She* 118), so must Ayesha be killed, “punished for a specifically female *hubris*” (Gilbert and Gubar, *No*

Man's 380). Notably, while Leo's childhood nurse Job cannot survive the fiery Pillar, his masculinity too much thrown into question by his maternal role, his maleness saves him from devolution. Holly and Leo conclude their adventure by taking a lock of Ayesha's hair, a final gesture asserting colonial and masculine power over the monstrous feminine body, her power now vanquished and sexuality nullified. As a "sign of Ayesha's Otherness" her hair "becomes a fetish[istic] ... souvenir and trophy", Holly and Leo violently reasserting hegemony over the Other through the ceremonial collection of the spoils of their exploration (Heller 59). Gilbert has noted that in many *fin-de-siècle* texts involving women in power, "a group of men must achieve or at least bear witness to a ceremonial assertion of phallic authority that will free all men from the unmaning enslavement of Her land" (S. Gilbert 449). Ayesha's devolution and death thus becomes a reinstatement of the "eternal law" of patriarchal power (Haggard, *She* 294). As Gilbert and Gubar aptly state, "[f]inally ... naked and ecstatic, in all the pride of her femaleness, She must be fucked to death by the 'unalterable law' of the Father" (*No Man's* 21).

Ayesha's essential femininity, fashioned within her physical female form and her desiring gaze, is the locus of her power, and the locus of her uncontainable threat. It is her passionate, active desire, rather than the desexualised, immobilised womanhood of domestic confinement, that "fuels her latent powers into political life" (Auerbach, *Woman* 37). As Holly states after her death,

Ayesha locked up in her living tomb, waiting from age to age for the coming of her lover, worked but a small change in the order of the world. But Ayesha strong and happy in her love, clothed with immortal youth, godlike beauty, and power, and the wisdom of centuries, would have revolutionised society, and even perchance have changed the destinies of Mankind. (Haggard, *She* 294)

It is this threat that thus “oppose[s] her[] against eternal law”, and leads her to be “swept back into nothingness – swept back with shame and hideous mockery” (294). As a domestic angel, a New Woman, a *femme fatale*, and the representation of uncontrollable female power, She is a woman with “the power not merely to create the walls of home, but to dissolve them along with all the boundaries masculine civilisation calls immutable” (Auerbach, *Woman* 61). Her threat to patriarchal power structures is her femininity, the source of her power to rule, a power that “is hers alone: she is a magus/queen not by virtue of an inherited cultural tradition, but by virtue of the mobile magic within her womanhood ... *She* is a parable of female typicality” (38). In her death, then, “Holly and Leo – and Haggard – bear witness not just to the death of a mortal woman but to the annihilation of the goddess, the deconstruction even of the idea of the goddess” (Gilbert and Gubar, *No Man's* 21), and the destruction of female power.

As an example of adventure romance, a genre inseparable from masculine colonial power, Haggard's novel enacts the reinstatement of hegemonic masculinity over not only woman, but over the racial and sexual Other. Haggard's fictional account, disguised as fact, creates “a unique and enduring myth expressed through a *horror* of the predatory female as invading Other. She, the woman, is Other, foreign, alien, exotic territory” (Stott, *Fabrication*, 125). Ayesha's power, uncontrollable in her refusal of masculine power, is contingent upon her essential femininity and sexual agency, and thus represents not only a threat to the explorers but to Britain, manifesting anxieties that the adventure romance narrative contains through colonial evolutionary and biological discourses. While *She* “establish[es] layers of interlocking binarisms designed to naturalise and reinforce the gender assumptions the text validates”, through Ayesha's active transgression and exploitation of male

power, “the novel reveals the fragility and periodic collapse of those oppositions” (Murphy 33). Her appearance and her material fashioning through dress depict conflicting forms of Victorian femininity, and encode narratives of feminine power, rebellion, and innocence. Ultimately, in her reduction from all-knowing, all-powerful, assertive woman, all aspects of her transgressive power are contained, “exposing her as a mere woman who eventually can be controlled as any other can” (Murphy 54).

Chapter Three

Self-Fashioning New Woman Identity in George Egerton's "The Regeneration of Two"

This chapter explores clothing and the female body in relation to New Woman fiction of the 1890s. The term 'New Woman' was coined first by Sarah Grand and Ouida in two 1894 articles, "The New Aspect of the Woman Question" and "The New Woman" respectively, and referred to women who embodied new or previously unarticulated forms of femininity that challenged the status quo and championed female agency and sexuality. The New Woman was "variously, a feminist activist, a social reformer, a popular novelist, a suffragette playwright, a woman poet", while also fundamentally "a fictional construct, a discursive response to the activities of the late-nineteenth century women's movement" (Ledger 1). Both in life and as a discursive and literary construct, the New Woman posed a challenge to the established order as she "threw certainties into dispute, threatened to disrupt family life as the Victorians liked to believe they had known it, and played the lord of misrule in a world turned upside down by her demands" (Gardiner 7). As a result, the New Woman was the subject of constant derision and attack by the popular press, caricatured and parodied as angry, unattractive, and masculine. The following anonymous 1894 poem in the periodical magazine *Woman* won a readers' competition for the best definition of the New Woman, and upholds this negative stereotype:

She flouts love's caresses
Reforms ladies' dresses
And scorns the Man-Monster's tirade.
She seems scarcely woman
This mannish New Woman
The Queen of the Blushless Brigade. (3)

This attack on the New Woman expresses key cultural concerns and anxieties about gender, both in an explicit sense of the press attempting to discourage women from adopting New Woman ideals, and in an implicit attempt to uphold traditional values and maintain patriarchal power. As Sally Ledger states, “[g]ender was an unstable category at the *fin-de-siècle*, and it was the force of gender as a site of conflict which drew such virulent attacks upon the figure of the New Woman” (2). The Victorian preoccupation with cultural degeneration, spurred on by the emergence of the decadent movement and the political instability of the British Empire, further fuelled these anxieties about gender and ‘The Woman Question’. In turn, the New Woman and New Woman writing critiqued entrenched and taken-for-granted institutions of Victorian cultural identity such as marriage and the family, hegemonic masculinity, and morality. The New Woman also traversed the public and private spheres in her movement away from domesticity and towards the traditionally masculine worlds of work and politics. The New Woman identity thus both challenged and epitomised key cultural anxieties.

The New Woman also recognised the role of clothing in maintaining women’s secondary and domestic social position, and as is discussed later in this chapter, through the Dress Reform movement, sought to encourage the adoption of less restrictive clothing. The adoption of masculine styles of dress such as bloomers was a key part of the New Woman’s challenge to the status quo, and a major controversy in “the swing of the pendulum in the ‘woman question’” (Grand 627).

As feminist author and adventurer M^{rs} Muriel Dowie wrote in 1893,

ever somewhere and elsewhere the poor old question is hawked and hustled! Shall a woman be allowed to wear a short dress and gaiters in a muddy street? If it were a new question put to a new race of intelligent beings without a congestion of conservatism in their brains, it would have, no doubt, one answer – Yes, if she wants to. As it is, we being as we are, and knowing

what we know, and persistently refusing to know what we won't know – this little query raises howls of opinion; opens a dress exhibition; [and] causes a host of persons to 'invent' what the calm people of the world have been wearing ever since they can remember (qtd. in Gardiner 9)

By appropriating traditionally masculine clothing, she further posed a threat in blurring both visual and performative signifiers of gender. The archetypal New Woman broke down traditional femininity through adopting styles of dress that drew on masculine clothing: “a two-piece suit with a blouse ... custom made of wool by men's tailors rather than dressmakers” (Cooper 79) or “a skirt and ready-made shirtwaist, a new blouse style based on men's shirts” (79). These styles of dress allowed women to perform physical work and move more freely than in more restrictive fashionable dress, which often included a boned bodice as well as a corset. Not only did this allow women to work, travel, and exist independently outside of the domestic world, but it also blurred the binary view of gender, which was upheld in part by dress. As clothing “made a clear distinction between male and female, and public and private spheres ... dress was a vehicle for enforcing these boundaries” (Cooper 69), so by adopting elements of traditionally male dress, and thus signifiers of hegemonic masculinity, New Women subverted traditional gender performance.

Conversely, some New Women chose to uphold traditional styles of dress in order to work within the status quo: as Dowie stated in 1894, “[h]er frills and laces are, in the meantime, a weapon, or if not a weapon to fight with, at least an implement to work with” (qtd. in Gardiner 13). Dowie recognises that

an air of masculinity, however slight, goes against the woman who would be successful in the eye of the public and on platforms ... to have it known that one is frightened at mice and spiders, assists greatly at the cordial reception of the most advanced intellectual display. (qtd. in Gardiner 12-13)

Working both within and outside of existing traditions is a crucial part of the persuasive power of New Woman writing and discourse. This chapter explores the New Woman short story in relation to Egerton's "The Regeneration of Two", and examines how her representation of the female body both reflects the aims of New Woman fiction and late-nineteenth century feminism more generally, both by working within existing literary traditions and by expanding their boundaries. I also examine how this re-presentation of the female body and its material fashioning speaks back to and corrects the tendency of traditional Victorian realist fiction towards the erasure of the female body, and thus demonstrate how the text responds to contemporary concerns through re-writing women's narratives.

A distinctly *fin-de-siècle* phenomenon both literary and extra-literary, and a figure of contention and controversy, the New Woman responded to the social, cultural, and political changes of the late-Victorian world. As these changes took place, and feminism, suffrage, and the phenomenon of the New Woman grew in social and political prominence, so women writers aimed to articulate new and progressive narratives of femininity. New Women writing both refers to the non-fiction writing of periodicals, press campaigns, and political debates around The Woman Question and suffrage, and the fiction produced in response to the social and political climate. As Lyn Pykett suggests, writing "woman (and women) anew was to write the, as yet, unwritten" and so required "a negotiation not only of the discourse of the proper feminine, but also of the discourses of fiction – language, form and genre" (194). New Woman fiction writers such as Olive Schreiner, Charlotte Perkins Gilman, Sarah Grand, and George Egerton wrote stories to "break away from masculine models and plot conventions, and to write boldly about woman's 'nature'" (Showalter, "Introduction" xiii). By responding to and challenging traditional forms

of fiction and their generic conventions of structure, character, and gender, and the social and political values inscribed upon them and implicit within their hierarchies, New Woman authors demanded that women's stories be articulated according to women's voices. Their stories championed sexual emancipation and equality, discussed the restrictions of traditional marital arrangements and the hypocrisies of Victorian gender politics, and portrayed independent women "of principle and action" (Gardiner 7). Alys Pearsall Smith articulates these sentiments of New Womanhood in her 1894 essay "A Reply from the Daughters":

In the past she has belonged to other people, now she demands to belong to herself ... She asks simply and only for freedom to make out of her own life the highest that can be made, and to develop her own individuality as seems to her the wisest and the best. She claims only the ordinary human rights of a human being, and humbly begs that no one will hinder her. (446-450)

Whether as an author, activist, artist, or fictional character, the New Woman embodied the newly perceived forms of femininity becoming prominent among the social and cultural change of the *fin-de-siècle*. In his 1894 review of the genre, "The Novel of the Modern Woman", W. T. Stead stated that New Woman novels were "written by a woman about women from the standpoint of Woman", taking "a distinctively woman's standpoint" in order to portray female characters not as "mere addenda to the heroes" but as having "an independent existence, and ... a soul of her own" (64-65). New Woman authors wrote women's experience into literature, providing new ways of embodying femininity and new narrative possibilities, but also representing women in ways reflecting the aims of the first-wave feminist political movement that was taking hold in the 1880s and 1890s. While New Woman novels "register misgivings, doubts, and discontent with women's position" (Stubbs 5), short fiction allowed women writers to explore the changing position of women and the nature of the social world by not only challenging these narratives, but also

the structural and narrative constraints of the novel. The short story thus provided a way to reject and challenge Victorian ideology and literary traditions in both content and form. This form is most characteristic of the New Woman movement, and authors such as George Egerton became pioneers of the short story and its use as a flexible and subversive mode of social critique. George Egerton's "The Regeneration of Two", from her 1894 collection *Discords*, engages with the new short story form, using discourses of materiality, clothing, and the body to critique traditional narratives of femininity, and to provide new ways to both represent and embody womanhood.

As a conscious movement away from traditional Victorianism, short fiction blatantly rejects the form characteristic of the Victorian era and its ideology: the realist novel. The "defining preoccupation" of the Victorian novel, as Patricia Stubbs explains, is "the elaboration of an intensely personal world of individual experience, the moral structure of which is build up around carefully organised patterns of personal relationships" (xi). Both for the female characters in these novels and the women reading them, the novel began a "fundamental association ... between women and private life", and with this, the narrow range of narratives available to women developed: "the virgin heroine, the wife and mother, the prostitute, the spinster, the mistress, the redundant middle-aged woman, the single mother" (xii). These narratives grew "to some extent out of the historical reality of women's experience, but [owe] even more to the ideology which developed to disguise that experience" (Stubbs xii). Both in reality and within novels, "the New Woman refuses to be assimilated into the iconography of Victorian "Womanhood"" (Ardis 27). Within novels, women were largely reduced to "*mere* properties, to characters and images imprisoned in male texts because generated solely ... by male expectations

and designs” (Gilbert and Gubar, *Madwoman* 12, italics in original). Furthermore, novels’ narrative structure was heavily tied to marriage as “the only possible resolution of a woman’s problems” (Stubbs 125). New Woman authors sought to resist reductive explanations of femininity in favour of new narratives that re-wrote the individual and embodied feminine experience, and brought issues of sexuality, maternity, marriage, work, and identity to the forefront of the text. In the rejection of the structural conventions of the novel form, New Woman writers also rejected the limited narratives and “procreative and genealogical fables of inheritance, marriage, and death” that the traditional novel upheld, and wrote instead to challenge literary traditions and conventions (Showalter, *Sexual* 18). The short and open-ended form allowed for the exploration and critique of women’s possibilities (or lack thereof) through not only the stories’ content, but through the structural brevity that allowed for evasive or inconclusive narrative resolutions, and allowed the charting of “alternative narrative[s] of women’s development without having to conform to conventions and prescriptions of the domestic narrative ... giving precise detail about a single turning point in each woman’s lives” (Hager, “Community” par. 7). The New Woman short story thus extended the challenging of Victorian literary traditions from content into generic form, and provided new ways to explore feminine agency and sexuality.

Despite distancing herself personally from the term, Egerton’s writing clearly expresses New Woman sentiments in her exploration of and giving voice to female sexual agency and identity. Her writing has been associated both with First-Wave Feminism and with New Woman fiction, and disrupts traditional modes of writing both in form and content. Her *Keynotes* (1893) and *Discords* (1894) are collections of short stories that concentrate on women and their experiences, and in their

structure as well as their subject matter, “destabilise[] the genre boundaries that divide the short story and the novel so that her books become hybrids of both ... in order to explore possible narrative structures outside of the conventional novel’s courtship plot” (Hager, “Community” par. 7). While *Keynotes* concerns itself with “the triumphant keynotes of women beginning to claim their own subjectivity”, *Discords* focuses on “the tortured discords between women’s needs for agency and the denial of that agency inherent [within codes of] Victorian femininity” (Hager par. 19). As Hager suggests, the first (“A Cross Line”) and final (“The Regeneration of Two”) stories in each collection frame the work, gesturing towards a transformation that occurs in the protagonists, and a crossing of boundaries between traditional and New forms of femininity (“Community” par. 8). In these collections, female sexuality and sexual agency is not only present – a subversive act in itself – but explicit. Egerton focuses on women who choose not to repress their sexual agency and desire but refuse to allow it to define or control them, and thus she “envision[s] sexuality as simply one note, not the keynote, in women’s lives” (Hager, “Community” par. 2). New Women’s writing “analysed the social and sexual choices of an emancipated woman”, and Egerton’s writing does this, describing “with a new vehemence and confidence the importance of honouring women’s sexuality” (Vicus, “Introduction” viii). Though meeting overwhelmingly with criticism from conservative sources, in *Review of Reviews*, Egerton’s *Keynotes* was praised for her articulation of women’s experience, having “crystallised her life’s drama, [and] written down her soul upon the page” (671). Egerton received letters from women who wrote that “they have often felt just like the uneasy woman in “A Cross Line,” and that they are glad to see their sensations made matter of record” (in Hager, “Community” par. 6). Egerton herself stated that she aimed to explore “the *terra*

incognita of herself, as she knew herself to be, not as man liked to imagine her – in a word to give herself away, as man had given himself away in his writings” (“A Keynote” 58). The continual use of the nameless protagonist throughout both *Keynotes* and *Discords* also emphasises her striving towards providing a voice for the ‘universal’ women. The unromanticised and often confronting exploration of women’s sexuality, subjectivity and experience was “a political as well as an aesthetic struggle ... [that] meant attacking a whole ideology and the network of state and social controls which had evolved to re-enforce it” (Stubbs 25). In her examination of aspects of female experience that had previously been either hidden within or written out of texts, Egerton’s writing contributes a critique of Victorian realism in both content and aesthetics.

“The Regeneration of Two” poses a feminist utopia, giving “an unashamedly idealised version of the new woman” and writing a heroine who is both mistress of the commune and worker, and who can love a man but “remain free” (Stubbs 111). However, in her use of the *Bildungsroman* ‘coming of age’ narrative, Egerton creates “the illusion of the ‘real’” to challenge the conventions and traditions of realist literature (Hager, “Community” par. 19). The *Bildungsroman* plot is characterised by “the development of the protagonist’s mind and character, in the passage from childhood through varied experiences – and often through a spiritual crisis – into maturity, which usually involves recognition of one’s identity and role in the world” (Abrams 193). Though Fruen’s development is not shown from childhood, occurring over three and a half years, her growth is from innocence to maturity. Her pre-transformed self is described as having “the eyes of a spoilt child” (Egerton, “Regeneration” 165), with a laugh “unrestrained as a child’s” (181), and her crisis of identity causes her to move from “ignorant innocence” (241) to becoming a “grand,

fearless, wholesome woman” (246). Rather than wasting away in pining for the man she loves, Egerton’s heroine finds purpose and fulfilment in work and in building relationships with other women, a characteristically ‘New Woman’ trait. In her growth, Egerton’s protagonist is caused not only to “analyse [her]self, to see what was under the form into which custom had fashioned [her], of what pith [she] was made, what spirit, if any, lay under the outer woman” (Egerton, “Regeneration” 241), but also to analyse the role and position of women in society, and the ways in which “social law [has] tended to cheapen women” (242). By using a *Bildungsroman* character development, Egerton draws upon a common trope of the realist novels of the period, setting up her narrative as following realist conventions.

While Egerton’s representation of a community of outcast women “was quite impossible for women at the time Egerton was writing” and so fundamentally involves a “rejection of realism” (Stubbs 112), the interplay between realist and utopian visions both superficially places the narrative in the realist tradition and challenges the limits of the realist narrative. The narrative begins in the classic setting of the Victorian realist novel: within the domestic space of Fruen’s home, and with a conversation between Fruen and her maid, Aagot. In Part II, the women of the commune also face day-to-day practicalities around the home, such as the preparation of food and the washing of clothes, further placing the narrative in the domestic realist setting. Just as Haggard sets *She* in Africa as a means of escaping Victorian codes of acceptable behaviour, Egerton locates the plot in contemporary Norway to perform a similar function. The narrative is not only plausibly placed within reality, but is also sufficiently geographically and socially external to Victorian British society to allow the utopian narrative to take place. The use of Norwegian words throughout the text at once makes the narrative more ‘realistic’

due to its Norwegian setting, but also “allow[s] female aesthetes to describe actions forbidden to modern life ... The languages mark[] the characters as ‘other, ‘different’” (Schaffer 51). As Martha Vicinus states, this subversion of the traditional form with utopian images is characteristic of New Women’s writing, “opening out the closed world of the realistic story to new, provocative, and unpredictable paths” (“Rediscovering” 21).

With the introduction of a romance plot between Fruen and the unnamed poet, the reader would expect the resolution of the plot via marriage at the conclusion of the text, and this is set up to resolve through the poet’s description of their “betrothal journey” (Egerton, “Regeneration” 250). A page later, Egerton subverts this through advocating instead for the perfect union as one of “free” love, wherein Fruen is a “free woman ... proud of [her] right to dispose of [her]self as [she] will, [and] to choose” (251-2), and her lover is a “free man” of whom she will “ask ... nothing” (251, 252). Egerton works within the traditional romance plot in order to subvert it, using Fruen and the poet’s meeting, separation, then chance meeting as plot points around which Fruen’s development starts, continues, and resolves. While in Part I, Fruen swoons in the heat and he revives her, their meeting in Part II demonstrates the new difference in the couple’s power dynamic, with Fruen rescuing him from freezing to death, and dragging him onto her sleigh before nursing him back to health. Egerton emphasises Fruen’s strength and dominance through describing the poet with language typically used for women, with Fruen perceiving him as “her comic great child, child in his greatest moments, with a little of the child’s desire for praise, a little of the child’s ‘show-off,’ happiest when fooled for his own good” (“Regeneration” 248). Despite Egerton establishing “a traditional dynamic, with the clear-sighted male poet showing the worldly woman the error of

evil feminine ways” (Hager, “Community” par. 22), the resolution of the text subverts this dynamic, with “the pupil [Fruen] ha[ving] distanced the master” (Egerton, “Regeneration” 245) and Fruen maintaining her subjectivity in a free love relationship.

Through Fruen’s relationship with her deceased husband, Egerton also critiques the fundamental inequality in the structure of traditional marriage, and thus challenges the marriage plot as the only possible outcome for women’s narratives. Fruen describes how “when [her husband] was dying or dead ... [there] was a fierce inward whisper of exultant joy that I belonged to myself again ... there must be many marriages like that in which the woman feels a dull resentment against the man because her love does not go with herself” (Egerton, “Regeneration” 168). While marriage is described as “old-fashioned bondage” that “narrows rather than broadens” a woman (248, 166), Egerton’s utopian relationship between a man and a woman is one in which the woman is allowed to be a “whole woman” (252), and in which love “will never be more than one note [in the woman’s life]; true, a grand note, in the harmony of union; but not the harmony” (246). Stubbs suggests that Egerton “deliberately adopt[s] non-realist narrative methods ... [to] break with the constraints of literary tradition” (235). However, I suggest that it is Egerton’s subversion of realist conventions through the use of non-realist narrative components that allows her to both break from Victorian traditions and to create a sense of possibility. By writing utopian narratives that were ideologically disparate to previous narrative possibilities for women within and alongside existing conventions, Egerton makes these utopian visions seem conceivable and grounded in reality, creating a sense of possibility and hope for an equal future.

Egerton's protagonist, Fruen, is a wealthy young woman who, in physical appearance and mentality, conforms to the feminine ideal:

She is not unlike an illustration in a dainty magazine ... she is seductively attractive, a thing of piquant contrasts – the attractive artificiality, physical lassitude, and irritable weariness of a disillusioned woman of the world, and the eyes of a spoilt child filled with petulant query. (Egerton, "Regeneration" 165).

Despite her outward composure, her character expresses a sense of inner turmoil, stating that she wishes to "get away by herself" and "to scream", and that "she would give all she possesses for one hour's real happiness" (Egerton, "Regeneration" 173, 165, 179). The seasonal setting contributes to this sense of suffocation: Part I is set in "mid-June one hot forenoon in Christiania", and "the air seems to vibrate audibly with heat, to gasp for coolness" (163), emphasising the oppressive heat that reflects Fruen's own sense of mental and physical oppression. Aagot, Fruen's maid, also expresses this unease, stating that "at night I do feel as if I could just cry without knowing why. I suspect all women do – it's part of our nature" (166). Whilst rubbing Fruen's feet, she "shak[es] her fingers after each time as if she is scattering away something she has drawn out of them" (165). This sense of disillusionment and of wishing to cast off or escape from something oppressive is a constant thread throughout Part I, in which both Fruen, Aagot, and Fruen's love interest all critique the hypocrisy of societal beliefs around women's position.

Throughout the text, Fruen undergoes a 'regeneration' through the self-fashioning of a new identity. Egerton demonstrates this through discourses of materiality, the body, and the physical 'material' of clothing. Both in Victorian life and in texts, dress was crucial to the fashioning and signification of identity. Sarah Josepha Hale, editor of the hugely influential *Godey's Lady's Book* and author of

etiquette guides for women, wrote in 1865 that dress “is the index of conscience; the evidence of our emotional nature; it reveals more clearly than speech expresses, the inner life of heart and soul in a people, and also the tendencies of individual character” (370). This is similarly true in texts, where femininity is embodied by the dress the heroines wear, and speaks of identity and character. Clothing “[can] be read as easily as any text” (Summers 19), and plays a significant role in developing and portraying character, both in “The Regeneration of Two” and in fiction more broadly. The coded references and languages of cloth and colour used within the text play a role in telling the narratives of the women beneath the dresses, being employed “symbolically, metaphorically and analogously in depicting the heroine’s progression through the narrative as she negotiates contemporary modes of femininity and sexuality, literary representation and genre” (Seys 5). Victorian readers, and particularly female readers, would have been aware of these multiple and shifting meanings: as Christine Bayles Kortsch states, “in her work bag, the ideal [Victorian] woman reader carried not only shears and a needle ... [but also] a sophisticated knowledge of the social significance of clothing and of the etiquette surrounding even the simplest of garments” (55). Thus, clothing and its material characteristics and fashioning can be read as symbolically significant reflections of narrative, character, and identity, while also engaging with contextual and ideological issues of femininity, sexuality, and morality.

Ideal femininity, then, was projected and gauged by a woman’s clothing, both in texts and in life. Dress both “defin[ed] the parameters of feminine respectability” (Summers 21) and assisted in policing and maintaining the social order through its reflection of class and morality. Clothing, and its effect upon the body, was inseparable from morality and respectability: on one hand, dress “had to signal [a

woman's] class origin and impeccable virtue", and on the other, "it also had to promote sexual attractiveness in order to attract an appropriate marriage partner" (22). A significant part of Victorian women's dress and its relationship to femininity was the fashionable silhouette: namely, the changing and alternating accentuation or diminishing of the erotic sites of the bust, waist, and hips. Throughout the Victorian period, the bust variously grew, raised, and lowered, the hips widened, slimmed, and were thrust behind the body, and the waist became circular, narrower, was raised and lowered, lengthened, and most significantly, became smaller and more tightly bound than ever. This was achieved through corseting the body. Through dress, then, women performed femininity and actively constructed a classed and gendered identity by negotiating conflicting yet co-existing markers of respectability and sexual desirability.

In Victorian society, corsetry functioned as "a multi-functional discursive device", being both signifier for the female body and sexuality, and the object by which these controversial and taboo subjects were shaped and controlled (Summers 3). The corset serves as a foundation both literal and symbolic, not only in creating a base for the fitting of clothing according to the fashionable silhouette, but as a key aspect of and vehicle for the defining and controlling of women's sexualities during the Victorian period. The corset accentuated the biological differences between the male and female body, asserting and maintaining the binary divide between the gendered worlds of men and women, and the associations of femininity with delicacy and masculinity with strength. It also restricted a woman's movement, limiting the physical activities or work that she was able to participate in and preventing the development of muscle, and reduced the amount of food she could eat. This both created and enforced the fashionable idleness, delicacy, fragility, and submissiveness

of the ideal Victorian woman. A tight corset further constricted the diaphragm, making only shallow breaths possible. As Helene Roberts states, this caused the “peculiarly feminine heaving of bosoms so lovingly described in popular novels” (558). Particularly throughout the *fin-de-siècle*, corsetry became the subject of extensive debate about its safety and necessity, and significantly, its moral, physical, and symbolic function in constructing and policing ‘acceptable’ domestic femininity. Victorian femininity was “a subjectivity that obeyed a rigid code of moral as well as sartorial maxims which mutually and intimately inflected each other” (Summers 4), and the corset became both metaphor for, and enforcer of, these codes and maxims. The corset and the cultural and scientific discourse surrounding it engaged with fears of the female body as “inherently flawed”, while also connecting to ideologies of “racial purity, national security, and heterosexual privilege” (Fields 48). As a form of bodily discipline, a physical garment and a textual metaphor, the corset can be read as a microcosm for the macrocosm of cultural control over women, the Victorian woman being both physically restricted by her corset, and symbolically “girdled by discourses at pains to define her” (Talairach-Vielmas 6).

The corset was the method of achieving and maintaining respectable femininity, restricting movement and forcing women into fashionable idleness, while also enhancing the erotic sites through manipulating the waist into the ideal shape and proportionately enhancing or slimming the bust and hips. A small waist was the ultimate arbiter of fashionableness, feminine delicacy and incorporeality, and gentility. Women hoped to have “at marriage, a waist-measurement not exceeding the number of years of her age – and to marry before she was twenty-one” (Willett and Cunnington 197-8), and could achieve it by tight-lacing her corset. Doing so was considered sexually attractive, while it also served a moral function: as an

anonymous defender of tight-lacing stated, “it is an ever-present monitor indirectly bidding its wearer to exercise self-restraint; it is evidence of a well-disciplined mind and well-regulated feelings” (qtd. in Roberts 565). As such, the small and bound waist is a signifier of purity, discipline, and refinement. However, as an erotic site, the bound waist existed not only as a sign of virtue, but as a sign of transgression and immorality. Tight-lacing was condemned both for its physical and moral impacts, being declared as not only one of “the greatest enemies to female health” but criticised by the church as being “opposed to all the laws of religion” (Willett and Cunnington 138). Conversely, in *The Gentlewoman’s Book of Dress*, Mrs Douglas calls the tight-lacer “a criminal” but acknowledges that “she wears her vice becomingly ... The tight-lacer is a person who respects herself and is careful in all departments” (15). Here, the conflicting expectations are clear: if a woman is to be virtuous, she must have a small waist, but if she tight-laces to achieve it, she risks becoming morally suspect. Lacing one’s corset too loosely or going without altogether was equally a sign of sexual license and degeneracy; as Bernard Rudofsky suggests, for middle- and upper-class Victorians, “uncorseted women reeked of license; an unlaced waist was regarded as a vessel of sin” (qtd. in Finch 343). The waist, corseted and uncorseted, was a site of sexuality and femininity both respectable and transgressive, and a signifier for both virtue and degeneracy. If clothing constructs identity, the corset physically shapes the boundaries of the body to fit an acceptable form of that identity, and binds the woman’s body to the discourses that control her. Thus, in the physical restriction of the body and its boundaries through the corset, bodily confinement performs and reflects the mental and symbolic confinement of restrictive and conflicting norms of femininity. The Victorian female form thus exists as one bound: physically, mentally, socially, and

symbolically. As a form of discipline, the corset is as much psychological as it is physical.

For the New Woman, corsetry symbolically confined women to limited and restrictive narratives, and many “resisted it specifically because of its role in female objectification” (Summers 5). As such, Dress Reform became a significant part of the New Woman movement. This reform sought to encourage modes of dress that allowed freedom of physical movement and comfort for both men and women, thus allowing the wearer to work and to exercise freely. The reform particularly sought to promote styles of women’s dress that could be worn without corsetry or with less boning, and that thus minimised the health conditions and physical frailty associated with tight-lacing and corsetry. As Gail Cunningham states, “women were likely to remain the weaker sex as long as they were encased in whalebone and confined their physical activity to the decorous movements of the ballroom” (2). Two major societies for Dress Reform were The Rational Dress Society and The Healthy and Artistic Dress Union. The Rational Dress Society was founded in 1880 by Lady Harberton, and was established “to promote the cause of health, comfort and sense in dress, and especially in women’s dress ... condemn[ing] tight lacing, high heels, [and] all the garments which cramped movements” (Ewing 93). As well as crinolines and crinolettes, the Society “omitted corsets from its list of approved underwear ... and specified that the total weight of underwear should not exceed 7 lbs” (93). Similarly, the Healthy and Artistic Dress Union was founded in 1890, and its associated periodical *Aglaia* aimed at “the propagation of sound ideas on the subject of dress” (Healthy and Artistic Dress Union i). The periodical, named for one of the three Graces of Greek mythology (*Aglaia* meaning ‘adornment’), looked towards Classical art and the associated styles of dress to “revive a beauty which was at one

time general, but for many years has been rare, and to substitute wholesome and natural garments for those which, for generations, have been injuring the health of the race” (Healthy and Artistic Dress Union 5). The magazine used both medical and aesthetic critique of contemporary dress to discourage readers from wearing certain garments. Corsetry had been a major point of controversy throughout the Victorian period for its impact on women’s health, reproductive capability, and morality, while *fin-de-siècle* feminism saw a movement towards exploring not only corsetry’s detriment to women’s health, but its contribution in preventing women from reaching their full potential. In a piece by William Wilberforce Smith in the first issue of *Aglaia*, “Corset Wearing: The Medical Side of the Attack”, he argues that “[t]his unmeasured damage to fitness, handicapping women in the race of life and hindering them in performing the best and noblest offices of their sex, probably constitutes the greatest of the evils of corset-wearing” (7). As the corset was “an absolute violation of our first principles, a crime against the law of beauty” (Holiday 15), the alternative clothing advocated by the movement involved “looser garments and no corseting ... [which] meant renouncing the desirable small and defined waistline, long considered a mark of femininity” (Cooper 79). In rejecting the traditional small-waisted feminine silhouette, the movement also rejected the narratives of feminine idleness and domesticity that this silhouette spoke of, and instead promoted clothing that “should be first comfortable, next pretty and becoming, and lastly fashionable if desired” (Dickson 10), and in turn, spoke of a new narrative for women that was based in a woman’s ability to work, to be independent, and to exist under her own terms.

Aglaia and the Rational Dress movement suggested an alternative form of beauty in clothing, wherein a garment’s beauty was conditional upon the ability of

the wearer to carry out the activities required, a principle reflecting the New Woman belief in and need for women to be able to be independent and self-sufficient. Sophie Bryant, an Irish feminist, activist, mathematician, and pioneer of the bicycle, wrote in *Aglaia*:

No dress can be, under any circumstances, either beautiful, convenient, or healthy, which does not allow the utmost freedom of movement that is suited to the circumstances. Hence we must reject it at once all the fashionable styles that arrest the movements of the body and impede the motion of the limbs - the stiff corsets or boned bodices, that regulate the internal movements of breathing and prevent almost entirely the natural play of dorsal and other muscles. (8)

In this way, the movement both promoted a style of dress that complemented physiology rather than restricted or changed it, but also promoted a new way of embodying femininity through clothing. *Aglaia* founder Henry Holiday states in his essay “The Artistic Aspect of Dress” that dress is “the outward expression of the Divine image in man ... If for any reason the body must be clothed, the clothing should be to the body as nearly as possible what the body is to the spirit” (13).

Clothing is thus a reflection of not only identity, but the way in which the individual chooses to embody their identity. Egerton is consistent with this view in “The Regeneration of Two”: Fruen’s looser clothing and abandonment of corsetry allows her to cultivate physical strength and to carry out her work, while also reflecting and facilitating her transformation into a powerful New Woman. While conventional Victorian narratives of femininity uphold these discourses of the symbolic confinement of the female body, as discussed in Chapter One, in New Woman fiction, authors write against these traditions and rewrite women’s narratives according to new ideas of femininity and its embodiment.

As ideal femininity was “gauged by its relationship to the world of beauty and fashion” (Talairach-Vielmas 5), so was the slender body, and its manifestation in and enforcement via dress, a signifier of class identity. Acceptable forms of femininity and their performative manifestation in culture and cultural products were inherently bound to white middle- and upper-class perceptions of gentility and refinement of character, while transgressive femininity was related to perceived ‘working-class’ traits of coarseness and sexual license, and racialised according to the colonial and evolutionary hierarchies promoted by modern scientific and cultural discourses. Dress, and the performance of class through the multi-layered meanings of clothing, operates as “a vital and problematic conduit which, ideally acted, was expected to visually delineate and distinguish middle-class femininity from that of its supposedly ‘coarser’ incarnation in working-class women” (Summers 21). In 1899, Thorstein Veblen stated that slenderness in a woman demonstrated that she was “incapable of useful effort ... useless and expensive, and she is consequently valuable as evidence of pecuniary strength” due to her need to be “supported in idleness by her owner” (qtd. in Silver 13). The delicate, frail body of the middle-class woman was both a marker of her not having to engage in physical activity due to having servants to do this for her, and of her husband’s affluence. Corsetry assisted in performing this class-based identity by physically moulding the flesh into the appropriate fashionable form. As a signifier of fashionableness and gentility, middle- and upper-class women wore corsets “to differentiate [themselves] from the ‘robust, large-limbed’ working class woman, to assert her decorative, rather than labouring social role” and to “strengthen and protect their class hegemony” (Silver 13; Summers 10). Working class women, on the other hand, “corseted (in part) to obfuscate or escape their working-class origins with the hope of entering the world

of their ‘betters’” (Summers 10). The waist, as the site being bound by corsetry and by these discourses of class, morality, and ideal femininity, is a site of conflict at which these discourses, and the ways they operate and intersect, are made clear.

Throughout “The Regeneration of Two”, images of clothing and of the active ‘making’ of identity through self-fashioning are used to critique traditional expectations of women. In Part I, Fruen’s discontented interior is contrasted with her image, and the language of self-fashioning is used to expose her performance of femininity as artificial and constructed according to social expectations. Her identity as an upper-middle-class woman is clear in her expensive and expertly made clothing: “Her patent shoes are made by the best man in London; her muslin gown, with all its apparent simplicity, is fitted by Parisian fingers; and her hat is an inspiration of blossoms and lace from the Rue de la Paix” (Egerton, “Regeneration” 179). Her physical description portrays her as the ideal beautiful but idle woman, “look[ing] so like a fashion-plate” with an “absurd” waist (243, 244), while also exposing the superficial and performed nature of her femininity as “attractive artificiality” (164) that has been “powdered and painted” (244). Throughout Part I, Egerton emphasises the contrast between “the woman under that infernal corset” (188) and the femininity that Fruen performs: she “blushes through her powder” and when she has “an hysterical, uncontrollable fit of laughter”, “it is as if one of the figures in a fashion plate in a lady’s paper were suddenly to change its simper into a natural smile, and let its waist expand” (181). Egerton makes it clear that she does this for men, rather than for her own pleasure, it having “grown natural to her to exact homage from every man” (182). As Emma Burris-Janssen articulates,

She is only able to recognise herself through the imagined gaze of an approving (and presumably masculine) spectator. Her body is an image, alienated from her subjective, embodied experience of it. All that it naturally

possesses is overpowered by the role it is required to perform within the heteropatriarchal parameters of her society. Its frailty is cultivated, its physical “flaws” are constructed by the male gaze and then covered by corsets and powder, and all of this has resulted in a “nervous irritability” that reveals itself as the woman prepares to be seen—not to act. (par. 7)

What is ostensibly ‘natural’ or possessing “apparent simplicity” is artificial and not a true part of Fruen’s self, but it instead having “grown natural” to her to act in a cultivated manner (Egerton, “Regeneration” 179, 182). Her femininity is entirely cultivated and constructed, and exposes the ideal as performative rather than natural, distinguishing between the ‘ideal’ and ‘real’ Victorian woman. This distinction begins to break down following Fruen meeting her poet: it “strikes her as never before” that the powder she applies “accentuates her lines and makes her look horribly haggard”, so “wipes it off carefully”, exposing her natural skin free from artifice or alteration (182). Like the strawberries Fruen and her poet eat that “are rather uncultivated ... but they are nice for all that, far better than the garden ones” (185), a clear theme runs throughout the text of the division between the ostensibly “natural” but cultivated, and the truly natural and authentic self.

In the discussion of women’s “dual life” (Egerton, “Regeneration” 198) of the surface level of femininity and “some bottom layer of real womanhood that [they] may not reveal ... through the outside husk of our artificial selves” (198), the text distinguishes between performed self of idealised femininity and the genuine and essentialist feminine self, and this is traced in the structure of the text in two parts, in which Fruen grows from the former to the latter. Through a dialogue with the poet, in which Fruen is “shamed to the depths of her soul ... [for] the spots of rouge on her cheeks” (196-7), both Fruen and the reader are forced into realisation of women’s position as “merely the playthings of circumstances [and] contradictions”

(198). It also portrays Victorian femininity as bound to the performance of its signifiers: by emphasising the distinction between inner “real womanhood” and of the ideal but “artificial selves” (198), Egerton poses ideal femininity as not innately found within women, but performed in order to fulfil a constructed ideal. However, Egerton also exposes women’s complicity in their own oppression, describing how women “have been taught to shrink from the honest expression of [their] wants and feelings as violations of modesty, or at least good taste” (198), and how the artificial and appearance-focused femininity this promotes makes them “half-man or half-doll” rather than allowing personal development into a “whole woman” (197, 252). As a central narrative of femininity within the realist genre, the exposure of this idealised, doll-like femininity as an empty performance critiques realism and the patriarchal systems it developed and worked within, and reflects New Woman sentiments that encourage women’s self-development and growth.

While marriage was “traditionally regarded as woman’s ultimate goal and highest reward” (Cunningham 2), Egerton’s text critiques both the institution of marriage and its textual iteration, the marriage plot. By characterising Fruen as a widow, Egerton both poses Fruen’s narrative as a continuation of the traditional marriage plot, but also subverts it in demonstrating its fallibility and artificiality. Egerton’s portrayal of Fruen and her past marriage challenges the realist marriage plot and the way it disadvantages women, stating that “[she] fanc[ies] there must be many marriages like that in which the woman feels a dull resentment against the man because her love does not go with herself” (168). Like “a harp that has lain away until the strings are frayed, and no one ever called out its deepest music” (168), Egerton shows how the limitations of women’s narratives have hindered Fruen’s self-actualisation, and that of women generally. In this way, Egerton exposes

conventional representations of women's narrative possibilities as artificial and unrealistic constructions of a patriarchal social system.

In contrast, Part II demonstrates Fruen's self-fashioning as a New Woman, portrayed as being a 'regeneration' for her own growth and as means to help other women. Fruen has undergone a physical, mental and social "transformation" (Egerton, "Regeneration" 232), running a commune of socially outcast women "going their own way to hold a place in the world in [the] face of opinion" (232). The act of spinning wool is both narratively and symbolically significant, as the women spin, weave, and make their own woollen clothing from their own sheep. This process is explicitly stated as an act of self-fashioning, and of discarding their old identity in favour of a new, stronger and more independent identity that "find[s] new hopes and self-reliance in measure as they better their work" (206). Despite "few ladies spin[ning] now" (243) – a comment by Fruen's love interest that emphasises its unfashionableness – and weaving "after the old patterns, that are better than the new" (206), the women do so in defiance of social custom, and in a harkening to a matriarchal social system untouched by patriarchal and restrictive social customs. Fruen refers to the spinning room as "her church", which "is open every day, and all day, and my sinners laugh and sing" (206), likening the process of self-realisation to a spiritual or religious awakening, and suggesting that though the women may be "sinners" by Christian standards, being social outcasts and unmarried mothers, their faith and purpose is in themselves and their work.

As "our most basic text for the reading of self", the body and its shaping both speaks of individual identity, and influences its fashioning (P. Gilbert 5). The bodily restrictions of corsetry and of clothing are not merely "form[s] of external control",

but rather become “internalised to the extent that the subject is fashioned from the inside no less than from the outside” through the “creation and cultivation of distinctive modes of behaviour and systems of belief” (Warwick and Cavallaro 15). Egerton’s story explicates this through her heroine’s transformation into “new womanhood” through her rejection of these forms of control (Egerton, “Regeneration” 246). As Fruen states, women’s “varying moods [are] bound up with the physiological gamut of our being” (198) – namely, the fact of the woman’s body as physically bound and restricted shapes their individual subjectivity and self-concept. As a metaphor for women’s confinement within patriarchal norms, as well as their own complicity within that system, Egerton’s story understands “the disciplinary practices of femininity ... as aspects of a far larger discipline, an oppressive and inegalitarian system of sexual subordination” (Bartky 37). To become a “whole woman” (Egerton, “Regeneration” 252), Egerton demonstrates that Fruen must not only cast off the corsetry and clothing that restricts her, but also the beliefs and internalised systems of control that have bound her life, thus rejecting “the form into which custom had fashioned [her]” (241).

In contrast to the culture that claimed corsets would help the wearer “look a better woman, feel a better woman, be a better woman” (*Woman’s Life* 291), Egerton’s heroine becomes a “grand woman” by “throw[ing] aside those infernal stays” (Egerton, “Regeneration” 231). Egerton demonstrates how Fruen is able to reach her full potential in a *Bildungsroman* self-actualisation through abandoning her corset: on a literal level, this would allow her to physically develop her muscles and to perform the work she wishes to undertake, and on a symbolic level, it reflects the freeing of her mind to consider other women’s experiences, and her rejection of patriarchal systems of oppression. As a New Woman text, Egerton’s story clearly

lays out the ways in which these forms of feminine discipline hinder women both physically and psychologically. She also explicates the development that can occur from rejecting them: as Fruen states, she wished “to see what significance the physical changes in [her] body had from where the contradictions of [her] nature sprang”, namely, “to find [her]self” through transforming her mental and physical form (“Regeneration” 241). Egerton asserts the strength of Fruen’s physical body in Part II, and her being “a grand woman” it is directly attributed to her having “throw[n] aside those infernal stays [and] tak[ing] exercise” (231). Fruen is described as “glowing ... look[ing] a different being from the anaemic woman of three summers ago” (203): she “looks very big”, being “tall and gracious and strong” (211, 232). Her growth is as much spiritual and emotional as it is physical, a reaction against the diminishing body of the domestic angel, where fragility, smallness, and incorporeality are the ideal. Egerton suggests a mode of femininity based on personal and physical strength rather than delicacy: in contrast to the fashionable ideal, it is possible to be a “whole woman” without a small waist, and without conforming to visual signifiers of ideal femininity. The representation of Fruen’s “big and bonny” (225) form also subverts class identity: though she is an upper-middle-class woman, her physical strength and assertive corporeality challenge the feminine delicacy, frailty, and idleness expected of women of her class. In choosing not to wear a corset, then, Egerton’s heroine works within the performative language of dress in her rejection of traditional narratives and patriarchal systems of power. However, she also works outside of it, in choosing to shape her identity and physical form as literally unbound by, and thus unrestricted by these narratives.

While within “Victorian ideology ... female representation and the construction of femininity is *mastered* by a patriarchal rhetoric which confines and

changes the female bodies” (Talairach-Vielmas 6, italics in original), Egerton’s *New Woman* short story breaks free from this patriarchal rhetoric, and resists reductive explanations of femininity and of the female body through the growth and strength of her heroine’s body. Unlike the symbolic erasure that the female body undergoes in *Adventure Fiction*, or the notable absence of the female body within realist tropes, in Egerton’s text, Fruen’s physical body is present and significant both to the narrative and throughout the narrative. Her physical form is described regularly throughout the text using a literal, observational tone that writes against the tendency of realist novels to utilise an “endless series of metonymies” in descriptions of the female body (Talairach-Vielmas 39). In Part I, Fruen is described thus:

She is far above the average height, and as she lifts her rather long, bare arms to reach down a gown, every action is full of grace. She has sloping shoulders and a long, deep chest; she looks slight of hips, and yet her frailness is more apparent than real; her muscles show under her delicate skin as she moves ... She looks at herself in the long glass with a kind of satisfaction ... then gives a pleased nod over her shoulder at her own image. (Egerton, “Regeneration” 171)

It is also significant that Fruen gazes “pleased” back at herself, reclaiming her body and its image from the narrator’s gaze. Whereas in realist texts “the novel’s physicality is inaccessible” (Michie 90), with the female body and sexuality written upon and through rhetorical spaces of metaphor, Fruen’s body is a literal and physical presence described with limited metaphor. Egerton describes her not for her beauty or desirability, but for her physical strength and vitality now that she “belong[s] body and soul to [her]self” (“Regeneration” 241). Egerton describes Fruen’s “supple figure ... look[ing] so strong, so capable” (244), with a “restrained energy in the very way she stands”, and who “stands as tall as [the poet]” (203, 248). Rather than the “powdered and painted” woman of Part I “with the laugh of a child, who looked so like a fashion-plate ... and [whose] waist was absurd” (243-4), Fruen

is characterised as a “grand, fearless, wholesome woman, with a clear head and sure hand to guide the great house and its many inmates” (246). Instead of drawing upon existing images of women, such as that of a “fashion-plate”, Egerton rewrites Fruen’s narrative through rewriting her body for its corporeality and physical ability.

Furthermore, despite the Victorian tendency for “the female body and its clothes [to be written as] metaphors of sorts for one another” (Finch 338), Fruen’s body is not erased or replaced by her clothing; instead, her dress complements descriptions of her body. This is evidenced in the narrator’s description of “the lace on her bodice flutter[ing] as her breast heaves” (Egerton, “Regeneration” 175), and in the statement that “it is warm under her cloak, and her body is one glow of heat” (224). Rather than using clothing as a metonym for the body, Fruen’s body and her clothing are described as distinct and separate, both significant in their construction of her identity, but not erasing her corporeal presence or her physical embodiment of her new identity. In representing the taboo female body and its physicality, Egerton further undermines traditional femininity and its incorporeal focus on spirituality and ‘angelic’ beauty. Similarly, the mention of her corset “press[ing] on her like an iron hand” makes explicit the unrepresented subject of the corset, as well as the embodied experience of wearing it. Egerton poses the corset as a prison-like object of confinement, but also as a hand, a distinctly human form of restriction. In Fruen’s eventual abandonment of her stays, her physical freedom becomes liberation both from the literal restriction of the corset, and from the socio-cultural formations of the female body that held women within limited narratives of disembodied and fragile femininity.

In the text, clothing and the self-fashioning of identity through clothes become significant in the 'regeneration' of identity. As Seys states, "[d]ress identifies the heroine and sets her on a narrative trajectory; yet, it also provides the means for her to refashion herself and her story. The changes in colour, texture, and style of dress represent her narrative development" (1). The multi-layered meanings of cloth and textile were an integral part of a Victorian woman's education, providing a "dual literacy ... in two languages – the language of cloth and the language of print" (Kortsch 4). Egerton utilises the language of cloth to further her heroine's narrative, evoking the sartorial symbolism of colour and textile to uphold or subvert the existing meanings and narratives of each sartorial element. Fruen's clothing reflects her development and the changes in her body, "tall and gracious and strong, in her crimson, homespun gown, with large clear eyes shining steadily, and her clear skin flushed" (Egerton, "Regeneration" 232). Egerton again draws upon spinning as a metaphor for self-fashioning, with Fruen's woollen dress becoming a symbol of her transformation and her own re-shaping of her identity, and the act of learning to spin as an act of self-discovery and self-actualisation: "The wool in my gown holds all my first attempts [at spinning] – I like it; I span an awful lot of thoughts into it, much of my old self, and when it was finished I was new" (243). Identity and clothing become analogous, with metaphors of self-fashioning not only transforming Fruen's identity through dressing differently, but with Fruen's clothing becoming her identity, the act of spinning and making her dress a conscious act of re-fashioning the materiality of who she is. Thus, the changes in her clothing are not only a manifestation of her growth and new identity, but also further Fruen's growth in an active re-fashioning and regeneration of self.

In Part I, Fruen wears a “broad lilac and white stripe[d] ... muslin morning gown” (Egerton, “Regeneration” 164). Muslin, and specifically, white muslin, is a symbolically charged textile that evokes “ethereality, innocence, youthfulness, purity and virginity” (Seys 31). As a cloth that remained fashionable throughout the nineteenth century, literature reflected this in its heroines’ dress, whose white muslin gowns bore the explicit and implicit cultural meanings that the textile came to symbolise. In Victorian realist novels, the young, unmarried heroine is typically dressed in a white muslin gown to reflect her pure and ‘unmarked’ sexuality, angelic beauty, and innocence. Used in conjunction with lilac, however, Egerton weaves multiple layers of meaning into the material of Fruen’s dress. The striped muslin of white and lilac reflects Fruen’s duality and the performative nature of dress and femininity, demonstrating how women use “deliberate calculation of dress” to perform desirable femininity (Egerton, “Regeneration” 194). On one hand, Fruen wears the colour of innocence and purity, but this is striped with lilac, “a colour frequently adopted for mourning, and is expressive of gravity, sorrow, and sadness” (Audsley 47). While this also reflects Fruen’s position as a widow, the contrast between the colour of a widow in mourning with that of an unmarried, virginal woman creates a tension between Fruen’s world-weary interior, and her performed exterior of childlike, “doll”-like femininity (Egerton, “Regeneration” 199). As the poet states, “she who flaunted the white banner of purity calculated the cut of her evening frock, and enticed men to walk under her banner by the whiteness of her breast” (193): the symbolic significance of colour as an indicator of character can equally be used falsely, as the colour white, with its connotations of purity and virginity, may be used to enact a front of respectable femininity. As such, Egerton

draws upon conventions and implicit knowledge of cloth and colour in order to demonstrate their performative nature in relation to models of ideal femininity.

In contrast, Part II sees Fruen abandon white muslin for crimson wool, and later, white wool. Having spun and woven her own “crimson gown, with its long full folds and tiny border of sable” (Egerton, “Regeneration” 211), Fruen embodies an active position in the construction and performance of her own identity, and the colour and textile further this narrative. As George Ashdown Audsley states in his 1870 text, *Colour in Dress: A Manual for Ladies*, the colour red is “strong” and “warm ... beyond every other”, so is “a fit symbol for ... pomp and power” (44), evoking Egerton’s use of the colour in portraying Fruen’s growth towards strength and self-determination. The colour also speaks of “active sexuality” (Seys 77), reflecting Fruen’s assertive femininity – Fruen “has witched the men of the district to help her in many ways” (Egerton, “Regeneration” 212) and has abandoned the corset and the angelic ideal for the subversive matriarchal power of a “Snow Queen” or “witch” (225, 237). At her first appearance in Part II, Fruen “has on a red ski (snowshoe) costume, hussar-braided jacket, full-pleated skirt, and knickerbockers tucked into the top of her sealskin boots” (203). This outfit is reminiscent of the ‘Bloomer’ costume proposed by American dress reform activist Amelia Bloomer in the 1850s, namely “a simple bodice approximating fairly closely to what was in vogue, with a slightly flaring skirt which reached well below the knees, but under this were seen baggy, Turkish-style trousers reaching to the ankle” (Ewing 64). Throughout the 1890s, the divided skirt and the Bicycle suit became popular among dress reformers (Crane 346), with trousers remaining a significant and enduring symbol of New Womanhood. Fruen’s knickerbockers represent both a challenge to gender roles in her ‘wearing the pants’ and adopting masculine signifiers, and a sign of her physical

fitness and freedom to move, while also a symbolic ability to traverse boundaries as she pleases. However, as Fruen's costume is a traditional Scandinavian costume, it also exists within a frame of 'Otherness' that renders it more acceptable and less transgressive. As a "symbolic challenge to the system ... Women whose behaviour was considered to be in defiance of the social order were sometimes represented as wearing trousers by satirists and cartoonists" (Crane 335), so in Egerton framing Fruen's dress as both a national costume and a symbol of New Womanhood, Fruen exists within a middle-ground of both challenging the system and working within its boundaries.

Her change to "a long soft white woollen [gown]" before forming a free union with the poet performs a similarly subversive action (Egerton, "Regeneration" 251). While the change in her gown's colour suggests "both simplicity and a closeness to nature which, in this Scandinavian winter, appears as all white around them" (D'hoker 532), it is also placed in the narrative as a wedding gown. As a gown made of wool, the textile of the New Woman, and a gown celebrating their free union, the dress draws upon sartorial conventions in order to subvert the traditional marriage plot further, and to pose the free union as the ideal equal relationship for the New Woman. In addition to the wool having been woven out of "much of [Fruen's] old self" (Egerton, "Regeneration" 243), thus contributing to and being the literal fashioning of her new identity as a "whole woman" (252), a significant part of the sartorial symbolism stems from the connotations of wool as a textile. Wool is a fabric associated with New-Womanhood, being the material of rational dress as well as a signifier of masculinity, and thus an appropriation of "associated political, intellectual and sexual freedoms" (Seys 145). Fruen shifts from wearing muslin, the cloth of unmarried, innocent young women, to wool, the textile of the New Woman,

and in this shift Egerton further demonstrates her growth from innocent ignorance to enlightened awareness and self-knowledge. Through the use of symbolically significant textiles and their material fashioning, Egerton further develops Fruen's "new womanhood" and explicates how clothing, cloth, and colour reflects and constructs identity through enactment and subversion of gender norms and social constructs ("Regeneration" 246).

In writing Fruen's body into the text by focusing on her physicality and corporeality, Egerton subverts the 'angel in the house' narrative, as well as its pervasive presence in the realist genre. Rather than being the domestic angel "that haunts Victorian representation of women" (Michie 90), she is described by men as "a great strong silver witch", "lillemor (motherkin)", "Princess", and "Queen" (Egerton, "Regeneration" 237, 225, 230, 225). In contrast to the passive angel, or the "child" Fruen is described as in Part I (165), these names of royalty, respect, and of otherworldliness all speak of distinctly feminine and matriarchal forms of power and authority. In Fruen's transformation, Egerton demonstrates the possibilities for women's futures outside of patriarchal systems, drawing upon ancient knowledge and "old" ways of living, giving a sense of possibility that the world already contains all that is required to achieve this utopian future (231). As Hager suggests, Egerton writes to push the boundaries that "confine women so strictly within the position of non-subject ... [so women may] move toward a space that allows for the expression of their own desires, not the desires that men would grant them" ("Piecing Together" vii). Fruen's relationship with the poet acknowledges this: "his love, no matter if it be his whole love, will not fill her life completely" (Egerton, "Regeneration" 248). In direct opposition to the Victorian ideal of the submissive, domestic angel-wife, whose life and duty is to dote upon her husband and family, Egerton writes a

distinctly New Woman heroine whose life is not consumed or defined by her relationship to men, and whose passion for work, relationships with other women, and duty to her own individual development take precedence. Thus, as the text liberates its female characters from the confines of traditional narratives, Egerton is also no longer bound to the generic confines of realism, using and subverting the tropes and conventions of realism with visions of a distinctly feminine and feminist utopia to weave new narrative possibilities for the women in her stories.

In “The Regeneration of Two”, Egerton breaks down class distinctions, collapsing patriarchal hierarchy into a communal utopian world in which ‘woman’ becomes a universal, essentialist category. Egerton represents cross-class relationships between women, such as between Fruen, her maid and friend Aagot, and Gunhild, the cow-herd. The collapsing of class distinctions into the universal idea of ‘womanhood’ and women’s shared experiences is typical of New Woman fiction, and as Hager suggests, Egerton’s text

situates women’s relationships with other women, particularly of different classes and ethnicities, as being of primary importance in women’s lives ... No longer buying into conventional moral definitions of the ‘good’ or ‘bad’ woman, these women can begin to construct their agency without denying the difference and agency of women different from themselves. (“Community” par. 2)

Despite the white, upper-middle-class Fruen largely conforming to the primary model of Victorian women’s subjectivity, Egerton demonstrates the limitations this places on women’s ability to form relationships with women from outside their in-group, “and the possibilities once women’s subjectivities begin to resist [the] unitary and static nature [of Victorian white, upper-class femininity]” (Hager, “Piecing Together” vii). While in Part I, Fruen dismisses Aagot as “You northerns” and “you folk up here” (Egerton, “Regeneration” 168), in Part II, she “espouse[s] the cause of

all women”, calling Aagot “her loyal companion” and the women of the commune “sisters” (205, 212). In recognising and writing the narratives of women from non-hegemonic class and cultural groups, Egerton acknowledges further narratives and identities of women outside of traditional possibilities, and as Lyn Pykett notes, allows her “to emphasise multiplicity and to focus on differences (between women) as well as difference (as a universal, essentialist gender category)” (173).

In “The Regeneration of Two”, Egerton provides a critique of society and of women’s position that not only dismantles the gendered and classed hierarchies at the heart of late-Victorian society, but also reconstructs and regenerates this world to demonstrate the possibilities and potential for women in the face of these challenges. Egerton explores new narrative possibilities and ways of embodying femininity, “provid[ing] alternative models on which women could focus and which could act as a measure of both their achievements and their potential” (Stubbs 112). Through Fruen’s body and its material construction via clothing and corsetry, Egerton examines the restrictions of women’s narratives within realist texts, and the gender norms and ideals they reflect and respond to. Egerton’s text exposes the nature of Victorian gender roles and the angelic feminine ideal as performative, requiring the active shaping of the body and its boundaries via dress to present this specific identity, while also resisting the realist tendency to portray the female body as entirely symbolic and represented in “a series of tropes or rhetorical codes that distance it from the reader in its very act of depiction” (Michie 5). By representing Fruen’s body in literal language, and resisting its reduction to metonym, Egerton makes her physical body and her new assertive femininity powerfully present, both in the narrative of her *Bildungsroman* growth towards self-realisation, and structurally, in the tracing of her growth throughout the text. Dress operates as a key

visual and performative signifier of class and class-based identity, and as Fruen creates and adopts new styles of dress and abandons her corset so does she cast off her old identity, cast off the restrictions of the corset, and allow her body to be made “new” by existing free of the disciplinary practices of femininity (Egerton, “Regeneration” 243). By adopting and subverting conventions of realist texts, Egerton challenges taken-for-granted assumptions of the nature of femininity, explicating its supposedly ‘natural’ form as a construction bound to the subordination and control of women. Dress and corsetry play a similar role in the text, showing the minimising of the bodily form via physical manipulation as a “perform[ance] [of] gender and class through slenderness” that hinders a woman’s physical, psychological, and social development into her full potential (Silver 22). Egerton thus exposes “nature” as an arbitrary concept that is defined by culture and bound to deep-seated ideals and beliefs, rather than speaking of any truth: it is “something defined by culture as the place where culture’s most cherished ideas and ideals can be kept safe from history ... [nature is] culture’s label for the cultural formations it wants to make inaccessible to social change” (Ardis 100-1). What is ostensibly ‘natural’ may be constructed according to norms that a given social system relies on for its operation; in Victorian Britain, this was the hierarchical, discrete, and deep-seated systems of gender and class that the cultural movements of the *fin-de-siècle* challenged. For New Woman writers such as Egerton, conventional narratives and the triple-decker novel upheld and enforced these systems, and the short story form provided a means to break away from and subvert them. As the New Woman “blurred the boundaries between heroine, author, and reader” (Seys 143), so does Egerton’s jarring critique of women and femininity. She leads the reader to acknowledge, as Fruen does, that “in some measure woman has been the greatest

sinner against woman by centuries of silence” (Egerton, “Regeneration” 242): by conforming to the ideal of the domestic angel, women’s narratives will never change, but by awakening to the way these systems restrict women, it is possible to rewrite and write new narrative possibilities.

Conclusion

“Censor the body and you censor breath and speech at the same time. Write
yourself. Your body must be heard”
(Cixous 880)

In the three texts, George Eliot, Henry Rider Haggard, and George Egerton negotiate how to represent femininity and its embodiment, either in subversion of or upholding contemporary ideals of femininity and the representational tropes that erase and objectify the female body. The representation of a character’s body becomes not only a reflection of character, but of that character’s subversive potential and individual agency within the generic framework of the text. The presence or absence of the physical female form is not only significant in terms of the representation of feminine subjectivity within texts, but is an act reflecting the extent to which this subjectivity is compromised and contained. While for Eliot and Egerton, the female body is a means to represent and reshape women’s experiences, for Haggard the female body becomes an erotic vessel for the containment of masculine anxieties.

In Eliot’s *The Mill on the Floss*, Maggie’s body and character overflow from the limitations of the realist narrative and the *Bildungsroman* plot trajectory. Her physical appearance and unconventional beauty, constructed within and alongside the intertextual narratives that expand her possibilities beyond realist conventions, becomes a signifier of both her connections to non-realist and therefore non-masculine narrative forms, and of the broader social world’s failure to acknowledge or accept forms of femininity outside of the ideal or the norm. Eliot thus explores the limitations of the realist form itself, critiquing the genre, the *Bildung* narrative, and

society as a whole's failure to provide a feasible model of development for female characters and for women. Haggard's *She: A History of Adventure*, Ayesha's desiring agency, corporeal presence, and emasculating, Medusa-like consumption or rejection of the male gaze ostensibly position her as the manifestation of female power. However, her traversal of both innocent and transgressive forms of femininity, manifesting images of the *femme fatale*, the New Woman, and the domestic angel, entails an uncontrollable female power that threatens the masculine hegemony asserted within the adventure romance. As an example of a genre aiming to cultivate the hegemonic masculinity as associated with the colonial pursuit, *She* demonstrates the anxious containment of femininity within evolutionary discourses that insist upon the female body's status as lesser than the male body. Thus, while Haggard writes the female body into the text in Ayesha's corporeal fashioning and in the landscape, this physical presence is ultimately not one of feminine power and agency, but of the colonial conquest and of the assertion of masculine power. Like Eliot, Haggard draws upon intertextual narratives from myth, however he does so in order to narrow her possibilities. While for Maggie, intertextual narratives at once allow Eliot to write embodied feminine sensual experiences outside of the conventions of realism, for Ayesha, intertextual narratives physically bind her, and limit her multiplicity within monstrous or *fatale* tropes of femininity.

In her attempt to explore woman "as she knew herself to be, not as man liked to imagine" ("A Keynote" 58), in "The Regeneration of Two", Egerton places the female body and its inherent power and potential at the core of the text. As Fruen transforms mentally, so does she transform physically: her regeneration from an unhappy society woman into a New Woman, free from the constraints of patriarchal structures, is manifest in her bodily growth and development, and her physical

freedom from material signifiers of those structures such as the corset. Egerton exposes both the construction of ideal femininity as a means to control and contain women, and provides a new and empowering narrative of femininity that privileges the body and self-actualisation. Her use of the short story structure further critiques these restrictive narratives by rejecting the conventional generic forms and limited narrative trajectories of realist texts.

The fashioning of identity is significant in all texts studied. Through the use of material discourses of clothing, colour, and textile, as well as intertextual narratives of femininity, Eliot, Haggard, and Egerton use the body as a surface upon which identity is inscribed and performed. While Maggie's appearance and her inability to 'fit' material signifiers of ideal femininity (such as her aunt's dress) demonstrate her inability to be contained within realist narratives of femininity, Ayesha's material fashioning via conflicting symbols of innocence and transgression manifest her uncontainable feminine power and sexuality. In "Regeneration", both Fruen's physical body and her clothing become a means of transformation of identity. The fashioning of the body is thus not only used to ascribe certain narratives to female characters, but also to allow the expression and critique of identity and its signifiers.

In "Regeneration" and in *Mill*, both female-authored texts, the conflict between women's inner and outer selves is a constant thread. As Maggie experiences a "conflict between the inward impulse and outward fact" (Eliot, *Mill* 367), so does Fruen discuss her sense of a "dual life" and of "some bottom layer of real womanhood", hidden beneath "artificial selves" (Egerton, "Regeneration" 198). Whereas Maggie, and indeed Eliot herself, is unable to resolve this conflict,

constrained by both the tenets of realism and a far more restrictive contemporary social world, Egerton's short story provides resolution in the hopeful positing of a world of equality and freedom for women, a narrative world made possible by both the use of the new and unrestrictive short story form and underpinned by New Woman values.

In the three texts examined, Maggie, Ayesha, and Fruen are not merely the desired objects, but are desiring subjects, holding their own feminine agency within each of their distinctly sensual and physical bodies. Their active desire is not only sexual, but is also a desire for a social world that allows, rather than suppresses and contains feminine power. The extent to which each female character is able to enact her own desire is determined by the possibilities available to her within the generic limitations of the texts, and the contemporary ideals the genre and narrative structure reflects. As Maggie's passionate agency is fundamentally incompatible with the limited narratives of femininity afforded to her by the material constraints of Eliot's writing, so Ayesha's sexuality, though powerful, is ultimately nullified in reflection of contemporary fears regarding the consequences of allowing women to possess their own desiring subjectivity. Only in Egerton's New Woman story, in a narrative that allows for the exploration of that agency – not only sexual but intellectual, physical, mental, and spiritual – can Fruen become the active possessor of her embodied subjectivity.

As Helene Cixous suggests,

ideology is a kind of vast membrane enveloping everything. We have to know that this skin exists even if it encloses us like a net or like closed eyelids. We have to know that, to change the world, we must constantly try to scratch and tear it. We can never rip the whole thing off, but we must never

let it stick or stop being suspicious of it. It grows back and you start again.
(qtd. in Stott, *Fabrication* 207)

This thesis analyses how female authors have started this scratching at the ideology that contains them, and how authors such as Haggard have tried to grow it back. As women move from passive object to active subject, so do we understand how these ideologies have functioned, and indeed, continue to function throughout history as strategies of containment: containment of the body, of desire, and of the possibilities we are allowed.

Works Cited

- Abel, Elizabeth, et al. *The Voyage In: Fictions of Female Development*, edited by Elizabeth Abel, Marianne Hirsch, and Elizabeth Langland, University Press of New England, 1983.
- Abrams, M. H. *A Glossary of Literary Terms*. 7th ed., Harcourt Brace College Publishers, 1999.
- Aeschylus. *Delphi Complete Works of Aeschylus (Illustrated)*. Delphi Classics, 2013. *Google Books*,
https://books.google.com.au/books?id=pGkbAgAAQBAJ&source=gbs_navlinks_s.
- Alban, Gillian M. E., "From the Erotic Blush to the Petrifying Medusa Gaze in George Eliot's Novels." *Victorian Newsletter*, no. 118, 2010, pp. 67-86.
- Alley, Henry. "The Complete and Incomplete Educations of the Mill on the Floss." *Rocky Mountain Review of Language and Literature*, vol. 33, no. 4, 1979, pp. 183-201. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/1347669. Accessed 25 July 2018.
- Ardis, Ann L. *New Women, New Novels: Feminism and Early Modernism*. Rutgers UP, 1990.
- Atkinson, Juliet. 'Critical Responses: 1970 – Present'. *George Eliot in Context*, edited by Margaret Harris, Cambridge UP, 2013, pp. 83-91.
- Audsley, George Ashdown. *Colour in Dress: A Manual for Ladies*. Curwen Stoddart, 1872.
- Auerbach, Nina. "The Power of Hunger: Demonism and Maggie Tulliver." *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, vol. 30, no. 2, 1975, pp. 150–171. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/2932949. Accessed 25 July 2018.
- . *Woman and the Demon: The Life of a Victorian Myth*. Harvard UP, 1982.

- Austen, Zelda. 'Why Feminist Critics Are Angry With George Eliot'. *College English*, vol. 37, no. 6, 1976, pp. 549-561. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/376148. Accessed 5 July 2019.
- Bartky, Sandra Lee. *Femininity & Domination: Studies in the Phenomenology of Oppression*. Routledge, 1999.
- Bassett, Troy J. 'Circulating Morals: George Moore's Attack on Late-Victorian Literary Censorship'. *Pacific Coast Philology*, vol. 40, no. 2, 2005, pp. 73-89. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/25474186. Accessed 5 July 2019.
- Bodenheimer, Rosemarie. *The Real Life of Mary Ann Evans: George Eliot, Her Letters and Fiction*. Cornell UP, 1994.
- Boumelha, Penny. 'Realism and the Ends of Feminism.' *Grafts: Feminist Cultural Criticism*, edited by Susan Sheridan, Verso, 1988, pp. 77-91.
- Brantlinger, Patrick. "Imperial Gothic: Atavism and the Occult in the British Adventure Novel, 1880-1914." *English Literature in Transition, 1880-1920*, vol. 28, no. 3, 1985, pp. 243-252. *Project MUSE*, muse.jhu.edu/article/374122. Accessed 12 May 2017.
- . "Introduction." *She: A History of Adventure*, by Henry Rider Haggard, Penguin Books, 2004, pp. vii-xxviii.
- . *Rule of Darkness: British Literature and Imperialism, 1830-1914*. Cornell UP, 2013.
- Browne, Phiefer L. "Men and Women, Africa and Civilisation: A Study of the African Stories of Hemingway and the African Novels of Haggard, Green and Bellow". Dissertation Rutgers University, 1977.
- Bryant, Sophie. "Our Choice From the Fashions." *Aglaia*, vol. 1, 1893, pp. 8-9.

- Burris-Janssen, Emma. ““My Life Has Been a Hell, Mother”: Victimisation and Abortion in George Egerton’s “Virgin Soil” and “The Regeneration of Two””. *The Latchkey: Journal of New Woman Studies*, vol. 8, 2016/17, par. 1-15. *The Latchkey*, <http://www.thelatchkey.org/Latchkey8/essay/Janssen.htm>. Accessed 13 June 2019.
- Butler, Judith. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. Routledge, 1990.
- Calder, Jenni. *Women and Marriage in Victorian Fiction*. Thames and Hudson, 1976.
- Cawelti, John G. *Adventure, Mystery, and Romance: Formula Stories as Art and Popular Culture*. University of Chicago Press, 1977.
- Cixous, Helene. “The Laugh of the Medusa.” *Signs*, vol. 1, no. 4, 1976, pp. 875-893. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/3173239. Accessed 11 Jan 2019.
- Cooper, Cynthia. “The Victorian and Edwardian Eras: 1860-1910.” *The Fashion Reader*, edited by Linda Welters and Abby Lillethun. 2nd ed., Berg, 2011, pp. 34-45.
- Crane, Diane. *Fashion and its Social Agendas: Class, Gender, and Identity in Clothing*. University of Chicago Press, 2000.
- Cranny-Francis, Anne. *The Body in the Text*. Melbourne UP, 1995.
- Crenna, Natalie. ““The Music Vibrating in Her Still”: The Influence of Musical Agency on Individual and Social Identity in George Eliot's *The Mill on the Floss* and *Daniel Deronda*.” MA Thesis. Dalhousie University, 2010.
- Cunningham, Gail. *The New Woman and the Victorian Novel*. Macmillan, 1978.

- Davison, Carol Margaret. "The Victorian Gothic and Gender". *The Victorian Gothic: An Edinburgh Companion*, edited by Andrew Smith and William Hughes, Edinburgh UP, 2012, pp. 124-141.
- D'hoker, Elke. "'Half-Man' or 'Half-Doll': George Egerton's Response to Friedrich Nietzsche." *Women's Writing*, vol. 18, no. 4, 2011, pp. 524-546. *Taylor and Frances Online*, doi:[10.1080/09699082.2011.600051](https://doi.org/10.1080/09699082.2011.600051). Accessed 30 May 2017.
- Dickson, E. Winifred. "The Distribution of Weight in Clothing." *Aglaia*, vol. 1, 1893, pp. 9-10.
- Dijkstra, Bram. *Idols of Perversity: Fantasies of Feminine Evil in Fin-de-Siecle Culture*. Oxford UP, 1986.
- Dobbins, Meg. "What Did You Cut It Off For, Then?": Self-Harming Heroines in *Villette*, *The Mill on the Floss*, and *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*." *Nineteenth-Century Gender Studies*, vol. 13, no. 1, 2017, par. 1-19.
- Douglas, Mrs. *The Gentlewoman's Book of Dress*. Henry and Co., 1894.
- Egerton, George. "A Keynote to Keynotes." *Ten Contemporaries: Notes Toward Their Definitive Bibliography*, edited by John Gawsworth, Ernest Benn, 1932, pp. 58-60.
- . "The Regeneration of Two". *Keynotes & Discords*. Virago, 1983. pp. 163-253.
- Eliot, George. *The Mill on the Floss*. Penguin Books, 1985.
- . "Art and Belles Lettres: Review of *Modern Painters* III." *The Westminster Review*, April 1856, pp. 625-633.
- Ermarth, Elizabeth. "Maggie Tulliver's Long Suicide." *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, vol. 14, no. 4, 1974, pp. 587-601.

- Esty, Joshua. "Nationhood, Adulthood, and the Ruptures of "Bildung": Arresting Development in "The Mill on the Floss."” *Narrative*, vol. 4, no. 2, 1996, pp. 142-160. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/20107079. Accessed 1 June 2018.
- Ewing, Elizabeth. *Dress and Undress: A History of Women's Underwear*. B. T. Batsford Ltd., 1978.
- Federico, Annette R. "Being Torn: The Mill on the Floss." *Lit: Literature Interpretation Theory*, vol. 12, no. 4, 2001, pp. 359-379. *Taylor and Frances Online*, doi:10.1080/10436920108580297. Accessed 12 June 2018.
- Fields, Jill. *An Intimate Affair: Women, Lingerie, and Sexuality*. University of California Press, 2007.
- Finch, Casey. "'Hooked and Buttoned Together': Victorian Underwear and Representations of the Female Body." *Victorian Studies*, vol. 34, no. 3, 1991, pp. 337-363. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/3828579. Accessed 3 March 2017.
- Fraiman, Susan. "The Mill on the Floss, the Critics, and the *Bildungsroman*." *PMLA*, vol. 108, no. 1, 1993, pp. 136-150. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/462858. Accessed 1 June 2018.
- Froude, Anthony. *Oceana: or, England and Her Colonies*. Longmans, Green & Co, 1886.
- Gardiner, Juliet, editor. *The New Woman: Women's Voices 1880-1918*. Collins and Brown, 1993.
- Gilbert, Christopher J., and Jonathan P. Rossing, "Trumping Tropes with Joke(r): The Daily Show Plays the 'Race Card'", *Western Journal of Communication*, vol. 77, no. 1, 2013, pp. 92-111.
- Gilbert, Pamela K. *Disease, Desire and the Body in Victorian Women's Popular Novels*. Cambridge UP, 1997.

- Gilbert, Sandra. "Rider Haggard's Heart of Darkness." *Partisan Review Issues*, vol. 50, no. 3, 1983, pp. 444-453.
- Gilbert, Sandra M., and Susan Gubar. *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination*. Yale UP, 1984.
- . *No Man's Land: The Place of the Woman Writer in the Twentieth Century: Vol. 2: Sexchanges*. Yale UP, 1989.
- Gitter, Elisabeth G. "The Power of Women's Hair in the Victorian Imagination." *PMLA*, vol. 99, no. 5, Oct. 1984, pp. 936-954. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/462145. Accessed 25 July 2018.
- Goodman, Charlotte. "The Lost Brother, the Twin: Women Novelists and the Male-Female Double *Bildungsroman*". *Novel*, vol. 17, 1983, pp. 28-43. *JSTOR*, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1344822>. Accessed 4 July 2019.
- Grand, Sarah. "The Man of the Moment." *The North American Review*, vol. 158, no. 450, 1894, pp. 620-627. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/25103334. Accessed 18 June 2017.
- Gray, Beryl. *George Eliot and Music*. Springer, 1989.
- Green, Martin. *Dreams of Adventure, Deeds of Empire*. Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1980.
- . *Seven Types of Adventure Tale: An Etiology of a Major Genre*. Pennsylvania State University Press, 1991.
- Haefele-Thomas, Ardel. *Queer Others in Victorian Gothic: Transgressing Monstrosity*. University of Wales Press, 2012.
- Hager, Lisa. "A Community of Women: Women's Agency and Sexuality in George Egerton's *Keynotes and Discords*." *Nineteenth-Century Gender Studies*, vol.

2, no. 2, 2006, par. 1-26. www.ncgsjournal.com/issue22/hager.htm. Accessed 6 June 2017.

--. *Piecing Together a Gray Patchwork: The Formation of Feminine Identity in George Egerton's Keynotes and Discords*. MA Thesis. University of Florida, 2001.

Haggard, Henry Rider. "About Fiction". *Contemporary Review*, no. 51, 1886. pp. 172-180.

--. *King Solomon's Mines*. Cassell and Company, 1907. *Project Gutenberg*, <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/2166/2166-h/2166-h.htm>.

-- *She: A History of Adventure*. Penguin Books, 2004.

Hale, Sarah Josepha. "Editor's Table: Fashions of Dress and Their Influence". *Godey's Lady's Book and Magazine*, 70, April 1865, p. 370.

Händel, Georg Frideric. *Acis and Galatea*. 1735. Novello, 1865.

Hardy, Barbara. *The Novels of George Eliot*. A&C Black, 1985.

Haweis, Mrs E., *The Art of Beauty*. Chatto & Windus, 1878.

Healthy and Artistic Dress Union. *Aglaia*, vol. 1, 1893.

Heller, Tamar. "The Unbearable Hybridity of Female Sexuality: Racial Ambiguity and the Gothic in Rider Haggard's *She*". *Horriifying Sex: Essays on Sexual Difference in Gothic Literature*, edited by Ruth Bienstock Anolik, McFarland & Co., 2007, pp. 55-66.

Holiday, Henry. "The Artistic Aspect of Dress." *Aglaia*, vol. 1, 1893, pp. 13-30.

Homans, Margaret. "Dinah's Blush, Maggie's Arm: Class, Gender, and Sexuality in George Eliot's Early Novels". *Victorian Studies: A Journal of the Humanities, Arts and Sciences*, vol. 36, no. 2, 1993, pp. 155-178.

- Houser, Tammy Amiel. “”The Ugly Duckling” and The Mill on the Floss: A Fairy-Tale Rewriting of the *Bildungsroman*.” *Women’s Studies*, vol. 45, no. 6, 2016. *Taylor and Francis Online*, doi: 10.1080/00497878.2016.1194720. Accessed 6 June 2018.
- Hurley, Kelly. *The Gothic Body*. Cambridge UP, 2009.
- “Key Dates.” *UK Parliament*, <https://www.parliament.uk/about/living-heritage/evolutionofparliament/houseofcommons/reformacts/keydates/>. Accessed 11 January 2019.
- Kortsch, Christine Bayles. *Dress Culture in Late Victorian Women’s Fiction: Literacy, Textiles and Activism*. Ashgate Publishing, 2009.
- La Belle, Jenijoy. *Herself Beheld: The Literature of the Looking Glass*. Cornell UP, 1988.
- Ledger, Sally. *The New Woman: Fiction and Feminism at the Fin de Siècle*. Manchester UP, 1997.
- Levine, George. *The Realistic Imagination: English Fiction from Frankenstein to Lady Chatterley*. University of Chicago Press, 1981.
- Mahawatte, Royce. “Counterfeit Gothic Heroines in The Mill on the floss and Middlemarch.” *George Eliot and the Gothic Novel: Genres, Gender, Feeling*. University of Wales Press, 2013.
- McEachern, Patricia A. *Deprivation and Power: The Emergence of Anorexia Nervosa in Nineteenth-Century French Literature*. Greenwood Press, 1998.
- Michie, Helena. *The Flesh Made Word: Female Figures and Women’s Bodies*. Oxford UP, 1987.
- Miller, Henry. *The Books in My Life*. New Directions, 1969.
- Millett, Kate. *Sexual Politics*. Rupert Hart-Davis Ltd., 1971.

- Milton, John. *Paradise Lost*. Project Gutenberg, 1991.
- Mitchell, Judith I. *The Stone and the Scorpion: The Female Subject of Desire in the Novels of Charlotte Brontë, George Eliot, and Thomas Hardy*. Greenwood Press, 1994.
- Moi, Toril. *Sexual Textual Politics: Feminist Literary Theory*. Methuen, 1985.
- Moretti, Franco. *The Way of the World: The Bildungsroman in European Culture*. Translated by Albert Sbragia, Verso, 2000.
- Morris, Pam. *Realism*. Routledge, 2004.
- Moylan, Philippa. "The Feeling Eye: Nation, Nerves and Masculinity in the Colonial Adventure Romance." *Journal of Australian Studies*, no. 66, vol. 24, 2000, pp. 138-145. *Taylor and Francis Online*, doi: [10.1080/14443050009387619](https://doi.org/10.1080/14443050009387619). Accessed 7 April 2017.
- Mulvey, Laura. "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema." *Film Theory and Criticism: Introductory Readings*, edited by Leo Braudy and Marshall Cohen, Oxford UP, 1999, pp. 833-844.
- Murphy, Patricia. *Time is of the Essence: Temporality, Gender, and the New Woman*. State University of New York Press, 2001.
- O’Gorman, Francis. "Realism and Romance." *Cambridge History of the English Novel*, edited by Robert L. Caserio and Clement Hawes, Cambridge UP, 2012, pp. 485-499.
- Ofek, Galia. *Representations of Hair in Victorian Literature and Culture*. Ashgate, 2009.
- Pal-Lapinski, Piya. *The Exotic Woman in Nineteenth-Century British Fiction and Culture: A Reconsideration*. UPNE, 2005.

- Patteson, R. F. "King Solomon's Mines: Imperialism and Narrative Structure." *Journal of Narrative Technique*, vol. 8, 1978, pp. 112-123. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/30225636. Accessed 5 April 2018.
- Pocock, Tom. *Rider Haggard and the Lost Empire: A Biography*. Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1993.
- Pykett, Lyn. *The "Improper" Feminine: The Women's Sensation Novel and New Women Fiction*. Routledge, 1992.
- Reid, Julia. "She-who-must-be-obeyed: Anthropology and Matriarchy in H. Rider Haggard's *She*." *Journal of Victorian Culture*, vol. 20, no. 3, 2015, pp. 357-374. *Taylor and Francis Online*, doi:[10.1080/13555502.2015.1058057](https://doi.org/10.1080/13555502.2015.1058057). Accessed 6 June 2017.
- Review of Reviews*, vol. 8, December 1893, p. 671.
- Roberts, Helene E. "The Exquisite Slave; The Role of Clothes in the Making of the Victorian Woman". *Signs*, vol. 2, no. 3, Spring 1977, pp. 554-569. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/3173265. Accessed 15 March 2017.
- Robinson, Ronald and John Gallagher. *Africa and the Victorians: The Official Mind of Imperialism*. Macmillan, 1961.
- Said, Edward. *Culture and Imperialism*. Vintage, 1993.
- Schaffer, Talia. *The Forgotten Female Aesthetes: Literary Culture in Late-Victorian England*. University of Virginia Press, 2000.
- Seys, Madeleine C. *Fashion and Narrative in Victorian Popular Literature: Double Threads*. Routledge, 2018.
- Showalter, Elaine. *A Literature of Their Own: British Women Novelists from Bronte to Lessing*. Virago, 1978.

- . "Introduction." *Daughters of Decadence: Women Writers of the Fin-de-Siecle*,
 edited by Elaine Showalter, Virago Press, 1993, pp. vii-xx.
- . *Sexual Anarchy: Gender and Culture at the Fin de Siecle*. Viking, 1990.
- Silver, Anna Krugovoy. *Victorian Literature and the Anorexic Body*. Cambridge UP,
 2002.
- Smith, Alys W. Pearsall. "A Reply from the Daughters." *Nineteenth Century*, March
 1894, pp. 443-450.
- Smith, William Wilberforce. "Corset Wearing: The Medical Side of the Attack."
Aglaia, vol. 1, 1893, p. 7.
- Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. "Displacement and the Discourse of Woman."
Feminist Interpretations of Jacques Derrida, edited by Nancy J. Holland,
 Pennsylvania State UP, 1997, pp. 43-71.
- Stead, William Thomas. "The Book of the Month: The Novel of the Modern
 Woman". *Review of Reviews*, no. 10, 1894. pp. 64-74.
- Stevenson, Robert Louis. "A Gossip on Romance". *R L Longman's Magazine*, vol. 1,
 no. 1, 1882. pp. 69-79.
- Stewart, Susan. *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir,
 the Collection*. Duke UP, 1993.
- Stiebel, Lindy. *Imagining Africa: Landscape in H. Rider Haggard's African
 Romances*. Greenwood Press, 2001.
- Stott, Rebecca. "The Dark Continent: Africa as Female Body in Haggard's
 Adventure Fiction." *Feminist Review*, no. 32, Summer 1989, pp. 69-89.
JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/1395364. Accessed 17 June 2017.
- . *The Fabrication of the Late-Victorian Femme Fatale: The Kiss of Death*.
 Macmillan, 1992.

- Stubbs, Patricia. *Women & Fiction: Feminism and the Novels 1880-1920*. Harvester Press, 1979.
- Sullivan, William J. "Music and Musical Allusion in 'The Mill on the Floss'." *Criticism*, vol. 16, no. 3, Summer 1974, pp. 232-246. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/23099588. Accessed 6 June 2018.
- Summers, Leigh. *Bound to Please: A History of the Victorian Corset*. Berg, 2001.
- Szirotny, June Skye. *George Eliot's Feminism: "The Right to Rebellion"*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2015.
- Talairach-Vielmas, Laurence. *Moulding the Female Body in Victorian Fairy Tales and Sensation Novels*. Ashgate, 2007.
- Thayer, William M. *Hints and Helps for Young Women*. Hodder and Stoughton, 1894.
- Vicinus, Martha. "Introduction". *Keynotes and Discords*, by George Egerton, 1893-4, Virago, 1983, pp. vii-xix.
- . "Rediscovering the 'New Woman' of the 1890s: The Stories of "George Egerton"". *Feminist Re-Visions: What Has Been and What Might Be*, edited by Vivian Patraka and Louise Tilly, University of Michigan, 1983, pp. 12-25.
- Warwick, Alexandra, and Dani Cavallaro. *Fashioning the Frame: Boundaries, Dress and the Body*. Berg, 1998.
- Wasserman, Renata R. Mautner. "Narrative Logic and the Form of Tradition in "The Mill on the Floss"." *Studies in the Novel*, vol. 14, no. 3, Fall 1982, pp. 266-279. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/29532173. Accessed 6 June 2018.
- Watt, Ian. *The Rise of the Novel: Studies in Defoe, Richardson and Fielding*. Hogarth Press, 1987.

Willett, C., & Phillis Cunnington. *The History of Underclothes*. Michael Joseph, 1951.

Willis, Martin. "Victorian Realism and the Gothic: Objects of Terror Transformed". *The Victorian Gothic: An Edinburgh Companion*, edited by Andrew Smith and William Hughes, Edinburgh UP, 2012, pp. 15-28.

Wilson, Elizabeth. *Adorned in Dreams: Fashion and Modernity*. Virago, 1985.

Woman, 26 Sept 1894, p.3

Woman's Life. 21 January 1899, p. 291.