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The Victorian Short Story: A Textual Culture's Forgotten Genre

by

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Abstract

This study claims a space for the Victorian short story in the literary canon. It explores what forces were at work between 1830, when the rise of the magazine created a venue for short story publication, and 1884, when critics codified the British short story. Contemporary criticism tends to compare the short story to the novel to show what it lacks. This project examines the short story in relation to the novel to see what it reveals about the novel as well as what it offers short story writers.

Ultimately, the short story develops as a reaction against the limitations imposed upon authors by the novel and by the culture that so strongly valorizes the novel. Although British writers failed to theorize overtly about the short story's form, close readings indicate that they delineate the short story's aesthetic in an economy of narrative and thematic confinement. Significantly, that confinement allows them to take liberties with subject and plot in the short story that they could not take in the novel. In fact, writers of the short story revise the novel's realist aesthetic. The rise of photography assists writers with this revision. As the photograph captures the Victorian imagination, a shared aesthetic develops between the two art forms that teaches readers and writers that meaning is subject to interpretation. The stories suggest that the novel's objective, omniscient third-person narrator may not accurately reflect the reality of the Victorians after all.

This project suggests several opportunities for scholarship and teaching. For scholarship, it brings to light texts previously unknown to many readers, offering them new insights into well-known authors' oeuvres. Second, it suggests lines of inquiry for
those interested in the ways a text can be shaped by its publication and market. For
teaching, it delineates ways of complementing studies of the novel, either through the
themes of confinement and freedom or the themes of marriage and community. Finally, it
provides a fascinating look at the self-conscious development of a genre as it finds its
own generic aesthetic.
Acknowledgements

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Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Reading the Short Story</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Writing within the Confines of the Short Story</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. The Paradox of Confinement: Liberating the Short Story</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Writing with Light: The Interplay between the Photograph and the Short Story</td>
<td>146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>213</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Works Cited</td>
<td>220</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Introduction

Nineteenth-century British fiction is often equated with the novel, particularly the marriage plot novel. Scholars teach classes in the Victorian novel and include it as the representative of the fiction genre in their Victorian literature survey classes. They teach their classes as if the novel is the only fiction authors were producing in nineteenth-century England. Generally speaking, contemporary Victorian fiction criticism supports this notion. Amidst studies of the novel one can find perhaps a dozen books on the subject of the Victorian short story. Most studies take 1880, the year literary historians designate as the beginning of golden age of the short story, as their starting point and work forward to the first half of the twentieth century. Walter Allen, Dean Baldwin, Henry Seidel Canby, Wendell Harris, and Harold Orel are the few twentieth-century critics who write specifically about the nineteenth-century British short story. However, their analyses present the short story in terms of what the genre lacks when compared to the novel. The Victorian short story (1) does not have the literary market of the novel, (2) fails to aspire to historical dimensions or express the moral seriousness of the novel, and (3) lacks a coherent theory of form that distinguishes it from the novel. In their estimation, even the short story’s eventual success suffers from its comparison to the novel. Ultimately, these critics argue, the nineteenth-century British short story could not flourish until the end of the reign of the three-decker novel.

The problem with these critical claims is that they give way to the prestige of the novel. The novel certainly dominated the literary market, but that fact should not prevent us from studying the century’s other significant fiction genre. This study, therefore, claims a space for the Victorian short story in the literary canon. It explores what forces
were at work between 1830, when the rise of the magazine created a venue for short story publication, and 1884, when Brander Matthews codified the British short story in his review article “The Philosophy of the Short-Story” (May 73-80). While most critics have compared the short story to the novel to show what it lacks, I examine the short story in relation to the novel to see what it tells us about the novel and what it offers its writers and readers.

If I am to claim a space for the Victorian short story in the literary canon, I must first demonstrate their prevalence. Chapter 1 takes as its starting point the argument that there was not a substantial market for the short story before 1880. I examine the middle- and lower-class periodical markets to determine where short stories were published and the size of the reading audience. Scrutiny of middle-class periodicals reveals that in fact the novel and the short story shared the same literary markets. Monthly and weekly journals such as Blackwood’s and Household Words that published novels also published short stories within their pages. Furthermore, the short story participated in two other markets that were not available to the novel. Short stories made up anywhere from 41%-91% of the gift annual, a book of stories, poems, and essays popular from 1825-50. When periodical publishers began creating special Christmas supplements at mid-century, the short story filled their pages almost exclusively. Dean Baldwin argues that the strongest market for short story existed in the lower-class penny weeklies. He asserts that their appearance there unfortunately tainted the genre’s image. Short stories did indeed appear in the penny weeklies, but Baldwin ignores the fact that the serial novel also appeared in the penny magazines. In fact, these lower-class journals often ran two or three serials in each issue but rarely more than one short story. Therefore, if any genre
had the potential to be tainted by its appearance in the penny weeklies, it would have
been the novel.

Even when short story critics acknowledge the existence of short stories between
1830 and 1880, they insist that it was British writers’ failure, or perhaps refusal, to
theorize about the form of the short story that prevented it from flowering before the
1880s. Edgar Allan Poe’s review of Hawthorne’s *Twice-Told Tales* in 1842 established
the form of the short story in America. Poe compares the power of a good “short prose
narrative” to that of a poem. Like the poem, it should require a half-hour to one or two
hours to read. Anything longer deprives the reader of “a certain unique or single effect”
that the skillful literary artist constructs in a tale (59-61). Wendell Harris assumes that
because British authors writing short stories did not refer overtly to Poe’s theory, the
American author’s review had little effect on British short story writers (Harris, *British
26*). Rather than accepting that argument at face value, I choose in Chapter 2 to examine
stories by Charles Dickens, Mary Elizabeth Braddon, Wilkie Collins, Elizabeth Gaskell,
Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu, Margaret Oliphant, and Anthony Trollope, in order to find
what theories of the form might be operating in their stories. My analysis finds that these
writers thematize the short story’s aesthetic in an economy of narrative and thematic
confinement.

The expression of confinement can be found in the framing devices of short story
collections, or in the stories’ narrative focus and setting. Because the framed stories in
the periodical Christmas supplements were so successful, authors generally followed the
same strategy and published their stories in collections. The addition of the frames as
well as the arrangement of the stories in a collection confined their breadth and scope. In
some stories the narrative voice laments the lack of space or time to describe events
thoroughly to the reader. In other stories, confinement is thematized through setting, illness, and significant moments that restrict characters spatially or temporally. The economy of confinement reveals a theory of the short story at work in the tales under study. The stories demonstrate the authors’ awareness of the basic tenets of Poe’s short story theory. The writers recognized that they must tell their tales in fewer words and in less space. They also allowed that a single event makes the short story narratable. However, in addition to fulfilling genre expectations, the economy of confinement also enables us to see what is liberating about writing a short story.

Although short story authors thematize the temporal and spatial confinement of the genre, that confinement allows them to take liberties with subject and plot in the short story that they could not take in the novel. Chapter 3 again examines the short stories of Dickens, Braddon, Oliphant, Gaskell, Collins, Trollope, and Le Fanu to answer the question of why middle-class authors wrote short fiction. The novel was the artistic pursuit to follow if one desired fame and fortune. What is it that the novel lacked that the short story could offer to writers? Close readings of the authors’ stories and analysis of critical discourse about the form reveal the paradox inherent in the economy of confinement. Although writing the short story confined writers within the limits of a much shorter medium, it also freed authors from the restrictions of the novel form. Novel conventions dictated that writers delineate how characters were shaped by the interplay between their individual choices and the pressures of the socioeconomic world in which they lived. In addition, writers had to create a sense that all plot lines were resolved at the end of the novel. More often than not, they tied these plot threads together in a marriage in the novel’s final pages. Finally, novelists had to adhere to the stricures of the serial format. Writers of the short story revise these tenets of the novel. They
celebrate the restorative power of narrating a single story without multiple plots. In addition, they do not feel obligated to provide neatly packaged conclusions. Instead, short story writers take liberties with the subjects of marriage, community, and domesticity. Ultimately, the revision of the novel that these writers express is a revision of the novel’s realism. Perhaps all we can narrate is a moment. We do not always know what becomes of characters or what their motivations are. Stories do not always end in marriage, and communities sometimes disintegrate. The stories suggest that the novel may not accurately reflect the reality of the Victorians after all.

Another emerging nineteenth-century art form assists writers with this revision of the novel’s realism: the art of photography. Chapter 4 examines the ways in which photography assists short story writers in revising the novel’s realism and creating readers for the short story. When the photograph came under evaluation, the problem of veracity came to the forefront. Nineteenth-century theorists questioned whether the photograph’s power resided in its ability to faithfully record and validate surfaces, or its capacity to prove that no visual medium can accurately represent the world. Readers and writers internalize this paradox as their experience with reading photographs increases throughout the century. Ultimately this paradox inherent in the veracity of the photograph gives rise to two of the short story’s popular subgenres: the detective story and the ghost story. Detective story writers, for instance, often rely on the veracity of the photograph to solve their cases, but ghost story writers take advantage of the photograph’s mutability to create mystery and multiple interpretive possibilities. The shared aesthetic between the two art forms teaches readers and writers that the short story does not contain a single, inherent meaning. It takes an observer to read the photograph
or a reader to read the story to give it meaning. The short story, then, wrests authority away from the novel’s objective, omniscient third-person narrator.

Short story writers also revise the realism of the novel by overturning the relationship between the novel and the painted portrait. The novel elaborated complex sets of events and relationships. Closely aligned with the novel’s realism is the photograph’s predecessor, the painted portrait. According to portrait theory, a painting of an individual represented a continuity of representation that captured the personality of subjects such as Darcy in *Pride and Prejudice* and Lady Audley in *Lady Audley’s Secret*. The painted portrait is a frequent motif in the Victorian short story. However, short story writers apply the debate over photography’s veracity to the painted portrait, overturning readers’ expectations of the painted portrait’s representation of character and once again revising the kind of realism expressed in the novel.

I see the short story developing as a reaction against the limitations imposed upon authors by the novel and those imposed upon them by the culture that so strongly valorizes the novel. In this study, I discuss where and why the short story revises the required “historical dignity” and “moral seriousness” of the novel. Authors in the position to shed light on such a study are well-known, middle-class writers who publish both novels and short stories. Therefore, this discussion focuses primarily on the short stories of those writers who produced a substantial body of work in both genres. Because the short story was codified so late in the century, just what constitutes a short story can be problematic. Generally, the works I will examine are those identified by their authors, the critics, and publishers of the day as short stories. At the very least, they will not have been identified as novels or novellas. The stories with which I will work were written for adult audiences and published in major middle-class periodicals. Most were also
published in short story collections during their authors’ lifetimes. While many readers are familiar with their novels, few likely know that Dickens wrote 75 short stories, Braddon 46, Collins 48, Gaskell 15, LeFanu 43, Oliphant 38, and Trollope 44. In other words, Dickens, Collins, Le Fanu, and Gaskell all wrote more short stories than novels. (They wrote 15, 21, 15, and 9 novels respectively.) Trollope wrote almost the same number (44 short stories versus 48 novels), and Oliphant and Braddon, each of whom wrote 80 novels, wrote half as many short stories. That seems to me to be a substantial body of work that thus far has been almost completely ignored. Tricia Lootens writes, “What is silenced within discourses—and what remains unprinted, untaught, and virtually unread within institutions—is inseparable from what is written and from what remains real and remembered within a canon” (3). The texts I discuss in this study have been “unread within institutions” for over one hundred years. It is my hope that this enterprise will begin creating a “real and remembered” place for them within the canon.
Chapter 1:

Reading the Short Story

Dean Baldwin’s article “The Tardy Evolution of the English Short Story” is a good starting place for scholars desiring to know where the Victorian short story appeared. He identifies three middle-class literary markets for short fiction: the fiction periodical, the gift annual, and the Christmas supplement. In addition, the lower-class penny fiction magazines published short stories. However, Baldwin argues, none of these markets encouraged the growth of the short story because they were dominated by the novel. He claims that even though middle-class magazines were publishing fiction by the middle of the nineteenth century, editors did not seek out short fiction for inclusion in their pages. Consequently, “there was little incentive” for authors to produce it (28). As for the gift annuals, Baldwin explains that one could find short stories between their covers, and their authors even sometimes earned nice sums for their contributions, but the literary community looked upon the annuals with scorn. The feminine audience for whom they were created and the emphasis on the beauty of their covers rather than the merit of their contents elicited considerable negative criticism. Baldwin notes that the Christmas supplements contained short stories, and many had large reading audiences, but like the gift annual, they only entered the market once a year. The penny press had a larger circulation than the middle-class markets, but Baldwin asserts, the short story’s appearance in the penny weeklies aligned it with escapist, “sensational and/or sentimental hack-writing” (28), and thereby made it objectionable to literary groups. Baldwin points to John Sutherland’s explanation that literary and publishing circles feared cheap
literature because they thought that inexpensive publications “would somehow release
forces beyond the trade’s control” (74-75).

My research suggests that Baldwin’s assertions about the short story’s market are
incorrect. I have evaluated the short story’s success in each of the markets Baldwin
identifies, and I find that the short story had a strong circulation in all of them.
Furthermore, my analysis demonstrates that Baldwin’s assertion that the short story was
aligned with penny fiction and was therefore tainted by that connection is unfounded.
What I find instead is that middle-class fears about the vast amount of cheap literature in
general (as opposed to genre-specific literature) created a tremendous number of
discussions about how to intervene in what became known as “the reading problem.”
The “Interventions in Reading” section of this chapter examines opportunities the short
story had to participate in discussions about the reading problem. But on the whole,
writers and critics of short stories did not engage in conversations about the impact of
short fiction on reading practices. The study of the short story market and its place in the
reading intervention discussions lead me to conclude that the short story’s critical
invisibility was the biggest setback to its evolution.

The Middle-Class Market for the Short Story

It is difficult to accept Baldwin’s claim that there was such a small demand for the
short story when one notes the amount of short fiction produced by some of England’s
most recognized novelists. As noted in the introduction, the authors included in this
study—Mary Elizabeth Braddon, Wilkie Collins, Charles Dickens, Elizabeth Gaskell,
Joseph Sheridan LeFanu, Margaret Oliphant, and Anthony Trollope—wrote a
considerable amount of short fiction. As with their serial novel installments, these
authors eventually collected and published them in volume form either with more of their short stories or with stories by other authors sharing a common theme. First, however, they published their stories in one of the three major middle-class markets for fiction: the fiction periodical, the gift annual, or the periodical Christmas supplement.

The Fiction Periodical Market

In the first half of the century, short stories by these writers and others appeared in the best selling middle-class periodicals that contained fiction. Blackwood’s Magazine was the first to provide the century with a “steady and respectable market for short fiction” (Harris 22). Created by William Blackwood to advance the Scotch Tory way of life, Blackwood’s, or “Maga,” as it was commonly called, published poetry, humor, and fiction, both native and in translation (Wellesley 1: 7-9). In its first year of operation (1817), Blackwood’s had a circulation of about 3,700 copies. By 1828, its circulation had risen to 6,500 in sales, and by 1831, it was selling over 8,000 copies each month (Altick 392-93). Fraser’s Magazine (1830-82) also provided a market for short fiction in the first half of the century. Fiction often had to battle for notice amongst the wide selection of scholarly articles, satiric sketches, essays, and literary spoofs, but short fiction can be found within its pages (Wellesley 2: 303-305). Writers such as William M. Thackeray, John Ruskin, Thomas Carlyle, Thomas Love Peacock, James Anthony Froude, William Allingham, and William Maginn contributed works to this periodical (Graham 290-91). In 1831, it was selling about 8,700 copies each month (Altick 393). In 1833, Dublin University Magazine was created to provide an outlet for the works of Irish writers. Politically, it emphasized the preservation of the Irish Church in the event of political union, but fiction was its most important element. William Carleton, G. P. R. James,
Charles James Lever, and LeFanu were major story contributors (Graham 274). A few years later (1837), Richard Bentley began publishing his one-hundred-page *Miscellany* designed to provide the works of popular writers as well as to bring forth talented unknown writers to the middle-class readership (Wellesley 2: 5-6). *Bentley's Miscellany* contained poems and essays, but more pages were devoted to fiction than to any other genre (Graham 295). In its first year it sold at least 6,000 copies each month, and in 1838 exceeded that total at least four times (Patten, *Charles Dickens* 77). On the heels of *Bentley's* appeared *Ainsworth's Magazine* (1842). This monthly illustrated sixty-four-page periodical "became more completely than any that had preceded it, a miscellany of fiction" (Graham 299). Serialized novels and short stories made up most of its pages, but it also contained essays, sketches, light verse, and translations of foreign poetry (Wellesley 3: 5-12). In its first year, it outsold *Bentley's* by about a thousand copies each month (Altick 394).

The creation of Charles Dickens's *Household Words* in 1850 is a significant event in periodical fiction publishing history. This two pence, twenty-four-page weekly miscellany contained poetry, anecdotes, serial and short stories, biographical incidents, and stories by a cross-section of primary and secondary literary writers, including short stories by Dickens, Gaskell, and Collins (Graham 297-98). Dickens described *Household Words* to Mrs. Gaskell as a "new cheap weekly journal of general literature" which would publish papers that expressed "the general mind and purpose of the journal, which is the raising up of those that are down, and the general improvement of our social condition" (Letters 6: 21). In 1859, *All the Year Round* absorbed *Household Words* and continued the tradition of the former magazine's price, size, and format. "*Household Words* and *All the Year Round* represent in scope and aim a popularizing of periodical
literature which had been going on for half a century in response to the gradual spread of education” (Graham 296-97). Altick suggests that the great importance of these two journals was their role in breaking down upper- and middle-class prejudice against the cheaper periodicals such as the London Journal and Family Herald (347). Household Words’s sales began at 100,000 each week, and during its “best years” average sales were 40,000 a week (Altick 394). All the Year Round began at 120,000 in sales in 1859 and reached 300,000 yearly sales by 1869. The success of Household Words and All the Year Round spawned numerous fortnightlies and monthlies that published fiction. By the 1890s, monthlies such as Argosy, Belgravia, Cornhill, St. James’s Magazine, St. Paul’s Magazine, The Strand, and The Yellow Book began publishing short stories exclusively (Orel 190).

Thus, it appears that the same periodical market that was available to the novel was also available to the short story. Granted, it is likely that the serial novel was the primary reason many readers purchased the journals and miscellanies, but it does not follow that the serial novel is the only portion of the journal that purchasers read. Whether or not editors sought out short story contributions will be discussed in the next chapter, but regardless of how they got there, short stories were circulating in middle-class periodicals.

The Gift Annual Market

In addition to the middle-class periodicals, the gift annual offered a market for short story writers. These lavishly produced books appeared in stores in the late fall of each year to provide holiday shoppers with the ideal gift. Chief examples of the annuals are The Literary Souvenir, edited by Alaric Watts; The Keepsake, edited by F. M.
Reynolds; *The Bijou*, edited by W. Fraser; *Forget-Me-Not*, edited by Frederic Shoberl; *Heath's Book of Beauty*, edited by Lady Blessington; and *Friendship's Offering*, edited by Thomas Pringle. They started out as pocket-sized books and quickly moved to quartos, generally measuring no more than 7 ¼ x 4 ¾ inches. Larger luxury editions were sometimes published for a higher price, but the largest of these measured only 9 3/4 x 6 inches (Paley 1-2). These books were designed to be ornaments for the parlor. Margaret Linley argues that while the middle-class periodicals attempted to define how their readers should think, the gift annual “laboured to establish the look of middle-class leisure, and that look was especially centered around a self-conscious display of a taste for beautiful things” (55). Watered silk and velvet were favorite bindings. Some had tooled leather jackets, and some had to be drawn by ribbons from the gift cases in which they were enclosed (Hutchison 471).

Once past the covers, the reader finds short stories, essays, sketches, and poetry printed on fine paper stock, often with gilt edges. Accompanying these pages are steel engravings in black and white and even color, numbering anywhere from the single frontispiece to twenty or thirty per volume. The engravings are designed to illustrate the poetry or prose or *vice versa*. Editors frequently bought the plates and then asked writers to compose a poem or story to go with them. The illustrations were usually sentimental: “A wan maiden pining away, a mother with two cherubins on her breast, a young wife weeping beside a grave” (Hutchison 471).

Often called keepsakes or parlor albums, the gift book’s period of greatest vogue was during the 1820s and 1830s. In one season, 1828, manufacturers produced nearly 100,000 copies at a retail value of over £70,000. Smith, Elder reports that its *Friendship’s Offering*, priced at 12s., sold between 8,000 and 10,000 copies a year
(Altick 362). With such success, it did not take long for other publishers to vie for a piece of the gift annual market. By 1831, over sixty different gift annuals of various sizes and “uneven literary merit jostled for the attention” of the middle-class purchaser. By mid-century, when the vogue was waning, the total sales of the annual over the twenty-five years were over two million copies (Siemens 129-30).

Short fiction was very much a part of the gift annual’s contents, and if sales alone were the basis for judgment, one would think the market for the short story was very strong. As the table below demonstrates, short fiction comprised between 41%-91% of *Friendship’s Offering, Forget-Me-Not, and Heath’s Book of Beauty’s* pages during the 1830s.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th><em>Forget Me Not</em></th>
<th><em>Friendship’s Offering</em></th>
<th><em>Heath’s Book of Beauty</em></th>
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<td></td>
<td>No. of short story titles</td>
<td>No. of short story pages</td>
<td>% comprised of short story</td>
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<td>1830</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>268</td>
<td>70%</td>
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<tr>
<td>1833</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>207</td>
<td>54%</td>
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<tr>
<td>1834</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>54%</td>
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<tr>
<td>1835</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1836</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>215</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1837</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>218</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
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Most notable is *Heath’s Book of Beauty* of 1833 which printed an astonishing amount of short fiction. It contains seven short stories, ten poems, and nineteen engravings. Of the 264 pages that make up this annual, 91% are devoted to the short story. Poetry, of course, is the other generic staple of the annuals. The gift books cited in the table contain an average number of 33 poetry titles, but they comprise only an average of 21% of the total pages. Legends from foreign countries and travel essays account for the remaining pages, along with an occasional sketch or moral tale.
Young ladies were the recipients of these poetry and short story collections. Anne Renier explains that the annual was so successful with young women because it mirrored the kind of education they received. Additionally, it provided the young lady with another mechanism for showing off her accomplishments. If a young woman was to play the piano or harp and sing songs for the entertainment of guests, what better addition to her entertainment repertoire than the gift annual? Young ladies could “toy with them at appropriate moments,” and “rhapsodize over the poems and engravings, displaying their taste and sensibility to the best advantage” (Renier 17). The gift annual also provided suitors with the perfect gift. As a token of friendship and affection, the book posed no risk of insulting the lady’s modesty. John Wilson, writing under his pen name Christopher North, characterizes *The Literary Souvenir* of 1825 in the following way:

[D]o you wish to give a small earnest graceful gift to some dearly-beloved one, then thank us for the happy hint, and with a kiss, or, if that be not permissible, at least with a smile of severest suavity [...] lay the *Literary Souvenir* upon her tender lap, with a few words, which it should be impertinent in us to particularize; only be sure, “you breathe them not far from her delicate auricle;” and with a low, a deep, and pleading tone, like the knight who won the bright and beauteous Genevieve. It is a hundred to one that you are a married man in six weeks or two months; nay if it be a “large paper copy,” one flesh will ye be before the new moon. (94)

One might expect that since marriageable young ladies made up the readership for the parlor albums, these little books might have received slight critical attention when compared to middle-class novels. As lighter fare for the sitting room, they might not have warranted much discussion. Quite the contrary is the case, however, for the gift
annuals were the topic of discussion by writers and critics alike. At stake in those discussions is what inclusion in the gift annual—an obviously feminine book—does for poetry’s and short fiction’s reputations as art forms.

Critical response to poetry’s inclusion in the gift annual is uneven. Morton Paley, for instance, argues that annuals played an important role in expanding the reading public for new poetry (1). In his study of Samuel Taylor Coleridge’s contributions to the gift annuals, Paley finds that Coleridge had a bigger audience for his work than ever before. In fact, Coleridge’s “new readers must necessarily have regarded him as a contemporary poet rather than one of a past generation, and the poems they read in the annuals established Coleridge’s poetic persona in their minds.” As a result, Paley argues, the exposure Coleridge received in the annual had a significant impact on the demand both for a second edition of the Poetical Works of 1828 and for the “deathbed edition” of 1834 (19-20).

Robert Southey, however, had a very different idea about what placing his poetry in gift annuals did for his reputation. Southey recognized that the annual was the dominant market for the sale of poetry, so when Allan Cunningham’s publisher asked him to approach Southey for contributions to an annual the publisher was producing, Southey told Cunningham that he would need as much money as possible for his poems. His poetry collections were failing to turn the author a profit, and Southey attributed the cause to the annuals: “The annuals are now the only book bought for presents to young ladies, in which way poems formerly had their chief vent.” The result, Southey claims, is that his poems “have suffered greatly—to the diminution [. . .] of more than half their sale” (Letters 4: 124).
As it was with poetry, the effects of the short story's inclusion in the gift annual on its generic prestige was mixed. In America the annual was also in vogue, and American short story critics generally agree that gift books provided a market that encouraged the short story form (Hutchison 472). However, as Wendell Harris points out, the vogue of the gift annual in England in the second quarter of the century created a demand for short fiction, but did so "in a way which helped to discourage competent writers from taking the form at all seriously" (24). Harris claims that publications such as the *Forget-Me-Not, Friendship's Offering, The Keepsake,* and *Heath's Book of Beauty* worked to discourage writers from adhering to any of the established tenets of the short story because editors demanded very little in terms of the quality of the fiction they contained. The stories were overly sentimental and were consequently held in contempt by reputable writers. The poor quality did not stop highly regarded writers from contributing occasionally to the annuals, however, because payment for their work was quite high. The contributions, Harris argues, were often dashed off quickly to fill the request, or they were stories previously unpublished because they had been rejected. Harris points to Sir Walter Scott's response to a request from the editor of *The Keepsake for 1828* as evidence of this assertion. Scott claims to have placed "with much pleasure at the Editor's disposal a few fragments, originally designed to have worked into *Chronicles of the Cannongate,* besides a MS. drama, the long-neglected performance of my youthful days" (48: 245-46). In Harris's estimation, none of these fragments, "The Tapestried Chamber," "My Aunt Margaret's Mirror," or the "Death of the Laird's Jack," "has much claim on the reader's interest" (25). He goes on to say that an examination of other works by well-known authors will reveal that "the disparity between the quality of
the author’s contributions to annuals and his better work is to be found everywhere one
turns” (25).

But contribute they did. “Nearly everybody who was anybody, and many who
were nobody contributed to the annuals” (Renier 13). Lord Byron, Coleridge, Dickens,
Maria Edgeworth, Thomas Hood, L. E. L. (Laetitia Elizabeth Landon), Scott, Mary
Shelley, Percy Shelley, Southey, and William Wordsworth all contributed work to the
annuals (Alexander 413). The Keepsake published work by John Ruskin and Lord
Tennyson (Paley 2), and William Makepeace Thackeray contributed once to the Juvenile
Forget-Me-Not, once to the Drawing-Room Scrap Book, and four times to The Keepsake
(Siements 134).

Contributing to the gift annuals did not prevent authors from making light of them
in their literary works when they had the opportunity. Thackeray, for instance, expresses
the maudlin sentimentality and excessive decorousness of the books through some of his
lesser characters in three of his novels. In Pendennis Lord Dodo’s poems and Percy
Popjoy’s ballads appear in the current Spring Annual. Rosey Mackenzie in The
Newcomes praises the annual and its poems, and when Becky Sharp’s maid selects what
is important to save from the Mayfair booty, she reaches for the gift annuals.

In a more serious vein, George Eliot employs the gift annual to suggest character
traits in Chapter 27 of Middlemarch. Ned Plymdale, suitor to Rosamond Vincy, presents
her with a copy of The Keepsake, feeling quite sure “that he had the very best thing in art
and literature as a medium for ‘paying addresses’—the very thing to please a nice girl”
(263). When the annual comes under Rosamond’s second suitor’s perusal, Lydgate
scoffs, particularly at the engraving of a doomed marriage. Both Ned and Rosamond
defend the contents of the annual by referring to the authors it contains. Rosamond
points out that L. E. L. and Lady Blessington are contributors, and Ned follows with Sir Walter Scott.

According to Meg Moring, the annual the characters describe is actually *The Keepsake for 1829*. The picture they refer to accompanies Scott’s story “My Aunt Margaret’s Mirror,” one of the fragments denigrated by Harris. Other contributors to this keepsake were Wordsworth, Mary Shelley, Coleridge, and, as Rosamond points out, L. E. L. and Lady Blessington. Biographer Gordon Haight notes that George Eliot had a very high regard for Scott and was reading J. G. Lockhart’s *Life of Walter Scott* at the time she was preparing *Middlemarch* (268, 430). Lockhart’s biography contains excerpts from Scott’s diary that talk about his contribution of that story. The author calls “Aunt Margaret’s Mirror” a “trifling thing or other” and later wishes he hadn’t contributed it (533). Moring argues that George Eliot used the 1829 *Keepsake* in order to show character differences between Rosamond and Lydgate, and, more specifically, that the author used the reference to the engraving to foreshadow their own doomed marriage (23).

Making light of the gift annals gradually became a regular feature of literary criticism as well. The criticism is aimed at the outside of the annals as much as the inside. From the beginning, publishers emphasized the annuals’ appearance. For example, in what is essentially an extended advertisement within *The Keepsake for 1828*, Leigh Hunt expresses the hope that the “genius of binding” will “put forth all its powers on thousands of Keepsakes” (14). Yet, at some point, what began as an icon of middle-class leisure developed into something cheap and overly ornate in the minds of middle-class reviewers. Critics, perhaps, fell victim to the publishers’ excessive advertisement rhetoric and began maligning the annual for the very characteristics their creators were
praising. A contributor to an 1828 issue of the *Quarterly Review* asks if the best writers of the age are “to continue to see their beautiful fragments doled out year after year in the midst of such miserable and mawkish trash as fills at least nineteen pages of every twenty in the best of the gaudy duodecimos now before us?” (“Literary” 99). A decade later, an 1839 issue of the *Monthly Chronicle* attacks the annuals as a “pestilent visitation of gilded flies,” a “heap of tawdry rubbish,” and a “nuisance that calls for abatement” (“Concerning” 63).

Scathing criticism appeared regarding the contents of the gift annuals as well, particularly after their first decade of existence. This fall in favor may be the result of the changes to the annuals’ format in the late 1830s. In the 1820s, contributions from renowned authors had been used to attract purchasers of annuals. In the next decade, contributions were solicited from the aristocracy, and the quota of genuine writers correspondingly declined. To enroll the aristocratic contributors, a titled lady of fashion such as Lady Blessington was appointed editor. The steel engravings of famous or contemporary paintings were replaced by engravings of scenes of nature, aristocratic mansions, and idealized portraits of nobility. In addition, the duodecimo volume was exchanged for the quarto format to make the annual more noticeable on the drawing-room table (Renier 20). Judging from the contents of the gift annuals produced in the middle of the century, the aristocratic contributors preferred poetry. By the 1860s, for instance, short fiction comprised less than 15% of *Heath’s Book of Beauty*.

Thackeray, who often reviewed each year’s crop of gift books for *Fraser’s Magazine* and *The Times*, occasionally found some lines worthy of praise for the annuals, but he was more likely to treat them contemptuously. In his review of the 1837 annuals, he complains
It is hardly necessary to examine these books and designs one by one—they all bear the same character, and are exactly like the Books of Beauty, Flowers of Loveliness, and so on, which appeared last year. A large weak plate, done in what we believe is called the stipple style of engraving, a woman badly drawn, with enormous eyes—a tear, perhaps, upon each cheek, and an exceedingly low-cut dress—pats a greyhound, or weeps into a flower-pot, or delivers a letter to a bandy-legged, curly-headed page. An immense train of white satin fills up one corner of the plate; an urn, a stone-railing, a fountain, and a bunch of hollyhocks, adorn the other; the picture is signed Sharpe, Parris, Corbould, Corbaux, Jenkins, Brown, as the case may be, and is entitled ‘the Pearl,’ ‘la Dolorosa,’ ‘la Biondina,’ ‘le Gage d’Amour,’ ‘the Forsaken One of Florence,’ ‘the Water-lily,’ or some such name. Miss Landon, Miss Mitford, or my Lady Blessington, writes a song upon the opposite page, about water-lily, chilly, stilly, shivering beside a streamlet, plighted, blighted, love benighted, falsehood sharper than a gimlet, lost affection, recollection, cut connection, tears in torrents, true-love token, spoken, broken, sighing, dying, girl of Florence, and so on. The poetry is quite worthy of the picture, and a little sham sentiment is employed to illustrate a little sham art. (Critical Papers 16)

Underneath Thackeray's rhythmic jocularity is a jab at the feminine nature of the publications. In spite of the fact that men (including Thackeray) were regular contributors to the annuals, Thackeray suggests that famous women writers were prostituting themselves by contributing to the annuals.
To counter criticism such as Thackeray’s, publishers’ addresses to readers became more defensive. The introduction written by Alaric Watts for his 1831 *Literary Souvenir* suggests that the critics who condemn the contents of the annuals do so because of the place where they appear instead of their literary merit.

It is worthy to remark, that some of the Cynics, who affect to regard so lightly the literature of annual volumes, are but too happy to publish, from time to time, in the periodicals over which they preside, the rejected articles of such miscellanies. [...] Why that which is food on one sheet of paper should be bad upon another, it is difficult to conceive; yet, that such is sometimes the case, will be inferred from the fact, that two influential periodical writers, who spoke with contempt of a prose sketch in the *Literary Souvenir* for 1829, from the pen of Mrs. Charles Gore, subsequently discovered, that (under another name, and in the collected works of the author) it was one of her happiest efforts, and possessed every claim to popular favor. (ix-x)

Ultimately it appears that the manufactured aspect of these books followed by a more aristocratic editorship made them illegitimate as art to critics writing for middle-class periodicals, but the argument that inclusion of the short story in the gift annual made the genre illegitimate is not that clear. In fact, the thing most remarkable about the criticism is that short fiction emerges unscathed. The elaborate bindings are vulgar, the illustrations are “badly drawn,” and the poetry is “sham sentiment,” but, significantly, the critics do not mention short fiction, the genre that comprises the largest percentage of the annuals’ pages. In fact, without any criticism being directed at the short form, the gift annual may have helped the genre gain popularity. At the very least, it familiarized
readers with the form, made them accustomed to reading it, and prepared them for a new kind of gift annual.

**The Christmas Supplement Market**

If, as present-day critics have suggested, the short story was an illegitimate art form because of its appearance in the gift annuals, it made a surprising leap to legitimacy with the advent of the periodical special Christmas supplements that appeared around mid-century. This market, frequently overlooked by present-day critics writing about the Victorian short story, significantly expanded the publication opportunities for short fiction. Mass-circulation periodicals (*Punch, Illustrated London News*, and *Household Words* to name a few) were a part of this new literary format. Physically, the supplements were not as elaborate as the gift annuals, but they were “admirably fitted to the tastes of those whose pocketbooks were opened a little wider than usual under the mellowing influence of the Christmas season” (Altick 363). The audience for this transformed annual was also different. The annual was no longer just for the ladies; the audience of the periodicals that produced these supplements was primarily the middle-class family. Also different was the list of contributors. Contributions were solicited from reputable authors who took the appearance of their work in the supplements seriously. According to Altick, from about 1860 to the end of the century, sales of some of these special numbers were tremendous, even surpassing the very successful Christmas numbers of *All the Year Round*, which from 1862-65 sold 185,000 to 250,000 copies annually (395). The Christmas numbers rarely contained any genre other than short stories. The short story had found yet another niche for publication in the literary marketplace.
The Working-Class Market for the Short Story

The primary working-class literature market for the short story was the penny weekly periodical. Publication in penny fiction periodicals certainly meant a much larger circulation than in middle-class periodicals. But an examination of these periodicals and what middle-class writers and critics said about them suggests that they do not recognize the short story as the low-brow genre that Baldwin suggests. In fact, in the first half of the century, critics profess a sense of wonder at the very existence of penny weeklies. When they do find them, they set themselves the tasks of speculating about the circulation and audience for the periodicals and examining them in an attempt to discover the lower class’s literary tastes. In the second half of the century, those writing about penny weeklies focus on the class and gender of the readers much more than on the fiction itself.

The Penny Weekly’s Circulation

In an 1838 article entitled “Half-a-Crown’s Worth of Cheap Knowledge,” Thackeray discusses his encounter with the “strange collection of periodical works” he finds when walking in Paternoster Row (279). For half a crown, he purchases fifteen examples of the kind of literature available to the lower classes in order to “afford us very fair opportunity for judging of this whole class of literature” (279). He hopes his analysis will enable him and the readers of Fraser’s Magazine to ascertain the unfamiliar “literary tastes” of the lower-class readers in London. The lower class of London is a tremendous society moving around us, and unknown to us—a vast mass of active, stirring life, in which the upper and middling classes form an
insignificant speck, and of which we (taking for granted the WE applies to both writer and reader) are quite ignorant and uninformed. An English gentleman knows as much about the people of Lapland or California as he does of the aborigines of The Seven Dials or the natives of Wapping.

(280)

Thackeray estimates this unknown group of readers to number at least 1,500,000 people with a literature of their own that has been invented not for politics or instruction but for amusement "in exchange for their humble penny" (283).

A perceived rise in the circulation of cheap fiction leads another Victorian writer to muse about the lower-class readership. Twenty years after Thackeray surveyed some of the available cheap literature of the day, Wilkie Collins conducted his own analysis. In 1858, Collins contributed an article to *Household Words* that discusses his discovery of "an Unknown Public": "a public unknown to the literary world; unknown, as disciples, to the whole body of professed critics; unknown, as an audience, to the distinguished English writers of our own time" (218). Readers such as those of *Household Words*, "the customers at the eminent publishing houses, the members of book-clubs and circulating libraries, and the purchasers and borrowers of newspapers and reviews," do not compose "altogether the great bulk of the reading public of England" (217). In fact, says Collins, if their advertisements are accurate, the five magazines he selected for review together have a circulation of one million purchased copies. If those copies are then shared with two other readers, the unknown readership of penny-novel journals, he estimates, must number about three million people.

Unfortunately Collins does not name the papers he has reviewed, but his comments suggest likely candidates. The most successful magazine in 1858 was the
London Journal, which advertised a circulation of one-half million copies. It began publishing in 1845, and by 1855 had a circulation of 450,000 each week. The London Journal’s largest competitors were the Family Herald and Reynolds’s Miscellany. In 1855, they had circulations of 300,000 and 200,000 respectively (Altick 394).

Collins’s phrase, “an Unknown Public,” gradually became a generic phrase to describe the readers of penny fiction, and two more critics contributed to the discussion concerning the size of the reading public. Almost twenty-five years after Collins published his article, James Payn contributed an article to Nineteenth Century. Payn estimates that this audience must now number at least four million readers. The number of penny fiction magazines also must have increased considerably because he has picked up almost fifty of them for review. By 1883, Thomas Wright, a writer in “a position to speak as to who constitute the unknown public [...] from personal knowledge of many of its members, and a lifelong acquaintance with the classes to which they belong” (“Concerning” 280), expanded the readership in an article contributed to Nineteenth Century. Wright estimates that a total of five million is probably underestimating the number of actual readers of penny journals.

The Penny Weekly’s Readers

While all four writers speculate about the number of penny weekly readers, the sense of wonder at their incredible number expressed by Thackeray and Collins shifts to a need to identify the class and gender of this vast reading public in the Payn and Wright articles. At first, Payn claims that for the most part the unknown public is still unknown to middle-class readers. Yet later he comes to the conclusion that the majority of the penny fiction readers must be female domestic servants. The only explanation for this
rhetorical move is his disappointment with the Letters to the Editor section of the paper. After all, who else could make up a public “whose mental caliber is such that they required to be told by a correspondence editor that ‘any number over the two thousand will certainly be in the three thousand’?” (153). The logical conclusion to Payn’s assertion is that there are four million reading female domestic servants in London. Wright disagrees with Payn’s identification of class but agrees that the penny weeklies are written for a female readership. Based on personal experience, Wright tells his audience that the readers of the penny fiction journals are not from the domestic class but are actually omnivorous readers from the “‘young lady’” classes.

The bulk of this great body of readers comes from classes that, in their estimation at any rate, are several “cuts” above the domestic class. They belong to the “young lady” classes—the young ladies of the counters, of the more genteel female handicrafts generally, and the dressmaking and millinery profession in particular. To these are added a numerous section of young ladies unattached—young ladies whose parents consider them, or who consider themselves, too genteel to go out to work. [...] As the young ladies carry their tastes into married life, the unknown public also includes numbers of wives of clerks, shopkeepers, and well-to-do artisans. (“Concerning” 282)

Men, according to Wright, are not a part of the penny fiction audience. They never subscribe to these journals and only occasionally come into contact with their wives’ copies scattered throughout their houses. Even then, men rarely read the fiction, but focus their attention instead on the miscellaneous readings and the answers to the correspondents.
Nineteenth-century critic Francis Hitchman agrees with Payn’s and Wright’s arguments for a female readership but expands the working classes from which they come. Hitchman identifies the readership of the *Family Herald* as the lower middle and working classes, or, more specifically, “smart housemaids and milliners’ apprentices” (“Penny Press” 390). He identifies the chief patrons of the *London Journal* as “domestic servants and the ‘young persons’ engaged in shops” (“Penny Press” 391).

**The Penny Weekly’s Generic Composition**

Before examining the generic contents of these penny weeklies to verify whether they offered a market for the short story, it is important that I make a distinction between the penny weeklies that I have been discussing in this section and another inexpensive type of publication called the penny dreadful. Baldwin conflates these two terms in his discussion of penny literature, a mistake that leads him to some incorrect assumptions about the market of the short story. Penny dreadfuls are the stories published in weekly parts, usually in eight pages of large octavo printed in double columns on paper like ordinary penny newspapers. They are illustrated with wood engravings similar to the penny magazines. Circulation figures for the penny dreadfuls are unclear. The 1867 *Bookseller* claims that the average sale of a weekly number is about 10,000, which when multiplied by the total number of penny dreadfuls produced each week indicates a total weekly circulation of over a quarter of a million copies. The audience for these stories is, according to the writer, the boys and girls of the middle and lower classes (“Literature” 121-23). However, the *Bookseller* of 1868 contradicts the assertions of the previous article. The writer claims that only a few have had large circulations, and as business speculations, the penny dreadfuls rarely make the publisher money. The writer’s basis
for this assertion is the audience. He believes that these stories have been written primarily for boys. As these boys become more discriminating readers, they move on to other literature ("Mischievous" 445-47). According to Hitchman, by 1890, penny dreadfuls printed serially were out of print, but they were reproduced in sixpenny volumes ("Penny Fiction" 151). The reader for these papers is the "son of the working man, who leaves school as soon after he has passed the age of thirteen as possible" ("Penny Fiction" 150). Regardless of their actual circulation figures, penny dreadfuls published serial stories rather than short stories and did not, as Baldwin claims, create a market for the short story that in turn denigrated its potential as an art form.

The penny weeklies, on the other hand, did contain short fiction, although not as much as Baldwin suggests. Of the fifteen papers Thackeray examines, only four contain fiction. The Penny Story-Teller contains three serial stories in various stages of progress, one of which Thackeray proclaims to have "very great merit" ("Half" 284). The second paper is Oliver Twiss, a bad imitation of Dickens's novel. Third is the Weekly Magazine, a sixteen-page magazine devoted primarily to serials, which Thackeray judges "neither [...] very good nor very bad; but, at least, it is good in its intention and quite harmless" (286). The final paper is a four-page political pamphlet called the Poor Man's Friend. Two of the four pages call for the abolition of the Poor Law and advertise the London Dispatch. The other two pages include a tale, which, according to Thackeray, has been stolen from the Torch. This tale is apparently the only fiction among Thackeray's fifteen periodicals that is likely to be a short story. Thackeray makes no judgment of the tale itself, but pronounces the Poor Man's Friend "neither more nor less than a humbug" ("Half" 282).
Although Thackeray did not encounter a great deal of fiction in his foray into the realm of cheap literature, cheap magazines containing fiction were clearly on the rise. Concern with lower-class reading habits led to social surveys, Parliamentary Reports, and the formation of new social condition magazines analyzing reading materials. These investigations indicate that in the 1840s lower-class London periodicals containing nothing but romances account for 22 of the 80 periodicals in circulation. By 1850, the numbers grew to 60 of 100 containing fiction (James 43-44). Unfortunately, the investigators did not distinguish between the short story and longer fiction, so there are no data to indicate how much of this cheap fiction consisted of the short story.

Of the periodicals containing fiction, the serial story apparently caught the critics' eyes. To gain a clearer understanding of the kind of fiction lower-class readers in the 1850s preferred, Collins selected five “penny-novel journals” for analysis. All five were sold weekly for the price of a penny each and contained approximately the same amount of material. In the five weekly copies he examines, Collins finds a total of ten serial stories, one reprint of a famous novel, and seven short stories, each of which begins and ends in the same issue of the magazine. The remaining pages of the magazines consist of letters to the editor and short paragraphs on a wide variety of subjects. However, Collins identifies the serial story as the most prominent feature of each weekly. It appears first in each paper and is illustrated with a wood engraving cut expressly for the story (217-21). His analysis, therefore, focuses on the serial stories, and the reader is left to speculate about his opinion of the nature of the short stories.

As mentioned earlier, given the circulation figures that Collins quotes for the periodicals he is studying and the list of their contents, it is likely that the *London Journal*, the *Family Herald*, and *Reynolds's Miscellany* are among the five periodicals he
discusses. The description he supplies corresponds to their generic contents as well. For instance, the *Family Herald* was “an eminently creditable specimen of the penny magazine” that contained a complete story, installments of two serials, an article on a current topic, three pages of selected reprints, a small amount of original poetry, and answers to correspondents in each number (Hitchman, “Penny Press” 389). The *London Journal* and *Reynolds’s Miscellany* had a similar format. In the 1850s they averaged one short story per issue, but short stories dwindled to one half of that number by the end of the next decade.

Neither Payn nor Wright specifically identifies the generic contents of the magazines under study. Payn emulates Collins by first discussing the stories (presumably the serial stories) and then the Answers to Correspondents. Wright, however, finds the arguments of both Collins and Payn unfair because they assume that the penny novel journals are the sole reading matter for the unknown public. According to Wright, they are omnivorous indiscriminate readers. “In the way of novels they will read almost anything, and as a matter of fact, do read a great many others besides those they find in their own journals” (“Concerning” 281). Most of them have read some of the works of Charles Dickens, Sir Walter Scott, Bulwer Lytton, Mary Elizabeth Braddon, Wilkie Collins, James Payn, and Walter Besant. However, the current favorite is Ouida. In fact, even though her work does not appear in penny serials, “Ouida’s writing is essentially the acme of penny serial style. The novelists of the penny prints toil after her in vain, but they do toil after her” (“Concerning” 290).

George Humphrey supports Wright’s claim that the lower classes read a great number of novels. Humphrey researches the number of books factory workers borrowed during three randomly selected months of an unidentified year and city. He finds
working-class readers checked out "160 solid books against 352 of fiction." He concludes from these figures that considering many of the books "were selected from the highest ranks of this class of writers whose works are second only to matter-of-fact writing, we may conclude that the choice was on the whole satisfactory" (694). The list contains the kind of first- and second-order novels that one would expect to find. Of the 352 books borrowed, only four short story collections were checked out for a total of six times. Granted Humphrey's article does not reveal just how many short story collections were available for lending, but such a small number makes it difficult to give credence to Baldwin's argument that the short story was a genre of the lower classes.

The Penny Weekly's Artistic Merit

According to Baldwin, the penny weeklies met the lower class's demand for fiction with "sensational and/or sentimental hack-writing" (28). In doing so, there emerged a "dichotomy between the popular taste for sensationalism and the establishment's fear of the debasing powers of such fiction that seems to have worked against the emergence of the short story in British magazines" (28). Baldwin is correct in his assertion about the establishment's fear of the effect of penny fiction on the lower and working classes. As we shall see later in this chapter, many middle- and upper-class reformers sought ways of using the popular taste for reading as a means of instilling middle-class moral and aesthetic values in the lower orders. However, there is no evidence to support his claim that this fear worked against the short story. If nineteenth-century critics blame any fiction for debasing the lower classes of society, they blame the serial novel.
Of the reviewers we have been discussing thus far, only two discuss the moral and aesthetic nature of the fiction in their periodicals. For Thackeray, it is not the fiction (as Baldwin suggests) that is offensive in these papers. Instead, it is the papers that describe men and manners. He finds the *Town*, the *Penny Age*, the *Fly*, and the *Shew-up Circle* "impudently blackguard and brazen" and full of "infamous ribaldry" and "obscenity" ("Half" 290). Altick more specifically describes these periodicals as "scandalous or pornographic papers" (346). For Collins, what is amazing about the serial stories in each of his papers is their "extraordinary sameness" (221). Yes, they contain "fierce melodrama," but it is coupled with "meek domestic sentiment" (221). "There seems to be an intense in-dwelling respectability in their dullness. If they lead to no intellectual result, even of the humblest kind, they may have, at least, this negative advantage, that they do no moral harm" (221). Wright does not discuss the fiction directly, and Payn's analysis of the fiction resembles that of Collins. He finds the stories contain no elements of sensation, dramatic interest, or impropriety. In the fifty samples he examines, the fiction "is as pure as milk, or at all events as milk and water" (149). Also like Collins, Payn does not comment on the short fiction but notes how the Answers to Correspondents section is a leading feature of the penny journal. Rather than wondering if the short story is filler—a charge often made against the short story's inclusion in middle-class periodicals—Payn wonders if some of the incredible questions in this section are actually fiction created by the editors to fill up a blank page (151).

Since it is likely that Collins was examining the *Family Herald*, the *London Journal*, and *Reynolds's Miscellany*, it is worth examining what other nineteenth-century critics write about the fiction in these periodicals. A contributor to the *British Quarterly Review* of 1859 includes these three periodicals as well as the *Leisure Hour, Home*
Magazine, Cassell's Illustrated Family Paper, Guide, and Welcome Guest in his analysis of periodicals published in London that claim to mingle recreation and instruction. The writer finds that they do not contain much information, but they have a lot of fiction. Moreover, it seems likely that they have been designed “more for the idle than the inquiring, and are calculated, upon the whole, to foster a desultory taste for reading rather than to stimulate investigation” (“Cheap” 329-30). It does not take much intelligence to put these periodicals together, and the periodicals themselves require little intelligence on the reader’s part. They impart no social or scientific knowledge or even knowledge helpful in getting through every day activities (“Cheap” 330-31). Yet in the end, he concludes,

there is something to be said on behalf of these lurid stories, after all; not for what they are, but for what they are not. There is no intentional travestie in them. The writers are in earnest. The stories are foolish, frivolous, childish, and occasionally stupidly wicked. But they are not conceived in a spirit of burlesque or anything better. (“Cheap” 40)

Later nineteenth-century critics review specific aspects of the Family Herald, the London Journal, and Reynolds's Miscellany because their circulations were so large. Hitchman’s survey of the periodical reading of the lower classes in 1881 finds that the Family Herald contains fiction that is “very good stuff of the second order” (“Penny Press” 390). Many three-volume novels are issued each year that fall far below the standard of most of the stories in the Family Herald. The tales are usually about the aristocracy, which does no harm to the readers of the story if they discover that the higher classes in their novels are as “vulgar and frivolous as themselves” (“Penny Press” 390). In another article appearing in the Quarterly Review, Hitchman describes the Family
Herald as “a very creditable specimen of the popular literature of the day” (“Penny Fiction” 165). As for the fiction in particular, Hitchman claims that it compares “favourably not merely with that which appears in magazines of its own class, but with the stories which adorn the pages of magazines of much greater pretension” (“Penny Fiction” 165). Margaret Dalziel characterizes the short stories in the magazines such as the Family Herald as highly sentimental but less sensational than the serials. Many of them are stories of domestic middle-class life. Common short story topics were lost fortunes, the hazards of ocean voyages, early death, the need for money to make a good marriage, the constraints of a bad marriage, the dependence of unmarried women on others, and family members seeking fortunes in other countries never to be heard from again. Some papers also ran more sobering stories about the misfortunes of sewing women and the evils of alcohol, but beneath all the stories and the serials alike remained “the assumption, never questioned, that romantic love is the chief topic of the writer and the most important thing in life” (32-34). In short, while the stories of the Family Herald may be written in a style expressing a stronger sense of the dramatic (or melodramatic), the topics of the stories emulate those of their middle-class counterparts.

Hitchman echoes Collins’s assertion that the fiction in all of these weeklies is the same generally, but he claims that the London Journal can be distinguished from the Family Herald by the more “gushing and sensational character of its fiction” (“Penny Press” 391). Many of the stories were written by J. F. Smith, the founder of “the ‘London Journal School’ of romance.” His followers include Charles Reade, Mrs. E. D. E. N. Southworth, Mrs. Henry Wood, and Pierce Egan the younger. Hitchman finds that the serial stories
certainly contained plenty of crime and not a little vice, but the criminal always came to grief in the end, and virtue was duly rewarded with wealth and titles and honour. The villains were generally of high birth and repulsive presence; the lowly personages were always of ravishing beauty and unsullied virtue. Innocence and loveliness in a gingham gown were perpetually pursued by vice and debauchery in varnished boots and spotless gloves. Life was surrounded by mystery; detectives were ever on the watch, and the most astonishing pitfalls and mantraps were concealed in the path of the unwary and the innocent. ("Penny Press" 391)

Generally, the same can be said about the *London Journal*'s short stories. They are full of gushing sentimentality, but they are more likely to take working or rural class characters as their subjects. Happy endings seem to be much less a requirement of their short stories, and, in fact, the lives of those characters who make mistakes end in tragedy. For instance, an innocent girl convinced by her lover to elope in spite of her father's warnings against the young man eventually loses her mind when she discovers that her husband is a thief and a murderer. Instead of living a quiet existence with her son after her husband's capture and execution, she wanders the streets of her village "a gentle maniac" ("Filial" 363). In another example, a young woman tries to use her power to control or "magnetize" the minds of others to save her alcoholic father from ruin in spite of warnings from a professional magnitizer that such an abuse of her power can bring her only sorrow. In the end, she places a man who has been robbing others in the village in a trance and takes him to the authorities. Unbeknownst to her, the man is actually her father in disguise. The inappropriate use of her power brings about his destruction, and the loss, albeit temporary, of the young woman's senses. Moreover,
even love between two innocent true lovers can end in tragedy. In one such story, a poor artist leaves his village to make his fortune so that he can be worthy of the woman he loves. When he returns a wealthy man, he finds the woman's parents have insisted that she marry another. The artist dies of a broken heart and leaves the woman a portrait he has painted of her. When she sees the portrait and hears of his fate, she loses her mind and soon follows him to the grave. These stories are melodramatic, sentimental, and aesthetically weak, but they contain some moral messages about obeying parents, using one’s talents wisely, and staying true to those worthy of love. While they may not provide the critical elements needed to inspire middle-class values, these London Journal stories certainly do no harm to their readers or to the prestige of the short story genre.

Of the three periodicals under discussion, critics have treated Reynolds's Miscellany most harshly. The criticism is aimed primarily at the serial novels rather than the short story. In fact, it would be difficult to find any elements in Reynolds’s short stories that distinguish them from those of the London Journal. The writers’ capacity for and style of writing is much the same, and, as with its competitors, Reynolds’s short stories offer some kind of moral lesson. The serial stories, on the other hand, have a slightly different character from the London Journal or the Family Herald. Margaret Dalziel finds that Reynolds’s serial stories, particularly those published between 1845-1850, strongly contrast with stories found in its rival penny periodicals (35). She claims that Reynolds’s scenes of cruelty, debauchery, and vice extend far beyond those of others. It was certainly a rival of the Family Herald and the London Journal at the time Collins wrote his article, and according to Altick its circulation in 1855 was 200,000 (394). A
contributor to the *Bookseller* of 1868 characterizes the novels Reynolds himself wrote as "undoubtedly mischievous in their character and tendency":

He deals not so much in the vulgar and ordinary incidents of murder, fire, and robbery, as in the sensational and exciting topics of love, seduction, persecution, and moral guilt. His tales are more likely to prove harmful, because of the talent employed in their construction, and the fluency with which they are written. Their very excellence, as specimens of literary work, is one of the main elements of their danger. The art which makes the life of a courtesan, or an actress, a life of ease, pleasure, and gay delight, is an art which can only be exercised with the greatest of caution, and in which the bane should always be accompanied by the antidote. In too many instances this clever writer has, we regret to say, administered the poison and forgotten the remedy—pandered to his readers' morbid love of excitement, without attempting to point the moral that should always accompany the descriptions of successful vice or splendid villainy.

(“Mischievous” 447-48)

This reviewer has added a new dimension to the criticism we have explored thus far. Those stories that are written badly but have a moral may not help the lower classes rise to new levels of cultural thinking, but they at least do no harm. Those papers like Thackeray's brazenly wicked pornographic periodicals are likely to appeal to readers who are already lost to a kind of life from which they will not escape. However, a well-written story without a clear moral message is a real danger. It could inspire members of this vast reading public to rise against middle-class values and culture.
Actually, the genre that generated the most negative critical discussion about a lack of moral and aesthetic value was the penny novelette, an “important constituent in the mental food—or rather poison—of the people” (Salmon 112). The Family Herald, the London Journal, Bow Bells and the London Reader published monthly supplements in the form of novelettes. Hitchman notes that other popular novelettes were the Illustrated Family Novelist, the Illustrated London Novelette, the Family Novelette, and the Lady’s Own Novelist. They were the size of the ordinary numbers of the weeklies. Bow Bells, for instance, consisted of sixteen large quarto pages, printed in double columns with three illustrations, equal to about 25,000 words or 100 pages of the ordinary three-volume novel. The Ladies’ Own Novelette offered two “novels” for a penny in issues of 32 pages comprising about 40,000 words or approximately 150 pages of a typical novel (Hitchman “Penny Fiction” 168). Hitchman claims that the novelettes related tales of the upper classes who are either “superhumanly wicked” or “superhumanly virtuous; the principal occupation of the former division is the corruption of virtuous girls of lower rank than their own, and the chief delight of the virtuous aristocracy is in raising the poor, but honest and beautiful girls to their own level by marrying them” (“Penny Press” 395). In general, they seem to be on a par with the stories in the penny periodicals, but according to Salmon, some of the novelettes “are positively vicious; others are foolish. All may be characterized as cheap and nasty” (112).

In all of the critical discussions of penny fiction, the short story genre is almost never mentioned. This critical silence about the short story demonstrates that the genre was not aligned with sensational fiction or the penny dreadfuls as Baldwin suggests. The short story is clearly overshadowed by the novel in these periodicals. If any genre should
be tainted by its appearance in the penny weeklies, it should be the novel, yet the majority of the writers in this study do not even find most of the supposed sensational serials terribly sensational. Instead, what critics ultimately find disconcerting about this cheap literature is not the generic content but what the seemingly endless amount of it might mean about the lower class.

Interventions in Reading

Fear of the vast quantity of cheap literature makes its way into discussions of reading interventions. Kelly Mays's study of “Reading and Victorian Periodicals” analyzes the debate in the second half of the century over the changing character of the reading public as it is expressed in Victorian periodicals. Mays notes that the increased productivity in the publishing industry combined with a significant increase in the number of readers and the amount of time they had to devote to reading created a sense of urgency about “the questions of how, why, and what readers were and should be reading” (165). Lectures, books, and periodicals insisted that reading was threatening the social fabric of the country, and solutions had to be found to curb bad reading practices (165-70). As one might expect, the short story is not directly included in these solutions. An examination of the arguments about the reading problem demonstrates a fear of reading cheap literature in general, and the penny serial novel specifically, but the short story is never distinguished as low or distasteful literature. However, its noticeable absence from the discussion is instructive, particularly because it could have offered a solution to at least some of the reading problems that middle- and upper-class educators were so anxious to address.
Victorian periodical writers identify several major reading problems. Most prevalent is the notion that novel reading has become an addiction. A writer for Temple Bar proclaims that reading has become a vice: “a vulgar, detrimental habit, like dram-drinking” (“The Vice of Reading” 251). Herbert Maxwell claims that one needs only to examine library lending reports for proof of this excessive novel reading. The reports clearly demonstrate that library patrons check out novels far more than any other category of book (1057). Reformers cite two causes for readers’ attraction to novels. First, Thomas Wright cites the sheer number of them. Thanks to the abundance of penny fiction serials and the penny dreadfuls, there is an “addiction to low and vitiating forms of reading.” In fact, “never before did the ranker forms of reading flourish so abundantly” (“On a Possible” 27). Second, novels are addictive because of their subject matter. Maxwell argues that novels offer an escape to those who are unhappy with their environment by providing relief in “contemplating an ideal society where tedium is unknown and disappointment is generally circumvented” (1057). He warns that it is unsafe to spend too much time with novels, for doing so will leave readers unprepared to face the difficulties they will have to encounter in their lives. Fiction teaches us that “life is nothing without love and marriage,” but real life is not “accomplished” with the end of a novel’s love passages. The minds of those who read only novels will be “enervated” and intellectually hampered when they have to deal with the realities of life (1059).

Both of these problems could have been addressed by incorporating the short story into the reading of the lower classes. Obviously, fewer pieces of fiction comprised of fewer pages would certainly reduce the amount of fiction to which readers could be exposed. More importantly, however, is how the short story could answer the argument against subject matter. Maxwell was concerned that the lower classes were reading too
much about love and the marriage plot and not enough about the kinds of things that had relevance in their own lives. As we shall see in the chapters that follow, the short story only sometimes dealt with love and marriage, and when it did, the reader is not always left with a happy ending. Much more reflective of what happens in the life of the common man, in the short story the heroine does not always make a good choice, and the relationship does not end in marriage. In fact, one of the parties may even die. Beyond the marriage plot, Gaskell and Oliphant wrote stories about how characters can deal with or even rise above being social outcasts. Even the ghost stories so popular toward the end of the century could stimulate discussion about moral and ethical issues. Readers were taught to foster good relationships with others in this life for mistakes could come back to haunt them (literally and figuratively) in the next.

Yet the short story could go so much farther than readjusting readers' understanding of personal relationships. It could also expand their knowledge in other ways. Reformer Thomas Wright argues that a moderate amount of well-directed reading could make the working classes in England cultured ("On a Possible" 26-29), and reading novels of the first order could actually provide cultural instruction. First-order novels are the embodiment of the thoughts and teachings of the most gifted literary minds, and as such they refine, elevate, and inform. They are also likely to induce collateral reading of other culture-giving works. Reading Walter Scott, for instance, is likely to make readers search for histories (29). Applying his collateral reading notion to education reform, Wright feels that the best way to achieve a popular culture through reading is to devise a more integrated curriculum. *Robinson Crusoe*, for instance, need not be only a reading book. It could also serve as a geography book (40-41). What Wright failed to recognize is how well the short story would have served his idea of an integrated curriculum.
Arthur Conan Doyle’s Sherlock Holmes stories could be instructive in both logic and attention to detail and memory development. More importantly to the classes so fearful of a lower class uprising, the Holmes stories could be instructive in the law, reinforcing the old adage that crime does not pay. Stories abound that could be useful in teaching not only geography but also the history and cultures of other countries. For example, Gaskell’s “Lois the Witch” teaches readers about the American witch hunts; Oliphant’s short story collection, *Neighbors on the Green*, teaches about life in small Scottish suburbs; many of LeFanu’s tales invite discussions of religious reform and Irish folklore; and Trollope’s *Tales of All Countries* provides a wealth of information about the customs and history of countries all over the world. Ghost stories raise points of discussion on English cultural issues such as spiritualism and mesmerism. Finally, Trollope, Dickens, and LeFanu have stories about the excesses of alcohol, a failing that middle-class reformers frequently conflate with the excesses of reading. Using the short story for culture instruction could have provided lessons in the excesses of both.

Another problem writers involved in the reading intervention debate identify is the bad habits that readers have developed. In his comparison of readers in 1760 with those of 1860, F. T. Palgrave notes that nineteenth-century readers read everything but read them only once; “a book is no more a treasure to be kept and studied and known by heart” (488). This image of people reading everything appears over and over again in the reading debate. Readers are often described as “devourers” of books (Harrison 505). Charles Allston Collins accuses most readers of “discursive and indiscriminate reading” (161-64). Even those who find time to read some masterpieces read them in a hurry without thought and reflection. As a result, only a “shadowy impression” remains after their perusal (Haultain 250). Women readers in particular, he argues, have developed
some bad reading habits because they have a penchant for distraction when trying to read. Rather than seriously studying a text, women interrupt their reading with knitting, exchanges of gossip, and reprimands of their children, thereby mixing up pieces of coherent text with various items of domestic intelligence. Not only is this a bad reading practice for women, but worse, they perpetuate it by modeling it for their children (162-64).

Much of the argument for bad habits is based upon the assumption that readers have a limited amount of time for reading. In England, in particular, since time is limited, reading should be focused and uninterrupted. As a contributor to Fraser's Magazine explains, "The sun never sets elsewhere upon a whole race of men who have been labouring without respite since the dawn." In England, he continues, "where we have plays, and concerts, and state pageantries, and anniversary dinners in abundance, the feeling of enjoyment is ever overcast by the heavy shadows of business. We are never entirely released from our daily responsibilities, our perpetual cares" ("Art" 725). University extension lecturer G. J. Goschen laments that giving sustained thought to a work has gone out of fashion because of the hurry of life and because of mental indolence. It is just too hard for people to think. As a result, Goschen advises that for reading and for thinking, readers should exercise "greater deliberation, more careful choice of material, more consecutiveness and continuity," and, above all, they should never hurry through a text (12).

The short story seems a natural solution for English citizens' poor reading habits resulting from a lack of quality reading time. As the contributor to Fraser's argues, England "should be the country for stories which condense into a few pages the essence of volumes; which realize in fiction the great economical maxim, by packing the largest
quantity into the smallest space” ("Art" 725). If reading reformers had only consulted Edgar Allan Poe, the first to elaborate on a theory of the short story, they too would have come to the same conclusion as the Fraser's contributor. Poe’s theory of the short story praises its brevity for the very thing reading reformers complained of. Because the short story requires only one-half hour to one or two hours to peruse, it can be read in one sitting. The advantage of its brevity is that readers are not likely to be interrupted by worldly interests and they can come away from reading a short story with a sense of the writer's full intention (61). The short story allows for greater deliberation, provides Goschen’s “consecutiveness and continuity,” and allows readers the time to read the text unhurriedly. It does what Frederick Wedmore calls an “amazing thing.” If well done, the short story “has become quintessence; it has eliminated the superfluous; and it has taken time to be brief” (408).

As Goschen’s admonition to “never hurry through a text” suggests, proponents of the bad reading habits theory were concerned that readers were not reaping the intellectual benefits of engaging themselves in what they read. The “habit of reading for mere reading’s sake, instead of for the sake of the stuff we gain from reading,” is “one of the worst and commonest and most unwholesome habits we have,” argues Frederic Harrison (492-93). Edward Dowden argues that the right kind of literature reveals “the widening possibilities of human life, of finer modes of feeling, dawning hopes, new horizons of thought, a broadening faith and unimagined ideals.” Moreover, he states, every great writer brings “his own personality with its unique mode of envisaging life and nature; and in each of us he creates a new thing—a new nerve of feeling or a new organ of thought; a new conception of life, or a new thrill of emotion” (702). The purpose of reading is to appropriate this new feeling, thought, or emotion for our own improvement
and the improvement of others ("Reading" 316). In other words, instructs Arnold Haultain, the most important habit to develop is to "[m]ake what you read your own. Not until what we read has become a part of our mental equipment, until it has been literally assimilated by the mind, made an integral and indivisible portion of our sum of knowledge and wisdom, is what we read of any practicable avail" (261).

The short story has the advantage over the novel of offering readers instructive subject matter and the time to finish and deliberate on the author's message without interruptions from the outside world to "annul" or "counteract" the total impression of the story (Poe 61). Had reading reformers consulted proponents of the short story, they would have found that reading the short story also provides an intellectual component that is unavailable to novel readers. First, says Poe, "the aim" of the short story is "truth" (62). The reader finds this truth expressed in the "slightest material" ("Art" 730) and in the briefest manner possible. The short story's brevity is achieved through adherence to the idea of "unity of impression," the theory that no word should be included in the story that does not contribute to its overall design (Matthews 73). "With its omissions, with the brevity of its allusiveness" (Wedmore 409), it requires a thoughtful and alert reader to understand the short story author's message. Unlike the novel, which frequently interrupts itself with long descriptions, long asides, or interpolated tales, the compression of the short story prevents discursive reading because it forces readers to think, and thereby make the story part of their "mental equipment" (Haultain 261).

In the minds of reading reformers, along with the intellectual benefit of readers engaging in what they read, is a corresponding material benefit. That is why it is so important for the working classes to be taught how to read the right kind of fiction. Alexander Strahan states:
Of all the amusements which can possibly be imagined for the working man, [...] there is nothing like reading. [...] It relieves his home of dulness or sameness, which, in nine cases out of ten, is what drives him to the ale-house, to his own ruin and his family's. It transports him into a livelier, and gayer, and more diversified and interesting scene; and while he enjoys himself there, he may forget the evils of the present moment, fully as much as if he were ever so drunk, with the great advantage of finding himself the next day with his money in his pocket, or at least laid out in real necessaries and comforts for himself and his family,—and without a headache. Nay, it accompanies him to his next day's work, and if what he has been reading be anything above the very idlest and lightest, gives him something to think of besides the mere mechanical drudgery of his everyday occupation—something he can enjoy while absent, and look forward to with pleasure. But supposing him to have been fortunate in the choice of his reading, what source of domestic enjoyment is laid open!

What a bond of family union! He may read the book or magazine aloud or make his wife read it, or his eldest boy or girl, or pass it round from hand to hand. All have the benefit of it—all contribute to the gratification of the rest, and feeling of common interest and pleasure is excited. Nothing unites people like companionship in intellectual enjoyment. It does more, it gives them mutual respect, and to each among them self-respect—that corner-stone of all virtue. (459)

As Strahan suggests, then, if the working classes can be taught to read the right kind of literature, they will benefit greatly. Their home life will be happier, they will not be
likely to drink excessively, they will have more disposable income, and they will be better citizens.

Significantly, Strahan’s desire for families reading together is exactly Dickens’s stated intent when he decided to start the first Christmas number of *Household Words*. In a letter to the Reverend James White, Dickens explains, “I propose to give the number some fireside name, and to make it consist entirely of short stories supposed to be told by a family sitting round the fire” (*Letters 6: 780*). Again echoing Strahan’s hopes for fiction, Dickens felt stories like those found in the Christmas numbers provided readers a release from the “workaday world” (Thomas 34-35). He expresses this idea in fiction in the words of Sissy Jupe. In *Hard Times* we find that short stories created the very kind of benefit that Strahan wished for working-class fiction. Sissy tells Louisa that she used to read *Arabian Nights* to her father: “They kept him, many times, from what did him real harm. And often and often of a night, he used to forget all his troubles in wondering whether the Sultan would let the lady go on with the story, or would have her head cut off before it was finished” (46). For Sissy’s father, listening to stories kept despair at bay just as Strahan hopes reading will keep alcohol out of the working man’s home. The stories also give Sissy’s father enough strength to go to work the next day and provide him something to occupy his mind. Thus, it seems an answer to the reading problem could have been found in Dickens’s text if only Strahan had taken the time to follow the advice of reading reformers like himself and consider and reflect on the truths penned in the text of the century’s greatest fiction writer.

In response to the charges that working class readers did not have access to the right kind of literature, a score of articles appeared that attempted to list just what these readers should be reading. The articles that generated the most discussion were Frederic
Harrison’s “On the Choice of Books” and Sir John Lubbock’s “On the Pleasure of Reading.” In spite of the possible solutions supplied by the short form, short stories are notably absent from these lists. In order to systematize reading, Harrison thinks it necessary to select “the greatest, of the best known, of those who cover the largest area of human history and man's common nature” (504). Those works selected should be “books accepted by the voice of all mankind as matchless and immortal” (506). Although short stories do not specifically appear on Harrison’s list, since he felt it was important to read all of an author’s body of work, the short stories of those authors on the list would theoretically be included. However, Sir John Lubbock’s list of the one hundred books most recommended by readers of masterpieces does not include any short stories, primarily because he omits works by living authors (250-51). A contributor to *Macmillan’s* explains that “[o]ne generation cannot decide upon the real worth of a book; only the lapse of time can prove whether it has elements that are imperishable” (Doubleday 113). As a result of this guiding principle, a new genre such as the short story had no opportunity for being included. In fact, the only English fiction on Lubbock’s list is Jane Austen’s *Emma* and *Pride and Prejudice*, Thackeray’s *Vanity Fair* and *Pendennis*, Dickens’s *Pickwick Papers* and *David Copperfield*, Lytton’s *Last Days of Pompeii*, George Eliots’s *Adam Bede*, Charles Kingsley’s *Westward Ho!*, and Scott’s novels (250-51).

These essays met with a great deal of criticism for two reasons. First, as the flurry of responses to the lists indicates, people’s personal tastes prevented any kind of standard agreement. This point was made particularly clear when Lubbock published his list, and nine of the *Pall Mall Gazette* correspondents had lists different from Lubbock’s. The nine different lists contained three hundred works not listed by Lubbock, and no single
book occurred on all the lists ("Mr. Frederic Harrison" 4-5). Second was that creating lists was meaningless without finding ways to get the literature to the readers. Edward Salmon observes that if literature were lying on the tables of working-class individuals, "they would often read, but they seldom sally forth into the highways and byways of the literary world to discover what they shall purchase" (116). Strahan argues that readers should be furnished with pleasing literature

—not written expressly for them as a class, but for all alike—and that the best of its kind. We shall soon find that they have the same feelings to be interested in the varieties of fortune and incident—the same discernment to perceive the shades of character—the same relish for striking contrasts of good and evil in moral conduct, and the same irresistible propensity to take the good side—the same perception of the sublime and beautiful in nature and art, when distinctly placed before them by the touches of a master—and, what is most of all to the purpose, the same desire, having once been pleased, to be pleased again. In short, we shall find that in the writings of our best authors we possess all we require to strike our grappling-iron into the working people's souls, and chaining them, willing followers, to the car of advancing civilization. (460)

While Strahan expresses the positive sentiment that the working class has the propensity to appreciate the artistry of master literary works, his image of the grappling-iron also demonstrates the desire of the middle class to find ways of controlling the lower orders. Hitchman believes the responsibility for exercising this control lies with the publisher. An enterprising publisher who pays close attention to the production, illustrations, and distribution of current cheap penny fiction periodicals could substitute good literature in
the penny number form and still make a profit ("Penny Fiction" 171). Salmon also charges the press with the responsibility of solving the working class reading problem. Because the working class is the chief patron of the press, the press should use its energy to awaken "higher ideals and the virtues of self-reliance and self-restraint" instead of "leading them astray, morally, politically, or socially" (117).

Interestingly, Hitchman's proposal is the one area in which the short story participates, albeit indirectly, in the reading debates. According to Hitchman, the following seven papers reached a circulation 1,250,000 to 1,500,000 weekly copies: Christian World, Christian, Christian Age, Christian Globe, Christian Union, Christian Herald, and Fountain (388). Like the weeklies discussed earlier in this chapter, these papers contained both serial and short stories, and while it can be argued that they did not meet Salmon's and Strahan's challenge to produce aesthetically pleasing literature of the first order, they at least provided a more wholesome kind of literature. The Leisure Hour (1852-1905), for instance, was created to drive out the evil of the "pernicious press" such as the London Journal and Reynolds's Miscellany by offering their readers something good (Green 74). The Sunday at Home provided "lighter religious literature for the young and uninstructed, and even for the wearied Christian in the hours of the Sabbath not devoted to more serious meditations" (Green 74). It carried a popular serial story called Jessica's First Prayer by Hesba Stretton (McAleer 207) that when bound as a novel sold 1,500,000 copies between 1867-69 (Altick 389). The Sunday at Home and the Leisure Hour received the most critical praise. A writer for the British Quarterly Review states that the Leisure Hour is an exception to the penny weeklies. "It is more solid, more in earnest in its work, and more trustworthy." Its fiction describes "every-day experience with ease and simplicity" ("Cheap" 344). As for the Sunday at Home, the writer thinks it
“is a work which cannot be too heartily commended to the homes of the middle orders and the labouring classes—not that there is any reason why it may not be found equally acceptable in the castles and mansions of the gentry” (344-45). In spite of such praise, however, Margaret Dalziel feels that “on the whole, it seems likely that among periodicals that aimed at reform of public taste, the success of religious publications was due to the support of the converted, while such non-religious ones as survived did so by their appeal to an essentially middle-class public” (76). Moreover, as with secular penny weeklies, the short story was not singled out as a genre significant to the success of the papers.

**Generic Indeterminancy: The Biggest Setback in the Short Story’s Evolution**

What becomes apparent from the study of the market for the short story and its place in reading intervention plans is its critical invisibility. Writers were experimenting with the short story’s form and pondering its possibilities, but neither they nor the critics were thinking systematically about its aesthetics. This critical silence coupled with the newness of the genre prevented reformers such as Harrison and Lubbock from including short stories on their lists of great literary works. Some twentieth-century critics suggest that it was British writers’ failure to theorize about the form of the short story that prevented it from gaining critical popularity before the 1880s. The most obviously available theory of the short story form appeared in 1842 in Edgar Allan Poe’s review of Nathaniel Hawthorne’s *Twice-Told Tales*. Poe compares the power of a good “short prose narrative” to that of a poem. Like the poem, it should require a half-hour to one or two hours to read. Anything longer deprives the reader of “a certain unique or single effect” that the skillful literary artist constructs in a tale (59-61). However, critics argue
that neither Poe's review (Harris, *British* 26) nor the publication in England of American short stories by Nathaniel Hawthorne, Edgar Allan Poe, Washington Irving, and James Fenimore Cooper seems to have affected British short story writers (Baldwin 29). The same is true of the European short stories by Nikolai Gogol, Ivan Turgenev, Gustave Flaubert, Guy de Maupassant, Johann Goethe, Ernst T. A. Hoffman, Heinrich Kleist, and August W. Schlegel that were translated and published in England (Baldwin 29). To claim that these writers had no influence on English writers seems hasty, however, especially since all were published in the same middle-class periodicals. In addition, there is evidence of contact between some of the authors. Trollope, for instance, met both Turgenev and Hawthorne (Hall 363, 227), and Collins considered J. F. Cooper one of the three "Kings of Fiction" (Clarke 201).

Unfortunately, because critics could not find evidence of adherence to a coherent theory of form, many of the stories that will be discussed in this study have been disparaged by twentieth-century literary circles. Some critics seem to be at such pains to prove that the short story is a lesser art form that they make assumptions completely unsupported by evidence. Norman Page, for instance, notes that critics of the twentieth century frequently describe Hardy's short stories as "potboilers" written "for the quick profits offered by magazine editors constantly in quest of material" (Introduction xi). These critics seem to have forgotten that it was important to Hardy, as it was to all authors, to make a profit from his novels as well. Moreover, these "quick profits" were usually very small when compared to novel-produced profits, so it seems Hardy would have made more profitable use of his time and energy by writing novels exclusively.

Walter Allen comments about Dickens's short prose that his stories "sometimes are as good as anything in the novels," but that they do not satisfy Poe's requirements. "Most
of them appeared in his own magazines, *Household Words* and *All the Year Round*, in which pride of place was taken by his novels in their serial versions; the shorter pieces were probably conceived of as little more than "fillers" (12). Allen is apparently oblivious to the fact that many of Dickens's short stories appeared in the special Christmas numbers that were made up exclusively of short stories. The fame of the main character in two of Dickens's Christmas numbers, Mrs. Lirriper, "swept London like a female Pickwick" (Glancy, *Books* xxvii). As for the stories appearing in the regular numbers of *Household Words* or *All the Year Round*, it seems absurd to call them "fillers." Granted, the serial novel whetted readers' appetites and compelled them to buy the next number, but that fact does not mean that the serial novel is all that readers of the magazines read. If that were true, there would have been no need to include stories, poetry, essays, or any other "fillers" in the magazines. LeFanu's practice of occasionally publishing novels that were expanded versions of his short stories\(^1\) has drawn criticism from Walter Houghton, who assumes that LeFanu regarded the short form as the "précis" of a later novel (23). One could just as easily claim that the superior work is the short story, but LeFanu had to give importance to the shallow and trivial, introduce flat characters, and add elaborate plot devices—in other words, add mass not art to his short story—to make money from his larger fiction. Writing in 1898, short story proponent Frederick Wedmore notes that in spite of the fact that the short story is in vogue in England, it is frequently made to suffer critically because of its brevity. The illogical arguments that these critics have put forth suggest that they have fallen victim to the

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\(^1\) "Chapter in the History of the Tyrone Family" (1839) became *Wyvern Mystery* (1869) and "Some Account of the Latter Days of the Hon. Richard Marston of Dunovan" (1848) became *A Lost Name* (1868).
same "size matters" assumption that had befallen their critical brethren from the century before them.

It is time for a re-examination of the Victorian short story. Even if we accept the argument that British short story writers pursued their own paths instead of following the tenets of the short story form laid down by Poe, we must ask, why? Why were novelists writing short stories? What were the writers of the short story trying to do? An 1856 article in *Fraser's Magazine* contradicts the claim that no one was theorizing about the English short story. In this article, the unidentified writer delineates the tenets of the short story.

It should not be very long, because the essential attribute which distinguishes a story from other modes of fiction is its brevity. It should not aim at grand effects, because grand effects must inevitably become ridiculous on a small scale. It should have nothing superfluous, for the best of all possible reasons, that it cannot afford space for superfluities. It should not make a severe strain upon the mental faculties, because people are not supposed to take it up for study, but for recreation. It should not put forward any show of pedantry, or make excursions into far-off regions of knowledge, because such impediments to the flow of the narrative interrupt the pleasure of the reader. (723-24)

This description of the short story seems more in touch with the actual practice of those writing the early British short story. As the next two chapters will argue, this description also suggests how writing a short story could be both confining and liberating, especially for those authors writing English novels.
Chapter 2

Writing within the Confines of the Short Story

In the last chapter I asserted that I could find very little discourse on the English short form published during the nineteenth century. Yet, in spite of this lack of a formal theory, British writers were thinking about the aesthetics of the short story. The way in which short stories were collected as well as what the short stories themselves reveal suggest that writers had some very definite ideas about the possibilities of the form. Close readings of their short stories indicate that Braddon, Collins, Dickens, Gaskell, LeFanu, Oliphant, and Trollope thematize the short story’s aesthetic in an economy of narrative and thematic confinement. This chapter focuses on how marketing strategies and the trappings of the novel helped create an economy of confinement as well as helped to define a short story theory.

This chapter’s divisions are organized by the location of the stories’ confinement. As the first section explains, authors often thematize the economy of narrative confinement in the framing devices created to link stories together in a collection. The tension between the framing device and the story frames confine the stories’ breadth and scope, especially if the stories were published separately and then collected at a later date. The second section locates confinement in the narrative voice. In these stories authors use the narrative voice to express the lack of time and space available for providing expository material. The last three sections of the chapter explain how stories express thematic confinement. Some express it through setting. Characters are confined to a specific spot from which they cannot leave. They may be locked in rooms, prison cells, or cellars. Other stories express thematic confinement through a kind of illness narrative.
In these stories, characters are confined because they are sick, injured, frozen with fear, or even mad. Finally, stories express thematic confinement in a significant moment. The moment may occur because of a character’s deliberate action or it may occur accidentally, but when it happens characters’ lives are brought to a halt and confined as a result of the moment. Through this economy of narrative and thematic confinement, we find authors expressing at least three of the form’s basic tenets: telling a story briefly enough for it to be read in a single sitting, compressing the story’s language, and focusing the story on a single event.

The Economy of Confinement and Framed Short Story Collections

When authors and publishers gathered up numbers of individually-published short stories for republication, they tended to market them as a volume or volumes resembling the format in which much Victorian fiction was published. Just as novelists would often publish their work in volume form once serial publication was complete, writers would select short stories published separately and republish them in collections. Writers often used a framing device to establish the mood and setting of individual stories, so it was not a large stretch of the imagination to develop a frame for a collection of stories, especially if making the collection seem more like a novel would encourage sales. An analysis of the relationships between the frames and the stories in some of these short story collections reveals how the frame not only confines them physically but also limits their interpretive possibilities.

Charles Dickens’s success with the Christmas numbers of Household Words and All the Year Round likely influenced authors’ decisions to use a framing device as a way of linking their short stories. The design of these publications is what Dickens
envisioned for the structure of Master Humphrey's Clock in 1840 (Glancy, "Framed" 56). The specially issued Christmas numbers collect six to eight stories, the first of which establishes the connection among the stories that follow. While Dickens wrote the first story, he asked other authors to contribute stories to complete the publication. The result was two or three stories written by Dickens and the remaining stories written by well-known authors such as Collins and Gaskell as well as by lesser-known writers. Dickens would frequently add some opening paragraphs to each of the individual stories to link them to each other and to the opening frame. Some of the story collections followed the English Christmas ghost story tradition, but others had little to do with Christmas themes.

The framing device worked both for and against the recognition of the short story genre. On the one hand, the device gave Dickens another format in which to create some of his most exceptional characters. Once such character is Mrs. Lirriper, the heroine of one of Dickens's most successful Christmas numbers, "Mrs. Lirriper's Lodgings" (All the Year Round 1863). This garrulous landlady serves as the catalyst for the beginning and ending frame stories encapsulating the other five stories of the number. The opening story relates how Mrs. Lirriper and Major Jemmy Jackman, another lodger, raise a child of a dead lodger whose husband had deserted her. The Major is devastated when young Jemmy goes away to school at age ten, so Mrs. Lirriper suggests that he write down the stories other lodgers have told him over the last thirteen years. When Jemmy comes home on vacation, the Major can share these stories with the boy. Each of the five stories that follows is introduced by the Major with an explanation as to how the lodger came to Mrs. Lirriper's house. Jemmy narrates the final story when he returns from school. According to Peter Ackroyd, the collection sold more than 200,000 copies. Everywhere Dickens turned, he "found the same enormous enthusiasm for his creation of the
benevolent lodging-housekeeper; one of his earliest biographers has also recorded the
'imense furore' which the story created” (936).

In fact, Mrs. Lirriper was so popular that Dickens decided to continue her story in
"Mrs. Lirriper’s Legacy,” the Christmas number for 1864. This time, the opening story
reveals that Jemmy’s natural father is dying in France and is asking to see Mrs. Lirriper
so he can give his belongings to her and Jemmy. The Major has continued to write
stories, and they take this second collection along to read in their French lodgings in the
evening. These stories—not what Jemmy’s father leaves behind—are the young man’s
real legacy. Thanks to the appeal of Mrs. Lirriper’s character, the short story was in
demand.

Yet even the delightful character of the landlady cannot disguise the obvious
tensions created by linking often disparate stories written by different authors. No matter
how creative the organizing frame, at times the machinations the editor had to go through
to make these stories fit simply do not work. For instance, in the sixth story of “Mrs.
Lirriper’s Legacy,” Dickens had to provide an elaborate explanation for why the story
was written in first person. He devised the following introduction:

[Introductory note by Major Jackman. The country clergyman and
his quiet and better than pretty wife, who occupied my respected friend’s
second floor for two spring months of four successive years, were objects
of great interest, both with my respected friend and with me. One evening
we took tea with them, and happened to speak of a pretty willful-looking
young creature and her husband—friends of theirs—who had dined with
them on the previous day. “Ah!” said the clergyman, taking his wife’s
hand very tenderly in his; “thereby hangs a tale. Tell it to our good
friends, my dear.” “I can address it, Owen,” said his wife, hesitating, “to
nobody but you.” “Address it then, to me, my darling,” said he, “and Mrs.
Lirriper and the Major will be none the worse listeners.” So she went on
as follows, with her hand resting in his all the time. Signed, J. Jackman.]  
(40-41)

The actual story, then, begins with the second paragraph which starts with the first-person
phrase, “The first time I saw you again . . .” (41). The maneuver is jarring at best. The
link is more likely to draw attention to the fact that these are disparate stories than to
maintain the sense of continuity it was designed to produce.

A similar strain on the linking frame is produced in Gaskell’s story of “The Ghost
in the Garden Room” in “The Haunted House,” the title for the All the Year Round
collection of 1858. In this story sequence, a group of friends live together in a
supposedly haunted house for three months. At the end of their stay, the guests are to
report to the others what kind of spirit haunts their rooms. In Gaskell’s linking frame,
readers are asked to accept that the tale they are reading was told by the ghost of a judge
to the narrator who then repeats it to the company. In the words of A. B. Hopkins, the
linking frame is “a decidedly clumsy bit of machinery” (258).

Two of the most notable contributors to the Dickens Christmas numbers, Wilkie
Collins and Elizabeth Gaskell, followed Dickens’s example and published collections of
their own short stories with linking frames. They too had difficulties confining their
stories to the shape of the novel. Early in his writing career, Collins’s mother gave him a
diary of reminiscences about her life with Collins’s father, the diary which was to
become Collins’s short story collection After Dark. After working with his mother’s
manuscript and talking it over with Dickens, Collins decided that his mother’s tales
needed a more coherent story to make all the incidents hang together. “As Wilkie told his mother, ‘strangers could not know that the thing was real—and novel readers seeing my name on the title-page would expect a story’” (Clarke 78-79). However, Collins did not turn his mother’s reminiscences into a novel. Instead, Collins turned his mother’s diary into four short stories and one novella published individually in Household Words between 1852-55. He then collected these five works and wrote another short story to create the collection After Dark, published in 1856 (Clarke 79).

To unify the volume, Collins devised a framing narrative to weave the seemingly disparate stories of After Dark into sustained entertainment. The first story, “A Terribly Strange Bed,” was originally published with a frame in which a client relates the story to a portrait painter during the course of a sitting. The rest of the stories had no such opening frame. In the collection, Collins elaborated on the frame of the first story, having a variety of clients relate their stories to a portrait painter, William Kerby, during the course of various sittings. However, Collins complicates this very straightforward framing device by placing an additional frame outside the original portrait-painter frame. This extra frame is created through the character of the painter’s wife, Leah. In the opening pages of After Dark, leaves from Leah’s diary explain that the stories are being collected because William has developed an eye infection and cannot paint. To earn money during his illness, his wife asks William to tell her these stories which she records and plans to publish. Leah is so busy taking care of the house and children during the day that the only time left for writing down her husband’s stories is “after dark.”

Following her diary entries and preceding all of the stories are prologues narrated by William to explain how he came to hear each story. Following four of the stories are epilogues in which William makes some closing remarks. The book ends with more
entries in Leahs's diary that inform the reader how the book was accepted for publication and that plead to the reader to buy the book so their bills can be paid.

This additional frame is superfluous, and, on some level, Collins feels its restrictions. In the preface to After Dark he admits that he has

purposely kept these two portions of the book within certain limits; only giving, in the one case, as much as the wife might naturally write in her diary at intervals of household leisure; and, in the other, as much as a modest and sensible man would be likely to say about himself and about the characters he met with in his wanderings. (xix)

In other words, Collins is imposing the short story tenets of brevity and conciseness upon the frame, but that is precisely what makes it fail. While Leah's character is well-suited for a short story, her tale suffers from the interruptions of the other stories. As a framing device, her diary fails because the story is too self-contained to tie all of the stories together. Leah's diary contains no thread to weave through the fabric of the collection, and for "a structure of this kind to be successful, it is imperative that some character, or at least some strain of feeling should be common to all its parts" (Brockington vii). In the frame Collins is trying to give the reader a glimpse of "that artist-life" he had not satiated in Hide and Seek. "This time," he writes, "I wish to ask some sympathy for the joys and sorrows of a poor traveling portrait-painter" (xix). The story idea, sadly, is confined to the framing device, and it fails as a linking mechanism and as a short story.

A comparison between a story's first publication and its republication in a collection can provide readers with insights into the kinds of choices authors such as Collins faced when trying to confine a story within a frame narrative sequence. The original stories had to be revised, and even though these alterations might be very slight,
the effect they have on the interpretative possibilities of the story can be significant. This is true, for instance, of *After Dark*’s “A Stolen Letter.” The story first appeared as “The Fourth Poor Traveller” in the 1854 Christmas number of *Household Words* entitled “The Seven Poor Travellers.” In both versions of the story, a lawyer narrator relates how Frank Gatlfie comes to his law office seeking help in a bribery case. A man by the name of Mr. Davager has presented Frank’s fiancée with a letter of contrition written by her father to a man he had wronged in his business affairs. The letter admits a forgery, and although her father had paid all of his debt and had been forgiven by the man he had wronged, the knowledge of his disgrace would revoke the blessing Frank’s father had given to his son’s marriage. Davager wants £500 or he will send the letter to the newspaper. Frank hires the lawyer to find the letter, in which case he will earn the blackmailer’s money. If the lawyer cannot locate the letter, he will deliver the £500 to pay Davager.

The most remarkable change made to the original Christmas story occurs in the character of the teller. In the frame for the Christmas collection, six travelers are invited to come in for lodgings and a meal on Christmas night. In exchange for this gift, each one must tell a story after dinner. The first two paragraphs of the original story of the stolen letter establish the character of the lawyer narrator. He informs his group of listeners that he had been a lawyer until two years ago. How he lost his profession and his fortune, he will not tell, but he is so poor now that his former footman will not even shake hands with him. As he tells his story, the reader finds the narrator wily, but lovable. He has no difficulty using somewhat underhanded yet clever methods of finding the letter, and readers can easily speculate that these practices might have been the cause
of his professional downfall. He also clearly comes from a lower-class background. When he is not speaking in the jargon of his trade, his words are common, unscholarly.

To include this story in *After Dark*, the major difficulty for Collins was to change the narrator’s character from that of a poor unemployed lawyer to that of a lawyer who can afford to have his portrait painted. To accomplish this end, the first two paragraphs of the story in the Christmas collection have been dropped from the story in the *After Dark* collection and replaced with a prologue that explains how the painter was commissioned to paint the lawyer’s portrait. In addition, all references to the other travelers have been replaced with references to the painter. The result is that the lawyer is now Mr. Boxsious, a “great local celebrity” who has been instrumental in “securing the prosperity of the town” (44). The “Municipal Authorities and Resident Inhabitants” of Tidbury-on-the-Marsh have commissioned a life-size oil portrait to commemorate his contributions. The behavior of this new incarnation of the lawyer is inconsistent with the behavior of the lawyer in the story of the stolen letter. Mr. Boxsious is portrayed as a high-strung, glib, opinionated windbag who could not possibly be clever enough to outsmart Davager and retrieve the stolen letter. Readers will find themselves agreeing with Mr. Kerby that his sitter has “odd manners and language” (48), but unfortunately the oddness stems not from the character himself but from the disconnect between the original story and the obligation to confine it within a frame to support its republication in novel-like format.

The difficulty of sustaining coherence between the linking frame and its tales is not resolved any more easily when the author creates several story tellers to link the tales in the story collection. Collins’ framing narrative in *The Queen of Hearts* (1859), for instance, is just as creative and cumbersome as the framing narrative of *After Dark*. The
narrator of the opening frame is one of three crusty old bachelors, brothers who are living in a seven-story tower, once the fortress of a Welsh chieftain, miles away from any town or village in South Wales. The gentlemen find themselves in the position of having to entertain a beautiful twenty-year-old lady well enough to keep her from becoming bored and leaving them before the arrival of the narrator’s son. It is the son’s plan to ask the woman to be his wife. In Scheherazade-like fashion, the brothers tell her stories.

While the characterization of the brothers is every bit as remarkable as that of Dickens’s Mrs. Lirriper, the stories lose some of their force because of the disconnect between the narrator’s description of his brothers’ characters and the stories they tell. “Brother Morgan’s Story of the Dead Hand” is a good example. Originally published in *Household Words* in 1857 as “The Dead Hand,” it is a doctor’s story of an encounter with an unusual patient. The doctor’s friend Arthur is forced to spend the night in a hotel room with a dead body or have no place to stay on a rainy night. When the supposedly dead man’s hand falls over the side of the bed, the doctor is called. The conversation that then takes place between the doctor, Arthur, and the ill man causes the doctor to suspect that the ill man is the illegitimate son of Arthur’s father. Moreover, he suspects that both Arthur and the ill man are in love with the same woman. The stranger eventually releases the woman from his prior claim so she can marry Arthur. Ten years after Arthur’s encounter with the supposedly dead hand, the same ill man, now calling himself Mr. Lorn, applies to the doctor for work as his medical assistant. Mr. Lorn works with the doctor for several years, and they form a very close friendship, but he never says anything of his past life to confirm the doctor’s suspicions.

The frame attached to this story in *The Queen of Hearts* attributes the tale to an episode from Brother Morgan’s life in his early years as a physician. However, in spite
of the many years since the story is supposed to have occurred, the doctor in the story seems nothing like what we are told about Morgan. The doctor in the story is a dedicated physician. He expresses deep concern about his patients and develops friendships with those he must nurse over an extended period of time. He is also discreet, never telling his suspicions to Arthur, Arthur’s wife, or Mr. Lorn. Furthermore, his need to hire an assistant suggests that he has had some degree of success in developing a practice.

According to the frame story, although Morgan gained a moderate independence through his practice, he was never a great doctor because of his lack of professional grace. The ladies did not like him because he was ugly and smelled of smoke, but worst of all, “he was the most formidably outspoken teller of the truth, as regarded himself, his profession, and his patients, that ever imperiled the social standing of the science of medicine” (2). Morgan has always viewed “with the profoundest contempt the learned profession by which he gained his livelihood” (15). In fact, since he has come to live with his brothers in the tower, he has begun writing “a voluminous treatise, intended, one of these days, to eject the whole body corporate of doctors from the position which they have usurped in the estimation of their fellow creatures.” This work is to be called “An Examination of the Claims of Medicine on the Gratitude of Mankind. Decided in the Negative, by a Retired Physician” (15). The story of “The Dead Hand” told by Morgan would be a very different story from the one we read. Morgan would likely be too busy expounding upon the negative aspects of his profession to note the connection between the ill man and Arthur. Even if he had discovered the truth, he would have been unable to squash his outspoken nature and keep it a secret. Moreover, the doctor in the story nurses Arthur’s wife through a long illness. It is not likely that Morgan could have developed a long-term relationship with Arthur’s wife given the general attitude he inspired in women.
Such a break in the linking mechanism and the story draws attention to the fact that there is an artificial device chaining these stories together.

Elizabeth Gaskell, too, experienced difficulties planning her short stories within the confines of linking frames. Gaskell published *Round the Sofa*, a two-volume collection consisting of a novella and five short stories in 1859. All but the last story appeared originally in periodicals before they were published in the collection. Gaskell introduces the collection through the narrator Miss Greatorex, a young woman who, along with other friends, has gathered around the sofa of an elderly invalid, Margaret Dawson, in her Edinburgh home. The narrator persuades Mrs. Dawson to tell the story of her youth and her friendship with Lady Ludlow. The result is the novella, *My Lady Ludlow*, in which the elderly woman agrees to tell this story on the condition that each group member follows in turn and tells his or her own story. Miss Greatorex provides the links that explain how each storyteller comes to narrate his or her story.

Gaskell’s assignment of the stories to their narrators is better managed than Collins’s. The variety of the subjects and the differences in language are appropriate to each narrator. They are also loosely linked thematically. As Edgar Wright points out, in all of these stories, “the emphasis is ultimately on the integrity of character in the face of social or emotional pressure. The narratives develop as problems of conduct created by circumstances, placed within detailed settings of local life and custom” (ix). There is one noticeable break in the chain, however. The last story of the collection, “The Half-Brothers,” is supposed to be an account of Squire Preston’s childhood. It essentially relates the abuse of his half brother by everyone in the family, including the squire. In

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2 As a marketing strategy to make it seem like a new book, Sampson and Low republished exactly the text of *Round the Sofa* in a one-volume edition in 1861 under the title *My Lady Ludlow and Other Stories*. References in this study are to this later edition.
spite of his ill treatment, his half brother gives his life to save the squire's. As A. B. Hopkins points out, since "the story involves the relation of intimate personal matters, a family conflict that reflects little credit on the narrator, its assignment to the squire looks like an ineptitude" (255). Because "The Half-Brothers" is the only previously unpublished story in the collection, Hopkins speculates that it was inserted at the last moment to add bulk (254-55). John Sharps comes to the same conclusion because the narrator in the frame is a Westmoreland squire, but his story has a Cumberland setting. He asks, "If 'The Half-Brothers' had been written when the Round the Sofa compilation was being put together, surely Mrs. Gaskell would have given it a different location?" (312).

Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu also felt obliged to republish some of his short stories in collections with frame sequences. In a Glass Darkly (1872) cleverly presents three short stories and two long stories originally published in various collections and periodicals between 1851 and 1872\(^3\) as cases collected by Dr. Martin Hesselius, a noted physician, and now presented to the reader by Dr. Hesselius's literary executor. The narrator explains that Hesselius has left him the job of sorting and indexing all of his papers for collection and publication in several volumes. While sorting through the papers, the assistant finds that sometimes Hesselius writes in two different personae. In one, he describes what he sees and hears in narrative form and then comments on the narrative as one would expect a doctor to do. Alternatively, Hesselius relies on narratives contained

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\(^3\)Original publication of these stories was as follows: "Green Tea" originally published in four parts in All the Year Round, Oct. 23-Nov. 13, 1869; "The Familiar" originally published as "The Watcher" in 1851 in LeFanu's Ghost Stories and Tales of Mystery; "Mr. Justice Harbottle" originally published as "The Haunted House in Westminster" in Belgravia, Jan. 1872; "The Room in the Dragon Volant" originally published in five parts in London Society, Feb.-June, 1872; and "Carmilla" originally published in four parts in Dark Blue, Dec., 1871-March, 1872.
in letters sent to him by those who desire his professional opinion and comments on them. The narrator has decided to publish those narratives that strike him as “of a kind to amuse or horrify the lay reader with an interest quite different from the peculiar one which it may possess for an expert” (6). Each story has a prologue in which the medical secretary informs the reader of some of the particulars about how Dr. Hesselius acquired the narrative. In the periodical publications, Hesselius and his medical secretary/editor appear as characters only in the first story, “Green Tea.” In the remaining four stories, their characters have been added to serve as a framing device to connect the stories of the collection.

Of the five collections discussed in this section, Le Fanu’s collection is the most aesthetically coherent, primarily because the stories are linked not only by a clever framing device but also by their supernatural themes. In all the stories, the characters are being pursued, either by a supernatural agent or a human agent. “Green Tea” is the story of Jennings, a man who drinks a great deal of green tea and is frightened by a spirit-monkey that appears with increasing frequency. In “The Familiar,” Captain Barton is constantly dogged by a “watcher” resembling a crewman who died as the result of Barton’s severe punishment. “Mr. Justice Harbottle” is the tale of a judge haunted by the recipients of his unjust sentences of death. Beckett in “The Room in the Dragon Volant” is pursued by thieves for his money. “Carmilla,” the vampire, has watched Laura, her intended victim, since childhood. In each case, the result of the pursuit plays such havoc with the narrators’ minds that all of them perceive that they are ill, and as a result, their cases come to the attention of Dr. Hesselius. At some point, all of the major characters in the In a Glass Darkly stories are confined to inaction either through fear or through drugs. Jennings, Barton, and Harbottle are eventually frightened to death; Beckett falls
under the influence of a drug that immobilizes him but still allows him to see and hear all that goes on; and Laura is unable to move when under the vampire’s spell. As we shall see in the next section, illness is one of the confinement metaphors that appears throughout the Victorian short story, and it serves an important role in the development of a theory of the genre.

**Short Stories Troped by Confinement**

Whether one believes that the short story emerged as a new genre in the Victorian period or developed slowly out of a tradition dating back to Boccaccio, an appreciation that it is something different from other genres is certainly expressed by the British novelists writing short fiction in the nineteenth century. This awareness is troped as confinement, and it appears in numerous ways. One of the most obvious tropes appears in the expressions of the narratorial voice in the short story’s linking frames. Other direct expressions of confinement appear in narratorial remarks about what can and cannot be included in a tale, a practice Trollope in particular has a hard time resisting. If the narrative voice is not expressing a sense of confinement in the storytelling process, the story expresses it thematically. A survey of the stories written by Mary Elizabeth Braddon, Charles Dickens, Elizabeth Gaskell, Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu, Margaret Oliphant, and Anthony Trollope suggest that the theme of confinement falls into three categories: confining spaces, confining illnesses, and confining moments. While the categories are not mutually exclusive, one often dominates when two or more confinement metaphors are at work.
Expressing Confinement in the Narrative Voice

Framing individual stories was a common practice for short story writers. The idea for the frame sequence in both Collins's *After Dark* and Le Fanu's *In a Glass Darkly* arose from the frame of an individual story published prior to the collection. Even later writers such as Rudyard Kipling, who made his reputation as a short story writer rather than as a novelist, sometimes use a frame to introduce single stories. The writers in this discussion did not theorize about the employment of the frame, but a French contemporary sheds some light on its intended effect. As Valerie Shaw explains,

Maupassant [...] frequently used framing devices to give an anecdotal flavour to his tales or, where the topic was especially horrific, to leave open an exit route back into normality. [...] As a general rule, the frame of a Maupassant story can be detached without affecting the story's meaning, its primary purpose being to establish mood economically and to put the reader in a receptive "frame of mind"—itself an apposite phrase.

(83)

In the nineteenth-century British short story, the frame does more than put the reader in a receptive "frame of mind." It works to define the short story as something apart from the novel, holding readers as willing hostages to the narrator's story.

At times, narratorial anxiety about the way the frame confines its tales appears within the stories. In the first story of "The Haunted House," the narrator explains that part of the reason the house is believed to be haunted is that when it was built each room had a bell wired to it. If an occupant needed something, he could pull the wire and the bell would ring downstairs to the servants. Each bell is labeled with the name of the room. After the house became haunted, these bells ring even though there are no
occupants in the rooms. The bell that rings the most is the one attached to Master B’s room. After the ringing bell disturbs the narrator one too many times, he breaks the bell off the wire in a state of anger: “I hope I may never again be in a state of mind so unchristian as the mental frame in which I lived for some weeks, respecting the memory of Master B” (4). The irony is that this “mental frame” toward the memory of Master B is the basis for the frame’s creation. This event initiates the confinement of the narrator’s friends to the haunted house in an attempt to investigate its ghosts. Following the frame narrator’s comment is the comment of the narrator of the third story, “The Ghost in the Double Room,” who relates how the shaking he received during the train ride to the haunted house seems to have made him ill: “How long this malady had lain concealed in my frame, and by what accident of time or temperature, it became again evolved, I had no means of judging, but by the time the train arrived at Dover I was in the throes of acute ague” (14). Here, the word “frame” resounds on several levels and links framing to the notion of confinement. The story is about the events that result from the narrator’s illness. This illness, then, is the story, and it is a story confined within the storyteller’s physical frame, until it evolves into one of the stories told within the frame of “The Haunted House.” Finally the fourth tale, “The Ghost in the Picture Room,” is a poem derived from the picture in the room encased in an “ancient frame” (19) hanging above the hearth. The painting depicts a young nun shrouded in shadow. Her facial expression inspires the narrator to recall a legend that teaches that one should not be haunted by regrets about what life could have been. The painting may be framed, but the story is the explanation of what the painting means to the narrator, thereby making the painting and the story one. The story of the framed painting is also the explanation of what haunts the room. Hence, regret is the ghost in “The Ghost in the Picture Room.”
The anxiety about the frame in these instances is likely a result of the emphasis Dickens placed on its role in the collection. Dickens had given instructions to the contributors to write stories told by visitors to the house. The stories were to tell of the ghostly experiences during the evenings in their rooms, but the stories were also supposed to reveal that the ghosts haunting their rooms were actually the ghosts of their past (Glancy, “Framed” 63). Upon receiving these stories from the contributors, Dickens complained to Forster that “as yet not a story has come to me in the least belonging to the idea (the simplest in the world; which I myself described in writing, in the most elaborate manner)” (Letters 9: 169). Given Dickens’s disappointment with the stories and the demands they placed on his editorial skills, the narrator’s “mental frame” takes on additional significance. Dickens’s attempts to fit the stories within the confines of the frame’s theme were frustrated by the contributors. The opposite may have been true as well. George Augustus Sala and Adelaide Anne Procter, the writers of “The Ghost in the Double Room” and “The Ghost in the Picture Room,” could have been frustrated by trying to enclose their stories within Dickens’s thematic framework. Hence, the anxiety about the confining frame surfaces within their stories just as it does in Dickens’s frame series.

One of the functions of the frame is to alert readers that they will not find the life story of Pip or a description of Middlemarch society delineated in the pages to come. It cues readers that they are reading a shorter text, or, as in the case of the collections, a group of short texts. Without a frame to alert the reader, writers sought other methods of informing readers that what they would find on the pages they were about to peruse was something different from the novel their reading experience. Many writers used a direct
narrative comment to prompt the reader, but, as with the frames, the narratorial voice reveals the anxiety created by the confinement of writing the short form.

This anxiety is most obviously expressed in direct comments about the size of the story readers are about to read. The Trollopian narrator, for instance, often announces that we will find our reading experience confined to “a little story” or a “little history.” In an attempt to distinguish one of his stories from his longer works, LeFanu entitles it “A Chapter in the History of a Tyrone Family.” It is a “brief tale” (215) that delineates only those incidents that significantly marked the history of the family. Margaret Oliphant adds another dimension to the narratorial anxiety about size in the paragraph following the opening dialogue of “John”:

She had arrived there quite by accident in the first grief of her widowhood, with a pathetic story, as was commonly told and reported. [...] I am not aware that any one had heard this story from her own lips. Certainly John had never heard it; but he understood somehow, as everybody else did in Cagnes, that this was his mother’s story. So many things there are in the world which have come into the common mind somehow, exist by some vitality of their own, and do not need to be re-told. John would have gone to the stake for it, and so would half the population of Cagnes, that his father was a sailor and died before he was born. What then, did this ridiculous little Jean, Jean au Meunier, the miller’s son, mean by his ridiculous story? (322)

The opposing stories described here are not only “little,” but also one is “pathetic” and the other is “ridiculous.” Clearly, it is what is reiterated as “the ridiculous story” that readers will discover in the upcoming pages. The young boy Jean informs his listener
that John’s father is indeed alive and has just arrived in town. The story turns out to be the true story of John’s parentage, but Oliphant’s language confines or marginalizes the story. It is both ridiculous and told by a ridiculous little narrator from the working class, which, perhaps accounts for its sensational nature. Anxiety about the story’s slightness marginalizes it to a history that cannot boast the artistic claims of the novel.

Trollope’s approach to alerting readers about the different expectation they should have for the short story is to express a narratorial concern with the limited space for telling a tale. For Trollope, this concern is expressed in things left unsaid. In “The Courtship of Susan Bell,” the narrator claims that he cannot spend a great deal of time describing “the merits and beauties of Hetta and Susan Bell” because he is “somewhat closely restricted” in the number of pages he can produce (157). The narrator also suggests that passages describing feelings that readers can easily imagine on their own are not necessary. For instance, when Susan’s father dies, the narrator remarks, “How the widow grieved when the lord of her heart and master of her mind was laid in the grave, I need not tell” (156). When the time comes for Susan’s brother-in-law to inform Aaron, her lover, that in his present situation he is not an appropriate suitor for Susan, the narrator comments, “Sons and daughters as well as fathers and mothers will know very well what he said; so I need not repeat his words” (191). In “The Turkish Bath” the narrator states that any further description of his interview with a writer would be repetitive: “The reader need not be troubled with a minute narrative of the circumstances as they occurred during the remainder of the interview. What had happened before was repeated very closely” (20). It appears that in Trollope’s short stories room does not exist for description and conversations that do not move the story forward.
Trollope takes the expression of the self-conscious concern with limited time, space, or necessary information to its extreme in “Relics of General Chassé,” for the entire story is about not telling. The tale is a humorous “little history” (204) about Reverend Augustus Horne and his traveling companion, George, who narrates the story. They make a trip to Antwerp to visit the site of the battle for Belgium’s independence. However, the story is not about the revolution or its aftermath. As the narrator explains, “It boots not here to describe the effects which gunpowder and grape-shot had had on the walls of Antwerp” (206). It is a story of a more personal nature. They are taking a tour of General Chassé’s private chambers when they run across a pair of the general’s trousers. Mr. Horne notices that the general was of considerable girth like himself, so he tries them on. He no sooner has the pants on when they hear a group of ladies approaching. The men manage to hide in another room, but in his haste, Mr. Horne leaves his own pants behind. Thinking that Mr. Horne’s pants belong to the general, the ladies decide to cut them into pieces and distribute them among themselves with the goal of making souvenirs out of them. Mr. Horne might not have found himself in this situation had George been able to tell the rector that it was clearly impossible that the pants would fit. All George can say is that he thinks Mr. Horne is doing the “good living of Ollerton insufficient justice” (209) if he thinks he can successfully wear the general’s pants. Nor does George ever name this article of clothing. When they first discover the pants, George refers to them as “that virile habiliment to which a well-known gallant captain alludes in his conversation with the posthumous appearance of Miss Bailey, as containing a Bank of England 5l. Note” (208). Afterwards, the trousers are referred to as “what’s-the-names” (208), “article of the great man’s wardrobe” (208), “regimentals” (209), “devoted goods” (211), “vestment” (213), and, of course, “relics” (213).
On another level, "The Relics of General Chassé" is a castration tale. George cannot name the pants because they cover the reverend's unmentionable maleness. The woman with the scissors is a "harpy" who picks up the "devoted goods" of George's companion and gashes them "[d]own from the waistband, through that goodly expanse" (211). She has "fierce-looking eyes" and an "indescribable something" which convinces George that "she had never known—could never know—aught of the comforts of married life" (212). She is quite willing to do what is "improper" (214), make "that unkind cut" (211), and then ask, "'Well, who's for having a bit?'" (213). The three ladies are quite excited about obtaining a bit of the material. The two maidens, who request fabric for a pincushion and pen wiper, have "fresh red cheeks" (212), and their mother, "hot and scarlet with exercise" as she feels "the extremities" of the minister's "property" (212), asks for "that portion of the affair which usually sustained the greater portion of Mr. Horne's weight" (214-15) to make a purse. The incident is loaded with sexual innuendo heightened by the fact that George will not directly identify the rector's "property."

However, there is still more of the story that George cannot tell. Unfortunately, the general's pants are not big enough for the rector, and with his own pants in ruin, Mr. Horne has nothing to wear back to the hotel. The rector's horror at his situation is yet another thing the narrator cannot narrate: "Here I must be excused if I draw a veil over his manly sorrow at discovering what fate had done for him" (216). Mr. Horne has lost both his pants and his manliness, and the narrator must return to their hotel, retrieve a cloak, and bring it back to the waiting Horne before they can leave the general's apartments. In the meantime, the reverend "began to be afraid that the story would get abroad, and he then and there exacted a promise" that George would "never tell it during
his lifetime” (217). Once they have returned to the safety of their hotel rooms, the two men are able to laugh about their adventure and fantasize about “exposing” the ladies’ “blunder,” but fear that in so doing they will “compromise” the rector (218). However, the narrator explains, “all was not over yet” (218).

George has the opportunity to encounter the ladies again. The next day, back in Brussels, George visits his cousins who are having a little dinner party. The guests turn out to be none other than the ladies who developed such a liking for the rector’s pants. When the conversation drifts toward the relics they found in General Chassé’s apartments, George’s cousin questions the origin of the cloth, pointing out that it was not likely that the general would have pants made of the kind of cloth and design the ladies had in their possession. “So much she said, and something more, which it may be unnecessary that I should repeat; but such were her eloquence and logic that no doubt would have been left on the mind of any impartial hearer” (231). To discommode the ladies, George had merely to add that he had heard a story about a gentleman visiting the site who had lost his pants to a pair of scissors and was now hoping to find the culprits and punish them.

Ultimately, George has told a story about a story that he cannot tell. First, as the title suggests, this tale is a story about the acquisition of the relics of General Chassé. Yet, this story has not been told because no one ever really acquires the relics. Once the ladies learn of their error, they toss away the cloth souvenirs, fearing they will be punished for taking them. It is also a tale about a fat man who loses his pants to a souvenir hunter’s pair of scissors. However, this story is never told either, for Mr. Horne is never called fat and the trousers are never identified as trousers. Between the lines, the story of the slashed trousers is also a castration story, but this too is never related because
George will not use the words to identify which of Mr. Horne’s attributes the lady felled. Finally, it is a tale about revenge that cannot be told without compromising Mr. Horne. Yet George is able to make the ladies aware of their “blunder” without ever identifying the rector. In the end, George has kept his promise of secrecy, for the story of the relics of General Chassé has not been told.

Expressing Confinement Thematically

Confining Spaces

If some of the stories in this study demonstrate a consciousness of limited space through the narrative voice, it is not surprising that other writers might express this loss of room in the tone of the story. Thus, I call this section Confining Spaces. Buildings and rooms may physically imprison characters, or the environments in which they live may confine their movements and actions. Characters are confined against their will, entombed by the actions of their ancestors, imprisoned by others with evil intent, or confined by the consequences of their own actions. Others willingly confine themselves, just as Jessie, the heroine of The Queen of Hearts, willingly confines herself to the old gentlemen’s house to listen to their stories, and Dickens’s visitors willingly place themselves in a haunted house to seek out its “ghosts.” In all cases, they have a limited sphere in which they can move, think, or act.

For example, the metaphor of entombment abounds in Braddon’s “Old Rudderford Hall.” The hall has been in the family for hundreds of years, but the more recent generations have not had the money to maintain the hall as it had been in years past. As a result, the current heir has closed the hall off from the rest of the world:
There was nothing to be heard or seen, no hen-roosts to be robbed—for
the poultry-yard was a desert: only closely-shut doors, and blank iron-
barred windows; weeds growing between the flagstones in the court, an
empty-dog kennel, a locked dairy, a broken pump, which would not yield
the wanderer so much as the refreshment of a draught of spring water. (85)

“All the lower windows,” the narrator tells the reader, “were closely guarded by heavy
oak shutters” (96), and the lower story was as secure “as the casements of a beleaguered
fortress, closely guarded from the foe” (97). If one should manage to get into the house,
the chances of ever coming out again seem slim, for the main door closes upon those who
enter it “like the jaws of a monster” who swallows them up (97). Although old
Rudderford Hall is described in tomb-like terms, Anthony Champion, the hall’s owner, is
a willing inhabitant. Rather than sell the dilapidated hall, Champion spends most of his
time “entombed” in the hall, “buried alive among his books” and remaining family
heirlooms (80).

The hall is a metaphor for the limited space of the short form. Confined within its
walls is the essence of the story. Its inhabitants are few: Anthony Champion, his
daughter, and two servants. Nearby is the new Greenwood estate built on grounds that
used to be part of the Rutherford estate, much to the resentment of Anthony Champion.
The heir to the Greenwood estate has fallen in love with Christabel, but his family
considers the young woman a bad match for Frank because of the financial state of the
Champion family. A pivotal moment occurs when a thief attempts to break into
Rutherford Hall and endangers Christabel in the process. Frank Greenwood comes to her
rescue, and the attempted robbery reveals that, unbeknownst to his daughter, Anthony
Champion has hoarded his money since her birth and now has a sizeable inheritance to
give her. Christabel’s rescue and her father’s revelation establish mutual acceptance between the neighbors and pave the way for the marriage between Frank and Christabel as well as the restoration of the old hall. The real story of Rudderford Hall, then, has been locked away inside its walls. Granted, the first page of the story may seem oppressive, but if readers will attempt to go beyond its first page they will find contained within the remaining pages a treasure that promises love and restoration.

The heroine of Gaskell’s framed story “The Grey Woman” lives in a prison of one kind or another all of her life. From birth to young adulthood she lives a secluded life in a mill. The first time she travels away from home, she meets a Frenchman and marries him. When he takes her to his manor, she exchanges a life of seclusion for one of incarceration: “I was becoming tame to my apparent imprisonment in a certain part of the great building, the whole of which I had never yet explored” (266). To occupy her time, her husband creates a flower garden below her window, but she suspects her jailer designed it to “give her exercise and employment under his own eye” (271). All the while, his servants act as spies, making her feel “trammeled in a web of observation, with unspoken limitations, extending over all [her] actions” (271). When she runs away from her husband, she has to hide herself to prevent detection, so she confines herself to the house. When the danger is over, she returns to the seclusion of the mill.

While the heroine lives her life in a series of prisons, the frame of this story adds yet another dimension of confinement to the grey woman’s tale. In the frame we learn that the heroine writes down the story of her confinement for her daughter. At the time the frame story takes place, the daughter is dead, but the letter has remained imprisoned in a relative’s desk until the narrator discovers it. Not only has the grey woman been confined by others, but her story has since been locked away by her descendants. Using
the device of the found manuscript as the impetus for the frame story was a fairly
common practice, but the device may also carry added significance for British novelists
writing short stories. Perhaps there are other stories locked away in drawers or even in
their heads that they long to see published. As mentioned in the previous chapter, gift
annual critics argue that many stories found in the parlor album made their way into its
gilded pages from literary drawers containing rejected manuscripts. Moreover, until
recently, critics believed that the interpolated tales in Dickens’s *Pickwick Papers* were
stories Dickens had in a drawer waiting for an opportunity to bring them forth (Patten,
“Interpolated” 83). The short story, then, has a publishing history, whether real or
imagined, of physical confinement which writers capture within their stories’ frames and
metaphors.

In “Lois the Witch,” Gaskell writes of another kind of confining environment—
“the atmosphere of mental tyranny” (Hopkins 257). She pens the tale of a young English
woman of Anglican upbringing, forced to live in America with Puritan relatives who are
immediately hostile to her. Emotionally, Lois is confined by her relatives who scoff at
her Anglican beliefs. Physically, she is confined to the house, leaving it only for the most
necessary household items. The forest surrounding the town pens in the entire
community. Stories of Indians and witches make most of the townspeople afraid to enter
it. Ultimately, the stories of witches escalate into rampant accusations against anyone in
the community who does not adhere to the sternest Puritan tenets. Lois’s vengeful
younger cousin takes advantage of this epidemic of persecution and spins a tale about
Lois being a witch. The townspeople then imprison Lois and put her to death.

In this tale, the enclosures created by the story become smaller and smaller,
beautifully mirroring the result of the witch hunt hysteria that seeks a focus for its release.
First, Lois is confined generally by the story of Puritanism. More specifically, she is imprisoned by the witch story her cousin tells about her. Finally, she is buried by that story. It is as if the story of so narrow a community with such a narrow vision has at last collapsed upon itself. The personal persecution and narrow view expressed by Lois’s community may also be a fictional representation of how the constraints placed on Gaskell’s contributions to Dickens’s weekly periodicals affected the author.

Disagreements between the author and editor over the serialization breaks and number of pages in *North and South* came to such a high pitch for Gaskell that she actively sought other venues for her fiction after the novel’s publication. In a letter to Charles Eliot Norton, Gaskell expresses the hope that she will receive “a definite proposal, either from the *Atlantic* or some publisher in the United States,” to take “Lois” (*Letters* 535) so that she will not have to give the story to the “new Dickensy periodical” she “so hope[s] to escape” (*Letters* 538). Of her relationship with Dickens and his sub-editor Wills, she writes that she wishes to be “done with them” (*Letters* 535-36). Much to her dismay, she had to publish “Lois” in *All the Year Round* in 1859. Like Lois, Gaskell was unable to escape the confines of her community—in this case the publishing community—and she reluctantly imprisons her story within the pages of *All the Year Round*.

Gaskell uses a similar enclosure technique for a very different effect in “Mr. Harrison’s Confessions.” Mr. Harrison is a bachelor doctor who has moved to the small town of Duncombe to form a medical partnership with his father’s cousin. Because five-sixths of the town’s population are women, Mr. Harrison’s arrival is the talk of the town. With gentle humor, Gaskell delineates how Mr. Harrison learns that in such a community, he must carefully select his words and control his actions if his intentions are to be correctly understood. The lesson is not an easy one. Thanks to stories derived from
the machinations of a friend’s practical joke, an overly zealous stepmother, and the town gossip, the community believes Harrison is engaged to three different women at the same time. As each story spreads through the community, Harrison’s ability to move about the town becomes more and more restricted until he is ultimately confined to his room.

The gradually building constraints on Harrison’s space begin when, unbeknownst to him, his friend Jack sends Miss Caroline a valentine but signs Harrison’s name to it. The young lady, assuming an attachment on Harrison’s part, feels thrown over when she hears that Harrison has purchased a woman’s work table and given it to his housekeeper, Mrs. Rose. Harrison has mistakenly purchased the table believing it to be a writing table for his study. Not knowing what else to do with it when he realizes his error, he gives the table to Mrs. Rose. The story about the gift begins to spread through the community, and, thanks to the coaxing of the town gossips, Mrs. Rose believes Harrison has affections for her. In the meantime, Harrison has been a regular dinner visitor at Mr. Bullock’s house. For Harrison, Bullock “was a relief, after all the feminine society [he] went through every day” (392). Bullock’s wife, however, assumes that Harrison comes to the house to woo her marriageable stepdaughter. Mrs. Bullock is incensed when she hears the story of Harrison’s engagement to Mrs. Rose, and Mr. Bullock expresses his disappointment with Harrison’s philandering behavior.

As each story begins to spread, Harrison’s sphere of operation becomes smaller and smaller. Of the story of Harrison’s behavior to Miss Caroline, his partner warns that it may take some time to “overcome a little prejudice which the story may excite against you” (388). In fact, this story when coupled with the other two supposed romances and an exaggerated story Jack had told about Harrison’s night in Newgate prison cause Harrison’s practice to fall off. “In short, so prejudiced were the good people of
Duncombe,” Harrison muses, that “very little would have made them suspect [him] of a brutal highway robbery, which took place in the neighborhood about this time” (423).

Not only is he cut off from his patients, but he is also cut off from his friends. Miss Caroline refuses to allow him in her house, the Bullocks no longer include him at their dinner table, and he does not want to go home for fear of seeing Mrs. Rose. The stories are closing in around him. Exasperated, Harrison asks, “Where could I go to be safe? Mrs. Rose, Miss Bullock, Miss Caroline—they lived as it were at the three points of an equilateral triangle; here was I in the centre” (416). Worst of all, his one remaining source of refuge is forced to desert him. The “reports of [his] conduct” (422) have forced Sophy, the woman he really loves, to move to her aunt’s house in another town. When his circumstances become unbearable, the only solution Harrison can find is to hide: “I flew up to my room and bolted the door. I had no candle, but what did that signify. I was safe” (419).

Even though Gaskell has exchanged a somber tale of an American witch hunt for a British comedy of manners, metaphors of confinement dominate the spaces in both of these stories. The author has exchanged the witch hunt hysteria for a husband hunt hysteria, and even though Harrison may be imprisoned by social circumstances rather than by a legal or religious authority, he is imprisoned all the same. His fate, of course, is not death. The release for this community’s hysteria is marriage. Ultimately misunderstandings are cleared up, Harrison’s reputation is restored, and he marries the woman he loves. One could argue that at the end the story is no longer held together by metaphors of confinement, except that Gaskell has enclosed Harrison’s story within a two-part frame. The impetus for narrating the story is to answer a friend’s question about how Harrison—now husband and father—and his wife met. The story starts when Sophy
and the baby go upstairs, and the story ends when Sophy returns. His story has changed from a circulating bachelor story to a private husband story (hence the “confessions” of the title), but it is still confined within a defined physical space. The bachelor story ultimately confined Harrison to his bedroom; the husband story confines him to the living room.

*Confining Illnesses*

The stories discussed in this section demonstrate that the definition of confinement is not limited to that of space. The confinement metaphor operating in these stories is that of illness. The stories are about characters who are immobilized by physical illness, such as Mrs. Dawson who is confined to her couch in the *Round the Sofa* frame. Other stories in this section describe characters who are sick with fear, such as the Le Fanu characters who are too frightened to move. Whatever the cause of the illness, it limits a character’s ability to take action, which, in some cases, leads to death. So frequently do these illness metaphors appear that one has to ask whether they are symptomatic of the authors’ own response to writing with the confines of the short story.

Physical and mental illness meld with the supernatural in Oliphant’s “The Library Window.” The narrator of the tale, a young girl, describes a summer she spent recuperating from an illness at her elderly aunt’s house in a Scottish town. As the only child in the house, she escapes adult observation in the deep recess of her Aunt Mary’s drawing room window. In this “refuge” she can collect her books and needlework around her, hide behind the curtain, and observe all the comings and goings outside the window. One of the most intriguing sites is the College Library across the street from her aunt’s house. The question of whether the last library window is really a window has
been a source of discussion for many years. The young girl becomes fascinated by the window. She stares at it every day and gradually starts to see the room behind it. First she sees a desk, then books, and at last she sees a young man writing at the desk. She spends her days looking for him and imagining what he is like. Eventually, she has the opportunity to visit the library, but after considerable searching she cannot find the window. A professor tells her that it is only a façade on the outside of the building, placed there for uniformity. When she returns to her aunt’s house, however, she sees the scholar at the window, and this time he waves at her. She calls for the others in the house to look to prove to them the window and the scholar are real. They all look at her as if they think she is “mad” (238) and treat her like an “invalid” the rest of the evening (239). The next day she is “in a kind of fever,” unaware of what she is doing (239). Her aunt tries to comfort her by suggesting what the girl saw was the ghost of a scholar killed for liking his books more than his lady’s love, but the story immobilizes and silences her. She finally musters the strength to steal out of the house at night to look for the window, thinking that at night “everything is so clear—no darkness to cover you, no shadow, whether on one side of the street or on the other side” (241). She does not see the window. Her mental state worsens, and her mother takes her away from the house.

Whether the visions are the result of the original illness that brought the narrator to her aunt’s house, the creative imagination of a “fantastic and fanciful and dreamy” (210) young author, or the ghost of a scholar killed years ago, the story never makes clear. What is clear is that the visions are a part of the internal life she lives in the seclusion of the recess. When the real world intrudes upon that refuge, the visions end, and she suffers from what present-day readers would consider depression. When the girl realize that she would never see the window or the scholar again—that the story of the
scholar is over with the wave of his hand—she does not feel as if anything matters
“unless if one could get into the dark somewhere—the soft, deep dark that would cover
you over and hide you” (241). Elizabeth Jay’s reading suggests that this is an
autobiographical story in which the girl represents Oliphant in her years as a beginning
writer (265). Perhaps too, this story indicates how difficult it is for an author used to the
comparatively endless number of the novel’s pages to confine herself to an ending after
only a few pages. With the wave of a hand the story is abruptly over, and the writer is
left wondering if anyone will take heed of a small story about what a girl sees through a
library window. This notion of a story’s unimportance can leave one immobilized, silent,
longing for the cover of darkness.

Another story that mixes our modern-day sense of depression with the gothic is
the second story of “Mrs. Lirriper’s Legacy,” entitled “A Past Lodger Relates A Wild
Legend of a Doctor.” Like the story of the grey woman, it is an old tale that has been
confined to a desk drawer, coming into the teller’s hands via a manuscript found in his
deceased father’s papers. Yet, it is also a modern tale of illness of both the body and
mind that leads to assisted suicide. The story describes a late eighteenth-century Parisian
doctor who, much like our present day Dr. Kevorkian, provides special services for his
guests. Weary of living, the guests arrive at the doctor’s house for a sumptuous meal and
then return home, fall asleep, and never wake up again. Alfred de Clerval comes to the
dinner because he thinks he has lost his love, Therese, to her cousin. As the story
progresses, the reader and Alfred learn that the desperate young man has made a mistake.
Therese’s cousin has made his suit to her, and she has rejected his affections in favor of
Alfred. The rejected cousin comes to the same dinner as Alfred with the same plan in
mind. As the two men talk during dinner, Alfred discovers the cousin’s identity and that
Therese has rejected him. Alfred, realizing that Therese loves him after all, immediately begs the doctor to stop the poisoning procedure. The doctor agrees to make an exception for Alfred, but the rest of the guests, in spite of some second thoughts, receive the services that they have paid the doctor to give them. Alfred lives and eventually asks and receives Therese’s hand in marriage.

Here, the illness metaphors indicate both a longing for and a chafing against the confinement of the short story. Alfred and the other dinner guests are so mentally anguished or disturbed that they seek the confinement from which there is no escape—that of the grave. They long for an ending to their lives, to their stories. Alfred’s change of heart, on the other hand, suggests a chafing against an end to the story. Had Alfred made his decision too late, he would have died like the rest of the guests, but the author chose instead to allow Alfred to live after a long convalescence. The author, unable to stay within or perhaps even rejecting outright the confines of the short story represented by the illness metaphors, allows Alfred to live and then co-opts him into the more novelistic marriage plot.

Mary Elizabeth Braddon’s “Ralph the Bailiff” also makes diseased minds and death its focus. In fact, its first lines are about death:

A drizzling rain fell upon the long grass and the moss-grown tombstones of the churchyard of Olney, a village in Lincolnshire.

Every now and then, beaten down by this incessant rain, a dead leaf fell from one of a row of sycamores, which bordered the low churchyard wall, and dropped heavily upon the graves beneath the trees.

No gleam of sunshine relieved the dull gray of the September sky.
A cluster of villagers and village children, grouped together at one angle of the irregular stone wall, drew their wet clothes closer round them, and shivered as if this September had been January.

From one side of the churchyard sounded the monotonous voice of the curate, reading the funeral service.

At the white gate, on the other side of the church, waited three mourning-coaches, surrounded by another group of village children, who, regardless of the perpetual rain, stood staring open-mouthed at the long-tailed black horses and the solemn-visaged charioteers.

The funeral service ended, the chief mourner walked slowly through the churchyard, followed by the seven or eight gentlemen who had been present at the ceremony. (1)

The dead man, Martin Carleon, died under mysterious circumstances, and Dudley, his brother and the inheritor of Martin’s farm, is being blackmailed by Ralph Purvis, his bailiff. The price for the bailiff’s silence is full entitlement to Dudley’s estate upon his death. To ensure that Dudley keeps this promise, Purvis shadows Dudley’s every move. The young man is always under the bailiff’s watchful eye, and Purvis masterfully counters each of Dudley’s attempts to free himself from the bailiff’s hold. After each attempt, Dudley seems even “more gloomy” and “more than ever under the thrall of his inseparable retainer, Ralph the bailiff” (15). Eventually, the situation becomes unbearable. Dudley’s guilt over killing his brother, coupled with his fear of discovery and revulsion of Purvis, immobilizes him. He can barely keep his wits about him, much less run his farm adequately. He sees no hope of release from Purvis’s grasp, so he opts for the confinement of the coffin over living immobilized by fear.
Dudley is not the only character caught in Purvis’s net. The farmer’s young wife, Jenny, also becomes emotionally imprisoned by Purvis’s actions. The stifling atmosphere in the household as well as her growing suspicion that her husband murdered Martin makes her apprehensive, even delusional. She develops an irrational fear of Martin’s portrait hanging in the living room of the farm:

She tried not to look at his picture; she turned her back to the panel where it hung. What if his likeness should descend from the shadowy panel, and, stealing noiselessly behind her, lay an impalpable hand upon her shoulder? She was not superstitious, but her monotonous life had weakened her nerves, and she felt as if she were alone with the dead. What if this painted image should shape itself into a phantom, and approach her? What if on rushing to the door to escape the phantom, she should find it locked, and herself a prisoner with this ghastly companion? (25-26)

The fear becomes too much for Jenny, and she becomes ill: “She struggled hard against this daily diminution of her strength, for she seemed to have a unreasonable horror of being confined to her room; but she succumbed at last, and kept her bed day after day” (31). Unlike Dudley, however, Jenny’s confinement is not permanent. She at last finds an opportunity to escape from the house and leave the dead and the ghosts behind.

“Ralph the Bailiff” is a story about the horrors that confinement plays on the mind and body. What it says to us about short story writing is that keeping such a strong control over the events and characters in the short story can be troublesome, especially for those used to the expanse of the novel. Purvis functions as the writer of Dudley’s and Jenny’s story. He controls their lives at every turn. Essentially his plan works, for he inherits the farm, but he immediately sells it and leaves for Australia. On the surface it
seems that Braddon has allowed the bailiff to escape punishment, but if that is really the case, why does she send him to Australia, the place so many criminals had been sent? His fate suggests that creating a short story in which one attempts to maintain unity of effect, only including those incidents that accomplish the aim of the story, can leave the writer feeling like a criminal or social outcast.

*Confining Moments*

According to Brander Matthews, essential to the short story is the single event, character, or emotion that creates “unity of impression” (73)—the element that distinguishes a short story from a short novel. The authors of the stories in this section clearly had the single event notion in mind when they wrote their stories, but significantly, all of the single moments are troped by confinement. These moments may be accidents beyond characters’ control, or they may be decisions—either well-considered or thoughtless—that characters make which in some way significantly limit the course of their lives. That moment takes away their opportunities, their dreams. They are imprisoned by a life they do not want because of a single moment. The next section will explore in more detail the significance of these moments to the short story’s development.

Oliphant’s “The Story of Anne Maturin” relates how orphaned Anne is raised by her aunt and falls in love with her aunt’s son, Francis. The young man, however, is more interested in making a good match and marries Maria Parker. It turns out that Maria was a spoiled child and has an excitable nature. She is given to fits of anger that leave her ill. After a year of married life, their marriage has deteriorated to the point that the young woman has a spell every time she sees her husband. Unable to care for her after a
particularly bad episode, Francis asks Anne to come and nurse her. Maria’s doctor has
prescribed an opiate for Anne to give Maria in very small doses. Maria wakes up in a fit,
snatches the bottle from Anne, drinks too much, and dies. This moment is “the tragedy
which, all at once without warning or probability, enveloped Anne Maturin’s life, and
swallowed up its tranquility, its gentle commonplaces, its every-day story” (61).

Anne’s story reveals that if the focus of the short story is a single instant, the
writer’s options too can be limited by that moment. As a result of this event, friends and
acquaintances shun Anne, and even her own cousins will not allow her to care for their
children. Francis loses his social and financial position and leaves the country, but not
before asking Anne to be his wife. She refuses; marrying Francis would only further
implicate her in Maria’s death. Anne eventually marries a rector and finds some
happiness, but the significance of that moment never leaves her, and the text entangles
her in multiple tropes of confinement. She

was far happier than she ever expected to be,—but yet never, in her own
consciousness, got quite free from that tragic net which caught her
heedless feet unawares. In one moment, without thought or warning,
without meaning or premeditation, she fell into it, and never struggled
fully out again, nor quite emancipated herself, all her life. (64)

Gaskell’s “Half a Lifetime Ago” is another tale about a life-altering moment.
Susan Dixon promises her mother on her deathbed that she will take care of her younger
brother, Will. However, the young man is ill and given to fits of madness, and Susan’s
lover, Michael, does not want to live in the same house with such a creature. He forces
her to choose between the two of them, swearing that she “shan’t have both” (82).
Susan’s maternal impulses take precedence over her sexual desire, and she chooses her
brother, but not without feelings of resentment: “It might have been right; but, as she
sickened she wished that she had not instinctively chosen the right. How luxurious a life
haunted by no stern sense of duty must be!” (89). She is clearly confined by her sense of
maternal obligation, but unlike Anne, Susan is not forever haunted by this event.

As the story’s title suggests, Susan’s decision made one-half a lifetime ago
envelops the first half of her life. It prevents her from marrying the man she loves and
having children of her own. It binds her to years of nursing her ill brother and then to a
few more years of living alone in a secluded house after Will’s death. However, she is
not finally trapped by that decision as Anne is. Some years after Will’s death, Susan
discovers Michael’s lifeless body in the woods. She knows that he had a wife and
children, so she seeks them out. She is able to imagine an alternative kind of family and
joins Michael’s wife and children in a combined household, finding happiness in her later
years. So “it fell out that the latter days of Susan Dixon’s life were better than the
former” (102).

Bridget, the titular heroine of Gaskell’s “The Poor Clare,” is confined by a rash
decision to place a curse on a young squire who kills her dog: “‘You shall live to see the
creature you love best, and who alone loves you—aye, a human creature, but as innocent
and fond as my poor, dead darling—you shall see this creature, for whom death would be
too happy, become a terror and a loathing to all, for this blood’s sake’” (283). It turns out
that the squire falls in love with Bridget’s daughter, and they have a child together. Thus,
Lucy, Bridget’s granddaughter, becomes the object of her curse. The curse takes the
form of an evil double who causes mischief wherever Lucy goes. The young woman
must confine herself in secluded lodgings on the outskirts of town to keep the double’s
opportunities for evil-doing to a minimum.
That moment confined every aspect of Bridget’s life. The only way Bridget can rid Lucy of her double is to join a convent in Antwerp and repent the curse. At the convent, Bridget is cut off from the outside world and confined to a small space with little to eat or wear. The convent in Antwerp is built of dim, pent-up, grey walls, shut closely in by narrow streets, in the lowest part of town” (325). The nuns are an “order of mercy of the strictest kind.” They dress “scantily in the coarsest materials, going bare-foot, living on what the inhabitants of Antwerp chose to bestow, and sharing even those fragments and crumbs with the poor and helpless that swarmed all around; receiving no letter of communication with the outer world; utterly dead to everything but the alleviation of suffering. (326-27)

The nuns are forbidden to speak even for the purpose of begging their daily food. An uprising between the inhabitants of Antwerp and their Austrian masters leads to a general famine in the city. Lucy’s father is serving in one of the Austrian regiments and is wounded in battle. Bridget cares for him, starving herself to give him what little morsels she has. The action kills her, but it lifts the curse from Lucy. Bridget’s confinement has ended, and so has her story.

**Forming a Theory of the Short Story**

Out of the economy of confinement also emerge flashes of short story theory. From the stories under discussion in this section, we can begin forming a definition of the short form. In the frame of *The Queen of Hearts*, for instance, Collins’s Jessie seems to be expressing a preference for the short story. To help Jessie occupy her time, the old gentlemen offer Jessie novels to read. Jessie’s response suggests that the unity of effect
of a short story is preferable to the moral purpose and marriage plot episodes that comprise the novel:

"I'm sick to death of novels with an earnest purpose. I'm sick to death of outbursts of eloquence, and large minded philanthropy, and graphic descriptions, and unsparing anatomy of the human heart, and all that sort of thing. Good gracious me! isn't it the original intention or purpose, or whatever you call it, of a work of fiction to set out distinctly by telling a story? And how many of these books, I should like to know, do that? Why, so far as telling a story is concerned, the greater part of them might as well be sermons as novels. Oh, dear me! what I want is something that seizes hold of my interest, and makes me forget when it is time to dress for dinner: something that keeps me reading, reading, reading, in a breathless state to find out the end." (31)

Jessie also appears to be suggesting that she wants a story that will end in one sitting, holding her attention for the entire time. The brothers take this cue and use short stories to seize hold of her interest and confine her in the tower to which they have willingly confined themselves for ten more days. Readers are left very much in the same position as Jessie. They have the option to come back for another story each night or leave off reading if they find them too dull.

The Trollopian narrator indicates that the short story should be confined to working out a problem between two or three main characters. The problem may or may not revolve around a love story. The language used to relate the problems should be concise. Descriptive passages and conversation are warranted only when they move the story toward its conclusion. A critic for the Saturday Review even praises Trollope's
sparser language in the first series of *Tales of All Countries*: “The language is never vulgar; there are no arid wastes of funny writing; there are no descriptions of scenery or philosophical reflections; there are no moral or sporting anecdotes” (“Trollope’s” 587). Granted, not all readers would agree with this critic’s assessment, but to what degree Trollope or any of the other writers in this study achieve what the critic praises in this passage is not nearly as significant as their recognition that concise, sparse language is a basic tenet of the short story.

Finally, the stories described in the previous section of this chapter suggest an awareness of another element of the short story. They all center on a single event that controls all the others to come. In terms of subject matter, these events may be domestic in nature as in “The Story of Anne Maturin” and “Half a Life-Time Ago,” or they may have an element of fantasy as in the curse of “The Poor Clare.” Regardless, the event keeps the story from becoming an “every-day story.” It also is the event that makes the story narratable. Anne’s unfortunate sickbed accident, Susan’s decision to follow her sense of moral duty, and Bridget’s curse all drive the remaining events of their stories. Although these stories, especially “The Poor Clare,” are not written with the same compression modern-day readers expect from the short story, these confining moments are clearly early British examples of the single effect theory expressed by Poe years earlier.

**Melding Confinement Metaphors and the Short Story in “Earthbound”**

All of the confinement categories as well as indirect expressions of a short story theory come together in Oliphant’s “Earthbound.” On the surface, it is a ghost story. While the hero, Edmund Coventry, is walking on the grounds of the Daintrey estate, he
spies a young woman he has never seen before. On two occasions he tries to overtake her and initiate a conversation, but both times she disappears in a corner of the property that connects the terrace and the lime-tree walk. The third time he sees her, they speak, and he is captivated by a "new-born yet all-absorbing love" (134). Unfortunately, Edmund is in love with the ghost of Maud, a Beresford family ancestor who died one hundred years ago. For loving the things of the earth too much, Maud has been sentenced to wander the property.

As one might expect of a ghost story, there are confining physical spaces throughout. In this case, the place between the lime-tree walk and the green terrace is the most significant since that is where Maud can most frequently be found:

Here, for no apparent reason at all, a wall had been built, of the date of some hundred years back, a high brick wall, quite out of place, screening in a square and rather gloomy angle of grass, in the midst of which stood a high pedestal surmounted by a large stone vase. Whether this was meant to commemorate anything, or whether it was merely supposed to be ornamental, in the days of George III, nobody could tell; but that it was very funereal and ugly was certain. In the side of this wall farthest from the house was a door which opened into the byway through the park. Perhaps the wall had been built to stop some right of way; perhaps—but there is little use in multiplying peradventures. There stood the wall built to shut out no one knew what. (121-22)

The confinement suggested by this spot and the title of the story apply to the ghostly Maud, who is bound by an unnamed power to this spot of earth after her death: "I was so fond of the house and the trees, and everything that was our own. I thought there was
nothing better, nothing so good. I was all for the earth, and nothing more. That is why I am here so much”” (132-33).

Death and illness confine other characters in the story. The first paragraph of the tale informs the reader that the Beresford family is mourning the loss of one of its sons. To deal with his grief, Sir Robert Beresford frequently abstains from family activities, preferring the “growling seclusion in the library” (126). Lady Beresford also finds the need to confine herself. At one point, all the young people had left the house to skate, “and she went up to her own room and shut the door, feeling as if she, who had the best right to it, had got that faithful sorrow all to herself, and uncovered his picture, and read his last letter, and wept out all the tears that had been gathering and gathering” (127).

The confining moment in this story is when Edmund realizes that Maud is a ghost and cannot return his love. Edmund is enthralled by Maud and vows to “secure her beyond all possibility of escape” (134). What he does not understand is that Maud is already imprisoned at Daintrey. Even those who cannot see her ghostly form can recognize that her image is confined. Sir Robert Beresford shows Edmund a painting of Maud “in an old-fashioned black frame” (140) stored in the home’s gallery. She appears to Edmund in the exact clothing that she is wearing in the portrait. On the back of the canvas is the date 1777. The force of her predicament hits Edmund when he sees the painting and its ghost side by side. At this moment he becomes insensible and must be confined to his bed for several days.

“Earthbound” also wedd the idea of confinement to the short story. While the story operates on one level as a ghost story, on another level it operates as a tale about interpreting a text—in this case, a short story. When Edmund sees Maud for the first time, he wants to “get a good look” at her, so he can interpret the “little mystery” (123)
that has presented itself to him. Significantly, Maud is dressed in textual black and white, nothing like the style the ladies of the house wear. Because of the “stir of his being” that the woman has elicited, Edmund feels that she must be “some one of a different kind from any he had met before: a new woman, a creature born to influence him” (125). When he asks the Beresford ladies for assistance in determining who this woman could be, they suggest she is the keeper’s niece. Edmund is reluctant to believe that the woman is not a lady, but Miss Daintrey explains that a woman who is among ladies most of the time can easily be mistaken for one until her words give her away: “‘[A] girl like that may walk like a lady and dress like a lady. She has got to be among ladies most of her time, and to see the best people. Unless you talked to her and found she dropped her h’s, or had vulgar ideas, how could you tell? Indeed, sometimes they talk even, just as nicely as we do’” (126).

The instances when Edmund sees or is looking for Maud extend the metaphor of a text to be interpreted. On a dark night after ice skating, the moon begins to rise and lighten “the milky expanse of the park, in which the trees stood up like bands of shadows” (127). As Edmund and Maud walk along the lime-tree walk, the moon shines “upon their heads all broken and chequered by the anatomy of the great trees like dark lines traced upon the sky” (132). Both descriptions suggest prison-like images, bars keeping Maud on earth, but they also suggest lines or bands of text on a page—the lines of Maud and Edmund’s story illuminated for those of us who will read it. And Maud’s portrait seems to represent the text as well. When Edmund climbs the stairs to the gallery, the moon is shining through the window onto the picture. “Edmund walked up—holding in his hand a candle, which flamed yellow and earthly in that radiance from
heaven—through the whiteness, a sort of milky way, with the annals of the past on every side of him” (142). She is a text that stands out among the other texts that surround her.

The text of Maud is a short story. In some sense it is a new genre, similar to but different from the novel. In another sense it is a kind of text that has existed long before now, but that has not been acknowledged by many in recent years. It has captured Edmund’s attention and ultimately is responsible for wedding Edmund to Maud’s descendant—the present-day Maud Daintrey. In the next chapter, we shall see how it has captured the attention of nineteenth-century novelists as well, stirring them to experiment with the short form. A significant portion of this experimentation is expressed through the use of the portrait—a feature that appears frequently in the Victorian short story (as readers of this chapter may have observed). In Chapter 4, I will discuss how short story writers use the painted portrait to establish differences between the novel and the short story; I will also set the stage for another art form that was to have a profound effect on the Victorian short story’s development: the art of photography.
Chapter 3

The Paradox of Confinement:

Liberating the Short Story

The final sentences of Margaret Oliphant’s “Earthbound” complete the metaphor of Maud as a text and reveal the paradox inherent in the economy of confinement.

And though there have been a great many versions of the story scattered abroad, and the Beresfords, once so silent on the subject, have become in their hearts a little proud of it—though it is supposed against their will that it should be known—no one else, so far as we have ever heard, has been again accosted by the gentle little lady who was earthbound. Perhaps her time of willing punishment is over, and she is earthbound no more. (144)

Thanks to Edmund, the story of the “little” lady confined to the Daintrey estate has been published, perhaps in different languages and “scattered abroad.” Her story is no longer bound to Daintrey. Out of her confinement, story has been born.

As the ending of “Earthbound” indicates, there is a paradox in the economy of confinement in the Victorian short story. In the previous chapter, I argued that the British writers included in this study thematized confinement in their short stories. In this chapter, I will demonstrate how the short story genre also lent itself to opportunities not allowed by the conventions of the novel. When writing a novel, the author has a seemingly endless number of pages in which to tell a story. Expectations of what those pages should contain and the format in which they should be published could stifle the writer’s creativity or limit the writer’s plot options. More specifically, several pervading novel conventions influenced what kinds of stories novelists could write. For one thing,
the “mission of the novel” was “to see and illustrate the interconnectedness of things” (Harris 20). Novelists had to delineate how characters were shaped by the interplay between their individual choices and the events in the communities in which they lived. Moreover, the novel conventions of ending and resolution insisted that authors leave readers with a sense that all of the novel’s plot threads were woven together within the last pages. Novelists usually accomplished this resolution through marriage. Finally, the formats of serialization and the three-decker novel demanded that novelists plan their novels to accommodate the page lengths of the serial.

The sections that follow delineate how authors used the short story to respond to each of these conventions. When writing short stories, authors could focus on creating single incidents rather than tying together multiple plot threads. The first section of this chapter discusses how authors celebrate this freedom by expressing within their tales the restorative power of telling a story. The second section demonstrates how short story writers do not feel obligated to create a strong sense of resolution at the end of their stories. Readers do not always know what becomes of some characters or how to interpret their actions. The third section asserts that the short form allows writers to take liberties with the marriage plot. The stories in this section clearly revise our expectations of marriage, community, and domesticity. The last section of the chapter discusses two of Trollope’s tales that express a sense of freedom from writing a longer work. In fact, these stories ironically celebrate the physical destruction of long texts within the confines of the short story. Ultimately, the short story’s revision of the novel’s aesthetic suggests a revision of the novel’s realism. The novel’s adherence to extensive plotting and orderly resolutions as well as its alliance with the marriage plot may not reflect Victorian reality after all.
Freedom from the “Interconnectedness of Things”:

The Restorative Power of Telling a Single Story

As Wendell Harris points out, the rise of the novel coincided with the rise in historical consciousness. The great essayists of the nineteenth century, such as Thomas Carlyle, John Ruskin, Matthew Arnold, and William Morris, “gave themselves to tracing the chains of causes and effects and to the analysis of the subtle interweaving of relations throughout society and across time” (19). Similarly, novelists created a “sense of organic interrelationship” (19) in their fiction that spoke to history on the one hand and the individual on the other hand.

The worlds of the great Victorian novels depend on the shaping of each individual by the interaction between the pressures of the socioeconomic world and the choices made by the individual. *Vanity Fair* implies not only the variety and venality of the world but its myriad interconnections in space and time; the vast web of human endeavors [...] which make up *Bleak House* represent only the most spectacular example of Dickens’s concern to show the rippling effect of each human action. *Middlemarch*, which George Eliot described as showing the “gradual action of ordinary causes,” [(Letters 5: 168)] sweeps across the great center of English social structure. (20)

Of course, the short story’s length makes it impossible to express the interrelationships between the individual and the social world that Harris describes. Instead, the short story should focus on a single event or emotion. At times, the writers in this study openly acknowledge that this smaller focus does not reduce the power of telling a story. The
authors go beyond telling about an isolated event; in an overt and self-conscious manner, they celebrate the form thematically by demonstrating the restorative power of narrating a single story. The texts' narrative voices reveal how stories have the power to change our lives, both for the better and the worse. This idea may appear as the focal point in an individual story or it may arise in the narrative frame of an individual story or in the frame for a collection of stories. Regardless of where it is expressed, the single events found in short stories, the writers seem to say, are just as powerful as the "vast web of human encounters" found in novels. Short stories have the power to create our sense of self, to soothe and heal us.

As demonstrated in the previous chapter, Oliphant consistently reminds us that we are reading the story of "John," but she also reveals that the stories we tell ourselves and others can have a tremendous impact on our lives. The "ridiculous story" that Jean Meunier has just told John in the opening lines of the story is that a sick gentleman has arrived by train. It turns out that John's mother had not married a sailor who was lost at sea. She had married a gentleman and then run away from him. The gentleman has just discovered where Jean and his mother live, and that is the reason for his sudden appearance. However, the shock of finding his wife is so great that when coupled with his already frail constitution the man has an attack that leaves him speechless and near death. The sight and knowledge of John's real father clashes with the story John has always told himself. To make sense of the new story, John walks to one of his favorite spots where he can look at the panorama of sea and sky from the top of a hill and dream of his father the sailor coming home:

Oh, the fine vision of that hope unfulfilled, that life so full of gentle wishes long subdued, of longing love and expectation, and almost
certainty of happiness to come! And now he was told that it had never been. This it was which filled him with the very rage of grief and loss. Hot tears like fire filled his eyes. No father, no sailor coming out of the unknown, with light in his face to bless the memory of his child!—no father at all, except that horrible figure at the hotel, the swollen and bloated face, the dead glare under the eyelashes, the ignoble countenance.

(330)

Even though his real father’s death means a substantial inheritance for John, the story ends with John’s sense of loss: “To his own consciousness he has lost far more than he gained” (338). However, this feeling of loss does not stem from the grief of not getting to know his real father before he died. It is for the story of his father that he “held as truth” (330) and had come to love so dearly. For John, this one story created his sense of self. He must now accept a new story of himself or be destroyed.

Collins’s “A Terribly Strange Bed” demonstrates the soothing power of story as well as its power to help us express our sense of self. In the narrative frame, the narrator/painter tells the reader that he cannot capture the natural appearance of his subject, Mr. Faulkner, because the gentleman felt “he must assume an expression, because he was sitting for his likeness, and in consequence, contrived to look as unlike himself as possible” (1). As Mr. Faulkner flips through the artist’s sketchbook, one of the painter’s sketches recalls a story to Mr. Faulkner’s mind. The sitter becomes so engrossed in telling the story of the terribly strange bed that he loses his self-consciousness, and in the ending frame the artist informs the reader that he is able to capture the “expression” that he wants (3). As mentioned in the previous chapter, Collins added Leah’s exterior frame to the painter frame when he published the After Dark
collection. As a result, there are three levels of storytelling in the collection. The individual stories told by each of the painter’s sitters, the interior frame in which the painter, William Kerby, introduces the sitters’ stories, and the exterior frame in which Leah Kerby explains how the stories came to be recorded. In the collection, we find that William asks multiple sitters to tell him stories in order to capture their natural expressions. Leah has written down these stories while William is unable to paint because of an eye infection. Writing these stories is a part of the painter’s convalescence as well as another way for the artist to make money from his artistry. At the end of the collection, Leah informs the reader that thanks to the time spent telling stories, William’s eyes and spirits have improved and he will soon be painting again. Storytelling is restorative on several levels. It improves the portrait sitter’s disposition. By doing so, it improves the interior frame narrator’s capacity for painting, and it returns the exterior frame narrator’s household to health, for the money earned from the story collection will pay for the all of the family’s needs that have been accumulating since William has been unable to work.

Gaskell’s and Le Fanu’s story collections are even more overt in suggesting the healing power of story. The Round the Sofa frame informs the reader that Miss Greatorex is an invalid of sorts. She is confined to a town she does not like in order to improve her health, and financial constraints confine her to dull, drab lodgings. The evenings of storytelling around Mrs. Dawson’s sofa are “very brilliant and very dazzling,” giving one enough “to think about and wonder about for many days” (438). The change from the “monotony of the nights” (437) in her lodgings is as curative for Miss Greatorex as her doctor’s course of treatment for her. Storytelling is also what sustains the crippled Mrs. Dawson: the “Edinburgh professors, Edinburgh beauties, and
celebrities all on their way to some other gayer and later party” come first to see Mrs.
Dawson “and tell her their bon-mots, or their interests, or their plans” (438). However, it
is not just hearing stories that is beneficial. Prior to beginning the story of Lady Ludlow,
Mrs. Dawson tells Miss Greakorex that even though Lady Ludlow is dead, it gives her
pleasure “to talk and think of Lady Ludlow” because she was a “true, kind friend and
benefactress” (440). Moreover, Miss Greactorex observes that the stories she has recorded
were told for the purpose of giving pleasure to Mrs. Dawson and earning kind words of
appreciation from her (442). The emphasis here, then, is on the healing power of story
not only in the physical sense, but also in an emotional sense. It gives pleasure to both
the story’s teller and the story’s listener. As readers, we are listeners, too, and by
implication, the story is restorative for us as well.

The idea of the curative power of story is also expressed in the narrative frame of
Le Fanu’s In a Glass Darkly. All of the storytellers desire to be cured of their ailments,
and that is how their narratives end up in Dr. Hesselius’s hands. Even today, the power
of patients’ narratives and how doctors elicit and understand those narratives generates a
great deal of discussion in medical journals. The frame of one story in particular
expresses how story can relieve a troubled mind. Surprisingly, in this case, it is the mind
of the physician. In “Green Tea,” Mr. Jennings tells his story of being haunted by a spirit
monkey to Dr. Hesselius in the hope that the doctor can rid him of this evil companion.
After hearing the story, Hesselius assures Jennings he can help him. He will consider the
best course of action to take and return with his plan the following day. Hesselius
instructs Jennings that should he see the monkey before he returns, Jennings should send
word immediately. Jennings sees the monkey within an hour of Hesselius’s departure
and sends for him, but Hesselius has gone to an inn to avoid interruption of his studies,
and the messenger cannot find him. By the time Dr. Hesselius arrives at Jennings’s house, the man has cut his throat with a razor. In the frames to this story, we learn that we are reading this story because Dr. Hesselius has recorded it in a letter to a colleague to purge his guilt for not having intervened in time to save Jennings. Hesselius tries to excuse any role his reader might ascribe to him in Jennings’s suicide. He claims that he has successfully treated fifty-seven similar cases. The difference here is that Hesselius did not know that Jennings was suffering from “hereditary suicidal mania” (40). (He does not include in this defense why Jennings’s recent episode in which the monkey tried to convince the poor man to jump off a cliff did not trigger a suspicion of a suicidal disposition.) This malady was actually the disease that needed treatment. The “sublimated visions” (40) from which Jennings was also suffering were a complication of the actual complaint. This lack of information along with the fact that Dr. Hesselius was never able to start treating Jennings enables Dr. Hesselius to justify his failure to save the man: “Poor Mr. Jennings I cannot call a patient of mine, for I had not begun to treat his case, and he had not yet given me, I am convinced, his full and unreserved confidence. If the patient do not array himself on the side of disease, his cure is certain” (40). Story, it would seem, also has the power to alleviate a guilty conscience and to justify one’s failures.

Similarly, Trollope uses the short story format to justify the actions and attitudes of a periodical editor in his short story collection entitled An Editor’s Tales (1870). Trollope wrote the stories during his editorship of Saint Paul’s Magazine and published them from November 1869 to May 1870. The collection consists of six stories told from the point of view of a fiction magazine editor. As Betty Jane Slepman Breyer observes, the tone of voice of the editor, or narrator, of the tales sounds very much like Anthony
Trollope (xiii). The author claims that the stories “professed to give an editor’s experience of his dealings with contributors,” but that they were not autobiographical:

I do not think that there is a single incident in the book which could bring back to any one concerned the memory of a past event. And yet there is not an incident in it the outline of which was not presented to my mind by the remembrance of some fact: —how an ingenious gentleman got into conversation with me, I not knowing that he knew me to be an editor, and pressed his little article on my notice; how I was addressed by a lady with a becoming pseudonyme and with much equally becoming audacity; how I was appealed to by the dearest of little women whom here I have called Mary Gresley; how in my own early days there was a struggle over an abortive periodical which was intended to be the best thing ever done; how terrible was the tragedy of a poor drunkard, who with infinite learning at his command made one sad final effort to reclaim himself, and perished while he was making it; and lastly how a poor weak editor was driven nearly to madness by threatened litigation from a rejected contributor.

(*Autobiography* 337)

The stories do more than describe the foibles and weakness of the editor, however. They also ask the reader to sympathize with the editor’s job. It will be a relief to the editor if readers understand that he does not stuff all aspirants’ manuscripts into “pigeon-holes” instead of reading them (“Josephine” 218); that most of the manuscripts he gets are “undeniable twaddle” and he must reject them (“Mrs. Brumbry” 182); and that he has to “steel himself against” stories of significant financial need, for to publish the work of every aspirant begging for relief of a starving family would be incompatible with
"common prudence" ("Turkish" 11). Narrating these stories justifies those editorial actions that may appear hard-hearted and elaborates the kindesses the editor gives to those aspiring to be published.

The story of "Mrs. Brumby" is a good example of the editor's need for sympathy and understanding. It describes the plight of an editor who is bullied by a "strong-minded" woman, Mrs. Brumby, to publish an article she has written on the appropriate costume of the day. Years after the incident, the editor is still so unhappy with the outcome of his experience with Mrs. Brumby that he must tell the story: "Whether she be alive or whether she be dead, her story shall be told,—not in a spirit of revenge, but with strict justice" (169). In Mrs. Brumby's mind, the editor's agreement to read the article means publication acceptance, and when the editor refuses to publish her work, she claims breach of contract and consults an attorney. In the end, the magazine pays Mrs. Brumby's lawyer £10 to keep the matter out of court, and the editor is horrified. "That in such a transaction Mrs. Brumby should have been so thoroughly successful, and that we should have been so shamefully degraded, has always appeared to us to be an injury too deep to remain unredressed for ever. Can such wrongs be, and the heavens not fall!" (191). The editor claims he has recorded the story to exact justice, so the implicaton here is that telling this story of Mrs. Brumby is restorative because it sets the record straight. Readers will know that the editor deals honestly with budding authors and does not create and break contracts. Narrating this story wipes clean his tarnished image and restores it to its former integrity.
Freedom to Create Ambiguous Conclusions

Joseph Flora notes that “practitioners of the modern short story often achieved stunning effects from what they refrain from sharing with the reader—events or information that the reader of an earlier era would have expected and received.” Flora calls this device “conspicuous silence” (27). Modern writers have used this technique to create “ambiguity or the possibility of multiple endings” (29). Although nineteenth-century British writers were not employing this device for the same startling dramatic effects of Flora’s modern examples, they were experimenting with the idea of ambiguity. Earlier stories often end ambiguously, and later stories maintain ambiguity throughout. In either case, they are a very different genre from the novel with its neatly explained details and its orderly ending.

Although the passages in the Trollope stories noted in the previous chapter are not informed by conspicuous silence in the way Flora suggests, the noted silence indicates that Trollope was concerned with exclusion. While that silence is on the one hand necessary because of the confines of the short form, it is also liberating because he can use it to free himself from having to tell the reader what he would normally have to say in the novel. In fact, the tone Trollope uses when employing this precursor to conspicuous silence suggests that he is reveling in not having to tell. Compare the ending of his story of thwarted love, "La Mère Bauche," for instance, with The Way We Live Now. In the short story, Trollope’s narrator relates the fate of La Mère Bauche in two sentences and then plainly states that he will not tell the reader what happened to the two remaining characters: “As for the captaine—but what matters? He was made of sterner stuff. What matters either to the fate of such a one as Adolphe Bauche?” (48). What, indeed, becomes of Adolphe Bauche? On the one hand, he may mourn for his dead love and feel
remorse for his role in driving her to suicide; on the other hand, with his mother an invalid, he is young and single with a promising financial future. There are no such ambiguous outcomes in the novel. In *The Way We Live Now*, Trollope lists the attendees of Hetta and Paul Montague's wedding and indicates what becomes of them all. Roger Carbury has learned successfully to live with his feelings for Hetta. John and Ruby Crumb have happily become Roger's tenants and are expecting a baby, and Mr. Broune and Mrs. Broune have come to the wedding to demonstrate that the family quarrel is at an end. The only significant character not there is Sir Felix, and that is a blessing to all, except perhaps Mr. Blake, who manages to keep the young man at home. The genre demands that the plot line be completed and all the characters accounted for. What fun, Trollope seems to say, to leave the reader wondering about his short story characters. The short story does not require an explanation.

Wilkie Collins also takes advantage of the short form's compatibility with the ambiguous ending. The narrator of "The Dead Hand" never learns for certain whether his suspicions about Mr. Lorn's identity are true. He tells the reader he has related everything he knows for certain about the man he brought back to life in the double-bedded room that night. All he can add to the tale is "matter for inference and surmise" (214). He claims that he had several suspicions:

I had a notion once that my patient at the Inn might be a natural son of Mr. Holliday's; I had another idea that he might also have been the man who was engaged to Arthur's first wife; and I have a third idea, still clinging to me, that Mr. Lorn is the only man in England who could really enlighten me, if he chose, on both those doubtful points. (216)
The narrator has based his suspicions on Lorn’s quickening pulse when he hears Arthur’s last name, a resemblance of facial expression between the two men, Lorn’s acknowledged illegitimacy, and rumors of the scandalous behavior of Arthur’s father in his youth. These are hardly convincing pieces of evidence. Yet rather than using Lorn’s return to confirm the narrator’s suspicions at the end of the story, Collins takes the liberty of leaving the narrator as well as the reader doubtful about Lorn’s identity.

Ambiguity is the result of Oliphant’s story of multiple interpretations, “The Library Window.” The young narrator watching “the varied story out of doors” (209) from the window recess creates the story of the library window. She sees that window night after night, making meaning of the text contained within its frame even when her aunt’s friends suggest that the structure might possibly be there for decorative purposes. She interprets the lights and shadows beyond the glass as a scholar working at a desk. Even when she goes to the library and finds physical evidence that the last window in the row is not a functioning glass window, she refuses to give up on her interpretation of the story of the scholar. In fact, the story has become so important to her that she cannot bear for it to end. One night, the scholar gets up from his desk and walks over to the window. He sees the girl and waves his hand to her, and that is the last time she ever sees his image or the window again. The loss of his story makes her ill. Her aunt offers the alternate interpretation that he is the ghost of a scholar killed years ago by his lover’s jealous brothers, but this story only makes the girl’s health worse. As an adult, she thinks she sees his face again in a crowd. She believes that there is no anger in it and that he does not mean harm. The story then becomes a comfort to her. She thinks of the scholar in times of deepest despair and his face cheers her.
Readers of this story experience the same interpretive difficulties as the narrator. Perhaps the scholar is the hallucination of a diseased mind. The narrator has been ill. Some consider her a “fanciful” child (210). Conceivably, her overly excited imagination dreamt the story of the studious young man. Aunt Mary offers the alternative story of a ghost seeking vengeance on the “race that had punished him” (242). Perhaps, then, the ghost is haunting the young woman. However, the text offers insufficient evidence of any of these scenarios. The narrator believes in her story of the scholar. Readers of this story must determine if the library window exists, and what, if anything, is beyond it.

*Freedom from Conventional Marital Relationships and Communities*

The sweeping social aspects of the novel gave a sense of history and community to its underlying structure. These aspects also imparted a “moral seriousness” (Baldwin 30). In her essay “Novels,” Margaret Oliphant argues that the novel’s “sanity, wholesomeness, and cleanliness” (257) make it a prestigious genre. The market infrastructure’s primary support for the novel’s kind of morality came from Charles Edward Mudie. With good reason, Mudie’s was often referred to as the “leviathan among circulating libraries” (Griest 15), for his influence on writers and publishers was tremendous. His circulating libraries purchased as much as 25%-35% of a publisher’s first printing (Sutherland, *Victorian* 12-15). Because his purchasing power was so significant, he could influence the kind of novels writers penned, and he was particular about what works he would accept for his circulating libraries. His advertisements stated that “‘novels of objectionable character or inferior ability are almost invariably excluded’” (quoted in Sutherland, *Victorian* 26). Short story collections, however, did not pay as well as the three-decker novel, so Mudie had no interest in purchasing them.
Of course, his lack of interest made publishing a short story collection a risky financial venture, but it also liberated writers from Mudie’s “trespass on artistic freedom” (Sutherland, Victorian 25). As a result, in the short form writers could revise the novel’s necessity for wholesomeness.

Valerie Shaw explains that “the short story is inherently suited to dealing with the unconventional, in relationships, in attitudes, in behaviour. A large part of the genre’s appeal, to readers as well as writers, lies in its detachment, and the freedom it gives by encouraging improvisation and experimentation” (223). John Sutherland notes this experimentation in his introduction to Trollope’s short fiction. He observes that by writing for periodicals, Trollope was free from writing for the circulating libraries “with their proverbial timidity about bringing blushes to the maiden cheek” (Introduction viii-ix). Part of the attraction for Trollope was that he could “use his short stories for stronger meat than Barsetshire, and for experiments in fiction too risky for the three-decker. Short stories were to release a free-ranging, artistic risk-taking, altogether un-Trollopian Trollope” (Introduction ix). Clare Hanson adds that Stevenson and Kipling preferred to write the “mystery tale, probably because it offered a means by which they could structure and organize their common preoccupation with disorder, transgression and the breaking of limits” (19). Yet a study of mystery as well as other stories, written before these two authors made the genre famous, reveals the same preoccupation. Close readings of their short stories demonstrate that the restricted form offers Collins, Dickens, Gaskell, Oliphant, and Trollope the opportunity to liberate themselves from the history and moral seriousness set upon them by the novel form. Their stories are endorsements of community disorder, social transgression, and the breaking of the limits imposed by the marriage plot.
"Reader, I married him" (454). Perhaps no other single phrase captures the essence of the Victorian novel more than this resolution to Jane Eyre's story. It immediately brings to mind so much of what we associate with the Victorian novel: The meeting/complication/resolution of the marriage plot, middle class domesticity, class mobility created by inheritance, the relationship of the individual to society, English provinces, and the gothic elements that prefigure the sensation novel. It also reflects what Shirley Foster calls "one of the most pervasive ideologies of the age"—the assumption that the "ideal womanly virtues—sacrifice, self effacement, moral purity, service—were best expressed in the vocations of wife and mother" (5). However, the sentiments about love and marriage often expressed in the Victorian novel were not necessarily an accurate reflection of what was actually taking place in the Victorian population. Census figures indicate that by mid-century there were half a million more women than men. According to Foster, this fact, coupled with a trend in which many men were marrying later, or not at all or emigrating to the colonies, meant that a considerable number of Victorian women would never marry (7). Foster sees this state of affairs as a major source of anxiety for Victorian women, "trapped between pervasive ideology and countering fact" (7).

Feminist criticism has analyzed the tension between the desire to challenge the predominate ideology and maintaining the status quo. The readings of Elaine Showalter, Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, and Nina Auerbach⁴ point out the contradictions and ambiguities in Victorian women's fiction and interpret them as strategies for communicating to their readers the writers' ambivalence. However, an analysis of what

⁴ See Showalter's A Literature of Their Own; Gilbert and Gubar's The Mad Woman in the Attic; and Auerbach's Woman and the Demon.
writers were “saying” about marriage in their short stories suggests that they found the form a much more direct method of creatively coming to terms with their ambivalence. While they may have felt confined by space, they felt far from confined by subject matter. Taking Jane Eyre’s proclamation as my starting point, the following three sections in this chapter will suggest some of the ways the short story form revises what Jane Eyre’s descendents have taught us to expect from the Victorian novel. Braddon, Collins, Gaskell, Oliphant, and Trollope take advantage of the confinement of the short story to voice alternative narratives of marriage, domesticity, and community—narratives perhaps more in keeping with the reality of Victorians’ lives. These revisions are neither mutually exclusive nor exhaustive, but they provide us with a way of making sense of the kinds of short stories that, oddly enough, were birthed from the center of the Victorian middle-class writing culture.

Section 1: Reader, I Left Him.

While the marriage plot gives shape, teleology, and closure to the Victorian novel, it is more often than not revised in Victorian short fiction. Kate Flint recently edited a collection of Victorian love stories, but only a few follow a shortened version of the meeting/complication/resolution format of the marriage plot. Those short stories that treat events prior to marriage usually introduce nontraditional characters as their lovers. The characters may be older, or even widowed, and seeking companionship in their old age. Others are stories of the relationship between two people after marriage—some are successful and some are not. A simple explanation for the short story’s lack of emphasis on the marriage plot could be its less-than-capacious form. If we apply what D. A. Miller says about the narratable, or the tensions or obstacles that must be present before the
marriage plot can begin, then it follows that certainly the short story does not allow the writer much time to build up the necessary tensions. There is no meeting/complication/resolution to tell. I am not arguing that short stories must exclude events leading to marriage. Trollope’s “The Courtship of Susan Bell,” for instance, is strongly invested in the marriage plot. However, the complication is narrowly limited to the conflict between the desires of docile Susan and her stern older sister. Braddon’s “Old Rudderford Hall” also ends in marriage, yet as the title suggests, the focus of the story is actually the building itself. The marriage will unite the owner of the hall with new money with which the hall can be restored to its former glory. More often, as the stories in this section demonstrate, British novelists writing short stories have discovered freedom in the short form to experiment with marital relationships.

Oliphant’s “A Story of a Wedding Tour” recounts how an accident gave a young wife freedom from an unhappy marriage. It begins by relating how Mr. Rosendale falls in love with a pretty young orphan educated to be a governess. Her guardians consider Mr. Rosendale an “astonishing match” for Janey, and the young girl is so thrilled that someone loves her that she willingly consents in spite of the fact that she hardly knows him. “He was a thick-set little man and did not dress or talk in perfect taste; but—in love! These two words made all the difference. Nobody had ever loved her much less been ‘in love’ with her” (303). At this point, the story sounds very familiar: Poor governess meets wealthy bachelor who falls in love with her and offers his hand in marriage. However, in the very next paragraph, Oliphant begins to unravel the marriage plot. Within a week of their marriage, Janey regrets her decision. She becomes “a good deal frightened, horrified, and even revolted, by her first discoveries of what it meant to be in love” (303). It seems her husband is in love with her beauty, but cares nothing for
what she thinks, likes, or feels. Other than remarks about her beauty, he has little to say to her:

He read his paper, disappearing behind it in the morning; he went to sleep after his midday meal (for the weather was warm;) he played billiards in the evening in the hotels to which he took her on their wedding journey; or he overwhelmed her with caresses from which she shrank in disgust, almost in terror. That was all that being in love meant, she found; and to say that she was disappointed cruelly was to express in the very mildest way the dreadful downfall of all her expectations and hopes which happened to Janey before she had been seven days a wife. (304)

Janey learns more about her new husband’s character as they are traveling through France by train on their wedding journey. When the train makes a stop, her husband gets off, presumably to stretch or get a drink. However, when the train starts to leave the station, her husband has not returned. She goes to the window and sees him running after it. The expression on his face reveals to her that here is a “temper as unrestrained as his love-making, and as little touched by any thought save that of his own gratification” (305). This revelation is enough to push Janey into action. In an astonishing twist, Janey, “intoxicated with her freedom,” (315) purchases another train ticket when she arrives at her original destination and hides herself away in a small French town. She gives birth to a son and lives there for ten years before she is discovered.

In a small amount of space, Oliphant has portrayed some of the real adversities facing women who chose to follow the dictates of society. They were often unschooled about sexual intercourse and sexual appetite, and could be at the mercy of their husband’s tempers. Merryn Williams remarks of A Widow’s Tale, in which this story is collected,
that it is ironic that “the woman who is best remembered as a Victorian prude probably wrote better than any Englishwoman of her century about sex as an irresistible force, swamping the decencies and conventionalities, and apparently did so without offending anyone” (164). One day Janey is on the railroad platform when the train passes through town. Her husband is on the train and they see each other through the train window. He is in ill health and the sight of her is such a shock that he dies within a day, but not before all is known to the townspeople and her son. The encounter also shocks Janey. She “had not blamed herself before; but now seemed to herself no less than a murderer of her husband; and could not forgive herself” (319). It is almost as if Oliphant too had to put some restraint on the liberties she had taken with the marriage plot. She could have easily ended the story with the view through the window, but instead in the final three paragraphs of the story, she describes the arrival of Janey’s husband, his death, and Janey’s resulting guilt. Perhaps a story such as this one was not offensive because in its conclusion Janey’s freedom comes at a price.

Trollope too uses the short form to explore unorthodox female behavior in “Mrs. General Talboys.” Some “slight domestic misunderstanding” (46) has driven the titular heroine to spend the winter of 1859 with a group of eighteen to twenty “would-be painters, poets, novelist, and sculptors” (50). While with the group, she takes the opportunity to make bold ideological speeches about religious, political, and personal freedom. Her statements suggest to other group members that she has no “repugnance” to the “theory of infidelity” (49). She is especially sympathetic to the matrimonial troubles of Charles O’Brien. The two become great confidants, and she counsels him to go to England and divorce his wife. The Irishman mistakes her sympathies and proclamations of personal freedom for romantic interest and asks her to go to Naples with
him. She is insulted that he could even think she would be unfaithful to her husband, and the friendship is destroyed.

Mrs. Talboys' aspirations for personal freedom in almost all aspects of life are quite controversial with her group of friends and were probably even more so with Trollope's readers. She champions religious worship without the fetters produced by the hypocrisy of the church, freedom from the constraints of paternity and landed property, and most of all, the ability to break the bonds between two spirits no longer compatible. In fact, the narrator says, "Mrs. Talboys' aspirations for freedom ignored all bounds, and, in theory, there were no barriers which she was not willing to demolish" (65). In spite of these proclamations of freedom, she remains a proper married woman when the opportunity arises for her to run away with O'Brien. Yet the story still seems to challenge the notion of what constitutes a proper married woman. Mrs. Talboys has left her husband and four of her five children at home to spend several months in Rome with a group of artists. She speaks her mind on all subjects, flirts with a married man eight years younger than herself, and enjoys both receiving and rejecting his proposal for a weekend in Naples. Yet at the end of the story, the group has dubbed her "the hero" (82) for her behavior.

The freedom that Trollope seems to believe the short form afforded him was apparently more than his usual readers were willing to accept. He had an agreement with the Cornhill to publish the stories that were to make up the second series of Tales of All Countries. When he sent in "Mrs. General Talboys" to the Cornhill for publication, editor William M. Thackeray and owner George Smith found this story of a liberated woman inappropriate for a family magazine. It was eventually sold along with seven others in the series to the London Review. However, the London Review readers were
offended by “Mrs. General Talboys” and another story called “A Ride across Palestine.” Laurence Oliphant, one of the owners of the magazine, wrote to Trollope about the readers’ disapprobation of the stories. One of the “mildest “objectors threatened to discontinue buying the journal “if it published any more of Trollope’s vulgar stories. Readers who prefer “stuff of that description” can find it in the London Journal. The letter writer goes on to ask if the editor meant to appeal to men of “intelligence and high moral feeling” or those of a “morbid imagination and a low tone of morals” (Letters 1: 141). The London Review published “The Parson’s Daughter of Oxney Colne” and then sold the remaining five stories of what eventually made up the collection to the weekly Public Opinion (Hall 207-209). Perhaps the editors of Public Opinion realized what a bargain they were getting. The stories, one of which, “Aaron Trow,” is discussed later in this section, “show Trollope growing in his technical skill, particularly fitting the right-sized subject into the restricted literary form” (Sutherland, Introduction xviii).

Collins blatantly uses the subject of divorce as the theme for one of the stories collected in The Queen of Hearts called “Brother Owen’s Story of the Parson’s Scruple.” Originally published in Household Words as “A New Mind,” this story describes the marriage between Alfred Carling, a middle-aged rector who had never been married, and a middle-aged woman, Emily, whom Carling believes to be the widow of Fergus Duncan. It is a love match, and they are happy until the rector begins to do some research for a pamphlet he is writing for a Missionary Society. He discovers that he needs to read a report and some letters to the editor published in the Times eight years earlier. A wealthy friend has bound volumes of the newspaper in his library and sends what the rector needs to his house. When Carling opens the package, he discovers that the page with the letters to the editor has been cut out. He then sends to a bookseller for the pages. When he is
finally able to read them, he discovers that one of the three lead articles was about the
divorce laws and the example used is the story of his wife:

At that time, England stood disgracefully alone as the one civilized
country in the world, having a divorce law for the husband which was not
also a divorce law for the wife. The writer in the *Times* boldly and
eloquenty exposed this discreditable anomaly in the administration of
justice; hinted delicately at the unutterable wrongs suffered by Mrs.
Duncan; and plainly showed that she was indebted to the accident of
having been married in Scotland, and to her consequent right of appeal to
the Scotch tribunals, for a full and final release from the vilest of
husbands, which the English law of that day would have mercilessly
refused. (*Queen* 228)

The rector is unable to cope with his wife’s deception. He has preached to his
congregation to accept literally the verse in the Gospel of St. Luke: “Whosoever marrieth
her that is put away from her husband, committeth adultery” (228). He believes they
have committed a great sin and refuses to look at her ever again. He leaves the house,
travels to London to make living arrangements for Emily, books passage on a ship to the
Pacific islands, and dies before he ever reaches land. In the meantime, Emily suffers
from a brain fever. She recovers, but has no memory of anything prior to her illness.

Emily has clearly deceived the rector. Not only has she presented herself as a
widow, but also she has cut out the damaging pages from the neighbor’s copy of the
*Times* and tried to intercept the arrival of the new copy before her husband can reach it.
However, the narrative suggests that readers should align themselves with the writer of
the *Times* article as well as empathize with Emily’s decision to deceive her husband. The
couple's friends entreat the rector to recognize that "the deception of which his wife had been guilty was the most pardonable of all concealments of the truth, because it sprang from her love for him" (230). Although he acknowledges this argument to be true, Carling is unable to forgive Emily not because she has committed an unpardonable wrong but because of a "moral defect" (218) in his character. He is a weak man, and like other weak men, he is "only capable of asserting himself positively in serious matters by running into extremes" (218). These extremes appear in matters related to religious principle, in which cases, he is the "sternest and the most aggressive of fanatics" (218). His punishment for this defect is death. On the other hand, the narrative treats Emily with sympathy and forgiveness. She surprisingly recovers from her illness "with the complete loss of one faculty, which, in her situation, poor thing, was a mercy and a gain to her—the faculty of memory" (231). She lives in "happy oblivion" (231), and the narrator hopes that in her final hours Emily will die with nothing in her memory but the recollection of the kindness of the friends who have taken care of her since her husband's death.

In this story, Collins has taken the liberty to overturn the marriage plot, not once, but twice, by creating a different kind of heroine. Emily has not exercised the womanly virtue of sacrifice by telling Carling of her past before marrying him. Nor is she morally pure. She knows that he would not marry a divorced woman, so she lies about her first marriage. She loves and desires Carling and does what is necessary to make him her husband. Yet she is not really punished for her behavior. While it is true that the shock of her husband's discovery and response makes her ill, the illness prevents her from ever learning that her actions have caused his death. In fact, she does not remember either husband. She is single again and living in "happy oblivion." It appears to be a much
better state than being in a bad marriage, which, the story suggests, is not that uncommon if it can happen to one woman twice in a lifetime.

Catherine Peters argues that this story is based on the plight of Frances Dickinson, a long-time friend of Collins. Dickinson left her husband in 1845 claiming adultery and cruelty, and the ten-year battle to free herself that ensued angered Collins. The ecclesiastical Court of Arches granted her a judicial separation in 1848. However, the agreement prevented either of the parties from remarrying while the other was still living, so Dickinson then sought a more complete Scotch divorce, which was finally granted in 1855 after extended public proceedings (173). Even if Collins is using this story to express his indignation over the English divorce laws, the point remains that the short story gave him a venue to freely express his feelings about the confines of the marriage plot.

Section 2: Reader, I Married Her.

John Wain notes that one of the pleasures of writing a short story is that it does not need enormous amounts of information. It is, therefore, extremely liberating. It has the power to liberate you from "the social milieu that you know best" (53). This liberation from the familiar social milieu is one of the attractions the short story held for Victorian novelists. For one thing, it allowed them to place their stories outside England. For another, it enabled them to write about alternative communities—societies that would be unacceptable to read about at length. Generally, these alternative communities are same sex communities. The heroes and heroines are not the pure people, and their stories stretch the limits of the linguistic and social taboos established in the novel.
Gaskell’s “The Grey Woman” is a particularly striking example of an alternative female community. A narrative frame informs the reader that two women visiting a German mill in the middle of the century see a painting of a beautiful woman hanging in the miller’s living room. When they ask the miller about the woman, he identifies her as his great aunt, Anna Scherer, as she looked in 1778. According to the family story, Anna was so frightened at some point in her life that she lost all the color in her hair and complexion and became known as the Grey Woman. The miller then produces a letter Anna wrote to her daughter, Ursula, that delineates these frightening events. The manuscript is written in German and the two women take it home to translate. They find that the letter is a warning to Ursula that she must not marry the man who has just proposed to her.

What follows is the story of Anna’s marriage to Monsieur de la Tourelle. Anna describes a courtship in which everyone around her considered the Frenchman such a good match for her that she dare not oppose their wishes in spite of her own uneasiness about Tourelle. Her husband imprisons her in his home in Vosges, cuts her off from her family in Germany, leaving her maid, Amante, for her only friend. One night, Anna sneaks into her husband’s office in search of a letter from home. When he returns unexpectedly with some friends, Anna hides under a table, from where she sees the corpse of a man they have just murdered and learns of her husband’s criminal activity. When the men leave the chamber, Amante helps Anna out of the room in a scene that marks a pivotal change in their relationship: “The door once opened—I know not by which of us—I fell upon her neck, grasping her tight, till my hands ached with the tension of their hold. Yet she never uttered a word. Only she took me up in her vigorous arms, and bore me to my room, and laid me on my bed” (278). The scene symbolizes the point
at which Amante replaces Tourelle as Anna’s husband. When Anna regains her senses, the two women flee the manor. To prevent discovery, Amante disguises herself as a man, and she and Anna present themselves to others as a traveling tailor and his wife. When they reach Frankfurt, Amante devises the following plan: “We will still be husband and wife; we will take a small lodging, and you shall housekeep and live indoors. I, as the rougher and the more alert, will continue my father’s trade, and seek work at the tailors’ shops” (297). Amante and Anna live together for at least a year posing as husband and wife, with Amante serving as father to the baby girl that Anna bears. Because Anna’s real husband will kill her if he finds her, Anna never leaves the house. She is profoundly cut off from all traditional society and is now a part of a tiny new community—herself, her cross dressing maid/husband, and their baby.

Eventually, Tourelle is caught, but not before he kills Amante. Anna then marries a doctor who treated her in Frankfurt and knew her story. Even though she is no longer in danger, she still refuses to leave the house. After the doctor’s death, Anna and Ursula return to her father’s mill where they live out the rest of their lives. Ursula believes the doctor to be her father until her mother relates this story. The cause for the letter is that Ursula has fallen in love with a Frenchman, and Anna has discovered that he is actually the son of the corpse Anna saw in her husband’s study. Ursula, the miller tells the ladies, never married the Frenchman or anyone else after reading her mother’s letter.

Maureen Reddy reads this story as a cautionary tale. She argues that Gaskell is implying that patriarchal homes have imprisoned Anna. Her father imprisoned her at the mill, her husband imprisoned her at the manor, and now the miller imprisons her story at the mill. The letter is “a warning from an experienced woman to an inexperienced one, which describes what marriage really is for women; that is, Ursula ought not marry
because the institution of marriage itself is a terrible trap for women regardless of the individual man involved” (186). Reddy sees Amante’s death as the result of her “‘deviant’ sexuality, and her usurpation of a man’s place. Amante’s particular variety of sexuality is especially threatening to the patriarchal order because it entirely eliminates men’s control over women’s sexuality” (191). While it is true that by killing Amante and returning Anna to a traditional marriage, Gaskell seems to undercut the imaginative force of the story, the letter prevents Ursula from what could be a disastrous marriage. The story is now in the hands of two women of the next generation who have “published” its warning for the reader. Despite its gothic nature, the story overtly makes clear the dangers marriage can pose for some women and how women can overcome those dangers when necessary.

It should be remembered that Gaskell also placed two women in a kind of marital relationship in “Half a Lifetime Ago” when Susan Dixon and the widow of her former lover join households. However, much more overt support of this alternative family unit is found in O livant’s “Lady Isabella.” The tale describes the relationship between two friends, Lady Isabella and Mrs. Spenser, “so intimately allied” that the story’s narrator, Mrs. Mulgrave, “was in the habit of saying they were more like man and wife than anything else” (149). The two women have lived together for seven years before the events of the story take place. Mrs. Mulgrave believes Isabella to be approximately thirty-five years old and Mrs. Spencer to be ten years her senior. Mrs. Spencer is of a very active nature, keeping every detail of the house, grounds, and finances orderly, and Isabella “bears with Mrs. Spencer’s ‘ways’ as a wife bears with her husband” (151). One evening when Mrs. Mulgrave visits the women in their house, she notes the character of their relationship:
Mrs. Spenser seated herself on her side of the fire, like the husband coming in from his day's work. She was a clever woman, but she was matter-of-fact, and notwithstanding the long years they had lived together, was never quite sure what was the meaning of her friend's jibes and jests. It was this as much as anything that gave a sort of conjugal character to their relationship. (153)

Mrs. Mulgrave is so accustomed to thinking of them as man and wife that at one point she uses the male pronoun when referring to Mrs. Spencer. When Mrs. Spencer laughs at one of Isabella's remarks, Mrs. Mulgrave characterizes the response as one "a husband would have done, taking it for the merest nonsense; yet somehow propitiated, for there was an inference of superior wisdom, importance, goodness on his—I mean her—part, such as mollifies the marital mind" (153). However, the conjugal nature of their relationship is not just the fancy of Mrs. Mulgrave. On at least one occasion, in a conversation with others, Lady Isabella even refers to Mrs. Spencer as her husband.

Conflict arises when Colonel Brentford, an old love of Isabella's, is stationed near the neighborhood. Mrs. Spencer tries to keep them from meeting because she fears Brentford will break Isabella's heart again. However, Isabella enlists the help of Mrs. Mulgrave to arrange a meeting, and eventually their love is rekindled, much to the surprise of everyone, especially Mrs. Spencer. When they announce their engagement, Mrs. Spencer's reaction is very much like that of a lover who has been thrown over: "'Isabella! I thought you had forgotten him. I thought it was this that was all over. I thought you were content.'" When Isabella responds that she is "'more than content'" now that she and Brentford have reconciled, Mrs. Spencer responds bitterly. "'Then I am nothing to her, nothing to her!'" (179).
In light of Gaskell’s female community in Cranford, this story might not seem so striking if it were not for the narrator’s closing remarks. In the final paragraphs, the narrator offers a comment that perhaps sheds light on Oliphant’s own ambivalence about how alternative narratives command little respect in a society in which marriage is a woman’s ultimate achievement:

We are all in the habit of laughing at the idea of friendships so close and exacting, especially when they exist between women. But to Mrs. Spencer it was as if life itself had gone from her. Her companion had gone from her, the creature she loved best. Next to a man’s wife deserting him, or woman’s husband, I know nothing more hard. Her pretty house, her flowers, her perfect comfort and grace of life palled upon her. She had kept them up chiefly, I think, for the young woman, who, she had thought, poor soul, was wedded to her for life. I suppose to be married is the happiest; but still I was very, very sorry, grieved more than I can say, for the woman who was forsaken; though she was only forsaken by another woman and not by a man.

However that, I fear, is a sentiment in which I should find few sympathizers. (181)

One could argue that with the union of Isabella and Brentford the story ultimately endorses the marriage plot, but it is Mrs. Spencer’s plight with whom the reader is ultimately left to sympathize. Oliphant manages to create that sympathy because she has so convincingly established Mrs. Spencer as Isabella’s husband in the reader’s mind. Regardless of how unpopular such a sentiment might be, one cannot help feel compassion for the manly Mrs. Spencer.
Trollope employs the short form to toy with another kind of community in “A Ride across Palestine.” Mr. Jones is travelling with a guide in the Holy Land when he is approached by a young Englishman by the name of John Smith. The young man proposes that he join Jones on his journey for the purpose of companionship and the sharing of expenses. Jones is immediately attracted to Smith and agrees to the proposition. Their journey on horseback from Jaffa to the Jordan River is filled with sexual innuendo. At first, the remarks are innocent enough. Smith, for instance, rebuffs Jones’s touch when the older gentleman demonstrates how his Turkish saddle will chafe Smith’s calves or when he offers to rub brandy over so “efficaciously” (248) on Smith’s saddle-weary limbs. However, even the most pure-minded readers would have to raise their eyebrows at the discussion between the two characters about Jones’s gun. Jones tells Smith that should they run into any danger he will put his “hand” on his “revolver.” Smith does not carry a revolver but will be happy to “take the charge” of Jones’s gun. Jones, however, feels that the “tool will come readiest to the hand of its master,” but urges Smith to buy one for a “pistol hanging over your loins is no great trouble to you, and looks as though you could bite” (243). By the time they reach the Jordan, they have become much more familiar with each other physically. Jones rests his head on Smith’s legs and thinks, “Ah, me! one does not take such liberties with new friends in England. It was a place which led one on to some special thoughts” (258). He reiterates the uniqueness of place again in the next paragraph after describing the view of the Jordan near them and the Dead Sea in the distance: “The wilderness! In truth, the spot was one which did lead to many thoughts” (259). By the time the conversation that takes place in this wild spot is over, Jones’s head is in Smith’s lap and Smith’s hand is on Jones’s brow.
When the two have returned to their starting point, Jones confesses to the reader that he loves Smith like a brother.

Readers were likely relieved to have their suspicions about Smith’s femininity confirmed. When the two travelers return to their starting point, there is a gentleman there searching for his niece. It turns out that she is Smith posing as a man in order to escape her overbearing uncle. Certainly some of the sexual innuendo would become less offensive to Victorian readers when the male/male relationship is exchanged for the male/female relationship, but just barely. Unknown to Miss Weston, a.k.a. Mr. Smith, a married man with a family back in England has been placing his head in her lap. Obviously then, the story cannot be resolved with a marriage. Instead, all parties go their separate ways, never to meet again.

“A Ride across Palestine” met the same publishing fate as “Mrs. General Talboys.” The Cornhill’s Smith and Thackeray wanted the story shortened and objected to the “sexual resonances” that were “too explicit for the magazine” (Hall 207). They asked Trollope to revise the story, but the author replied that while he could “arrange” such details like the saddle sores, he could not shorten the story to twenty pages: “One cannot shorten a story. Little passages are sure to hang on to what is taken out” (Letters 1: 116-117). He offered them “Mrs. General Talboys” instead, and as mentioned above, both were rejected and ultimately published in the London Review.

Section 3: Reader, I Murdered Him.

Writer and short-story theorist Frank O’Connor argues that writers have to belong to submerged population groups before they can discover the freedom of expression afforded them by the short story. He argues that historically the short story seems to
flourish in places without a strong cultural framework, such as in regional settlements lacking organized social cohesion or in colonial societies. The American short story, for example, flourished when new territories were being developed. Or, suggests O'Connor, if the short story develops within an established community, it is produced by writers who are writing from within “submerged population groups.” These writers are opposed to the cultural framework in which they live and find their society’s professed values problematic (13-21). Ultimately, their stories reflect that opposition. While the novel adheres “to the classical concept of a civilized society, of man as an animal who lives in a community,” the short story by its very nature remains “remote from the community—romantic, individualistic, and intransigent” (20). Thus, runs O’Connor’s argument, until British writers like Kipling appear and write from outside the established English cultural framework, the short story could not flourish.

However, Braddon, Collins, Dickens, Gaskell, Le Fanu, Oliphant, and Trollope discovered its appeal while writing from the center of dominant British middle-class society. While it is true that Trollope’s *Tales of All Countries* collections were inspired by his real-life travels, and other writers place their stories in settings other than England, none of them is ever a member of any group other than the dominant culture. In fact, while traveling may have inspired some, it could stifle others. For instance, when Dickens was in Genoa trying to start the Christmas story he had agreed to write for Bradbury and Evans, he found it difficult to begin. He felt “plucked” out of his “proper soil” (*Letters* 4: 199). A “cavernous Italian palace was perhaps not the best place to paint the careful miniatures of benevolence and good will which he needed for the Christmas season” (Ackroyd 440-41). Ultimately, hearing the Italian chimes at midnight brought to Dickens’s mind an “old London belfry” and inspired *The Chimes* (*Letters* 4: 200).
In spite of the fact that they were writing from the center of Victorian middle-class culture, the novelists discussed in this section see the short story as an opportunity to revise the kind of community they wrote about in novels. The stories in this section narrate the disruption or disintegration of community. The disruption is initiated by a heinous act committed by human or supernatural agency, and ends with the expulsion of community members or the disintegration of the entire community. The community is disrupted in Gaskell’s “The Poor Clare,” for instance, when Bridget places a curse on the squire and, inadvertently, on her granddaughter. To restore Lucy to the community, Bridget must remove herself to the convent. Part of the force of encounters with the supernatural is their brevity. Sustained accounts of murders or rapes would have been repugnant to Victorian reading audiences, and ambiguity between natural and supernatural forces would likely be more difficult to maintain at length. Extended descriptions of Lucy’s evil double, the result of Bridget’s curse, would detract from the mysterious nature of the curse. They would also become episodic—just one more bad deed on a list of bad deeds. Elizabeth Jay speculates that the appeal of ghost stories in the second half of the nineteenth century “may have lain in the disruptions they offered to a mechanistic explanation of a world increasingly dominated by sceptical materialism” (159). Certainly they were at odds with the realist project supported by the novel, which stressed the “primacy of material existence and [...] reject[ed] or fail[ed] to focus upon the absent, the transcendent, the unreal” (Brantlinger 181).

For example, Trollope spins a tale of prison confinement and escape in “Aaron Trow.” Trow, a convict serving time in a Bermuda jail, manages to elude his jailers for a month until he makes a desperate attempt to rob Anastasia Bergen of money so he can pay for a passage out on a ship. When he discovers the young woman has no money in
the house, his desperation becomes more than murderous: "Then I will do worse than murder you. I will make you such an object that all the world shall loathe to look on you." And so saying he took her by the arm and dragged her forth from the wall against which she had stood" (21). What follows is an amazingly detailed description of the battle that ensues between Trow and Anastasia. Fortunately for the young woman, the struggle is interrupted by the return of her two servants, and Trow runs off into the night before he is able to carry out his threat. The mild mannered Presbyterian minister engaged to Anastasia becomes so enraged at Trow’s act that he organizes a search party, and they relentlessly pursue the convict to his death.

This is a tale of community disorder. The jail is disrupted when the convict escapes. The community is disrupted in the search for Trow, and the marriage plot is disrupted with the attempted rape of Anastasia. Moreover, the community is not returned to order at the end. Even though the convict is killed and Anastasia and Caleb are married, the minister cannot come to terms with his feelings of revenge, so he and his bride leave the island for Nova Scotia. The minister is essentially expelled by the ghost of Aaron Trow who is said to haunt the rocky inlet where he died. The ghost haunts the islanders as well. In fact, the story of the ghost has become so much a part of the island that it “is a part of the creed of every young woman in Bermuda” (45).

Another story in which the author feels free to write about community disorder is Gaskell’s “Lois the Witch.” A. B. Hopkins discusses how liberating this story was for the author personally. This story, “with its scene laid in the Salem of 1692, was a field in which Mrs. Gaskell had not ventured before; she had generally confined herself to the nineteenth century and to territory with which she was personally familiar. In essaying an American locale she made what was for her a bold venture” (256). It is perhaps by
placing this story in such a different social milieu that she is able to explore the idea of community disruption.

It begins with the heroine, Lois, being forced out of her own English community upon the death of her parents and made to travel to America to live with an uncle she has never met. The household is dominated by her aunt, Grace Hickson, and the isolated community of Salem is dominated by superstition. As an English woman whose father was an Anglican minister, Lois’s views of religion make her unacceptable to her new family as well as to the community. Her aunt and her older cousin, Manasseh, had “positive, active antipathy to all the ideas Lois held most dear” (125). Eventually, Manasseh, whose sanity becomes less and less stable as the story progresses, has a vision that he and Lois should be married. He insists that the prophecy has been ordained by God and that neither of them have any choice but to follow it. He accuses Lois of blasphemy when she tells him that she does not love him and that “there is no power in heaven or earth that can make me love thee enough to marry thee or wed thee without such love” (137). Lois also manages innocently to alienate her other two cousins. Her cousin, Faith, misinterprets Lois’s feelings for the minister Faith loves. Her spoiled younger cousin, Prudence, becomes so angry when Lois corrects her bad behavior that she waits for the proper time to seek vengeance. The time comes at the prayer meeting following a witch execution. Prudence falls into convulsions and accuses Lois of bewitching her. The belief in witchcraft has fomented a collective hysteria, and Lois is immediately imprisoned. After a speedy trial, she is sentenced to death.

Clearly, Lois is hanged as a witch primarily because she insists upon her right to think independently and to control her own sexuality. However, the community that performs this act is delusional. Twenty years later, her accusers, Prudence and Grace
Hickson, and the judge at her trial publicly repent and ask for forgiveness, and the church erases the sentence of excommunication that had been ordered against all the witches of Salem. The short form has given Gaskell the opportunity to depict the "psychology of hysteria" in an isolated community "turned in upon itself, where fear, jealousy, superstition, and literal belief all tangle; where panic, once started, cannot be halted until it has worked out its fury in destruction, leaving the community aghast like those self-betrayed, at the evidence of their own turbid passions" (Easson xi).

Braddon’s "Ralph the Bailiff" narrates the disintegration of the family. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the story begins with the death of a family member, Martin Carleon. Dudley Carleon, the new owner of the family farm, retains his brother's former bailiff, Ralph Purvis, to help him run the farm. The bailiff's sister, Martha, also works on the Carleon farm, taking care of domestic matters. As the story unfolds, we learn that Purvis is blackmailing Dudley over the death of his brother. A suggestion made by Purvis had inspired Dudley to poison his brother so he could inherit the farm and pay off some of his debts. Purvis uses his knowledge to coerce Dudley into secretly marrying Martha and buying a small farm where she can live and raise the child Dudley sires. The blackmail is expensive, and no one knows of his marriage to Martha, so Dudley marries Jenny Trevor, primarily for the money she brings to the marriage. Purvis has his eye on the farm and wants Dudley to leave it to Martha's son in his will. To do so would acknowledge Martha as his wife and leave Jenny robbed of her inheritance. Purvis's unceasing vigilance over Dudley's every move and his attempts to keep Jenny prisoner break Dudley. In the end, the family has disintegrated. The woman Martin left behind has gone mad; Jenny is free but has lost her inheritance; Dudley has taken his own life; and Purvis, his sister, and her son have left for Australia.
Braddon uses the short form to narrate a dark vision of the family—the unit from which community extends. The husband is a bigamist and a murderer. The woman who is his legal wife achieved that status through blackmail. The woman who is recognized as his wife has been robbed of her inheritance. The trusted family servant is a blackmailer seeking the demise of the family for his own gain. Braddon narrates the destruction of the family as well as the failure of a return to order when the events have unfolded. The guilty heroine of *Lady Audley’s Secret* is locked up in a home for the insane for her misdeeds, but the blackmailing Purvis is free. He is not punished because with Dudley’s death there is no one to prove his culpability. In the end, the child from the marriage between Martha Purvis and Dudley will likely inherit the family farm as Purvis hoped, but even better, from the bailiff’s point of view, is that the child’s name is Purvis, not Carleon. All vestiges of the Carleon family have been swept away. A new and murderous order has replaced it.

**Freedom from Serialization and the Three-Decker Novel**

Closely akin to the idea of the “interconnectedness of things” is the market infrastructure that supported it. Authors wrote novels because both the three-volume novel format and periodical serialization formats demanded it. The cost of a well-produced novel was too high for English middle-class families to purchase regularly, so they paid to borrow novels from a library. The circulating libraries found the three-decker format the most profitable, and since as much as 25%-35% of a publisher’s first printing was purchased by the circulating libraries, publishers were ready to supply the libraries with the three-volume novel (Sutherland, *Victorian* 12-15). The alternative to
library borrowing was to purchase fiction via the inexpensive weekly or monthly periodicals that printed fiction in installments. Both formats required long texts.

To support this “commercially safe” infrastructure, publishers wanted writers to produce stories long enough to fill the three-volume and serial installment formats. Usually a three-volume novel was filled with 120,000-200,000 words, and serial novels ran from twelve to twenty months with about 10,000-12,000 words in each (Griest 45). The length could be troublesome for authors, but the additional demands of serialization could be especially exasperating. Elizabeth Gaskell, for instance, found the experience of writing *North and South* for Dickens’s *Household Words* a difficult task. The magazine was a weekly, and that portion allotted for the serial had to be four to six pages. Each installment had to contain enough matter of intrinsic interest to carry over into the next number, and the chapter’s end had to coincide with the end of the installment. Gaskell and Dickens frequently bickered over how to compress Gaskell’s prose to meet these requirements. She found it difficult to chop the story up into chapters as precisely as the format required and frequently ignored Dickens’s suggestions for chapter breaks (Hopkins 144-46). When sales of *Household Words* dropped slightly at the same time the first installments of *North and South* appeared in the magazine, Dickens attributed the slump to “the wearisome way” Mrs. Gaskell divided her story. It had become a “dreary business,” he said (*Letters* 6: 778). Other arguments flared up over the way Dickens was advertising Gaskell’s novel and Gaskell’s request to increase the number of installments. Dickens eventually gave in to Gaskell’s demands, but not before some harsh words were exchanged on both sides (Hopkins 146-48). After the publication of *North and South*, Gaskell contributed fourteen more tales to *Household Words* and its successor *All the Year Round*, but none of these contributions was a full-length novel (Hopkins 152).
After experiences like Gaskell's, what a relief it must have been for writers to complete a story in a single issue. Even stories that had to be printed in two or three installments did not require the same kind of extensive chapter planning and plot outlining that a serialized novel required. Two stories in Trollope's *An Editor's Tales* hint at this sense of freedom from novel writing. The first is "Mary Gresley." Mary is a young woman who appears at the editor's office with the manuscript of a novel. Writing in the editorial "we" of his profession, the narrator explains the power Mary has over him:

> We have known many prettier girls than Mary Gresley, and many handsomer women,—but we never knew girl or woman gifted with a face which in supplication was more suasive, in grief more sad, in mirth more merry. It was a face that compelled sympathy, and it did so with the conviction on the mind of the sympathiser that the girl was altogether unconscious of her own power. (25)

Mary had been writing for her own entertainment since a small child. When she was eighteen, her father passed away, leaving Mary, her sister, and her mother with little financial security. In an effort to alleviate some of their wants, Mary began to wonder if she had enough talent to earn money from her writing. She gave the manuscript of a novel to a man of letters in her neighborhood who declared the novel had some merit but was not good enough for publication. She burned the manuscript and began again. The man of letters read the second novel and wrote her a letter of introduction to the narrator. Because of the sympathy Mary inspires in the narrator, he agrees to read her novel.

What ensues is a telling description of the three-volume novel's creation. First and foremost in the editor's criticism that the young woman's novel "was intended to fill
only one volume” (35). Moreover, “it was simple, unaffected and almost painfully unsensational” (37). He tells her that if she insists on pursuing novel writing she must begin again. In spite of any real belief that Mary will ever gain fame and fortune by her pen, he works out the following plan with her:

She was to fabricate a plot, and to bring it to us, written on two sides of a sheet of letter paper. On the reverse sides we were to criticise this plot, and prepare emendations. Then she was to make out skeletons of the men and women who were afterwards to be clothed with flesh and made alive with blood, and covered with cuticles. After that she was to arrange her proportions; and at last, before she began to write the story, she was to describe in detail such part of it as was to be told in each chapter. On every advancing wavelet of the work we were to give her our written remarks. (40)

After approximately nine months of work, Mary is summoned away from London to her fiancé’s deathbed in Dorsetshire. When she returns from her trip, she informs the editor that she promised her betrothed to give up novel writing. Her lover, a rector, believed novel writing “to be a misapplication of God’s gifts” (48). To honor her oath to him, she burns every scrap of the manuscript and never attempts novel writing again.

In the end, we do not have a novel, but we do have a short story. The narrator clearly aligns the short story we are reading with Mary, making the character and the story we are reading one. For one thing, we are reading her story in a short story named after her. For another, he calls this tale as well as the plot of the young woman’s manuscript “her story” (28) and acknowledges that reading the manuscript is how he comes to know Mary’s personal history. The problem is that her history is not the meat
of novels. Mary Gresley has not had enough life experience to produce a novel. When she brings the skeletons of her novel’s characters to the editor for review, he questions her ability to create characters. “How was it to be expected that a girl of eighteen should portray characters such as she had never known?” (43). Yet the fact that the story of Mary Gresley is not made of the stuff of novels does not make it any less valuable. Her story is as Mary is: a little sad, a little mirthful, and compellingly sympathetic.

“Mary Gresley” is not the only story of a burned manuscript that Trollope penned. “The Spotted Dog” also ends with a manuscript in flames. Its protagonist, Julius Mackenzie, is “so well educated, so ripe in literary acquirements” that the editor knows few he could call Mackenzie’s equal (157). However, the learned man has a drinking problem that has ruined all hope of a successful career. He lives in squalor and barely manages to feed himself and his children by writing for the “Penny Dreadfuls” (120). In an effort to help Mackenzie, the editor proposes that Mackenzie provide an index for a doctor seeking assistance with his three-volume manuscript. Mackenzie starts out well enough, but when his drunken wife, who has been missing for some time, appears at the Spotted Dog where Mackenzie is working, he goes on a drinking binge. The editor later finds Mackenzie at home, asleep on his bed and the manuscript in the fireplace. According to the scholar’s children, Mackenzie’s wife burned the documents after her husband fell asleep. Shortly afterwards, Mackenzie takes his life.

The editor is then left with the task of informing the manuscript’s author that his life’s work has been destroyed. The editor offers the doctor a plan for reconstructing the document, but after a few days have passed and the gentleman has had time to adjust to the news, he tells the editor he has made a decision about his work:
I have determined to relinquish the design. That which has been destroyed cannot be replaced; and it may well be that it was not worth replacing. I am old now, and never could do again that which perhaps I was never fitted to do with any fair prospect of success. I will never turn again to the ashes of my unborn child; but will console myself with the memory of my grievance, knowing well, as I do so, that consolation from the severity of harsh but just criticism might have been more difficult to find. (166)

Like Mary, the author is not equipped to produce a three-volume work. The editor feels remorse that while attempting to help the doctor he caused him irreparable disappointment, but he also supports the doctor's statement that the book would never have come to anything. When the doctor says he cannot afford to "dally" at his age, the ironic editor writes, "He had been dallying with his work all his life, and we sincerely believed it would be well with him if he continued to dally with it to the end" (150).

Mackenzie is also ill equipped for literary endeavors. In spite of an outstanding education, his literary achievement has consisted solely of sizable contributions to the "penny dreadfuls" at sixpence a page. In both cases, readers are left in no doubt that the outcomes for both literary aspirants were inevitable, and their demise will be of no serious consequence to the literary world. Again, in the end we have no three-volume work. This time, however, readers are left with a sense of relief that the work has been burned. Although he does not explain why, Trollope identifies "The Spotted Dog" as "the best" of the *Tales (Autobiography* 337). Perhaps the release from a long work and the freedom to express that release in a short story is part of its appeal.
Finally, then, it is the artistic freedom the short story allows that encourages Victorian novelists to try their hand at the short form. In spite of low pay and little recognition for writing short stories, these authors return to it to experiment with form and subject. The short story develops as a reaction to the limitations imposed upon authors by the novel and those imposed upon them by the culture that so strongly valorizes the novel. It gives authors a venue for revising the "historical dignity" and "moral seriousness" of the novel. These stories suggest there is an alternative Victorian reality. We may only be able to narrate single moments. We may not fully understand events or characters' motivations. Lives do not always end in marriage, and communities sometimes disintegrate. As we shall see in the next chapter, the art of photography plays a significant role in this revision. It provides short story writers with a new way of seeing short subjects and critiquing long ones. In the process, it plays a significant role in ushering in the Victorian short story's golden age at the end of the century.
Chapter 4

Writing with Light:

The Interplay between the Photograph and the Short Story

In the last chapter, I discussed the ways in which the short story revised the novel’s realist aesthetic. This chapter examines the role of another contemporaneous art form long understood to challenge novelistic concepts of realism. The first three sections of this chapter examine the art forms’ parallel paths of development. They share similar reception histories and similar struggles for an aesthetic. Both even share a similar repository for collections of their forms. While publishers printed gift annuals to house collections of the short story, manufacturers produced photo albums to house collections of photographs. In addition to these obvious connections, a paradox in viewers’ understanding of what the photograph represents connects the two art forms. As the next three sections reveal, photographers explained the power of photography in two ways. On the one hand, the photograph could capture minute detail. It was a chemical process by which nature could “reproduce herself” (Fouque 61). On the other hand, the photograph could only capture fleeting, transitory shadows. Viewers’ internalization of this paradox created readers and writers for two of the short story’s popular subgenres: the detective story and the ghost story. The last two sections of this chapter describe the ways in which photography influences short story subjects. I first review how novelists establish a connection between the painted portrait and their texts in support of the novel’s realist aesthetic. I then analyze how short story writers capitalize on the paradox inherent in photography to revise the novel’s portrait/text relationship. Photography’s lessons in reading prepared writers and readers for a new view of realism that allowed for
multiple interpretations of a story. With assistance from photography, the short story offers readers a new view of Victorian life, a life that consists of unresolved and unconnected moments about which they must draw their own conclusions.

A Snapshot of Photography’s History

While the short story was struggling for recognition during the nineteenth century, another artistic form emerged upon the scene. The process of writing with light made its way into British culture in 1839 when Louis Jacques Mandé Daguerre demonstrated to the French Academy of Sciences his photographic process. Daguerre produced images on silver-plated sheets of copper made sensitive to light through a series of chemical processes. The images were rich in detail but were fragile and had to be encased in glass to survive repeated handlings. As a result, they could not be duplicated. Three weeks later, William Henry Fox Talbot presented a paper to the British Royal Society describing his calotype process. Talbot’s images were produced on ordinary writing paper made chemically sensitive to light. After exposure, the paper developed into a negative from which multiple prints could be made. Being paper, these negatives lacked the clear detail of the daguerreotype, but they were more durable (Davenport 7-13). The two photographic processes dominated the market for a decade until Frederic Scott Archer developed the wet collodion or wet plate process (Mathews 16). This process essentially combined the precision of the daguerreotype with the negative and positive qualities of the calotype and reduced the exposure time. Twenty years later, the invention of the dry plate replaced the wet plate and ushered forth the era of “instantaneous photography” (Mathews, 18). Unlike the short story, the presentation of the photograph garnered much attention and discussion, but what followed the presentations of these new inventions
shares remarkable similarities to the developments occurring in the short story. From its introduction, many embraced photography's new possibilities. In fact, one member of the Photographic Society, Joseph Durham, refers to the Photographic Exhibition of 1857 in terms much like the narrator of "The Panjandrum." Durham exclaims that photography "'washed the world clean, revealing fresh pastures, virgin earth'" (Bartram 22). Many more recognized the photograph's ability to "tell a story" ("Some" 8-9). This chapter focuses on the ways photography can inform our understanding of the short story's development.

Despite the enthusiasm the photograph received, like the short story it had to struggle to ultimately be recognized as a distinct art form. As with short story theory, years passed before an independent discourse developed to delineate photography theory. At the heart of the discussion was whether to designate this new form as an art or a science. As evidenced by discussions of photography in learned, scientific, and popular journals, editors were unsure of the general subject heading under which to place discussions of the new invention. In the Art Journal one can find reports on photography under "Foreign art," "Chit-chat," and "Varieties"; in the Athenaeum before 1845 one will find them under "Our weekly gossip" and "Scientific and literary." However, in the Gentleman's Magazine and the Spectator the editor usually placed information on photography in the "Fine arts" columns. It was ten years later before photography was assigned a separate heading in Notes and Queries (Jäger 317). An author writing in The Athenaeum in 1847 echoes the same dilemma Brander Matthews described when trying to determine the appropriate name for the "short-story": "We have attended a meeting of a dozen gentleman amateurs [of the Calotype Society in London] associated together for the purpose of pursuing their experiments in this art-science (we scarcely know the word
fittest completely to designate it”) (Calotype 1304). Some of the articles describe photographic processes, allowing for the application of scientific criteria. But as The Athenaeum writer suggests, should aesthetic criteria be applied as well? Photography seemed to be an art, but what kind: “mechanical art, fine art, or the simple application of human skill in rendering images of objects permanent?” (Jäger 317). Similarly, short fiction seemed to be an art, but what kind: a tale, a novella, or the simple application of human skill in rendering the novel short?

As discussed in Chapter 1, the short story was often compared with the novel. Because the photograph was a form of pictorial representation, its aesthetic qualities were immediately compared with those of painting. Often, criteria used to assess the aesthetic qualities of paintings were used to describe photographic pictures, sometimes even to praise them, but the very act of comparing the new form with painting prevented photography from being realized as a “new and revolutionary means of expression”; instead, it was another means of “expressing the same thing” (Steegman 276). Moreover, the mechanical and scientific character of the photographic process led most critics to discuss photography’s artistic value in metaphors of inadequacy much as the short story’s artistic value was discussed in terms of its inadequacy when compared with the novel.

One of the inadequacies critics assigned to both art forms was their perceived mode of production. Critics faulted the short story for being churned out, almost mechanically, for the penny journals. From its first presentation, the photograph was criticized because the reality it produced was not created by the artist but by a machine. Critics argued that only when the hand and eye of the artist worked together could something artistic be achieved (Jäger 320). Photography, then, was even less artistic than engraving or lithography because the hand of a human being was not involved in the
artistry (Hamber 140). Even John Ruskin, who found the daguerreotype an “antidote to the mechanical poison that this terrible nineteenth century has poured upon men,” did not make the distinction between the product and the machine that produced it. He believed that the photograph was a tool to help the scientist or the artist but that it was not an autonomous art form (225). That the photograph was “functional, subservient to fine art” is demonstrated in its placement in the Great International Exhibition of 1862 (Flukinger 11). Rather than placing photography with painting and engraving, the Commissioner for the Exhibition placed it in the machinery section, “in close proximity,” as a contributor to the Photographic Journal complained, “to the steam engine, patent mangle &c” (“Lady” 287). In her essay, “Photography,” in the Quarterly Review, Elizabeth Eastlake adds a gendered dimension to the position of photography in the mid century:

Photography is intended to supersede much that art has hitherto done, but only that which it was both a misappropriation and a deterioration of Art to do. The field of delineation, having two distinct spheres, requires two distinct labourers; but though hitherto the freewoman has done the work of the bondwoman, there is no fear that the position should be in future reversed. (466)

This gendered dimension gives the photograph a feminine otherness that again separates it from the hallowed halls of artistic acceptance.

In portrait painting, the criticism against photography’s perceived mode of production spilled over into the studio. Echoing those who faulted the short story because it did not take as long to produce, critics of the photograph, particularly painters, frequently pointed to “sitting” time as the strongest argument against photography’s admission into the fine arts. According to painting theory, the subject’s expression in
painted portraits was the "main vehicle by which the intangible, spiritual qualities of
mind and soul were made manifest in the picture" (Linkman 41). Painters therefore
strove for an expression that would serve as a synthesis of the individual. To achieve this
expression, painters had to spend time in the company of their sitters. England's best
painters demanded from as few as four to as many as fifty sittings for one portrait to
capture an expression that depicted the sitter's soul. Although in the early years,
photographic portraits could require the client to sit for as long as twenty-five minutes,
the design of a new lens a year after Daguerre demonstrated his process made portraits
much less torturous. The new lens reduced the exposure time from 2400 seconds to 150
seconds. A new accelerating process reduced the time even further, although the time a
sitter had to sit still was subject to the amount of light in the room, the time of day, and
the season of the year (Gernsheim, History 138). As Audrey Linkman explains, "as long
as the theory of synthesized expression had currency, any view of the features reproduced
by the camera, even though it was indisputably genuine, could only be regarded
negatively as a partial, and therefore inferior, portrayal of the subject" (41). Likewise, as
long as the short story was measured against the novel, it was bound to be regarded as
partial or slight, even though it was undoubtedly original or genuine.

Both the short story and the photograph were frequently denigrated because of
their perceived creators. Since short stories often appeared in working class journals or
annuals designed for sentimental young women, it followed that the writers must be
uneducated hacks. If a short story by a writer of reputation appeared, it was one of his or
her lesser creations dashed off for a quick bit of change. The same kind of argument
spilled over into the discussions of photographers. "Somebody using a machine simply
could not be a true artist" (Jäger 320). For one thing, it was argued that many of the
photograph's creators were not real artists. They were not educated, and some were from the working classes. Their creations were made by mere machine operators. Even in the photographic journals, contributors referred to photographers as "operators," "mechanics," and "workers in the factories of pictorial reproduction" (Green-Lewis, Framing 41). In a humorous essay for Household Words, John Payn expands the objection to the uneducated photographic mechanic to include a dubious character:

"When," as the bard has observed, "a man is like me, sans six sous, sans souci, bankrupt in purse, and in character worse, with a shocking bad hat and his credit at zero," what on earth can he now-a-days hope to become save a photographer? This profession, which requires little capital, but great assurance; no book learning, but considerable knowledge of character, was the very thing to suit me, and I may say that I have succeeded in it. (352)

Of questionable character or not, photography was a fast-growing field. The "census of 1861 reveals that the number of professional photographers in England had grown from 51 to 2,534 in ten years" (Heyert 83).

Fear of the democratic potential of photography, particularly the portrait, hampered photography's acceptance as an art form in much the same way that the fear of cheap literature hampered the short story's acceptance as a literary art form. The rise of the middle and lower middle classes stimulated the demand for reproductions in great quantities, which in turn spurred manufacturers and inventors to find inexpensive ways of creating them. For centuries, the painted portrait had been the privilege of the few, but with the invention of photography, owning an affordable likeness of a loved one was insisted upon as a democratic right by the English lower and middle classes. "To have
one’s portrait done was one of the symbolic acts by which individuals from the rising social classes made their ascent visible to themselves and others and classed themselves among those who enjoyed social status” (Tagg 37-38). As one might expect, some members of the upper middle and upper classes were less enthusiastic. With the number of photographers on the rise and most of them without at least a middle-class education, some middle and upper middle-class consumers found it objectionable to pose for photographers. Green-Lewis argues that in mid century, objections became particularly directed at portraiture: “The much-touted ‘democratizing potential’ of photography was not, after all, a promise that all trees or buildings might be rendered equal in aesthetic terms; it was a threat that photography could destroy social difference between sitters” (53). To rise above these social distinctions, photographers would have to find a way to define photography on its own terms.

**Developing a Theory of Photography**

Efforts to create photography theory followed a path similar to that followed to create a short story theory. When fiction writers and critics started to define the short story in critical terms, magazines and journals that catered to short story publication and critical theory began to appear. Books and articles were published instructing writers how to pen a short story. Similarly, photography journals appeared to “give continuous airing to the intrinsic claims of photography as an art” (Bartram 124). Photographer Antoine Claudet argued that the interest of the Queen in photography proved that it was an art (243). A contributor to the *London Review* argued that “the manipulations involved in photography; the necessity of adhering to artistic principles because of the vagaries of the chemical action of light, more difficult to master than ‘all the arcana of
'high art'; and the parallel between photography's monochrome and that of sculpture and engraving” demonstrated the aesthetic artistry involved in photography. “Rembrandt’s chiaroscuro” was also invoked (“Photography” 42). To elevate the perception of photographers to that of artists, the photographic journals gradually changed their formats from pages describing processes, baths, and experiments to essays instructing photographers about art principles. In 1868, the Illustrated Photographer was founded expressly to raise aesthetic standards (Bartram 124). “The ideal which every photographer [..] should keep before him,” proclaimed a Photographic News journalist, “does not [..] differ from that of Phidias or Da Vinci” (“An Art” 399). Perhaps the strongest voice for the artistry of the photograph emanated from Henry Peach Robinson, a professional photographer and author of almost a dozen books on photographic art theory. Robinson believed it was the photographer’s duty to control and shape an image to conform to the popular aesthetic theories governing other artistic mediums of the day. The photographer should subordinate the camera’s ability to capture the real world to the artist’s higher quest for truth (Robinson, Pictorial 15-16).

Photographers responded to criticism about the lack of artistry involved in sitting by publishing manuals with chapters entitled “The Management of the Sitter” (Robinson, Studio 50-56). As Linkman notes, photographers aspired to be the artistic equals of painters, and it therefore became important that their professional rhetoric demonstrate control over all the elements that make up a portrait (37-39). This rhetoric bears a striking resemblance to early short story theory. Poe argued that the writer should combine events with deliberate care to create a single effect. The composition should contain only sentences that bring out this pre-established design. By doing so, in a single “sitting” the reader will be able to appreciate the “immense force derivable from totality,”
and "the soul" of the reader will be under "the writer's control" (61). Similarly, professional photographer Henry Peach Robinson argued that the photographer "should be able to see the finished result in his mind's eye from the beginning" (Pictorial 86). The best pictures "tell something worth telling" with "nothing left to blind chance," and figures are "carefully placed and studied" (Pictorial 48-49). The sitter, for instance, should do what the artist wishes, look as he directs, and smile or frown as he wills. In other words, "the sitter should be conquered" before the photographer ever takes the picture (Studio 103).

The case for photography as an art form did not go unnoticed by Charles Lutwidge Dodgson, amateur photographer and professional writer. Dodgson penned under the name Lewis Carroll "Photography Extraordinary," a witty sketch that employs literature to explain photography's artistic worth. Dodgson first took up photography in 1856. During the next twenty-five years, he photographed every type of subject matter, including portraits of famous individuals and children. He has left behind numerous albums and an inventory of 2500 negatives (Bunnell 1). In the sketch, the narrator suggests that the chemical principles of photography could be applied to literature in order to reduce "the art of novel-writing to the merest mechanical labour" (1109). With the assistance of a camera-like device to establish a "mesmeric rapport" (1110) between the sitter and the lens, the sitter's ideas could be transferred to the surface of specially prepared paper where, in the manner of a photographic negative, his ideas developed into different degrees of literary style. The style resulting from the gentlest development was the "milk-and-water School of Novels" (1111). Further processing brought the development of the "Matter-of-Fact School" (1111). When the paper was developed to
the "highest possible degree," the machine operator presented the narrator with lines from the "Spasmodic or German School" (1111). A similar experiment was tried with a passage of Byron's poetry, "but the paper came out scorched and blistered all over by fiery epithets" (1112). As Roger Taylor argues, "by suggesting that photography relied on the power of its chemistry for its ultimate effect, Dodgson was inverting his own beliefs for the sake of comic narrative" (15). Dodgson's point, as Leonard Marcus explains, is that "if a viewer is genuinely moved by a photograph, something more than a technological trick must be responsible" (4). For Dodgson the photographer as well as for Carroll the writer, successful works of art depended upon the conception of the artist. The tools he used to create the art were governed by this conception.

The discussion about photography's value was not limited to the artistic arena, however. Just as they had done with literature, social reformers put a positive spin on photography's democratic potential by incorporating it into discussions about education and social reform. Some saw the democratic potential of photography as a means of improving familial affections in the lower and poor classes. Echoing the arguments for the beneficial effects of good fiction on the lower classes, a contributor to Macmillan's Magazine writes:

Any one who knows what the worth of family affection is among the lower classes, and who has seen the array of little portraits stuck over a labourer's fireplace [. . .] will perhaps feel with me that in counteracting the tendencies, social and industrial, which every day are sapping the healthier family affections, the sixpenny photograph is doing more for the poor than all the philanthropists in the world. ("Photography's" 203)
In his article on photography in the 1859 Encyclopedia Britannica, Sir David Brewster claims that photography will be influential in humanizing the humbler classes:

Portraits of their families in beautiful frames and morocco cases can be purchased for a shilling, and even sixpence each. The emigrant may carry to his distant home the portraits of those from whom he has been obliged to part, and the humble peasant may adorn his cottage not only with likenesses of his family and friends, but with accurate photographs of various objects in art and in nature which he may desire to contemplate.

(554)

Thus if photography cannot be appreciated as an aesthetic art form, it can at least improve one’s taste and foster an appreciation of beauty.

**Reinventing the Gift Annual**

While educators and social reformers saw the inexpensive photograph as a tool for improving the lower classes, some photographers found a way to make the inexpensive photograph extremely profitable. The “little portraits” that the Macmillan’s writer refers to are undoubtedly the most popular form of the photographic portrait in the 1860s: the carte de visite. The demand for this shortened form of the painted portrait (coined “cartomania”) swept England in the 1860s. Between 1861-1867, 300-400 million cartes de visite were sold every year in England (Darrah 4). French photographer Andre Disderi discovered a way of exposing only small sections of a plate at a time, enabling the photographer to take as many as twelve exposures on a single plate. The sitter could even adjust the pose slightly for each exposure. From the negative plate, the photographer made a sheet of positive prints, cut them to approximately 2 ½ x 3 ½
inches, and mounted them on a card measuring 2 1/2 x 4 inches. Prices for these small portraits ranged from 6d. to 1s. 6d. per copy, and multiple copies were available (Mathews 22). They were appealing as collectibles and were portable, making it easy for British subjects in other lands to carry pictures of their loved ones with them. Although the majority of the cartes produced were portraits of ordinary people, one could purchase cards depicting celebrities, works of art, and famous travel destinations. Cartes of writer celebrities such as Charles Dickens, Wilkie Collins, William Thackeray, Oscar Wilde, Alfred Lord Tennyson, Robert Browning, Thomas Carlyle, and John Ruskin caught the eye of their nineteenth-century public, but the most popular celebrity cartes in England were those depicting the Queen and the Royal Family (Mathews 55-56). In 1860, John Mayall published his “Royal Album” comprised of fourteen cartes de visite of members of the Royal household. The album quickly sold hundreds of thousands of copies, and sellers claimed royal approval had been conferred on the new format (Linkman 62). In the years between 1860 and 1862, three to four million copies of Queen Victoria were sold, and over two million copies of the Prince of Wales and Princess Alexandra were sold following their marriage in 1863 (Linkman 67).

Just as the gift annual provided a place of residence for the short story, the portrait album provided a home for the carte de visite. These albums bear a striking resemblance to the gift annual in terms of their physical appearance and intended audience. Generally, the albums were octavo size with 25-50 thick leaves with open windows into which a card could be inserted through a slot so that it appeared in the window. Usually, two cards could be placed back-to-back. The elaborate bindings were made of buckram, calf, and tooled morocco and were often embossed, with bone, ivory, mother of pearl, or even gem stones. Clasps were usually made of brass, although gold was also available (Darrah
9). A report in the *Photographic News* in 1871 describes how the albums were becoming annually "'more numerous and resplendent.'" The writer proclaims that the cabinet maker or the upholsterer has worked on the cover as much as "'the legitimate bookbinder'". Moreover, "'some of these extraordinary portfolios are made with musical boxes on the cover with looking glasses, with recesses for perfume'" (quoted in Darrah 9). The most common types of albums were the family albums containing portraits of loved ones, weddings, and residences, but celebrity albums for royalty, statesmen, and literary figures were popular as well. Travel albums containing scenic cartes de visite depicting places visited on a tour were especially popular between 1862-85, and eventually subject albums where one could assemble cartes illustrating works of art, a college class, or some other sentimental favorite captured the public's imagination (Darrah 9).

The inside of the album also bears some resemblance to the gift annual. Just as the gift annual contained engravings to illustrate the themes of its poems or short stories, the photo album was designed according to specific themes, and many of its pages were adorned with thematic color illustrations of trees, flowers, the seasons, and so forth (Linkman 72). The frontispiece also had an elaborately designed message for the reader. In an album published by Ashford Brothers, for instance, the first page of the album reads as if it could have begun one of the *Friendship's Offering* annuals:

> Within this book your eye may trace
> The well known smile on friendship's face;
> Here may your wandering eyes behold
> The friends of youth, the lov'd of old;
> And as you gaze with tearful eye,
Sweet mem'ries of the years gone by
Will come again with magic power
To charm the evening's pensive hour.
Some in this book have passed the bourne
From where no travellers return;
Some through the world yet doomed to roam,
As pilgrims from their native home,
Are here by nature's power enshrined,
As lov'd memorials to the mind—
Till all shall reach that happy shore,
Where friends and kindreds part no more. (Mathews 7)

The verse appears centered on the page in a white oval-shaped background that is framed by a dark mat with a collage of oval-shaped portraits of the Royal Family.

As with the gift annual, the albums for the cartes-de-visite became the proud possessions of many homes. Total sales numbers for the photographic album are unclear, but in 1867 one firm claimed to have issued almost a million albums for the card picture. They were marketed as gifts for birthdays and Christmas, and as particularly appropriate gifts for coming-of-age presents (Linkman 71). Advertisements of album manufacturers in the trade press claimed that the public would be "'enchanted by the novelty of the arrangements for introducing the cards, and the felicitous manner in which the portraits are at once displayed and preserved.'" The elegantly bound album was one of "'the indispensable ornaments of every lady's table'" (quoted in Linkman 71). Like the gift annual, the carte de visite album could be another accoutrement to the young lady's entertainment repertoire.
The carte de visite album also resembled the gift annual as a signifier of social position. As John Tagg explains, the portrait is “a sign whose purpose is both the description of an individual and the inscription of social identity. But at the same time, it is also a commodity, a luxury, an adornment, ownership of which itself confers status” (37). This sense of possession pervades the elaborately mounted collection of cartes de visite of public figures as well as personal collections whose organizations were carefully structured to reflect the taste and political persuasion of the family. “The production of portraits is, at once, the production of significations in which contending social classes claim presence in representation, and the production of things which may be possessed and for which there is a socially defined demand” (Tagg 37).

Just as short story critics argued that the gift annual discouraged the recognition of the short story as a legitimate art form, so too did the carte de visite invite disparagement of the photographic portrait as an art form. Although the carte was included and even had some success in photographic exhibitions, it “remained an unwanted intruder in the eyes of many aesthetes” (McCauley 18). For one thing, because of “their size, cost and familiarity,” they were generally considered “less serious photographs” (McCauley 18). For another, the market had not spurred any novel ways of representing sitters. Instead, photographers adopted poses and backgrounds from aristocratic portraits (Tagg 38). As a result, critics often complained that the portraits were “conventionalized, imitative, uninspired and cheap in every sense of the word” (Darrah 24). Phillipe Burty called the carte the “eighth plague” in his 1861 review and identified it with “dance-hall girls in transparent skirts and side-show entertainment” (242-43). Henry Peach Robinson complained that “ninety-nine out of every one hundred photographic portraits are the most abominable things ever produced by any art”
("Autobiographical" 82). As for the albums, Robinson described them as "always a trouble," and of "execrable taste." The cushioned, domed or oval shaped openings were "always destructive to the best effect," while "the gaudy chromolithographs [. . .] outstared the portraits" ("Autobiographical" 96).

The demand for the carte de visite format begin to decline steadily after 1880, primarily because it was displaced as a source of amusement when photographic reproductions began to appear in newspapers, magazines, and books. In addition, the invention of the snapshot camera eliminated the need for a photographer, and lastly the picture postcards introduced in the 1880s captured the market for scenic views (Darrah 10). Yet, the commercial success of the carte played a large role in inserting the photograph into Victorian culture. With photographs constantly before the public view, they were bound to have an effect on other forms of art.

A Photographic Paradox and the Development of the Short Story

While much of the previous discussion focused on how painting influenced photography, I did not mean to imply that photography had no effect on painting. Critics of the pictorial arts recognize that the "inter-relation of photography and painting" is a complex topic, but there are some reasonable surmises one can make (Gernsheim, Masterpieces 7). For instance, the demand for realistic detail in painting undoubtedly arose from the public appreciation of the detail found in the daguerreotype. At the height of its popularity, the daguerreotype depicted greater detail than current paintings. "The photograph came nearer the perfection of nature, and the more detail a painting revealed under a magnifying glass, the greater was the public's esteem for the artist" (Gernsheim, Masterpieces 11). The result was that the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, as well as
painters in general, struggled to render detail in their paintings (Gernsheim, *Masterpieces* 11). Impressionism was born as a reaction against realism. Impressionist painters created paintings with indefinite forms and vague lines. Natural scenes were replaced with fragments of scenes, subject was subordinated to motif, and “the motif,” Gernsheim argues, “was influenced by photography. The fleeting light and shade effects so characteristic of Impressionist painting can also be traced back to instantaneous photography, for nothing records so admirably the infinity and delicacy of nature’s tones as a good photograph” (*Masterpieces* 15).

In like manner, we can make some surmises about the inter-relationship between the photograph and the short story. Social historians recognized how rapidly photography was becoming a part of Victorian culture. By 1866, a journalist for the *British Quarterly Review* claimed that photography was a “prominent fact of the day” whose results “are to be found in every part of the civilized globe” (“Photography” 347). As Susan Sontag points out, photography’s presence in so many facets of culture constructed “a new sense of the notion of information.” Because the photograph depicts a singular event in space as well as time, “photography reinforces a nominalist view of social reality as consisting of small units” (123). Such a view of reality prepared readers for a new social reality in literature—a literature that deals with a single character, a single event, a single emotion, or the series of emotions called forth by a single situation (Matthews 73). In addition, a nominalist view of reality gave rise to a change in the notion of framing that in turn created opportunities for the short story. The photograph “can be separated, can be made discontinuous, from anything else: all that is necessary is to frame the subject differently. (Conversely, anything can be made adjacent to anything else.)” (Sontag 123). Like the photograph, the short story could be separated and
published individually if framed by the covers of journals like *Belgravia* or *The Strand*, which readily published short stories. They could also be published as a group of stories related to each other simply by being penned by the same hand. On the other hand, short stories could be placed adjacently and connected by a series of arbitrary frames to fill the space of a book much in the same way photographs could be ordered within the photograph album to tell a story.

From its beginnings, discussions of photography’s abilities underlined a paradox inherent in the ideological conception of the photograph. This paradox had a profound influence on the short story. When Daguerre announced his photographic process in 1839, he stressed its public accessibility and automatic nature. The photographer claimed he could “take the most detailed views in a few minutes” by a “chemical and physical process which gives nature the ability to reproduce herself” (Fouque 61). Thus, from the beginning, the photograph was regarded as “a direct and ‘natural’ cast of reality” (Tagg 41). As a result, the sciences hailed photography’s documentary capabilities as well as its credibility. In what seems to be a similar claim, Fox Talbot remarks that the “transitory shadow, the proverbial emblem of all that is fleeting and momentary […] may be fixed forever in the position which it seemed only destined for a single instant to occupy.” The camera “may receive on paper the fleeting shadow, arrest it there and in the space of a single minute fix it there so firmly as to be no more capable of change” (Newhall 25). While Fox Talbot echoes Daguerre in the camera’s ability to faithfully mirror an object, he also introduces the idea that the object itself may be mutable, not really what we see a few minutes later. The photograph may represent reality, but a reality that has now passed. Roger Fenton expands upon this idea as it applies to human form in his keynote
speech to the members of the Society of Arts in 1852 who had gathered for the first photographic exhibition in Great Britain:

Those natural attitudes of the human form which come unbidden, and which cannot be assumed, is there any pencil so rapid that it can depict them before the meaning has departed from the pose? Is there any eye so true, any memory so faithful, that can mark and retain those delicate shades of difference which succeed one another in the human form, when it sinks back from intelligent movement into torpid inertness? (9)

Meaning, then, is transitory, and photographic portraits can represent an individual only at a given moment. The photograph of a human form may be able to capture glimpses of the subject’s character or intelligence, but only glimpses. How much truth then does the photograph represent? This paradox of realism versus mutability is played out particularly in two of the short story’s subgenres: the detective story and the ghost story.

The Auxiliary of the Law and the Rise of the Detective Story

In 1846, William Henry Fox Talbot tried to define the parameters and possibilities of photography in *The Pencil of Nature*, the first major photographically illustrated book. As the title implies, Talbot elaborates on the dual nature of photography as both a science and an art. Talbot refers to the “new art” of photography as a significant occurrence in “the scientific world” and hails photography as an advanced technique for “drawing” portraits and as a new technique for providing “mute testimony” and “evidence of a novel kind” in the court of law (12). Ronald Thomas has discussed how the dual nature of the photograph is the basis of the potent “plot element” in nineteenth-century detective
fiction (114). However, he does not focus on how the art of photography and the short story converge to influence each other. Photography’s capacity to serve as the “auxiliary of the law” (“Photography” 347) firmly establishes the new art form of the British detective story in the last two decades of the nineteenth century.

While literary critics have diverging opinions about many facets of the detective story, they generally agree that the detective story as we know it was initiated by Poe, was expanded to the novel form by Wilkie Collins in England, and then made popular by Arthur Conan Doyle (E. M. Wrong xi-xiii). Dorothy Sayers cites three of Poe’s short stories as those which initiated and helped create the detective story: “The Murders in the Rue Morgue,” “The Purloined Letter,” and “The Mystery of Marie Roget” (57). All three stories chronicle the exploits of an eccentric private detective, C. Auguste Dupin, as told by an “unimaginative friend” (Wrong xii). This format was then developed and made popular by Arthur Conan Doyle in 1887 with the appearance of Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson in A Study in Scarlet. The appearance of this short novel marks the beginning of what Dorothy Sayers and Robin Winks identify as the Golden Age of detective fiction, spanning from 1887 to World War II (Winks 8, Sayers 72).

 Ironically, the first two tales of Sherlock Holmes, A Study in Scarlet (1887) and The Sign of Four (1890), were published as slim novels. They earned little notice, but when Doyle sent two short stories to Herbert Greenhough Smith, editor of The Strand Magazine, Smith immediately recognized their potential. Realizing the benefits of the shorter form, Doyle agreed to pen additional Holmes stories. In 1891 he wrote,

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5 Thomas is particularly concerned with the way the literary detective manages to obtain authority through early forensic science devices (fingerprinting, photography, lie detectors) and the way these devices relate to questions of cultural authority.

6 For other significant landmark contributions to the genre see Wagenknecht, Edward. Introduction. Murder by Gaslight.
A single character running through a series, if it only engaged the attention of the reader, would bind that reader to that particular magazine. On the other hand, it had long seemed to me that the ordinary serial might be an impediment rather than a help to a magazine, since, sooner or later, one missed one number and afterwards it had lost all interest. Clearly the ideal compromise was a character which carried through, and yet installments which were each complete in themselves. (Memories 95)

George Newnes, creator of The Strand, had resolved that each monthly issue would be complete and could therefore contain only short stories, so The Strand was the ideal publication in which to print the Holmes adventures. The first issue of The Strand (January 1891) sold 300,000 copies. The first six Sherlock Holmes stories were published between July and December, and by the end of 1891, The Strand’s sales had reached 500,000 copies (Pound 32). Six more short stories appeared in The Strand between January and June, 1892 and were then published in volume form as The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes (1892). They were followed by another series of twelve stories published first in The Strand and then collected in 1894 as The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes (Panek 78-79). According to Ian Ousby, these twenty-four stories are “the best and most popular of his work” (151). It is in these short stories that “Doyle found his true metier and his true audience” (151). Ousby characterizes the time Doyle spent writing the three slim novels and the twenty-five stories published from 1901-1927 as a period of “progressive decline” (151). This period includes The Hound of the Baskervilles (1901), thirteen stories in The Return of Sherlock Holmes (1905), The Valley of Fear (1914-15), His Last Bow (1917), and twelve more stories in The Case-Book of Sherlock Holmes (1927).
As evidenced by Doyle’s *oeuvre*, his Holmes chronicles were not limited to the short form. He and those who followed him published detective novels and short stories. As a result, critics are divided on whether one genre is preferable. Critics such as Jacques Barzun argue that the short story is “the true medium of detection. Pleasant as it is to begin a novel that promises a crowd of actors and incidents, of clues and disquisitions upon clues, the pleasure is soon marred by the apparently unavoidable drawback of a subplot and its false leads.” He prefers “the story as it was first conceived, without this artificial bustle and bulge which exists only to be deflated by a sentence or two near the end” (146). H. Douglas Thomson notes the merits of both the short and long forms. He points to G. K. Chesterton’s preference for the short variety. In *Generally Speaking*, Chesterton argues that the detective story “should be on the model of the short story rather than the novel.” The “chief difficulty is that the detective story is after all a drama of men’s false characters rather than their real character. The author cannot tell us until the last chapter any of the interesting things about the most interesting people.” The “primary principle” is that the story should be “simple.” The whole story “exists for a moment of surprise; and it should be a moment. It should not be something that it takes twenty minutes to explain, and twenty-four hours to learn by heart, for fear of forgetting it” (4-5). The difficulty then is keeping the interest of the reader in a full-length novel. Conversely, Thomson argues that a little knowledge can whet the reader’s appetite, and the writer can use the longer form to play with “red herrings”—the opportunity to introduce not one but several “startlingly original” ideas (77-78) that an author cannot afford in the short story form. Regardless of one’s preference, however, the popularity of the literary detective expanded a publication market for the short form that had previously been much more limited.
"The Final Problem," Doyle's twenty-fourth story, left Holmes and Moriarty for dead on the rocks of the Reichenbach Falls. Much to the disappointment of Greenhough Smith, Doyle had decided not to write any more Holmes stories and began working on historical pieces. With the appearance of the first short story, Sherlock Holmes had become a well-known literary character, and within six months, he was as well known as the Queen. The monthly issues of The Strand were anxiously awaited at newsstands, and the stories were so successful that the magazine was compelled to fill the void with other detective stories (Booth 143-45). When the Holmes stories ended, the magazine informed its readers "there will be a temporary interval in the Sherlock Holmes stories. A new series will continue in an early number. Meanwhile, powerful detective stories will be contributed by other eminent writers" (quoted in Panek 79). Doyle's stories had created such a demand for detective fiction that many people turned into detective-story writers overnight and thereby furthered the development and popularity of the detective story (Panek 79).

If Poe's stories are the beginning of the detective story, one question that critics ponder is why forty years passed between the appearance of Poe's Dupin stories and the Golden Age that began with Doyle's Holmes stories. Many point to the development of the burgeoning police force. E. M. Wrong, for instance, speculates that "a faulty law of evidence was to blame, for detectives cannot flourish until the public has an idea of what constitutes proof" (x). Dorothy Sayers adds that the public also had to have sympathy for law and order and the development of a policing organization (55-56). Yet what was likely just as influential was the widespread use of the camera. As the writer for the Quarterly Review states, the camera's fact-recording capacity is invaluable to the police. He goes on to say, "If it nothing extenuate, it sets down naught in malice, and when it
enters the witness-box its evidence leaves little room for doubt” (“Photography” 379).

The writer argues that photography’s “most important legal use is its aid to the discovery of identity in persons charged with crime” and favors a bill adopting the universal photographing of prisoners in the English prison system (“Photography” 379-80).

Ironically, the portrait, originally a symbol of status as well as a trinket of endearment, gains an opposite function. It now reveals the identity of the guilty. This dual function of photographic portraiture led Walter Benjamin to proclaim the invention of photography “no less significant for criminology than the invention of the printing press is for literature. Photography made it possible for the first time to preserve permanent and unmistakable traces of a human being. The detective story came into being when this most decisive of all conquests of a person’s incognito had been accomplished” (Benjamin 41). As we shall see, the Holmesian detective becomes both camera and photographer, recording all traces of human existence.

“The camera,” John Tagg notes, has the “power to see and record” (64). So too does the literary detective, and, explains Mary Roth, this power is one of the literary detective’s major attractions to the reader. Critics have frequently faulted detective fiction as deficient in its characterization, and yet, Roth argues, the power of the form is the “singular character or character type”:

One of the draws of this basic type of analytic hero is the metaphor of the “thinking machine.” The image of the machine connotes logic and thus reinforces the definition of the genre as puzzle, and it connotes science, which adds a dimension of contemporary relevance to the genre. It also excuses the indifference of the heroes to the misery of their fellow characters. Finally the image of the machine is self-reflexive: it codifies
what we already know about the hero from the outside: that he is a fixed
undeveloping character type whose performance is an attractive
redundancy. (Roth 43)

Even in her discussion of the detective story’s artistic merits, Sayers admits it “does not,
and by hypothesis never can, attain the loftiest level of literary achievement. Though it
deals with the most desperate effects of rage, jealousy, and revenge, it rarely touches the
heights and depths of human passion. It presents us only with the fait accompli, and
looks upon death and mutilation with a dispassionate eye” (77). A thinking machine, a
recorder with a dispassionate eye, are apt metaphors for Poe’s Dupin and Doyle’s
Sherlock Holmes, who perform amazing feats of sight. They make the “invisible visible”
by appropriating the camera and using it to identify the “unseen criminal among us”
(Thomas 114).

For Doyle, these metaphors may not have been such a stretch of the author’s
imagination. Doyle studied in Vienna to be an eye surgeon and planned to practice as an
eye specialist in London. With the success of the Holmes stories, he gave up his medical
practice in 1891 for a literary career. Earlier in his career, the author earned extra money
by writing about his amateur photography exploits for the “Where to Go with the
Camera” series of The British Journal of Photography from 1881-85. Not only does
Doyle describe where to go, but he recommends lenses and cameras, and he describes
plate coatings, emulsification processes, and plate drying methods. In one of his 1881
articles, he even uses his camera to photograph a boat captain in the act of stealing
Doyle’s lunch basket and whiskey bottle. The author then uses the picture as “a pretty
conclusive bit of evidence” (9) with which to confront the captain of his crime. This
incident may have provided the seed that was to germinate into the Sherlock Homes
stories later. Clearly, his interest in photography did not wane during the rise of his medical career. On the contrary, when The Strand agreed to pay Doyle £50 for each of the Holmes stories in the second series, Doyle sold his eye instruments to pay for new photographic equipment (Gibson xvi).

Surprisingly, John Gibson and Richard Green ponder the fact that “although there are occasional references to photography in Doyle’s work, it does not have any prominence” (xviii). The collectors of Doyle’s photographic essays have missed the photographic metaphors that permeate the Sherlock Holmes stories. In “A Scandal in Bohemia,” Holmes becomes synonymous with the camera. Watson describes him as “the most perfect reasoning and observing machine that the world has seen.” He is like “a sensitive instrument” dependent on his “high-power lenses,” and such an instrument has a “delicate and finely adjusted temperament” (161). In “The Boscombe Valley Mystery,” Holmes’s eyes become camera lenses encased by the body of the camera: “His brows were drawn into two hard black lines, while his eyes shone out from beneath them with a steely glitter” (211). In “A Study in Scarlet,” Holmes’s “eyes were sharp and piercing,” and “his hands were invariably blotted with ink and stained with chemicals” (20), perhaps those chemicals required in the photographic development process. Holmes also has a photographer’s eye. Henry Peach Robinson explains that it is the role of the photographer to examine the sitter’s face to determine which side would make the best picture. “To one who is in the habit of observing, the sides of every face differ so much, and in such a definite manner, that a glance is all that is necessary to settle the question” (Studio 50). He similarly instructs photographers that the eye follows a sitter’s “slightest movements,” “their most trivial acts” in an effort to determine the best pose for a portrait
(Studio 63). Holmes too has the photographer’s special gift of sight, which he explains to Watson in “A Case of Identity”:

“You appeared to read a good deal upon her which was quite invisible to me,” I remarked.

“Not invisible but unnoticed, Watson. You did not know where to look, and so you missed all that was important.” (196)

Holmes is both photographer and camera. As a thinking machine, he observes with photographic clarity the details that distinguish the innocent from the guilty.

This photographer’s observing eye is not limited to a crime scene. Even Holmes’s clients are described like sitters for photographs. For instance, the character seeking Holmes’s assistance in “The Red-Headed League” is described in terms of a typical pose for a carte de visite or cabinet photograph: “The portly client puffed out his chest with an appearance of some little pride and pulled a dirty and wrinkled newspaper from the inside pocket of his greatcoat. As he glanced down the advertisement column, with his head thrust forward and the paper flattened upon his knee” (177), Watson observed the client, trying to “read” what he could about him. All Watson could determine was that the visitor was a “common British tradesman” (177). Holmes’s “quick eye,” of course, deduces a great deal more about the client than Watson’s. Holmes’s photographic eye deduces that the man has “at some time done manual labour, that he takes snuff, that he is a Freemason, that he has been in China, and that he has done a considerable amount of writing lately” (177). He advises Watson to never trust “general impressions,” but to concentrate “upon the details” (197).

Holmes himself did not employ the camera as an assistant in solving any of his cases. With photographic powers of his own, he had no need. However, consequently
and simultaneously with Sherlock Holmes's rise in the popular literary market, tiny, easily hidden cameras called detective cameras became popular in England. The term was originally coined by Thomas Bolas in January 1881 for two cameras he created for the police to take photographs of suspects without their knowledge. The idea became popular immediately, and manufacturers created cameras hidden in everyday items that would not draw attention to themselves as cameras. Packages, picnic baskets, handbags, opera glasses, field-glasses, books, watches, guns, walking sticks, hats, and cravats all served as detective cameras in the last two decades of the century (Gernshiem, History 417).

Unstable Surfaces and the Rise of the Ghost Story

The invention of the camera gave the photographer the power to fix and reveal what had hitherto been unimaginable detail in the universe. The result was “a religious enthusiasm for precision and minuteness of scale” (Green-Lewis, “Fading” 565) in almost every facet of Victorian life: the natural sciences, astronomy, architecture, painting, and the law. This enthusiasm, however, forced Victorians to deal with what Stephen Jay Gould calls “an almost incomprehensible immensity, with human habitation restricted to a millimicrosecond at the very end” (2). One response to this immensity of knowledge was the scientific rationalism we see in the Holmes stories. Discoveries about the everyday physical world led to a new vision of man’s power. In “The Blue Carbuncle,” Holmes refers to The Martyrdom of Man, in which Winwood Reade insists that “when we have ascertained, by means of Science, the methods of Nature’s operation, we shall be able to take her place, and to perform them for ourselves [. . .] men will master the forces of Nature; they will become themselves architects of systems,
manufacturers of worlds” (24). Holmes becomes the master of his fictional world, “teaching the reader to look upon the ordinary trivia of the physical world with renewed vision” (Ousby 159). Another response, Jennifer Green-Lewis argues, is that this “abundance of knowledge” and feeling of insignificance created “a crisis of memory.” One answer to the crisis was to make the most of one’s memory by reading manuals on how to improve it. Green-Lewis sees this need to remember as “a kind of resistance to the oblivion that surrounds life and into which the better part of it disappears” (“Fading” 569). Another answer to the memory crisis was the photograph. She notes that although the photograph helped create the crisis, “the stasis of photography’s absolute present represented a kind of respite.” With the camera, the present “was retrievable through its objectification and subsequent utilitarian rebirth as a visual aid to memory” (“Fading” 564). Certainly, Elizabeth Barrett Browning supports this view. In a letter to Mary Russell Mitford, she contemplates the camera’s ability to keep a loved one’s memory alive always:

Do you know anything about that wonderful invention of the day called the Daguerreotype?—that is, have you seen any portraits produced by means of it? Think of a man sitting down in the sun and leaving his facsimile in all its full completion of outline and shadow, steadfast on a plate, at the end of a minute and a half! The Mesmeric disembodiment of spirits strikes one as a degree less marvelous. And several of these wonderful portraits . . . like engravings—only exquisite and delicate beyond the work of a graver—have I seen lately—longing to have such a memorial of every Being dear to me in the world. It is not merely the likeness which is precious in such cases—but the association, and the
sense of nearness involved in the thing . . . the fact of the very shadow of
the person lying there fixed forever! It is the very sanctification of
portraits I think—and it is not at all monstrous in me to say what my
brothers cry out against so vehemently, . . . that I would rather have such a
memorial of one I dearly loved, than the noblest Artist’s work ever
produced. I do not say so in respect (or disrespect) to Art, but for Love’s
sake.” (357-58)

Victorians not only treasured photographs as mementos of loved ones who had
since passed away, but they also valued photographs of their dead. Photographers
sometimes recorded the monuments or memorial stones at the gravesites and other times
took portraits of the dead. Many of the surviving post-mortem photographs depict babies
or young children who appear to be sleeping (Linkman 119-121). Hardly viewed in bad
taste, posthumous pictures were evidence that the camera was performing its function of
capturing all that could be collected or documented and preserved for memory.

However, as Green-Lewis points out, a picture produced by Robinson sparked a debate
that was to undermine the documentary nature of the camera in the minds of some. In
1856, Robinson conflated the genres of posthumous and art photography to produce
“Fading Away.” The photograph depicts a young girl, seemingly near death, lying on a
couch and surrounded by her family. Actually, the young girl was a healthy model
posing for a composite picture created from five different negatives. Robinson exhibited
the work in 1858, and the revelation about its creation sparked a debate about such
photographs for decades in photography journals (Green-Lewis, “Fading” 576).

In work similar to Robinson’s, Lewis Carroll combined negatives to produce what
he called “ghost pictures” (Taylor 84). In one such surviving picture, he manipulated the
negatives to create the ghostly image of George MacDonald and his son watching over his daughter, Mary, while she slept (Taylor 84). Although a photograph of a father watching over his family might be more benevolent than Robinson's, the result was the same. Because of Robinson's picture and those like it, the claims of veracity that had been made for the camera were undermined. The photograph was not necessarily a reliable "sign of past objects, persons, or events." If "ambiguity, perspective or artifice were admitted into its vision," it would "produce its own kind of anxiety regarding the increasingly unstable surface of modernity" and disrupt "the culture of Victorian realism which it initially appeared so fully to affirm" (Green-Lewis, "Fading" 577). An anxiety about the possibility of unstable surfaces and misrepresented detail, especially an anxiety initiated by the subject of death, created an atmosphere ripe for another short story form: the ghost story.

If Victorians were concerned about remembering, then the past became a focus of anxiety, and the ghost story, like photography, "offered a way of anchoring the past to an unsettled present by operating in a continuum of life and death" (Cox ix). If the present is unsettled, if there is an explosion of knowledge and a "shadow of change falling across virtually every area of life and thought" (Cox ix), then there must concurrently be "a sense of a gradual building of uncontrollable forces" (Sullivan 3) like those created by Robinson's photograph. Robinson's model is ghost-like. She is a figure of indeterminacy; her existence is ambiguous. Is she alive or dead? If she is actually a robust young woman, who would want to hang on a wall a photo of her passing away? Ghost stories represent that fascination with the kinds of issues this picture raises: "the fascination with darkness and irrationality, the focus on unorthodox states of
consciousness and perception, the projection of apocalypse and chaos, and above all the preoccupation with timeless 'moments' and 'visions'” (Sullivan 2).

Michael Cox and R. A. Gilbert proclaim that “ghost stories were something at which the Victorians excelled.” They argue that ghost stories were as much a part of the culture as “imperial confidence or the novel of social realism” (x-xi). Certainly there was a great deal of hack fiction, but there were also many well-written ghost stories. In fact, the Victorians so “effectively defined the possibilities of the short ghost story” that “all subsequent practitioners have been indebted to the Victorian achievement in some degree or other” (x-xi). By 1871, Walter Besant had even noted the educational function of ghost stories. In an article published in Belgravia entitled “The Value of Fiction,” Besant writes, “Ladies who read Belgravia do not often penetrate into the slums of the East-end. Fagin and his tribe are as unknown to them as the Esquimaux. It is not, however, bad for ladies to know that such things exist. Nor, perhaps, for ladies to be pleasantly frightened by a ghost story” (189). Interestingly, it is the photograph’s history as an art form that enabled writers to frighten these ladies so effectively.

From the moment daguerrotypist studios opened, they were associated with all things ghostly. There was no electric light in the middle of the nineteenth century, so commercial studios were built to capture as much natural daylight as possible. Less light required longer exposure time, which could be particularly troublesome in the winter months (Mathews 26). Photographers added mirrors and bottles of blue liquid to their studios. These devices supposedly shortened exposure times by intensifying the sun’s rays (Davenport 18). Other photographers built glass studios, often fitted with blue-tinted glass that both filtered and maximized the illumination (Haworth-Booth 22). In a letter to
a friend, Gothic novelist Maria Edgeworth describes the ghostly effects of sitting for a portrait in such a studio:

It is a wonderful mysterious operation. You are taken from one room into another up stairs and down and you see various people whispering and hear them in neighboring passages and rooms unseen and the whole apparatus and stool on a high platform under a glass dome casting a snapdragon blue light making all look like spectres and the men in black gliding about [...]. (593-94)

Yet this ghostly atmosphere is not limited to the picture-taking rooms. Writing in tongue-in-cheek fashion for Household Words, Henry Morely and W. H. Wills describe their visit to a photography studio in which they find both the photographer and the photographic process unsettlingly mysterious. When they meet the photographer, they note that he is “affable enough,” but, they speculate, “smiling faces have been long connected with mysterious designs” (55). They later describe him as a “taker of men” (55), a “magician,” and a “necromancer” (58) who places his hand under the camera’s “black pall” (56) in order to engage sitters for some “hole some latter-day magic” (55). The journalists ask the photographer to show them the entire picture-taking process, so they begin in the plate preparation room. When the writers see this room, they refer to what sounds like Wilkie Collins’s ghost story, “A Terribly Strange Bed”:

Our sense of the supernatural, always associated with dark closets, was excited strongly in this chamber, by the sound of a loud rumbling in the bowels of the house, and the visible departure of a portion of the wall to lower regions. We thought instinctively of bandits who wind victims up
and down in moveable rooms or turn them up in treacherous screw bedsteads. (56)

The rumbling they hear turns out to be the mechanism that shifts the pictures up and down for coloring and framing. Once the plate is prepared, the writers observe the photographer taking a father-and-son portrait. He places the plate on the camera, removes the slide, and the plate receives “the mediated shock upon its sensibility” (58). While “hiding his dark deeds from the face of day” he places the plate in a small bath of quicksilver (58). As Roger Taylor explains,

> The alchemy of developing solutions made the image appear out of thin air, with the invisible becoming visible, the third dimension reduced to two. Watching the glass plate develop offered a conundrum of reversed tones where white became black and black, white. In the world of photography, the positive became negative and the negative, positive. The transient became permanent and the established, fugitive. Nothing was ever quite what it seemed. (11)

Hence, as the writers watch the image of the father and son appear before them, they comment that the image is “unnaturally sensitive and altogether wanting in stability of character.” The photographer then fixes the picture with two more solutions, making the portrait “perfectly spellbound” (58).

> Had these intrepid journalists looked through the lens of the photographer’s camera, they would have found even more parallels between the unorthodox state of perception represented in ghost stories and photography. Through the lens the photographer’s sitters would have hung upside down; foreground would have replaced sky; what was on the left would have appeared on the right. Adjusting the focal length of
the lens would have made small things large; and changing the focus of the lens would have made solid objects disappear from view (Taylor 11). The finished product could also appear ghostly. When sitters for daguerreotypes did not remain still during the entire exposure the result was a blurry, ghostly being on the plate. In the case of Carroll’s humorous story, “A Photographer’s Day Out,” moving subjects in a country scene are outright monstrous. The wind blew the trees, making them “misty,” the farmer walked, giving him enough arms and legs to be a “centipede,” and his cow moved his one head enough times to create three heads in the photograph (984-85). Moreover, even if the subjects were still, there were no guarantees that the photo would be a success. The mysterious and ghostly effects were not just the domain of the daguerreotype, however. Because paper was the foundation of the emulsion process of the calotype, the resulting print was often fuzzy, especially when compared to the clear lines of the daguerreotype. The paper was also subject to fading, giving those photographed an airy, otherworldly appearance (Davenport 16-17).

Even entering the door of a photographer’s studio could be an unsettling experience. Photographers often covered the walls with examples of all the various picture sizes and frames they could offer their clients. The number and variety of faces that peered out from the walls could be daunting. Upon arriving at their photographer’s studio, Morley and Wills feel as if a “thousand images of human creatures of each sex and of every age [...] glanced at us from all sides [...] . Here a face was invisible; there it burst suddenly into view, and seemed to peep at us” (55). If one were to observe the photos in this photographer’s gallery as the natural light changed from dusk to night, how like the dream sequence in LeFanu’s “Justice Harbottle” the photographer’s gallery
would be. Harbottle, for instance, dreams that he was carried off to court and tried for his crimes by a ghostly jury. The lights were faint.

The jurors were mere shadows, sitting in rows; the prisoner could see a dozen pair of white eyes shining in, coldly, out of the darkness [. . .].

The place seemed to the eyes of the prisoner to grow gradually darker and darker, till he could discern nothing distinctly but the lumen of the eyes that were turned upon him from every bench and side and corner and gallery of the building. (109)

If the moon were to rise and shine through the glass on one portrait, leaving the rest in shadow, how like Joseph Waylie’s face in Braddon’s “The Scene-Painter’s Wife” that portrait would be. Exactly one year after his death, Joseph’s wife sees him in the circus stage pit “sitting amongst the crowd—amongst them, and yet not one of them, somehow, with a ghastly glare upon his face that marked him out from the rest” (40).

As with the short story, metaphors of confinement abound in discussions of photography. Physically, photographs, like short stories, are confined within frames. Much like short story collections, they can be framed as a group between the opening and closing frames of the photo album. Even today, we speak of the camera’s capacity to “fix” an image of an individual, to make his or her face permanently confined to paper. The prison photographer, or “taker of men” (Morely 58) could “capture” the image of the inmate to make sure he remained confined behind bars. Morley and Wills’s photographer goes so far as to assure them that all the photographs on his studio walls were “executed here” (55). But this physical confinement is not limited to the placement of the photographs. Whether prisoners or commercial clients, most Victorian sitters discovered what it was like to be confined in small spaces. Commercial photographers, particularly
during the collodion period, placed their sitters in stands and backrests to keep them still during the exposure. Most portraitists sought sharp, clear pictures, which any movement on the client's part would destroy. As a result, their clients' heads were placed in a kind of vice even for short exposures of five to six minutes (Linkman 50-51). Although photographers made every effort to conceal the headrest, at times the expression on the sitter's face is all one needs to detect its existence. Morley and Wills note that in the photographer's gallery, "young chevaliers regarded us with faces tied and fastened down so that, as it seemed, they could by no struggle get their features loose out of the very twist and smirk they chanced to wear when they were captured and fixed" (55). Even the plate preparation is reminiscent of the confining spaces found in the short story. As the journalists explain, after dipping a plate in chemicals that make it very sensitive, "it was requisite to confine it at once, in a dark hole or solitary cell, made ready for it in a wooden frame" (56).

The metaphor of confinement did not go unnoticed by Lewis Carroll. During a visit to Auckland Castle, Carroll penned "The Legend of Scotland," a humorous story designed to entertain Bishop C. T. Longley's daughters and nieces. The story tells of an artist "having wyth hym a merveilous machine called a Chimera" (1002). He is engaged by the mistress of the castle to take her full-length portrait. After many failed attempts, he tells her that her height prevents him from capturing her head and feet in one picture. She becomes so angry that she locks him in the cellar without food and water. She tries again to convince the photographer to take more pictures, but weak from starvation, he dies before he can answer her. Disappointed, waiting for an answer that will never come, she wastes away in the cellar where they both will remain as ghosts until someone takes a full-length portrait of a living Auckland castle mistress bearing the same name as the
ghost mistress. Ironically, in this framed story (a visitor scared by the appearance of the ghost tells the Lady’s story) the lady’s countenance as well as her story is confined between the walls of Auckland Castle.

**Writing from a Painter’s Point of View**

Earlier in this chapter I argued that the acceptance of photography as an art form was frequently hampered by its comparisons to painting. For photography to be seen as a serious art form, its adherents had to create an art theory different from that of painting. The result was a photographic rhetoric that greatly resembled nineteenth-century short-story theory. Alison Conway demonstrates that a similar connection exists between the reception histories of the novel and the painted portrait. Conway argues that a gradual shift took place in the public’s mind about the artistic merit of portrait painting. Early in the eighteenth century, art critics highly prized history painting because it presented a public narrative that engaged “the beholder in a dialogue” (4). Portraits, on the other hand, depicted private accounts of human history or, even worse, were no more than reflections of the sitter’s vanity. Arguments against the novel ran a similar course. Novel reading was a private activity about fictitious characters who could in no way generate discussions that serve the public interest.

Counter to the negative responses to the portrait were publications like Jonathan Richardson’s “An Essay on the Theory of Painting” (1715). Richardson revalues the relationship between portraiture and vanity. He theorizes that in the portrait a relationship is established “between the mind and the face. To sit for one’s Picture, is to have an Abstract of one’s Life written, and published” (14). The portrait therefore projects a public knowledge of the individual and thereby puts that individual into the
public arena. It is the portrait painter's duty to depict "the abstract meaning" (Conway 9) in particular representations. The success of a portrait "depends on its movement between the question of physical resemblance and the larger truths manifested by the sitter's character, a movement that defines the portrait as both private and public, particular and general" (Conway 9):

> History painting's public narratives no longer take precedence over the very private accounts of human history that portraits provide. Instead, the privacy of the portrait ensures a stable ground for sympathetic relations among individuals, relations that in turn form the bedrock of social stability and historical continuity. (Conway 9)

A similar rhetorical shift occurs, Conway argues, in the reception of the novel. "The critics who assess the novel's potential gratifications in positive terms reconceptualize the private interests that the novel promotes as part of a new public ethic, one that links the interiority of the reading experience to a world that uses sympathy such as the novel produces to cement social relations" (Conway 11).

Victorian novelists capitalized on this alignment between the novel and the painted portrait. A few examples of how novelists make use of painted portraits help clarify Conway's argument. In fact, Conway most assuredly had Pride and Prejudice in mind when she wrote her article. The novel's readers may recall that thanks to her own shortsightedness as well as the manipulations of other characters, Elizabeth doubts Darcy's gentlemanly character until she visits his home. However, after an "earnest contemplation" (220) of his portrait hanging in the gallery, her beliefs about his character change.
Every idea that had been brought forward by the housekeeper was favourable to his character, and as she stood before the canvas, on which he was represented, and fixed his eyes upon herself, she thought of his regard with a deeper sentiment of gratitude than it had ever raised before; she remembered its warmth, and softened its impropriety of expression.

(220)

By Richardson's standards, the painter has fulfilled his duty, for he has captured Darcy's character as well as his face. The larger truths about Darcy's character that the painter has captured on the canvas for visitors to see while touring Darcy's home ultimately play a significant role in cementing the social relationships delineated in the novel, particularly the relationship between Elizabeth and Darcy.

The novel's characters may not know it at first, but Lady Audley's Pre-Raphaelite portraitist has also translated the essence of her being onto canvas. The narrator puzzles over how the "hard," "almost wicked" look given to the lady's "pretty pouting mouth" and the "fiendish aspect" given to the portrait as a whole could be "so like and yet so unlike" the sitter (70-71). The narrator concludes that these features must be the result of the Pre-Raphaelite style, but Alicia intuits that there may be more to the strangeness of the portrait than the style:

I think that sometimes a painter is in a manner inspired, and is able to see, through the normal expression of the face, another expression that is equally a part of it, though not to be perceived by common eyes. We have never seen my lady look as she does in that picture; but I think that she could look so. (71-72)
Indeed, the painter has discovered the wickedness in Lady Audley's character and placed it on the canvas for public view. The painting fulfills its role in engaging its viewers in a dialogue about the lady's character, which as it turns out, is the secret of the novel's title.

Of course, the ultimate example of how painted portrait theory is supported in the novel is found in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. Upon completion of Dorian's portrait, Dorian laments,

"How sad it is! I shall grow old, and horrible, and dreadful. But this picture will remain always young. It will never be older than this particular day in June [...] If it were only the other way! If it were I who was to always be young, and the picture that was to grow old! For that I would give everything! Yes, there is nothing in the whole world I would not give! I would give my soul for that!" (120)

Dorian, of course, obtains his wish. He is not the same as he was before his portrait was painted. He has been rent in two. His innocence at the time of the painting remains stamped on his physical body while his soul is captured within the brush strokes of the painting. Every evil thought and deed is written on the portrait but not a whisper of either appears on Dorian's body. As a result, Dorian has to lock the portrait away from public judgment. By removing the character from the physical body, the portrait can no longer generate the personal relationships that form the basis of community. It cannot even serve as an instrument to improve the sitter's conduct as Richardson believed the portrait could:

[W]hy should we not also believe, that considering the violent Thirst for Praise which is natural, especially in the noblest Minds, and the better sort of People, they that see their Pictures [...] are often secretly admonish'd
by the faithful Friend in their own Breasts to add new Graces to them by
Praise-worthy Actions and to avoid Blemishes, or deface what may have
happen’d, as much as possible, by a future good Conduct. (14-15)

Richardson’s theory provides a wealth of material to mine for someone influenced by the
aesthetic movement like Wilde. The author essentially twists inside-out Richardson’s
praise of the relationship between the portrait and vanity. Richardson argues that the
portrait establishes a means of self-surveillance. For Dorian, the portrait’s accumulation
of his sins annihilates his incentive for self-surveillance. He is free to accumulate
blemishes on the painted portrait because the living being will lose none of his graces.

Victorian short-story writers, too, frequently capitalized on the connection
between the painted portrait and the novel, but they do so for different purpose. On the
surface, short story writers employ the portrait to establish a sitter’s character and create
the impetus for the tale. In doing so, they also lend credibility to the story, especially
those in need of a dose of realism, such as the ghost story or the romance. However, by
the end of the tale it becomes clear that short story writers have used the portrait to revise
the portrait theory espoused in novels. In doing so, they claim a place for the short story
in general and for the ghost story in particular.

The narrator of LeFanu’s “Strange Event in the Life of Schalken the Painter,” for
instance, begins the story with a description of Schalken’s strange painting of a young
woman. The narrator claims that the picture “faithfully records a remarkable and
mysterious occurrence and perpetuates, in the face of the female figure [. . .] an accurate
portrait of Rose Velderkaut [. . .] the only love of Godfrey Schalken” (108). He
describes the painting thus:
The picture represents the interior of what might be a chamber in some antique religious building; and its foreground is occupied by a female figure, in a species of white robe, part of which is arranged so as to form a veil. The dress, however, is not that of any religious order. In her hand she bears a lamp, by which alone her figure and face are illuminated; and her features wear such an arch smile as well becomes a pretty woman when practicing some prankish roguery; in the background, and excepting where the dim red light of an expiring fire serves to define the form, in total shadow, stands the figure of a man dressed in the old Flemish fashion, in an attitude of alarm, his hand being placed on the hilt of his sword, which he appears to be in the act of drawing. (107-08)

The narrator then relates the incredible tale of the abduction of Rose by a living corpse dressed in Flemish attire. The event takes place in Schalken’s youth when he is a poor art student studying under Gerard Douw, Rose’s uncle and guardian. One evening, a stranger named Minheer Vanderhausen appears at Douw’s house asking for Rose’s hand in marriage. Rose’s uncle believes the stranger to be a rich older gentleman taken with Rose’s beauty. Once they agree on the appropriate sum of money to purchase a union between the stranger and Rose, the figure takes on the ghastly appearance of a corpse and takes Rose away. Schalken is heart-broken, and both he and Rose’s uncle search for Rose, but they never find a trace of her or her ghastly husband. Some months later, Rose returns to her uncle’s house, terrified and exhausted, but she mysteriously disappears before the night is over, never to be heard from again. Many years later, Schalken returns to Rotterdam to attend his father’s funeral. As the travel-weary Schalken waits in the church for the funeral to begin, he falls asleep. He dreams that he sees the specter of
Rose and follows her into the vaults of the church. They enter an apartment furnished with antiques, including a four-poster bed with black curtains around it. Rose pulls back the curtains to reveal the "livid and demonic" (134) figure of Vanderhausen. The sight causes Schalken to fall senseless to the floor. Church caretakers find him the next day lying on the floor of a large cell next to a coffin.

There is clearly a disconnect between the description of the portrait and the tale that follows. By employing the portrait in this manner, Le Fanu is making claims for the short story aesthetic. The narrator, admitting that this dream vision "will not be received by our rational readers in lieu of evidence," claims that it "produced, nevertheless, a strong and lasting impression upon the mind of Schalken" (132). In fact, Schalken is so "satisfied of the reality of the vision," that he records the "evidence of the impression" that the vision "wrought upon his fancy" (134-35) in the painting that the narrator describes at the beginning of the story. Thus, the portrait is not serving the novelistic purposes one might expect. Rose's character is not part of a larger project to provide sympathetic relationships that in turn promote social stability. Her portrait represents Schalken's unorthodox vision of necrophilia and rape. The reader, in fact, is left wondering if Rose ever really existed at all. All the reader can know is that moment of Schalken's vision as it is captured in the story and the portrait.

LeFanu again undermines painted portrait theory in "The Ghost and the Bone-Setter." In this story, however, he employs a portrait to examine the humor in the supernatural. According to the narrator, the story is based on an Irish superstition that the last corpse buried in a churchyard must supply the rest of the churchyard tenants with fresh water to satisfy the burning thirst of purgatory. The story comes from Terry Neil, a bone-setter by trade, who had a small farm on Squire Phalim's ground. When the squire
leaves the country, he asks his tenants to spend the night in the castle. The story in the neighborhood is that the squire’s dead grandfather, whose portrait hangs on the parlor wall, materializes when no one is watching and steps out of the frame in search of liquor. When a family member draws near, however, the squire steps back into the picture “looking as quite an’ innocent as if he didn’t know any thing about it” (184). When it is Terry Neil’s turn to stay at the castle, he takes a bottle of holy water and a bottle of “pottieen” with him and sits in the parlor. After Neil has had some liquor to keep him warm, he drifts off to sleep, and the spirit of the old squire steps out of the picture frame. When the old squire realizes Terry Neil is in the parlor chair, he asks Neil to reset his leg. In the place where the squire now resides, he has been charged with walking great distances in search of water. In more material times, the squire had broken his right leg in a riding accident, and all of the extra walking he has to do now aggravates the old injury. As Neil pulls on the squire’s leg, the old gentleman takes a sip of the holy water, thinking he is drinking some of Neil’s spirits. The squire screams and all becomes dark. Neil wakes up the following morning with the leg of one of the parlor chairs in his hands. As for the squire’s spirit, “whether it was that he did not like his liquor, or by rason iv the loss iv his leg, he was never known to walk again” (188).

Again, portrait theory has been turned on its head. Although Neil does not describe the portrait in detail, we can assume that since its subject is a squire, and since the picture hangs in the family parlor, the squire was represented as a respectable gentleman. However, we learn from the storyteller that the old squire drank alcohol quite liberally. In fact, he died when a blood vessel burst as he was pulling a cork out of a bottle of liquor. The “innocent” picture does not reflect the alcoholic nature of the squire, nor does it suggest that at different periods of the squire’s life he was (in the mixed-up
words of the narrator) a “most extemporary Christian, and most charitable and inhuman to the poor” (187), or that he would end up where he is now. Whether the reader chooses to categorize this story as a drunkard’s tale or a ghost story, the result is the same. The portrait does not provide the novelistic abstract of one’s life in the face of the sitter. In LeFanu’s hands, the portrait provides the vehicle for the “single effect” that creates this story’s “unity of impression” (Matthews 73).

Albeit subtly, even Wilkie Collins undercuts Richardson’s portrait theory in the frame to the story, “A Terribly Strange Bed.” As discussed in an earlier chapter, the narrator of the frame story is a painter who induces his sitters to tell stories in order to capture their natural expression on canvas. Such an act is in keeping with portrait theory, but the story that the sitter, Mr. Faulkner, tells calls into question his character. Mr. Faulkner relates that he was living a dissipated life in Paris when one night he decided to shun the “ghastly respectabilities” of the “respectable gambling house” in search of “genuine, blackguard, poverty-stricken gaming” (3). Such a house was easily found and several hours later Mr. Faulkner found himself champagne- and “gambling-drunk” (6). Since he is clearly unable to find his way home, a member of the gambling crowd suggests Faulkner spend the night in a vacant room upstairs. The gambler soon discovers that the canopy of the four-poster bed in the room has been designed so that it can be lowered onto the sleeper below and suffocate him. Mr. Faulkner barely escapes with his life.

Mr. Faulkner gives the reader very few clues about his character. He was (and may possibly still be) an adventurer, eager to experience all of life, even its seamier side. He ends his story by noting that two good things came out of his experience. First, the government used his plight as justification for shutting down the Paris gambling houses.
Second, he has not played “‘Rouge et Noir’” (20) since this mishap occurred. 
Significantly, however, Faulkner does not say he has never gambled since, suggesting 
that as frightening as this experience was, his love of adventure will always persuade him 
to seek new games to play. Moreover, with the passage of time, the experience may no 
longer seem so frightening. After all, Faulkner tells this particular story because he finds 
the painter’s sketch of the gambling house in his studio. Rather than turning his features 
stiff with fear, relating the “exciting romance” (3) relaxes them.

These are the only surmises the reader can make, for the painter deliberately 
leaves Faulkner’s character ambiguous. The artist informs the reader that he finds Mr. 
Faulkner’s “natural expression” a “very remarkable one,” but because he is not an author 
he “cannot describe it” in words (1). The only clue he provides about Mr. Faulkner’s 
expression is that it is the “most difficult likeness” he has ever had to paint (1). The 
question is what is Mr. Faulkner’s natural expression? Is there a hint of roguery or even 
debauchery peeking out of his eyes or hiding in the lines of his face? Does the portrait 
reflect his adventurous spirit? The reader cannot be sure. Collins’s narrator deliberately 
leaves the description of the portrait incomplete, unstable, ambiguous. For the reader, the 
portrait cannot provide Richardson’s required “abstract” of Faulkner’s life. If it could, 
the reader would be perusing the pages of a novel. In the short story, all the reader can 
know is that small amount of time, that single sitting that Faulkner spends relating the 
story of the terribly strange bed.

While undercutting portrait theory generally seems to be the province of the ghost 
story, Oliphant manages to dispense with historical portraits and historical novels in a 
domestic short story. In the last year of her life, Oliphant published a volume entitled 
The Ways of Life. The seemingly autobiographical preface explains that within the
volume’s covers are stories that treat the “ebb” of life in which one finds “himself carried away by retiring waters, no longer coming in upon the top of the wave, but going out” (vi). The ebb does not represent old age as much as “the wonderful and overwhelming revelation which one time or another comes to most people, that their career, whatever it may have been, has come to a stop; that such successes as they may have achieved are over, and that henceforward they must accustom themselves to the thought of going out with the tide” (vi). The preface sets the stage for the story of “Mr. Sandford,” a painter whose career is ebbing away with the tide.

The way in which Oliphant puts an end to Mr. Sandford’s career undermines portrait theory. Mr. Sandford paints historical portraits. His sitters dress in historical costumes, a trend popular in the middle of the century. Over the years, he has earned a great deal of praise and a good living from this style of painting. One day, Mr. Sandford overhears a conversation among his son’s friends in which the young adults are commenting on the recent exhibition of the works of the Royal Academy. They are criticizing the way in which sitters dress up as historical characters. One young man exclaims, “Historical painting is gone out like historical novel-writing. The public is tired of costume. Life is too short for that sort of thing” (347). This conversation is the first of a series of events that cause Mr. Sandford to believe that his work has become old fashioned. After overhearing his children’s ideas about art, Mr. Sandford sees his agent, who tells the painter that his paintings have stopped selling. Taking the young people’s conversation to heart, Mr. Sandford decides to try to paint in the impressionist style of painting. When he realizes that he cannot alter his mode of painting, he wishes for death, for the end of his life is more palatable than the end of his career. His death, however, would leave his family in financial ruin, so Mr. Sandford wavers between accepting the
end of his artistic career and taking steps to end his life until one day a carriage accident resolves the matter for him and cuts his life short.

Although the children’s conversation is on the subject of art, another message made clear in these sentences is that novels like the ones Oliphant has published are out of style. Readers want something shorter, something not focused on historical subjects, yet they want works that express the beauty of art. Significantly, in this short tale Oliphant attempts to deliver just that. Mr. Sandford’s sudden death ironically serves to make his paintings popular once more. His historical painting has gone out of style just as Oliphant’s historical novel writing has, so instead the author provides us with something shorter, something not focused on historical subjects. She paints with words a significant moment in the life of an historical portrait painter.

Similar to the other stories discussed in this section, Gaskell describes a portrait at the beginning of “The Grey Woman” to provide the impetus for the story. Anna Scherer, the “young girl of extreme beauty; evidently of middle rank,” (251) captures the attention of the narrator and stimulates her to ask about the girl’s identity. Her question, in turn, leads to the discovery of Anna’s manuscript. On the surface, then, the portrait provides tangible evidence of Anna’s existence and lends credibility to the incredible tale that follows. Yet the woman at the end of the story is nothing like the woman in the portrait. Anna writes that since her hair has become gray and her complexion has become “ashen-coloured,” no one could recognize the “fresh-coloured, bright-haired young woman of eighteen months before” (302). The portrait is no longer an accurate representation of the woman in this story. She is, as the title of the story indicates, a grey woman. It is as if the color portrait of the young girl has been exchanged for the black and white photo of an old woman. It is in that moment when she realizes her husband is a murderer that the
change begins. When she experiences the "series of emotions called forth by [that] single situation" (Matthews 73), both Anna and her surroundings become devoid of color. From that moment, she goes into hiding followed by "deep retirement, never seeing the full light of day" (302). She looks out at the world through the frame of the window and never again interacts with others. Thus, at the point where Gaskell invokes this principle of the short story, she also invokes the photograph. The result is that, again, portrait theory has been dispensed with, but this time the painted portrait has been replaced with the photographic portrait to suggest a shared aesthetic between the photograph and the short story.

A similar rhetorical shift occurs in Oliphant's "Earthbound." In an earlier chapter, I noted that the painted portrait of Maud had taken on the textual aspects of the ghostly Maud-turned-text whom Edmund so desperately tries to interpret. Many of the same qualities that make the portrait textual also make it photographic. For one thing, it is black and white. For another, it is grouped with many other pictures in the room, almost like those collected in a family album, the covers of which have been opened to the page containing Maud's picture. Consistent with the album metaphor is the black frame that encircles the portrait rather than the elaborately carved wood-toned frame that often surrounds a family member's portrait. Finally, there is the emphasis on the close correspondence between the portrait and the specter that gives the portrait a photographic quality. When Maud appears alongside the portrait, a confused Edmund asks himself, "Were they two, standing side by side, comparing themselves each to each, or were they one?" (142). This and other descriptions of the portrait do not delineate the correspondence between the sitter's face and character as we have seen them do in novels. Instead, the framed image is essentially the mirror image of the specter, echoing
Barrett Browning’s almost supernatural assertion that photographs are “the very shadow of the person lying there fixed forever” (357). Given that short-story writers, including Oliphant, have undermined painted portrait theory to establish a theory of the short story, and given that “Earthbound” is a story in which the earthly Maud’s story has been transformed into a ghost story, it is not such a leap for the earthly Maud’s painted portrait to be transformed into a shadowy photograph to help advance the aesthetic of the short story.

**Reading from a Photographic Point of View**

Other stories take a more definite stance on the shared aesthetic between the short story and photography, and in doing so make it clear how the photograph has created readers for the short story. As photographs become a part of the Victorian social fabric, writers start to incorporate the camera, the photograph, and the development process into their work. In the detective story, we have seen how the camera can serve as the auxiliary of the law and how the photograph is perceived as an unbiased recorder of detail. In the ghost story, we have seen how the photographic process has contributed to the development of a supernatural atmosphere and the appearance of ghostly apparitions. Outside of these subgenres, however, the photographic portrait is consistently presented as something unstable, dependent upon the observer for meaning. Several lines in Oliphant’s “The Story of Anne Maturin” are indicative of how the photograph operates in this manner. In order to set the stage for the event that confines Anne to a life of unhappiness, Oliphant suggests that the cause of Anne’s undoing—Miss Parker—is not exactly what she seems. Upon Francis’s engagement to Miss Parker, Mrs. Hartley informs Anne that she has heard Francis’s betrothed is an “‘angel,’” which one naturally
“‘takes for granted.’” Her photograph indicates that Miss Parker is “‘pretty enough; but you never can tell from a photograph’” (53). The implication is that the surface of a photograph does not contain a single, inherent meaning. It takes an observer to read the photograph and give it meaning based upon the relationship he or she has with it. Instead of the angel Mrs. Hartley is expecting, Miss Parker turns out to be a spoiled young woman given to deadly fits of anger. The stories discussed in this section address, either metaphorically or directly, the notion of the photograph’s multiple interpretive possibilities.

In an earlier chapter, I discussed the ambiguity of Oliphant’s “The Library Window.” At the end of the story, the readers are uncertain whether the girl’s vision of the scholar in the library window across the street is the result of the illness that brought the girl to her aunt’s house, the creative imagination of a “fantastic and fanciful and dreamy” (210) young author, or the ghost of a scholar killed years ago. One of the ways Oliphant establishes this ambiguity is through the metaphor of photography. Elizabeth Jay reads Oliphant’s “The Library Window” autobiographically, suggesting that the girl represents Oliphant in the early stages of her career. As Oliphant struggles with the desire to write in an environment that views “writing as the male prerogative, the prospect of attaining the fellowship of the pen is alluring, but fraught with the danger of disappointment and alternative taunts of eccentricity bordering upon madness, or impropriety” (265). The girl in the story, Jay suggests, “has all the time been seeing, though not recognising, her mirror image thrown upon the recessed window of the drawing-room by the lamps brought in at twilight” (265). While Jay makes a convincing argument that the scholar is Oliphant, what her reading fails to recognize is the photographic nature of the girl’s vision of the image of the room across the street. The
girl is not looking at her reflected image but is seeing the image develop like a photograph before her eyes.

In her window recess, the young girl is outfitted much like a photographer. The curtains that fall over the recessed window seat serve as the photographer’s focussing cloth, and from her secluded perch she is “a spectator of all the varied story out of doors” (209). She adjusts her focus on the window across the street until gradually a picture begins to develop. At first, it is just a room: “I saw as I looked up suddenly the faint greyness as of visible space within—a room behind, certainly—dim, as it was natural a room should be on the other side of the street—quite indefinite: yet so clear that if some one were to come to the window there would be nothing surprising in it” (215). A little later that same evening the furniture starts to appear, “a large, black thing coming out into the grey.” It is “a piece of furniture, either a writing desk or perhaps a large bookcase” (215). A week later, a writing desk appears clearly in the window—“a large old-fashioned escritoire, standing out into the room” with “a great many pigeon-holes and little drawers in the back, and a large table for writing” (217). She acknowledges that she gradually sees more and more of the room as the days go by—papers on the desk, books piled on the floor nearby. Then after several weeks, a male figure at the writing desk gradually starts to take shape. She can make out “the outline of his figure, dark and solid, seated in the chair, and the fairness of his head visible faintly, a clear spot against the dimness.” Significantly, she sees this figure “against the dim gilding of the frame of the large picture which hung on the farther wall” (222). One more view a few days later makes the picture complete. She sees the figure, “wrapped in his thoughts, with his face turned to the window.” The girl has never seen the room so clearly. “It was like a picture, all the things I knew, and the same attitude, and the atmosphere, full of quietness, 
not disturbed by anything” (235). The photo at last develops when the figure comes to the window and makes an ambiguous gesture with his hand to the girl. She is unsure if he is greeting her or waving her away, but the image remains with her for the rest of her life. She has a framed (by the window) mental photograph of a young writer standing in front of his writing desk to carry with her always.

Just as light plays an important role in the photographic development process, light plays an important role in determining what the narrator sees. The girl notes that she sees inside the window only late in the day: “I rarely saw anything at all in the early part of the day; but then that is natural; you can never see into a place from outside, whether it is an empty room or a looking-glass, or people’s eyes, or anything else that is mysterious, in the day.” Jay notes that it is the twilight hour, the liminal time of medieval romance when the boundaries between the faery and mortal worlds are particularly fragile, that the vision appears. While it is true that the time of day adds an aura of mystery to the visions, the girl’s comments on light suggest a photographer’s sense of the necessary light to create the photograph: “But in the evening in June in Scotland—then is the time to see. For it is daylight, yet it is not day.” Her description also explains why she cannot see the window every time she looks at it. The light must be just right. She goes on to say that there is an indescribable quality about the light; “it is so clear, as if every object was a reflection of itself” (217). Indeed, the objects reflect onto the plate behind her camera lens eyes where the photograph of the writer is developing. The girl is learning to interpret this photograph and give it meaning, just as the reader is trying to interpret Oliphant’s story. The multiple interpretations readers find in the story parallel the multiple interpretations the characters have for the library window.
While Oliphant employs the metaphor of photography to develop the artist in "The Library Window," LeFanu uses the metaphor to "un-develop" the character of Mr. Jennings in "Green Tea." Although Dr. Hesselius describes himself as a "medical philosopher," his definition of that role sounds very much like a medical Sherlock Holmes. He certainly claims to have the same camera-like powers of observation.

Hesselius has "sought out" cases and "watched and scrutinized" them with more time "and consequently with more minuteness than the ordinary practitioner." The result is that he has fallen "into habits of observation, which accompany him everywhere, and are exercised [...] upon every subject that presents itself" (8). In the scene in which Dr. Hesselius calls on Mr. Jennings in the minister's drawing room and learns of the monkey spirit that haunts him, Hesselius is exercising a photographer's attention to light. In the fading daylight, the scene of the two men in the drawing room could almost be a picture developing in the reverse. Instead of coming into view, it is as if a photographic preparation has reduced the light to shades of dark gray and black in the photographic plate in Dr. Hesselius's mind. The doctor observes that "the corners of the room were already dark: all was growing dim, and the gloom was insensibly toning my mind, already prepared for what was sinister" (20, italics mine). The tall figure of Mr. Jennings appears "faintly seen in the ruddy twilight" (20). In "the darkening room" on Jennings's face rests "that dim, odd glow which seems to descend and produce, where it touches, lights, sudden though faint, which are lost, almost without gradation, in darkness" (21). Jennings is fading into darkness.

A passage in the text appears to offer an explanation for the spirit 'monkey' that stalks Jennings, but upon reflection the reader realizes that the photographic metaphors in the passage create more interpretive possibilities than acceptable answers. While
Hesselius waits for Jennings to enter the room, he peruses the minister’s books. A set of Swedenborg’s *Arcan Caelestia* draws his attention, and he opens one of the volumes to a passage Jennings has marked about the possibility of opening man’s interior sight, “which is that of his spirit,” and enabling him to see “the things of another life, which cannot possibly be made visible to the bodily sight” (14). While this interior sight enabled Swedenborg to talk with angels, he warns that it also opens the door for attack by the spirits from hell who appear in bestial form to destroy man. Jennings neither indicates to Hesselius that he believes he has found this inner sight nor that the monkey is the product of that discovery, and Hesselius does not acknowledge the possibility in his diagnosis, but it appears that contact with the spirit monkey is causing Jennings to fade from “bodily sight.” When they discover Jennings’s lifeless body in his bedroom, Hesselius again observes the reduction of light in the room: “In this sombre, and now terrible room, one of the great elms that darkened the house was slowly moving the shadow of one of its great boughs upon this dreadful floor” (36). Jennings has faded into the shadows leaving Hesselius with, as he tells his correspondent, Professor Van Loo, a “picture” that his “memory rejects with incredulity and horror” (37).

Freudian and Christian critics have tried to explain Jennings’s slide into oblivion but neither theoretical camp seems satisfactory. To Peter Penzoldt, Jennings’s monkey is simply “the product of schizoid neurosis” (77); to V. S. Pritchett, it is “dark and hairy with original sin,” and its persecution symbolizes “justified” retribution for Jennings’s sins (122-23); to Michael Bengal, the monkey is sent to punish a clergyman who has “lost his faith” and whose “intellectual pride” has “cut him off from God” (40). However, as mentioned earlier, Hesselius’s psychological evaluation of Jennings is unreliable. He seems more interested in explaining his own actions than providing a psychological
explanation for Jennings’s visions. As for Jennings’s sins, the story does not delineate any, so one has to rely on faith alone to draw that conclusion. He reads a great deal, but he never demonstrates any arrogance about his studies, and his intellectual endeavors never push him away from the pulpit. The story suggests that there is no cause and effect relationship. Yet, the one thing we know about Jennings is that he is a scholar. He has a wide variety of interests and is an avid reader. Perhaps that is the reason Jennings “undevelops.” As Green-Lewis argues, one of the responses to the explosion of knowledge in the nineteenth century is a sense of insignificance. The interpretive possibilities that come with knowledge created an unstable environment for Jennings, and he fades out of the surface of this life and into the one opened by Swedenborg’s interior sight.

The authors of “The Library Window” and “Green Tea” capture in fiction the influence that the photographic development process has on the way we interpret what we see. Other stories such as Doyle’s “A Scandal in Bohemia” deal more directly with the interpretation of photographs. Susan Sontag states,

Any photograph has multiple meanings; indeed, to see something in the form of a photograph is to encounter a potential object of fascination. The ultimate wisdom of the photographic image is to say: “There is the surface. Now think—or rather feel, intuit—what is beyond it, what the reality must be like if it looks this way.” Photographs, which cannot themselves explain anything, are inexhaustible invitations to deduction, speculation, and fantasy. (123)

Given the correspondence between Sherlock Holmes and the camera, it should be no surprise that the first of his short-story adventures is about the stories photographs tell. In the case of “A Scandal in Bohemia,” the stories that photographs tell depend upon the
possessor of the photograph. Watson relates how the soon-to-be-married King of Bohemia hires Holmes to retrieve a photograph from an actress and singer named Irene Adler. In his youth, the then prince was in love with Miss Adler and in a weak moment was persuaded to pose for a photograph with his lover. Now that he is about to be married, Miss Adler has threatened to send the photograph to his fiancée. The King is sure the photograph will be the end of the relationship if his betrothed sees the picture. To the King, the photograph tells the story of a past indiscretion that is now a threat to his social position and title.

The actress reads the photograph in a different light. Holmes, through a series of ruses and disguises, tricks Miss Adler into unconsciously revealing the whereabouts of the photograph. However, before he is able to retrieve the photograph, Miss Adler, relying on her theater background, designs some ruses of her own and tricks Holmes into unconsciously revealing his identity to her. She manages to leave the country with the photograph before he is able to remove it from its hiding place. Miss Adler has fallen in love and married, however, so she promises not to use the photograph against the King. For Miss Adler, the photograph is a “safeguard” and a “weapon” that will “secure” her from any action the King might take against her in the future (175).

Although the much sought after photograph is not in its hiding place when Holmes looks for it, there is a photograph waiting there in its place. This photograph means nothing to the King, but it means a great deal to Holmes. Miss Adler explains in a letter that she has left it for the King in case he might care to possess it. Surprisingly, Holmes asks the King if he might have this photograph as pay for his detective endeavors. For Holmes, the photograph tells the story of a case he did not solve, but the story is not a source of pain or humiliation for the great detective. Rather, it serves as a
source of admiration. As the first line of the story announces, “To Sherlock Holmes she is always the woman.” In Holmes’s eyes, Watson tells the reader, Miss Adler “eclipses and predominates the whole of her sex” (161). It is not love Holmes feels for this woman, for a “reasoning machine” does not allow for emotions, but it is admiration for the way his plans “were beaten by a woman’s wit” (175). The story’s title then is as much a disguise as those worn by Holmes and Miss Adler. There was no scandal in Bohemia; it was averted. Yet there was a scandal in Baker Street when the finely tuned Holmesian observing machine failed to notice that it was Irene Adler dressed in man’s clothing who wished him good night. Ironically, the ruse earned her and this story produced by her photograph the “title of the woman” (175).

Thomas Hardy’s “An Imaginative Woman” is a story about how one photograph elicits different life-altering interpretations from its two observers, Ella and William Marchmill. Ella is a mother of three, who lets off her “delicate and ethereal emotions in imaginative occupations, day-dreams, and night-sighs” (8). Her husband, William, is a gun manufacturer who speaks “in squarely shaped sentences,” and is “satisfied with a condition of sublunary things” that make weapons necessary (8). Ella, in an effort to find a healthy release for some of her pent-up emotions, writes poems, some of which have appeared in obscure magazines. When one of her published verses appears on the same page as a poem written by Robert Trewe, Ella takes an interest in the poet’s work. As fate would have it, a few months later Ella’s family rents the same Solentsea cottage that Trewe has just vacated, and Ella becomes infatuated with the poet. She tries on his clothes and reads his poems incessantly. When the landlady gives Ella a picture of Trewe, Ella waits for a night when her husband will be away and imagines lovemaking with Trewe. She deliberately waits for evening, so that a “romantic tinge can be imparted
to the occasion by silence, candles, solemn sea and stars outside” (18). She then puts on her dressing gown, reads some of Trewe’s “tenderest utterances,” climbs in the bed where he slept, and places his portrait on the pillow beside her.

The face is a striking countenance to look upon. The poet wore a luxuriant black moustache and imperial, and a slouched hat, which shaded the forehead. The large dark eyes described by the landlady showed an unlimited capacity for misery: they looked out from beneath well-shaped brows as if they were reading the universe in the microcosm of the confronter’s face, and were not altogether overjoyed at what the spectacle portended. (18)

She kisses the photo, justifying her behavior to herself with the argument that she knows Trewe’s thoughts and feelings as well as she knows her own. “He’s nearer my real self, he’s more intimate with the real me than Will is, after all, even though I’ve never seen him!” (19). She imagines that her lips are resting where his once rested and becomes “immersed in the very essence of him, permeated by his spirit as by an ether” (20). Ella’s evening is unexpectedly cut short when her husband returns from his sailing trip, declaring that he has come back early because he wants “to be with [her]” (20). While at the cottage and after she returns home, Ella attempts to meet Trewe, but her plans never materialize. Several months after the Solentsea trip, Trewe kills himself and Ella is devastated. She asks the landlady to send her his picture and a lock of Trewe’s hair as a memento. Nine months after the Solentsea trip, Ella dies after delivering her fourth child.

The story of Trewe’s picture does not end there. Ironically, Ella is not the only imaginative member of the family. Two years later, Marchmill is making room for his new wife when he runs across Trewe’s portrait and lock of hair.
Marchmill looked long and musingly at the hair and portrait, for something struck him. Fetching the little boy who had been the death of his mother—now a noisy toddler—he took him on his knee, held the lock of hair against the child’s head, and set up the photograph on the table behind, so that he could closely compare the features each countenance presented. By a known but inexplicable trick of Nature there were undoubtedly strong traces of resemblance to the man Ella had never seen; the dreamy and peculiar expression of the poet’s face sat, as the transmitted idea, upon the child’s, and the hair was of the same hue. (32)

After perusing the dates on the picture Marchmill comes to the conclusion that Ella had been unfaithful, and that the child was a product of that illicit liaison. He promptly rejects his youngest son.

Martin Ray finds the story’s ending seriously flawed. He particularly objects to the “inexplicable trick of nature” line, arguing that “Hardy was obviously trying to give a proper motivation to Marchmill’s mistake and to make it seem more plausible and realistic, but the effect is instead to give us a narrator who endorses the superstition that a child’s features can be determined by the experiences of a parent” (80). Ray believes that Hardy has obscured the story’s “real irony, which is that a story about an imaginative woman becomes a story about an imaginative man ready to believe his own fancies and reject his own son.” Had Hardy “given less, not more, physical evidence” to justify Marchmill’s mistake, Ray reasons, “the irony would have been heightened” (80). Yet there is another level of irony broached in that line that Ray has not contemplated. When one considers the descriptions of Ella as compared with the photograph of Trewe, the likeness is remarkable. They both have dark hair and similar eyes. Ella’s eyes are dark
“with a marvelously bright and liquid sparkle in each pupil” (8). Trewe’s are dark and large with “a very electric flash” (17). Both look out with those eyes unhappily at their respective worlds. Their personalities bear a striking resemblance as well. Ella engages in daydreams and night sighs, and Trewe is “dreamy, solitary, rather melancholy” (9). Given these similarities along with the fact that Ella has worn a mackintosh Trewe left behind at the cottage, excepting Trewe’s moustache, the two are almost identical. Moreover, Ella’s first three children look like their father, not Ella. The real irony, then, is if by some inexplicable trick that the fourth child looks like Trewe, he also looks like Ella, but Marchmill fails to recognize it. From his perspective, “the condition of sublunary things” invites an interpretation of infidelity. He is not imaginative as Ray suggests, for he cannot see what is beyond the surface of the photograph and intuit the real story about Ella’s relationship with Trewe.

Rudyard Kipling uses the photograph’s interpretative possibilities to blend the supernatural with the detective story “At the End of the Passage” about four British subjects employed in India. Mottram of the Indian Survey, Lowndes of the Civil Service, and Spurstow, the doctor of the railroad line, meet every Sunday at Hummil the engineer’s lodging to allay the loneliness of working in India. The heat is unbearable, and they have few of the comforts of home. Suicide is not uncommon, and death is frequently the topic of conversation. When the story begins, the men are playing whist, and Hummil is clearly not himself. The others are worried about his quarrelsome behavior and his “gummy and swollen” eyes (248). As the sun begins to set, Mottram and Lowndes leave, but Spurstow stays behind to attend to his friend. Hummil complains that he has not been able to sleep for days and begs Spurstow to give him something to help him sleep. Something terrifying is chasing him in his dreams and if it catches him,
he fears he will die. Before the sleeplessness set in, he kept a spur in the bed to sting him when he fell back. The doctor administers a dose of morphene and Hummil drifts off but his sleep does not last. He tells the doctor he must fall into a deep sleep before the dreams catch him. Spurstow gives Hummil another dose and he sleeps soundly until mid-day. The doctor suggests that Hummil request a leave, but Hummil will not hear of it and insists that he will be fine now that he has had some sleep. When the friends gather together on the following Sunday, they find Hummil dead in his bed. "In his staring eyes was written terror beyond the expression of any pen" (262). Spurstow, believing that he can see something in the dead man's eyes, takes a picture of each eye. He retreats to the bathroom to develop his film. "After a few minutes there was the sound of something being hammered to pieces, and he emerged, very white indeed." He tells the others that it was "impossible," that "there was nothing there" (265). As the three part, the doctor says,

There may be Heaven,—there must be Hell,

Meantime, there is our life here. We-ell? (266)

Neither Mottram, Lowndes, nor the reader can know for certain what is waiting at the end of the passage. The photo in Hummil's eyes has left the answer open to interpretation.

Jeffrey Meyers maintains that this "powerful tale of terror, hopeless despair and spiritual disintegration" should have ended with the death of Hummil:

But Kipling, not satisfied with his achievement, pushes on to the realm of the supernatural, and nearly destroys the total effect of the story. The very real horrors—physical, spiritual and mental—were certainly sufficient to destroy Hummil without the introduction of supernatural elements (and further unnecessary explanations). The fact that the horrors which killed
Hummil remain on his eyes after death and are recorded by a camera adds nothing to the story and is irrelevant to Kipling's intention of showing the self-sacrifice and devotion to duty of these shattered men of imperial fibre.

(22)

Yet the camera is in perfect keeping with the economy of sight that permeates this story. According to a newspaper article the four subjects are discussing at the beginning of the story, they are in India because of the misguided vision of the aristocracy who have annexed India with a "single eye to their own interests" (244). Lowndes represents the British government to a prince who is forever asking the civil servant for money. Lowndes has tried to make the prince understand that "he has played the deuce with revenues for the last twenty years and must go slow." The prince "can't see it" (244). Mottram finds he must wash his eyes "to avoid ophthalmia" (246), and the doctor is the observer of them all. He watches Mottram and Lowndes, kicking them before they respond to Hummil's quarrelsome remarks, he observes Hummil's eyes change from "unnaturally large" (252) to puckered with "quivering eyelids" (255) during the course of the evening, and he looks into the dead man's eyes and tries to determine what killed him. His camera-like observation gives meaning to his life, as evidenced by his inability to understand a man's desire to commit suicide: "If I were Job ten times over, I should be so interested in what was going to happen next that I'd stay on and watch" (248). But Spurstow is not the only character with camera-like sight. As the ending of the story indicates, Hummil also has the capacity to capture images with his eyes. The image that frightens him to death is not the only image he sees, however. During the week between the guests' visits to Hummil's bungalow, Hummil sees himself on at least two occasions. He tells himself as he rubs his eyes that if the specter slides away from him "all in one
piece, like a ghost,” he will know that it is only his “eyes and stomach that are out of
order.” If the specter walks, his “head is going” (261). The first vision dissolves into
“swimming specks within the eyeball” similar to the sensation created by the camera
flash, but the next time he sees the vision of himself, it rises and walks out of the room
quickly. “Except that it cast no shadow it was in all respects real” (261). This self-
portrait seems to be too much for Hummil, for the next mention of him is the discovery of
his corpse.

The scene with the camera is also in keeping with the event that foreshadows
Hummil’s death. Following the conversation about the newspaper article, the four men
discuss the death of Hummil’s assistant, Jevins. The three guests are anxious to know
how Jevins died. Like Hummil, the poor man was seeing things. Jevins came in from
work one day and announced that he was going home to see his wife in Liverpool that
evening. After resting for an hour, he rubbed his eyes, apologized for anything he might
have said during his fit, and went to his bungalow to clean his rifle so he could hunt deer
the following day. “Naturally, he fumbled with the trigger, and shot himself through the
head—accidentally,” Hummil explains (247). The men ask Hummil why he does not call
Jevins’ death a suicide, and Hummil responds that there is no proof. It makes sense, then,
that the doctor, who equates suicide with “shirking your work” (248), would look for the
cause of Hummil’s death.

Finally, the suggestion that Spurston could see in Hummil’s eyes what killed him
may not be as supernatural an ending as Meyers assumes. According to Arthur Evans,
German experiments on the retina in the 1870s concluded that “the retina functioned like
the photographic plate of a camera; therefore, the final image viewed before death should
remain fixed forever—like a photo—within the dead person’s eyes” (343). Belief in this
idea became so prevalent in the final decades of the nineteenth century that some police departments began to photograph the eyes of murder victims in an effort to discover their killers (343). Kipling is likely employing this belief to suggest another interpretation. Hummil did not die of the madness created by the isolation and environment of the Indian tropics but instead was murdered by a British vision of India that is unattainable. British self-sacrifice and commitment to duty do not work in this country, and those who are sent to civilize India are destined to become its victims.

Victorians learned another way of reading as they gained experience with reading photographs. The paradox inherent in the photograph created a Victorian audience that understood life could be fragmented, unconnected, and ambiguous. In the short story, we no longer read of the connections between people and their social world, and we no longer have those connections neatly bundled together at the end of the text. Moreover, as the stories in this section indicate, the interpretation of either stories or photographs no longer belongs to a single narrative voice. There are multiple layers of readers/interpreters. Ironically, these stories about the stories photographs tell helped usher both genres into the next century and into recognized art forms.
Conclusion

To make a long story short, this study recovers some of what has been lost to twentieth-century readers of Victorian literature. One can open any nineteenth-century Victorian fiction weekly or monthly periodical and find short stories. Yet critical discourse about the Victorian short story is inadequate. Victorian scholars who ignore the short story grossly misrepresent the nineteenth-century British reading culture. Perhaps Anthony Trollope’s short story, “The Panjandrum,” expresses best the significance of this project. The narrator of the story and five of his friends have decided to create a new magazine called The Panjandrum. They know that they want to create something “grand,” but they cannot adequately define it. The one point they do agree upon is that they will not include fiction in the magazine. However, when the group members must produce twenty pages each before their next editorial meeting, the narrator writes a short story. He knows he is breaking editorial policy, but he convinces himself that a short story would be a perfect way to start the first month:

I had persuaded myself that a short tale would be the very thing for the first number. It might not stir the public mind. [...] But a well-formed little story, such as that of which I had now the full possession, would fall on the readers of the “Panjandrum” like sweet rain in summer, making things fresh and green and joyous. (83)

I would like to suggest that the short story would be “the very thing” to invigorate our study of Victorian fiction. It can provide a fresh perspective on Victorian literary culture as well as the realism of the novel.
This project suggests several paths for acquiring that fresh perspective. First, it brings to light texts previously unknown to many readers. For scholars of Braddon, Dickens, Collins, Le Fanu, Oliphant, and Trollope, this study offers new insights into the authors’ respective oeuvres. My discussion is informed by the discovery that the short form gave writers the opportunity to re-examine what fiction can accomplish when it is not confined within the generic conventions applicable to the novel. Placing some of the short stories of Trollope, for instance, in a dialogue with his novels could offer many opportunities to re-examine both genres. Alternatively, one could focus on a discussion between the novel and the short story based on the confinement and freedom themes discussed in this study. For instance, examining marriage plot novels along with short stories that revise these novels’ idea of marriage could delineate the cultural forces at work in both genres.

The first chapter’s discussion of the Victorian literary market for the short story contributes to larger debates about literary markets for fiction. This kind of criticism is consistent with recent studies. Peter Shillingsburg’s *Pegasus in Harness* (1992) and John Jordan and Robert Patten’s collection of essays called *Literature in the Marketplace* (1995) contribute to our understanding of how the texts of Thackeray, Dickens, and others were published and marketed. My project’s generic focus contributes to these studies through its discussion of the ways short story enters the gift annual and Christmas supplement markets. In both of these areas, there is room for a great deal more research, particularly in identifying gift annual contributors and in editing reprints of examples of both genres.

I encourage scholars to seek out in the Victorian periodicals the Christmas supplements. They offer a line of inquiry for those interested in the ways a text can be
shaped by its publication and market. Teachers of courses whose emphasis is on reading Victorian literature in its periodical format—as the Victorians read it—will find the Christmas supplement a useful tool in understanding the periodical market. One might consider comparing the text of a Christmas supplement to an author’s collection of previously published stories linked by a framing device. On the one hand, several writers are constructing stories around a given theme. On the other hand, a single writer is fitting several of his or her own stories to a unifies whole. Students could question whether there are categories of confinement at work in one kind of publication that do not appear in the other.

Studying the history of photography alongside the history of the detective story could stimulate discussions about the detective’s powers of observation. In Chapter 4, I discussed how photography constructed a more fragmented sense of information. By observing photographs, viewers were learning that moments can be captured and then separated and made discontinuous from everything else. Sherlock Holmes is the master observer of photographs. He is both camera and photographer. In Doyle’s stories, on one level, the camera-like Sherlock Holmes is taking pictures of disparate images; on another level, the photographer-like Sherlock Holmes is selecting the right images out of an array of possibilities in order to solve the mystery. What does Holmes’s selection process suggest about the power of the person selecting the images? On the surface the Holmes stories seem to promote the realist aesthetic of the novel. However, if we think of a mystery as a series of photographs taken by the camera/photographer Sherlock Holmes, we change our perspective. Out of those photographs Holmes selects the pictures that ultimately solve the mystery. Watson selects a different set of photographs and offers alternative theories to Holmes. Watson’s interpretations are wrong, of course,
but the process still suggests that the detective story at least on one level supports the notion of multiple interpretations. Other aspects of the photographic process might generate additional ideas about Holmes’s powers of observation.

Studying the history of photography alongside the history of the ghost story could stimulate discussions about writers’ perceptions of ghosts. In Chapter 4, I argue that the mutability of the photograph gave rise to an atmosphere ripe for the ghost story. One could pursue that argument further to see if descriptions of ghosts in stories written before the invention of the camera differ from ghosts in stories written after the photograph was invented. Are ghosts more substantial? Are they more ethereal? Do they excite any other senses other than of sight? Lenora Ledwon, for instance, argues that the Darwin’s *Origin of the Species* changed the way writers presented ghosts in the nineteenth century. Once the idea that man was akin to apes took hold of writers’ imaginations, ghosts took on a decidedly more bestial form. LeFanu’s spirit monkey in “Green Tea” is an obvious example (11). While the connection between Darwin and the more bestial ghost is a clever one, Ledwon does not have many examples to support her theory. The photograph seems a more likely influence on the representation of the ghost. Photography infiltrated almost every aspect of the Victorians’ lives because it fascinated them. As Elizabeth Barrett Browning claimed, having one’s picture taken is like creating “a facsimile in all its full completion of outline and shadow, steadfast on a plate, at the end of a minute and a half!” She finds it more marvelous than “the Mesmeric disembodiment of spirits” (357). It is worth investigating whether Victorian ghost writers felt the same as Mrs. Browning.

Feminist critics can mine the stories in Chapters 2 and 3 for themes that will extend their work. Miss Weston, a.k.a. Mr. Smith from “A Ride across Palestine,” the
titular heroine of "Mrs. General Talboys," and even Janey from "A Story of a Wedding Tour" provide figures of independent Victorian women. "Half a Lifetime Ago," "Lady Isabella," and "The Grey Woman" explore the notion of communities of women. Study of the female communities in these stories might complement the female community elaborated in Cranford. In addition, "The Relics of General Chassé" as well as the trials and tribulations of Gaskell's Mr. Harrison, a man trapped in a female community, punctuate nicely the stories of women's strength. For those interested in works on a continuum, Oliphant's "The Library Window" anticipates Charlotte Perkins Gilman's "The Yellow Wallpaper." Both women are confined by illness and both women have visions that are suggestive of madness.

Another motif that may be of interest to scholars and students is the development of the artist. Elizabeth Jay argues that the girl in Oliphant's "The Library Window" represents the author in the early stages of her career. As Oliphant struggles to write in a male-dominated environment, the idea of becoming an author is enticing, but riddled with the danger "of eccentricity bordering upon madness" (265). The girl in the story, Jay suggests, "has all the time been seeing, but not recognizing, her mirror image thrown upon the recessed window of the drawing-room by the lamps brought in at twilight" (265). If the desire to write is driving the narrator mad in "The Library Window," the realization that his art is not longer valued is driving the artist to despair in "Mr. Sandford." Both of the stories complement Trollope's An Editor's Tales which describe the successes and failures of literary aspirants through the eyes of an ironic narrator/editor.

These stories also provide new material for the narratives of illness, a genre that is gaining popularity on college and medical school campuses. Stories from the confining
illness section—"A Past Lodger Relates A Wild Legend of a Doctor," "The Library Window," and Braddon's "Ralph the Bailiff," along with the linking frames from *After Dark* and *Round the Sofa*—could generate discussions about suicide, madness, psychosomatic paralysis, and the psychological response to blackmail. The Dickens Project's 2004 call for papers on Victorian terrors expands the notion of illness. Conference creators request papers about terrorized bodies, terrifying people, and terrifying ideas. The stories in this study could easily fit the request. LeFanu's stories are particularly full of terrorized bodies, demons, diseased minds, the supernatural, and nightmares, but all of the authors discussed in this project have stories that could assist scholars with answering this call.

As a whole, this study of the short story during the Victorian period offers its readers the rare opportunity to witness the self-conscious development of a genre as it finds its own generic aesthetic. Students of eighteenth-century literature may find it instructive to examine the development of the short story alongside the development of the novel to see in what ways two kinds of fiction arising in two different centuries can inform their understandings of each.

Finally, for those who teach Victorian literature, including the short story in the classroom has the logistical advantage of relieving the heavy reading demands that the study of this period can place on students. While this project suggests a way of selecting short stories for study, Victorian short story anthologies edited by Kate Flint, Harriet Jump, and Michael Cox and R. A. Gilbert as well as paperback editions of Dickens, Collins, Gaskell, and Trollope's stories are making the genre more accessible than ever. My hope is that studies like this one will change our teaching and scholarship practices to
the point where the Victorian short story will no longer be a textual culture's forgotten genre.
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