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‘With whom shall I identify?’: Nineteenth-
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Abstract

This inter-disciplinary research considers cultural influences, such as religion and education, on adolescent identity formation and parental role-models in nineteenth-century texts. Definitions and representations of constructed identities are explored in relation to the influence of cultural factors using twentieth-century psychological, sociological and psychiatric theories surrounding adolescent and parental identity. Representations of adolescent experiences and parental influences within the home and society reflect changing attitudes towards shifting gender boundaries throughout the century. The conflict of changing family dynamics, in relation to parental roles and authority, are also considered with regards to how these influence the adolescent during this critical life-stage.

The conflict and crisis involved in the process of adolescent identity formation is linked to the need for the adolescent to identify with a successful role-model. The analysis of representations of socially constructed role-models in the nineteenth-century suggests there are many factors that determine the success or failure of an adopted identity. This research supports the theory that the concept of a problematic adolescence is not borne out of the inability of adolescents to form an identity, rather the inability of nineteenth-century parents to provide a stable, positive and successful role-model, and the adolescent's increasing awareness of this instability and their need for an individual identity. Representations support the argument that the growing pressure of individual responsibility for life-choices throughout the nineteenth century also increases the conflict and crisis of the adolescent experience and creates an adolescent desire for autonomy to realise their full potential.

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Introduction

Historically, attitudes towards child development conceded the importance of youth as a developmental stage. However, representations of adolescent identity formation evolved throughout the nineteenth century in direct relation to the factors that influenced parental identity. Judith Semon Dubas, Kristelle Miller and Anne C. Petersen suggest a connection between child and adult identity; '[d]uring

the Middle Ages, the idea that adolescence was a unique life phase was overshadowed by the predominant view that children were miniature adults'.¹

The dominating effects of parental influences during the nineteenth century are reflected in a shift of focus

within the family, from the child as a central feature to the role of the parent. John Tosh includes visual representations of the family unit in his text *A Man's Place: Masculinity and the Middle-class Home in Victorian England*. George Morland's late eighteenth-century painting, *The Cottage Door*, depicts

a 'child-centred home' (Fig. 1),² a dynamic, argued by Tosh, to support a 'Romantic idea of the child [...] in Victorian England' that is reflective of Jean-Jacques Rousseau's eighteenth-century text about adolescent development, *Émile*.³ The contrast in focus is apparent half a century later when the strict,

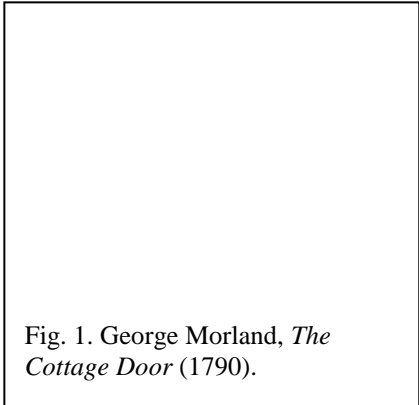
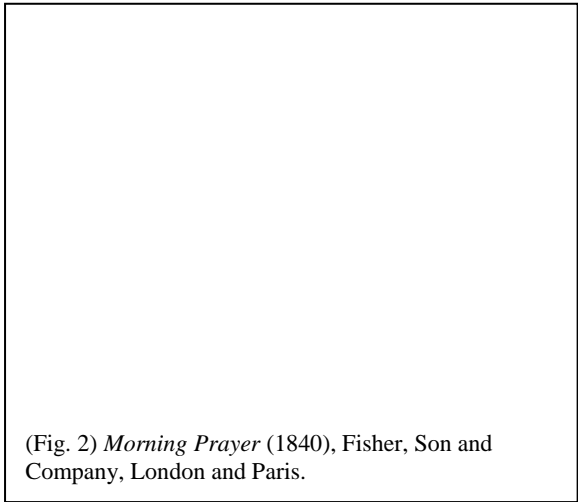


Fig. 1. George Morland, *The Cottage Door* (1790).



(Fig. 2) *Morning Prayer* (1840), Fisher, Son and Company, London and Paris.

¹ Judith Semon Dubas, Kristelle Miller and Anne C. Petersen, 'The Study of Adolescence During the 20th Century', *The History of the Family*, 8 (2003), pp. 375-397 (p. 376).

² George Morland, *The Cottage Door* (1790), in John Tosh, *A Man's Place: Masculinity and the Middle-Class Home in Victorian England* (New Haven, London: Yale University Press, 1999), p. 40.

³ John Tosh, *A Man's Place: Masculinity and the Middle-Class Home in Victorian England* (New Haven, London: Yale University Press, 1999), pp. 40-41.

patriarchal influence of Evangelical beliefs relating to control and formation of identity, through the influence of the father, is depicted in *Morning Prayer* (Fig. 2).⁴ The picture suggests the authority and power of the father over the family unit through the gaze of not only the mother and child, but also the two female adults at the periphery of the image. The change in focus suggests a link between the patriarch, authority and power, and the perception of outward identity which can also be portrayed through behaviour.

The psychological and cultural aspects of adolescent development reflect the conflict of adolescence, as does the definition of identity. The descriptions of identity in the Oxford English Dictionary highlight the difficulty in defining a personal trait that is constantly evolving and influenced by internal and external factors. Initially identity is described as '[t]he quality or condition of being the same in substance, composition, nature, properties [...] absolute or essential sameness'.⁵ This reference to sameness supports Dubas, *et al's*, idea of a child representing a miniature adult.⁶ The alternative definition reflects the desire for consistency of identity, yet introduces the idea of individuality; '[t]he sameness of a person or thing at all times or in all circumstances; the condition of being a single individual, the fact that a person or thing is itself and not something else; individuality, personality'.⁷ The difference between these definitions reflects the conflict caused by external factors and influences during the transition of adolescent identity formation and the crisis caused by the desire to both replicate a role-model and develop as an individual.

It was not until the twentieth century that adolescent studies began to increase our understanding of this life stage. Carol Dyhouse argues that '[m]uch of the debate over and social concern with 'adolescence' over the last century can be best understood

⁴ *Morning Prayer* (Fisher, Son and Company, London and Paris, 1840), in Tosh, *A Man's Place: Masculinity and the Middle-Class Home in Victorian England*, p. 37.

⁵ Oxford English Dictionary.

⁶ Dubas, Miller and Petersen, 'The Study of Adolescence During the 20th Century', p. 376.

⁷ Oxford English Dictionary.

as a concern with questions of autonomy and independence'.⁸ This debate over the adolescent experience is reflected in Dyhouse's summary of influential twentieth-century psychologist, G. Stanley Hall's view in relation to gender differences; '[f]or the boy it was a time of ambition, growth and challenge. For the girl it was a time of instability; a dangerous phase when she needed protection from society'.⁹ This theory of adolescence can also be applied to the parental experience, and is represented in the texts throughout the nineteenth century.

The conflict between the existing, dependent adolescent, societal and parental expectations and the adolescent desire to evolve into an autonomous adult causes a crisis of identity. F. D. Brooks highlights the continuity of adolescent development, suggesting that '[c]hanges do take place and they are of great importance, but life is a continuous function; the youth does not break with his past'.¹⁰ This is reflected in psychologist Eastwood Atwater's suggestion that 'identity refers to the sense of sameness and continuity between past and present selves'.¹¹ The influence of family identity and particularly parents as role-models on adolescent identity will be explored by considering how adolescents represent the past, present and future self. And how parents represent the past, established identities. Atwater also considers the alternative definition of identity in relation to society; '[a] second meaning of identity also refers to the integration of an adolescent's private and public selves'.¹² This highlights the link between family and parental influences and an acceptable public identity, and some consideration will be given as to why, during the nineteenth century, adolescents began

⁸ Carol Dyhouse, *Girls Growing Up in Late Victorian and Edwardian England* (London, Boston, Henley: Routledge, and Kegan Paul, 1981), p. 119.

⁹ Dyhouse, *Girls Growing up in Late Victorian and Edwardian England*, p. 122.

¹⁰ F. D. Brooks, *The Psychology of Adolescence* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1929), pp. 3-4, quoted in Dubas, Miller and Petersen, 'The Study of Adolescence During the 20th Century', pp. 375-397 (p. 378).

¹¹ Eastwood Atwater, *Adolescence* (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1983), p. 124.

¹² Atwater, *Adolescence*, p. 124.

to desire an individual identity that would distinguish and separate them from their parents.

Twentieth-century family historian, John Demos, considers the three different perspectives used to interpret adolescence: biological, psychological and cultural; with the psychological development of adolescence linked to the ‘resolution of internal issues around oneself and one’s ‘significant others’ and the impact of cultural ‘ideals, values, norms’.¹³ Adolescents are easily influenced and ‘are especially in need of positive models and encouragement at a critical stage of growth. [...] because of young peoples’ lack of experience and judgment’,¹⁴ indicating that the family and particularly parents have an important role to play in influencing the identity of their children. Sarah Bilston considers Norman Keill’s text, *The Universal Experience of Adolescence*, in relation to adolescent identity formation, highlighting Keill’s suggestion that the transitional stage of adolescence is directly linked to the identity of role-models; ‘[f]or the adolescent, the question, ‘What shall I be?’ actually means, ‘With whom shall I identify?’ Central to his vocational choice is the problem of identification’.¹⁵ The impact of parental role-models on adolescent identity formation, and the influence of external factors on both adolescents and parents, will be explored through representations in nineteenth-century literature.

Demos suggests that, during the first decades of the nineteenth century, literature began to focus on the role of the mother, who was to become the ‘primary parent [...] prompted in part – by new ideas about gender’.¹⁶ This shift in authority indicates a fracture within the family, as Joseph F. Kett observes in *Rites of Passage: Adolescence*

¹³ John Demos, *Past, Present, and Personal: The Family and The Life Course in American History* (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), p. 95

¹⁴ Atwater, *Adolescence*, p. 17.

¹⁵ Norman Keill, *The Universal Experience of Adolescence*, (New York: International Universities, 1964), p. 657, quoted in Sarah Bilston, *The Awkward Age in Women’s Fiction, 1850-1900: Girls and the Transition to Womanhood*, p. 63.

¹⁶ Demos, *Past, Present, and Personal: The Family and The Life Course in American History*, p. 49.

in America, 1790 to the Present, ‘what strikes most historians about the family in the past is less its strength than its fragility’.¹⁷ The fragility of identity is represented in the Oxford English Dictionary definitions by the instability of being similar yet individual, with the fragility of not only the family, but also the identity and authority of parental role-models, represented in a range of nineteenth-century texts. The increasing instability of the parental role-model, both within the family and society, is reflected in the shifting authority and gender boundaries that led to changing identities. Representations expose the growing importance of a personal, individual identity in the nineteenth century and how adolescent attitudes to the influence of parental identity changes throughout the century. These attitudes are reflected in nineteenth-century advice literature and support the idea that unstable identities, influenced by internal and external factors, are partly to blame for a crisis of identity during adolescence.

When considering how parental identity impacts on adolescent identity formation it is important to understand the internal and external factors that influence both of these identities. Twentieth-century theories surrounding identity formation illustrate the impact and conflict of micro and macro influences. Developmental psychologist, Urie Brofenbrenner, considers the significance of personal interaction and environmental factors; with a microsystem consisting of ‘interpersonal relations’ deemed to be the most influential.¹⁸ However, Erik H. Erikson’s influential text, *Identity: Youth and Crisis* (1968), argues external factors increasingly become more influential than the family; ‘a larger unit, vague in its outline and yet immediate in its

¹⁷ Joseph F. Kett, *Rites of Passage: Adolescence in America, 1790 to the Present* (New York: Basic Books, 1977), p. 4.

¹⁸ Urie Brofenbrenner, ‘The Ecology of Human Development: Research Methods and Fugitive Findings’, in *Development in Context: Acting and Thinking in Specific Environments*, R. H. Wozniak and K. W. Fischer (eds.) (Hillsdale: Erlbaum, N. D.), quoted in Dubas, Miller and Petersen, ‘The Study of Adolescence During the 20th Century’, p. 385.

demands, replaces the childhood milieu – ‘society’’.¹⁹ The conflict arising from the influence of these factors reflects Atwood’s idea surrounding the need for continuity between a past and present identity. Conflict between the personal desire to maintain one’s own individuality and the impact of social attitudes and conventions is highlighted by Erikson and how this can impact on the adolescent, ‘[t]hey are sometimes morbidly, often curiously, preoccupied with what they appear to be in the eyes of others compared with what they feel they are’.²⁰ It can be argued that during the nineteenth century there is a shift in concern, and therefore control, from the opinion and acceptance of parents to the opinion and acceptance of society, which is supported by the representations of adolescents and their interaction with their parents in nineteenth-century texts and adolescent advice literature. The idea that this change in attitude is connected to the instability of parental roles and the dwindling success of traditional identities in society can also be argued through nineteenth-century representations in parental advice literature. Atwater suggests that ‘[y]outh often adopt a negative identity because they lack positive models’.²¹ This reflects the conflict arising out of the desire to become an individual and the need for guidance, with the parent representing the bridge between the past and present self.

The sentiment and importance of family identity during the early nineteenth century is reflected in William L. Burn’s comment, ‘to hear Victorians talk about the family one would suppose that it had been invented in the 1830s’.²² However, the stability of the family unit was threatened by the shift in parental authority throughout the century, influenced by changes to gender roles that reflected societal issues. John Demos suggests that, due to economic factors, responsibility for child rearing began to

¹⁹ Erik H. Erikson, *Identity: Youth and Crisis* (London: Faber and Faber, 1968), p. 128.

²⁰ Erik H. Erikson, *Identity: Youth and Crisis*, p. 128.

²¹ Atwater, *Adolescence*, p. 127.

²² Kett, *Rites of Passage: Adolescence in America, 1790 to the Present*, p. 79.

evolve, from the responsibility of the father to the mother.²³ However, by the late nineteenth century the emergence of women's rights and the desire for female autonomy impacted on the control and authority within the family and society, and on traditional gender roles. Traditional measures of success were beginning to be undermined and young men and women began to question the success of their parental role-models, no longer wanting to adopt the identities provided by their parents. Instead they increasingly strived for independence and an independent identity.

The importance of religion, patriarchy and family identity on adolescent identity formation during the early nineteenth century will be explored in Chapter One. The power of the patriarch, as God's representative, to influence identity formation will be considered in relation to the survival of the family and the increasing awareness of individual responsibility in James Hogg's *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* (1824). Representations of the authority of the absent patriarch and the perception of choice and responsibility placed on adolescents will be considered through the moral development of Fanny Price in Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park* (1813).

Chapter Two will explore how the questioning of roles and identity increasingly created conflict and instability within the home for adolescents and parents. Discussions relating to the continuing survival of the family, reliant on the division between genders, will be linked to representations of traditional and evolving parental role-models and adolescent attitudes towards these identities in Charles Dickens's *Hard Times* (1854) and Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women* (1868).

Chapter Three will consider the impact of late nineteenth-century societal factors on adolescent and parental identity and roles. The increasing autonomy of women and adolescents and the desire for independence is linked to the threat to the patriarch and

²³ Demos, *Past, Present, and Personal: The Family and The Life Course in American History*, p. 7.

social order. Conflict initiated by the narrowing division between gender roles and the widening gap between generations will be explored through representations of adolescents and adult and parental role-models in George Bernard Shaw's *Mrs Warren's Profession* (1893), F. Anstey's *Vice Versâ, or A Lesson to Fathers* (1882), and George and Weedon Grossmith's *The Diary of a Nobody* (1892).

Chapter One

In the Name of the Father: The Influence of Family, Religion and the Patriarch in the Early Nineteenth Century.

The importance of religion in the formation and development of children reflects the importance and connection between internal and external influences on parental and adolescent identity. Kett suggests that ‘in religious households piety began early. Conversion in youth was often the outcome of a process that commenced at 7 or 8’,²⁴ underlining the potential of religion to influence impressionable young people. Valerie Sanders argues that for the Victorians parenting was linked to roles within the family, with mothers the ‘cornerstone of the whole domestic structure’.²⁵ In contrast the father, placed in a role ‘at the head of his table or as God the Father’s representative in the home’,²⁶ reflected the authority of God. The link between God as an omnipresent being and the father role-model as God’s representative highlights the ever present influence of the patriarch. The duality of identity experienced during adolescence is also represented in religion, as Kett argues; ‘[a]t the core of Calvinism lay a profound paradox which derived from its dual insistence on unconditional election and individual responsibility’.²⁷ Kett also suggests that although in the early twentieth century Hall explored the psychodynamics of adolescence through religious conversion, Puritanism in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century had already provided a ‘context in which moral and intellectual conflicts of young people often received their primary expression’.²⁸

²⁴ Kett, *Rites of Passage: Adolescence in America, 1790 to the Present*, p. 68.

²⁵ Valerie Sanders, *The Tragi-Comedy of Victorian Fatherhood* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 5.

²⁶ Sanders, *The Tragi-Comedy of Victorian Fatherhood*, p. 5.

²⁷ Kett, *Rites of Passage: Adolescence in America, 1790 to the Present*, p. 63.

²⁸ Kett, *Rites of Passage: Adolescence in America, 1790 to the Present*, pp. 62-63.

The conflicting factors of internal and external influences and the duality of adolescence are represented by the identity formation of brothers George Colwan and Robert Wringhim in James Hogg's *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* (1824). Set in the seventeenth century, the influence and identity of George and Robert's paternity is explored in the text, and highlights the importance of family identity, role-models and religion during adolescence. A review in *The British Critic* (1824) argues that the text reflects the conflict between the influence of inherent traits and external factors on adolescents; '[t]he tempers of the two youths from their birth seemed naturally to resemble those of their respective protectors; and the opposite system of education by which they were trained, materially contributed to strengthen this difference'.²⁹ This can be considered in relation to representations of George's adolescent identity formation that reflect Erikson's theory that macro factors can become as important as micro influences; whilst Robert's conflict represents how an overbearing influence, in the shape of an omnipresent father, can impact on the successful identity formation of an individual.

Mothers had traditionally been portrayed as morally superior, connecting their identity and role within the family and society to the higher purpose of child rearing.³⁰ Tosh suggests that 'maternal love [...] was the nearest earthly approximation to the love of God'.³¹ However, depictions of the father in early nineteenth-century texts suggest an authority and God-like dominance over the family. Representations of contrasting, strong patriarchal figures are represented in *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner*, through the right to represent God in the extended Colwan/Wringhim family. Ian Duncan suggests that *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* 'represent[s] sentimental and political divisions within the family, articulated

²⁹ *The British Critic, 1793-1826*, Vol. 22, ed. W. R. Lyall (London: 1824), p. 69.

³⁰ Tosh, *A Man's Place: Masculinity and the Middle-Class Home in Victorian England*, pp. 44- 45.

³¹ Tosh, *A Man's Place: Masculinity and the Middle-Class Home in Victorian England*, p. 45.

through masculine relations of paternal authority'.³² This right to dominate and influence is contested even before the children are born, and indicates how the desire for success creates a co-dependency. Demos argues that traditionally 'fathers – not mothers – were particularly identified with the prospects of sons'.³³ This suggests not only a struggle for family survival within society, but also a struggle for control over the future of the family identity. Tosh argues that heredity and lineage played a role in defining patriarchal authority; 'the prejudice in favour of sons and the preference for well-trying names were established patriarchal features of the propertied classes'.³⁴ This is directly linked to the fear of cuckoldry, when a man may be 'providing for - or still worse passing on his property to – another man's child',³⁵ represented in the text by the uncertainty of the children's paternity.

The right to represent God and influence and control future generations is represented at the wedding of the Laird and Lady Dalcastle when the place at the 'head of the hall'³⁶ is taken by the bride and her 'favourite pastor' (p. 3), Reverend Wringhim, whilst the Laird of Dalcastle is cavorting with the females at the gathering. This behaviour undermines the Lairds power and authority, and identifies him as irresponsible and promiscuous, placing the family lineage in jeopardy. In contrast Wringhim, as a minister and representative of God within the community, is the preferred, stable father figure. The role-models provided by both the Laird of Dalcastle and Reverend Wringhim suggest conflicting influences linked to religion and the power and authority of the patriarch. Wringhim adopts Robert and provides a 'divine', (p. 14) God-like role-model, in contrast to the 'ungodly' (p. 10) Laird, who had a 'very limited

³² Ian Duncan, *Scott's Shadow: The Novel in Romantic Edinburgh* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2007), p. 247.

³³ Demos, *Past, Present, and Personal: The Family and The Life Course in American*, p. 46.

³⁴ Tosh, *A Man's Place: Masculinity and the Middle-Class Home in Victorian England*, p. 80.

³⁵ Tosh, *A Man's Place: Masculinity and the Middle-Class Home in Victorian England*, p. 3.

³⁶ James Hogg, *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 3. All further references will be given in the body of the text.

proportion of the fear of God in his heart' (p. 2). Yet the hypocrisy of Wringhim's role, within the Church, society and the family, is outlined by the Laird, '[y]ou are, Sir, a presumptuous, self-conceited pedagogue, a stirrer up of strife and commotion in church, in state, in families, and communities' (p. 15). The description of Wringhim reflects the role of the father as pedagogue, one of the responsibilities of the patriarch represented in seventeenth-century religious texts, as highlighted by Demos; '[he] must be centrally concerned in the moral and religious education of the young'.³⁷ Wringhim's dual God-like role centres on Robert's moral and religious education. Yet it is through his parenting that the instability of his identity is exposed, suggesting a threat to Robert's future prospects.

The contrasting identity of George and Robert indicates the influence of adult role-models on adolescent identity formation and how it manifests itself through behaviour and attitudes. Atwater suggests that adolescents 'need to be treated like individuals, not as stereotyped rebels or as godlike creatures'.³⁸ The increasing belief that children are individuals is questioned in *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* through the moral development of Robert and George and the factors that influence their reaction to transgressions. Atwater highlights the way that externally oriented responses, such as punishment-seeking, influences adolescents to 'behave in a provocative, defiant manner that 'invites' correction by authorities and peers'.³⁹ When the brothers first meet, their behaviour, 'a casual quarrel [...] at a tennis match' (p. 26), escalates, suggesting an invitation to be guided or punished. However, the impact of treating adolescents as 'stereotyped rebels' indicates the impact of macro factors, such as societal expectations; reflected in George and Robert's trial for anti-social behaviour. Despite Wringhim's attempts to sully the Colwan family identity, 'the populace retired

³⁷ Demos, *Past, Present, and Personal: The Family and The Life Course in American History*, p. 44.

³⁸ Atwater, *Adolescence*, p. 17.

³⁹ Atwater, *Adolescence*, p. 249.

to their homes impressed with no very favourable opinion of either the Laird of Dalcastle or his son George' (p. 31), Robert, Wringhim's 'favourite ward, namesake, and adopted son' (p. 32) was also viewed in poor light; 'he made the unfortunate affair between the two brothers appear in extremely bad colours' (p. 31). This highlights the importance of family identity in the early nineteenth century and shows how family connections cannot be easily disassociated.

The importance of positive influences is represented by the differences in George and Robert's childhood and how this impacts on identity formation and the desire for individuality:

George was brought up with his father, and educated partly at the parish-school, and partly at home, by a tutor hired for the purpose. He was a generous and kind-hearted youth; always ready to oblige, and hardly ever dissatisfied with any body. (p.18)

George's upbringing is balanced, yet the influence of 'the parish-school' (p. 18) and his tutor, both external factors, expose him to threats beyond his family's control. William Cobbett, in *Advice to Young Men, and (Incidentally) Young Women, in the Middle and Higher Ranks of Life* (1829), warns of the temptations of society and how they can impact on adolescent and family identity.⁴⁰ George's adolescent identity is described in positive terms. Viewed as 'the hero and head of his party' (p. 22), George already possesses authority and is popular with his peers, an identity trait inherited from his father who 'believed he was living in most cordial terms with the greater part of the inhabitants of the earth' (p. 2). George's role within his peer group leaves him vulnerable, as the fight with Robert suggests. However, this also suggests George's desire for an individual identity.

⁴⁰ William Cobbett, *Advice to Young Men, and (Incidentally) Young Women, in the Middle and Higher Ranks of Life* (London: William Cobbett, 1829).

George's willingness to partake in a tennis match, in which his 'prowess and agility [...] drew forth the loudest plaudits of approval from his associates' (p. 20), reflects his father's sociable behaviour at his wedding; '[t]he laird gave full scope to his homely glee. He danced, [...] clapped his hands and shouted at the turn of the music' (p. 3). This also indicates how his father has influenced his behaviour and decisions. George has been allowed to form his own successful identity that enables individuality, but also represents his patriarch; creating a link between the past and present. George's upbringing is reflective of Rousseau's theory surrounding the nurturing of children in *Émile*. Jules Steeg highlights what Rousseau considered to be the role of the parent in the development of the child; 'to make them discoverers rather than imitators; teach them accountability to themselves and not slavish dependence upon the words of others'.⁴¹ George's childhood reflects this as he is allowed to discover and develop through different forms of education and socialisation.

In contrast the identity of the young Robert is solely influenced by the religious views of his 'pious' (p. 3) mother and the man who is suspected to be his father, the 'directing angel, the self-justified bigot' (p. 78), Reverend Wringhim. Although his character is formed through a dependency on his adoptive father, the influence of the Laird is still present:

Robert was brought up with Mr. Wringhim, the laird paying a certain allowance for him yearly; and there the boy was inured to all the sternness and severity of his pastor's arbitrary and unyielding creed. He was taught to pray twice every day, and seven times on Sabbath days; but he was only to pray for the elect [...]. (p. 18)

Wringhim asserts his power through the ritual of daily prayers, a practice used by fathers as 'proof of the husband's divinely ordained authority'.⁴² Robert's religious conversion earns him a place in the 'society of *the just made perfect*' (p. 115), but

⁴¹ Jules Steeg, 'Introduction', Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Émile; or, Concerning Education*, trans. Eleanor Worthington (Boston: D. C. Heath and Company, 1889), p. 6.

⁴² Tosh, *A Man's Place: Masculinity and the Middle-Class Home in Victorian England*, p. 37.

despite this transition, Robert is aware of underlying factors. Duncan argues that 'Robert's sense of his destiny is that it is all written down: "written in the book of life"'.⁴³ However, Kett argues that Calvinism creates a conflict between the idea of the 'unconditional elect and individual responsibility'.⁴⁴ The most influential factor in Robert's destiny is not God or scripture, or his own 'individual responsibility', rather an earthly influence in the shape of Wringhim. His Calvinist belief that he is one of the elect, 'a justified person [that] can do no wrong' (p. 13), encourages Robert to become detached from the dangerous influence of society and attempt to form an identity that imitates his adopted, God-like father.

Robert's behaviour reflects that of an adolescent with a predestined future, who is treated as a 'godlike creature'. His desire to remain on the periphery of the group during the tennis match, '[h]e seemed determined to maintain his right to his place as an onlooker' (p.21), highlights the impact of his isolated upbringing and his belief that he is superior to his peers. This behaviour also reflects Wringhim's detached yet controlling and authoritative influence, represented in Robert's upbringing, 'the boy was early inured to all the sternness and severity of his pastor's arbitrary and unyielding creed' (p. 18), and highlights Wringhim's dual identity of father and teacher, a substitute for God, rather than a true representative. This substitution is suggested when Robert's identity is determined by his name, being 'baptised [...] by the name of Robert Wringhim, - that being the noted divine's own name' (p. 18), although he is known by his peers as 'Mr. Robert Wringhim Colwan' (p. 23). This indicates that the Laird has a claim on him also, partly due to his admission of paternity and his yearly 'allowance' (p. 18), and highlights Robert's dual identity, 'I generally conceived myself to be two people' (p. 154), influenced by his dual paternal role-models.

⁴³ Duncan, *Scott's Shadow: The Novel in Romantic Edinburgh*, p. 284.

⁴⁴ Kett, *Rites of Passage: Adolescence in America, 1790 to the Present*, p. 63.

Under the influence of the Reverend's Calvinist belief that 'to the just, all things are just and right' (p. 13), Robert is instructed 'to pray for the elect' (p. 18). This reflects the struggle between the internal and external factors that influence adolescent identity formation. Wringhim's beliefs influence Robert, encouraging him to form a heightened view of his own self-worth and moral superiority over others, yet be merciful to those who 'knew no better' (p. 18). Superiority and righteousness are not positive attributes, and they hinder the success of Robert's identity formation. Robert is likened to a 'fiend' (p. 90), possessed by 'a demon [...] [who has] inherit[ed] flesh and blood' (p. 90). These traits indicate the impact of Wringhim, whose lasting internal influence is represented by the destructive 'worm that never dies' (p.90) within Robert, and suggests that although Wringhim's credentials as a role-model seem superior to the Laird's, he is not necessarily a positive, guiding influence on his ward.

The narrative structure of the text represents not only the conflict between internal and external influences on adolescent identity formation, but also the constant adjustment and evaluation of identity during this life stage. Hogg's 'double-account scheme'⁴⁵ is reflective of the adolescent desire to conform, either to parental or societal expectations, and the adolescent need to confess their transgressions. Atwater considers how confessions are 'more of an externally oriented response to transgression, consisting of a verbal report of one's wrongdoing to another'.⁴⁶ The text uses various forms of confession, destabilising events through the different, contradictory accounts. Robert's inability to recall his actions can be read as a way of evading the truth, as Atwater suggests, '[w]hen confession has been followed frequently by harsh consequences, [...] adolescents may become more devious, and may either give an

⁴⁵ John Carey, 'Introduction', in Hogg, *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner*, p. xi.

⁴⁶ Atwater, *Adolescence*, p. 249.

abbreviated confession or avoid explicit confessions altogether'.⁴⁷ The introduction of Gil-Martin as Robert's partner in crime represents Robert's struggle to admit his misdemeanours and his unstable identity. Robert's willingness to behave as he wishes and refuse to fully confess indicates his lack of conscience, but not consciousness, 'he weeds every one of his actions justified before God, and instead of having stings of conscience for these, he takes great merit to himself of having effected them' (p. 90). This conscious awareness of transgression indicates Robert's awareness of his identity formation, revealed through Gil-Martin's 'chameleon art of changing' (p. 124). However, Gil-Martin's ability to change his appearance through his 'studies and sensations' (p. 124) is reflective of the religious influences that form Robert's identity, and the educational influences that enable George's individuality. Gil-Martin is also able to 'contemplat[e] a face minutely [...] [and] attain the very same ideas' (p. 125), reflecting the impressionability of adolescents and their desire to both identify with and replicate someone externally and internally.

Robert identifies with Wringhim as his creator. In defence of his immoral actions he swears the truth on 'the great god that made me' (p. 176), yet Gil-Martin admonishes him for identifying with someone who is perceived to be superior; '[d]o not [...] any more profane that name whose attributes you have wrested and disgraced' (p. 176). This indicates that Robert is not worthy to identify with either God or God's representative in the home. Robert's concern regarding Gil-Martin's fluid identity, '[h]ave you no name but Gil? Or which of your names is it? Your Christian or surname?' (p. 129), supports the importance of family identity, also apparent through Robert's prediction of his own identity crisis; '[a]re you ashamed of your parents, that you refuse to give your real name?' (p. 129). This indicates the instability caused by the

⁴⁷ Atwater, *Adolescence*, p. 249.

crisis of identity formation during adolescence and the link between family names and future success. Robert's identity, formed by the dual influences of his 'monster' (p. 6) father, the Laird, and his adopted father, the 'justified' (p. 13) Wringhim, earn him the label of 'unaccountable monster' (p. 25), and hint at cuckoldry. This unaccountability is reflected in Robert's inability to fully represent Wringhim as God's representative and his desire to give an incomplete confession.

Concerns regarding heredity and family are represented in the text. The ability to father children, in particular sons, helped define masculinity. Tosh argues that '[t]he naming of children, especially sons, was a matter for the father, reflecting his concerns about lineage, descent and heredity'.⁴⁸ Adolescent concerns regarding inherited traits are reflected in Robert's attempts to distance himself from his family, suggesting that the omnipresence of the patriarch, represented by the Laird's claim on Robert through his paternal allowance, and the continual psychological and moral influence of Wringhim as a role-model does not support successful identity formation. Robert is aware that the influence of his family can threaten his ability to form a successful identity; 'I was two persons, my reasoning faculties had no power. [...] Who can doubt, from this statement, that I was bewitched, and that my relatives were at the ground of it?' (p. 154). This indicates the power and influence parental role-models hold over adolescents during this life phase. Through his adoption of new names, 'Cowan is my surname' (p. 212) and his journey to Edinburgh, where he 'assumed' (p. 222) the 'Border name of Elliot' (p. 222), Robert, like George, attempts to create an individual identity. When this also proves unsuccessful it is suggested that Robert erases his identity completely by committing suicide. This, and the murder of George following his quest for individuality, prevents either boy from transitioning to adulthood or

⁴⁸ Tosh, *A Man's Place: Masculinity and the Middle-Class Home in Victorian England*, p. 80.

continuing either of the family names. This suggests that successful identity formation relies not only on guidance from religion or society, but on connections to a past-self through a strong, successful family identity, and that the future of the family identity relies on the success of the next generation.

During the early nineteenth century the family unit was being dissected and analysed to enable understanding of its function within society. Family life became ‘something thought about in highly self-conscious ways, written about at great length and by many hands, and worried about in relation to a host of internal and external stress-points’,⁴⁹ represented in parental and adolescent advice literature of the time. The importance of parental role-models in defining family and adolescent identity is explored in *Mansfield Park* (1813) through the characters of Fanny Price, her parents, and her authoritative Uncle, Sir Thomas Bertram. The omnipresence of the patriarch, the danger of societal influences and the need for successful family identity are reflected in the identity formation of Fanny through the power of patriarchal influence. Fanny’s conscience and her conscious decisions during this critical life stage are formed through her consideration of not only her own identity, but that of her family.

Kett suggests that a ‘feature of early nineteenth-century society was the emphasis on the subordination of young people’.⁵⁰ This is apparent in the dynamics of the family unit, where ‘tradition decreed that sons and daughters were inferior members of the family hierarchy’.⁵¹ The authoritative and controlling role of the father within the family is also argued by Demos; ‘*fathers* ruled families with a more or less iron hand’.⁵² In 1828 H. C. O’Donnoghue’s advice to fathers supported the idea of a consciousness of identity, linked to the understanding that the reign of the patriarch would provide a safe,

⁴⁹ Demos, *Past, Present, and Personal: The Family and The Life Course in American History*, p. 30.

⁵⁰ Kett, *Rites of Passage: Adolescence in America, 1790 to the Present*, (p. 45).

⁵¹ Kett, *Rites of Passage: Adolescence in America, 1790 to the Present*, (p. 45).

⁵² Demos, *Past, Present, and Personal: The family and The Life Course in American History*, p. 7.

loving home: 'a little world of love at home, of which he is the monarch'.⁵³ However, it is the fear that this world can be destroyed through the lack of patriarchal guidance that is represented in *Mansfield Park*. One stress-point is illustrated in the text by the absence of Sir Thomas Bertram, 'master at Mansfield Park'.⁵⁴ Tosh highlights how following the Industrial Revolution '[p]roviding for the home [was] now viewed as a responsibility which takes a man out of the home'.⁵⁵ This is represented by Sir Thomas, who 'had of late spent so little of his time at home, that he could only be nominally missed' (p. 26). However, his patriarchal authority is jeopardised not by his need to travel for business, rather by his eldest son's wayward behaviour that necessitated their removal abroad; 'quitting the rest of his family, and leaving his daughters to the direction of others at their present most interesting time of life' (p. 25). This suggests both an awareness of the vulnerability of family identity and the influencing factors on adolescents, and an understanding that both Sir Thomas's and the family's prospects and status rested with his ability to guide the adolescent children. Demos argues that in relation to the family the 'husband-father [...] was not just the breadwinner [...], but also its sole representative in the world at large. His 'success' or 'failure' [...] would reflect directly on other members of the household'.⁵⁶ Therefore, the family identity relied on the success of Sir Thomas's public identity and his power and control within the family home.

Sir Thomas's thoughts regarding his wife as a guiding role-model, she could not 'supply his place' (p. 25), suggests the fear of the patriarchal authority not being upheld in his absence, and indicates that Lady Bertram does not represent the matriarchal

⁵³ H. C. O'Donnoghue, *Marriage: the Source, Stability and Perfection of Social Happiness and Duty* (London: 1823), p. 98, quoted in Tosh, *A Man's Place: Masculinity and the Middle-Class Home in Victorian England*, p. 49.

⁵⁴ Jane Austen, *Mansfield Park*, ed. Claudia L. Johnson (New York, London: W. W. Norton and Company, 1998), p. 251. All further references will be given in the body of the text.

⁵⁵ Tosh, *A Man's Place: Masculinity and the Middle-Class Home in Victorian England*, p. 3.

⁵⁶ Demos, *Past, Present, and Personal: The Family and The Life Course in American History*, p. 33.

‘cornerstone’ of the family suggested by Sanders.⁵⁷ The incompetence of the matriarch is indicated by Lady Bertram’s ‘indolen[ce]’ (p. 26) that prevents her ‘witnessing [...] [her daughters’] success and enjoyment’ (p. 26). The incompetence of the mother role-model and her inability to support the adolescents during their transition into adulthood is also indicated in how the ‘evil’ (p. 27) of Fanny’s exclusion from family activities would have been ‘earlier remedied’ (p. 27) if the younger Bertram son, Edmund, had been present. Despite these fears the relief felt over Sir Thomas’s absence, ‘[t]heir father was no object of love [...] he had never seemed the friend of their pleasures, and his absence was unhappily most welcome’ (p. 25), indicates that the authority of the patriarch relies on a certain amount of detachment and a lack of sentiment. Fanny’s ‘consciousness’ (p. 25) of her own relief is tinged with shame, as she is also aware of how her uncle has supported her, despite her lack of ‘improvement [...] in some respects’ (p. 25), that have prevented the ‘sister at ten’ (p. 25) developing into ‘the sister at sixteen’ (p. 25). This indicates that Fanny’s continuing transition through adolescence has not been entirely successful. Her reaction to Sir Thomas’s suggestion of this, ‘[s]he cried bitterly’ (p. 25), shows how much she desires both to develop personally, whilst also gaining Bertram’s acceptance, despite it being formed through an ‘habitual dread’ (p. 122).

The adolescent crisis incited by the conflict between external factors and internal desires is represented by the confusion during the rehearsals for Lovers’ Vows. The fear of social expectations that Fanny feels she cannot live up to, ‘I cannot act’ (p. 102), and the growing desire for individuality, ‘[l]et her choose for herself’ (p. 103), indicates an awareness of identity formation and how this impacts on choices and relationships. Kett suggests that the burden of life choices were beginning to influence adolescents, with

⁵⁷ Sanders, *The Tragi-Comedy of Victorian Fatherhood* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 5.

conduct-of-life books encouraging a ‘balance of character’ and focusing on ‘decision of character’.⁵⁸ This suggests a shift in responsibility, represented by the conscious effort of the individual, devoid of sentiment, now needed to form a successful identity. Fanny’s conscious effort to form an identity is plummeted into a crisis borne out of her inability to connect with any family members and her awareness of parental, peer and societal expectations. The importance of a strong family bond is reflected in Fanny’s relationship with the male role-models. The lack of influence provided by Fanny’s father, ‘from whom she had been divided, almost half her life’ (p. 250), creates a reliance on her uncle for guidance. This is achieved by him ‘appeal[ing] to her reason, conscience, and dignity’ (p. 250) and indicates that due to Fanny’s lack of emotional connection she will need manipulating rationally, rather than sentimentally.

The influence of external factors is represented by the family awareness of societal expectations, reflected by their concern that Sir Thomas would not approve of the ‘impropriety’ (p. 129) of Lovers’ Vows. During this crisis Fanny develops her identity by exercising her morals in public. It is Fanny who ‘judged rightly throughout, who has been consistent’ (p. 129), indicating that the guiding presence of an authoritative, yet absent, father is influential and beneficial to the adolescent. Both as an adolescent and an actor Fanny understands that you have to ‘[l]earn your part’ (p. 103), yet her fear of failure as an actor in front of her peers and as a responsible young woman in the eyes of her uncle, ‘I should only disappoint’ (p. 103), prevents her from taking on a role and adopting an identity. The power of the patriarch is reflected in Fanny’s reluctance to take part in the play despite the encouragement of her peers, indicating that Fanny’s ‘decision of character’ is influenced mainly by the desire for parental

⁵⁸ Kett, *Rites of Passage: Adolescence in America, 1790 to the Present*, p. 162.

acceptance, often borne through fear, representative of the link between the past, childhood identity and the present, adolescent self.

The adolescent desire for an identity that mimics the values of a strong parental role-model is reflected in Fanny's consideration of her uncle's wishes, also indicating the ever present authority of the patriarch. This authority is maintained by Sir Thomas's suggestion that individual choice, represented by 'independence of spirit' (p. 216), is 'offensive and disgusting' (p. 216). Demos suggests that this authority was destabilised at the beginning of the nineteenth century by the 'trends of economic and cultural modernization',⁵⁹ culminating in a shift in power from parents to adolescents, particularly through the decision and control of 'mate selection' thought to be 'of great historical consequence'.⁶⁰ Demos maintains that '*choice* was now emerging as key to a broad range of youthful experience: choice of occupation, choice of residence, choice of values, choice of friends, of sweethearts (and ultimately of spouse)'.⁶¹ Sir Thomas's remarks indicate the reluctance of the patriarch to relinquish the power and control of life decisions to the adolescent.

During the nineteenth century the home became a representation of the family, and the return home of a family member became synonymous with the return to 'authenticity',⁶² as indicated by the cessation of Lovers' Vows on Sir Thomas's return home. For Fanny though, the return to her family home does not represent the authenticity she seeks. Fanny's visit is used as both a punishment for disobeying Sir Thomas regarding mate selection, and as a moral lesson to teach her how fortunate she is to be living in the Bertram household. Fanny considers her visit a 'duty' (p. 251), and the relationship between mother and daughter, of which there was 'shewn no

⁵⁹ Demos, *Past, Present, and Personal: The Family and The Life Course in American History*, p. 7.

⁶⁰ Demos, *Past, Present, and Personal: The Family and The Life Course in American History*, p. 8.

⁶¹ Demos, *Past, Present, and Personal: The Family and The Life Course in American History*, p. 102.

⁶² Kett, *Rites of Passage: Adolescence in America, 1790 to the Present*, p. 5.

remarkable fondness' (p. 262), indicates an inability to connect with her parents and her past. Fanny's father 'seemed very much inclined to forget her' (p. 258) and she felt 'unthought of' (p. 257). This distinct lack of feeling is 'the very reverse of what she could have wished' (p. 264), and Fanny sees her parents as a disappointment; '[s]he could not respect her parents, as she had hoped' (p. 264). Sir Thomas's influence, despite his physical absence, is contrasted by Mr Price's emotional 'neglect of his family' (p. 264) and lack of 'tenderness' (p. 264), which is dwarfed by Fanny's 'disappointment in her mother' (p. 264). Fanny does not consider her mother to be a suitable role-model, describing her as a 'partial, ill-judging parent' (p. 265), yet during this time she is also aware that Sir Thomas's parental authority has been undermined by the elopement of his daughter. However, Fanny makes a choice that is based on the overall success of family identity, wishing to leave her disorganised parental home, where '[n]obody was in there right place, nothing was done as it ought to be' (p. 264), for 'Mansfield, [and] its beloved inmates' (p. 266), where the authority of the patriarch provides an element of safety. Fanny's conflict is created by a perceived autonomy, reflected in her decision to reject her parents as role-models. Lynne Vallone suggests that Fanny is 'offended by the moral and physical dirtiness of her Portsmouth family'⁶³, rendering her emotionally and physically detached. This inability to identify with her family is further exacerbated by Fanny's 'choice' to return to live with the Bertram's, creating both a physical and emotional divide.

Tosh suggests that the tyrannical father and the absent father are at 'the opposite end of the spectrum',⁶⁴ as represented by the contrasting fathers in *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* and *Mansfield Park*. The growing fear of unsuccessful identity formation and the lack of parental acceptance are represented at

⁶³ Lynne Vallone, *Disciplines of Virtue: Girls' Culture in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), p. 104.

⁶⁴ Tosh, *A Man's Place: Masculinity and the Middle-Class Home in Victorian England*, p. 95.

the beginning of the nineteenth century by the relationships between adolescents and the authoritative God-like father, and the increasing awareness of how identity influences future prospects. However, the conscious effort afforded to identity formation and the awareness of individuality indicates a shift in responsibility, from the patriarch to the adolescent, for the outcome. This attempted shift in responsibility and the idea of 'choice' becomes increasingly apparent in later texts, and will be explored further in Chapter Two and Chapter Three.

Chapter 2

Questioning the Future: The Threat to Traditional Gender Roles in the Mid-Nineteenth Century.

Charles Strickland, writing about the family in Louisa M. Alcott's work, suggests that a "‘sentimental’ revolution’ took place during the nineteenth century, whereby ‘didactic’ literature, ‘concerned with domestic themes’, relied on sentiment as the ‘preferred guide in perceiving reality and acting on it’.⁶⁵ Strickland notes that ‘[p]rior to the sentimental revolution, parents were advised to rely on the child’s awe of authority or fear of punishment as the principle sanction for discipline’,⁶⁶ as reflected in the texts in Chapter One. However, as predicted by William Cobbett’s *Advice to Young Men* (1829), a moralist manual written to ‘instruct youth’⁶⁷ of the temptations of society, it is external influences and how these impact on not only individual identity, but that of the family, that begin to pose an increasing threat.

The threat to the family ideal and individual identity relied on the guiding influence and authority of the parent. The fear that external influences would destabilise these influences by blurring gender roles and identities is represented by both John Ruskin’s essay ‘Of Queen’s Gardens’ (1865) and Dinah Maria Mulock’s feminist text *A Woman’s Thoughts about Women* (1858). The desire to maintain a gender balance is reflected in the way differences between men and women are celebrated and encouraged. Ruskin comments that men and women are ‘nothing alike’,⁶⁸ advocating the restriction of opportunities for women to ensure they remain focused on their domestic responsibilities. Mulock takes a different stand, agreeing that ‘[m]an and

⁶⁵ Charles Strickland, *Victorian Domesticity: Families in the Life and Art of Louisa May Alcott* (Alabama: University of Alabama Press, 1985), p. 4.

⁶⁶ Strickland, *Victorian Domesticity: Families in the Life and Art of Louisa May Alcott*, p. 12.

⁶⁷ Cobbett, *Advice to Young Men*, p. 3.

⁶⁸ John Ruskin, ‘Of Queens’ Gardens’, quoted in ‘The ‘Woman Question’: The Victorian Debate About Gender’, *The Norton Anthology of English Literature: The Victorian Age*, eds. Stephen Greenblatt, Catherine Robson and Carol T. Christ (New York, London: W. W. Norton and Company, 2012), p. 1608.

woman were made for, and not like one another’,⁶⁹ yet considering one similarity to be the ‘right’⁷⁰ to develop as an individual. This indicates a rebellion against the continuing subordination of women. The difference between parental gender roles and their influence on adolescent identity formation were beginning to be undermined by the ‘Woman Question’ that debated the imbalance of gender status both in society and the home, and dubbed the ‘greatest social difficulty in England’ by Justin M’Carthy.⁷¹ Debates surrounding women, education and marriage even infiltrated the royal household, with uncertainty and instability reflected in the ‘mixed opinions of Queen Victoria’ regarding support for a women’s college and her marriage advice in letters to her daughter.⁷² Despite this questioning of gender roles the iron hand of the patriarch as God’s representative in the home was still present by the mid-nineteenth century, supported by Queen Victoria’s admission that ‘the woman’s devotion is always one of submission [to her husband] [...] though it cannot be otherwise as God has willed it so’.⁷³ This indicates that the survival of the family relied on the clearly defined, predetermined roles of its members, as highlighted by Demos:

[T]he ‘ideal family’ of the nineteenth century comprised of a tightly closed circle of reciprocal obligations [...]. If the family did not function in the expected ways, there were no other institutions to back it up. If one family member fell short of prescribed ways and standards, all the others are placed in jeopardy.⁷⁴

The repercussions of failing to adhere to these defined roles are reflected in literature, with ‘[o]nly the most careful and moral ‘rearing’ of parents ensuring they did not

⁶⁹ Dinah Maria Mulock, ‘A Woman’s Thoughts about Women’, in *The Norton Anthology of English Literature: The Victorian Age*, eds. Stephen Greenblatt, Catherine Robson and Carol T. Christ (New York, London: W. W. Norton and Company, 2012), p. 1624.

⁷⁰ Mulock, ‘A Woman’s Thoughts about Women’, p. 1624.

⁷¹ Justin M’Carthy, *Westminster Review* (July, 1864), quoted in ‘The ‘Woman Question’: The Victorian Debate About Gender’, *The Norton Anthology of English Literature: The Victorian Age*, p. 1607.

⁷² Stephen Greenblatt, Catherine Robson and Carol T. Christ, ‘The ‘Woman Question’: The Victorian Debate About Gender’, p. 1607.

⁷³ Greenblatt, Robson and Christ, ‘The ‘Woman Question’: The Victorian Debate About Gender’, p. 1608.

⁷⁴ Demos, *Past, Present, and Personal: The family and The Life Course in American History*, p. 34.

‘imperil their destiny irrevocably’.⁷⁵ The growing confusion surrounding gender roles affected the stability of parental roles within the family unit, in turn affecting the success of the family and its members. Demos considers how this unsettling of both individual and family identity created a ‘‘crisis phase’. [...] [that] [a]fter mid-century, popular literature on domestic life poured out a long litany of complaints’ relating to the family.⁷⁶ These complaints were often hidden behind the desire to uphold the idealised family described earlier by Demos,⁷⁷ and considered to be ‘a bastion of peace, of orderliness, of unwavering devotion to people and principles beyond the self’,⁷⁸ supported by parental role-models in an attempt to preserve the traditional family unit. Valerie Sanders’s observation that Prince Albert, a ‘typical authoritarian father figure’, was adored by his daughters⁷⁹ indicates the sentimental desire for a traditional patriarchal influence within the family unit, although ‘the culture produced no universally acknowledged ideal father-figure’,⁸⁰ suggesting that no one, single identity was successful.

The powerful, authoritarian father contrasts with the expectation that women would base their own identity on gentler female attributes considered of value; ‘unworldliness and innocence, domestic affection, and [...] submissiveness’.⁸¹ This picture of domestic order, maintained through the controlling influence of the patriarch and the submissiveness of women, is represented by the Gradgrind family in *Hard Times* (1854). However, the questioning of gender roles is also reflected in Louisa Gradgrind’s perception of both her parents’ and her own identity. Demos suggests that

⁷⁵ Demos, *Past, Present, and Personal: The Family and The Life Course in American History*, p. 35.

⁷⁶ Demos, *Past, Present, and Personal: The Family and The Life Course in American History*, p. 30.

⁷⁷ Demos, *Past, Present, and Personal: The Family and The Life Course in American History*, p. 34.

⁷⁸ Demos, *Past, Present, and Personal: The Family and The Life Course in American History*, p. 30.

⁷⁹ Sanders, *The Tragi-Comedy of Victorian Fatherhood*, p. 27.

⁸⁰ Sanders, *The Tragi-Comedy of Victorian Fatherhood*, p. 27.

⁸¹ Greenblatt, Robson and Christ, ‘The ‘Woman Question’: The Victorian Debate About Gender’, p. 1608.

the difference between nineteenth-century family life and life outside the home was as defined as gender roles. The experiences are described as ‘spheres’,⁸² requiring ‘different strategies and values’.⁸³ This is supported by Tosh, who describes the influence of the public and private ‘sphere’ on parental roles within the home; ‘[m]en make their living and their reputation in the world; women tend the hearth and raise the children’.⁸⁴ However, Tosh argues this ‘division of labour has seldom been absolute’.⁸⁵ The external factor of industrialisation also influenced the way men viewed their identity within the family home; ‘[d]omesticity supposedly allowed workhorses and calculating machines to become men again, by exposing them to human rhythms and human affections’.⁸⁶ This reliance on the family to provide a humanising influence for the father conflicts with the idea of ‘separate spheres’ that created a reduced, dehumanising status for mothers, where ‘[h]omemaking’ proved to be a form of domestic imprisonment; polite culture was sheer vapidness; public life remained [...] off limits’.⁸⁷ This indicates a social invisibility for women that due to the power imbalance between husband and wife, is also reflected in the home.

In *Hard Times* the absent parental presence is not represented by the power of the patriarch, as in earlier texts, but rather by Mrs Gradgrind. Her invisible, ‘feminine dormouse’⁸⁸ identity indicates a submissive role within the family. Bilston suggests that mid-nineteenth-century advice literature, despite their ‘explicit celebrations of mothers [...] assume some level of need and inadequacy on the mother’s part’.⁸⁹ The inadequacy of Mrs Gradgrind is increased by Mr Gradgrind’s influence and authority within their

⁸² Demos, *Past, Present, and Personal: The Family and The Life Course in American History*, p. 31.

⁸³ Demos, *Past, Present, and Personal: The Family and The Life Course in American History*, p. 31.

⁸⁴ Tosh, *A Man’s Place: Masculinity and the Middle-Class Home in Victorian England*, p. 1.

⁸⁵ Tosh, *A Man’s Place: Masculinity and the Middle-Class Home in Victorian England*, p. 1.

⁸⁶ Tosh, *A Man’s Place: Masculinity and the Middle-Class Home in Victorian England*, p. 7.

⁸⁷ Demos, *Past, Present, and Personal: The Family and The Life Course in American History*, p. 11.

⁸⁸ Charles Dickens, *Hard Times*, eds. Fred Kaplan and Sylvère Monod (New York, London: W. W. Norton and Company, 2001), p. 51. All further references will be given in the body of the text.

⁸⁹ Sarah Bilston, *The Awkward Age in Women’s Fiction, 1850-1900: Girls and the Transition to Womanhood* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 27.

relationship. When Mrs Gradgrind attempts to voice her opinion she ‘become[s] torpid’ (p. 51) under his authoritarian ‘eye’ (p. 51), suggesting her lack of autonomy within the ‘matter of fact’ (p.11) family home. Mrs Gradgrind’s invisibility is likened to a vision, an insignificant being devoid of physical presence; ‘Mrs Gradgrind, weakly smiling, and giving no other sign of vitality, looked [...] like an indifferently executed transparency of a small female figure, without enough light behind it’ (p. 16). This ghostly presence is an alternative angelic representation of the ideal female in Coventry Patmore’s poem, *The Angel in the House*. Criticised for the ‘sentimentality of its ideal of women and the repressive effect of this ideal on women’s lives’,⁹⁰ women are represented by the references to their ‘affecting majesty/so meek’.⁹¹ Mrs Gradgrind fulfils the role of the meek wife, continuing to play this part through her illness, stating ‘I think there’s a pain somewhere in the room, [...] but I couldn’t positively say that I have got it’ (p. 151). Her weakness is represented by Louisa’s inability to find her mother’s ‘pulse’ (p. 151), also indicating Mrs Gradgrind’s lack of vitality due to her restricted life within the family ‘sphere’. Mrs Gradgrind’s willingness to hold on to her meek role within the family suggests that any identity, however submissive, is desirable. The description of Mrs Gradgrind as a ‘light that had always been feeble and dim’ (p. 152) suggests a wasted opportunity and highlights the diminished influence and lack of individual development experienced by women both within the home and society.

Mulock considers the role of young Victorian girls in the home and society to be restricted. Expected to ‘finish their education, come home, and stay at home. [...] They have literally nothing whatever to do’.⁹² This wasted opportunity is reflected in the way

⁹⁰ Greenblatt, Robson and Christ (eds.), ‘Coventry Patmore’ in *The Norton Anthology of English Literature: The Victorian Age*, p. 1613.

⁹¹ Coventry Patmore, *The Angel in the House*, in *The Norton Anthology of English Literature: The Victorian Age*, eds. Greenblatt, Robson and Christ, p. 1614, ll. 56-56.

⁹² Mulock, ‘A Woman’s Thoughts about Women’, in *The Norton Anthology of English Literature: The Victorian Age*, eds. Greenblatt, Robson and Christ, p. 1624.

Louisa is educated by her father - the patriarch and teacher: 'There were five young Gradgrind's [...]. They had been lectured at, from their tenderest years' (p. 11), yet she is unable to utilise her knowledge and skills. Dyhouse suggests that 'the Victorian ideal of femininity represented economic and intellectual dependency [...]. From early childhood girls were encouraged to suppress (or conceal) ambition, intellectual courage or initiative'.⁹³ The power of education to create an alternative life is highlighted in Catharine Maria Sedgwick's adolescent advice book to young girls, *Means and Ends, or Self-Training* (1839). Sedgwick underlines the importance of education in enabling 'an independent pursuit, something to occupy your time and interest your affections; then marriage will not be essential to your usefulness, respectability, or happiness'.⁹⁴ However, education is used by Mr Gradgrind as a form of patriarchal control. Louisa's education does not encourage independence, reflected in Louisa's apathy towards life, 'I have been tired a long time' (p. 14). This apathy is reflective of her mother's submissive role, and Louisa's repressed ambitions encourage her withdrawal:

All this while, Louisa had been passing on, so quiet and reserved, and so much given to watching the bright ashes as twilight as they fell into the grate and became extinct, from that period when her father had said she was almost a young woman – which seemed but yesterday – [...] when he found her quite a young woman (p. 73).

The description of Louisa's quiet transition to adulthood suggests a link between her past and present self, reflected in the reference to the extinguishing of a light, that indicates not only Mrs Gradgrind's negative influence as a representation of a wasted life, but Louisa's lost opportunities to develop her own identity and independence. An article in *Godey's Lady's Book* (1864) reflects this concern and the apathy felt by adolescent women, '[a]n aimless life! I am weary of it. [...] What have I done? What

⁹³ Dyhouse, *Girls Growing Up in Late Victorian and Edwardian England*, p. 2.

⁹⁴ Catharine Maria Sedgwick, *Means and Ends, or Self-Training* (Boston: 1839), p. 19, in Dyhouse, *Girls Growing Up in Late Victorian and Edwardian England*, p. 118.

am I doing?'.⁹⁵ Louisa's ability to form her identity has been hampered by her lack of experience and the lack of a strong, autonomous matriarch, '[w]hom have I seen? Where have I been? What are my heart's experiences?' (p. 79). Societal expectations also play a role in how adolescent girls view their future prospects and independence. Atwater suggests that adolescents are 'only too aware of their identity or lack of it',⁹⁶ reflected in Louisa's fireside musings, and the diary entry of the soon-to-be Queen Victoria. Even on her eighteenth birthday, Victoria was questioning her own role as the future monarch and her incomplete identity, '[h]ow old! Yet how far am I from being what I should be'.⁹⁷ This suggests that a growing awareness of identity creates a questioning of the future prospects of the individual in relation to established identity roles. Although Louisa displays a growing awareness of identity it is Mr Gradgrind who realises Louisa's potential. Pointing out her transition, he shows interest and surprise, 'My dear Louisa, you are a woman!' (p. 73), compared to Louisa's individual disinterest and apathy.

Louisa's identity crisis is further exacerbated by her father's literal view of life and his desire to extend his public identity as the 'eminently practical friend, Gradgrind' (p. 12) within the home. This identity indicates that Gradgrind, an 'affectionate, [yet] 'eminently practical' father' (p. 12), is devoid of sentiment. He is 'a man of facts and calculations' (p. 6), and considers his success as a parent to be based on his ability to enable his daughter to transition into adulthood at the sacrifice of her childhood; 'I never dreamed a child's dream. [...] I never had a child's belief or a child's fear. [...] Mr. Gradgrind was rather moved by his success' (p. 79). For Mr Gradgrind success is measured by his ability to restrict opportunities for his children, rather than create.

⁹⁵ Lulie, *Godey's Lady's Book*, Vol. 68, eds. Louis A. Godey and Sarah Josepha Hale (New York: Godey Company, 1864), p. 254.

⁹⁶ Atwater, *Adolescence*, p. 124.

⁹⁷ Marion Lochhead, 'Prologue', *Young Victorians* (London: John Murray, 1959), p. 3.

Mr Gradgrind's influence has a negative effect on Louisa's ability to form a successful adult identity. Atwater suggests that adolescent identity formation relies on '[t]he growing capacity to think abstractly and experiment with new roles'.⁹⁸ Mr Gradgrind ensures that his children do not think abstractly, '[n]o little Gradgrind had ever seen a face in the moon' (p. 11). His focus is to educate his children in 'facts. Facts alone are wanted in life' (p. 5), suggesting the influence of Gradgrind's own values on his children and his awareness of the factors that influence their future prospects. Louisa realises she has lost the opportunity to form her own identity through her childhood imaginings and inner influences, 'remembrances of home and childhood, were remembrances of the drying up of every spring and fountain in her young heart' (p. 150). Instead her identity is formed through her father's idealised vision of his 'model' (p. 11) children, managed by 'taking childhood captive, and dragging it into gloomy statistical dens by the hair' (p. 11). This suggests that Louisa's childhood submissiveness is still an influencing factor in her identity formation, re-enforced by the submissive role-model provided by her mother.

Louisa is becoming aware that her upbringing and her parental role-models have impacted on her lack of individual identity and her inability to attain an individual place in the world. Mr Gradgrind's influence over his daughter is reflected in Louisa's inability to decide on her future through the power dynamic relating to 'mate selection', considered in Chapter One, and argued by Demos to be 'of great historical consequence',⁹⁹ is represented in *Hard Times*. When Mr Gradgrind wishes to 'discharge [his] duty' (p. 79) in relation to this decision, by telling Louisa 'I now leave you to judge for yourself' (p. 78), she is unsure of how to react to this opportunity; '[w]hat do I know, father, [...] what a strange question to ask me!' (p. 79). This reluctance to

⁹⁸ Atwater, *Adolescence* (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1983), p. 124.

⁹⁹ Demos, *Past, Present, and Personal: The Family and The Life Course in American History*, p. 8.

transition from her submissive adolescent identity and make decisions affecting her future is reflected in her new adult identity. Following her marriage she is not defined as Mrs Bounderby, but as ‘Tom Gradgrind’s daughter’ (p. 84), indicating the lasting influence of the authoritarian patriarch and the link between Louisa’s past and present self. Louisa’s awareness of her lack of individual prospects is reflected in her meagre hopes for her future, ‘I wish to do the little I can, and the little I am fit for’ (p. 78), reflecting her mother’s almost invisible role within the family and society. This attitude is representative of what nineteenth-century feminist Frances Power Cobbe considers to be the effects of society on young women. In her opinion women were ‘fine human material [...] deplorably wasted’,¹⁰⁰ predetermined to underachieve and only equipped with the skills to become an ‘Ornament of Society’.¹⁰¹ Louisa understands that her future and her identity are not valuable or her own to determine, so ‘[w]hat does it matter!’ (p. 79), suggesting a realisation that the power of men and their control of gender roles will ensure the continued subordination of women within both society and the home.

Louisa’s attitude represents the questioning of autonomy and individual identity by mid-nineteenth century women, but it is still coupled with submissiveness and reluctance to actively initiate changes. In Louisa M. Alcott’s *Little Women* (1868) the instability of traditional roles can be explored through the growing influence and autonomy of the female. Mulock’s suggestion that women were voicing a concern relating to wasted opportunities, ‘“What am I to do with my life?” [...] whether marrying or not, each possesses an individual life, to spend, to use, or to lose’,¹⁰² indicates the anxiety linked to the importance of successful identity formation. For

¹⁰⁰ Frances Power Cobbe, *Life of Frances Power Cobbe: As Told by Herself* (London: Swan Sonnenschein and Company, 1904), p. 63.

¹⁰¹ Power Cobbe, *Life of Frances Power Cobbe: As Told by Herself*, p. 63.

¹⁰² Mulock, ‘A Woman’s Thoughts about Women’, in Greenblatt, ‘The ‘Woman Question’: The Victorian Debate About Gender’, p. 1625.

adolescents ‘it is the concern over the ‘self I can be’ that occasions the most anxiety’.¹⁰³ This anxiety over identity formation can be linked to the anxiety in the blurring of gender roles within both society and the home during the mid-nineteenth century and connected to the rebellion against an enforced female identity. Demos considers the impact of this rebellion, suggesting that ‘organized feminism [...] expressed an anguished cry from the depths of oppression’,¹⁰⁴ indicating the frustration of wasted opportunities. The rebellious nature of changing gender roles is represented in a shift of autonomy, reflected in *Little Women* under the backdrop of the American Civil War. The roles within the ‘family sphere’ are destabilised by Mr March’s absence. Lynne Vallone writes that American advice books and novels depict ‘real womanhood’ within the domestic sphere.¹⁰⁵ It is in the domestic setting that Mrs March, as the authoritative role-model, is able to use her influence within the family to ensure the conflict of adolescence is negotiated.

The growing influence of mothers over their adolescent children’s identity is represented by the strong, positive presence of Mrs March, who, in contrast to the inadequate Mrs Gradgrind, has been a ‘good example’¹⁰⁶ to her daughters. Mrs March’s reference to their relationship, ‘I never have to force my children’s confidence, and I seldom have to wait for it long’ (p. 321), indicates her daughters’ trust in her ability to guide them. This supports the idealised version of the mother, described by Demos as the ‘centrepiece in the developing cult of Home’.¹⁰⁷ However, although Mrs March assigns much of her time and effort to her daughters’ upbringing, a traditional role

¹⁰³ Atwater, *Adolescence*, p. 124.

¹⁰⁴ Demos, *Past, Present, and Personal: The Family and The Life Course in American History*, p. 11.

¹⁰⁵ Vallone, *Disciplines of Virtue: Girls’ Culture in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries*, p. 114.

¹⁰⁶ Louisa May Alcott, *Little Women*, Elaine Showalter, ed. (London: Penguin, 2010), p. 448. All further references will be given in the body of the text.

¹⁰⁷ Demos, *Past, Present, and Personal: The Family and The Life Course in American History*, p. 32.

division suggested earlier by Tosh,¹⁰⁸ she shows a reluctance to advise her daughters to become confined to the domestic sphere. Strickland argues in his analysis of *Little Women* that Mrs March ‘defied the stigma that convention attached to spinsterhood’,¹⁰⁹ reflected in her attitude towards female autonomy. Strickland suggests traditional gender roles are challenged when ‘Marmee, that embodiment of motherly virtues, advised her daughters [...] [to] remain single [...]: ‘Better be happy old maids than unhappy wives’.¹¹⁰ This encouragement of individuality is in contrast to Mrs Gradgrind’s acceptance of her invisible, angel-like presence in the home and its negative effect on her daughter, Louisa.

The debate surrounding the autonomy of women suggests an increasing threat to gender differences. Strickland suggests that social upheaval is linked to social reform: ‘The decades before the Civil War were marked by a ferment of reform [...] promoting equal rights for women’.¹¹¹ However, despite this, gender stereotypes became more defined. Demos suggests that increasingly, from the 1850s, ‘gender created boundaries of difference’, where ‘[g]irls approaching womanhood were seen through a haze of romanticization: to them fell the role of ‘junior angel in the house’, [...]. These images particularly implied suppression of self and suppression of sexuality – key elements, both, in adolescent development’.¹¹² Despite Mrs March’s endorsement of autonomy and individuality there is still a desire in her daughters to mimic the identity of the successful parent. Beth March mimics her successful mother and represents the ‘junior angel in the house’, with an ‘unselfish ambition, to live for others, and make a home happy by exercise of those simple virtues which all may possess’ (p. 184). However, her untimely demise indicates that this method of adolescent identity formation is no longer

¹⁰⁸ Tosh, *A Man’s Place: Masculinity and the Middle-Class Home in Victorian England*, p. 1.

¹⁰⁹ Strickland, *Victorian Domesticity: Families in the Life and Art of Louisa M. Alcott*, p. 77.

¹¹⁰ Strickland, *Victorian Domesticity: Families in the Life and Art of Louisa M. Alcott*, p. 77.

¹¹¹ Strickland, *Victorian Domesticity: Families in the Life and Art of Louisa M. Alcott*, p. 4.

¹¹² Demos, *Past, Present, and Personal: The Family and The Life Course in American History*, p. 103.

viable in enabling transition into adulthood. The crisis and conflict of adolescence and the fear of an unsuccessful transition is reflected in Jo's reluctance to change, '[d]on't try to make me grow up before my time, [...] let me be a little girl for as long as I can' (p. 153). This desire to remain a child and hold onto the past identity is contrasted by the pressure placed on girls to become women in miniature and adopt the 'dress and manner of adult women'.¹¹³ A fashion picture from *Godey's Lady's Book* (1864) (Fig. 3)¹¹⁴ encourages the adoption of an adult identity, with the adolescent girls mimicking the older female in both dress and demeanour.



Fig. 3, *Godey's Lady's Book* (1864)

This is represented in *Little Women* when the March girls dress for a party, attempting to mimic grown women. Meg's desire to look taller, in 'high-heeled slippers [that] were

¹¹³ Demos, *Past, Present, and Personal: The Family and The Life Course in American History*, p. 104.

¹¹⁴ *Godey's Lady's Book*, Vol. 68, eds. Louis A. Godey and Sarah Josepha Hale (New York: Godey Company, 1864), pp. 113-114.

dreadfully tight, and hurt her' (p. 25), and Jo's sophisticated hairstyle, made possible by 'nineteen hair-pins [that] all stuck straight into her head' (p.25), were necessary, as they had to 'be elegant or die' (p. 26). The ultimatum indicates how important it is for the girls to conform to societal expectations and the responsibility placed on the matriarch as an influential role-model.

It is not only external factors that influence the decisions of the March girls. Mr March also places pressure on his daughters to conform. Even in his absence during the Civil War he is influential, reminding them of their 'duty, [...] [as] little women' (p. 8); highlighting the desire by the patriarch to continue to uphold the idealised version of the family through the traditional division of roles. However, Mrs March concedes that 'the secret of our home happiness' (p. 392) depends on partnership: 'we work together, always' (p. 392), suggesting a shift in attitude. Unlike the examples discussed in Chapter One, where the patriarch is most authoritative when he assumes a God-like detachment, Mr March prefers to be an approachable parent, like his wife. He is most influential in his study, the "church of one member" (p. 433), when speaking to Jo as an equal; '[s]he gave him entire confidence, - he gave her the help she needed, [...] for the time had come when they could talk together not only as father and daughter, but as man and woman' (p. 433). These representations of equality indicate the increasing connection between mothers and fathers in their roles as parents and the weakening of division between genders within the home and as role-models. The relationship between Mr March and Jo indicates a shift in dynamics within the home that is becoming apparent within society.

The increasing desire for equality is represented by the female adolescent desire to attain the status of the American version of a 'real woman', defined by the 'active,

intelligent, playful, and loving tomboy’,¹¹⁵ yet conflicts with her wish to adopt the role of her mother. Vallone suggests that Jo March, ‘lively, intelligent and charming’ is an example of the American tomboy.¹¹⁶ Jo’s attitude towards her development suggests the desire to suppress her sexuality. However, rather than remaining in a child-like state by adopting the ‘junior angel in the house’ role she adopts a boy-like identity. Jo cuts off her hair, her ‘one beauty’ (p. 162), to sell, which reduces her femininity, but she is pleased to have the option of ‘a curly crop, which will be boyish’ (p. 162). The referral to the ‘boyish’ (p. 162) hairstyle suggests that Jo’s efforts to adopt a more masculine appearance will never be quite enough to earn her the equal status of a man. Vallone argues that ‘girls generally could not be trusted with the freedom of boy-life’,¹¹⁷ and highlights the restrictions imposed on their identity; ‘the tomboy is always measured against a male standard [...]. The possessor of some of his qualities but few of his prerogatives, a tomboy merely plays at being a boy’.¹¹⁸ Jo desires to have the same prerogatives, ‘in time I may be able to support myself and help the girls’ (p. 156) and be ‘independent, and earn the praise of those she loved’ (p. 156), yet understands they may only be ‘the dearest wishes of her heart’ (p. 156). The ability to be independent, successful and support others was seen to be adult, masculine attributes.¹¹⁹ Jo’s wishes suggest the growing desire for equality of status, independence and responsibility for this new generation of adolescent girls.

Cultural changes further weakened the gender division, but only temporarily. Demos argues that although girls from middle and lower-class homes were encouraged to expand their horizons and work, either in domestic service, factories or schools, and as nurses, it was understood that ‘marriage would move a woman back to her

¹¹⁵ Vallone, *Disciplines of Virtue: Girls’ Culture in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries*, p. 119.

¹¹⁶ Vallone, *Disciplines of Virtue: Girls’ Culture in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries*, p. 119.

¹¹⁷ Vallone, *Disciplines of Virtue: Girls’ Culture in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries*, p. 120.

¹¹⁸ Vallone, *Disciplines of Virtue: Girls’ Culture in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries*, p. 120.

¹¹⁹ Dyhouse, *Girls Growing Up in Late Victorian and Early Edwardian England*, p. 117.

appropriate domestic 'sphere'.¹²⁰ In *Little Women* Jo aspires to be a writer to enable autonomy, so she can 'supply her own wants, and need ask no one for a penny' (p. 269). Her younger sister, Amy, also desires to develop, 'learning, doing, enjoying' (p. 257), into an 'accomplished woman' (p. 257). The girls have followed the advice given by Mrs March, who suggests that the key to a happy, balanced life is through developing as an individual:

Have regular hours for work and play, make each day both useful and pleasant, and prove that you understand the worth of time by employing it well. Then youth will be delightful, old age will bring few regrets, and life becomes a beautiful success [...] (p. 118).

Despite some success, both sisters return to the domestic sphere, with marriage, 'the sweetest chapter in the romance of womanhood' (p. 250), mimicking the successful partnership of their parents and enabling a successful transition into adulthood. Jo indicates an awareness of the complexities of adolescence, assuming this is particular to girls and that gender equality would solve the dilemma, 'why weren't we all boys? Then there wouldn't be any bother!' (p. 203). Yet it is suggested in the text that it is not only girls who have a complex adolescence, as their neighbour, Laurie, an 'accomplished boy' (p. 71), is expected to negotiate adolescence as a 'little gentleman' (p. 22). This suggests that the conflict and crisis of adolescence, despite the debate over the 'Woman Question', the desire for individual autonomy, and the blurring of gender boundaries within the home, was increased by the sentimentality connected to traditional, established gender identities.

¹²⁰ Demos, *Past, Present, and Personal: The Family and The Life Course in American History*, p. 104.

Chapter Three

Late Nineteenth-Century Transitions: *The Awkward Age* of the ‘New Woman’ and the ‘Missing Man’.

Carol Dyhouse, writing about sexual divisions within late nineteenth-century society, highlights the growing debate surrounding adolescence and how this life phase was viewed. She argues that ‘[a] proliferation of discussion and writing about ‘youth’ from around the 1890s onwards testifies to the increasingly common assumption that *adolescence* as a phase posed developmental problems, while *adolescents* as a group might well constitute something of a social problem’.¹²¹ The fear of adolescents as a group within society capable of causing upheaval led to ‘a steady stream of literature [...], focusing on the problems of youth and adolescence’.¹²² The desire to analyse adolescence and voice these fears is apparent in the continuing publication of advice literature, such as Charlotte Mary Yonge’s *Womankind* (1890), and the didactic text by Henry James, *The Awkward Age* (1899), which takes its title from a phrase Sarah Bilston suggests was used to define female adolescence.¹²³ In addition, the early twentieth-century psychoanalytical text, *Adolescence*, by G. Stanley Hall made some bold statements about female adolescent identity formation, as Dyhouse summarises; Hall ‘argued that women never really outgrew their adolescence – psychologically and emotionally they could best be understood as having their growth arrested in the adolescent phase’.¹²⁴ This stalling of development suggests that the adolescent transition into adulthood is influenced and determined by society. Dyhouse considers how the effects of society create a division of gender identity, with men defined by their ‘economic and occupational independence’, and argues that a society that ‘discourages

¹²¹ Dyhouse, *Girls Growing Up in Late Victorian and Edwardian England*, p. 115.

¹²² Dyhouse, *Girls Growing Up in Late Victorian and Edwardian England*, p. 115.

¹²³ Bilston, *The Awkward Age in Women’s Popular Fiction, 1850-1900: Girls and the Transition to Womanhood*, p. 22.

¹²⁴ Dyhouse, *Girls Growing Up in Late Victorian and Edwardian England*, p. 118.

women from achieving economic dependence *is* effectively condemning women to a permanently *adolescent* state'.¹²⁵ This supports the idea that cultural factors were becoming increasingly influential in both the identity formation of adolescents and their parents throughout the century, and also raises some questions surrounding the stability of gender roles.

Changes to the way women and adolescents viewed their life-options continued to blur gender boundaries both within the home and society. The idea of 'separate spheres' still continued, with men realising their potential within the world of 'work, commerce and professional endeavour',¹²⁶ whilst women were confined to the home. Dyhouse suggests that the feminist fight for independence focused on unmarried women, seeking to 'enlarge women's sphere of autonomy',¹²⁷ and was a feature of feminist literature. The fight to 'enlarge the woman's sphere of autonomy' was taken up in 1876 by Queen Victoria when, following the Royal Titles Bill, Victoria was awarded the title of Empress of India.¹²⁸ Miles Taylor argues that Queen Victoria was 'less a modern icon of Empire and more a European-style monarch, exercising a considerable sway of personal influence'.¹²⁹ This public display of female authority to rule autonomously and construct an individual identity reflects the Queen's increasing power and control over her empire and further undermines defined, traditional gender roles and identities.

In her article *The Revolt of the Daughters* (1894) B. A. Crackanthorpe responds to the rebellion driven by the 'rights of the individual'¹³⁰, who want to 'make their own

¹²⁵ Dyhouse, *Girls Growing up in Late Victorian and Edwardian England*, p. 118.

¹²⁶ Dyhouse, *Girls Growing up in Late Victorian and Edwardian England*, p. 139.

¹²⁷ Dyhouse, *Girls Growing up in Late Victorian and Edwardian England*, p. 139.

¹²⁸ Miles Taylor, 'Queen Victoria and India, 1837-61', *Victorian Studies*, 46: 2 (2004), pp. 264-274, (p. 264).

¹²⁹ Taylor, 'Queen Victoria and India, 1837-61', p. 266.

¹³⁰ B. A. Crackanthorpe, 'The Revolt of the Daughters' *Nineteenth Century*, 35, in *A New Woman Reader: Fiction, Articles and Drama of the 1890s*, ed. Carolyn Christensen Nelson (Peterborough: Broadview, 2000), p. 265.

minor mistakes and not to be strictly limited by unwritten law to produce feeble imitations of their mothers' best copies'.¹³¹ Crackanhorpe suggests that parents were partly responsible for the growing desire for female autonomy. She argues that conflict arose out of the increasing education of women who were then prevented from accessing opportunities and expected to become 'mothers in miniature':

These girls are withering because they are not allowed to live their own lives, but are always compelled to live the lives of other people. They have no chance of self-development, no work, no pursuits of their own; their especial talents are left to lie dormant, and their best powers are allowed no sphere of action. [...] 'No wonder they wither, and no wonder they revolt'.¹³²

In her analysis of female adolescence, Bilston considers how societal concerns, such as the perceived threat posed by the feminist movement, and a change in the traditional gender power balance were in part manifestations of 'New Imperialism' and concerns relating to 'natural world order' at the *fin de siècle*.¹³³ Legally imposed changes to power affected not only the 'natural world order', but also threatened the stability of the family. Tosh suggests that '[t]he legislation on wives' property and the rights of custody over children appeared to serve notice that power and privilege in the home, which had hitherto been largely beyond the reach of the law, were now subject to scrutiny and restraint'.¹³⁴ In contrast to their mothers, the 'New Woman' also threatened to destabilise the 'natural order' of men and women in society and the home, and offer a different role-model in relation to female opportunities in the late nineteenth century.

The destabilisation of gender boundaries within different 'spheres' is suggested by Tosh. He argues that the 'New Woman [...] a tangible reality, daily encountered in the drawing room, as well as the office' affected '[d]omestic patriarchy'.¹³⁵ The increasing

¹³¹ B. A. Crackanhorpe, 'The Revolt of the Daughters', p. 263.

¹³² B. A. Crackanhorpe, 'The Revolt of the Daughters', p. 270.

¹³³ Bilston, *The Awkward Age in Women's Popular Fiction, 1850-1900: Girls and the Transition to Womanhood*, p. 131.

¹³⁴ Tosh, *A Man's Place: Masculinity and the Middle-Class Home in Victorian England*, p. 168.

¹³⁵ Tosh, *A Man's Place: Masculinity and the Middle-Class Home in Victorian England*, p. 153.

autonomy of women and the impact this has on the behaviour and identity of both men and women in the home is depicted in a Punch cartoon from 1895 (Fig. 4).¹³⁶ The man of the house is represented by a rather feminine Jack. Standing with his hand on his hip, he is ready to exit the room as he no longer perceives his wife to be a feminine companion. He resorts to self-exclusion from the main household, stating ‘I’m going for a Cup of Tea in the Servants’ Hall’; preferring, what he now considers to be the more refined company of the servants, ‘I can’t get on without Female Society’. Jack’s comments highlight how the lack of representation of traditional femininity threatened gender differences within the home and society. His wife and her friend, wearing a manly shirt and tie with their long skirts and pinned-up hairstyle, represent an identity constructed from both male and female signifiers.

(Fig. 4) *The New Woman* (1895), in *Punch*, George Du Maurier.

This image reflects a conflict of ‘natural order’ for the patriarch within the domestic ‘sphere’. The women are unconcerned, displaying a confidence in their growing status,

¹³⁶George Du Maurier, *The New Woman*, (1895), in *Punch*
https://punch.photoshelter.com/image?&_bqG=13&_bqH=eJzLzk53MzB1TC_xiPQtNgwPy8oLMPM0NCw0jM.3sjA1sLAyNDAAYSdpGe8S7Gyb11quXZ6fm5in5hkfGuwaFO_pYhsKks_yyso0DUrKy_FMV4t3dA6xLU5NLErOAACMOR2n&GI_ID= [accessed 28 August 2018]

attained by adopting the 'New Woman' role. Tosh suggests that by the end of the century 'there was a sense that an era of stability in domestic life had come to a close'.¹³⁷

Despite changing attitudes towards gender autonomy, the defined roles within the family unit remained generally intact. Tosh argues that it 'takes more than a few legal changes and an egalitarian tendency in the prescriptive texts to disturb longstanding assumptions about family order'.¹³⁸ However, it can be argued that the questioning of roles within the family influenced the way adolescent children viewed their parental role-models, and their own future prospects. Traditionally the success of a mother relied on her ability to maintain a 'perfect home' [...] [to] an almost impossible standard'.¹³⁹ Fathers were measured on their 'success' or 'failure',¹⁴⁰ in the world of work. The impact of changing roles and how this became a factor in adolescent identity formation is represented in George Bernard Shaw's *Mrs Warren's Profession* (1893).

The portrayal of Vivie Warren as a young woman aspiring independence is reflective of the changing attitude towards female autonomy and how this impacts on family relationships. The opening paragraph describes Vivie surrounded by the objects that came to be associated with a 'New Woman' and how the female desire for knowledge and autonomy threatens and surrounds the family home: 'A lady's bicycle is propped against the wall, under the window. [...] [and] within reach of her hand, is a common kitchen chair, with a pile of serious-looking books and a supply of writing paper on it'.¹⁴¹ Tosh suggests that 'smoking and cycling, [were] the most visible badges of emancipated womanhood', often 'applied to the young middle-class women who not

¹³⁷ Tosh, *A Man's Place: Masculinity and the Middle-Class Home in Victorian England*, p. 169.

¹³⁸ Tosh, *A Man's Place: Masculinity and the Middle-Class Home in Victorian England*, p. 160.

¹³⁹ Demos, *Past, Present, and Personal*, p. 33.

¹⁴⁰ Demos, *Past, Present, and Personal*, p. 33.

¹⁴¹ George Bernard Shaw, *Mrs Warren's Profession; A Play in Four Acts* (London: Constable, 1905), p. 159. All further references will be given in the body of the text.

only had a job but maintained herself'.¹⁴² The fight for female autonomy and independence is reflected in the behaviour and 'magnificent [educational] achievements' (p. 163) of Vivie Warren. Dyhouse suggests that Higher Education for women threatened the patriarchal authority within the 'separate sphere' of educational institutions. She argues that 'clerics in Oxford and Cambridge, already gloomily contemplating the decline of power of the church in universities, saw the 'invasion' of their hallowed male precincts by women as the final desecration',¹⁴³ further diminishing the authority and status of men.

The importance of the role of the parent in educating adolescents to make important life decisions is suggested in Yonge's *Womankind*. Yonge considers adolescence to be the time when 'the maiden of seventeen or eighteen [...] needs the training of home and family life [...] before choosing a profession'.¹⁴⁴ However, although Vivie desires autonomy; a 'reputation [...] social standing, and [a] profession' (p. 190), her lack of parental influence, 'I hardly know my mother' (p. 165), does not threaten her future prospects, instead threatening the continuation of the 'mother in miniature' identity. Atwater argues that the division between generations is enhanced by education; 'education affects one's personal values, we would expect adolescents' values to change as they acquire greater education'.¹⁴⁵ The division between generations is made apparent when it is conceded that, unlike Vivie, Mrs Warren was a 'very poor woman who had no reasonable choice' (p. 212). Dyhouse highlights how women were 'economically dependent on the male breadwinner',¹⁴⁶ and Mrs Warren's lack of choice, she was 'unable to 'pick and choose [her] own way of life' (p. 192), leaves her financially dependent on men. Vivie's aspirations do not replicate her mother's

¹⁴² Tosh, *A Man's Place: Masculinity and the Middle-Class Home in Victorian England*, p. 152.

¹⁴³ Dyhouse, *Girls Growing up in Late Victorian and Edwardian England*, p. 121.

¹⁴⁴ Charlotte Mary Yonge, *Womankind* (New York: Macmillan, 1890), p. 80.

¹⁴⁵ Atwater, *Adolecence*, p. 117.

¹⁴⁶ Dyhouse, *Girls Growing up in Late Victorian and Edwardian England*, p. 4.

enforced, dependency. However, Dyhouse argues that by the late nineteenth century maternal influence was still important, '[m]others provided daughters with some image of how their lives might take shape'.¹⁴⁷ Yet the distance and division between the generations is reflected in Praed's observation of Vivie, and Mrs Warren's expectations, 'you are so different from her ideal' (p. 165), indicating that a predetermined identity based on her mother's and society's expectations is used to measure Vivie's success, rather than her own achievements. The text also supports the idea that growing female autonomy and changing gender boundaries destabilises identity, rather than consolidates it, with Praed assuring Vivie of her individuality in behaving 'conventionally unconventionally' (p. 162), despite her adoption of the 'New Woman' role.

The widening gap between mothers and daughters is represented by the new generation of women, described as 'splendid modern young ladies' (p. 162), in contrast to the growing parental autonomy of their mothers, seen as a negative aspect of parenting. The negative impact matriarchal autonomy may have on their daughters' identity formation is suggested by the 'anarchist' (p. 162) Praed, 'I'm so glad your mother hasn't [*sic*] spoiled you' (p. 162). This comment hints at the remaining long-held fear surrounding the inadequacy of mothers, supported by his suggestion that Mrs Warren's authority may have been used to ensure the continuation of established female roles, 'I was always afraid that your mother would strain her authority to make you conventional' (p. 162) and prevent Vivie's prospects. The threat posed by the increasing autonomy of women is represented when Praed considers how a shift in parental power influences family dynamics: 'authority [...] spoils the relations between parent and child – even between mother and daughter' (p. 162). This suggests the importance of parental authority and control in a time when the 'New Woman' threatened to both

¹⁴⁷ Dyhouse, *Girls Growing up in Late Victorian and Edwardian England*, p. 30.

devalue the traditional female identity within the domestic 'sphere' and undermine the patriarch within his work 'sphere'.

Bilston highlights the threat posed by the autonomous female, suggesting that adolescent 'New Woman' were 'represented as dangerously modern creatures in late Victorian discourse – as very different creatures from their mothers'.¹⁴⁸ Vivie considers herself one of a new generation of women, '[t]he sort the world is mostly made of' (p. 192). She is a different 'creature' from her own mother, who finds her unidentifiable, '[m]y God, what sort of woman are you?' (p. 192). This suggests a lack of both generational and gender connections exacerbated by changing attitudes towards the role of women in society. Susan C. Shapiro suggests that the 'New Woman' has been represented in texts for centuries, '[e]ven in 1600 the 'mannish', bold, athletic, ambitious New Woman was old; she had by then been around for at least 250 years'.¹⁴⁹ Shapiro considers how the threat to patriarchal power, through their rejection of traditional roles and desire for equality, has been a constantly reinvented and 'ridiculed [...] phenomenon of the moment'.¹⁵⁰ This is supported by Yonge's suggestion that strong-minded women were a 'bad imitation'¹⁵¹ of men, who 'made game of her little affectations'.¹⁵² Imitating the increasingly unstable male identity seems at odds with the desire to form a successful identity. Yonge suggests that strong-minded women did not strive for men to 'tolerate'¹⁵³ them, rather '[s]he does not want to cease to be a woman, but [...] make out that the woman is physically as well as mentally the superior creature, and [...] be on an equality and perhaps take the lead'.¹⁵⁴ This is represented by

¹⁴⁸ Bilston, *The Awkward Age in Women's Popular Fiction, 1850-1900: Girls and the Transition to Womanhood*, p. 172.

¹⁴⁹ Susan C. Shapiro, *The Mannish New Woman: Punch and its Precursors*, in *The Review of English Studies*, 32 (1991), pp. 510-522, (p. 510).

¹⁵⁰ Shapiro, *The Mannish New Woman: Punch and its Precursors*, p. 510.

¹⁵¹ Yonge, *Womankind*, p. 233.

¹⁵² Yonge, *Womankind*, p. 233.

¹⁵³ Yonge, *Womankind*, p. 233.

¹⁵⁴ Yonge, *Womankind*, p. 233.

Vivie's masculine 'resolute and hearty' (p. 160) handshake and her academic success in mathematics. Vivie's desire for success in a male dominated world reflects Yonge's theory surrounding the development of the child, who, desiring autonomy 'has the instinct of trying its strength with its keeper, and experimenting how far it can go'.¹⁵⁵ This testing of independence and status supports the idea earlier suggested by Dyhouse, that women are continually kept in a state of adolescence by societal expectations and constraints.¹⁵⁶ Representations in *Mrs Warren's Profession* reflect the desire of women to attain and overshadow an increasingly diminishing male identity, threatening not only gender differences and patriarchal power, but also the mother/child bond. Representations in late nineteenth-century texts also suggest that the relationship between a father and his son was also influenced by external factors and the desire for adolescent autonomy and individuality.

By the end of the nineteenth century the imperfections of the patriarchal role-model were beginning to be exposed by the accomplishments of their adolescent children. Dyhouse suggests that despite the introduction of compulsory elementary education in the 1880s, 'girl's schooling remained a fairly short-term experience'.¹⁵⁷ However, this removed the responsibility of education from the parents onto the state and created a generation that would have more knowledge than their parents and more opportunities within the workplace. Formal education for boys helped transform 'callow, ripe youths'¹⁵⁸ into independent men. Education was practical, building the 'foundations for an occupation', and for middle-class boys was followed by '[t]raining for a business or profession'.¹⁵⁹ The adolescence phase was shortened, as '[p]arents,

¹⁵⁵ Yonge, *Womankind*, p. 20.

¹⁵⁶ Dyhouse, *Girls Growing up in Late Victorian and Edwardian England*, p. 118.

¹⁵⁷ Dyhouse, *Girls Growing up in Late Victorian and Edwardian England*, p. 3.

¹⁵⁸ G. Stanley Hall, *Youth: Its Regimen and Hygiene* (New York: Appleton, 1906), pp. 284-296, quoted in Dyhouse, *Girls Growing up in Late Victorian and Edwardian England*, p. 124.

¹⁵⁹ Tosh, *A Man's Place: Masculinity and the Middle-Class Home in Victorian England*, p. 105.

employers and teachers were often intent on forcing their charges through the remaining stages to manhood as quickly as possible'.¹⁶⁰ This again highlights the importance of external factors on identity formation for both adolescents and their parents.

The role of the authoritarian father was being threatened from many angles. Within the domestic 'sphere' the patriarch was being undermined and destabilised by the 'mannish, New Woman', and his place within the home and the work 'sphere' was being threatened and questioned by the newly trained, competent adolescent male. The diminishing authority of the patriarch and the growing status of the next generation are explored through the representation of father and son relationships and the impact of the external influence of formal education in F. Anstey's novel, *Vice Versâ, or A Lesson to Fathers* (1882). The text is described as a 'landmark in the decline of Victorian patriarchy' because it gives vent to a schoolboy's ridicule of the pomposity and hypocrisy of old-style fathers'.¹⁶¹ The decline in the authority of the patriarch is immediately apparent in the text by the description of Mr Bultitude. The contradictions in his appearance hint at a flaw in his confidence; 'Mr. Bultitude was a tall and portly person, of a somewhat pompous and overbearing demeanour; [...] His general expression suggested a conviction of his own extreme importance, but, in spite of this, his big underlip drooped rather weakly'.¹⁶² Mr Bultitude's weak lip represents a defect in the character of the father. This is also supported by the description of Bultitude's attitude towards and knowledge of his son, Dick, that is suggested to be representative of other fathers; '[h]e was one of those nervous and fidgety persons who cannot understand their own children, looking on them as objectionable monsters whose next

¹⁶⁰ Tosh, *A Man's Place: Masculinity and the Middle-Class Home in Victorian England*, p. 152.

¹⁶¹ David Grylls, *Guardians and Angels: Parents and Children in Nineteenth-Century Literature*, (London: 1978), p. 103, in Tosh, *A Man's Place: Masculinity and the Middle-Class Home in Victorian England*, p. 167.

¹⁶² F. Anstey, *Vice Versâ, or A Lesson to Fathers* (London: Smith, Elder and Company, 1882), p. 2. All further references will be given in the body of the text.

movements are uncertain – much as Frankenstein must have felt towards *his* monster’ (p. 4). The reference to Frankenstein and his monster indicates a father’s lack of control and influence over their son’s identity formation, and his lack of understanding of the new generation. The link between the loss of control and the monstrous is also reflected in *Mrs Warren’s Profession*, where the increasing influence of education is blamed in part for changing female identity; ‘a monstrous, wicked, rascally system! [...] destroying all that makes womanhood beautiful’ (p. 164). The growing awareness of the impact of external influences, particularly education, on both parental authority and adolescent identity formation is represented by Bultitude’s inability to connect with his son. The instability this creates within the family home is reflected in his behaviour, ‘Paul sat on brambles until he had seen the house definitely rid of his son’s presence’ (p. 5), that can only be balanced by Dick’s return to school.

Despite the lack of connection between father and son, Dick still strives to be like his father, although it is the stability of his lifestyle, rather than his character, that is desirable; ‘[h]ow unspeakably delightful it must be, thought Dick, to be grown up and never worried by the thoughts of school and lesson-books; to be able to look forward to returning to the same comfortable house, and living the same easy life, day after day, week after week’ (p. 8). This also reflects the destabilising effect that external influences, such as education, have on adolescent identity. Bultitude’s status is dependent on his achievements within the work ‘sphere’, rather than his authority within the home. His ‘wealth’ (p. 14) represents success to Dick, and the value of money, beyond economic worth, is suggested when Dick comments on ‘the dignity and credit which a single one of those bright new sovereigns would procure’ (p. 14). This indicates that Bultitude’s influence over his son is threatened by societal and cultural factors.

Bultitude 'wished to be a boy again' (p. 26), but the lack of respectability and status afforded to adolescents is not acceptable, '[c]ould he possibly have become invisible and have lost the power of casting a reflection' (p. 24). In contrast, Dick desires to emulate the identity of a financially successful adult, 'each with the other's personal appearance' (p. 31), indicated by Dick's willingness to become 'the exact duplicate' (p. 32) of his father; 'I wish I was a man like you were just now!' (p. 32). However, this is not an acceptance of his father as a role-model, but rather his desire to be in a position of autonomy and independence. However, the text undermines the value of the patriarch within society, with the 'preposterous arrangement' (p. 31) exposing how success is measured superficially. Dick suggests that his father 'can't go up to business' (p. 26) looking like an adolescent boy, and that they are both in 'false positions' (p. 33). The crisis created by the conflict of identity formation, 'I don't understand who I'm supposed to be now' (p. 25), indicates instability caused by external factors, in particular societal expectations. Bultitude's uncertainty is borne out of his diminishing authority that had remained unthreatened and the declining status and knowledge of the patriarch. In her text, *Girlhood*, Marianne Farningham warns against vanity, suggesting that '[t]here would be fewer disagreeable people in the world if we could '[s]ee ourselves as others see us''.¹⁶³ Bultitude's experience is described as a 'shock to his sense of his own identity' (p. 246). It is only made possible by the opportunity to view his own characteristics through his son's 'fraudulent imitation' (p. 246), which makes Bultitude aware of his own flaws as a father, and highlights the hypocrisy of a society that expects the new generation to adopt this imperfect identity. This suggests that parents are no longer able to provide the guidance or role-models necessary for success.

¹⁶³ Marianne Farningham, *Girlhood*, (London: James Clarke and Company, 1869), p. 100.

The skills and knowledge needed to obtain a career that will provide a successful and desirable lifestyle are no longer attained through parental guidance, but are acquired through formal learning. The acceptance that the new generation are better educated and in possession of valuable new knowledge is indicated by Bultitude's dependence on his son for answers. When questioning his identity, Bultitude asks 'Dick, who am I?' (p. 25). Dick's reply, 'You can't be me', said Dick authoritatively, 'because here I am, you know. And you're not yourself, that's very plain. You must be somebody, I suppose,' he added dubiously.' (pp. 25-26), indicates the instability of parental identity. The growing status and confidence of the new generation of adolescents is indicated in the shift of authority. Bultitude's 'advice' (p. 23) to his son is 'received with ridicule' (p. 23), and his identity is 'a joke' (p. 23). This lack of authority and knowledge of how his own identity is perceived, he is 'incapable of guessing what he has said or done to amuse' (p. 23), leaves Bultitude vulnerable to his son's advancing status. Dick is described by Bultitude as a 'usurper' (p. 35), who has 'driven [him] from his home' (p. 35) and attempted to 'dispose' (p. 252) of his father. The relationship and interactions between father and son indicates competition between generations to shape the identity of the male role-model and shift the masculine hierarchy in both the home and society.

George and Weedon Grossmith's *The Diary of a Nobody* (1892) also explores father and son relationships and the decline of the patriarchal influence. The title suggests the diminished role of the father, Charles Pooter, a 'nobody'. In his introduction to the text, Ed Glinert describes Pooter's character; '[h]e is naïve, vain, mean, prim, pompous, gullible, snobbish and conceited. He is desperate to be thought of as a wit', ¹⁶⁴ reflecting the 'caricature' (p. 246) of the patriarch, imitated by Dick in *Vice Versâ*. This not only highlights Pooter's imperfections, but his desire to have a role and

¹⁶⁴ Ed Glinert, 'Introduction', George and Weedon Grossmith, *The Diary of a Nobody* (London: Penguin, 1999), p. xi.

a place within society. This lack of identity is reflected in Demos's suggestion that in the history of the family the 'mother-child pair holds the focus [...]. [With] an absence – the missing man'.¹⁶⁵ This is reflected in *Mrs Warren's Profession*, with the uncertain identity of Vivie's father and the lack of patriarchal influence not considered an issue, '[w]e take her on her own merits. What does it matter who her father was?' (p. 170). In *Vice Versâ* Bultitude's uncertain identity reflects Pooter's acceptance of his reduced status in the opening to his diary, 'I do not happen to be a 'Somebody',¹⁶⁶ indicating not only an unstable identity, but also a devalued role for the father. *The Diary of a Nobody* supports the idea that adolescence was becoming a more important and influential phase in life, with Pooter's statement that '[m]y only regret is that I did not commence [my diary] when I was a youth' (p. 7), suggesting a missed opportunity to record the experiences of his past self and learn from this transitional phase.

The Diary of a Nobody chronicles the decline of Pooter's status and influence and the increase of his son's confidence and independence as he transitions into adulthood. Tosh considers the slow decline of patriarchal influence and their position by the end of the nineteenth century:

'[T]he traditional role of fathers had been steadily attenuated over quite a long period. Their position as moral authority in the home was more open to question than ever. There was little left of their role of educators. And they exercised less and less influence over their sons' choice of career'.¹⁶⁷

Pooter attempts to influence Lupin in his career by encouraging him to follow in his footsteps and become a 'father in miniature'. Glinert suggests that Lupin is '[e]armarked from birth to follow his father into a secure, if lowly position, in the same

¹⁶⁵ Demos, *Past, Present, and Personal: The Family and The Life Course in American History*, p. 41.

¹⁶⁶ George and Weedon Grossmith, *The Diary of a Nobody* (London: Penguin, 1999), p. 7. All further references will be given in the body of the text.

¹⁶⁷ Tosh, *A Man's Place: Masculinity and the Middle-Class Home in Victorian England*, p. 168.

firm',¹⁶⁸ with Pooter stating '[t]he ambition of my life would be to get him into Mr Perkupp's firm' (p. 65). This indicates that Pooter is proud to share his place in the world with the next generation, believing it still to be of worth. However, the diminished influence and value of past identities is illustrated by Lupin's attitude towards institutions and his elders; 'with respect to the Bank, there's not a clerk who is a gentleman, and the 'boss' is a cad' (p. 64). The role-model and ready made identity provided by Pooter and men of his generation are no longer of value to his ambitious son.

An article in *The Parent's Review* (1894) reflects the desire for individuality during this 'self-conscious age'.¹⁶⁹ The younger Pooter's decision to discard his Christian name, Willie, named after Pooter's brother, 'who was much respected in the City' (p. 63), and use his middle name, Lupin, 'a purely family name' (p. 63), indicates Lupin's self-consciousness and his rejection of the patriarchal identity. Demos suggests that 'life in the late nineteenth century was characterized by [...] a 'search for order.' [...] Individually and community-wide, efforts were made to channel, to organize, and thus to constrain the jarring influences of a generation or two before'.¹⁷⁰ The desire of the new generation of young men to forge an individual identity is represented by their realisation that success depends on their ability to distance themselves from their fathers. Dick Bultitude desires the autonomy to make his own choices, independent of his father's influence, 'let me go my own way' (p. 254). His attitude is reflective of the suggestion in *The Parents' Review* that '[m]en are waking more than ever before to the realisation of powers in and around them'.¹⁷¹

¹⁶⁸ Glinert, 'Introduction', George and Weedon Grossmith, *The Diary of a Nobody*, p. xii.

¹⁶⁹ F. U., 'Self-Consciousness in its Relation to Character', in *The Parents' Review: A Monthly Magazine of Home-Training and Culture*, Vol. IV, ed. Charlotte M. Mason (London: Kegan, Paul, Trench, Trübner and Company, 1894), p. 347.

¹⁷⁰ Demos, *Past, Present, and Personal: The Family and The Life Course in American History*, p. 105.

¹⁷¹ F. U., 'Self-Consciousness in its Relation to Character', p. 350.

The realisation of a link between autonomy and success is made apparent in *The Diary of a Nobody* when the value of a ‘simple unsophisticated life’ (p. 177) is questioned. The ‘brilliant’ (p. 175), but ‘alarm[ing]’ (p. 175), Mr Huttie suggests the acceptance of the “‘happy medium’” (p. 175) creates a “‘miserable mediocrity’” (p. 175), represented by Pooter and men like him, who are ‘half-hearted, [...] half-measure – respectable’ (p. 176). The prospect of continuing to identify with their mediocre parents reduces the prospects of the next generation to ‘make a name’ (p. 185) for themselves, independent from the family. However, a growing independence means a lack of parental influence, leaving Lupin vulnerable, a concern voiced by Pooter; ‘I could only ask: ‘Yes, but what sort of name?’’ (p. 185). This indicates that the fear of the family name being brought into disrepute is still present, even at the end of the nineteenth century, but is of more concern to the older generation.

The differences between the concerns and anxieties of the generations reflects the term *fin de siècle*; a ‘phenomenon’ that ‘invokes a sense of the old order ending and new, radical departures’.¹⁷² Lupin’s willingness to take risks, both emotionally and financially, suggests that the next generation do not look to the past for inspiration, as Glinert argues, Lupin ‘displays the values of the 1890s [...] and can barely wait for the twentieth century to begin’.¹⁷³ The new generation’s lack of caution poses a threat to ‘social order’ through their progressive outlook. Pooter considers how his son would become a threat if he were to become successful, ‘Lupin [...] has original and sometimes wonderful ideas, but it is those ideas that are so dangerous’ (p. 177). However, it is the opportunity to take risks and make mistakes that ensures Lupin’s success. Rather than being content like his father, ‘I am happy because I am not

¹⁷² Ruth Livesey, ‘Introduction’, *Fin de siècle*, Oxford Bibliographies Online (2017) <http://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780199799558/obo-9780199799558-0030.xml> [accessed 17 September 2018]

¹⁷³ Glinert, ‘Introduction’, George and Weedon Grossmith, *The Diary of a Nobody*, p. xiii.

ambitious' (p. 177), Lupin's search for happiness includes taking risks in his financial, public and personal life. Erikson considers the opportunity to experiment and experience conflict and self-doubt as essential to developing an identity.¹⁷⁴ Lupin's 'intelligence' (p. 184) is identified through his willingness to take a risk and undermine the established Perkupp, although this is deemed an 'act of treachery' (p. 181) by Pooter. This act not only gains Lupin financial success, but also a place of his own in a rival firm, and a home in a more affluent neighbourhood, independent of his parents. It is Lupin's affliction, he 'occasionally suffered from what he could not help – youth' (p. 201), that encourages a willingness to embrace the possibility of failure, but also exposes an inexperience and the need for continued parental guidance.

By the end of the nineteenth century the power of the patriarch, defined by his ability to provide for his family, was undermined by autonomous women, despite the restrictive effects of society. These constraints are borne out of the conflict between the desire to maintain and preserve past identities and the aspirations for the future prospects of the next generation. The growing autonomy of the new generation is represented in the texts by their ability to choose and determine individual identity, partly by deciding which of their parents' desirable attributes they wish to adopt and emulate, and which they wish to discard. However, these individual identities are not entirely independent, but influenced by new roles constructed to meet the requirements of a changing society.

¹⁷⁴ Erik H. Erikson, *Insight and Responsibility* (New York: Norton, 1964) in Kett, *Rites of Passage: Adolescence in America 1790 to the Present*, p. 122.

Conclusion

Nineteenth-century literature reflects the crisis of adolescence through the portrayals of conflict relating to identity formation during this life-stage. The representations not only reflect adolescent conflict, but also the conflict of parental responsibility, relationships and the influence of society on parental role-models and identity. Due to this conflict, the literature is often didactic, offering advice to both parents and adolescents regarding identity formation. Advice literature focuses on how to nurture or attain an ‘ideal’ adult identity, representative of established gender roles and societal expectations. Success is often measured on how well an adolescent or parent meets these expectations, and adheres to the expectations of the adolescent experience. Dyhouse summarises Hall’s view of adolescence identity formation in relation to genders; ‘[f]or the boy it was a time of ambition, growth and challenge. For the girl it was a time of instability; a dangerous phase when she needed protection from society’.¹⁷⁵ This view is reflected, although not always supported, in representations of the adolescent experience in texts throughout the century.

Early nineteenth-century literature reflects an inter-dependency of micro and macro factors to enable successful identity formation. However, representations of the overbearing presence of the God-like, omnipresent patriarch in *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* and *Mansfield Park* suggests parental influences pose a threat to successful adolescent identity formation and indicates the increasing need for external influences. Although written nearly a hundred years earlier, the texts in Chapter One reflect Hall’s views in *Adolescence* regarding the adolescent experience, but do not necessarily reflect the gender differences. The identity formation of George Colwan and Robert Wringhim in *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified*

¹⁷⁵ Dyhouse, *Girls Growing up in Late Victorian and Edwardian England*, p. 122.

Sinner supports Hall's theory that for boys, adolescence was an opportunity to question and challenge established family identities. George attempts to form an independent identity, and Robert questions his ability to form his own identity in relation to his patriarchal influences and challenges the value of his family identity by changing his name. However, the instability attributed to female adolescence is reflected in Robert's conflict and dual identities, which is exacerbated by the overbearing influences of the patriarch and religion.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century the authority and the responsibility of the patriarch to guide and nurture are increasingly undermined by external influences, the adolescent awareness of individuality, and the increasing burden of life choices. Hall's view regarding the instability of female adolescent identity formation is also reflected at this time, represented by Fanny Price in *Mansfield Park*. Her exposure to external influences, namely her peers, creates conflict through choices that threaten her moral development. However, it is the questioning of parental role-models and willingness to challenge family identity that overshadows these influences, representing an increasing awareness of individual responsibility.

Mid-century literature reflects the questioning of traditional roles and the increasing awareness of the right to develop as an individual. The increasing awareness of the subordination of women, both in society and the home, is represented as a rejection of established roles that threaten the continuing success of the family. The questioning of roles was also seen as a threat to the continuing link between the past and present that ensured the success of a patriarchal society. Parental identities both represent and replicate the past, as reflected in *Hard Times* and *Little Women*, whilst adolescents provide the opportunity to recreate these adult identities in miniature. However, the questioning of gender roles and the desire to create an individual identity

is in direct conflict with the inability of adolescent girls to utilise their attributes in a society that prevents them from transitioning fully into an independent adult.

By the end of the nineteenth century the combination of increasingly unsuccessful parental role-models and the pressure of societal factors increase the desire for adolescents to disassociate themselves from their family identity and strive for individuality. The success of traditional gender roles is questioned by aspiring adolescents, such as Vivie Warren in *Mrs Warren's Profession*, who desire to distance themselves from their parents both socially and psychologically by adopting socially constructed, 'New Woman' identity. Education, training and opportunities enabled increased autonomy, yet social expectations reduced the options to become an individual. Selective identity formation reflects contradictory views regarding the decline of patriarchal power. Valerie Sanders suggests that the 'Victorian 'heavy father' seemingly ends the century as secure in his bullying presence as he began'.¹⁷⁶ However, the representations of the Victorian father in *The Diary of a Nobody* and *Vice Versâ* do not reflect the authority of the patriarch in the early nineteenth-century texts; rather they indicate a diminished presence both within the home and society. When considered in relation to Hall's view of the instability of the female adolescent experience, the increasingly reduced status of the patriarch and the increasing autonomy of the 'New Woman' suggest a blurring of gender boundaries in relation to identity formation.

The awareness of the instability of identity in these texts supports the view of the anonymous writer of an article in *The Parents' Review* (1894). Comparing the *fin de siècle* to adolescence, the writer states '[i]t is an age of experiments [...]. Like the school boy, the world thinks it knows nearly everything [...]. But like the school boy, it is, perhaps, only passing through a phase which may be the passport to fuller

¹⁷⁶ Sanders, *The Tragi-Comedy of Victorian Fatherhood*, p. 3.

knowledge'.¹⁷⁷ Despite representations of adolescent identity formation and the influence of parental role-models in nineteenth-century literature the passport to fuller knowledge in relation to this life phase and the influence of parental role-models does not begin to manifest itself until the scientific exploration of adolescence at the beginning of the twentieth century. However, despite this increasing knowledge surrounding adolescence and parental influences, it is Cobbett's advice to youth in 1826 that perhaps predicted the key to successful identity formation: 'Happiness ought to be your great object, and it is to be found only in *independence*'.¹⁷⁸ This sentiment is echoed in 1858 by Mulock, who argues for the 'right'¹⁷⁹ to develop as an individual. Representations suggest the role-models provided by parents were never completely successful for either generation. Therefore, for the influential parent, as much as the adolescent, success lies with the ability and autonomy to develop an individual identity in a society that values established and constructed roles and identities.

¹⁷⁷ F. U., 'Self-Consciousness in its Relation to Character', p. 350.

¹⁷⁸ Cobbett, *Advice to Young Men*, p. 19.

¹⁷⁹ Mulock, 'A Woman's Thoughts about Women', in *The Norton Anthology of English Literature: The Victorian Age*, p. 1624.

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