

“THE POLITICS OF VICTORIAN PUBLICATION – AUTONOMY AND LICENSE”

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Abstract

The article focuses on the politics of print culture which provides a new kind of historicist censure as it offers instructive reflection on how publishing industries transformed the ways in which novels were produced and written. Exploring the politics of publication excites interest to know about the ethics of the press, about the dictatorial policies of the editors, and the expectations of the publishers. Such an inquiry authenticates what went to determine the providence of the writers. The article examines the reception of the novels, the policies of the publishers and the artist's adherence or defiance to such standards. Victorian publishing conventions as well as the eminence of the periodical press dramatically fashioned the form of literature that went to determine the significance of the novelists. An objective appraisal makes us understand that there is a vast terrain of unexplored area that escapes our attention because of generalization made about a work of art which is common enough in academic discourse. What factors went to assign the canonical and the non canonical status to a work of art is discerned through a willful probing into the past. Issues that surround Victorian British writers are matters of concern today for such matters provide new ideas and fresh challenges to study the cultural, social and literary context rigorously in order to discern how texts were situated.

Keywords: Publishing conventions, censoring novels, polemics of editors, victimization of authors

I

‘Victorian’ has become an epitome for the assumption of assorted conflicting opinions, behavior and perception. Victorian era is generally perceived as the lengthiest in the annals of English literature it is due to this aspect the era saw varied shifts and changes in social, economic and political life. The era witnessed throes of unparalleled changes, due to industrialization, scientific inventions, suffrage movement, Marxism, utilitarianism, evangelicalism, consumerism, and so on. The well accepted fact about the era as far as

literary development is concerned is that it is called the age of the novel. What then was the priority given to novelists and the novels published? If we go by the general estimate that all records on history of English literature pronounce is that novel production in the previous era was considerably less. Considering the number of novels published we would assume that novelists were encouraged to write according to their artistic aspirations and that their novels showcase the realities of the 19th century. This may be partially true not entirely because a close study of the Victorian publishing policies present a different scene. Publishing is a significant interim which popularizes cultural diversity and this feature affords a new kind of historicist censure because it presents an instructive reflection on the reception of novels and the artist's freedom and license.

Industrialization brought new printing technologies which saw the rise of novels and the growth of publishing houses. Technology enhanced the commercial interest of publishers who saw printing as lucrative. The rise of the middle class and the increase in reading population enhanced the production. The authors wrote to appease the interest of the consumers, editors, publishers and readers. This saw the emergence of many sub-genres like the gothic, sensational, new woman fiction, railway novels, and so on. Why were the sub-genres introduced? Why did the conservative proprietors and publishers allow them to flourish? Why were they called popular novels? Questions such as these make us revisit the Victorian literary scene to understand the publishing culture. Growth of publishing houses strengthened the hands of the publishers which also made them powerful and act as the controlling agent in production of novels. Exploring the politics of publication excites interest to know about the ethics of the press, the dictatorial policies of the editors, and the expectations of the publishers. Such an inquiry authenticates what went to determine the providence of the writers.

II

In some ways the publishing system reflects the judiciary in democracy with the assessors being the moderators. The politics of publication serves as a sub text to understand the risks and comprises that artists had to negotiate. A willful probing into the past makes us understand how the erstwhile year has come pointedly into concentration as a locus for our comprehension of the social and political debates that surrounded the era. Victorian era was largely patriarchal and conservative which made writers vulnerable. Writers pondered over deviating from the familiar subjects and issues because they were pressurized to adhere to the demands and aversions of publishers and readers. A careful scrutiny offers a new vantage point on the novels produced by main stream and minor novelists of the era. Conformists governing the British publishing industry imposed norms that served to preserve the age old beliefs. The interesting but harsh fact was that publishing conventions as well as the

eminence of the periodical press dramatically fashioned the form of literature. This feature exhibits a different image of the press culture which clearly shows how it transformed the ways in which novels were produced and written. What then was the primary concern of the British publishing houses? It would not be untrue if book trade is perceived as involving a little bit of compromise and surveillance. Exploring the reception and meaning of fiction through the eyes of the conservative publishers' and the editors assist in comprehending their bias and their principles. Publishing culture includes a set of rules and traditions which may seem proper to those who frame such standards but may sound arbitrary to those who are obliged to observe the same. Hence an objective examination of the publisher's policies and the artist's adherence or defiance to such standards alters our perception of the writers and the controlling agents (editors, proprietors)

Historical instances show that the sustained deflation of 1860's saw the decline in the prices of goods and this led to the rise of the purchasing power of the pound. So, the tendency was to borrow an expensive object and this led to the flourishing of libraries which strengthened the hands of the proprietors. Scrutinizing the literary output during the era one can see that the publishers' contemplated the productive value of the book keeping in view the customer's response, readers urge, and the ethical value of the book. It goes without saying what determined the novels popularity and what was branded as major and minor novels. Publishers not only went to decide the novels as good and bad but also decided the elevation and subjugation of the artist. Judging a book on one's perception of principles is not welcoming for such a notion is likely to run the nation into a literary lacuna of some magnitude and this is true of the Victorian era.

A close survey of the novels produced in the era is time consuming and persuades exhaustive awareness that leaves us to understand that there is a vast terrain of unexplored area that escapes our attention. Generalizations about a work of art which is common enough in academic discourse curtails us from knowing the total literary output. This is true of the Victorian novel; we are often stifled by being restricted to the dozen writers designated as 'major' by the *New Cambridge Bibliography of English Literature*. Information provided by texts such as these which is most times believed as authentic leaves us with only the sketchiest sense of the infra structure of Victorian fiction. It is ironical because fiction was very much a province of the 19th century yet few writers achieved the canonical status. It is still a long-winded conduit to know- Who originated and distributed the product? Who were the novelists? How many were there? How was it produced? Well, it is cumbersome to give a fair reply as statistics cannot provide an accurate account. Victorian era presents a wide range of novelists those who profess knowledge about the Victorian fiction recall names of Jane Austen, George Eliot, Charles Dickens, William Thackeray, Elizabeth Gaskell, Charlotte

Bronte, Henry James, and a host of minor or popular novelists such as Willkie Collins, George Egerton, Ellen Wood, Eliza Linton, Bram Stoker Mary Braddon, Sarah Grand, and so on.

III

Judging a past a writer barely on the basis of his creative acumen and not understanding or scrutinizing the hegemonic practices be it patriarchal or political would be somewhat erroneous. What then helps us to assess the true worth of the writers? I would say an objective glance at the publisher's stratagem will help us to discern the harsh realities that alter our perception of the writers. The gender politics and the rigid norms prescribed by the conservative publishers and proprietors of circulating libraries saw the filtering of the novels which impeded the birth of fiction that focused the confusions and desires of the deprived (women and the downtrodden) Re-reading of the Victorian mainstream and minor novelist's literary tradition shifts attention to the ways in which women and the role of feminine is constructed within the texts. Patriarchal tradition expected women to play their allotted roles in the marriage market; primogeniture was more strictly adhered to in English law than elsewhere in Europe. Helen Cixous states that western literary thought has always adhered to endless series of binary opposition which refers to pairs of opposite such as male/female, white/black, rich/poor, and reason/emotion. These oppositions are arbitrary but its influence on women/men is stronger. The male view of the feminine denigrates her place in the social order with the dictum, masculinity is strong and femininity is weak. Fiction depicted woman in varied ways while some confirmed to the proper feminine image others presented an image contrary to the feminine image that the canonical novels portrayed. Fiction that expressed the tension between the demands of dominant segments of society and the aspirations of the assertive women, the slave, and the downtrodden were branded as trash or merely popular. Such condemnation led to the permanent silencing of the popular novelists, the writers in spite of their efforts did not get the much desired critical acclaim. These writers can be unearthed only if you know them, because "The construction of canon has involved the filtering of a great deal of writing, including all of the fiction produced by women" (Lyn Pykett 3).

The verdict of the editors in publication sector is crucial their opinion matters a lot for the producer because it decides the future of the artists. What role did the editors of the Victorian publishing houses perform? Well, that unravels the hidden truths of the editing culture which asks for some amount of sacrifice of the artist's ethics, his pride, his freedom and artistic rendition. Major writers like Hardy, George Gissing, Thackeray, Austen, George Eliot, the Bronte sisters minor writers like Braddon, Grand, Collins were all puppets in the hands of the editors. "Many of the great novels of the period which appear to be unaided

product of creative genius were often ... the outcome of collaboration, compromise or commission.” (Sutherland 6) Artistic endeavors cannot be limited by the demands and predisposition of the society and state but “Victorian novelist’s art was conditioned by publishing convention, economic circumstances and the need to preserve accepted public standards of literature and morality” (Norman Page 30) Norman Page’s observation hints at the constraints that encumbered the artistic pursuit. Victorian writers were unable to avoid the rubric of parochial rule uttered by the society, the press, the church and the government. The texts alert us to the visible complexities of the practice of dominant ideology and its repercussions. Hardy writing in the latter part of the Victorian era was well aware of the harsh realities of the age. Modern critics commend Hardy for the sensitive portrayal of women, for dexterous plot construction which invoke typical Victorian controversies such as, the status of religion, identity politics, re-evaluation of the feminine and the masculine. In so doing Hardy represents women outside the tradition established by the canonical writers.

Hardy set a fresh novelistic discourse in making his women characters express their disgruntlement and revolutionary zeal. Contemporary feminists call Hardy an antifeminist for not making his woman characters successful. Elaine Showalter in her essay on *The Mayor of Casterbridge* explores how Hardy could not free the monolithic model where men still occupy the primary position and women occupy the secondary position. If critics accuse Hardy for transforming his novels into a male document so do women writers, for instance, Braddon, and George Eliot. Their novels (*Doctor’s Wife*, *Adam Bede*) ultimately evince masculine power and women’s surveillance to such power. Hardy and Braddon in projecting the primary importance of men are not favoring the patriarchal notion of woman as the ‘other’ or the estranged self but exemplify the narrow exiguity and rigidity of the moral code. Their novels show how women’s aspiration for liberation or deliverance from such rigidity is frustrated. It is ironical that Hardy the grand old man of the Victorian age found it arduous to find a publisher. His first novel *Desperate Remedies* was refused by Macmillan’s, Reynolds Weekly. Chapman and Hall agreed to publish if Hardy paid 20 pounds against loss which Hardy was willing. Hardy’s *Return of the Native* was subject to many revisions as guided by Leslie Stephen the editor of Cornhill which made Hardy shift his focus more on Eustacia than Thomasin. Temple Bar editor George Bentley rejected the novel three times; finally when the novel found its dawn Hardy was discontented because his artistic freedom to structure the plot was in some ways curbed.

His striving materialized when Smith Elder became his time-honored publisher but his writing remained a struggle against the grain. Meredith’s editorial policies clogged the prospects of many writers while others have found their way after repeated affronts. Hardy’s obligation to observe Meredith’s demand not to print controversial matters in *Desperate*

Remedies (since it would offend the social and cultural practice of the society) explains the victimization of writers by editors. Such censoring also implies how Meredith not only endeavored to protect the erudite mores of readers but also nurtured the literary convention that was against writing women centric novels. Understanding the polemics of editors made Hardy compromise his free will he soon found himself committed to novel writing as a trade which made him transfer his copyrights to Macmillan. Such surrender made him subdued and harassed as he was hurrying to produce, this explains why Hardy was forced to make his women accept their defeat. Hence the passionate Eustacia, the intellectual Sue Bridehead, the bold and vivacious Bathsheba are unable to actualize their aspirations.

Publication was a widespread activity and the many publishing houses Macmillan, Smith Elder, Black Wood, Bradbury, Evan Chapman and Hall Longman were actively involved in publishing fiction which illustrates the prominence and influence of print culture. The publishing houses merged consumer and production their sole purpose in doing so was to seek short and long term profits. "London publishers were reaching unprecedented heights of prosperity – the printed world was unchallenged as medium of mass communications" (Hutton 17.) The novelist's predilection to make his/her protagonist transcend beyond the ordinary by choosing to follow his own rules in order to actualize his want is somewhat frustrated. Their stories show them not as aristocrats but as deviants because it was mandatory for them to represent the interests of community as a whole. Most Victorian novelists had to ignore the private sympathy for the individual self in order to create a blameless character and a non controversial story. The nineteenth century society viewed feminine as a threat to the wholeness and hardness of the bold and adventurous men. Many male texts portrayed women as forces of chaos and instability, a threat to masculinity Ballantyne and (*Coral Island*, 1858) Rider Haggard's heroes (*Solomon Mines* 1885) are middle class men, adventurous, bold and ethnocentric. Even the mystery or detective stories of Edgar Allan Poe or Sherlock Homes had men play the lead role in investigating a crime or a murder; hence the stories are overtly nationalized stories. Kate Millet states, (1977) "The production of ideological consent to patriarchy, through socialization into masculine and feminine roles was 'based on the needs and values of the dominant group and dictated by what its members cherish in themselves ... aggression; intelligence, ...in the male; passivity, ignorance, ...ineffectuality in the female.'" (qtd. Hollows10) Hence femininity and masculinity are cultural constructs, and depiction of such traits in books only meant the author's approval.

Christianity was in many ways integral to public life and religion entailed a politically conservative interpretation of Christian ethics which emphasized passive endurance of earthly tribulations rather than reforming it. Early and mid Victorian novels showed allegiance to

such precepts and were per forced to feminize and privatise feminine virtues. Subversion of the patriarchal ideology was met with hostility and women writers depicting women's' transgression was critiqued by writers doubting the chastity of the women novelists. Novelists who transgressed morality faded into oblivion; censoring their novels curbed the possibility of finding a place in the public library shelves (Ouida and G.W. Reynolds) Mainstream novelists Hardy, Thackeray, George Eliot , sensational novelists like Braddon and Collins, new woman novelists like Grand, Mona Caird and Olive Schreiner circulate the discourse of feminism, lesbianism and also focus on the distasteful outcome of traditional masculinity and femininity. Such a project re-presents the Victorians from a vantage point as these texts deal with modern and postmodern milieu. It is hard for writers' male / female to erase negative constructions of woman founded on the theory of 'penis envy' that is based on the view that woman is man's 'other', lacking the penis. Socialization and cultural expectation held for each sex determined the male and female behavior. Hence the act of silencing prevails in the fictional world nevertheless the novelists celebrate women's difference, their fluidity, and multiplicity that apparently rupture western representations of women.

Victorian novelists undertook the mimetic project with the aid of pen substantiating the dictum that the pen is mightier than the sword. Novels show novelists adept at capitalizing the challenges intrinsic in the domestic ideal in order to present even more radical claims. They not only encourage hegemonically complicit conduct through language and patriarchal motifs but also create rupture. Thackeray, Charles Dickens, Collins, Braddon seized the working class readership to become popular; their works relied in some cases not on subjective impression but on the response of readers which influenced the sales. Hence Thackeray could create rebellious woman like Becky Sharp in *Vanity Fair* and Dickens exposed the harsher side of London in *Oliver Twist* through Fagin's society. Hardy elevated the status of the fallen woman calling her the pure woman but had to make her meet a sad end to please the rigid society. The writers' shift from the familiar themes, their critique of the established beliefs which were formed at specific time to serve assured interests was met with hostility. The silencing act was inevitable because of the publishers fear that such candid assertion might be detrimental to society.

Victorian era saw the burgeoning of many women writers which clearly marked transition from the private to the public domain. Harsh reality that encountered the writers was the fact that writing was a male territory and proving their artistic worth meant a lot of compromise. Women writers were measured against a social document ignoring the literary merit. It was mandatory for them to make their woman modest, religious, sensitive and pure. Glorification of the errant woman would not earn her a publisher; hence they adhered to the

familiar notions of femininity. It would not be an overstatement to state that periodicals and magazines were instrumental in the rise of the women authors, anonymity that periodicals offered (obliged women to conceal their identity) gave woman an occasion to write on diverse topics. Anonymous and pseudonymous articles were responsible for the rise of female writers. George Eliot, Francis Power Cobbe depended on journalism for financial survival “to be a woman novelist in Victorian society was to be a first person anonymous, that is to both construct and subvert notions of individual identity ... women negotiated and capitalized upon these publishing conventions” (Easley 2). The Bronte sisters, George Eliot who did not desire to declare themselves woman wrote under pseudonyms the unambiguous male names indicate that they were not so ambiguous.

Anonymity gave women writers an occasion to verbalise woman’s assertion and counter sexual and social taboos. Patrick Bartingler cites Salmon’s survey which unravels how young boys and girls desired reading Dickens, Daniel Defoe, Walter Scott Ballyntyne, “many girls found girls stories vapid and saccharine they found Ballyntyne and Kingsley thrilling” (41) Male hegemonical command over literary opportunities enabled them to define novels written by men as erudite and novels by women as merely popular. Besides the onslaught of the periodical press and its dictatorial policy limited women’s literary practice by imposing gender stereotype in writing which was a major hindrance to unravel the hidden agendas of the private domain. Tory quarterly reviews, Edinburgh review, were inimical of political texts written by women but West Minister review’s conciliatory stand was a blessing. All this is proof enough to infer that a general estimation about women’s narrative convention is difficult. The authorial subject was contested and scrutinized by the male gaze which led to the silencing of the radical woman (female author or female subject) Braddon’s reaction to such atrocity was the finding of *Belgravia* a monthly magazine that welcomed diverse articles and boasted of having a large circulation. Braddon could intercede with the city through her narrativization, language of risk and diction. *Belgravia* signaled a feminized kind of London to its readers thus producing the magazine with a female experience in mind and illustrating that women were not dormant.

Emily Dickenson’s poem, *They Shut Me Up In Prose*, expresses her anger at male politics. The poem expresses her urge to break the shackles of restriction and irrational ideas nurtured by the patriarchal society. But the era witnessed very few women writing in verse because women accepted to write in the popular genre prescribed because their sole concern was to be heard and to unmask the bitter truths and perverse notions of society. These are but few instances to show how women novelists faced the conundrum of discerning the truth from the fallacy of what society proposed as their identity. The list of women authors the era saw corroborates the fact that their stories reflect resistance to belittle people on the basis of

gender, ethnicity, religion and tradition. All this presents them as overtly competent and pragmatic in their desire to pursue masculine task (education, interest in reading and writing). Barbara Leah states “Most of the estimated 3,500 novelists will never emerge from the obscurity of the statistical mass.”(xiii) The discrepancy between women’s expectations and publisher’s insistence was never bridged. Women writers caught between artistic concerns and the fear of derisive denigration resorted to articulate their revolutionary dogmas in a subtle manner

IV

Another significant fact that cannot be ignored is the domineering influence of the circulating libraries that affected the publishers, readers and authors. Dictatorial policy of the proprietors of the circulating libraries constituted a battle ground for competing strategies. Transgressing the moral code or defying the hierarchical binary only meant victimization of authors and publishers. Proprietors Charles Edward Mudie and rival William Henry Smith controlled the literary scene, their adherence to traditional beliefs and literary censorship affronted many writers. Major publishing houses looked to them for an ample slice of their sales seeing that “Publishers editors and libraries were capable of exerting their own less obtrusive pressures” (Page 30) Judging a book on ones perception of ethics may hamper the creative adept of the writers and restrain their freedom and spontaneity of thoughts. Publishing industry, proprietors of the library and editors were largely responsible for considering the novels as canonical and non canonical. Writers were obliged to negotiate and capitalize upon the publishing conventions which demanded writers to adhere to the patriarchal and religious ideology. Artist’s divergence from the traditional paradigms threatened the complacency of the conservatives who punished the whistle blower for challenging the unquestioned laws. It is clear from this that the coercive measures espoused by the publishers, the government, and the patriarchal policies were a major stumbling block to the writer’s artistic performance.

Mudie’s library known as ‘Mudie’s Select Library’ thrived by renting novels, this also gave him the license to conduct a role of censor. Mudie’s moral screening of books curtailed the prospects of man radical writers, passive adherence to Mudie’s ways only meant the silencing of skeptical and radical appraisal of the socio –political situation. Mudie’s select list could facelift the authors reputation, “Many copies of a given title he stocked was in itself, the best publicity a book could have, irrespective of its literary quality” (Tucker 94) the books that did not clear struggled to clear its costs. Such censorship made Hardy abandon novel writing and Moore launch a campaign against the practice of censorship. Mudie’s censoring of Moore’s novel *Modern Lover* based on two ladies opinion won the wrath of Moore. Moore’s reaction “You are acting in defiance of the opinion of the press you are taking a high

position in deed, ...you will probably be overthrown... enable me to appeal to the public.” (Qtd 268 Barnet) evidences the fury of the artist and the dictates of the proprietors. Writers’ effort at eroding stereotypes and myths and showing writing as the loci where subversion germinates were allegorically paralyzed because they had to abide by the Victorian bourgeois modesty which was intensely moralistic, rigid and puritanical. Writers and publishers could not ignore religious teachings; the church overtly taught a lesson of submission and obedience proving its hierarchical and authoritarian stance. Novels that upheld the Victorian notions of morality were considered as the canonical which also meant the writing with constraint.

The act of looking back unravels a different scenario it is imperative necessity to visit the past since academic discipline does not discuss the purpose of the popular genres. This motivates us to ask, how did these novels educate the public? What went to determine their popularity? These queries bother us because the novels did not completely fadeout from the public gaze. If we perceive the advent of popular genres (sensational, gothic and new woman novels) one can understand the rationale behind the creation of such fiction. Popular genres dislodged the purpose of the older canonical novels which adhered to the demands of the conservative producer because of their social status. Popular genres increased the sales because it stole the attention of both the upper class and the working class readers. Reading fiction was associated with the domestic environment and came with a demand that fiction should be modest, religious and sensitive. With the emergence of popular genres readers’ interest was not perceived as scholarly because readers considered reading fiction as recreational activity. Hence the era saw avid readers with varied purpose for some it was an academic activity and for others it was a pass time.

The advent of industrialisation, scientific and technical innovations changed the cultural scene it increased the prospects for relaxation and education. Publication in periodicals offered advantages, ‘The Metropolitan Magazine’(1830) ‘The New Sporting Magazine’(1831) ‘The Dublin University Magazine’(1837) were largely responsible for the popularity of the novels. Magazines also counted on the monthly serial fiction for this was the most awaited section that captured the long term interest of the readers. Some of the magazines had novelists as editors-Thackeray for Cornhill, Trollope for St. Paul’s magazine, and M. E. Braddon for Belgravia. Facts such as these aver literary production as less hazardous and more heartening and also makes one assume that novelists wrote without hindrance. The basis for such a belief is the fact that the Victorian era is called as the age of the novel it is called so because of the qualitative and quantitative production of fiction. A quick glance at the literary scene without shades of bias makes us perceive that pain and humiliation that popular novelists welcomed. The denouncing of the popular genres by

conservative critics as base, meaningless and lacking in intellectual verve tossed popular fiction to the attics silencing many talented novelists from earning critical repute.

Today popular fiction is not perceived as a mere potboiler be it sensational novels of Braddon or the gothic fiction of Bram Stoker. Today they are studied because they set a new culture by challenging the middle class morality and upper class respectability. We understand the agenda of popular genres which is to give emphasis to social relevance than textual structures, their polysemy deviates from that of aestheticism because divergent readings are possible. They are categorised as popular for two reasons, one because of the mass appeal and profits they earned and another because of the conservative critics fear that the popular novels might destabilize the stabilized notions about family, class and gender. But the genres changed the reading culture by not creating a hierarchy of readings and this worked to pluralize meanings and interpretation of the text. The multiple voices of the texts offer a close linguistic and gendered reading which reflects the ideological tensions in the late nineteenth century.

Recycling the past only shows how their stories cast a new and sometimes cold light on a series of modern, postmodern and postcolonial alliances. They are ripe particularly in terms of theme, characterization, exploration of genre and tone but sadly these novels failed to earn the critical acclaim that the canonical texts earned. The bias about the Victorian popular forms continues, it is seen in how owing to the overbearing influence of the canonical texts scholars have been slightly nonchalant towards the thematic subtleties and genuine academic vigor of the minor writers. The subversive mode enabled the writers to expose the ruthless realities of the private domain and articulated a range of suppressed female emotions. These aspects inertly became a part of the reader's lives because they read and responded to situations that happened in their own lives. Such was the animus against retaliatory novels that Braddon and Mrs. Henry Wood, among others were driven to renounce any means other than interesting the reader.

The reading population facilitated production and created unrestricted consumers from all social classes and this resulted in the sporadic influence of sensation mania everywhere within the country. The sensational novels offer a way for women to resist the powerful structures; it allows women to refuse momentarily their self abnegating social role. The modern language of risk and accident begins to take its place in the 19th century novels which shows the transition from orthodox and religious set up to a secular or Darwin's universalisation of chance and accident.

New woman fiction endeavored to correct the long observed conservative beliefs about woman as the virgin or the whore. Novels that followed the Victorian conventions

portrayed the deviant woman as the whore and subservient as the virgin. Active rewriting of culture also serves to correlate the artifice of resistance. The new woman novels can be read as a corrective, a revisionist strategy to present the new woman fiction as a new feminine-cum feminist poetics that transformed traditional literary and cultural paradigms. This daring act had to be frustrated; the male regime administered its punitive measure by terming the fiction as merely popular or non canonical since it had no universal appeal. The emergence of the new woman fiction played a significant cultural role in the fin de siècle era. It was a period which saw cultural transformation; which affirms that modern society starts in the Victorian period. The novels give scope to explore a range of issues such as economics, sexuality, art, identity, imperialism, canonization and social politics. Critics saw the new woman in fiction as an element of the pathological novel and considered it as polemic in its project. Their novels invoke traditional arguments of sexual differences, integrating them into new nomenclatures of masculinist science in order to reverse the dominant hegemonies. This could be one of the performative methods but the conservative press limited the revolutionary drive of the novelists terming them as immoral and debase this pushed the new woman to the margins.

The mid Victorian and the late Victorian era saw some revisions made in the publishing trade; their motive was to give prime importance to publish fiction. This introduced new genres like the sensational novel, new woman fiction, gothic fiction, three-decker novel, railway novels, and standard novels and so on. The sub genres outsold the canonical novels which made novelists like George Eliot and Margaret Oliphant condemn the sensational novels as trash lacking in universal appeal. This also alerts us to the fact that printing techniques opened up the possibility of mass printing cheap novels which was condemned by the conventional critics as demeaning since they were skeptical about the quality. The frenzied fascination of the readers increased the sales of the sub genres and this fan memorabilia was viewed as economically valuable by the publishers and the proprietors, for instance, the first issue of Braddon's or Collins or Bram stoker's novel augmented the financial value.

The drastic revisions changed the literary scene; the social niceties of Thackeray, the moral power of George Eliot bored the readers and the era saw the switch to gothic horror stories and sensational stories. Attention to the mid Victorian and the late gothic (Bram Stoker) and sensational writers provide models and emotional support to readers and successors. Braddon's acting career gave a strong rhetorical dimension to writing for instance; she presents the illegitimate world of popular culture to her readers. Braddon, and Collins, didactic assignment was to teach readers appreciate the popular cultural form. Their novels proliferate with Balzac, Shakespeare, Scott, and it also pulsates with references to

Beethoven, Turner etc. The era witnessed the use of popular, marginal, expressive forms that gained momentum and which could be easily transformed. Women's involvement in the music scene was absent or ignored in the patriarchal world, their attempts illustrate how they endeavor to make women appreciate popular music which exemplifies the manipulation of the Victorian literary conventions. The sub genres not only included bigamy, murder, risk, crime, subjugation, oppression and mystery but also endeavored to theorise, write, and educate the masses on these subjects. Probably such frankness shocked the readers and conservative critics, who rejected the genre as low and vulgar that went to appease the interest of the masses. David Morley talks about the mechanisms of genre- based theory interpretation in his study *The 'Nation' wide Audience* (1980) he observes how audience research might be more successful if it turned to a genre -based interpretation than the encoding-decoding model. 1895-1901 the period gave writers some hope in actualizing their aspirations, the British Agrarian 1895 and Splendid Sin 1896 created a space for candid debate of sexual issues. Thomas Hardy, Caird, Frances Brooke, Grand, utilized this opportunity to discuss women question. William Heinemann's liberal rule turned the dream of artists to reality agreed to publish Grand's *Heavenly Twins* which was condemned by Meredith. The novel sold well which helped to draw a new contract which allowed royalties to Sarah Grand.

The emergence of the sub genres played a significant cultural role in the fin de siècle era. It was a period which saw cultural transformation; which affirms that modern society starts in the Victorian period. The subgenres (gothic, sensational, New woman,) offer much more than a tableau of a certain social, political, and literary period in England's history, their speech, their act of writing was sadly illegible to scholars who occupied the space produced by mainstream culture. In describing woman's sexuality, intellect and voluptuousness the sub genres aimed to challenge the disembodied, ethereal Victorian ideal which bothered canonical fiction. The novels contained the poetics of everyday life, the dramaturgy of social presence which went unnoticed in the hum drum affair of life. The sub genres were perceived by the masses as functional as it enhanced their hope to actualize their dream to transcend class and gender boundaries. Despite these features the novels were not subject to scholarly review owing to rigid norms which designates a work of art as 'good' and 'bad'.

A willful probing into the themes, style, and generic modes show diverse multitude of literary work, it also illustrates its plurality that alters our areas of interest and understanding of the 19th century. It is hard to contradict the fact that the era in spite of the restraints has introduced many kinds of fiction, variegated themes, style, and mode. The sub genres forever changed the landscape and saw the rise of mass culture and mass commercialism that demonstrates that the Victorian reading public was heterogeneous. This new found awareness

makes one guilty for being ignorant about popular novelists of the era who can be credited for breaking the gender and genre conventions. Writers who were not part of the reviewing groups, unrepresented in print but strongly represented in sales and subscription.'

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