

“THE NEW WOMAN”

FEMINIST WRITING AND THE PERCEPTION OF GENDER PATTERNS DURING THE
VICTORIAN FIN DE SIÈCLE

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Abstract

This thesis analyses the work of Anthony Trollope and Ouida to obtain knowledge about the perception of gender patterns during the Victorian fin de siècle whereby the phenomenon of the “New Woman” will be focused on. It aims to provide an answer to what extent and how the work of Trollope and Ouida reflect concepts of the fin de siècle New Woman. In doing so, the thesis discusses two authors who lived and wrote during the mid and late Victorian period. The four chapters focus on identifying New Woman concepts to bring to light where the authors position themselves in the New Woman debate through their writing. The thesis concludes that although New Woman concepts and with that gender patterns are clearly present, the New Woman is not stable as a term and should therefore be treated with great caution.

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Introduction

0.1 Sensation Fiction: Dirty Reading

The literary genre of sensation fiction emerged and rose in popularity in Britain from roughly around the 1860s and onwards (Rubery, par. 1). It is said that as a literary genre sensation fiction was based upon three major novels: Wilkie Collins' *The Woman in White*, Mary Elizabeth Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret* and Ellen Wood's *East Lynne* (Sweet, par. 4). The name 'sensation fiction' however, came from the sensation dramas in theatres which were known for their "spectacular effects and displays of intense emotion" (Rubery, par. 1). Its literary counterpart included several popular forms like melodrama and domestic realism whereby plots varied in degrees of scandal ranging from murder to madness and sexual deviance (Rubery, par. 1). What made these novels so scandalous were not only the issues they dealt with – involving everything the Church had forbidden – but especially the protagonists committing these sins as they were often the seemingly morally right characters. The sensation novel became hugely popular since the often domestic settings were so familiar to a multitude of people through all the layers of society. It was designed "around the concept of the family as a domestic group bound together by shared literary tastes" (Wynne 1). This was reason for both religious and political authorities as well as literary authorities to denounce these novels for "eliciting intense physical responses from their readers" (Rubery, par. 1). It was also feared that the genre's newly gained interest and popularity would become the new standard and set the norm for other types of writing. In short it meant that its criticism was mainly focused on the threat of it eroding literary standards and the undermining of domestic tranquillity; that it would become "the guiding fiction of middle-class life" (Bernstein 213). About this decline of family values and about sensation fiction in general Margaret Oliphant says:

"We have grown accustomed to ... the narrative of many thrills of feeling. ... What is held up to us as the story of the feminine soul as it really exists underneath its conventional coverings is a very fleshy and unlovely record. Women driven wild with love for the man who leads them on to desperation. ... Women who marry their grooms in fits of sensual passion; women who pray [sic] their lovers to carry them off from husbands and homes they hate; women ... who give and receive burning kisses and frantic embraces, and live in a voluptuous dream ... such are the heroines who have been imported into modern fiction" (Oliphant qtd. in Bernstein, p. 213).

What this quote from Oliphant's 1867 essay concretizes is that there was a clear ideological concept when it came to gender and genre, one that was not supposed to be meddled with especially with regards to the woman construct.

0.2 Fin de Siècle Fiction and the New Woman

It is not uncommon for the approach of the end of a century to come with fears that the world might be coming to an end. This was no less so for Victorian Britain, which is how this section is connected to the previous one because sensation fiction was closely connected with fin de siècle fears. However, something else was happening too. The term fin de siècle was not only indicative for the end of the nineteenth century, but it also came with a set of moral, artistic, and social – as well as political – concerns (Livesey, par. 1). Referring to the end of the century in French rather than in English is said to help trace its critical content, for “it was, and continues to be, associated with those writers and artists whose work displayed a debt to French decadent, symbolist, or naturalist writers and artists” (Livesey, par. 1). Literature of the Victorian fin de siècle then not surprisingly often shows characteristics of these French aesthetic movement(s), but at the same time Victorian fin de siècle literature covers a wider range of social concerns that are on strained terms with aestheticism. One of those socio-political concerns was the emergence of the New Woman.

Many aspects of society were improving and evolving during the fin de siècle, and so was the traditional view of how women were to fit in that picture. The educational system had been improving for some time with the 1870 Elementary Education Act or Forster Education Act setting out a frame for all children between the ages of five and twelve to go to school by setting up school boards so schools could be managed and built where previously none existed (“The 1870”, par. 5). Some Education Acts later with the Education Act of 1899, school attendance was compulsory for all children till the age of twelve including the blind and deaf (“The 1870”, par. 9). This improvement of the educational system was vastly important for women living in an ever more urbanizing society because it meant that with improving education and improving economic prospects they were not dependent on marriage anymore as the sole solution to securing a stable financial future. They could now work and more or less provide for themselves.

Coventry Patmore's long poem “The Angel in the House” is so often taken as the epitome of the traditional view of a woman's gender identity and so her role in society through the eyes of a masculine society whereby the woman – in an ideal world – is supposed to obey her husband and practically devote her life to his care. Patmore's poem became so

immensely popular that his ideal came to serve as the norm for Victorian womanhood. The poem sold over a quarter of a million copies, which proves that the idea of women as submissive mothers, daughters, and wives was both popular and widespread (Markwick 10). With such strong opinions regarding a woman's ideal gender identity, strong fictions going against this ideal soon appeared too. A more radical example is Sarah Grand's 1893 novel *The Heavenly Twins* in which the protagonist refuses to consummate her marriage after she discovers her husband's dubious sexual past (Buzwell, par. 7). The Contagious Diseases Acts of 1864, 1866, and 1869 – issues that Grand's novel deals with – in short meant that the police could subject any woman who was suspected to carry whatever venereal infection to embarrassing inspections ("The Contagious", par. 6). Many innocent women were victim of these inspections and many were innocently detained whilst the men could go scot-free spreading disease, hence the outrage these acts caused.

The New Woman as a cultural phenomenon was a progressive feminist figure striving for social modernity, whereas in literature she more often took a seemingly more different form of "someone whose thoughts and desires highlighted not only her own aspirations, but also served as a mirror in which to reflect the attitudes of society" (Buzwell, par. 6). What often seems to go unnoticed in this discussion is that at the time of the rise of the New Woman the 'New Man', for instance in the form of the dandy, was fashionable as well, so it was not only the traditional view of women that was challenged, but also the "accepted view of masculinity" (Buzwell, par. 3). This is important to be aware of because it shows that the discussion was not single-sided. It is also equally as important to take into account that many men found the idea of a woman – not necessarily their own – making her way in the world and being at least able to provide for herself quite sensible whereas some women like for instance Mary Augusta Ward – known as Mrs Humphry Ward – found that same idea preposterous (Buzwell, par. 4).

0.3 Aim of the Thesis

This thesis aims to explore Victorian literature as a reflection of attitudes towards gender, in particular the representation of the New Woman whereby the research will focus on the determining of Victorian women's gender identity. It will be done so by discussing two Victorian authors and two of their novels. The first author to be discussed is Anthony Trollope; a more conservative and domestic writer seen as a "mythmaker of an England long lost to modernity" (Dever and Niles 1). His novels that will be discussed are *The Vicar of Bullhampton* and *He Knew He Was Right*. *The Vicar of Bullhampton* has been selected

because it is said to be the “only novel to be structured around that important issue of the [Victorian] 1860s and ‘70s, the ‘Woman Question’” (Skilton). *He Knew He Was Right* has been selected because it focuses on an American feminist who relates what the *Saturday Review* has said about English motherhood to reality, “if you have a baby, they’ll let you go and see it two or three times a day. I don’t suppose you will be allowed to nurse it, because they never do in England” (Trollope qtd. in Skilton, par. 6). The other author whose works will be discussed is Maria Louise Ramé who is known under her pseudonym Ouida and henceforth will be referred to as such. Ouida’s life was “marked by an ongoing debate about women’s proper position, a debate that she continually restaged in lieu of resolving” (Schaffer 140). Her novels that have been selected are *Princess Napraxine* and *Idalia*. They are of particular interest in the context of this research because their main protagonists are women, and many of Ouida’s novels feature strong independent women. Both *Princess Napraxine* and *Idalia* moreover seem to reject traditional gender roles; the women are active, and able to fight men and win.

How these four novels by Trollope and Ouida relate to each other and how, as a whole, they relate to their authors and the period during which they were written will be of great value in determining how they are reflective of fin de siècle New Woman concepts. This leads to the following research question: “How and to what extent do Trollope’s *The Vicar of Bullhampton* and *He Knew He Was Right*, and Ouida’s *Princess Napraxine* and *Idalia* reflect concepts of the fin de siècle New Woman?”

Previous research has focused on the relation between Trollope and Ouida, for instance in *Rediscovering Victorian Women Sensation Writers: Beyond Braddon*, but it is about their relation on a personal level. They have not yet been compared to and contrasted with one another in relation to the four novels as will be researched here. The aim and at the same time contribution to the field of literature- and gender studies will be that of adding nuance, and new insights and findings; particularly in trying to identify clear New Woman concepts in light of these author’s works. Each chapter discusses one novel and one author with the ultimate goal of exploring the relation between both authors, the selected novels, the time during which they were written and their relation by drawing parallels between them accompanied by a theoretical framework (i.e. *Ouida and Victorian Popular Culture* and *New Men in Trollope’s Novels: Rewriting the Victorian Male*). The outcome thereof will provide a solid answer to the Research Question. Its hypothesis claims that Trollope will turn out to be surprisingly progressive when it comes to New Woman concepts whereas Ouida is more predictable in her works instead of the other way around with Trollope being predictably

conservative and Ouida surprisingly progressive, but that both authors are very much a product of their time – the sensational Victorian end of the century – both in their own way as well as in relation to each other.

Chapter I: Trollope and *The Vicar of Bullhampton*

1.1 Chapter Outline

This chapter will discuss Anthony Trollope and *The Vicar of Bullhampton* in relation to the New Woman. Since it is the first of the two chapters that discuss Trollope in relation to his works, this first chapter will start off with a biography on Trollope. This will allow for including certain information from Trollope's personal life in the discussion and analysis of his work(s) because his mother Frances, for instance, wrote novels in which her heroines were "androgynous figures in whom a feminine feeling for others, human connectedness, love and care remained combined with a sharp, flinty intellect and a strong, tenacious will" (Kissel 87). It is at this point but an assumption, but postulating the proposition that Frances Trollope influenced Anthony Trollope in his writing is a valuable point of discussion when the chapter proceeds from the introduction to the author to Trollope in relation to *The Vicar of Bullhampton* and the New Woman. That particular part of the chapter will aim to bring to light what the portrayed gender roles are, and how they relate to New Woman concepts. Finally, the conclusion will consider all of the above in answering the question how the novel as a whole relates to New Woman concepts and to what extent it relates to and is a product of the period during which it was written.

1.2 Introduction to Anthony Trollope

Anthony Trollope (1815-1882) was born the son of Thomas Anthony Trollope and Frances Trollope née Milton in London April 1815 (Hall, par. 3). He was baptized in St George's Bloomsbury church on the 18th of May that same year. John Hall in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* writes that Trollope's father, Thomas Anthony Trollope, was a barrister who had taken up farming in order to be able to send his sons to Harrow boarding school in London (par. 3). In *An Autobiography* edited by F. Page, Trollope describes that these were unfortunate times for him saying that they were 'as unhappy as that of a young gentleman could well be' (2) because boys from the village were looked down upon (Hall, par. 3). He then left to attend private school at Sunbury, which was another painful experience. After Sunbury he went to Winchester College, which his father attended too. Because his mother and sisters left for America and because his father lost legal clients due to his temper, his farming efforts put him into deeper debt (par. 5). As a result Trollope's college bills were not paid and his 'school fellows of course knew that it was so' (*Autobiography*, 9). Trollope was left with suicidal thoughts that are quoted in *An Autobiography* where he describes his

memories of Winchester College as follows,

‘I suffered horribly! I could make no stand against it. [...] Of course I was ill-dressed and dirty. But, ah! how well I remember all the agonies of my young heart; how I considered whether I should always be alone; whether I could not find my way up to the top of that college tower, and from thence put an end to everything?’
(Autobiography, 9).

Trollope got a job at the Post Office as a clerk through his mother, who knew the Freeling family who controlled much of the Post Office. His work there was found unsatisfactory and *An Autobiography* hints that he fell into the hands of a moneylender as a result of constant money problems. Arthur Hayward in *The Days of Dickens* delineates that living expenses for a (senior) clerk in 1844 mounted up to £150,- a year. Even though Trollope might not have been a senior clerk, and the fact that inflation has not been taken into account seeing as these figures are from a few years after his working days at the Post Office in London, one could see how Trollope’s wages of £90 (Hall, par. 10) were not enough to provide for a single man living in the capital. In 1841 he transferred to Ireland after successfully applying to the job of clerk to a surveyor, that he said ‘changed his life altogether’ (Hall, par. 12). It is in Ireland where he met his wife Rose (1820-1917), daughter of the banker Edward John Heseltine, and they were married in 1844 (Hall, par. 15). Not much is known about the marriage and Trollope’s wife Rose as Trollope was very private about it, ‘My marriage was like the marriage of other people, and of no special interest to anyone except my wife and me’ (Autobiography 71).

He began writing his first novel, *The Macdermots of Ballycloran*, while he was engaged in 1843. It was published by a minor London publisher – Thomas Cautley Newby – in 1847. Although the novel had excellent reviews it did not sell (Hall, par. 17). It was the Barsetshire novels that brought Trollope his popularity, especially *Framley Parsonage* (1860-61) which sold 120,000 copies (Hall, par. 28). It was the start of his friendship with William Thackeray who had edited *Macdermots of Ballycloran*, and he had moved back to England around that time. Trollope also wrote sensationalist novels like *Phineas Redux* (1874), part of the Palliser novels of which six appeared.

He moved to the countryside with his wife Rose in 1880 because he thought the air of the rural area in Sussex would do his health good, seen as he was suffering asthmatic symptoms (Hall, par. 47). On the third of November 1882 Trollope suffered a stroke which left his right side paralyzed, damaging his speech and reasoning abilities (Hall, par. 54). He

died in the nursing home he was moved to, on December 6th 1882. The funeral was held three days later with his body being buried in All Souls cemetery, Kensal Green, London (Hall, par. 54). His prolific writing earned him more than £75,000, which would amount to over 20 million pounds in today's money.

Oxford University Press World's Classics became the most important publisher of Trollope novels after his death, throughout the midst of the 20th Century. They brought out 37 of his titles in 185 printings with *Barchester Towers* as a best-seller, selling over 56,000 copies around 1920. This means it kept pace with popular Dickens novels, even outselling *Oliver Twist* by around 12,000 copies (Hall, par. 61).

1.3 The New Woman in Relation to Anthony Trollope and *The Vicar of Bullhampton*

The New Woman was as much a cultural phenomenon as well as a literary one. As a term in itself it was however not coined until the late nineteenth century in 1894 by Sarah Grand, a public speaker and writer (Grand qtd. in Diniejko, par. 8). But it was an issue in Victorian England that more and more women of the middle and upper classes did not marry, an issue highlighted by William Rathbone Greg in his 1862 essay "Why Are Women Redundant?" (Greg qtd. in Diniejko, par. 4). A reason that Diniejko puts forward is that more and more women with an education, and the liberties that come with it, 'began to question the foundations of paternalistic society and the supposed bliss of the traditional Victorian marriage' (par. 6). This group of women are those who would later be called 'New Women' and it proves that New Woman concepts do not necessarily only belong to the fin de siècle because the phenomenon was known much earlier.

Throughout the Victorian period the role of both men and women changed significantly. It was not uncommon for men and women to work alongside each other in various family businesses in the early Victorian period, but with inventions such as that of the steam locomotive, carrying passengers from 1825, it became easier for men to commute to work (Hudson). Women stayed at home because a 'Separate Spheres' model, a psychological ideology, dictated that a woman's sphere was 'the unregulated realm of home, family, and child rearing' whereas the male sphere was defined as a public one 'concerned with the regulated world of government, trade, business, and law' from which women were largely excluded (Kuersten 16). The argument that this model puts forward for defining these spheres is that women were seen as 'physically weaker yet morally superior to men' meaning that according to this model they were 'best suited to the domestic sphere' (Hughes, par. 3). With women having such great influence in the domestic sphere and them largely bringing up their

children solo, they were also naturally preparing the next generation to continue their way of life which brings us to Coventry Patmore's concept of "The Angel in the House". Patmore introduced it as a concept in Victorian England in the form of an ode to his wife in 1854. He describes her as the 'Victorian ideal of feminine self-sacrifice, submissiveness, and motherly devotion' (Weber 1). At first it was not a popular work that received much recognition, but Patmore continued working on it, and it eventually accumulatively sold over a quarter million copies (Markwick 10). This number means that the idea for this belief on women in the role of submissive wives, mothers, and daughters was both popular and widespread. It was during this time that Patmore's wife died, and as it was an ode to his wife the image transitioned from 'material body to metaphorical figure' (Weber 1). The 'Angel in the House' became standardized as the metaphor that 'produced a version of idealized femininity that reinforced an ideological barrier to women's labour, professional remuneration, public visibility, and political action' (Weber 2). This is an important and recurring image for comparison throughout this thesis and the metaphor of idealized femininity and idealized biological gender roles will be used for the analyses and comparison of character's within the author's works.

But one cannot exist without the other, meaning that with a changed sense of women's identity the gender identity of men came under pressure as well. In literature the New Woman often took the form of 'someone whose thoughts and desires highlighted not only her own aspirations, but also served as a mirror in which to reflect the attitudes of society' (Buzwell, par. 6). Tara MacDonald in *The New Man, Masculinity and Marriage in the Victorian Novel* argues that men often cut a very poor figure in New Woman Fiction (81). In 1894 a critic for the *Times* complainingly states that 'the distinctive notes in these novels about the New Woman is the very poor figure which man cuts in them' (qtd. in MacDonald 81). MacDonald argues that the New Woman's 'quest for social equality' is impeded by certain styles of masculinity (81), which brings us back to the argument of the separate spheres. Because the public lives of men affected the private lives of women it is argued that 'the New Man cannot simply be the romantic partner to the New Woman but must be her political ally in the public sphere as well' (MacDonald 82). New Woman literatures thus revise earlier standardized representations of masculinity. This is a point of especial relevance to the Ouida chapters as well because it highlights how New Woman authors in particular "attempt to dismantle the earlier Victorian ideal of separate spheres – an ideal that, they imply, permits male secrecy and hypocrisy" (MacDonald 82), but first it leads one to the discussion of *The Vicar of Bullhampton*.

The Vicar of Bullhampton was written in 1868 and published in 1870. Its first edition was supposed to be issued serially in *Once a Week*, a magazine published by Bradbury and Evans to compete with Dickens' magazine *All the Year Round* ("Once"), but came out in eleven monthly parts instead and was illustrated by Henry Woods (Bonhams). This makes for a surprising fact since serialising novels in monthly parts was out of fashion by 1870. It cost Trollope a loss of reputation, readership, and finances as a result (Super 256).

The Vicar of Bullhampton begins with the narrator directly speaking to the reader. He outlines where the story is set, in Bullhampton, Wiltshire, in great detail, arguing that the place is somewhere in between a small town and a large village. It is a conservative place, one where the Church of the Primitive Methodists, a movement within the Catholic Church claiming to practice a purer form of Christianity (Kendall), have "a very strong holding" (Trollope 5). There are three plots and the first one is that of Mr. Gilmore and Mary Lowther whom the author describes as follows, "Mr. Harry Gilmore is head and ears in love with a young lady to whom he has offered his hand and all that can be made to appertain the future mistress of Hampton Privets. And the lady is one who has nothing to give in return but her hand, and her heart, and herself" (Trollope 6). During the beginning stages of the story it becomes apparent that Mr. Gilmore has proposed to Mary Lowther, but that she has not given him an answer yet. More so she states that "she knew very well that she would not accept him now" (9). This seems curious as Gilmore is the town's squire with a substantial estate, and for Lowther, having nothing to offer but herself, it seems it would – characteristically for the Victorian era – be more logical to instantly marry someone in a more economically comfortable situation rather than to refuse him. One would however not want to claim that all women in the Victorian era would marry for money and for status because this cannot be safely stated.

Next to general theoretical works relating to feminist criticism in Victorian popular culture there are works that specifically relate to Trollope's relation to New Woman concepts. Margaret Markwick in her work *Trollope and Women* describes that beliefs like the Angel of the House by Patmore must have shaped Trollope's female (and male for that reason) characters in some way, shape, or form by the role(s) placed upon them (10) because it opened up new possibilities for the writing of his female characters since they were previously bound to the domestic sphere only. Markwick develops her interpretation of Trollope by stating that many women in Trollope's novels reflected the expectations of Victorian women, "that their sphere should be domestic and subordinate, and viewed in relation to the standing of their menfolk, whether as daughters in relation to their fathers, or

wives in relation to their husbands” (10).

With this in mind, one can now get back to the story and analysis of the characters within the subplots of *The Vicar of Bullhampton*. It must be noted that the subplots are intertwined and that consequently their analysis will be intertwined, for one cannot be discussed separately without discussing the other. When Mary Lowther in that moment refuses Mr. Gilmore, her argument is that “it seemed to her that a girl should know a man very thoroughly before she would be justified in trusting herself altogether in his hands” (Trollope 9). This sounds reasonable, but the reputation of Mr. Gilmore is established as being kind, warm-hearted, and well-to-do. It seems that a girl in her position should at least give him a clear answer. This is something she contemplates and discusses with her friend Janet Fenwick, wife of the vicar of Bullhampton Frank Fenwick, who says “I should like to shake you till you fell into his arms. I know it would be best for you” (15). Janet believes that love is not necessary for a woman to marry a man and that it will eventually grow over time, whereas Mary is more of a romantic believing she cannot marry a person whom she does not love even though she believes she shall never like any man better than Gilmore. Janet is worried that Mary is waiting for “something that will never come till you will have lost your time. That is the way old maids are made” (15). It translates to a worry that Mary may downgrade her position as a woman in society by not marrying, or at least doubting to marry, Mr. Gilmore, who will ask her the same question again three months later. However, two types of women – opposing in their beliefs regarding marriage, Janet on the one hand and Mary on the other – may have been identified, but a woman’s role is not solely and necessarily established through marriage alone. This argument in discussion of the two female characters relates to New Woman concepts in the way that they reveal an ambiguity across them. This is related to Trollope’s own “ambivalence about the cultural ideals of femininity” (Markwick 10) because both characters try to create “a distinctive identity” through their struggles regarding each other (Markwick 10). This refutes the statement that “Trollope’s novels are designed to encourage gentle, modest, not very passionate girls” (Praz qtd. in Markwick 10) because through the struggles between Mary and Janet Trollope “exposes the paucity of women’s choices” (Markwick 10).

The character of Carry Brattle is then added to the discussion of Trollope’s women in *The Vicar of Bullhampton*. She is an example of an atypical, non-traditional Victorian woman who is a religious miller’s daughter and introduced by her mother to her referring to her as a “fallen child”, a more subtle way of calling her a prostitute in this case. Trollope explores the effects of a woman, a daughter, gone astray on her family and the parish they live

in through characters such as the Brattle family and the vicar Fenwick, and has devoted an entire chapter to the character of Carry Brattle (Chapter fifteen, page 65). When a murder is committed, “They’ve knocked his skull open with a hammer” (32), her brother Sam is immediately suspected even though there is no direct evidence. This may be the result of Carry’s profession causing her family to become social pariahs, making it all too easy for other villagers to put blame on those who suit them best. This is strengthened by the Marquis of Trowbridge who states about the Brattle family that “the family is very bad, one of the daughters, as I understand, a prostitute” (70), and that because his villagers believe Sam has committed the murder he should be in prison until the time of hanging arrives. Meanwhile Carry starts to believe that she is bad, but that is because she internalizes the views and feelings of others. Something has driven her to this and the reader does not know – yet – what exactly it is, but it is not entirely unfounded to believe that when one makes a choice one believes it to be right. The exploration of conflicting morals regarding such a matter continues with Mr. Fenwick doubting what he should do. On the one hand he believes that there may be justified reasons for a father to disown his child, but out of religious considerations and because he has always liked Carry he believes there has to be searched for other options rather than disowning her. He does state “if anything was to be done for Carry Brattle, it seemed as though it must be done by her father’s permission and assistance”, completely leaving the person who birthed her out of the occasion. This goes to show that her mother cannot do much when it comes to her daughter, she cannot decide to take her back home for instance as it is up to the father, the head of the family, to make such decisions. The Marquis of Trowbridge in the meantime is not happy with Fenwick standing up for the family as that would make matters more complicated for his own situation seen as the dead farmer held his land under him. He does however not want to see reason in anything other than his own beliefs and “is one of those who pity the condition of all who are so blinded as to differ from him” (71). The question remains whether or not it is indeed blind sightedness or his position in society that makes him act the way he acts. If a majority of people in his county believe that someone is guilty of murder, his own position could become questionable if he strongly acts against their wishes of imprisoning and perhaps hanging said suspect. He may thus not have much of a choice.

Meanwhile the vicar Fenwick decides to talk to Mr. Brattle, contemplating what is to be done “for the assistance of such fellow-creatures as this poor girl” (72). He strongly urges him to stretch forth his hand so that she may be saved as he believes the punishment outweighs the sin. Fenwick makes an interesting statement about Mr. and Mrs. Brattle saying that “He could

not think that of all his parishioners no two were so unlike each other as were the miller and his wife. The one was so hard and invincible;--the other so soft and submissive!" (75). But then Mrs. Brattle goes against her husband's wishes and decides to go and look for her daughter in secret, asking Mr. Fenwick, who knows the whereabouts of Carry, to take her there. This is interesting because it may be natural for a mother to go after her children and make sure they are safe, but her first duty was to obey her husband and perhaps if he was so outspoken on the matter she should have decided not to go after her daughter.

Mary Lowther has gone to a nearby town called Loring to stay with her aunt Miss Marrable in order to contemplate her decision regarding Mr. Gilmore. She does read, and although many people were literate around the 1870s the fact that it is mentioned she reads "Pope, Dryden, Swift, Cowley, Fielding, Richardson, and Goldsmith" (27) indicates that she must be an educated woman. This is typical but not uncommon for women of the higher classes, Harriet Martineau, a social theorist and writer, for instance urged women to get an education to make themselves financially independent as early as the 1850s (Diniejko, par. 2). She does not strive to be financially independent however, and her "contempt of money" (27) means that she is not characteristically New Woman if one were to take only that into consideration. It is too simplistic to say that all New Women strove to be financially independent. Other things have to be taken into consideration as well, but based on what the reader knows about her, one could argue that she is more of a traditional Victorian higher class woman. Miss Marrable's position in society is confirmed by the author stating that

"The Marrable family is of very old standing in England, the first baronet having been created by James I., and there having been Marrables,--as is well known by all attentive readers of English history,-- engaged in the Wars of the Roses, and again others very conspicuous in the religious persecutions of the children of Henry VIII" (33).

This is important because Mary Lowther is a descendant of them, which makes her position of a lady who has nothing to give but her hand, her heart, and herself surprising. She falls in love with the questionable character of Captain Walter Marrable, deployed in the British Army in India, who is trying to get inheritance money from his father; money of which his father robbed him. About the intimacy between Lowther and Marrable Trollope says "In America a girl may form a friendly intimacy with any young man she fancies, and though she may not be free from little jests and good-humoured joking, there is no injury to her from such intimacy" (37). This is in sharp contrast with girls on the continent of Europe, who "do not dream of making friendship with any man. A cousin with them is as much out of the question as the

most perfect stranger. [...] All friendships between the sexes must, under such a social code, be looked forward to as post-nuptial joys” (37). We thus get an idea about social behaviour from the author himself, which is relevant as he lived in the era he is writing about and in so doing can give an accurate representation of social codes regarding male and female behaviour. Miss Marrable opposes any possible match between her niece and Walter Marrable because she fears the only attraction is the fact that he has been ruined by his own father, and that he will not be able to provide for Mary. She does however all of a sudden make a statement in favour of being financially independent in not so many words by saying that “My idea about money is this, that whether you have much or little, you should make your arrangements so that it be no matter of thought to you” (42). She does, traditionally, not understand how two people can fall in love when one, especially the man, who has to provide for his – future – family, has been robbed off his fortune. Feelings are out of the question, one has to marry with her head rather than with her heart. A fascinating element that William Rathbone Greg points out is that single women should be shipped off to “where they are wanted”, meaning the colonies, as purportedly single men were waiting for them (Diniejko, par. 7). It is therefore amusing to point out that this may be relevant to Walter Marrable, who is a single man who has to return to India if he does not marry money or obtains money in a different way.

As the story plays out it turns out that Mr. Brattle has forgiven his daughter Carry for the misfortunes she has caused her family and herself by being “indiscrete”. His argument for forgiving her is that she may once again eat under an honest roof, but he does not call her by her name. This is significant because names are part and partial of one’s identity. He may have forgiven her, perhaps more for the sake of the family(name), but he does not acknowledge her. This is followed up by the final details about Mary Lowther’s story. She has at last broken off everything with Mr. Gilmore so that she and Walter Marrable may be married to much despair of her Aunt Sarah, who does not know about the upcoming engagement yet and who believes Walter is to be married to someone else, who believes young women should get themselves married. Trollope comments on this by saying that “The old women are right in their views on this matter; and the young women, who on this point are not often refractory, are right also” (177). It seems that he has sympathy for those young women who decide not to marry should they not be fully behind the match. Mary’s aunt is not so liberal in doing everything in her power “to aid the difficulties which had separated the two cousins” (178). Trollope remarks that “the young women belonging to them [older women] should be settled, - and thus got rid of, - is no doubt the great desire” (178). This would make

sense when one is to look at the theory of the Angel in the House, where women are seen as the pillars of domestic harmony in their roles of wives, daughters, and sisters. Apart from these roles it seems women could hardly be anything else, and since they could not make their own way and have a career for instance girls of marriageable age could potentially become a burden to older women since they only cost them money. Trollope further remarks that “To be returned as a bad shilling, which has been presented over the counter and found to be bad, must be very disagreeable to a young woman’s feelings” (178). However much this may be the case, it does not bother Mary simply because it does not apply to her. She is not the one that has been “presented over the counter and found to be bad”, rather it is the other way around by the woman turning down a man. Mr. Gilmore meanwhile “had set his heart upon the gaining of a thing, and was now absolutely broken-hearted because he could not have it” (180), strikingly referring to a woman as “a thing”, which more or less indicates their value as seen from a male perspective at the time. A general sense of manhood is articulated by Frank Fenwick in stating that “you should so carry your outer self, that the eyes of those around you should see nothing of the sorrow within” (181), and that “You can’t throw yourself on the public pity as a woman might” (182). Finally all is well that ends well, Mary and Walter get married and become Squire and Squires at an estate called Dunripple, Sam is acquitted of murder, and Carry gains back her father’s respect after her disorderly passions led her astray.

1.4 Conclusion

Of Mary Lowther it can be said that she is the one who comes closest to an early representation of the New Woman. When pronouncing her name it sounds a bit like ‘Mary loathe her’, perhaps a clear critical remark from the author’s point of view. She turns down a proposal that would have secured a comfortable future and rather follows her heart than wanting to believe marriage is necessary for a woman’s happiness. Her aunt Sarah Marrable is her complete opposite; she would fit Patmore’s description of the Angel in the House most out of all the female characters, whereas the characters of Carry Brattle and her family seem to be a combination of the two. Carry becomes a prostitute and however sorry she is for it, she was for a while a working woman albeit far from respectable. Her mother bows down to her husband in almost every way, except for when it comes to her daughter; then she disobeys him.

This novel has a woman, or rather women, as its main protagonist, and according to Lyn Pykett New Woman novels are mostly those that express dissatisfaction with a woman’s position in both marriage and society (Pykett qtd. in Diniejko, par. 15), which this novel so

clearly does. The novel is not written by a woman and it does not overly fight Patmore's concept of Angel in the House which seem to be among the criteria, but the author with the novel provides critical remarks. The abnormalities of the female characters, where they deviate from the norm that is the Victorian ideal of femininity, i.e. the "Angel in the House", are chronicled throughout the novel and they become integrated as gender-specific themes. The result of this is that "the subversive implications of the narrative conflict with the novel's conclusion" (Markwick 10), and it is this exact tension that reflect "Trollope's ambivalence about the cultural ideals of femininity that the book indirectly questions [through exploring and exposing the paucity of the women's choices], but eventually upholds" (Markwick 10).

All in all, if one were to look at the novel's main protagonist being a woman and its criticism of the position of women in marriage and society then this novel can be labelled as New Woman fiction. The evidence however is too thin to present such a statement to be unconditionally true, but it may be said that it certainly has New Woman concepts woven into it. It is not distinctive New Woman fiction per se as it does meet certain requirements but not all, and it most definitely can be seen as a predecessor to fin de siècle New Woman fiction.

Chapter II: Trollope and *He Knew He Was Right*

2.1 Chapter Outline

This second Trollope chapter will continue with the analysis of Trollope in relation to New Woman concepts, but it will do so using another one of his novels called *He Knew He Was Right*. It is an entirely different novel, and will be useful to discuss and bring to light any differences between the novels to see how exactly Trollope uses New Woman concepts in his writing. To do so, the chapter will have a section about Trollope in relation to the New Woman and *He Knew He Was Right* after which it will be discussed in relation to the Victorian period itself in the conclusion. The chapter will not feature a biographical section because that has already been discussed in the previous chapter, but information from that section will be used to finally determine how his personal life played a role in his attitude towards contemporary issues such as the “Woman Question”. The ultimate aim of this chapter is to explore how *He Knew He Was Right* is a reflection of Victorian attitudes towards gender, thereby focusing on the representation(s) of the New Woman in determining Victorian women’s gender identity.

2.2 The “New Woman” in Relation to Trollope and *He Knew He Was Right*

This version of *He Knew He Was Right* is published by Oxford University Press and has 952 pages in total. Trollope began writing the original version on 13 November 1867 after which it was finished on 12 June 1868 (xxv). It was originally published as a 32 week serial by James Virtue, who provided Trollope with £3,200 for the copyright (xxv). This particular version was selected and found to be most useful because it comes with an introduction and textual notes by Professor of Modern English Literature at University College London John Sutherland. It is noteworthy that earlier versions of the novel had introductions written by Virginia Woolf, T.S. Eliot, Graham Green, and other prominent literary figures which “enriched the experience of reading” (0).

Sutherland argues that Trollope’s attitude towards the woman question “evolved significantly in the 1860s, before hardening into an old man’s prejudices in the last ten years of his life” (xxi). Trollope divided his view on (new) women’s rights into two main strands. On the one hand he was “absolutely in favour” of the working woman; he found that they should be enabled to have a career of their own in “respectable fields” meaning that he found the spectacle of women working ploughs for instance not at all “uplifting” (xxii). On the other hand he found that women should not be allowed to enter politics in any way, shape, or form,

for he found women to seek legal equality with men “simply disgusting” (xxii). This is rather hypocritical because in his opinion women are allowed to work, but only in a society “run exclusively by men” (xxii). He seems to be open-minded, but in reality is thus much more close-minded than at first seems the case on the surface.

He Knew He Was Right draws on the drastic change in Victorian England middle-class life because of the 1860s debate surrounding the Divorce Bill of 1857 (xv). It made divorce more affordable and easier, although it must be noted that for women it was significantly harder to get legally separated from their husbands than the other way around. But at least it was not altogether unattainable anymore. A review in the *Saturday Review*, that was extremely anti-Trollope, called *He Knew He Was Right* “simply repulsive” as a result (xxi).

The main story is about Louis Trevelyan, who can best be described as a fortunate gentleman. He is eloquent with an education from Cambridge University, a man of fortune, and very generous. He is also obstinate as is his wife Emily, whose mother says about her daughter’s character that she “likes her own way too” (3). The thing that has to be remarked about Trevelyan’s wife Emily Rowly is that she has grown up in the Mandarin Islands where her father, Sir Marmaduke, is governor. This means that she is not familiar with the ways and practices of (London) society. The first thing that stands out is that women’s husbands are referred to as ‘masters’ by both parties which indirectly refers to women as subordinate. For the era they lived in this may not have been exceptional, but it does set the record straight about the roles of both women and men especially when it comes to marriage. Then the character of colonel Osborne is introduced and of him it is said that “he was fond of intimacies with married ladies, and perhaps was not averse to the excitement of marital hostility” (7). He may thus be described as a man of questionable morals. He is a friend of Sir Marmaduke and unwholesomely interested in Emily, who in her turn thinks nothing of it. Her sister Nora explains to her that “he is civil and kind to you because he is not your master” (4), as if he would not be civil and kind when he were to be her master. It is also questionable whether he has her best interests at heart and is civil at all given the fact that he knowingly drives a wedge between a husband and his wife. Nevertheless Osborne gets away with most of this behaviour as “the evils which arose were always contributed to mistaken jealousy” (11) meaning that any wedges driven within and between families are the result of the husband’s jealousy and not of the Colonel’s actions. It is stated in the novel that a girl is to conduct herself properly, meaning that she should end any contact, when she is subjected to “the arts and practiced villainies” of such individuals (13), but once more it has to be stated that Mrs. Trevelyan was not familiar with such codes of conduct because she did not grow up

in “society”. The prevailing course of action would be for a husband to tell his wife that any written or spoken contact with such individual would be inappropriate after which the wife should obey her husband’s wishes, but Mrs. Trevelyan takes it as a great insult to her character when Mr. Trevelyan tells her of the nature of Colonel Osborne and wishes her not to see him anymore because she believes that decision is up to her. She has not been brought up to fit the traditional Victorian mold of Angel in the House and therefore ““She has yet to learn that it is her duty to do as I tell her,’ said Trevelyan. ‘And because she is obstinate, and will not learn from those who know better than herself what a woman may do, and what she may not, she will ruin herself, and destroy my happiness’” (28); his happiness being directly linked to his reputation.

The comments provided by these characters make it apparent that they do not only voice their own preferences, but with that often societal ones as well. Greg Buzwell in “Daughters of decadence: the New Woman in the Victorian fin de siècle” highlights and confirms that as a literary character the New Woman often is someone “whose thoughts and desires highlighted not only her own aspirations, but also served as a mirror in which to reflect the attitudes of society” (par. 6). It is not meant to name Mr. Trevelyan a New Woman as the preceding quote is his, but as a literary character he voices clear standards when it comes to the gender roles of not only his wife but women in general. Trevelyan’s quote about the obstinate nature of his wife reflects what was to be expected of how a Victorian women should conduct herself as she has to be “domestic and subordinate, and viewed in relation to the standing of [her] menfolk” (Markwick, “Trollope and Women” 10).

A subplot within the novel is concerned with Mrs. Rowley’s sister Nora who wishes to engage herself to Hugh Stanbury, a journalist of moderate income who is not considered a decent party as far as her father Sir Marmaduke is concerned. Stanbury had spoken the words to her “whether it would grieve her to abandon that delicate, dainty mode of life to which she had been accustomed” (235). This sounds a bit minimizing, as if he were to imply that she has nothing serious to concern herself with, that she was as she formulates it “one of the butterflies of the day, caring for nothing but sunshine and an opportunity of fluttering her silly wings” (232). A life of reasonable comfort may indeed seem dainty to a middle-class man who earns a decent and not uncomfortable living of £600,- per annum, and is not found good enough by the father of his future fiancé when his income and character are compared to that of Marmaduke who earns £3000,- per annum and wants not much less for all his daughters. To Nora it is an insult because not only is it a prejudice, but more importantly he puts a price tag on their love. This may give the impression of her being naïve, and she is, because women

were encouraged to pursue advantageous marriages and for upper-class individuals it was especially important not to marry down as to not put their family name, and the status that is directly derived from it, to shame (Buzwell, par. 7). It is also quite remarkable to see the manner in which is spoken and thought about love. Throughout the novel it is referred to as a feeling one is in complete control of while most feelings are characteristically uncontrollable; meaning in so much words that one cannot simply decide how to feel at any given moment because it depends on external influences. Nevertheless, chapter 19 reads a comment from Stanbury directed at Trevelyan that radically differs from the view regarding women's gender roles as presented by Coventry Patmore. It reads "but if I were married [...] I fancy I shouldn't look after my wife at all. It seems to me that women hate to be told about their duties".

Another interesting comment is made in chapter 26 by the American Miss Caroline Spalding who is to marry the wealthy British Charles Glascock, who in his turn showed an interest in Nora Trevelyan. Spalding, referring to the moneyed Lady Peterborough, remarks "To be Lady Peterborough, and have the spending of a large fortune, would not suffice for her happiness. She was sure of that. It would be a leap in the dark" (524). This "leap in the dark" refers to the description of the 1867 Reform Act by Lord Derby (948). The Reform Act, in short, meant that more men – not all, as it was still based around qualifications regarding property – would get the vote, doubling the electorate from one to two million men in England and Wales ("Second", par. 6). Having one's happiness depend on a large sum of money can thus be seen, as is here alluded to, as a great experiment through the eyes of an American woman. It must be noted that America lacks the centuries old history and culture that European countries such as England have. As a result it is not illogical to think that Americans often look at European countries for inspiration regarding history and culture to gain a sense of self because one's identity is based, at least partially, on those who came before. Since America was "discovered" (the term is used very loosely here; 'invaded' might be more appropriate) by Christopher Columbus in 1492 they do not have a rooted history to base the identity of their people on. This may sound slightly generalised and questionable, but Linda E. Smeins work called *Building an American Identity: Pattern Book Homes and Communities, 1870-1900* reveals that,

"In actuality, the United States was but a fledgling nation when compared with the histories of European and British Development. [...] Believed to be sorely lacking in high culture, the creative arts continued to rely on Britain and the Continent for leadership. Public discourse acknowledged that the United States was an inheritor of

western cultural traditions and was a contemporary ally in western cultural and economic domination, but finding means to locate symbolic separation and international leadership was paramount” (27).

She also states that “Being perceived as a peer and an inheritor of western cultural and economic dominance was central to American identity” (27). As a result behavioural patterns would be copied and not internalized causing things such as gender stereotypes to be present, but in a much more liberal form. The function of such a form of cultural mobility seems to be supplementing emotional deficiencies, and Trollope remarks, “We in England are not usually favourably disposed to women who take a pride in a certain antagonism to men in general” (xx) thereby referring to the character of Wallachia Petrie who is an American feminist.

In chapter 55, Wallachia Petrie’s character is described as “the Republican Browning as she was called” (513). Her name and character seem a combination of a prominent Boston abolitionist who after the Civil War (1861-65) “devoted himself to women’s rights” (“Wendell”, par. 5), and “A New England lady” (Trollope 947) who argued that the poems she published came to her from the ghost of Edgar Allen Poe (Tearle, par. 5). “Browning” could then be an allusion to Elizabeth Barrett Browning who supported “the Italian struggle for freedom” (947). The first name Wallachia may then refer to the principality, now situated in Romania, where a violent revolutionary struggle took place in 1848 (947). Together they make up for a rebellious type of woman greatly concerned and fighting against any form of domination, whether it concerns women’s struggle to gain equality or whether it be more general in the form of countries fighting for freedom. She is the representation of an American woman, the “Republican Browning”, that did not agree with Anthony Trollope and he was greatly irritated by that type of woman when he first visited the country in 1861-2 (948).

Petrie, in chapter 56, remarks that the antipathy of men against women vowing for equal rights “has been common on the face of the earth since the clown first trod upon the courtier’s heels” (529). This is a clear reference to Shakespeare’s Hamlet when he comments on the growing egalitarianism of the age in a letter to Horatio saying “The age is grown so picked, that the toe of the peasant comes so near the heel of the courtier, he galls his kibe” (Shakespeare 5.1.6). The explanation is that

“It is the instinct of fallen man to hate equality, to desire ascendancy, to crush, to oppress, to tyrannise, to enslave. Then, when the slave is at last free, and in his

freedom demands—equality, man is not great enough to take his enfranchised brother to his bosom” (529).

Slavery was abolished in America in 1863, as a result of the American Civil War. In an article called ‘American Reconstruction’, written for *St Paul’s*, and published in 1868 when he was writing the section of the novel concerning Wallachia Petrie, he remarks that

“here, in these Southern States, the negro who is now to be politically omnipotent was but yesterday a slave;-- and the race over whom he is to be omnipotent is the race that yesterday owned him. In which side of the bargain, for the late slave or for the late master, can there be good?” (949).

Trollope argues that the former slaves are now omnipotent over white men whilst they were only after equal rights. Although far from it, the abolishment of slavery was a first step in the right direction for them to acquire equal rights, but what concerns Trollope is the effect it might have on society. Women at that time, too, could be viewed as being under the domination of (white) men, and with slavery abolished it could open the door for women’s equal rights as well because they would realize that there are possibilities for anyone to get away from any form of control whether it be social, political, or both. It shows that (American) feminism and abolitionism are greatly intertwined political movements, and it explains Wallachia Petrie’s passion regarding these issues. Furthermore, the woman question in this novel highlights the strained relationship between England and America.

The book *Strained Sisterhood: Gender and Class in the Boston Female Anti-slavery Society* mentions the term “Victorian America”. Since the Victorian era refers to the reign of Queen Victoria in Britain the term “Victorian America” suggests that Britain greatly influenced America during that time, both culturally and socially. This socio-cultural mimicking was not always received without hesitation and/or contempt as the novel shows. When the British Mr. Glascock, a man of reputation and great wealth, contemplates marrying the American Miss Caroline Spalding he states that ‘he could not dare to ask Caroline Spalding to be his wife’ because “There were certain forms of the American female so dreadful that no wise man would wilfully come in contact with them” (530). He continues that “It would be too much, indeed, if in this American household he were to find the old vices of an aristocracy superadded to young republican sins!” (531). Mr. Glascock is a very eligible man and many mothers in the novel try to set him up with one of their daughters, which is why he is referring to the old vices of an aristocracy. America during that era was a republic, which can indeed be considered sinful when the nation you inhabit has a monarch which you

believe has been put there by God and rules in his name. Mr. Glascock comes to the above quoted conclusion after Caroline Spalding's aunt, the American Mrs. Spalding, engaged in conversation with him and cleverly disguised that the sole purpose of that conversation was to make sure that Mr. Glascock would propose to her niece. The defence of Mrs. Spalding is that "It seemed to her to be so natural to say a good word in praise of her niece to the man whom she believed to be in love with her niece" (531). Although this may be true, one cannot help but ponder why many mothers – and all mothers in this novel – would so heavily engage in match-making when it comes to their daughters because their interference when it comes to their sons is much less apparent if apparent at all.

The first thing that comes to mind is that daughters are usually the ones to take care of their parents in old age. When a girl remained unmarried it would not at all be uncommon for them to stay and live with a parent, which is how the "spinster" is born. When that daughter does marry, and preferably a good party, it ensures that not only will her own life be reasonably without worry; she will also have insured the family's good reputation – if all goes well – and be out of her parent's hair. Being able to marry off your daughter well thus seems the Victorian equivalent of life insurance. It is not altogether illogical that families of the higher classes would be much concerned with their daughters because in society they had less rights and led a much more passive role than men. Men could always work and support themselves whereas working women in the higher classes would be frowned upon. In the eyes of society it would suggest that the girl's family did not have enough money for her to solely busy herself with her domestic duties, but that does not mean it never happened. Women of the lower classes would already more often be found in the workplace, and figures show that in 1851 half of the adult female population, coming down to about 3 million women, "laboured for their subsistence" (Krauskopf, par. 1). The *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* of December 1860 even published an article regarding the working woman because they felt it was becoming "a popular society subject" rather than anything else (qtd. in Krauskopf, par. 1).

Caroline Spalding, being "bright, pleasant, attractive, very easy to talk to, and yet quite able to hold her own" (528), is everything Mr. Glascock looks for in a woman since he wanted "a woman that was not blasée with the world, that was not a fool, and who would respect him" (529). Yet when Miss Spalding gives him an answer on the subject of marriage – "Marry an English wife in your own class,-- as, of course, you will" (534) – that is not to his liking, he is taken aback and argues that she is no longer the "American woman whom he desired to take with him to his home in England" (534). It shows that Mr. Glascock is open to

the idea of a woman “hat can hold her own” as long as she does not do it, which is in fact the case for most men in this novel and perhaps men in general, although evidence that leads in that direction is only presumptive and one would not want to make gross generalizations.

Earlier on in the novel, page 111 to be exact, a reference is made to women working in educated professions by Miss Jemima Stanbury to her niece Dorothy. She says, “They say women are to vote, and become doctors, and if so, there’s no knowing what devil’s tricks they mayn’t do”. Miss Stanbury can perhaps be best described as an old-fashioned lady whose prejudices are slightly exaggerated, but nevertheless with good intent. During the 1860s there were a few women working as doctors, but as the novel suggests Miss Stanbury is most likely referring to Elizabeth Blackwell and Elizabeth Garrett. The British Blackwell actually graduated as a Doctor of Medicine in America and went on to give lectures on “Medicine as a Profession for Ladies” in Britain, of which three were much publicized (939). Garrett attended Blackwell’s lectures “and forced the Society of Apothecaries to qualify her, in 1865” (939). The London School of Medicine For Women was eventually opened after much perseverance and opposition in 1874 (939). Miss Stanbury, later on, mentions the improving – or better yet “modernizing” – position of women in one breath with the road to the devil. It is probably the longest quote in the novel showing her disdain upon the matter. She states that,

“But now, what with divorce bills, and woman’s rights, and penny papers, and false hair, and married women being just like giggling girls, and giggling girls knowing just as much as married women when a woman has been married a year or two she begins to think whether she mayn’t have more fun for her money by living apart from her husband” (140).

This quote in a nutshell encapsulates and shows the worry on the “improvements” on the position of women in Victorian society through the eyes of a woman discontent with then current developments. The Divorce and Matrimonial Causes Bill of 1857 has been mentioned and briefly discussed earlier in this chapter, but when Miss Stanbury refers to “woman’s rights” she probably has in mind the Women’s Rights Movement of the 1850s-60s also known as so-called “First Wave Feminism”. Nevertheless, Miss Stanbury argues that to live apart from one’s husband equals a divorce. It may make sense for argument’s sake, but Louis and Emily Trevelyan, for instance, live apart from each other for an extended period of time and never get legally divorced; thus stating that to get separated does not legally equal divorce even though it may be viewed as such by certain individuals during the time.

The beginning paragraphs of this chapter mentioned sir Marmaduke and his eight

daughters living in the Mandarin Islands. This is not a coincidental reference as Trollope himself had visited the Mandarin Islands when he was working for the Post Office as is mentioned in his biography in chapter I. In 1859 he wrote the novel *The West Indies and the Spanish Main* during his visit to what is referred to throughout the novel as “the tropics”, which arguably strengthens the connection with the West Indies (931). Upon further research, and after coming across commentary on page 800 suggesting that the Mandarins are in the “antipodes” – referring to the journey of Sir and Lady Marmaduke “out to the Antipodes” (800) -, they must be situated in what is nowadays known as the Island of Jamaica (“The West Indies”). Then there is the character of Hugh Stanbury, who eventually marries Nora – Emily Trevelyan’s sister. According to Sutherland this is the character that comes closest in resembling Trollope, and some arguments can indeed be made for that. Trollope went to Harrow as is known, but his brother – Thomas Adolphus – went to Oxford and Trollope was prevented from going there because of his father’s hardships which meant there was not enough money to be able to send him there. Also, page 403 reads that “Hugh Stanbury would have had to own that he had written lately two or three rather stinging articles in the ‘Daily Record,’ as ‘to the assumed merits and actual demerits of the clergy of the Church of England.’”, which is also what Trollope wrote about during that time in the *Pall Mall Gazette* (933).

There are four pairs of sisters in the novel: Emily (Trevelyan) and Nora Rowley, Priscilla and Dorothy Stanbury, Camilla and Arabella French, and the American sisters Caroline and Olivia Spalding. Strikingly, each pair has a sister that does get married and one that does not, except for Emily and Nora, but Nora’s match with Hugh Stanbury was not approved of and in her not accepting Mr. Charles Glascock – because she felt her intentions would be less than honourable in her marrying him for the position and money rather than love – it then looked like she too would be sentenced to spinsterhood. Dorothy Stanbury eventually marries Brooke Burgess, who is a London clerk, after much opposition from her aunt Jemima Stanbury who would have liked to see her marry Mr. Gibson. After much persistence on the part of Brooke, and after much quarrelling between Dorothy and her aunt Jemima finally gives her blessing for the wedding and Priscilla is left the single woman of the pair. Her fate “like most ‘dependent’ but unmarried women” is ‘to provide companionship for an aged parent with the prospect of an eventual lonely old age for herself’ (xix). She takes her fate gracefully thereby stating that, when talking to Dorothy, “To enjoy life, as you do, is I suppose out of the question for me. [...] Things get dearer and dearer, but I have a comfort even in that. I have a feeling that I should like to bring myself to the straw a day” (914),

which is an allusion to a tale whereby a farmer fed a horse less and less until at last it was surviving on only “a single straw a day” (952) after which it inevitably died. Caroline Spalding surprisingly ends up marrying Mr. Charles Glascock after his hesitations regarding American women, and her sister Olivia is much dignified in accepting her fate like Priscilla. This is not the case when it comes to Camilla and Arabella French. They both want marry Mr. Gibson of which there is most unfortunately only one. He does not help matters by going back and forth between the two sisters which causes rivalry between them. Eventually he marries Arabella and Camilla is left with the question what an unchosen woman can do with herself (xix).

2.3 Conclusion

All in all this novel shows the woman question in relation to the marriage prospects of the four pairs of sisters through the eyes of what can be argued is a rather conservative author. Trollope repeatedly voices his discontent when it comes to changes in societal conduct from little things such as the chignon – “A young gentleman was seen riding... holding on high at the end of his cane a chignon as those heavy lumps of hair are technically called” (*Pall Mall Gazette* 3 July 1865 qtd. in Trollope, p. 936) – to the larger more controversial issues such as feminism. Since Trollope was born in 1815 and this novel was published in 1869, it means that he was no longer a young man open to all sorts of modernizations.

Louis Trevelyan can be seen as a tyrannical representation of the traditional Victorian man because he treats his wife as Victorian custom suggests: that she is subject to his happiness, and should obey him as he pleases and she should be happy in doing so. Thereby she becomes the submissive object of male desire; she becomes Patmore’s ideal of the “Angel in the House”. Trevelyan is not just a “normal” representation of the traditional Victorian man because he takes his son away from his mother as he constantly questions Emily’s fidelity. This obsession with his wife’s fidelity relates to Victorian society because it “registered a wider Victorian panic at the idea of equal sexual freedom for women” (Polhemus qtd. in Morse, Markwick, and Turner, p. 86) even though Emily was never unfaithful in her marriage.

Then there are the male characters who do desire equal marriages, and who grant their wives more freedom than Victorian conventions recommend. Hugh Stanbury, for instance has “the sweetest temper that was ever given to a man for the blessing of a woman” (Trollope 4). Charles Glascock’s character is referred to as being “as sweet as an angel’s” (Trollope 63), and Brooke Burgess, the man who marries Dorothy Stanbury, has “as sweet a mouth as ever

declared the excellence of a man's temper" (Trollope 31). These characters are defying what Victorian society has taught them: male supremacy (Nardin 211). Nardin in *He Knew She Was Right: The Independent Woman in the Novels of Anthony Trollope* furthermore argues that Stanbury, Glascock, and Burgess desire equal marriages because of their "innate sweetness" (211). Granted these men are sweet and the marriages are happy ones, but this comment also highlights that a woman can only be sure of marital happiness if she marries an "exceptionally kind man" (Nardin 211), which draws attention to the women who are less lucky in that regard and that "reform of the customs that encourage men to tyrannize over their powerless wives" is much needed (Nardin 211).

The more rebellious female characters such as Jemima Stanbury and Wallachia Petrie are almost turned into caricatures because their language is often presented to come off as humorous. Trollope does so as to imply that "no sensible woman would seriously propose the immediate abolition of long-established customs" (Nardin 212), which in the novel refers to divorce bills and women's rights. The novel does however not come up with any solutions for the characters it caricaturizes, which implies that the "Woman Question" cannot be answered through individual reform, but it hints at the "hope in the possibility – perhaps even the probability – of gradual social reform" (Nardin 212).

Finally it is argued that Trollope believed that a shift in public opinion, on the topic of women's rights, would eventually be followed by law reforms and reforms of custom (Nardin 212). It is this combination of stability and flexibility that, in his eyes, was "the greatest virtue of the English social and political tradition" (Trollope qtd. in Nardin, p. 212).

Chapter III: Ouida and *Idalia*

3.1 Chapter Outline

This chapter will first provide an introduction to the author Ouida since it is the first of the two chapters that will be devoted to her works in this thesis. The introduction to the author is of importance because it will provide information that, together with the novel and theoretical works, will allow for broader and deeper insights when it comes to answering the research question(s). The chapter will then proceed to tackle “New Woman” concepts and aim to relate them to parts of the novel *Idalia* in order to be able to find out and prove how the portrayed gender roles relate to New Woman concepts, and how they are related to the period during which the novel was written. The chapter’s conclusion will finally shed light on and provide answers to how Ouida and *Idalia* relate to the New Woman as a cultural movement.

3.2 Introduction to Ouida

Ouida is the pseudonym of Marie Louise de la Ramée (1839-1908), daughter of a French father, Louis Ramé, and an English mother, Susan Sutton (Killoran, par. 1). It is of special importance to give this Victorian novelist a biographical introduction because she is no longer read and remembered as much as she was during the period she was living in. The novel *Idalia* is published by “Forgotten Books” implying that the title is forgotten, but that does not automatically nor necessarily mean that its author is a forgotten novelist as well. Ouida, however, may be classified as a forgotten female novelist as she is mentioned as such in several esteemed journals and books. The journal *Women’s Writing* issued a special edition on forgotten female sensation novelists and “The Forgotten Female Aesthetes: Literary Culture in Late-Victorian England” discusses Ouida’s literary style, person, and character in great depth. The question why she is now a forgotten novelist remains, but will be answered in the conclusion of this chapter since it might have to do with Ouida’s writing style and the topics she wrote about that in part will be discussed throughout the two Ouida chapters.

The pseudonym “Ouida” is derived from the mispronunciation of Louise during her childhood which stuck with her and became her nickname (Killoran, par. 2). In a letter of January 1900 to her European publisher, Baron von Tauchnitz, it becomes apparent that on the basis of that nickname she struggled to distinguish between her private and public identities:

‘I just see in your catalogue that you append another name to Ouida (Louise de la Ramée.) Please take it out. I have no other name in literature. And it should not be put

in inverted commas ... Besides, I *love* Ouida. It is my *very own*, as children say. I don't care for any of the other names I bear' (Jordan 76 qtd. in Killoran, par. 3).

As every child is the product of its upbringing, character features such as 'snobbish, intolerant, and rude' (Killoran, par. 7) that would later be imputed to her may stem from the estranged relationship she had with her father. He was a mysterious man and as a result not much is known of him. It is known that Ouida's education most likely consisted solely of the tutoring of her father, who is also rumoured to have taught French next to his affairs as a gentleman and tailor (Killoran, par. 1). He was frequently absent and Ouida is said to have romanticised him as a Napoleonic spy after which she changed her name from "Ramée" to "de la Ramée" to suggest 'a vague aristocratic background' (Killoran, par. 1). She could indeed live the life of an aristocrat as her earnings amounted to £5000,- per year on average (Killoran, par. 5). She held salons at the Langham Hotel in London where she invited guests, if they would come, who described her as 'a difficult hostess and a demanding, insulting guest' (Killoran, par. 7). Other biographies such as the one by Elizabeth Lee describe Ouida's 'arrogance, vanity, idiosyncrasies, dramatic flair, and the other extreme oddities' (Lee qtd. in Killoran, par. 6) indicating that she was quite the colourful and controversial figure.

As a novelist in the nineteenth century she was popular, beginning writing *Idalia* as early as the age of sixteen (Killoran, par. 2). When novels of hers were both parodied and critiqued in magazines such as *Punch* and the *Pall Mall Gazette* her life as a public figure was established, and *Under the Two Flags*, published in 1867, sold millions of copies in its "single-volume 'cheap' format" (Killoran, par. 4). One of the reasons why she is not so well-remembered anymore nowadays is in part due to a ten-year affair with the marchese della Stuffa, a member of an old Florentine family and gentleman in waiting to the king (Killoran, par. 8). He was involved with a certain Mrs. Janet Ross and in avenging his refusal to marry her Ouida published *roman à clef: Friendship* vowing that 'every word of it was true' (Killoran, par. 8). This work got such a negative response from the general public that it diminished her already weakened social status, but a sneer from the prime minister Lord Salisbury in 1887 devalued her status permanently (Killoran, par. 8). One has to remark that it is a bit of a stretch to state that this one event ruined her reputation up to 2017. Other factors must have been at play and must be taken into consideration, but this event most certainly contributed to it.

The "New Woman" principle was first identified by Sarah Grand, who wrote an article called "The New Aspect of the Woman Question" in 1894 (Dixon 204). The term "New

Woman” was coined by Ouida, who wrote an essay that was literally called “The New Woman” in a response to Grand’s article a month later (Dixon 204). It is then striking to discover that the woman who helped coin the “New Woman” as a term, a concept together with feminism forming an integrated whole, would become strikingly anti-feminist later in life (Killoran, par. 9). Then again she was modern in her beliefs regarding religion, and during a time when England was devoutly Christian and Italy (where she had moved later in life, in 1871, for financial reasons to do with poverty) being Catholic, it is striking that she argues it “an invention based on oriental myths in order to satisfy basic human needs and hopes” (Killoran, par. 9) because religion was then so important to so many people (DiPaolo 130).

Another remarkable aspect of her life is that from 1904 onwards she started adopting stray dogs to the point where she indulged them in all sorts of luxuries whilst she herself would starve and live in ruin (Killoran, par. 10). She would eventually die due to complications of pneumonia in via Zanardelli on the 25th of January in 1908, unmarried and childless, after which she was buried at the Bagni di Lucca in the English cemetery (Killoran, par. 10).

3.3 The “New Woman” in relation to Ouida and *Idalia*

The introduction to Ouida already briefly mentioned that she was anti-feminist, which seems striking considering that she wrote upon the matter in an article as a response to Grand’s essay. The detailed account of Ouida’s response to Sarah Grand’s essay captures Ouida’s own personal beliefs which she voices through her opinions in quite strong language. It is therefore useful in linking New Woman concepts to her novel *Idalia* because it is an accurate and first-hand representation of the debate at the end of the 19th Century by the actual author of the novel.

When taking a closer look at what Ouida wrote in “The New Woman” it becomes clear that one would not necessarily have to be feminist to observe a new phenomenon and to be able to write about it. This sounds logical but one can hardly ever be wholly without prejudice. It is not entirely clear whether Ouida pleads in favour of the new or the old woman as the 1894 piece appears contemplative, but nevertheless inclines towards the negative. She compares the working man and woman, and states that they both want to “have their values artificially raised and rated, and a status given to them by favor in lieu of desert” (Ouida 610). She argues that “the Cow-Woman and the Scum-Woman, man understands; but that the New Woman is above him” (610) and thus in so many words a threat. According to her men are in their infancy morally, which is why they would arguably not understand women claiming

men to be imperfect because man has “no conception of himself as imperfect” (610). She does not directly oppose herself to the New Woman, but she is frustrated that those women in her opinion do not understand what they are trying to claim. She is frustrated that the New Woman leaves areas of her life, within the boundaries of stereotypical gender roles, untouched because she can only focus on obtaining that which she has not. She gives many examples one of which is that “She can write and print anything she chooses; but she imprisons herself in men’s *ateliers* to endeavor to steal their techniques and their methods, and thus loses any originality she might possess” (613). She in so many words continue to argue that they are the women who give birth to the children that would later overpower her in the form of men, but that she lets that happen because any prejudice or overpowering on behalf of men could be resolved with proper education, yet she – the woman – refuses to educate herself in having such influence. Were she to get that part right, she “could rule the future of the world” (613) through her children. Her sub-conclusion is that “The immense area which lies open to her in private life is almost entirely uncultivated, yet she wants to be admitted to public life” (614). She makes the assertion that “if the vast majority [of women] have not either the mental or physical gifts to become either [Helen or Penelope, presumably referring to Greek mythology], that was Nature’s fault, not man’s” (614). She does however contradict herself when she later on states that a college curriculum would do nothing when aiming for improving “a rich and beautiful mind”, but that it even “might have done much to debase it” (615). This statement is ambiguous as it can be interpreted both in favour as well as against woman’s nature to be naturally inferior to men. It can either be interpreted as though women should not pursue an education because it would befuddle their minds with things they would not understand in the first place, or it can be interpreted as though a woman’s mind is superior, either morally or intellectually, to all others meaning that education is not necessary which seems a rather arrogant opinion. Her use of the word “debase” and her stating that pursuing an education for men might be useful in “its preparation for the world, its rough destruction of personal conceit”, but that for women “it can only be hardening and deforming” (614) lead one to believing the latter interpretation of the quote on page 615 of the article is most likely to be the right one.

Ouida is very critical in her remarks about the New Woman, but in that criticism displays herself, consciously or unconsciously, as a New Woman. This, because while she is critical about New Women, she takes a firm stand against the position of men in society claiming that

“he has the incredible stupidity to be blind to the fact that ‘woman has self-respect and

good sense,” and that ‘she does not in the least intend to sacrifice the privileges she enjoys on the chance of obtaining others’” (612).

It seems that she is mostly frustrated with the way women who are unhappy about their situation conduct themselves. On the one hand she wants to be admitted into public life and strives for equality to men, yet on the other hand “she will still expect the man to stand that she may sit; the man to get wet through that she may use his umbrella” (612). These so-called privileges underline the inequality between men and women and not necessarily in a bad way, but Ouida argues that if you want to be treated the same way as men are treated then you cannot make an appeal to his chivalry anymore as that would be “a confession that she is weaker than he” (612), and that is just the point they are arguing against. Ouida is not so much against the New Woman, but she would wish that she first makes the most of that which she already possesses within the frame she currently operates in Victorian society, namely that she should for instance take an interest in her servants, present herself in a way that is not tied to fashions, understand the beauty and the solitude of nature, keep her sons out of the “shambles of modern sport” and lift her daughters above “the pestilent miasma of modern society” and that so long as she “does not, can not, or will not either do, or cause to do, any of these things, she has no possible title or capacity to demand the place or the privilege of man” (619). The New Woman “wants to get the comforts and concessions due to feebleness, at the same time as she demands the lion’s share of power due to superior force alone” (612). Ouida celebrates the differences between the sexes, for it is “the difference, not the likeness, of sex which makes the charm of human life” (618). She is thus comfortable in her position as a woman the way things are and would thus not like to see extreme changes before certain ‘criteria’ are met, but then again for her such strong opinions are far more attractive because she is a woman of status and thus has infinitely more opportunities than say a woman from the lower classes.

Ouida finished writing *Idalia* in 1867, but this copy is a reprint of an “188-?” published version. The novel begins by setting up a striking simile metaphor of a golden eagle, “monarch of earth or sky”, soaring to the sun (1). He is “rejoicing in his solitude, and kingly in his strength. [...] his plumes stretched in all the glory of his godlike freedom, his unchained liberty of life” (2). Then the character Fulke Erceldoune shoots it,

“On the moor the king-bird lay, the pinions broken and powerless, the breast-feathers wet and bathed in blood, the piercing eyes, which loved the sun, blind and glazed with

film ; the life, a moment before strong, fearless, and rejoicing in the light, was gone”
(3).

Erceldoune did not shoot the eagle for any other purpose to ensure their scarcity, which is exactly one of the things Ouida pointed out that women should not strive for. Women can shoot a revolver just as well as any man can, but “these are precisely the deadly, secret, easily handled modes of warfare and revenge, which will commend themselves to her ferocious feebleness” (Ouida 616). Apart from what this quotation may further mean - in light of the novel taken as a whole, it can be seen as a symbol for the traditional Victorian woman especially in the view of Ouida. She is as free as the eagle within the written and unwritten boundaries of society. Were she to step out of it, or so much as attempt it, she will be overpowered by force in the form of man. She will be symbolically shot and put in her place to “ensure their scarceness”.

It is interesting that Erceldoune remarks that “True to the world, he knew well enough, only appraised men by the wealth that was in their pockets ; but the world’s dictum was not his deity” (5). He strays from social convention by not caring for and worrying about money or possessions. Erceldoune is the first character in this novel representing some form of adaption social changes. It is of as much interest to highlight the male characters as well as the female ones as with the discussion of the New Woman inevitably comes the question of the resurrection of the New Man. Gender differences, or at least the belief therein, were put to the test once women were allowed to pursue higher education and once their marital legal status was improved by the legislative acts (MacDonald 109). It thus led to a change in male gender roles as well as one cannot change without the other, meaning that when the role of women changes the role of men does so too.

As it turns out, Erceldoune is a Queen’s messenger, a State courier, and while he is sent off to wherever the Kingdom needs him a telegram is sent in code. That telegram contains the first mention of “Idalia” and another reference to the eagle as it reads: “The Border Eagle flies eastward. Clip the last feather of the wing. Only La Picciola. Idalia or pearls of led, as you like. [...] N.B. The Eagle will give you beak and talons” (23). Its translation reads,

“Erceldoune, Queen’s courier, will take the F.O. bags into the Principalities. Relieve him of the last despatches he has with him. We only want the smallest bag. I leave you to choose how to manage this; either with a successful intrigue or a sure rifle shot. [...] N.B. This Erceldoune will give you trouble and fight hard” (24).

“Idalia”, seemingly a woman’s name, is thus used to describe “a successful intrigue”. Meanwhile the story of Fulke Erceldoune tragically ends when he is robbed by armed men in a mountain passage and like the eagle he “fell as one dead” (38).

Early in the novel there are several references to women. Erceldoune for instance dreams about a paradise “where a woman will not follow them” (32) and in describing a woman’s face mentions that it is either the face of a temptress or of an angel; he also puts women in the same category as fatalists and fools when referring to “Chance” as a deity. The woman who saves Erceldoune from his apparent death is a mystery to him as well as the reader. She is simply “Idalia”. She is described as “a woman used to speak and to be obeyed, to guide and to be followed” (116). As their friendship progresses the woman wants to end it without giving any reasons and Erceldoune responds with “If you command it, I must obey” (117) which seems rather odd as he does not have to obey her at all, but in the name of courtesy and chivalry, as Ouida states in her article, it is in his nature to do so.

“Idalia” as the woman shall henceforth be referred to says that men “love me for my beauty, because I charm their sight and their senses, because they are fools, and I know how to make them madmen! So that a woman were lovely, they would care not how vile she might be” (258). This is an intriguing comment because there was fear at the fin de siècle that with the occurrence of the New Woman came sexual autonomy on the part of women as well. This is in fact proven by Mary Heaton Vorse, an American novelist, who states about the matter that she is “trying for nothing so hard in my own personal life as how not to be respectable when married” (Lavender 4). The idea was that women would equal men in all aspects, so in their sexual desires as well. This was however easier said than done because in acting as such they would not gain much respect from society.

The story progresses and it becomes apparent that Idalia is a fervent believer in Italian independence – which is where the story takes place at that moment, Italy – and who is betrayed by the same men who sent the coded message from the beginning of the novel: Victor Vane. Idalia is taken into captivity, but since Vane “had spoken falsely against her honour” (563) he was sure to meet his death. His motive for such an act against Idalia – for otherwise it would have been her who would have gotten a traitor’s due – is that he too, like many men, had fallen for her and his love had remained unanswered. Although Idalia wanted him dead, when she has a chance to speak to the Italians with loaded rifles she says to let Vane go with the words “Your sin was great, go forth and sin no more” (565) because death would be too easy: “should we give him the nameless mystic mercy which all men live to crave; [...] It is rest to the aged, it is oblivion to the atheist, it is immortality to the poet. It is a

vast, dim, exhaustless pity to all the world” (565).

The novel ends with Erceldoune and Idalia together disappearing into the sunset on a ship, and all is well again.

3.3 Conclusion

This relatively short chapter has aimed to discuss Ouida’s personal beliefs regarding the New Woman in relation to her novel *Idalia*. As “*Idalia*” is referred to as a “successful intrigue” early on in the novel it comes as no surprise that the novel’s heroine, whose name remains unknown, is called Idalia because she fools men into believing they can win her love while she herself is unable to love as she herself calls it. Ouida’s greatest point of opposition against the New Woman in her article called “The New Woman” is that women do not make us of that what they already have and that they see themselves as the victims of men, whilst they fail to see – or do not want to see – to what degree men are the victims of women (615). She also argued that a woman becomes corrupt “because she likes it” (615), which is striking because that is exactly what her heroine Idalia does and which is one of the New Woman concepts. Idalia the character relates to the typical New Woman as they are both described as “hard, anti-maternal creatures” (Dixon 204). *Idalia* the novel relates to New Woman concepts in the way that it portrays societal fears at the Victorian fin de siècle regarding the New Woman. It was feared that women in so many words would become lawless and bring shame upon society, but that society was dominated by men and they were comforted by the ways women were restricted – otherwise it would have been much easier to, for instance, improve a woman’s legal status in marriage. It seems unfair that men could divorce women in the second of a heartbeat, but that when a woman’s husband were to cheat on her it would be virtually impossible for her to divorce him. It would either be legally or financially impossible, or she might fear the disdain that would fall upon her as a divorcee. Ouida nevertheless has a point in stating that women cannot expect to be held equal to men so long as they want to get the comforts and concessions by making an appeal to their chivalry. Although Ouida opposes to the idea of the New Woman as it was put forward by Sarah Grand, her character Idalia can be argued to indeed be a representation of the New Woman and an accurate representation of the debate that was going on in society at the time. Idalia, like the New Woman, was attacked for her behaviour, it even landed her into captivity, but in the end it all worked out as the rebellious woman saw fault in her behaviour, found love that she said she would never have, and was redeemed. Perhaps the novel’s ending mirrored hope for the turmoil of the discussion that Ouida found herself in.

Chapter IV: Ouida and *Princess Napraxine*

4.1 Chapter Outline

This fourth chapter can be viewed as a continuation of chapter three when it comes to the discussion of Ouida in relation to New Woman concepts. Since the previous chapter includes a biography on Ouida there will not be an introduction to the author in this chapter. The chapter will directly proceed to discussing Ouida in relation to *Princess Napraxine* and New Woman concepts instead. Before reaching a conclusion at the end of the chapter, there will be a section included that is devoted to the discussed Ouida novels in comparison. Since Ouida finished writing *Idalia* in 1867 it is relevant to the discussion to see how, which, and to what extent New Woman concepts in that particular novel relate to that of *Princess Napraxine*. That section of this chapter will aim to identify any changes in her writing in light of the period the novels were written in, specifically aimed at the role of the New Woman.

4.2 The New Woman in Relation to Ouida And *Princess Napraxine*

The princess Nadine Napraxine let herself be persuaded by her parents to marry the Prince Platon Napraxine. She did not know what marriage entailed, and regarded it as “an entry into the world with unlimited jewels and the power of going to any theatres she chose” (Ouida 20), which is why she accepted to marry the prince without loving him. When she did however find out what it entailed amongst others, meaning the consummation of the marriage, “it filled her with an inexpressible disgust and melancholy” (20). It is not so much that marriage in itself disgusts her, but that another someone had complete control over her and her body. Tara MacDonald in *Rediscovering Victorian Women Sensation Writers: Beyond Braddon* adds to that “this right to penetrate her body and thus violate its integrity” is what Napraxine’s parents wished so that they “may maintain their expensive high-society lifestyle”, and it is that exact combination of domination over her life and body which nauseates her (MacDonald 20). This relates to New Woman concepts in the way that it is tied with Ouida’s criticism regarding marriage stating that it has become “the bondage of domestic monotony” and the sensational New Woman representations in the periodical presses where it was criticized as “sexually and socially irresponsible, portraying heroines who refused to consummate their marriages” (Schroeder and Holt 228). Princess Napraxine did consummate her marriage, but she did so unwillingly which could and would nowadays be referred to as rape. Ouida states that women have three options in marriage, they either “submit to a marriage of legalized prostitution, [to] refuse to perform conjugal duties, or [to] separate from the husband” (Ouida

qtd. in Schroeder and Holt, p. 228) whereby princess Napraxine would fall into the first category, even though Ouida calls marriage “the cruellest folly of all on earth – that binding of two lives together like two corpses from which the life has fled” (Ouida qtd. in Schroeder and Holt, p. 228). The argument is amplified by Napraxine declaring that after bearing two sons in the first two years of marriage she “considered herself free from further obligations” (20) regarding marital duties in producing heirs for the Napraxine properties, after which the author states that Napraxine “declared that all the caresses and obligations of love were odious to her” (20). Odious because up to that point she has never known that type of love and has only suffered the consequences of what to her is a loveless marriage bound by strict obligations imposed by her husband and by society through that marriage.

Further on in the chapter – chapter 2 to be exact – the author comments on the princess’s character by saying that

“she was unusually clever, clever by nature and culture, by intellect and insight, keenly, delicately clever, with both aptitude and appetite for learning and scholarship; and within the first twenty-four hours of her marriage, she had taken his measurement, moral and mental, with merciless accuracy, and had decided to herself that she would never do but what she chose” (20)

This she brings into practice by never sleeping with her husband again and turning away from her children because they are too much like their father in her opinion, thereby fulfilling the role of the Victorian stereo-typed New Woman in the sense of her being the “hard, unfeminine, and anti-maternal creature” (Dixon 204). Nevertheless, the fact that she turns away from her children may quite possibly stem from the fact that they were born from rather painful experiences, i.e. unwillingly consummating her marriage. It is remarkable that the princess only accepts flowers as gifts from men because she herself has been unwillingly deflowered, as if it were “a psychological defence against abuse” (Schaffer 142). The author seems to comment through the character of the princess when she says “‘How very stupid some women must be’, she reflected often, ‘to let themselves be dictated to, and denied, and bullied, and worried by their husbands.’” (334), as it may be a clear reference to Ouida’s previously stated options in marriage. Nevertheless it is a hypocritical statement because the princess’s mother gave Napraxine the advice to “*Ménage ton mari, sois bien douce*” (334), meaning in so many words that she has to manage her husband in being kind and careful with him. It is advice that she did not take, saying that she “froze him from the first” (334), yet which she criticizes others for.

The story continues on by developing a love triangle. Talia Schaffer points out in *The Forgotten Female Aesthetes: Literary Culture in Late-Victorian England* that Ouida is “a modern woman commenting scornfully on the ideal feminine heroine” (145), which the following paragraph will explain in further detail.

Princess Napraxine gets a male admirer in the character of Othmar while she is still married to her husband Platon. She refuses Othmar while he becomes infatuated with her, but she does so not only because she has become an object of male desire in the “economic transaction between her father and husband” (Hager) but because she knows that a plain young peasant woman named Yseulte de Valogne has feelings for him. Othmar, his love being unanswered by Napraxine, eventually marries Yseulte and describes her character as follows,

“She was a most lovely and most innocent creature, who was welcome to enjoy all the greatness and the grace of life with which he could dower her; she was a young saint who would bear his children in her breast as innocently as the peach-blossom bear the fruit” (295)

Napraxine reacts scornfully to their union stating that, “I am quite sure that he has imagined in this poor child an angel and a goddess; a kind of Greek nymph and Christian virgin blent in one” (216). She believes Yseulte will just tire Othmar, and that he will grow weary of her once he finds out that she is only a child without an education. It is not just jealousy speaking from this quote, although it is striking that Othmar wins Napraxine’s love through marrying another, it is also a direct commentary on Ouida’s contemporary society. Ouida, with that quote, critiques the feminine ideal of women seen to be the pillars of domestic harmony.

One cannot help that the character of Yseulte de Valogne reminds us of the character in the tale of Tristan et Iseult. Apart from the striking similarity in name there are striking character similarities as well, Iseult – like Yseulte – is called “the fair” and although that her character would seem more appropriate in relating to princess Napraxine in that she has a forbidden lover while she is married (Iseult was married to the king, Napraxine is married to the prince), their jealousies coincide. Othmar continues to love Napraxine even though he is married to Yseulte and while Napraxine is scornful when Othmar marries Yseulte, her scorn is not directed towards Yseulte as much as it is directed towards Othmar. She respects Yseulte by exclaiming the following, “‘How stupid men are!’ thought Nadine Napraxine that night. ‘she is worth very much more than I am; she is both handsome and lovely; she is as harmless and guileless as a dove, and she adores him [...]’” (348). She recognizes the purity of

Yseulte's character saying that she is among "the noblest sort of women" and in that recognizes her own faults. This stems from the reality that Yseulte is a wilfull obedient wife who innately wants to serve the role of the Angel in the House, she wants to love her husband, bear his children, and be faithful to him, whilst Napraxine is rendered emotionless through her experiences in marriage and is analytical in recognizing such emotions,

"she was supremely merciless, because she was supremely indifferent, but she was capable of perfect loyalty in her own fashion. Far down in the depths of her complex nature there was, beneath all the coldness, malice and selfishness of disposition and of custom, a vague instinct of chivalrous generosity. If ever that chord in her were touched, it always responded." (410)

As a result she removes herself from the picture because she finds that Yseulte is the better woman even though in the moment of the union between Othmar and Yseulte "she was nearer love for him than she had ever been before" (184). Yseulte would cut her heart out of her own breast to serve her husband, and therefore she is not at all happy when she finds out that Othmar has never stopped loving Napraxine and does not care for her the way he cares for the princess. Yseulte asks if Napraxine is a good woman in chapter 37, but no one can really answer her and she gives the answer herself later on in the novel:

"To her ignorance, Nadine Napraxine was a woman as cruel, as evil, as terrible as the murderess Lescombat of whom the Duc de Vannes had spoken. [...] She only saw in her a sorceress, whose merciless will and irresistible seduction drew her husband from her as the Greek ships of old that passed to the world of the east were drawn out of their safe straight road by the loadstone rocks of the Gulf of Arabic" (353).

This quote stands out on its own because this character description of the princess through the eyes of her rival corresponds with character traits or habits of the Victorian dandy, also known as the New Male. Talia Schaffer points out that Napraxine has features attributed to the dandy combining his "careless, supercilious charm with the sexual charm of the siren", and thus Napraxine equals the female equivalent of the male dandy (Schaffer 141). Where the New Woman lacked femininity the Dandy had too much of it in the eyes of Victorian society and it is thus that the Dandy filled the void the New Woman had left. Thereby the "gender opposition on which patriarchy is based altogether" (Böker 119) was not only questioned, it also established new gender oppositions whereby previously female characteristics were now accredited to men, and male characteristics were now accredited to women. With Princess Napraxine being the female equivalent of the male Dandy, she is the embodiment of the New

Woman.

Yseulte keeps silent about her worries towards her husband which, together with her being called an angel and a goddess, makes her the perfect symbol for Coventry Patmore's "Angel in the House" whereby women are, as Schaffer states it, "inanimate object[s]" (143). She has become an object instead of an agent, something that on no account applies to the case of princess Napraxine. During the beginning stages of the novel it is mentioned that she speaks accent-less English, and it is her mastery of the language that enables her to "externalize her own interiority" which prevents her from becoming objectified like Yseulte (Schaffer 143). The narrator comments on Napraxine's persona by questioning not only her character but more so the judgement others place upon it,

"Was she wicked? Was anybody so? Was there ever anything in human nature beyond impatience, ennui, inquisitiveness, natural love of dominion, and wholly instinctive egotism? Did not these, collectively or singly, suffice to account for all human actions?" (371)

It seems that through her narrator Ouida is defending the princess by arguing that her character traits reside in all human beings, but like Ouida's version of the New Woman, as has become apparent through her essay, Napraxine is everything that Ouida critiqued about Sarah Grand's version of the New Woman. As is discussed in chapter 3, Ouida finds it increasingly frustrating that Grand's New Woman still wants the privileges that come with their submission to men by making an appeal to their chivalry whilst they expect to be held at equal standards with them. Napraxine is independent and analytical in that independency, and in that embodiment of Ouida's New Woman is a direct opposite of Grand's version whereby Grand's New Woman "is marked by being vain enough to be entirely wrapped up in herself, but not vain enough truly to understand her power or lack thereof" (MacDonald 98).

Othmar fails to recognize how he makes his wife Yseulte suffer by admiring Napraxine, and it is for that reason that Yseulte ultimately decides she has no other option but to take herself out of the equation because "she is trapped in a tragic story of dependence and self-sacrifice" (Schaffer 147). Thus, "[Then] she stepped forward into the void below, threw her arms outward as a bird spreads its wings, and fell, as a stone falls through the empty air" (Ouida 421), Yseulte de Valogne committed suicide. Like Patmore's wife, to whom "The Angel in the House" was written as an ode, she was not only an angel of the house, but became an actual angel in death. This statement is amplified by the narrator commenting, "She had accomplished that supreme sacrifice which is content to be unguessed, unpitied,

and, attaining to the martyr's heroism, puts aside the martyr's crown" (421). Ouida has thus made the "domestic marriage plot" (Schaffer 148) fail.

Platon Napraxine has in the meantime died in a duel, leaving the princess Napraxine a free woman. She is now free to be with Othmar, who is also free since his wife died. It seems Yseulte has left a void only Napraxine can fill and Schaffer further comments that princess Napraxine's future "molds itself around the lack Yseulte has left behind" (148), but that lack has always been there since Othmar only ever truly loved Napraxine. It is the lack of both Platon and Yseulte that makes them both free to pursue each other, rather than one just filling the void of the other. It turns out that Othmar and Napraxine do end up together, but the novel is inconclusive about the state of their relationship as they are never referred to as anything other than "lovers". The space alongside Othmar may be cleared, but it is also the space which destroyed Yseulte and the space which Napraxine vowed to never fill again. Napraxine may have won in getting what she desired: to be at Othmar's side, but Yseulte strangely wins in death because she forces "the *mondaine* into the despised mummery of a wedding and into the perpetual adoration of the domestic goddess's character" (Schaffer 148). Schaffer also hints that Napraxine submits to silenced Angelhood because the true reason for Yseulte's suicide is because a servant of Napraxine's delivered a letter from Napraxine to Othmar to her (148).

4.3 The Novels in Comparison

This particular section of the chapter will aim to identify any relationship that *Idalia* and *Princess Napraxine* may have on the subject of the New Woman, and how there may be changes in New Woman representations in light of the period they were written in.

Idalia was written in 1867 and *Princess Napraxine* was originally published in 1884. There is thus a considerable time period of 17 years in between the novel; Ouida was respectively 28 and 45 years old, which generally are the formative years during which life experience is gained. It is then not an assumption to expect changes in her attitude towards the New Woman and her general outlook on life, which would then be reflected in her works. Even though the novels are written quite some time apart, both the novel's heroines show striking similarities as well as striking differences. The heroine in *Idalia* is referred to as "Idalia" which has no clear derivation apart from the Latin name "Idalius", but is in the novel referred to as a "successful intrigue". It upholds the mystery of her actual identity because apart from her character description and character development she has none as she has no name whilst one's identity at least in part is derived from one's name. It is the lineage derived

from that name that gives one a sense of self because you would know where you came from, but *Idalia* in that sense has no roots and can derive no identity from that so the reader has nothing other to go on than the description of a successful intrigue. It is there that the women resemble each other as *Napraxine*, too, is a successful intrigue who has many male admirers whilst both women claim to being unable to love themselves. It is remarkable to say the least that Ouida gives both these women a happy ending through marriage in the end, even though in the case of *Napraxine* it remains unclear – it is clear that she ends up on the road to marriage. It is striking because Ouida herself remained unmarried and it suggests a paradoxical need to “to accommodate her society’s ideals even as she critiqued them” (Schroeder and Holt 228). It is also true that Ouida, at least in these two novels, gives her heroines no alternative options for marriage leaving spinsterhood as the only alternative. Even though there are no character representations of spinsterhood depicted in these novel, it heavily implies it; it implies “a reluctance on Ouida’s part to relinquish completely a paradigm that she has vehemently discredited” (Schroedinger and Holt 228). Whilst *Idalia* is a clear representation of Ouida’s critique regarding Sarah Grand’s *New Woman* as she becomes corrupt because she likes it and has no clear understanding of “her power or lack thereof” (MacDonald 98), *Napraxine* represents the ideal Ouidean *New Woman* on the other hand because she is analytical and has the “razor-sharp critical faculty to understand both herself and her relationship to others in minute detail” (MacDonald 98).

Ouida clearly added to the debate surrounding the *New Woman* in contemporary society through her novels apart from the essays and articles she wrote. *Idalia* features the *New Woman*, but it is the type of *New Woman* that Ouida dislikes. *Princess Napraxine* features a different type of *New Woman*, but it is the *New Woman* type Ouida approves of.

4.4 Conclusion

This chapter has aimed to discuss Ouida and her novel *Princess Napraxine* in relation to *New Woman* concepts and the ongoing debate surrounding it in Victorian society whilst the novels were being written. Ouida takes a stand with *Princess Napraxine* by letting the traditional idea of the domestic marriage fail. It could perhaps be argued that it did not fail because it was in line with Patmore’s ideal of the “Angel in the House”, but Yseulte was not happy in the marriage and took her own life as a result which *Napraxine* recognized. Yseulte could escape the standardized Victorian ideal of womanhood through death alone and in her death makes the free woman *Napraxine* step into “the traditional marital role that destroyed Yseulte” (Schaffer 148). The novel has a conventional ending with the heroine being rewarded with

happiness in love as a sort of redeemed character. It must be noted, however, that the failure of the domestic marriage is not met with much feelings of tragedy. The failure of the portrayed domestic marriage is convenient to Napraxine because after having lost her husband she is finally free to have Othmar as her lover, and it is convenient to Othmar because he had always admired Napraxine and never loved Yseulte. It is thence why Ouida's novels have been described as "bad; evil books" (Schaffer 146) through the works of other novelists such as Dorothy Richardson because "not only did they not believe in Victorian domesticity, but they did not even believe that the loss of domesticity was tragic; not only did they refuse to depict happy families, but they popularized a discourse for parodying them" (Schaffer 146).

It can finally, in conclusion, be stated that Yseulte mirrors Patmore's "Angel in the House", that Napraxine mirrors the Ouidean New Woman, and that the novel as a whole is a representation of the ongoing debate regarding the New Woman in Victorian society. All in all it supports and discusses the Victorian belief that "a good woman cannot be happy unless her husband adores and approves of her" (Schaffer 147).

Conclusion

In trying to explain and to understand how and to what extent the New Woman is reflected in *The Vicar of Bullhampton*, *He Knew He Was Right*, *Idalia*, and *Princess Napraxine* to determine Victorian women's gender identity, it is important to note that every woman's and every author's perception and experience of the New Woman movement and its function and impact on them, as well as society, is different. One has to be aware that the complexity of each author and two of their works as a reflection of New Woman concepts, and as a representation of the opinion of a larger group of individuals in society could dangerously invite to make generalisations. However, it is possible to come to a solid conclusion through the analysis of the authors and their works.

Chapter I discussed Anthony Trollope as the author reflecting New Woman concepts in *The Vicar of Bullhampton*. The hypothesis stated that Trollope was a conservative author, especially when it came to the discussion of the New Woman. This statement was derived from Trollope's own autobiography, where he states that he views himself as "an advanced, but still a Conservative Liberal" (243). He thus describes his nature as two-folded, on the one hand he is conservative and on the other hand he is liberal. Trollope explains that the conservative "sees inequalities in society and is committed to preserving them; though the conservative realizes that there are tendencies at work to reduce those inequalities, he looks upon such changes as an evil that he must at least slow down if he cannot stop altogether" (Turner). The Liberal, as opposed to the Conservative, as Trollope explains it "is alive to the fact that these distances are day by day becoming less, and he regards this continual diminution as a series of steps towards that human millennium of which he dreams" (245). Trollope is a combination of the two in his own words, whereby both "conservative" and "liberal" are used as nouns and not as adjectives, which has to do with the speed of certain changes in society. As a conservative he wants change to slow down, but as a liberal he is often "not lukewarm about what are sometimes radical goals" (Turner). He also states that he has frequently used his characters "for the expression of my political or social convictions" (Trollope, "An Autobiography" 151). It then becomes difficult to ignore his representation of the New Woman, or his discussion of the New Woman issue, in *The Vicar of Bullhampton* when one considers just how serious he was in promoting his views as "an advanced conservative Liberal" (Turner).

The complexity in the case of *The Vicar of Bullhampton* lies precisely in Trollope's self-proclaimed duality of his own character. The evidence for Trollope's hypothesised

conservatism regarding the New Woman seems too thin on the surface, but the chapter discussed how abnormalities of the female characters became integrated as gender-specific themes. He did not make one character positively stand out as either in favour or against New Woman concepts, but through the struggles of the characters in conversation with each other he explored and exposed the paucity of Victorian women's choices. In exploring and exposing that paucity, his conservative-Liberalism explains that he was observant of the plight of women and changes in women's rights, but that he was still very careful in voicing it in *The Vicar of Bullhampton*. This despite the character of Carry Brattle, a prostitute, and however questionable her choices may seem, she was a working woman. That particular subplot focused much more on conflicting morals rather than the character itself. However, it is once again a case that showed the paucity of women's choices and how much they were at the mercy of their male superiors to find redemption and in that redemption find happiness, even though the "Woman Question" would not reach its peak until many years later.

Chapter II continued discussing Trollope as the conservative author reflecting New Woman concepts in his writing, but this time the focus was directed towards *He Knew He Was Right*. Even though the novel was published one year earlier than *The Vicar of Bullhampton*, 1869 versus 1870, it was much more direct in showing New Woman concepts. Trollope used this novel to repeatedly voice his discontent with changes in society, for which a reason might be that he "[has] not been able to speak from the benches of the House of Commons, or to thunder from platforms, or to be efficacious as a lecturer, [these characters] have served me as safety-valves by which to deliver my soul" (Trollope, "An Autobiography 151). By using "safety-valves" he suggests that he could voice built up frustration through his novels that he could not deliver anywhere else. This is important because his novels thus became the new platforms from which he could "thunder".

The main character Louis Trevelyan is portrayed as the stereotype of Victorian male gender ideology. He is a more extreme version of Coventry Patmore, making his wife his submissive object and taking her child away from her in order to force her to do so. It was discussed how his constant obsession with his wife's fidelity related to a wider panic at the idea of equal sexual freedom for women. New Woman criticism often tended to focus on women's sexuality because it was during the 1870s that divorce bills were passed which is why many men were afraid to lose control over their women, and which is how it is related to *He Knew He Was Right* (Ledger 10). Furthermore, a wife's adultery was also the exact main ground for divorce under the 1857 statute of the Divorce Bill.

The characters of Stanbury, Glascock, and Burgess show that a women can only attain

marital happiness if she marries an exceptionally kind man. Trollope thereby drew attention to women who were less lucky in the marital lottery, and implied that reform of societal customs that allow men to tyrannize over their powerless wives was much needed.

Since Trollope viewed himself as a conservative Liberal, it seems odd that he would ridicule characters such as Wallachia Petrie – the American feminist – instead of taking a more neutral and observing stand. It is safe to say he ridiculed this character because her language was presented that way and never taken much seriously. She also lacked the “sheen” which Trollope so revered in his beautiful, but submissive, women (Trollope, “He Knew” xx). He liked to think that feminism was “a foreign aberration imported into his country” and that most men in England would not be “favourably disposed” to women who took pride in certain antagonisms “to men in general” (Trollope, “He Knew” xx). The chapter’s conclusion featured a quote from Trollope in which he stated that the combination of the stability and flexibility of law and custom reforms following a shift in public opinion was “the greatest virtue of the English social and political tradition” (Trollope qtd. in Nardin, p. 212). His conservative Liberalism allowed him to agree and at the same time disagree with New Woman concepts, and it may not at all be a stretch to hint upon it that he may also have been ambivalent about the cultural ideals of femininity to not lose readership.

Chapter III discussed Ouida as the author reflecting New Woman concepts in *Idalia*. The hypothesis stated that Ouida was a progressive author, especially with regards for the discussion of the New Woman. This claim was derived from a statement by Jane Jordan and Andrew King in *Ouida and Victorian Popular Culture*, which claims that Ouida tended to either “find her 1860s novels filled with unconventional, strong (feminist-ish) characters, or [worried] about her embarrassing later tirades against the New Woman (39). This is precisely where the complexity of discussing her as a progressive New Woman author lies, and which was also the reason for her to be discussed, because this was “reductive of the complex attitudes both of Ouida and of the ‘New Woman’” (Schaffer qtd. in Jordan and King, p. 39).

This is the reason that the chapter applied Ouida’s 1894 essay called “The New Woman” to the much earlier published *Idalia* from 1867. It may have seemed problematic at first to apply an 1894 prose work to an 1867 novel because author’s opinions on things tend to change over such a relatively long period, but it could effectively be done since – as the quote from Jordan and King explains – Ouida’s 1860s novels featured exactly what she discussed in the essay, and that she would only later, after the novels were long published, revert to “embarrassing tirades” against the New Woman. It is also important to once again underline that Ouida in her essay did not oppose to the New Woman in general, she opposed to a certain

version of the New Woman. She names her heroine “Idalia” which is not her actual name, but refers to the earlier stated “successful intrigue”. Idalia is a morally corrupt woman because she likes it, which is the type of New Woman Ouida critiqued in her essay. Men were comforted by the way women were restricted, which is why Idalia type women would cause them a certain nervousness. Since Ouida opposed Grand’s essay and Ouida opposed to the “Idalia” New Woman, it can be effectively stated that the character Idalia was an accurate representation of the New Woman as presented by Sarah Grand, and as opposed by Ouida even though the authors’ article and essay were only published much later. Evidence for such a statement is provided by Ouida herself who, in opposing to that type of woman, incarcerates her own heroine and in doing so muzzled the New Woman she personally disliked through her writing.

Chapter IV continued discussing Ouida as the progressive author reflecting New Woman concepts in her writing, but in this chapter the focus was directed towards *Princess Napraxine*. This novel was published in 1884, much closer to the peak of the New Woman debate in the 1890s. It should therefore have been much more active and clear in its representation of the New Woman and in its reflection of the debate surrounding it in comparison with the other novels that were published much earlier. It is indeed much more outspoken than *Idalia* in representing contemporaneous issues. The story bases itself entirely around the love triangle between Napraxine, Othmar, and Yseulte, whereby Napraxine is forced into the role of domestic angel that destroyed Yseulte. It is however quite difficult to determine whether or not Ouida deliberately meant to position herself in the category of New Woman writing rather than sensation fiction because she herself was quite a puzzle for readers to sort out in her day, and proclaimed that she was “morally rather than ideologically driven” (Jordan and King 39).

All in all, in tying all the novels together, it becomes apparent that authors themselves often had a difference of opinion when it came to identifying who the New Woman really was. Anthony Trollope was careful about his depiction of any such matter, and exposed and explored “only” the options his female characters had within the bounds of Victorian gender ideology. Ouida’s novels on the other hand do feature clear New Woman characters, but even they differ in nature and in character. Furthermore, all the novels have conventional endings whereby characters are either rewarded with marriage or are redeemed. The combination of these four novels does however accurately represent the complexity of the debate surrounding the New Woman because there was no one stereotyped New Woman, there were plenty. Medico-scientific discourse, for instance, focused on “reproductive issues, emphasising the

New Woman's supposed refusal of maternity, [while] antipathetic fictional discourses on the New Woman concentrated instead on her reputed sexual license" (Ledger 10). Ann Ardis has argued that the naming of the New Woman in the periodical press was problematic for the feminist movement of the nineteenth century (Ledger 9). She claims that by trying to define the New Woman and giving a name to the socio-cultural movement

"her critics were able to narrow the parameters of the debate on the Woman Question, so that the New Woman novel and not the 'real' New Woman (that is, late Victorian feminists) became the centre of controversy" (Ledger 9).

This is in part true, but naming a previously unidentified phenomenon such as the New Woman also gave her a presence. This presence meant that people could form an opinion on the presence (or absence) of the New Woman that was based on a metaphor for an ideological phenomenon. As a result, as David Rubinstein argues, that "never before had literature and fiction contributed so much to the feminist movement as it did at the *fin de siècle*" (qtd. in Ledger, p. 9). The New Woman was much critiqued because she posed a threat to male-dominated society, but "hostile discourse" also invited the New Woman to answer which is called "reverse discourse", and this caused the New Woman to begin "to speak on her own behalf" (Ledger 10). It means that through the critique of society that was meant to limit the New Woman's influence, the New Woman actually got a platform "to thunder from" as Trollope would phrase it. As a result the naming of the New Woman was a triumph for the feminist movement, and not its "Armageddon" (Ledger 10).

The overall conclusion must be that New Women, as reflected in *The Vicar of Bullhampton*, *He Knew He Was Right*, *Idalia*, and *Princess Napraxine* posed a threat to male-dominated society because they started to evolve from passive to active actors in a society that was based upon female submissiveness. The New Woman was also a fluid term and a complex topic of writing, which is why and how the several New Woman representations may differ in the novels. It also explains why both Trollope and Ouida were ambivalent in their writing because they themselves were ambivalent in their opinion of the New Woman. The New Woman was thus far from stable as a category herself, and she represented an ideological struggle by which the homogeneity of Victorian culture sought, but could not find, a "consistent language by which [the New Woman] could be categorised and dealt with" (Ledger 11).

It turned out that the research question itself: "How and to what extent do Trollope's *The Vicar of Bullhampton* and *He Knew He Was Right*, and Ouida's *Princess Napraxine* and

Idalia reflect concepts of the fin de siècle New Woman?" is confidently answered, but that the hypothesis that preceded it, Trollope being surprisingly progressive in his attitude to the New Woman and Ouida being more predictable in her works instead of the other way around, was much harder to refute or to confirm because both authors were ambiguous in their attitudes towards New Woman concepts, which in turn was reflected in their works. Further research may resolve this by taking more novels by more authors into consideration, so that perhaps a standard can be put together as to define the New Woman by. A much larger scope will allow for a much more detailed discussion, and one should preferably also discuss novels that were published over a longer period of time so that a much clearer development of the New Woman debate may be identified.

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