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‘A Touch of In’nard Fever’: Illness and Moral Decline in *Elster’s Folly* (1866)

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Abstract:

The important relationship between illness and morality in the fiction of Mrs Henry Wood looms large in her 1866 novel Elster’s Folly. This article argues that Wood’s apparently conservative sensationalism, suggested by the presence of a moralizing narrator in many of her works, as well as by the conclusions to her novels, in which order is almost inevitably restored, in fact conceals a more subversive element in her fiction. In Elster’s Folly, transgression, and specifically sexual transgression, is figured as contagious (a common ploy in Victorian fiction), and a superficial reading would seem to reinforce the notion of Wood as a conservative sensation writer: a number of characters whose morality is in question fall ill and die, while moral health is clearly linked to physical health through Wood’s portrayal of the Countess Dowager, an immoral woman who suffers from an obsessive phobia of illness. However, the conclusion of the novel undermines this reading: the illegitimate daughter, unlike the illegitimate son, is not only permitted to live, but also retains the title to which she is not, in fact, legally entitled. In this way, Wood subtly undermines conventional Victorian morality through her representation of sin, illness and the family.

Representations of illness proliferate in Victorian fiction, as a number of recent studies illustrate. In her work *Somatic Fictions*, Athene Vrettos notes ‘It is difficult to find many Victorian novels that do not participate in a general dialogue about sickness and health, whether through sustained representations of physical affliction and exertion or passing metaphors of bodily sensitivity and threat’.¹ This essay explores the association between illness and immorality in Mrs Henry Wood’s 1866 novel, *Elster’s Folly*, in an attempt to identify both the subversive and conservative elements of Wood’s work that mark her particular brand of sensationalism.

Physical and mental illnesses are used in a variety of ways in nineteenth-century fiction: frequently associated with idealised images of femininity, in novels such as Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* (1818) and Elizabeth Gaskell’s *Ruth* (1853) illness and subsequent death highlights the self-sacrificing nature of women through the

characters of Caroline Frankenstein and Ruth Hilton respectively. In novels such as Wilkie Collins's *The Woman in White* and *No Name*, illness serves to return the subversive female who threatens to undermine patriarchal authority (Marian Halcombe and Magdalen Vanstone) to the domestic sphere. Some critics have argued that illness occasionally serves as a form of empowerment for women: Elaine Showalter observes that 'in many sensation novels [...] women escape from their families through illness'.² Elsewhere, illness can be read as a form of punishment, or as an indicator of a character's moral deviance – hardly surprising, given the pervading belief in the nineteenth century in the inextricable connection between physical and spiritual well-being, and the popular notion that the healthy body was a reflection of a healthy mind and the diseased body indicative of a diseased mind.

Sensation fiction in particular is associated with ideas of moral disease and contagion: not only did sensation novels portray the 'infection' of the middle-class home by the lower-class criminal, frequently disguised as the angel of the hearth, but the contagion also threatened to spread to the reader, as Henry Mansel made explicit in an article entitled 'Sensation Novels', which appeared in the *Quarterly Review* in April 1863, in which he argued that such works are 'indications of a wide-spread corruption, of which they are in part both the effect and the cause; called into existence to supply the cravings of a diseased appetite, and contributing themselves to foster the disease, and to stimulate the want which they supply'.³ As Pamela Gilbert notes, such reviews articulated a fear that 'Fiction, like contagion, might become the vehicle by which important physical boundaries were breached: distinctions between [...] upper and lower class, masculine and feminine, [...] mother and whore'.⁴

However, while critics condemned the threat of contagion posed by these immoral works, Wood's fiction frequently appears to ultimately reinforce the conventional Victorian belief in an association between physical and moral health. The relationship between illness and transgression is clearly reflected in her work: in *East Lynne*, for example, Isabel Vane, the fallen woman of the story, succumbs to a fever contracted from her son. Both she and her son die, implying that the sins of the mother are visited on the child, and that immorality is in some sense contagious. The death of Isabel might be seen to negate the risk of contagion, yet not all reviewers were appeased: Mrs Oliphant, for example, expostulated 'This is dangerous and

foolish work, as well as false, both to Art and Nature',⁵ while Geraldine Jewsbury, reviewing the novel for the prospective publishers, Bentley and Son, argued that it included 'needless sins against good taste'.⁶ Other readers, however, were somewhat placated by the narrator's repeated condemnation of Isabel's behaviour, noting that 'the authoress never for [a] moment allows us to doubt of her abhorrence of such a crime',⁷ and observing that the author 'does not fail to parade her moral'.⁸ Wood's invasive narrator, who appears in much of her fiction, issues stark warnings to the reader who may be tempted to follow in her characters' footsteps, and is largely responsible for 'parading the moral' of the story in *East Lynne*, in which she repeatedly warns the reader against Isabel's sin:

Oh reader, believe me! Lady – wife – mother! Should you ever be tempted to abandon your home, so will you waken! Whatever trials may be the lot of your married life, though they may magnify themselves to your crushed spirit as beyond the endurance of woman to bear, resolve to bear them; fall down upon your knees and pray to be enabled to bear them: pray for patience; pray for strength to resist the demon that would urge you to escape; bear until death, rather than forfeit your fair name and your good conscience; for be assured that the alternative, if you rush on to it, will be found far worse than death!⁹

Clearly such passages represent an attempt by Wood to mollify potential critics of her work, and this was undoubtedly successful to a certain extent, as is evident from her reviews. What is less clear is the extent to which such intrusions into the text by the didactic narrator represent Wood's own position.

Recent critics of the sensation novel have suggested that the moralising voice of the narrator in Wood's fiction may in fact conceal a more subversive agenda, not least because the voice of the narrator of *East Lynne*, which appears so unequivocal in its condemnation of the adulterous woman, ultimately creates sympathy for the protagonist. Stevie Davies argues that '*East Lynne* in fact defies the stern code of morality which it claims to preach. By making such a pandemonium about the wickedness of her character, Mrs Henry Wood covers her tracks adroitly'.¹⁰ Lyn Pykett concurs, discussing *St. Martin's Eve* (1866), she argues that the 'weight of sympathy [for the anti-heroine] [...] contradicts the overt moral message of the text'.¹¹ Elsewhere, she notes: 'The particular mixture of sin and sentiment in *East Lynne* serves to expose the contradictions of the proper feminine, even as the novel

works to re-establish it',¹² highlighting the problematic combination of conservative and subversive elements in Wood's work.

If the moralising narrative voice in Wood's fiction can be read as potentially subversive, then so too might her portrayals of illness be called into question in terms of their commentary on immorality and contagion. While Wood's novels almost inevitably conclude with the restoration of respectability to the upper/middle-class home, a question mark frequently remains over the conclusion of the text: to what extent do Wood's novels ultimately *contain* the threat of social contagion? I turn now to an exploration of representations of illness in *Elster's Folly* in an attempt to address the significance of Wood's engagement with the theme in relation to the overall message of her work.

In *The Improper Feminine*, Lyn Pykett summarises the key features of Wood's fiction:

[H]er sensation novels [...] are tales of crime and passion involving secret skeletons and the masks and strategies by which those secrets are both generated and concealed. They are all narrated by an intrusive, moralising and gossipy feminine narrator, who, both explicitly and implicitly, acknowledges and panders to a common fascination with the "evil passions of our nature", while ultimately distancing herself and her readers from them.¹³

Elster's Folly is a typical example of Wood's sensation fiction. It tells the story of Percival Elster (known as Val), who, following the death of his elder brother, Lord Hartledon, inherits the title himself. Engaged to Anne Ashton the woman who he loves, he falls victim to the machinations of the Countess Dowager of Kirton – a distant relative – who wants her daughter, Maude, to marry him for both wealth and rank. Maude too acknowledges the advantages of such a union, though she despises her prospective husband; nevertheless she is complicit in the plot to separate him from Anne. The plan succeeds, and Elster and Maude are married. Sometime after the marriage, however, shortly after Maude falls pregnant, Elster discovers that he unwittingly married another woman some years before in an irregular Scottish ceremony, and therefore his marriage to Maude is invalid, and their unborn child illegitimate. He withholds this information from his wife, but she eventually

discovers the truth, and is haunted by the knowledge, growing increasingly weaker. News of Elster's first wife's death enables he and Maude to marry again – this time legally, although under British law at the time their two children remain illegitimate. Maude's health continues to decline and eventually the shock of witnessing her son fall from a pony causes heart failure and she dies. Following Maude's death, Elster finally marries Anne. To his relief, his illegitimate son falls ill and dies, solving the problem of the inheritance of the title and estate. The novel concludes with Elster reflecting on the 'folly' of his youth, and looking forward to his future with Anne and his remaining children.

As in so many of Wood's novels, *Elster's Folly* includes an intrusive narrator, who frequently appears to act as a moral guide to the reader, condemning, for example, Maude's disobedience to her husband during the scene in which she eavesdrops on a conversation between him and his barrister in order to discover the secret that he is concealing from her, after he has forbidden her, 'by the obedience you promised me before God',¹⁴ to make any attempts to discover the secret: 'Wilful, unpardonable disobedience! when he had so strongly forbidden her!' (*EF*, 367). Inevitably, it seems, Maude pays a high price for this disobedient act: the knowledge that her marriage is invalid leads to a breakdown in her health, and to her eventual death from heart failure. There are clear connotations here with the story of Eve in the Old Testament: temptation and the subsequent knowledge of sin leads to the woman's downfall. This is made more explicit by the Countess's assertion that 'the knowledge [of her husband's bigamy] killed her [Maude]' (*EF*, 478).

The narrative voice in the novel is also heavily critical of the Countess's determination to marry her daughter to Elster, in spite of Maude's intense dislike of him:

If we could but foresee the ending of some of the unholy schemes that many of us are apt to weave, we might be more content to leave them humbly in a higher Hand. Do they ever bring good, these plans, born of our evil passions – hatred, malice, utter selfishness? I think not. They may seem to succeed triumphantly, but – watch the triumph to the end.
(*EF*, 147)

Here the narrator preaches conventional religious morality, and the story as a whole supports the notion of 'evil passions' as contagious. Wood's religious doctrine is further evident in the final words of the novel, in which Elster reflects on past events in light of a passage from the Bible:

"There's one verse I should like to hang before every son of mine, though I had ten of them, that it might meet their eyes always, last ere the evening's sleeping, in the morning's first awaking."

[...]

"Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart and in the sight of thine eyes: but know thou that for all these things God will bring thee into judgement."

(*EF*, 483)

Wood thus supports the apparent conventional morality of the novel with an adherence to the traditional principles of Victorian religious belief. Interestingly, she adopts a similar ploy in *East Lynne*, though one critic at least called her theological stance into question. Writing in the *Literary Gazette*, an anonymous reviewer criticised Wood's invocations of Christian belief in her most famous novel:

The theology of the work is [...] open to grave exception. Madame Vine, in her torturing position at the Carlyles', complains that she has taken up her cross, but that it is too heavy for her and is killing her. Now, sacred and pregnant language ought not to be used in this unmeaning way. [...] [A] human being has no right to voluntarily to place herself in a false and miserable position, and then talk of taking up her cross.¹⁵

Significantly, the reviewer seems to hint at the possibility that Wood's moral preaching is merely an attempt to pacify the reader, who might otherwise criticise her sympathetic portrayal of the fallen woman, implying that Wood's fiction may indeed be considered more subversive than it initially appears. The conclusion of *Elster's Folly* suggests she may be using a similar tack here.

The notion of divine justice in *Elster's Folly* is further invoked in the novel's treatment of the themes of illness and death - which frequently appear to act as a form of retribution upon various characters. Those involved in morally questionable behaviour frequently fall ill, and the theme of contagion is suggested by the impact of the secret of Elster's bigamous marriage not only on himself, but on those around him

as well. Lady Hartledon (Maude) grows weak and eventually dies after she discovers his secret, contaminated by the implications of Elster's first marriage, which leaves her in a position analogous to that of the fallen woman, complete with two illegitimate children. Her second wedding to Elster is not enough to rid the family of the disgrace, for it cannot legitimise their children. Almost inevitably, then, the son, who has been cast into the position of false heir to his father's estate, grows ill and dies, so the narrative seemingly endorses the idea of disgrace, and in particular disgrace associated with sexual transgression, as contagious. Maude herself acknowledges the taint on her character, declaring 'I am dying of horror – and shame' (*EF*, 371), and longs for death – implying the stain on both her and her child is indelible: 'if we were but dead! [...] if it would but please Heaven to take us both' (*EF*, 370). The notion that death is preferable to the shame of illegitimacy is further expressed following the death of her third child. Asked by Elster whether she is 'grieving after that little premature infant?' she replies 'No, [...] not for him. I grieve for the two who remain' (*EF*, 379).

Elster's first wife, Agnes Waterlow is also punished for her transgression (indeed, she is portrayed as largely responsible for duping Elster into the marriage in the first place, while he is guilty only of a young man's 'folly'). Her 'punishment' mirrors that of the typical sensation villainess: she is incarcerated in an asylum (though, unlike Lady Audley, her madness, the narrative suggests, is real), and subsequently falls ill and dies, thus removing the 'source' of the contagion and enabling a legal union between Elster and Maude. Elster himself suffers from an 'inward fever', which threatens to consume him, until events finally purge the sin from his family. The physical effects of the secret on Elster's health are clearly apparent to others, though the cause is unknown. Anne, meeting Elster after a lapse of some time, immediately notices the change in him, asking, 'Have you been ill?' (*EF*, 322). In replying, he acknowledges the symbolic nature of his illness, as a reflection of his own moral decline: 'No – not as the world counts illness. If remorse and shame and repentance can be called illness, I have my share: ill deeds of more than one kind are coming home to me' (*EF*, 322-3). His appearance, as he battles with his situation, tells 'of inward fever' (*EF*, 331), and there is an acknowledgement that conventional cures will be of no use against the illness he is suffering from: "The sea air may do me good [...] I want that, or something else," he added; his tone assuming a sad weariness as he remembered how futile any "sea-air" would be for mental disease

such as his' (*EF*, 339). Through the repeated references that are made to the 'inward fever' he suffers from, the narrative clearly associates physical illness with moral decline.

One of the most interesting aspects of the text in relation to the theme of contagion and disease is Wood's portrayal of Maude's mother, the Countess Dowager, who suffers from an obsessive fear of illness and death. While the Countess is a comic character in the Dickensian vein, she nevertheless clearly represents the immorality that the novel ostensibly criticises: she is variously described as 'debased in mind, vulgar in speech' (*EF*, 331), 'Wild, frantic, intemperate' (*EF*, 477) and as 'a perfectly unscrupulous woman' (*EF*, 203). In 'moments of excitement', she performs 'a sort of war-dance' (*EF*, 42). Told of the death of Lord Hartledon, Elster's brother, she 'talked and shrieked, and danced round [...], exactly as if she had been a wild Indian' (*EF*, 114). Later, upon news of Elster's second marriage, she performs a 'wild dance of passion, [...] whirling round in circles as if she was a true red Indian' (*EF*, 402). Considered in the context of nineteenth-century attitudes towards the racial 'other', these descriptions suggest the Countess stands outside of the boundaries of English respectability and morality. This is further emphasised by her removal from the Hartledon estate at the end of the narrative: she repeatedly imposes herself on her son-in-law throughout the novel, but in the conclusion he insists she leaves, agreeing to pay her a yearly allowance. Her departure from the home of the English lord, at the point at which respectability and morality have seemingly been restored, further indicates her position as outsider. This 'othering' of the disreputable woman is significant, reinforcing the notion of Wood as a conservative sensation writer who portrays transgressive, subversive characters only to reinforce conventional Victorian values.

Read in this context, her fear of illness and disease takes on a significant meaning. She is described as suffering from 'an intense, selfish fear of any sort of illness; she had a worse fear of death' (*EF*, 152). This fear leads her to avoid at all costs those who are suffering from any form of illness: she balks at the idea of her invalid son visiting, forces Elster to burn his clothes after he has visited Anne's cottage, where the servants are suffering from fever, and panics at the news that her grandson has fallen ill, convincing herself that he is suffering from smallpox: 'If I have a horror of one

calamity more than another, it's that dreadful, disfiguring small-pox. I'd not stop in a house where it was for a hundred thousand pounds. I might catch it and be marked!' (*EF*, 441). Her fear of physical illness contradicts the state of her own *moral* health and can be read as an acknowledgement of her sinful nature, and a fear of God's judgement. Her specific fear of smallpox can be seen as a fear of disfigurement, indicating not simply her vanity, but also her desire to avoid a visual marker of her immorality. The use of the quotation from Ecclesiastes in the final passage of the novel emphasises the idea that illness and death may be read as a form of divine justice in Wood's fiction, and hence reinforces this reading of the Countess's phobia.

A cursory glance at Wood's novel suggests a significant absence of gender division when it comes to punishing characters' sins: divine justice is, it would seem, meted out in equal measure to both sexes. However, it is significant that while Elster is allowed to live, to redeem his sin and enter into a happy, and legal, marriage, both Agnes and Maude are punished for their transgression with death. Agnes, who entered into an illicit affair with Elster before entrapping him into marriage, and Maude, who is also accused of deliberately ensnaring Elster (his friend, Carr, on hearing of the engagement, comments 'You have been a victim to earl-hunting' [*EF*, 183]), bore him children and lived with him as his wife without a legal marriage certificate, are both guilty of sexual transgression, and this rarely escapes some form of punishment in the Victorian novel. Wood's treatment of the fallen woman then, is, it would seem, all too conventional. Furthermore, unlike in *East Lynne*, in which the reader is encouraged to feel sympathy towards the fallen woman, neither of these characters is presented sympathetically: during the wedding ceremony, Maude wears an expression of 'evil triumph' (*EF*, 214), and the narrative makes it clear that her sole motive for marrying Elster is for 'rank, wealth, [and] her peeress's title' (*EF*, 359). In addition, unlike Isabel Vane, Maude 'had never pretended to be religious' (*EF*, 268), further distancing her from the Victorian ideal of womanhood. Agnes, meanwhile, is described as 'a wild, free, rather coarse-natured girl' (*EF*, 471) and as 'an obscure and insane girl' (*EF*, 473). Both women are guilty of practising a deception on the patriarchal male, and both suffer the consequences, while he is largely absolved of responsibility. His freedom is ultimately granted: theirs is not.

Perhaps less conventional is the fact that while the illegitimate son falls ill and dies, the illegitimate daughter, also called Maude, is allowed to live. The death of the son is undoubtedly required to ensure the Hartledon title and estate pass through the legitimate line, while the daughter's life, on the basis that she will not inherit, can be spared. However, in allowing her to live, Wood implies that she escapes the contagion that infects her family as a consequence of her father's bigamy. Furthermore, it is agreed to 'let the child, Maude, be Lady Maude still to the world' (*EF*, 479). The secret, then, that threatens to destroy the respectable Victorian family, remains at the heart of the family at the conclusion of the narrative. The decision to raise the illegitimate daughter as Lady Maude suggests the contagion may continue to spread. Indeed, the potential for disruption is illustrated by Wilkie Collins's early sensation novel, *The Dead Secret* (1857), which tells the story of Rosamond Treverton, the illegitimate daughter of a servant, raised as the legitimate daughter of Captain Treverton and his wife (without the Captain's knowledge of her true origins). Tamar Hellar comments that Mrs Treverton, who is responsible for the deception, 'attacks both patriarchal privilege and class hierarchies by fraudulently installing an illegitimate and working-class child as heir to the father's estate'.¹⁶ Of course, the key difference between Rosamond Treverton and the young Maude is that while both may be illegitimate, Rosamond is the daughter of a servant, while Maude is, at least, the biological daughter of a peer, in spite of her illegitimacy. Nevertheless, Wood's novel subtly undermines Victorian notions about the respectable family, and, through the representation of the illegitimate daughter, calls into question the moral value of the story and the extent to which it represents restrictive Victorian attitudes. In spite of the words from the Bible which close the novel, the moral which Wood parades here is not as clear-cut as it may initially appear, a fact further emphasised by the reiteration by Anne (who contrasts Maude – the bad mother – as the narrative's 'good' mother) that 'The world will never know that she is not Lady Maude' (*EF*, 479). Furthermore, not only is the illegitimate daughter allowed to live (in itself, not particularly unusual in the Victorian novel), she is not even required to suffer a period of illness as a means of cleansing, or purging, her character – something which various other illegitimate heroines are subject to: Dickens's Esther Summerson in *Bleak House* (1853), for example, and Collins's Magdalen Vanstone in *No Name* (1862). Wood's novel is hardly a diatribe against the treatment of illegitimate children in the nineteenth century in the same vein as Collins's novel, but nevertheless

it raises important questions about conventional attitudes towards the subject, and indeed pertinent questions about the author's own attitude towards accepted moral values. It is also worth noting that while Mary Elizabeth Braddon is repeatedly considered as significantly more subversive than Wood in terms of her attack on traditional Victorian attitudes, particularly towards women, in her two most famous novels – *Lady Audley's Secret* (1862) and *Aurora Floyd* (1863) – she avoids the issue of illegitimacy by ensuring that no children result from the bigamous marriages. The survival of the illegitimate daughter in *Elster's Folly* is, therefore, arguably the most subversive element of the novel, and undoubtedly calls into question the image of Wood as one of the more conservative writers of the sensation school.

While the novel certainly gives voice to the idea of moral deviance as contagious, it is by no means conclusive on this point. While Agnes, portrayed as largely responsible for the bigamous marriage, the elder Maude, effectively a fallen woman as a consequence of her husband's bigamy, and her son, Edward, an illegitimate child posing as the legitimate heir to an English lord, all die, Elster himself, his illegitimate daughter and his corrupt mother-in-law are all permitted to live, thus if the novel can be seen to voice concerns about social degeneration, it ultimately offers no solutions: while the 'disease' is, to a large extent, contained and the respectable union between Anne and Elster succeeds the disreputable bigamous marriage between Maude and Elster,¹⁷ key players in the events that unfold and threaten English respectability survive.

There are, then, it would appear, subversive elements to *Elster's Folly* – in particular the continued representation of the illegitimate daughter as Lady Maude at the conclusion of the narrative. However, it is significant that the blame for the family's fall from grace is placed firmly on the shoulders of the deviant woman – Agnes Waterlow – while Elster is portrayed as guilty of little more than the 'folly' of youth, claiming himself that he is 'more sinned against than sinning' (*EF*, 281). Indeed, informing Anne of his affair with Agnes, he comments, 'I lost my head. Don't frown, Anne; ninety-nine men out of a hundred would have lost theirs' (*EF*, 472), thus the narrative appears to endorse the Victorian double standard that tacitly accepted male promiscuity, while unequivocally condemning the sexually transgressive woman. Elster's 'great sin' is deemed to be 'cowardly irresolution' (*EF*, 70), and Wood

apparently sees no great need to condemn his character, in spite of the fact that he confines his former mistress (wife) to an asylum, and allows Maude to fall pregnant, although he knows that the children will be illegitimate. This is particularly contradictory given his initial reaction to the news that his marriage is invalid, shortly after Maude falls pregnant for the first time: ““our children our children!” groaned the earl, a hot flush of dread arising in his white face’ (*EF*, 246). Shortly after the birth of his first child, he prays ‘that God would take it to Himself, not suffer it to live’ (*EF*, 344), and yet prayer seems to be the extent of the action he takes to avoid the birth of further illegitimate children. The narrative offers no explanation as to why Elster goes on to father two more children (one who is born prematurely and dies) in spite of his initial horror at their legal status.

Elster’s Folly highlights the difficulty involved in attempting to categorise Wood’s work as either conservative or subversive sensationalism: while in many respects she appears more conservative than contemporaries such as Collins and Braddon, the problem of categorising Wood in fact points to a broader issue in terms of recognising the common features of sensation fiction, particularly in relation to conventional Victorian attitudes towards women, class and sexual transgression. Ultimately, Wood’s position in relation to these concerns remains frustratingly ambiguous.

¹ Athena Vrettos, *Somatic Fictions: Imagining Illness in Victorian Culture* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), p.1.

² Elaine Showalter, *A Literature of Their Own: From Charlotte Brontë to Doris Lessing* (London: Virago Press, 1978), p.160.

³ Henry Mansel, ‘Sensation Novels’ (April 1863) in Andrew Maunder (ed.), *Varieties of Women’s Sensation Fiction*, Vol. 1 (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2004), p.33.

⁴ Pamela K. Gilbert, *Disease, Desire and the Body in Victorian Women’s Popular Novels* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p.36.

⁵ Mrs Oliphant, ‘Sensation Novels’, *Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine* (May 1862) in Andrew Maunder (ed.), *East Lynne* (Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview Press, 2000), p.715.

⁶ Geraldine Jewsbury to Mr Bentley, June 19 1861 in Maunder (ed.), *East Lynne*, p.698.

⁷ Anonymous reviewer, *Saturday Review* (15 February 1862) in Maunder (ed.), *East Lynne*, p.714.

⁸ Anonymous reviewer, *Literary Gazette* (19 October 1861), in Maunder (ed.), *East Lynne*, p.709.

⁹ Mrs Henry Wood, *East Lynne* (1861; Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview Press, 2000), p.334.

¹⁰ Stevie Davies, ‘Mrs Henry Wood’s *East Lynne*: Introduction’ (1984) at: <http://www.steviedavies.com/henrywood.html>

¹¹ Lyn Pykett, *The Sensation Novel from The Woman in White to The Moonstone* (Plymouth: Northcote House Publishers, 1994), p.66.

¹²Lyn Pykett, *The Improper Feminine: The Women's Sensation Novel and the New Woman Writing* (London: Routledge, 1992), p.134.

¹³Pykett, *The Improper Feminine*, p.115.

¹⁴Mrs Henry Wood, *Elster's Folly* (1866; London: Richard Bentley and Son, 1879), p.366, hereafter abbreviated to *EF*.

¹⁵Anon. in Maunder (ed.), *East Lynne*, p.710-11.

¹⁶Tamar Heller, *Dead Secrets: Wilkie Collins and the Female Gothic* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), p.2.

¹⁷The marriage is problematic not only because it is not a legal union, but also because, as a consequence of Maude's initial dislike of her husband and desire for wealth and status, it represents marriage as a form of prostitution.