EDUCATING THE PROPER WOMAN READER

Victorian Family Literary Magazines and the Cultural Health of the Nation

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INTRODUCTION

The Scene of Women’s Reading:
Mid-Nineteenth-Century Culture, Professional Critics,
and Family Literary Magazines

NINETEENTH-CENTURY BRITISH and American critics claimed
that women readers were dangerous.¹ Scholars have acknowledged that
the mid-nineteenth-century critical anxiety about women readers was
a cultural phenomenon that was largely the result of the mass produc-
tion and mass marketing of print culture—exemplified by the availabil-
ity of a wide variety of inexpensive magazines—and the consolidation
of middle-class power that gave women the leisure time to devote
themselves to reading. As literacy rates rose, printing technologies
improved, taxes on newspapers were revoked in England, and the pub-
lishing industry was centralized in the United States, periodicals began
to dominate nineteenth-century print culture. The development of this
unruly mass of periodical literature gave critics a forum in which to
make their living as well as a subject around which they could build
their reputations. The primary critical response to the unprecedented
abundance of literary material was to initiate a new discourse that
called for the regulation of women’s reading in order to ensure the
morality of the primary literacy educators of the family, the literary
taste of the middle class, and the preservation of the nation’s culture.

Scholars typically base this conception of the nineteenth-century
woman reader on the analysis of elite literary journals run and read by
highly educated Victorian men, whose discourse about the dangers of
women’s reading is very similar to contemporary discussions about the
dangers of children’s exposure to violent video games or television
shows. While this image of women’s reading was certainly prevalent in
nineteenth-century elite culture, it was not the only image of women readers presented to the public. In *Educating the Proper Woman Reader* I reevaluate prevailing assumptions about the relationship between nineteenth-century women readers and literary critics by examining how four important family literary magazines—the American *Harper’s New Monthly Magazine* and the British magazines the *Cornhill*, *Belgravia*, and *Victoria*—defended women from the highly publicized accusation that they were uncritical readers whose reading practices threatened the sanctity of the family and the cultural reputation of the nation. Contrary to most scholarly discussions of the condescending and even destructive attitude of critics toward women readers in the nineteenth century, I argue that family literary magazines empowered women to make their own decisions about what and how to read. Despite the dominant attitude toward women as dangerous readers, this genre of magazine led the way for women to participate in professional critical discourse as both consumers and producers of literary culture. Family literary magazines attempted to change the landscape of the debate surrounding women readers by combating the portrayal of improper reading as a particularly female malady and instead depicting women as intellectually competent readers.

John Ruskin’s emphatic warning to parents to “keep the modern magazine and novel out of your girl’s way” (“Sesame and Lilies” 66) illustrates the typical anxiety nineteenth-century critics expressed about the dangerous combination of periodical literature and female readers. Such warnings were precipitated by the booming magazine industry, which touched nearly every British and American citizen. During Queen Victoria’s reign, there were as many as 50,000 magazines published in Great Britain alone (North 4). By the mid-1800s, there were more than one thousand journals devoted solely to literary subjects (Thompson 3). In the United States 2,500 magazines were issued between 1850 and 1865, despite the hampering effects of the economic panic of 1857 and the Civil War (Mott 4). The development of periodical literature had such an impact that critic George Saintsbury declared in 1896, “Perhaps there is no single feature of . . . the nineteenth century, not even the enormous popularisation and multiplication of the novel, which is so distinctive and characteristic as the development in it of periodical literature. . . . [I]t is quite certain that, had . . . reprints [from magazines] not taken place, more than half the most valuable books of the age . . . would never have appeared as books at all” (166). As a result of the overwhelming abundance of inexpensive magazines and the novels they contained, critics on both sides of the
Atlantic took it as their mission to direct readers to choose the proper texts and read in the “right” ways. The eminent Victorian Frederic Harrison justified the need for critics like himself to guide readers by declaring that he “could almost reckon the printing press as amongst the scourge of mankind” because its immense productivity encouraged people to “act as if every book were as good as any other” (5, 10). He argued that critics were necessary to teach “the art of right reading,” which “is as long and difficult to learn as the art of right living” (11).

James Machor describes the role nineteenth-century critics like Ruskin, Saintsbury, and Harrison created for themselves as that of “literary philanthropists” who benevolently bestowed their wisdom upon less educated literary consumers (65). Women readers were the most frequent beneficiaries of this “philanthropic” effort, though it was not always so benevolent. Condescending critics tended to define themselves as professionals and experts at the expense of women by initiating a discourse that pathologized women’s reading practices. Whereas masculine middle-class reading was defined as professional and critical, feminine middle-class reading was seen as amateurish and careless. Moreover, periodical and novel reading, often considered mindless, were characterized as primarily feminine pursuits. The regulatory function of critics was justified by the characterization of women as the most susceptible victims of the “disease of reading,” which was believed to be a threat to the sanctity of the family and to the social order of the nation.2 As a result, many of the attempts to preserve literary culture and professionalize literary criticism were waged in the press as efforts to protect the woman reader from the rampant forces of production-line culture, which were assumed to be corrupting to her, her family, and the nation.

The profession of literary criticism was built upon the notion that the work of critics served national interests by cultivating a healthy cultural atmosphere that would preserve (or, in the case of the United States, build) the nation’s strength. As Susan Bernstein contends, nineteenth-century attitudes toward women readers were influenced in England by national imperial anxieties and articulated in anthropological terms as women’s reading came to be seen as “either evidence of the threat of a degenerating . . . civilization or a symptom of . . . the encroachment of the so-called ‘lower’ orders with their forms of entertainment into legitimate, sanctioned culture” (“Dirty Reading” 215). In the United States these national anxieties were more focused on the status and reputation of a young nation seeking to legitimize its cultural productions in the face of well-established and well-respected British
and European exports. One example of the nationalistic pathologization of women readers in England can be seen in an article called “Vice of Reading,” featured in Temple Bar (September 1874). This article depicts reading as an addiction “just as real, just as imminent, and we fear yet more deadly, since far more insidious” than dram drinking, tea drinking, or tobacco smoking (251). The habit of reading is described as an excuse for idleness and a “stumbling-block in the way of education” that will enfeeble the mind, make “flabby the fibre” of the body, and undermine the “vigour of nations” (ibid.). Such a feminized rhetoric of the dangers of reading highlights the inseparability of anxieties about reading, women, and national cultural supremacy. Temple Bar even goes so far as to declare the invention of croquet the savior of many women who have, as a result, avoided contributing to the “deterioration of the human species” through improper reading practices (256–57). Moving women into a more social, group-regulated activity such as croquet (even if it was an outdoor “sport” that took women out of the parlor and into the company of men) was seen as a remedy to the private and unregulated spaces in which solitary and “insidious” reading could occur. In order to stave off the feminization of British culture, Temple Bar surprisingly suggests that women take on more vigorous, masculine activities and abandon the dangerous vice of reading.

Though the specific dangers of reading were often only vaguely alluded to, they were frequently associated with women behaving in ways unbecoming to a proper wife and mother. In other words, critics amplified fears that what women read (especially if it happened to be sensational or scandalous) and how they read (particularly if it was quickly and uncritically) would infect them with (at best) romanticized expectations that would leave them dissatisfied about their lives and (at worst) with immoral thoughts that could lead to immoral behavior. An article on “Novel-Reading,” printed in the American magazine Putnam’s, illustrates the connection between fears about women’s reading and fears about their proper roles. The article opens with the scene of a mother’s dutiful regulation of her daughter’s reading practices: “‘Pray put away that book,’ ‘I wish you were not so fond of novels,’ and the like phrases of displeasure and reproach, are familiar to the lips of many mothers, to the ears of many daughters” (September 1857, 384). While a supposedly real mother who is quoted in the article admits that she enjoys nothing better than a good novel, she maintains that “such books are decidedly dangerous for young girls. They exert a bad influence on growing minds, especially on feminine minds, by nature inclined to an overbalance on the side of feeling. They excite the imag-
The Scene of Women’s Reading

ination, arouse morbid emotions and aspirations, and so render them unfit for homely duties and aims of common life, and cause them to feel unsatisfied with its realities” (ibid.). By putting such speeches into the mouths of mothers, Putnam’s cleverly enlists women to justify the need for their own regulation in order to keep them fit for their roles as wives and mothers. Here mothers serve a contradictory role: They are asked to monitor the reading of those under their care, but they are also required to submit to the regulatory powers of the critics who will teach them how to do so.

Although much of the discourse surrounding the corruptibility of the woman reader was at odds with the popular idea of woman as moral agent, Machor points out that “reviewers were unable to see—or perhaps unwilling to admit—that their ideas about female readers rested on incompatible conceptions of womanhood in the culture at large” (68). Likewise, in Women’s Worlds: Ideology, Femininity, and the Woman’s Magazine, Ros Ballaster, Margaret Beetham, Elizabeth Frazer, and Sandra Hebron argue that “the definition of the female reader of magazines is a contradictory process in which women’s importance is both confirmed and strictly delimited, through which the ‘feminine’ is both repressed and returns irrepressible” (77). Thus, middle-class women readers were central to many commentaries on proper reading practices precisely because of their revered status as the protectors of morality, a status that coincided with an intense anxiety about the potential failure of individual women to live up to their idealized reputations by reading improperly. Whether critics’ regulatory attempts were the charitable acts they characterized them as or cynical acts of patriarchal dominance through which reviewers marginalized and disempowered women in what Machor identifies as “an ultimately phallocentric system of reading” that women were supposedly incapable of joining (74), it is clear that women readers became the contested ground on which literary culture was defined and the profession of literary criticism was established.

By studying the influential genre of the family literary magazine in the context of critical discourse on women’s reading, I reveal an alternative to the relationship between women readers and nineteenth-century magazines outlined earlier. While focusing on the ways in which the negative idea of the woman reader served as a major defining force behind the divisions between high and low culture, the definitions of literary forms such as realism and sensationalism, and the development of the literary canon, this book illustrates how some critics and magazines created a distinct image of women readers that has not yet been
uncovered. The fact is, women readers were crucial to the establishment of family literary magazines, which targeted women as the primary consumers of literature and the disseminators of culture within the home. The untapped audience of middle-class women was excluded from other serious magazines that addressed literary and cultural issues. Largely because they included women, family literary magazines stood apart from and outsold the weighty political and critical quarterly reviews, which had been the primary venue for respectable literary opinions in Great Britain since the eighteenth century. With a drop in demand for the old quarterlies (such as the *Edinburgh Review* and the *Quarterly Review*), literary reviewing became the province of review-oriented weeklies like the *Athenaeum* and *The Saturday Review*, conducted by university men. The concomitant push toward making the university the center of literary authority spawned specialty journals such as the *Reader* and the *Academy*, which offered to fulfill Matthew Arnold’s call for an English counterpart to the French Academy to monitor the nation’s cultural activity and ensure its high quality (Kent xx). However, these new journals were aimed at a more highly educated male audience than the family magazines, and, as such, they increased what Margaret Shaw calls the “stratification of literacy” along class and gender lines, “which ultimately solidified and privileged the construction of a new ‘man’ of letters and his forms of literate behavior” (196). As the professionalization of this man of letters took hold, critics such as Frederic Harrison declared their concern about directing the public’s reading practices. In “The Choice of Books” featured in the *Fortnightly Review* in April 1879, Harrison claims that “Systematic reading is but little in favour even amongst studious men, in a true sense it is hardly possible for women. A comprehensive course of home study, and a guide to books, fit for the highest education of women, is yet a blank page remaining to be filled” (4). While the elite literary reviews focused on what John Morley of the *Fortnightly Review* called the “momentous task of forming national opinion” by providing education, guidance, and the resolution of doubt for male audiences (quoted in Houghton, “Periodical Literature” 7–9), the family literary magazine had already begun to supplant these periodicals by establishing itself as one solution to the educational void that existed for women readers.

To do so, family literary magazines did not condescend to women readers; instead, they replaced the predominantly unhealthy discourse of women’s reading with an alternative, healthy discourse. While this approach had its roots in marketing, it was also justified in terms of pro-
tecting middle-class values and preserving the cultural health of the nation. In *The Reading Lesson* Patrick Brantlinger rightly points out that critical opposition to novels and novel reading in the Victorian period as “a widespread reaction to one of the earliest forms of modern, commodified mass culture, is familiar, well-charted territory” (2); however, he goes on to chart the less familiar criticisms of novel reading within novels that he claims are a defining feature of the genre itself. I hope to map another less familiar territory: the defense of novel and magazine reading within magazines themselves, which I argue is a defining feature of the family literary magazine. Against the well-founded critical background of protests against gendered reading practices outlined by scholars, *Educating the Proper Woman Reader* explores a specific kind of response to common critiques of women readers that has been largely ignored. I hope to show that the unique response of family literary magazines to women readers placed them firmly in the center of the nineteenth-century literary marketplace as participants in a cultural debate rather than as subjects to be debated. I maintain that these magazines defended women readers against critics for both commercial and cultural purposes that ultimately created greater personal and professional opportunities for women.

By resisting the professionalization of literary criticism at the expense of women readers, family literary magazines also contributed to a better environment for women writers than other “serious” magazines. While women contributed to and sometimes edited other types of magazines, this genre was particularly welcoming to women. Taking the *Cornhill* as an example, Janice Harris claims that women writers contributed about 20 percent of its contents between 1860 and 1900, with women writers rising as high as 60 to 70 percent in certain issues during the 1860s and 1870s—the heyday of the genre (385). Harris compares these figures to Walter Houghton’s estimate that only 14 percent of the writers included in the thirty-five journals indexed in his *Wellesley Guide to Victorian Periodicals* were women. This increase seems to indicate that the family literary magazine’s inclusion of women readers may have led to a more favorable environment for women writers. Harris claims that the greater number of women writers was largely the result of the attention these magazines paid to “topics of interest to women” as well as the assumption that “women—and men—were interested in more and different topics than either the exclusively ‘women’s’ publications or the major reviews had covered” (392). As a result, women writers felt invited to contribute serious articles as well as fiction and poetry to family literary magazines. By the 1880s, when the
genre was declining, the number of women writers also began to decline. In *Edging Women Out*, Gaye Tuchman and Nina Fortin posit that by the 1880s male critics and authors had “actively redefined the nature of a good novel and a great author,” effectively “edging women out” of the profession in which they had thrived during the 1860s and 1870s (8). Tuchman and Fortin surveyed the archives of Macmillan Publishing—a company that also launched its own family literary magazine bearing the house name—from 1867 to 1917. They found that 62 percent of fiction manuscripts were submitted by women at the beginning of this period, whereas only 48 percent of them were submitted by women by the end of the period (60). While Tuchman and Fortin do not consider the effects that novel serialization or contributions to magazines may have had on these figures, they identify a trend that corresponds to the rise and fall of the family literary magazine. I contend that while this periodical genre dominated, women were more successful as professional writers. As novel serialization in magazines waned, the reign of the three-volume novel and the circulating library collapsed, and the single-volume novel emerged, male writers began to resume control of the literary marketplace.

Although Ellen Miller Casey and Marysa Demoor complicate this narrative somewhat, they do not refute it. Miller Casey read 11,000 fiction reviews printed in the *Athenaeum*, the preeminent British review, between 1860 and 1900. She agrees that the number of novels by women decreased during that period but maintains that there was a “genuine though grudging acceptance of women novelists as the equal of men” at the end of the century (152). She also qualifies the concept of “edging women out” by denying a “smooth” and “unidirectional” rate of change in the number of women’s novels reviewed, though she concedes that between 1885 and 1890 there was a dramatic drop in the number of women novelists discussed (153–54). Likewise, Demoor’s study of women reviewers who wrote for the *Athenaeum* indicates that the journal itself experienced a sharp decrease in the number of women contributors by the turn of the century, when critics’ credentials increasingly included academic degrees (146). Although these scholars present a complex assessment of women’s relationship to the London literary marketplace, they all agree that women writers were more successful during the 1860s and 1870s than later in the century. What I find most interesting about this is that these years coincide with the predominance of the family literary magazine, a genre welcoming to women readers, writers, and editors alike. This was, I believe, the
result of the confluence of a period and a genre friendly to women, a moment in history forgotten or repressed by Virginia Woolf when she notoriously claimed that there was no legitimate history of women’s literature to record. This book aims to bring this forgotten or repressed moment in literary history to the surface. While my primary focus is on the empowering discourse about women’s reading that has been overlooked, I also show how women readers were sometimes able to transform themselves into writers and critics as a result of their rising status as readers in family literary magazines.

The Periodical Form as Literary and Scholarly Subject

While most nineteenth-century critics avoided condemning all fiction and magazine reading, their general distaste for the periodical form and its biggest star, the serialized novel, pervaded the profession of literary criticism well into the twentieth century. As a result, the field of periodical literature has, until recently, remained largely unexplored by scholars. According to Laurel Brake, Victorian periodicals have been a “subjugated” form not only in their own period where they were prime and highly visible quiddities in a struggle between literature and journalism, but also in the twentieth-century construct of “literature” which is predicated on their defeat, devaluation and invisibility. . . . In the desire to establish English as an academic subject, it was attempted to sever links between literature and journalism, and to obscure their intimate material involvement and intertextuality in the period. (Subjugated Knowledges xi–xiv)

The nineteenth-century impulse toward the professionalization of literary criticism as a way of regulating cultural production and consumption marginalized not only women readers but also periodical literature and serialized novels. Many twentieth-century scholars who dismissed magazine publications took their cues from nineteenth-century critics who began to standardize the canon of books deemed worthy of literary study based on criteria that either excluded periodical literature altogether or divorced supposedly more literary works from their original periodical contexts. In Sesame and Lilies, for example, John Ruskin makes the distinction between “books of the hour” and
“books of all time.” Books of the hour, he argues, should not even properly be called books as they are “merely letters or newspapers in good print,” whereas books of all time are works of art that express truth (7–9). Ruskin draws a barrier between periodical literature and art, developing a definition of high culture that necessarily excludes popular newspaper and magazine sources. However, his formula breaks down when one considers that the majority of “classic” Victorian novels were originally serialized within the pages of magazines or issued in monthly parts.

During the nineteenth century, magazines were generally believed to encourage skimming, skipping, and leisurely enjoyment—supposedly corrupting methods of reading assumed to be opposed to professional and critical ways of reading. The reliance of family literary magazines on fiction serials coupled with the fear of magazines themselves increased their potential for critical dismissal. Why were serials so objectionable? Jennifer Hayward argues that the serialized novel’s commercial status and responsiveness to readers have been equated with “femininity and immaturity” as well as “pernicious social influences” since the nineteenth century (7). Like fears about women readers, Victorian critical distaste for both the serial and the periodical was also linked to the critic’s anxiety about his own status. The advent of part-issue publication, originating with Charles Dickens’s *The Pickwick Papers* in the 1830s, forced critics to act not as experts but as everyday readers, reading and responding as a novel was in process. Hayward notes that this was distasteful primarily because it undermined the professional status critics were just beginning to establish, making them equal participants in the reading community rather than revered experts (24). As a result of the loss of some of their regulatory power over serials, critics often depicted “the serial phenomenon” in terms of “familiar, disparaging models of addiction and industrial production” (27). The profession of criticism was thus simultaneously threatened and sustained by women readers, periodicals, and serial novels.

By the 1860s part-issue serialization began to give way to magazine serialization. This move was in large part due to the advent of family literary magazines, which provided publishers with a consistent outlet and advertising vehicle for their wares and the public with a cheap and varied source of reading material. Norman Feltes acknowledges that serials in magazines were particularly marked by their status as “branded goods” (69). As texts that drummed up sales for particular magazines, which were often used as advertising vehicles for their publishing houses, magazine serials were even more distasteful than part-issue
publications. Not only were readers forced to consume literature bit by bit in monthly portions that invoked suspense and invited reader interaction, they were now assaulted with an additional, overwhelming array of highly commercialized reading material. For many of the same reasons, the critical distaste for serials persists today as they have transitioned into television and other digital media.

Ironically, the very divisions between high and low culture that critics formulated in the pages of nineteenth-century magazines often discouraged twentieth-century literary scholars from exploring the “low” and “ephemeral” form of the periodical. A fetishization of the book led critics to ignore the fact that serialized novels in magazines dominated the Victorian literary arena. Furthermore, a disciplinary emphasis on individuality and solitary authorship encouraged literary scholars to neglect the highly communal and eclectic form of the periodical. Even today, many scholars of periodicals feel the need to justify their work by organizing it around canonical literary figures or focusing on periodicals only as they enrich our understanding of already revered writers. Furthermore, despite Lyn Pykett’s call for critics to make the transition from thinking of periodicals as mirrors that reflect society to understanding them as active shapers of culture, magazines are still often used as tools to study other subjects, and their own specific agendas and anonymous articles are given short shrift (“Reading the Periodical Press” 102). Few studies take into account magazines as genres or treat them as collaborative and corporate forms that are worthy of study in their own right. This book seeks to remedy some of the neglect periodicals have received as a genre by examining family literary magazines as a class of coherent texts with recognizable traits, paying attention to particular authors and editors only as they are relevant to advancing the agenda and character of the periodicals themselves. This approach draws attention to the actual experiences of nineteenth-century readers and allows us to better understand the ways in which literature and journalism intersected.

By focusing on Harper’s, the Cornhill, Belgravia, and Victoria, I am asserting both that each periodical conforms to the generic qualities of the family literary magazine and that each one also has a particular character and agenda that was often guided by the editor and that inevitably influenced contributors. Mark Parker points out that although periodicals seem to offer an unparalleled openness of form that would invite a myriad of writing approaches and reading responses, they also provided writers and readers with a highly determinate set of expectations that shaped contributions and responses (15). Likewise,
Linda Hughes argues that periodicals are a form in which “random disorder... coexists with order” and that “can be said to affirm pluralism at the local level, conformity at the global level” (119, 121). Within the pages of periodicals, editors, contributors, and readers interact to create a seemingly chaotic and open form that maintains a logical coherence. This coherence determines the periodical’s genre as well as its distinct character and agenda, which is larger than the sum of its parts and permeates even the seemingly disparate and discrete sections of the collection of works in any given issue. As a result, works included in periodicals are not merely extensions of their author’s intentions or related to the context of the magazine in a secondary way, as is sometimes assumed. Instead, these works gain deeper meaning when examined within the periodical because that context gives them their meaning. In this study my primary interest is in the meaning the periodical context lends to images of women readers within the pages of these magazines during their first five years of publication, a time when each periodical was developing its own coherent character and agenda.

*Educating the Proper Woman Reader* would not be possible without the gradually but steadily increasing interest in periodicals and their readers that reaches back to the scholarship of Richard Altick, William Charvat, and others who in the mid-twentieth century paved the way for studies focusing on the effects of the publishing industry on authorship and readership. Their work, along with the rise of interdisciplinary, feminist, new historicist, and cultural studies approaches to literature, has spawned a major critical movement in recent years that includes both periodical studies and book history. The formation of the Research Society for Victorian Periodicals in 1969 and of both the Research Society for American Periodicals and the Society for the History of Authorship, Reading, and Publishing in 1991 have hastened the development of bibliographic resources that established a map of nineteenth-century periodical literature upon which scholars could begin to chart their own courses of study. The leadership of these organizations and the development of important scholarly tools have resulted in a booming field of research that is highlighted by the number of recent books that have made readership, print culture, and periodicals acceptable subjects of literary-historical scholarship.

Despite the recent excellent work in the field, there are still gaps in our understanding of the function of women readers in periodical culture. In *Reviewing Sex: Gender and the Reception of Victorian Novels*, Nicola Diane Thompson calls for a serious, full-length investigation of the role women readers played in the development of critical standards in lit-
erary magazines (5). Likewise, Ballaster and her colleagues note that though the connection between women readers and literary magazines was crucial to the development of the nineteenth-century periodical press, no study has been devoted to examining this relationship (76). In addition, as Kate Flint points out, though “woman as reader” is a fashionable topic in feminist criticism . . . most of the current debate has either focused on the practice of women reading today, or has looked at the construction of the woman reader . . . divorced from a fuller socio-historical context” (16). This book seeks to return the concept of the woman reader to the neglected social, historical, and literary context of periodical literature that broadens and enriches our understanding of both her symbolic function in Victorian society and her practical impact on literary debates.

**The Family Literary Magazine as a Genre**

When I use the term “family literary magazine,” I am referring to that class of magazines typically called shilling monthlies in England, including *Macmillan’s* (1859), *Temple Bar* (1860), *St. James’s* (1861), *The Argosy* (1865), *Tinsley’s* (1867), and *St. Paul’s* (1867). Instead of using the more commonly recognized label, I have coined the term “family literary magazine” because, in my estimation, it more accurately describes the attributes of these magazines than the simple designation of their price implies. In *Sensation Fiction and Victorian Family Magazines*, Deborah Wynne uses the term “family magazine” to refer to similar kinds of middle-class fiction magazines. I prefer the addition of the term “literary” to emphasize the cultural pretensions of these magazines as well as their function as a forum for serialized novels. I also expand the British context to include inexpensive American monthlies like *Harper’s* and *Putnam’s*, which I see as two of the earliest examples of the genre. A decade after *Harper’s* showed how successful it could be for a publishing house to begin a general literary magazine as an advertisement for its publications and an outlet for its authors, this magazine genre exploded in London, where nearly every major publishing house began its own magazine. As a result of my study of *Harper’s*, I have decided to exclude weekly magazines such as Charles Dickens’s *All the Year Round*, which Wynne includes in her category of family magazines. I see the weeklies as halfway between the penny papers aimed at the working classes and the middle-brow, family literary mag-
azines that are my focus. My analysis of Harper’s transformation of elements borrowed from Dickens’s weekly Household Words, the predecessor to and model for All the Year Round, has contributed to my understanding of the family literary magazine as distinct from even Dickens’s literary weeklies. While literary weeklies were certainly closely related to the monthlies and were often geared toward the same broadly defined, middle-class audience, the monthlies usually looked less like newspapers and were of a higher quality, often including lavish illustrations and full-page text layouts rather than the newspaper-style columns and lack of illustrations that characterized Dickens’s magazines.

So, what did this new magazine genre look like, and how did readers approach the multifarious collection of cultural artifacts contained within its pages? Richard Ohmann’s fictionalized account of an American woman’s response to her favorite periodical suggests one answer to this question. In his study of turn-of-the-century American magazines, Ohmann sets the scene of periodical reading for a middle-class woman who desires to be culturally educated as well as entertained by her magazine. Though this scene of reading takes place decades after the heyday of the family literary magazine, it dramatizes the effects these magazines may have had on their more commercially oriented, late-century successors and their readers. Ohmann writes:

When the morning mail arrives, on a muggy autumn day in 1895, Mrs. Johnson . . . comes down from the sewing room and . . . picks up the October issue of Munsey’s Magazine. . . . [She consults her] favorite departments: “The World of Music,” “Literary Chat,” “In the Public Eye” . . . and, with more of a sense of duty than of pleasure, “Artists and Their Work.” She especially looks forward to the hour she will spend tonight with the final installment of Robert McDonald’s “A Princess and a Woman” (dashing Americans now caught up in a Carpathian intrigue). And during the month, she will return to the magazine for other fiction, including a new serial. . . . She will carefully read the article on the Strauss family . . . duly noting that “Americans hold Strauss and his music in great esteem.” . . . This kind of information helps her find her bearings in a cultural landscape that she knows mainly through magazines and those friends who belong to it by birth and education. (1–2)

This illustration is interesting for its emphasis on the prominent role magazines played in women’s intellectual development even at the end
of the nineteenth century. In addition to providing entertainment, family literary magazines were a primary source of the formation of women’s identities as readers: These magazines self-consciously packaged themselves as tools to help women become culturally literate, to become better literacy instructors for their families, and to become proper middle-class citizens.

The new genre of the family literary magazine was distinctly unlike women’s magazines such as the *Englishwoman’s Domestic Magazine* or *Good Housekeeping*. Whereas domestic magazines articulated women’s proper roles as housewives by providing articles on decorating, cooking, and household management, family literary magazines produced an image of the proper woman reader as a symbol of national health and vitality. Instead of teaching women to be proper consumers of products as domestic magazines did, family magazines taught women to become proper readers and to represent themselves as tasteful, middle-class citizens without engaging in the alarming rhetoric of feminine corruption and cultural decline. While women’s magazines wanted to cure women’s bodies with products and advice, family literary magazines wanted to cure the nation’s cultural anxiety by presenting positive images of women readers.

Family literary magazines were thus a hybrid genre—appealing to women not solely through domesticity but also through literary values that the proper woman reader could use to advance the cultural status of her nation. As Mary Poovey argues, the idea of the proper woman “was critical to the image of the English national character, which hoped to legitimize both England’s sense of moral superiority and the imperial ambitions this superiority underwrote” (9). Poovey contends that the Victorian ideal of womanhood—to which the ideal of the proper woman reader was intimately connected—served to depoliticize class differences by focusing on moral and psychological differences among classes and by subsuming all individuals into a representative Englishman or Englishwoman (ibid.). Although women’s proper moral and domestic behavior was implicit in the family magazines, the spotlight was on their countrywomen’s literary taste and cultural sensibility as a means of justifying the cultural superiority of the nation. Indeed, the act of reading was promoted in such magazines as a means of nation building as readers interacted with, internalized, and embodied the national cultural values that emerged from their reading.

As embodiments of national cultural taste, family literary magazines also followed in the footsteps of Mudie’s Select Circulating Library, which characterized itself as a surrogate parent who would
choose proper reading material for the family, thus easing the worry of actual parents, who could rest assured that whatever their family members were reading from Mudie’s would be moral and wholesome.\textsuperscript{12} Family literary magazines marketed themselves as miniature select libraries that contained material appropriate for the entire family that was still stimulating for male readers. However, these magazines did not merely dictate what was appropriate reading material; instead, they encouraged readers to use the magazine’s contents to develop their own abilities to choose good literature. It was not only the contents of family literary magazines that were important, but also their physical presence as decorative objects in the home. Barbara Quinn Schmidt contends that bound volumes of these magazines, seen as guaranteed repositories of suitability and good taste, were prominently displayed as signs of social status in middle-class households ("Novelists" 142). Women who purchased such magazines signified their individual literary taste, their family status, and the cultural superiority of the nation. It is no coincidence that many of these magazines, including the \textit{Cornhill}, \textit{Temple Bar}, \textit{Belgravia}, \textit{St. James’s}, and \textit{St. Paul’s}, took the names of particular areas of London. In England and America—where magazines like \textit{Harper’s} and \textit{Putnam’s} were among the first to seek truly national rather than regional audiences—the family literary magazine became a geographical signifier of the nation’s capital of culture. These magazines confidently placed the responsibility for the dissemination of that culture on the shoulders of the nation’s women.

Since the publicly acceptable rationale for women’s education was to prepare them to teach their children properly, these magazines took on an instructive—but not condescending—persona aimed at women who were learning to be upwardly mobile and culturally literate, middle-class subjects. Part of the great appeal of the family literary magazine was its ability to simultaneously address men and women and upper- and lower-middle-class readers by speaking instructively to those who needed it and confidingly to those who didn’t. In other words, the features of these magazines reinforced the middle-class behavior and values of those who belonged to that class and tutored those who were attempting to move into it by speaking authoritatively on middle-class culture with a few nods and winks to those who already knew the ropes. The editors of family literary magazines addressed their readers as a part of this already genteel and educated audience while simultaneously emphasizing the need for readers to become genteel through the magazine’s cultural instruction.
Understanding the educational mission of the family literary magazine is crucial to understanding the genre’s relationship to women readers, which focuses on increasing women’s cultural knowledge and improving their readerly reputations. I examine several articles featured in the *Cornhill* as case studies of the family literary magazine’s progressive attitude toward cultural instruction because it is precisely this attitude on which the magazines built to advance the cause of women readers. In the *Cornhill*, William Thackeray compares the cultural role of the family literary magazine to that of a connoisseur who watches over the reader’s shoulder, educating the reader “to admire rightly” because an “uninstructed person in a museum or at a concert may pass without recognizing a picture or a passage of music, which the connoisseur by his side may show him is a masterpiece of harmony, or a wonder of artistic skill” (“Nil Nisi Bonum,” February 1860, 133). Thackeray and other editors of family literary magazines shaped their periodicals as interpreters of culture, but they also intended them to be important instruments in the spread of culture. This goal is stated in a *Cornhill* article on “The National Gallery” (March 1860), in which the magazine introduces its own economical plan for a gallery renovation that would present the nation’s best art in the most attractive manner and, more importantly, make it accessible to the greatest number of people, thereby promoting “a taste for art throughout the kingdom” (355). In this case the family literary magazine becomes a strong advocate for cultural experiences that are beyond its pages and that extend its own project of bringing culture to the vast range of the middle classes, particularly to women. Likewise, in articles such as “Amateur Music” (July 1863), the *Cornhill* advocates the “cultivation of music as a recreation” for all classes. This article argues that musical enrichment would allow the nation’s culture to thrive by “striking its roots down lower in the social scale” and thus enabling “its topmost branches” to become “widened and strengthened” (93). The *Cornhill*, an exemplar for the genre, not only disseminated culture, but also interpreted it and, in its view, strengthened it by including new audiences.

However, there are some indications of the genre’s ambivalence toward the spread of culture to the masses. In “The Opera 1833–1863” (September 1863), for example, the *Cornhill* acknowledged that some loss of prestige and distinction given to the cultural elite would inevitably occur once access to culture was widened. Still, the magazine maintained that glory to the nation as a capitol of culture and the knowledge and appreciation of music (or any other form of cultural
enrichment) provided benefits that outweighed the costs (295). In accordance with this view, Harper’s featured articles on American architecture and landscapes as well as monthly reports on current cultural events; Belgravia ran a series on parks and monuments of London; and Victoria included essays on art exhibits, theaters, and other “public entertainments.” The family literary magazines in this study reveal their awareness of the arguments against a widespread cultural education but nevertheless support such a mission, especially as it applied to the improvement of women and the middle classes. Family literary magazines not only advocated improved cultural knowledge for a wide audience, they also unabashedly promoted themselves as the perfect educational handbooks for those who desired to obtain that knowledge in an accessible way.

As cultural experiences were made available to a wider (female) audience, these magazines also helped to manufacture middle-class taste. In the Cornhill, the vast array of articles on taste, when taken in their context alongside numerous explorations of the British military, parliament, and the strength of the nation, become nationalistic arguments to improve British culture as a means of maintaining the nation’s position as the greatest country in the world. Articles on etiquette, homes, furniture, fashion, and makeup repeatedly emphasize simplicity and understated elegance as a way to combat the ostentatious display of status, replacing vulgar consumerism with economy and simplicity, which are established as the sober and realistic standards of middle-class taste. Prominent among such articles is Richard Doyle’s series “Bird’s-Eye View of Society” (April 1861–October 1862). Doyle’s humorous commentaries and their accompanying foldout illustrations are “intended chiefly for the information of country cousins, intelligent foreigners, and other remote persons; also young ladies and gentlemen growing up, and not yet out” (April 1861, 497). These miniature guidebooks expostulate on parties, balls, charity bazaars, art shows, seaside escapades, horse races, and music concerts, reminding readers of proper and improper behavior and attire for such public events. According to Andrew Blake, the Cornhill “celebrated the promotion of the middle class into new influence, and welcomed changes in behavior that accompanied this” (96). Doyle’s “Bird’s-Eye” views and family literary magazines generally anticipated and encouraged behavior that would benefit both the middle classes and women. To this end Harper’s linked its cultural and educational commentary to a sense of middle-class nationalism that would be enacted by women; Belgravia featured numerous articles on fashion, health, and beauty to ease the assimila-
tion of the upwardly mobile woman and maintain the civility of the middle class; and *Victoria* offered alternative ways for middle-class women to acceptably enter and participate in the male-dominated public sphere for the benefit of the nation. Thus, family literary magazines attempted to initiate newcomers as they constructed rules for maintaining a middle-class lifestyle that would be beneficial to women readers and the nation.

By presenting themselves as proper purveyors of culture, family literary magazines defied many reviewers in the cultural elite who saw periodicals as initiators of the downfall of the nation’s literature. To counter this negative press, the *Cornhill* linked its own status to important periodicals of the past. In “The Four Georges” Thackeray claims that reading magazines such as the *Spectator* and the *Tatler* is the best way to learn about the culture of the eighteenth century: “In the company of that charming guide, we may go to the opera, the comedy, the puppet show, the auction, even the cockpit” to relive the past (July 1860, 18). If eighteenth-century magazines are so filled with historical fruits, why shouldn’t those of the current century also be considered valuable, Thackeray implicitly asks. Another *Cornhill* article, titled “Journalism,” goes beyond arguing that magazines are valuable historical artifacts to proclaim their status as a part of contemporary literature: “Journalism will, no doubt, occupy the first or one of the first places in any future literary history of the present times” (July 1862, 52). Likewise, “A Memorial of Thackeray’s School Days” provides readers with a chronicle of the importance of periodicals to that great writer’s education, describing how he and his friends pooled their spending money to subscribe to magazines such as *Blackwood’s*, the *New Monthly Magazine*, and the *London Magazine*:

> It is uncertain what college tutors or schoolmasters may think of magazine reading for their pupils; to the set of whom I am now speaking my belief is that it was most advantageous, and that it proved to be a very strong stimulus of literary curiosity and ambition. The constantly fresh monthly and weekly supply of short articles seemed to bring home the fact of literary production, and made it appear, in some degree, within reach. (January 1865, 126)

Thus, the *Cornhill* presented itself as more than an educator of cultural values; it promoted itself as the inspiration for (as well as the instrument of) great cultural productions. *Harper’s* and *Victoria*, with their unabashed reprints of articles from other magazines, and
Belgravia, with its strident defense of the value of newspapers and periodicals, also contributed to the elevation of periodical literature as a whole and of the family literary magazine in particular as a vital literary resource for the nation.

Just as important and intimately linked to its cultural value was the family literary magazine’s defense of women readers. All of the magazines in this study repeatedly positioned themselves in opposition to the elite reviews, most notably the Saturday Review, which had a reputation for being dismissive toward women readers. For example, in “The Sharpshooters of the Press” (February 1863), the Cornhill goes so far as to blame some male journalists’ belief in the innate inferiority of women on their personal shortcomings: “They cannot escape their fate—though it is such a hard one—to be unsuccessful with women, and to write as if they were so” (242). The author goes on to argue that such journalists “question the reality of women’s virtue, arraign their motives, ridicule their tastes, and dictate to them in what mode or under what condition they shall be allowed to employ or amuse themselves, and at what season, and in what fashion they shall perform certain feminine affairs” as a way of controlling and belittling them (241).

Though Belgravia and Victoria make the most overt and consistent attempts to support women readers by attacking other magazines and their prominent reviewers, family literary magazines are generally serious about defending women as intellectually capable members of its reading public by offering positive images of intellectual women readers in their featured poetry, fiction, nonfiction, and illustrations. Even though these magazines asserted that women should be empowered to read a wide variety of texts and trusted that women’s reading could be critical and productive, they diverged in their views of what would be obtained by women’s reading as well as in the degree to which they accepted the independence of women to read without regulation or supervision.

In chapter 1, I examine the transatlantic cross-fertilization of the family literary magazine by looking at the ways in which the American Harper’s Magazine first formed itself out of “pirated” scraps from British periodicals and then maintained transatlantic relationships that established the family literary magazine as a viable commodity in both America and England. This chapter discusses Harper’s suggestion that American women readers use the literature it reprinted from British periodicals to teach their families higher standards of literary taste that would allow them to play a role in establishing a nation capable of producing its own literature. I contend that Harper’s promoted the British
realist novel as a high cultural text suitable for middle-class women readers, who would instruct their families in proper literary taste and thereby lay the groundwork for the development of a new generation of writers able to create a distinctly American literature. The magazine thus, surprisingly, used British literature to forge a patriotic American message. Harper’s made clear the relevance of the domestic realm to the success of public culture and allowed women to play a vital role in the development of America’s identity by passing knowledge on to their children.

Beginning with an examination of one of the most popular magazines of the nineteenth century allows me to place the genre of the family literary magazine within a transnational context that not only increases its significance as a literary form but also illustrates that transatlantic literary relationships were more reciprocal than it is often assumed. This chapter also reveals the roots of the magazine genre in the nationalistic goals of the growing middle classes, who were struggling to construct a coherent identity through literary culture. Indeed, as Frank Luther Mott claims, Harper’s “immediately and profoundly” affected “the whole course of development of the American magazine” (3). My study of Harper’s shows that it affected the course of the development of the British magazine just as profoundly. The connections among national identity, literary culture, and women readers established in Harper’s are central to the genre of the family literary magazine in both America and England.

Chapter 2 illustrates the ways in which the Cornhill, the most reputable and critically revered of the family literary magazines, inherited Harper’s agenda by consistently depicting women as domestic readers who were guided in their reading choices by the magazine itself and who read for the benefit of their families. However, the Cornhill went beyond Harper’s more traditional arguments urging women to pass on their intellectual abilities to the next generation. I argue that the magazine advocated women’s formal education—and, to a lesser degree, women’s movement into the professions—as a means of assisting the development of the newly defined “professional gentleman,” who was emerging as the leader of the British nation. In the context provided by the Cornhill, a woman who learned to read properly would participate in both self-improvement and nation building as she learned to follow particular codes of conduct that would ensure the cultural dominance of the middle class. If middle-class women were allowed to be educated or to work to support themselves, the magazine suggested, middle-class men would be free to distinguish themselves in their professions,
INTRODUCTION

consolidate their wealth, and increase the power of the class and the nation before entering into a costly and attention-diverting marriage. Thus, for the *Cornhill*, women’s reading was vital to the dominance of the middle classes. The *Cornhill* is crucial to any examination of the family literary magazine because it set the standard upon which the genre was modeled throughout the 1860s, when it emerged as a powerful force in London’s literary marketplace.

In chapter 3, I discuss the ways in which *Belgravia Magazine* worked to counteract negative images of women readers by providing them with the autonomy to both enjoy and learn from what many critics saw as a scandalous fictional form, the sensation novel. This magazine built itself on the foundation laid by the *Cornhill*, but sought to radicalize the *Cornhill*’s message by introducing pleasure as an important consideration in deciding what to read as well as by insisting that women’s reading be considered separately from the ways it could benefit the family. Editor Mary Elizabeth Braddon not only defied critics who disparaged women readers and the form of the sensation novel, she also overtly encouraged women to choose their own books and read for their own reasons. *Belgravia* worked to transform attitudes toward women readers and popular literature first by imagining the woman reader as active, independent, and informed and second by redefining the genre of the sensation novel as realistic, artistic, and instructive. I maintain that while Braddon may not have been the best spokesperson for legitimizing women’s independence as readers of sensation novels due to her own personal and professional scandals, her voice was important because it promoted women’s independence as readers and broke through the predominantly moralistic critical discourse to claim that reading could be personally fulfilling for women without being dangerous. *Belgravia* marks a notable milestone in the development of the family literary magazine because it was one of the few and the most notorious periodicals edited by a woman. *Belgravia* provided a strong defense of women readers and revolutionized the parameters of reading, allowing women to partake of the private pleasure that the other family literary magazines sought to transform into a public duty performed on behalf of one’s class and nation.

Finally, chapter 4 delineates *Victoria Magazine*’s establishment of a feminist tradition of literary criticism that promoted women’s reading by encouraging them to become writers and critics who could contribute to the creation and definition as well as the consumption of literary culture. This magazine realized the progressive ideal of the woman reader that the other family literary magazines only imagined.
Victoria established a real community of intellectual women readers who became editors, printers, and contributors to a family literary magazine that overtly promoted a feminist agenda. Together, Emily Faithfull, Emily Davies, and the working women at Victoria Press produced a politically motivated literary magazine that both envisioned and created alternative roles for middle-class women. Using Queen Victoria as a model of women’s ability to be powerful public figures and proper wives and mothers, the magazine urged women to enter public culture by reading and writing in ways that allowed them to participate in the most important issues of the day. Victoria is a significant family literary magazine because it pushed a nascent feminist social agenda more boldly than any of the other magazines while demonstrating the results of that agenda in its pages. From developing a feminist criticism to hiring women writers to printing the magazine at a woman-run press, this periodical engaged women in the process of producing a literary culture amenable to their vision of a society in which they were equal partners with men in guiding the progress of the middle class.

Belgravia and Victoria made more radical statements regarding the relationship of women to literary (and not so literary) texts, but Harper’s and the Cornhill each had a more dominant voice in the period and serve as a more typical gauge of the alternative public image of the much-maligned woman reader. Though Harper’s provided an influential model for the genre that was developed by the Cornhill and its competitors, the Cornhill was the most prestigious of these periodicals. The Cornhill did not suffer the intense criticism that Harper’s faced from its competitors for reprinting much of its contents from British magazines (a practice that had also established Harper and Brothers as a mainstay of American publishing). The Cornhill’s prestige was linked to the fact that it was issued by the respectable Smith, Elder, and Company, edited by the revered William Thackeray, and featured novels written by critically acclaimed authors such as George Eliot, Elizabeth Gaskell, and Anthony Trollope. Belgravia, on the other hand, was issued by the maverick publisher John Maxwell and managed by Braddon, whose reputation as the “queen of the sensation novel” and illicit relationship with Maxwell garnered critical disrespect. Braddon’s magazine also showcased her own sensational novels as well as stories by other, less-known writers that did little to improve the magazine’s image. Likewise, Victoria’s lack of “quality” literary material and its position within the protofeminist Langham Place Circle detracted from its power and prestige among the general population. Thus, the publishers, editors, and contributors determined the reputation of each magazine and had a
profound effect on its construction of the proper woman reader. While the more marginalized *Belgravia* and *Victoria* were positioned to take risks in transforming images of women readers by appealing to women’s personal pleasure and social self-interest, the more reputable *Harper’s* and *Cornhill* took progressive, but safe, routes to promote and recruit women readers. In providing analyses of these four magazines, I explore a class of underread and uncategorized literary periodicals that shed new light on the dynamics of gender and reading. Analyzing the methods these magazines use to defend women readers is my primary goal in the chapters that follow. However, I also explain how the family literary magazine’s concept of the woman reader is linked to its definitions of high and low culture. As a result, a brief introductory discussion of these categories—as they manifested themselves in the magazines in terms of realism, sensationalism, and sentimentalism—is necessary.

**Realism and Cultural Authority in Family Literary Magazines**

As documents that claimed cultural authority, family literary magazines could not avoid participating in the broader critical discussions of what constituted high culture. While it is often assumed that the important literary debates about high and low culture were taking place in high-brow journals, family literary magazines participated in defining the same critical terms under discussion in the elite reviews in which criticism was being professionalized. These cultural debates were focused on the definition of realism, which varied from one critic—and one magazine—to the next. Generally speaking, the term was applied to domestic novels about middle-class families that were considered to have an appropriately moral message, that achieved an acceptable level of verisimilitude, and that focused on character development over plot. Often, however, realism was conceptualized as more “ideal” than “real.” Realist works were expected to paint a picture of life that seemed “true” in its details but that required its main characters to serve as moral role models for middle-class audiences. In *The Realistic Imagination*, George Levine argues that such a conception of realism allowed nineteenth-century authors—and the critics who touted realism as equivalent to high culture—to claim “special authority” for themselves. Levine claims that:
Realists take upon themselves a special role as mediator, and assume self-consciously a moral burden that takes a special form: their responsibility is to a reality that increasingly seems “unnamable” . . . [and] to an audience that requires to be weaned or freed from the misnaming literatures past and current. The quest for the world beyond words is deeply moral, suggesting the need to reorganize experience and reinvest it with value for a new audience reading from a new base of economic power. (9–12)

The slippery nature of realism is, in part, a result of its function as both a descriptive term to define a genre of fiction and a signifier of the author’s and critic’s own professional power to shape middle-class values. Definitions of realism were reliant not only on the aesthetic and moral elements of a work of fiction, but also on its constructions of the emerging middle-class subject.

The authority that realism signaled was played out in gendered terms as well. Men were more likely to be designated as realist writers, while women were relegated to lower cultural forms. Even women writers who focused on representing detailed depictions of domestic life were often categorized as practitioners of “detailism.” The excessive use of detail was cited by many critics as a sign of women’s inability to do anything other than copy in minute detail what they saw around them. As Lyn Pykett argues in The Improper Feminine, the predominance of a “gendered critical discourse” perpetuated two main ways of viewing women’s writing either as “a world of surfaces and sympathy—or as a riot of detail and promiscuous emotion” (27). Women who attempted to conform to the high form of realism were often dismissed for their superficiality, while women who wrote sensational or sentimental fiction were seen to be lost in details of a more bodily and disruptive kind. Although realism was defined in relation to what was usually conceived of as its opposite, growing out of what Alison Byerly calls realism’s “impulse to contradict” (4), the forms that were defined in opposition to realism were often discussed as exaggerations of realistic techniques that encouraged excessive emotions and/or immoral behavior.

Pamela K. Gilbert contends that delineating genres such as realism, sensationalism, and sentimentalism is equivalent to endorsing “a set of reading instructions” that “critics, publishers, authors, and readers will enforce” as they read, thereby ignoring certain qualities of a work in order to classify it (59). While both sensational and sentimental fiction
incorporated realistic traits, works containing sensational and sentimental elements were delimited by their genre’s position as realism’s low cultural opposite. Even though accepted realist writers could incorporate sensational or sentimental techniques, those who were designated as sensationalists or sentimentalists had a harder time escaping their generic confines. Within the logic of the typical nineteenth-century review, then, the following qualities were constructed and perpetuated as inherent to high and low cultural forms:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>High Culture</th>
<th>Low Culture</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Masculine</td>
<td>Feminine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Realistic</td>
<td>Sensational or sentimental</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Idealistic</td>
<td>Hyperrealistic (“detailism”)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cerebral</td>
<td>Physical</td>
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<tr>
<td>Artistic</td>
<td>Market driven</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Represents proper female characters</td>
<td>Represents aggressive and criminal or suffering heroines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emphasizes character over plot</td>
<td>Emphasizes plot over character</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emphasizes the moral strength of the middle classes</td>
<td>Blurs class distinctions</td>
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While these qualities are broadly generalized, they suggest what Nancy Glazener argues: that defining realism against sensationalism and sentimentalism is at bottom misogynist, male dominated, and embroiled “in class hierarchy and the consolidation of white bourgeois cultural privilege” (146).  

Indeed, defining realism seems just as ideological and politically charged today as it was 150 years ago. In Narrating Reality, Harry Shaw provides an overview of twentieth-century critical discussions of realism that forgo praising the form for its moral and artistic authority, but employ it “as a scapegoat genre that helps [critics] affirm values they find antithetical to the values they impute to it” (11). According to Shaw, realism has been disparaged for the same reason it was praised in the nineteenth century—because it “supposedly attempts to make the world of the bourgeoisie seem ‘natural’ and ‘full,’” representing the world in a totalizing way that refuses to admit that it offers only one version of reality (9–10). On the other hand, it has been championed for “its refusal to totalize” (11). Shaw indicts critics such as Georg Lukács, Roland Barthes, Terry Eagleton, Michel Foucault, and Mikhail Bakhtin for ignoring the experiences of actual readers as they define realism to
suit their own political purposes. Like the family literary magazines that championed the power of readers over nineteenth-century critics, Shaw complains that twentieth-century critics have followed the tradition of the previous century by dismissing readers as “chumps” who are overcome by some sort of “mass hypnosis” and cannot make appropriate reading choices on their own (33–34). In the nineteenth century, realism was a socially and politically driven category used to signify a moral and educated readership that had critically shunned dangerous, low cultural forms; in the twentieth century it became a socially and politically driven category used to signify the complacency of the unthinking masses captivated by a false and lulling sense of reality. In each case, realism has been crucial to defining how culture works in society. Shaw’s goal is uncannily similar to that of family literary magazines: Both defend the supposedly unknowing reader against the supposedly knowing critic by questioning the efficacy of the divisions between high and low cultural forms.

Family literary magazines embraced women readers and both high and low cultural forms. Instead of presenting women as objects for critics to protect and guide, family literary magazines imagined them as subjects who were initiated into critical discussions in which they became full participants. These magazines generally asserted that reading low cultural forms was entertaining and harmless even as they asked their readers to prove that they were savvy enough to know the difference between entertaining and edifying literature. In his lecture “On English Prose Fiction as a Rational Amusement,” Anthony Trollope—who edited the family literary magazine *St. Paul’s*—articulates the common attitude toward high and low culture in family literary magazines. He contends that “a novel is bound to be both sensational and realistic. And I think that if a novel fail in either particular it is, so far, a failure in Art. . . . Truth let there be;—truth of description, truth of character, human truth as to men and women, if there be such truth I do not know that a novel can be too sensational” (123–24). Trollope recognizes the critical binaries between realistic and sensational novels but attempts to destroy what he characterizes as false divisions that obscure the ability of both novels and magazines to teach “lessons of life . . . from the first page to the last,” especially if they deal with “the false and the forward, as well as with the good and gracious” (110). The significance of these ideals to family literary magazines becomes even clearer when combined with Trollope’s support for the same kind of integrated audiences family magazines promoted. Trollope argues that “he who condemns the reading of novels for his daughter, should condemn it for his son;
and that he who condemns it for his children should condemn it for himself” (107). He thereby refutes the focus on women as highly corruptible readers whose cultural consumption should be regulated more stringently. In his refusal to blindly uphold cultural divisions and to use women as a rationale for the profession of literary criticism, Trollope espouses the philosophy of the magazines in this study.

While family literary magazines followed elite reviewers by setting up common critical binaries, they did not uphold them in practice. Rather, the critical oppositions served as a means to articulate cultural authority while the magazines actually conveyed that the divisions between the high and the low, the masculine and the feminine, were more permeable, blurred, and mutually constitutive. In other words, family literary magazines engaged with the terminology of the binary critical system while subtly refuting it. These binaries collapsed as family literary magazines instigated genre trouble by inviting women readers to judge literature for themselves, thus denying this as the sole right of critics. At the same time “Victorians were struggling to name and classify, to define and enclose” the world (Bernstein, “Ape Anxiety” 267), family literary magazines resisted strict classifications, definitions, and enclosures.

My analysis of Harper’s illustrates how the false binary between realism and sentimentalism, upheld by its editors in an effort to teach literary taste to its readers, is blurred by the magazine’s concomitant attempts to convince the public that it was a nationalist periodical. The magazine’s desire to increase its patriotic profile and appeal to women readers led to its inclusion of many sentimental tales by American writers. The collapse of the high/low cultural boundaries theoretically endorsed culminated in the magazine’s focus on Charles Dickens—a writer who represents the intermingling of reason and fancy, realism and sentimentality, the high and the low—as the ultimate exemplar of a respectable literary culture. I argue that the dual narrators of Dickens’s Bleak House duplicate the competing editorial voices within Harper’s itself that simultaneously maintained and blurred the high/low cultural boundaries. The sentimental female voice of Esther Summerson thus parallels Harper’s nationalist and feminine appeals to its readers while the “objective” observations of the omniscient narrator coincide with the authoritative voice of Harper’s editors, who advocated realism as a literary model for Americans to follow.

Similarly, the Cornhill set up a false opposition between fact and fiction that paralleled the opposition between high and low culture. However, in practice, the opposition was collapsed. With William
Thackeray as its driving editorial force, the magazine recommended an educational diet of reading that stressed the need for “nourishing facts” to balance out its “fictional sweets.” However, the *Cornhill’s* promotion of realist novels as educational tools that would allow readers to arrive at some new understanding of “fact,” or real life as it is lived, and of factual articles that held their readers’ interest by including fictional elements such as dream sequences and dialogues made it difficult to distinguish between the two forms. The *Cornhill’s* theoretical elevation of fact/realism is further complicated by its contention that sensation novels, while highly “unreal,” were valuable sources of entertainment as long as readers could distinguish between the two opposing forms. In other words, the *Cornhill* proposed simple distinctions between high and low culture that it argued were not ultimately as important as the informed choices made by readers who understood the differences between the cultural forms but did not allow their reading practices to be dominated by those differences.

In *Belgravia Magazine*, Mary Elizabeth Braddon engaged with the same critical binaries as she attempted to debunk them, interacting with and confounding the dominant critical discourse that constructed the sensation novel as the opposite of the realist novel. Braddon’s magazine counteracted the rampant fear of sensation fiction as a sign of an infectious, mass-produced low culture dispersed primarily through railway newsstands. Instead of presenting sensationalism as a threat to the nation and to high literary culture, *Belgravia* allied it with a high cultural tradition descending from writers like Sophocles and Shakespeare. In fact, Braddon claimed that sensationalism was a new form of realism that was ultimately more artistic and more effective than the idealized domestic narratives that critics typically praised. *Belgravia* overtly attempted to overturn the cultural boundaries that other family literary magazines questioned more subtly.

Finally, in Emily Faithfull’s *Victoria Magazine*, the strict separation between the high and the low was reinstated in order to establish an authoritative, feminist critical voice. In other words, the magazine’s protofeminist critics, led by Emily Davies, fell in line with elite critics (despite expressing overt disdain for their dismissal of women writers) in order to legitimize their own promotion of women authors and their redefinition of realism to include a focus on positive portrayals of female characters that served as role models for the emerging “new woman.” Despite *Victoria’s* sometimes elitist critical stance, which more boldly attacked sensation fiction than did other magazines of the genre, the magazine’s poor financial situation led to the inclusion of sensation
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tales much like those it rejected in its criticism. However, I argue that *Victoria* purposely published what its editors saw as a tamed or domesticated sensationalism that adhered to its feminist and high cultural values. Thus, *Victoria*, like the other family literary magazines, used realism as a means of establishing its literary authority, while advocating the legitimacy of low cultural forms that adhered to its feminist literary values.

Family literary magazines succeeded in establishing the authority of middle-brow culture and in empowering women readers to participate in important literary debates that would determine the standards of culture for years to come. These magazines were active and powerful defenders of women readers in the nineteenth-century press, though their voices may not have been the dominant ones. Women may have been “edged out” by the professionalization of literary criticism, the corporatization of the publishing industry, and the establishment of English as an academic discipline, but family literary magazines contributed significantly to creating a social climate in which women’s formal education was on its way to becoming standard for middle-class women by the turn of the century. Though these magazines were not overtly political in nature, they participated in a wide public debate that affected the intellectual lives of women for years to come. Because of magazines like *Harper’s*, the *Cornhill*, *Belgravia*, and *Victoria*, women’s growing intellectual abilities and independent reading practices became less controversial and more acceptable as an inevitable part of societal progress. As Kelly J. Mays declares, while “reading may have been forever lost as an art in the nineteenth century, it had been simultaneously gained as both a discipline and a profession” (185). Those who defined the discipline and the profession were often preoccupied with the effects of literary culture on women. The family literary magazines featured in the following chapters are crucial for their documentation of an alternative relationship between literary authorities and women readers.
THE IMAGES OF influential women readers (in Harper’s), intellectual women readers (in the Cornhill), independent women readers (in Belgravia), and feminist women readers/critics (in Victoria) successfully gave women an opportunity to participate in defining literary culture and paved the way for changes in women’s education and roles in society that family literary magazines characterized as part of an inevitable, evolutionary development. These magazines provided women with a mainstream forum that invited them to develop their own ideas about literature and to engage in the kinds of critical discussions from which they were typically excluded. As a result of the phenomenon of the family literary magazine, women like Victoria’s correspondent Henrietta were confidently able to raise their voices in favor of the intellectual development of women. In her letter to the editor, Henrietta overtly expresses the message that underlies this magazine genre:

The epithets of “bluestocking” and “strong-minded” have been too often thrust in the faces of many of the most refined and modest of women, whose higher natures instinctively followed a law to which more frivolous or ill-trained minds were strangers, but which preserving the outward semblance of womanly goodness, passed muster when those others were censured and discouraged. The most capable, the most intellectual among women have ranked among the gentlest, kindest, and most devoted of wives and mothers. The largest view allowed to her, the more clearly she discerns her true sphere, her noblest mission. I know of no argument more cogent
than that of the right to grow. It ranks above all others, it is mighty for all time. I think I do not overstate a conviction founded on observation and a calm though deep-rooted interest in the subject, when I say, I think it is impossible for a woman to be “too intellectual.” I think she cannot be too highly educated. Though she were charged with the knowledge of all the world, she would be “woman” still.

As a genre, these magazines empowered women to read in new ways that were fervently justified as beneficial to the status of the entire middle class and the cultural health of the nation. Thus, the women who read and wrote for family literary magazines were able to influence the valuation of literary culture in important ways that were characterized as acceptable within the middle classes. Uncovering these alternative representations of women readers is crucial to our understanding of Victorian culture because it was partly as a result of such female-friendly but not female-exclusive forums that women would increasingly gain access to education and to previously male-dominated professions. These magazines reached a broad audience and effectively worked to change public opinion about women’s roles in the literary world as well as in society at large.

However, the advances in thinking represented by these magazines had evidently become invisible to early-twentieth-century writers like Virginia Woolf, perhaps due to arguments like Henrietta’s, which continued to focus on women’s education as a force that would improve family life rather than transform it. Woolf, whose father edited the *Cornhill* from 1871 to 1882, famously lamented the lack of a woman’s literary and critical tradition, apparently disregarding all of the “Henriettas” (including her Aunt Anne Thackeray Ritchie) who read and contributed to family literary magazines like the one that occupied so many years of her father’s life. In *The Forgotten Female Aesthetes*, Talia Schaffer argues that “Woolf was well read in the literature produced by women at the turn of the century and was indeed intimately acquainted with many of the women themselves.” However, “the woman who insisted ‘we think back through our literary mothers’” actually established modern feminism and the modernist movement by excluding her mid-to-late-nineteenth-century literary foremothers (194). In addition to the ascendance of a new generation that disregarded the activities of its immediate Victorian predecessors, several major changes in the publishing industry and the system of higher education at the turn of the century apparently muffled the voices to which
I have drawn attention in this book. The demise of the serialized novel and the circulating library, which effectively ended the dominance of the family literary magazine; the increasing specialization of magazines into distinct target audiences, which further separated male and female readers; and the development of English literature as an acceptable field for academic study, which entrenched the profession of criticism as a predominantly male pursuit, worked to exclude women from mainstream literary and cultural discourse despite the gains they had made at mid-century. These changes led to the exclusion of women from the development of the literary canon as readers, authors, and critics until the late twentieth century. However, we cannot forget that, if only for a brief time during the middle of the nineteenth century, women had a mainstream forum that invited them to create and influence culture rather than to consume it passively.

Though the modernists may have forgotten or dismissed the family literary magazines, studying such cultural texts is important not only for what they teach us about the past, but also for what they teach us about the present. In her postscript to *Victorian Afterlife: Postmodern Culture Rewrites the Nineteenth Century*, Nancy Armstrong argues that postmodernism is the culmination of the Victorian cultural modernization process that shifted “political action from government onto culture” (313). The importance of culture to women’s power in mid-Victorian society and, particularly, to the nation’s imagined identity prefigures our contemporary “culture wars” in which the identity of the nation is represented as much by its culture as by its land and institutions (ibid., 312). Thus, through the study of nineteenth-century commodities like family literary magazines, which figure cultural knowledge as status, we can trace the origins of the democratization of the public sphere that fueled the anxieties of nineteenth-century critics, elicited the rejection and suppression of all things Victorian by the modernists, and has inspired the cultural play as well as the culture wars of the postmodernists.
Notes to Introduction

1. Despite vast national differences, I treat British and American literature as a single discursive field in which similar and parallel critical trends were emerging—particularly in relation to the function of critics, periodicals, and women readers. Likewise, I use the term “Victorian,” which is technically applicable only to Great Britain during the reign of Queen Victoria, to refer to the corresponding time period in the United States. While this is a convenience in a book that focuses on more British than American periodicals, it is also a practice that some American historians have followed.

2. For more on the conception of reading as a disease, see Kate Flint, Pamela K. Gilbert, and Kelly J. Mays.

3. Though Temple Bar belongs to the genre of the family literary magazine, which I define more thoroughly below, it seems that—at least during the 1870s—it was more conservative than its contemporaries.

4. Putnam’s, a rival to Harper’s, also belongs to the category of the family literary magazine. The fact that it focuses on the power of women readers and shifts the fears of reading to girls indicates that it took a more progressive stance in tune with the magazine genre even while it justified the role of the critic.

5. In addition to Mary Elizabeth Braddon’s editorship of Belgravia and Emily Faithfull and Emily Davies’s editorial posts at Victoria, Ellen Price Wood edited the Argosy, and Anna Maria Hall edited St. James’s.

6. See my qualification of these numbers as they apply to William Thackeray’s editorial reign over the Cornhill in chapter 3.

7. While this index includes the family literary magazines the Cornhill, Macmillan’s, and Temple Bar, it is dominated by more elite journals.

8. For an account of the ways serial novels coincided with the Victorian worldview, see Linda Hughes and Michael Lund’s The Victorian Serial (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1991).

9. See the special issue on “Critical Theory and Periodical Research” (Victorian Periodicals Review 22 [Fall 1989]) for an important series of articles about studying the genre and form of periodicals.
10. The most ambitious bibliographic attempts made thus far have been the cataloguing of a wide range of British periodicals in the *Wellesley Index to Victorian Periodicals* and *Waterloo Directory of Victorian Periodicals* (ed. Michael Wolff, John S. North, and Dorothy Deering. Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1977)—both of which are now available in fully searchable CD-ROM formats—as well as the *Union List of Victorian Serials* (ed. Richard D. Fulton and C. M. Colee. New York: Garland, 1985). The Nineteenth Century Masterfile, a new web-based subscription search engine for nineteenth-century magazines, and *The Athenaeum Project*, an online database of reviews published between 1830 and 1870, are recent useful electronic resources.

For publication information and thorough descriptions of thousands of magazines, Edward Chielens’s *American Literary Magazines* and Alvin Sullivan’s *British Literary Magazines* are also invaluable. For historical surveys, Frank Luther Mott’s *History of American Magazines* and John Tebble and Mary Ellen Zuckerman’s *Magazine in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991) prove to be the most comprehensive studies on the American front.


**Notes to Chapter 1**

1. The magazine was called *Harper’s New Monthly Magazine* from 1850 to 1900. From 1900 to 1925 the name was shortened to *Harper’s Monthly Magazine,*
and in 1925 it was changed to its current title, *Harper's Magazine*. For the sake of convenience, I refer to the magazine by its shortest and most commonly used name, *Harper's*.

2. Technically speaking, the works copied from British magazines into *Harper’s* pages were reprinted legally and were therefore not pirated. However, *Harper’s* developed a reputation for piracy despite the absence of laws preventing its reprinting practices.


4. In *Transatlantic Insurrections* Paul Giles identifies a need for more scholars to acknowledge and trace “reciprocal transatlantic influences” as they relate to “versions of national identity” in the literatures of Britain and America (15). For another account of literary history that reverses the traditional transatlantic flow, see Nancy Armstrong and Leonard Tenenhouse’s *The Imaginary Puritan: Literature, Intellectual Labor, and the Origins of Personal Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992).


6. As Mark W. Turner points out in his book *Trollope and the Magazines*, periodicals embody Bakhtin’s notion of intertextuality as multivocal texts with plural meanings (233). Cynthia L. Bandish affirms this notion by suggesting that Bakhtinian analysis serve as a model for periodical studies.

7. The featured serial novels for the first issue were Charles Lever’s *Maurice Tiernay, Soldier of Fortune* from *Dublin University Magazine* and Anne Marsh’s *Lettie Arnold* from *The Ladies’ Companion*. Other works included the short story “Lizzie Leigh,” attributed to Charles Dickens (but actually written by Elizabeth Gaskell for Dickens’s *Household Words*); a biography of Samuel Johnson and an article on George Sand from *Bentley’s*; and an article on William Wordsworth from the *Athenaeum*.

8. The June 1850 features taken from *Household Words* are “Lizzie Leigh,” “A Tale of the Good Old Times,” “Francis Jeffrey,” “A Child’s Dream of a Star,” “Illustrations of Cheapness,” “Short Cuts across the Globe,” “Ghost Stories—An Incident in the Life of Mademoiselle Clairon,” and “Work! An Anecdote.” In July 1850 the following articles are attributed to Dickens’s magazine: “The Miner’s Daughter,” “The Railway Station,” “Globes and How They Are Made,” “A Paris Newspaper,” “Two-Handed Dick the Stockman,” “The Uses of Sorrow,” “Alchemy and Gunpowder,” “Ignorance of the English,” “The Planet—Watchers of Greenwich,” “Father and Son,” “The Appetite for News,” “Greenwich Weather-Wisdom,” “Young Russia,” and “The Orphan’s Voyage Home.” Of these pieces taken from *Household Words* between its inception on March 30, 1850, and June 8, 1850, “Ghost Stories—An Incident in the Life of Mademoiselle Clairon” is listed in Anne Lohrli’s table of contents for the magazine without the phrase “Ghost Stories,” and “Globes and How They Are Made” and “Ignorance of the English” are not listed at all. It is likely that the titles of these selections were changed before they were reprinted.
9. Dickens received $1,728 for the advance sheets of his novel (Exman, *Brothers Harper* 310).

10. While authors such as Dickens and Edgar Allan Poe fought for an international copyright agreement, publishers were generally not supportive of the idea and claimed that book prices would rise dangerously, jeopardizing most Americans’ access to books and threatening the American book trade abroad (Barnes 234–38). As early as 1844 Wesley Harper joined the American Copyright Club, which pushed for more extensive international copyright laws, but this did not seem to interfere with the company’s piratical practices (Exman, *Brothers Harper* 157). Apparently, Harper and Brothers’ relationship to the push for an international copyright law was precarious: On the one hand, the company wanted to be recognized for its efforts on behalf of authors; on the other hand, it did not want to endanger its own profits. The copyright controversy raged on and awareness of the problem grew, but the rights of readers and manufacturers held sway over those of authors until 1891, when an international copyright agreement was finally reached.

11. John Abbott’s *Napoleon Bonaparte* was highly profitable for both author and publisher. It was published in two volumes with engravings from the magazine on June 15, 1855 (Exman, *House of Harper* 329). Contracts for “Abbott’s Napoleon” of February and March 1852 show that the company agreed to pay $100 an article and an advance of $1,000 for travel to Europe to sell the plates and the copyright of *Napoleon* if Abbott split the profits of those sales with Harper and Brothers (Archives A1, 177–79). Jacob Abbott was paid five dollars a page plus expenses not to exceed one additional dollar per page, and he was promised a ten-percent royalty should it be “deemed expedient at any future time to publish any portion of said articles” (ibid., 171).

12. Travel writer and essayist Donald G. Mitchell, also known as Ik Marvel, occupied the “easy chair” from its inception in 1851 until October 1853, when he began to share the responsibility with George W. Curtis, a young journalist associated with the Brook Farm intellectuals. According to Gordon Milne, Curtis took over the “chair” in April 1854 (75). Curtis was considered the more “literary” as well as the more “political” of the two editors, though both had a strong stake in strengthening the reputation of American writers. Curtis in particular supported Herman Melville and was instrumental in getting his work (including “Bartleby”) published in *Putnam’s*, where he simultaneously worked until 1857 (ibid., 68, 75). However, both Mitchell and Curtis conformed their editorial commentaries to *Harper’s* agenda.

13. As Zboray illustrates, literacy instruction in nineteenth-century America often fell to women, who were expected to reinforce their children’s reading practices at home. This feminization of reading and other literate practices gained strength as women increasingly participated in public institutions such as churches and schools that promoted reading (88).

14. The vexed nature of Esther’s narrative has been a favorite topic of critics. Some articles that have examined her role as narrator over the years include William Axton’s “The Trouble with Esther” (*Modern Language Quarterly* 26 [1965]: 545–57); Valerie Kennedy’s “Bleak House: More Trouble with Esther” (*Journal of Women’s Studies in Literature* 1 [1979]: 330–47); Michael Kearns’s “But I Cried
NOTES TO CHAPTER 2


15. Nina Baym notes of this particular review that “the work seen by the London Leader as particularly American would not have been accepted as worthy of the up-and-coming nation, and indeed in allotting work reminiscent of the European Dark Ages to the American mind, the British journal was patronizing” (245). This view of Melville’s fiction as “uncivilized” could further account for Harper’s rejection of the novel for serialization.


18. See Brian Foley, Sheila Post-Lauria, Pearl Chesler Solomon, and Robert Weisbuch. Foley suggests that Melville’s purpose in writing “Bartleby” was “to show not just that an American writer can write a Dickensian story as well as Dickens can, but that he can write one better” (247).

19. Sheila Post-Lauria and Michael T. Gilmore both offer analyses that follow this line of reasoning.

20. For more on Israel Potter, Harper’s, and Putnam’s, see Post-Lauria (191–201).

21. In fact, Dickens was responding to critics, G. H. Lewes in particular, who attacked his work for being unrealistic.

Notes to Chapter 2

1. The Cornhill’s own advertisements suggested that initial sales were as high as 120,000, but according to John Sutherland, the exact figure was 109,274. The sales figures for the remaining issues during the first year are as follows: February–March, 100,000; April, 92,000; May–June, 90,000; and July–December, 87,500 (106). These numbers are astounding when one considers the 1860 circulation figures for precursors to the Cornhill such as Blackwood’s (10,000) and Bentley’s (5,000) and for reviews such as Fraser’s (8,000) and the Saturday Review (10,000) (Ellegård 22, 32). The Cornhill’s sales figures remained around 80,000 for the first two years and are recorded as follows by George Smith for December of each subsequent year under consideration here: 1862, 72,500; 1863, 50,000; and 1864, 41,259 (Glynn 143).

2. The Saturday Review was particularly opposed to the Cornhill Magazine because of bitterness over William Thackeray’s successful bid to obtain several of Saturday’s frequent contributors. Fitzjames Stephen, Henry Sumner Maine, and John Ruskin were among the defectors to the Cornhill (Bevington 28). In his “Roundabout Papers” (August 1860, October 1860, and July 1861), Thackeray
protested what he saw as the Review’s unfair critiques of himself and his publisher, George Smith. The Saturday reciprocated with unfavorable reviews of Thackeray’s works (ibid., 173–74) as well as with an attack on Stephen’s Cornhill campaign for women’s economic independence.

During Thackeray’s tenure as editor, articles on many serious and controversial subjects made their way into the magazine. The Cornhill included articles that covered topics such as liberal political and social philosophy (“Liberalism,” January 1862), industrial reform (“Life and Labour in the Coal Fields,” March 1862), continental wars and politics (“Invasion Panics,” February 1860; “How I Quitted Naples,” August 1860; and “The Dark Church in Vienna,” March 1863), and the Civil War (“The Dissolution of the Union,” August 1861, and “Negroes Bond and Free,” September 1861), as well as numerous articles on British courts, parliament, and laws, particularly those regarding women, criminals, and the insane. Furthermore, the magazine’s inclusion of a novel like Wilkie Collins’s Armadale, which the author felt compelled to defend against the “claptrap morality of the present day” as a book “daring enough to speak the truth” (“Foreword” 5), illustrates the Cornhill’s proclivity to take risks, especially after Thackeray’s editorial reign had ended.

However, Thackeray did in fact reject Trollope’s story Mrs. General Tallboys and George Meredith’s poem “The Meeting” because of his fears of offending lady readers. When he reluctantly and with profuse apology turned down Elizabeth Barrett Browning’s poem “Lord Walter’s Wife” on the grounds that “there is an account of unlawful passion felt by a man for a woman” against which “I am sure our readers would make an outcry” (Ray, Letters 227), she replied with a convincing defense of women readers: “I am deeply convinced that the corruption of our society requires not shut doors and windows, but light and air—and that it is exactly because pure and prosperous women choose to ignore vice, that miserable women suffer wrong by it everywhere” (ibid., 228). It seems that Browning’s defense was supported by George Smith, who played a role in tempering Thackeray’s moralistic intent. Smith considered the rejection of Barrett Browning’s poem an unnecessary fuss and insisted on printing controversial articles on public school reform that Thackeray also opposed. These widely debated articles led to the Cornhill’s emergence as a champion of public school reforms.

In addition, Thackeray was generously paid for his serials. According to Sutherland, Thackeray received the bulk of the magazine’s payments to contributors; in September 1860, for example, he received about 358 of 538 pounds in payments (106). Thackeray conducted the magazine from January 1860 until May 1862. From May 1862 until August 1864 the magazine was run by an editorial board consisting of George Smith, Frederick Greenwood, and G. H. Lewes. When Lewes resigned in 1864, Greenwood became the sole editor until 1868, when Lewes, Dutton Cook, and Smith took over. Finally, in 1871 Leslie Stephen was hired, giving the magazine a unified editorial identity once again, but with a continued decline in sales (Huxley, Smith Elder 118).

Thackeray and Smith agreed that they would have equal veto power over contributions, an arrangement that—coupled with increasing financial worries—may have eventually led to Thackeray’s resignation, although the partnership was successful overall. The facts surrounding Thackeray’s resignation remain fuzzy.
However, the existing letter recording the incident, written March 4, 1862, states: “I have been thinking over our conversation of yesterday, and it has not improved the gaiety of the work on which I am presently busy. Today I have taken my friend Sir Charles Taylor into my confidence, and his opinion coincides with mine that I should withdraw from the magazine. To go into bygones now is needless... And whether connected with the Cornhill Magazine or not, I hope I shall always be sincerely your friend” (Ray, *Letters* 256). In fact, Thackeray continued to write for the magazine until his death in December 1863.

5. Spencer Eddy’s comparison of the *Cornhill* cover with the stodgy Macmillan’s cover indicates the positive impact it probably had on the public. As further evidence of this impact in a transatlantic context, Eddy notes that the ailing American magazine *The Knickerbocker* looked to the *Cornhill*’s cover design as a model for transforming its own image (16–17).

6. Typical of most issues, the premiere number included two fiction serials, one of which opened the magazine—Anthony Trollope’s *Framley Parsonage*—and one that was inserted amidst the “factual” material—Thackeray’s *Lovel the Widower*. Most issues contained seven serious articles and two or three poems. The January 1860 issue featured the first part of G. H. Lewes’s scientific series “Studies in Animal Life,” which encouraged the hands-on study of biology among amateurs; John Bowring’s account of his experience as a British diplomat in the Orient, including a description of Chinese women and daily life in “The Chinese and the Outer Barbarians”; John Burgoyne’s “Our Volunteers,” which warned of the dangers of French militarism and the need to bolster the nation’s military forces; Thornton Hunt’s biography of his father, Leigh Hunt; excerpts from Allen Young’s journal (complete with an elaborate fold-out map) about his search for Sir John Franklin’s lost Arctic expedition; the first of Thackeray’s *Roundabout Papers*; and the poems “Father Prout’s Inaugurative Ode to the Author of *Vanity Fair*,” a piece by Reverend F. Mahoney glorifying Thackeray as editor, and “The First Morning of 1860,” a wartime poem urging peace by Mrs. Archer Clive. This issue included six, rather than the standard seven, articles due to the length of Young’s excerpt. Despite this, Peter Smith maintains that the first number has certain qualities that became typical of the magazine: “[T]here is a topicality, not in the sense that it deals with the news, but that it treats of ideas and facts which are of concern; secondly, there is the variety of subjects considered, and finally, there is the fact that the contributors are all men of authority in their subjects” (31).

7. For some less enthusiastic reviews of the *Cornhill*, see Andrew Maunder’s “Discourses of Distinction: The Reception of the *Cornhill Magazine*, 1859–60” in *Victorian Periodicals Review* 32 (3) (Fall 1999): 239–58.

8. Schmidt points out that Smith’s habit of signing authors to write serials after they had completed their most popular works tended to leave the magazine with authors of great reputation and works of less astounding popularity (“Novelists” 148). For example, John Sutherland claims that by December 1862, in the middle of *Romola*’s serial run, sales of the magazine had dropped from 70,000 to 50,000 copies while expenditures doubled (107). G. H. Lewes lamented that *Romola* had “unfortunately not been so generally popular as I hoped and believed its intrinsic beauty would have made it” (quoted in Glynn 140). Though *Romola* did not recruit more readers, Smith stuck to his promise. The novel maintained
its honorary position at the beginning of every issue and included two illustrations by Frederic Leighton per installment—double the usual number—for ten of its twelve parts.

9. Accepting the editorial post of the *Cornhill* seemed to be the best way to ensure the future comfort of his daughters. As an editor, Thackeray would gain a position of great prestige and earn a generous and steady income. This would have been a less arduous means of supporting his family than embarking on lecture tours as he did in America in 1852 and 1856.

10. The 12.5 percent written by women during Thackeray’s editorship includes twenty-one works of fiction, thirteen poems, and three nonfiction articles. The total of 297 contributions excludes nine poems whose authors remain unidentified. My figures are based on the list of prose contributors provided by *The Wellesley Index*, as well as on a survey of the tables of contents of the *Cornhill* to determine which poets contributed to the magazine. Many of these poets are also discussed in articles by Robert A. Colby and Rosemary Scott.

11. During the ten-month period between these two essays, only Thackeray’s daughter Anne (who had one story and one article included in the magazine), the famous poets Elizabeth Barrett Browning and Adelaide Proctor (who contributed two poems each), and Charlotte Brontë (who had one poem posthumously published) appeared in the magazine.


14. The *Cornhill*’s argument seems to have disturbed someone at the feminist Victoria Press whose November 1863 article “The *Cornhill* on Men and Women” in the *English Woman’s Journal* complains about what it interprets as the *Cornhill*’s crass call for women to be like men. While the *English Woman’s Journal* feared that women would lose their moral authority if they became too masculine, the *Journal* was probably also reacting to the fact that the *Cornhill*’s liberatory project for women was presented primarily as a protection for men rather than as an improvement for women; as a result it offered little practical advice for women seeking professional opportunities.

The *Journal* is specifically offended by the September 1863 *Cornhill* article “Anti-Respectability,” written by Fitzjames Stephen. This article argues that women are not inherently more virtuous than men but are only more moral because of the restrictions society places on them. Stephen calls for the expansion of women’s rights but suggests that once societal restrictions on women’s behavior are lifted, women will lose their moral superiority. The *Journal* argues instead for a time when “men and women . . . shall reverence and uphold everywhere that virtue which is of no sex—which is the offspring of God’s love, not of man’s prudence” (181).

15. On the Victorian idea of the gentleman, see also James Eli Adams’s *Dandies and Desert Saints: Styles of Victorian Masculinity* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1995) and Shirley Robin Letwin’s *The Gentleman in Trollope: Individuality and

16. For a more extensive analysis of Leighton’s illustrations for Romola see Shawn Malley, “‘The Listening Look’: Visual and Verbal Metaphor in Frederic Leighton’s Illustrations to George Eliot’s Romola” in Nineteenth-Century Contexts 19 (3) (1996): 259–84. See also Mark W. Turner, “George Eliot v. Frederic Leighton: Whose Text Is It Anyway?” in which Turner notes that “Almost no work has been done on the ways periodical illustrations in the nineteenth century were consumed. While there is an ever-increasing body of work on Victorian images, there is little work that theorizes ways for twentieth-century viewers to encounter nineteenth-century visual culture” (19). Turner suggests some important questions that should be asked about Victorian illustrations, which I address in my discussion of magazine images of women readers: “[H]ow do these drawings relate to the literary text? How do they relate to other visual images within the magazine? How does each individual image stand apart from the series?” (19).

17. That Eliot believed her heroine symbolized the potential of educated women is evidenced by the fact that with her fifty-pound donation to Girton College she identified herself only as the author of Romola. It was also rumored that Barbara Bodichon—cofounder of Girton College with Emily Davies—was the model for the character of Romola.

18. The object Phillis holds—which appears to be a rolling pin—is unmistakably phallic and is thus an additional sign of the threat she presents to her cousin.

19. Although Reader inadvertently states that this census occurred in 1865 (a year in which there was no census taken), his charts and all other comments on it correctly note that it was taken in 1861.

20. This article is the second part of a series that began with “Middle-Class Education in England—Boys” (October 1864), in which Martineau agrees that boys’ schools need reform but resists the idea that the government should step in to administer the changes.

21. Lillian F. Shankman argues that this article by Anne Thackeray (Aunt Anny to Leslie Stephen’s children) had a direct influence on the young Virginia Stephen and in many ways inspired Woolf’s A Room of One’s Own and the development of modern feminism (168–69). In her 1873 revision of the article for a collection of essays of the same title, Thackeray added to her agenda an argument for women’s right to vote (168).

Notes to Chapter 3

1. Maxwell was also the publisher of the Half-Penny Journal, Temple Bar, St. James’s Magazine, and The Welcome Guest, all of which Braddon had contributed to or worked on for at least five years before gaining the editorship of her own magazine. Braddon conducted Belgravia from 1866 until 1876, when it was sold to another publisher, Chatto and Windus, who replaced Braddon’s novels with the works of Charles Reade, Wilkie Collins, and Thomas Hardy (Scheuerle 32).

2. In her recent biography of Braddon, Jennifer Carnell argues that the author was more of a figurehead for Belgravia than a hands-on editor and presents evidence indicating that Charles Smith Cheltnam actually reviewed submissions
to the magazine (174–76). Furthermore, Braddon’s illness from November 1868 to June 1869 prevented her from completing her *Belgravia* serial, *Bound to John Company*, and certainly from attending to the contents of the magazine (Wolff, *Sensational Victorian* 229). However, it seems clear that whatever Braddon’s actual position was concerning the day-to-day business of *Belgravia*, the character, agenda, and philosophy of the magazine were very much under her control. In fact, this periodical is much more closely linked to the personality of its editor than any of the others in this study.

3. Although James generally displays a positive regard for Braddon—affirming that she is an “artist” with a “knowing style” who produces photographs that reflect her “shrewd” observational skills—he claims that her fellow sensationalist Wilkie Collins deserves “a more respectable name” than founder of the genre (593).

4. See, for example, the March 28, 1868 *Punch* cartoon “Sensation Novels” and the May 2, 1863 cartoon about Braddon’s *Aurora Floyd*.

5. *Circe* ran in the magazine from March to September 1867 and was supposedly plagiarized from Octave Feuillet’s *Dalila*. Interestingly, the *Pall Mall Gazette* was barraged with advertisements for *Circe*, *Belravia*, and Braddon’s other works in the month leading up to Greenwood’s assault on her. Maxwell’s aggressive ad campaign on Braddon’s behalf might have inspired the *Pall Mall’s* unwanted attention, but Greenwood may also have been motivated by a personal vendetta against Braddon and Maxwell. He was friends with John Gilby, the spurned literary patron who first supported Braddon’s career. Gilby probably had more than a business interest in Braddon, whose relationship with Maxwell led him to completely sever his ties to her. For more on Greenwood’s attacks on Braddon, see Wolff’s *Sensational Victorian* 208–15.

6. The Wolff Collection at the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center contains sixteen letters Braddon wrote to Kent between 1865 and 1881. All the letters express her gratitude for his championship of her work.

7. Articles such as “Literature in the Purple” (May 1868), “Literature on the Line” (June 1868), and “Writing for Money” (June 1869) supported Braddon’s contention that writing for profit constituted professionalism rather than literary prostitution. These articles followed Braddon’s reasoning that only failed novelists would criticize those who were models of professional success.

8. I quote from a copy of this letter contained in the Robert Lee Wolff Collection at the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center, University of Texas, Austin. The original is housed at the Yale University Library.

9. That Braddon was still considered a champion of women readers and had become much more of a literary authority later in her career is evident in her correspondence with the writer Hall Caine. In November 1901 Caine asked Braddon to serve as an expert witness—as an author “of unquestionable distinction” whose name “would carry weight with the jury”—in a trial to defend his novel, *The Eternal City*, against charges by Mr. Pearson of “The Lady’s Magazine” that it was “likely to corrupt” the magazine’s female readers (Letter dated November 11, 1901). However, Braddon’s draft of her reply indicates that she refused to serve as an expert witness. Her explanation that “when it comes to the question of what kind of story is suited to a Ladies Magazine I find myself unable to pronounce an
opinion. The novelist’s scope has widened greatly since I began to write; & sub-
jects which I should not then have dared to approach have now become the com-
mon stock of women writers” may indicate her unwillingness to engage in such
controversy after having gained a certain measure of respect later in her life (Let-
ter to Hall Caine. No date).

10. Carnell attributes this poem to Braddon herself; however, she mistakenly
cites the date as January 1869 (420).

11. Following Mortimer Collins’s formulation in “Mrs. Harris” (December
1870), which I examine later in this chapter, Belgravia’s illustrations of women
reading letters symbolize women reading sensation novels.

12. For another account of the publication of these serials, see Onslow’s
Women of the Press (122–23).

13. With Braddon’s three simultaneous serials, the short stories, the nonfiction
items she was also writing, and the editorial duties she fulfilled, it is no wonder that
the deaths of both her sister and her mother led Braddon to suffer a nervous break-
down in November 1868. As a result she was unable to complete her novel Bound
to John Company. While another writer took over this novel for her from December
1868 to October 1869, she must have had Charlotte’s Inheritance completed before-
hand since it continued to run and was concluded while she was ill. Braddon told
Bulwer-Lytton in 1872 that “for more than six months” after her mother’s death
“life was a blank, or something worse than a blank, an interval in which imagina-
tion ran riot, & I was surrounded by shadows” (Wolff, “Devoted Disciple” 148).

14. All three of these articles were probably written by Braddon. Carnell
includes “French Novels” and “Glimpses of Foreign Literature” among her list of
Braddon’s nonfiction works (421).

15. This advertisement is part of a series of similar ads featuring praise for
Birds of Prey, Circe, and Belgravia taken from a wide range of magazine reviews. I
noted ads on September 14 and 21 and on October 5, 12, 19, and 26.

16. The on-line Athenaeum Index of Reviews attributes the Birds of Prey to
William Lush and the review of Charlotte’s Inheritance to Geraldine Jewsbury.

17. Her use of such a term worked to feminize and emasculate the predomi-
nantly male, elite critics who attacked her as unfeminine and low.

18. For more on “Sensationalism in Science,” see Onslow’s discussion of Pat-
terson (167–72) and Bandish’s analysis of the series as a part of the magazine’s
Bohemian questioning of authority (249–51).

19. Other articles in the series include “Daylight” (August 1868), “Autocracy
of the Sun” (November 1868), and “Photospheres” (February 1869). Equally sen-
sational, but not part of the “Sensationalism in Science” series are “Inhabited
Grow Sick?” (November 1869), and “Sun Spots” (November 1870).

Notes for Chapter 4

1. Although the women of Langham Place did not adopt the term “feminist,”
I use it for the sake of convenience and because I believe it accurately describes
their magazines and activities.
2. My discussion of Victoria’s literary values is indebted to Solveig Robin-
son’s account of the feminist criticism of the Englishwoman’s Review in “‘Amazed at
Our Success’: The Langham Place Editors and the Emergence of a Feminist Criti-
cal Tradition.”

3. Pauline Nestor intimates that what she calls the magazine’s “restrictive
moralism” is directly related to its association with Queen Victoria (102). How-
ever, James Stone uses nineteenth-century assessments of the magazine to support
his own contention that Nestor’s statement fails to account for the responses of
contemporary women readers, who got more than a moral lesson from the mag-
azine (76). I would argue that the magazine’s tendency toward morality was moti-
vated not by the Queen, but by the magazine’s attempt to prove that professional
women could maintain their femininity, which, if not signaled by motherhood or
charity, was most easily marked by morality.

4. Maria Frawley argues that the magazine’s emphasis on the Queen shifts
from her status as monarch to her essential embodiment of womanhood and
finally tapers off altogether, only to be replaced with depictions of Emily Faithfull
herself as the magazine’s “queenly center” (“The Editor as Advocate” 97).

5. In fact, Davies claims in a letter to Barbara Bodichon that the prospectus
for the magazine caused disagreements that were resolved by eliminating any
description of the magazine or address to its readers (March 12, 1863).

6. For more about Taylor’s relationship to Victoria Press and Victoria Maga-
azine, see Janet Horowitz Murray’s “First Duty of Women: Mary Taylor’s Writings

7. This series includes “Feminine Honesty” (May 1867), “Feminine Knowl-
dge” (June 1867), “Feminine Work” (September 1867), “Feminine Idleness”
(November 1867), “Feminine Character” (December 1867), “Marriage” (January
1868), “Feminine Earnings” (March 1868), and “Feminine Respectability” (May
1868).

8. In addition to the involvement of women readers encouraged by the
“Correspondence” section, the “Social Science” section asked women to actively
participate in social and political activities.

9. After a short stint doing editorial work, Davies devoted herself to impro-
ing women’s education and is best known as the cofounder and head mistress of
Girton College. For more on Davies, see Daphne Bennett’s Emily Davies and the
Liberation of Women, 1830–1921 (London: André Deutsch, 1990) and Barbara
Stephen’s Emily Davies and Girton College (London: Constable, 1927, and Westport,

10. That the review section was seen as a strength of the magazine is indicated
in a quotation Davies pulled from the Illustrated Times: “The Victoria has sterling
qualities and a character of its own. . . . The literary summary is so good that I
cannot but suspect in it the hand of the one man of genius whose name I have
seen in this serial. I hope the Victoria will be able to persevere; if so, it will make
a footing for itself” (Letter 337a). Though Davies had no idea “who our genius
may be,” she was clearly pleased that the portion of the magazine that was so cru-
cial to her was recognized.

11. That Davies already felt a sense of distance from and disdain for Faithfull
may well be reflected in her surreptitious use of the degrading nickname “Fido”
to refer to her Langham place partner in private correspondence. Faithfull’s scandalous involvement in the Codrington divorce case along with her clashes with other Langhamites about her management of the press and of *Victoria* combined to make her the group outcast. The Codrington divorce case of 1864 was one of the most notorious of the trials made possible by the Divorce Bill of 1857. Faithfull became a pawn who, it was implied, either was the victim of attempted rape by the husband of her friend Helen Codrington or was having a lesbian affair with Helen. Stone and Fredeman explain the effect of the case on Faithfull’s reputation and her subsequent rejection by most of her Langhamite colleagues. For an account of the socio-sexual implications of the case, see Martha Vicinus, “Lesbian Perversity and Victorian Marriage: The 1864 Codrington Divorce Trial,” *Journal of British Studies* 36 (January 1997): 70–98.

12. Although the book reviews are unattributed and Davies was not the author of all of the notices, her standards guided the contributions.

13. As Esther Schwartz-McKenzie points out, other critics, including Margaret Oliphant, agreed that Thackeray created heroines who were “wrought plainly and without exaggeration” (xxiv). Thackeray’s heroines were *women with commonsense* and they “projected an idea of what women were that women could appreciate” (ibid.).

14. Though Gaskell’s novel turns on some very sensational events, including a murder and subsequent cover-up, *Victoria* embraced it in large part due to the reputation of the novelist. However, the novel also adheres to the magazine’s conception of domesticated sensationalism, which I discuss later in this chapter.

15. Clare Simmons discusses this in her introduction to the Broadview edition of Yonge’s *The Clever Woman of the Family* (16).

16. The similarities between the June 1863 comment about Gaskell’s work—“Not being overcrowded with incident, there is room for the characters to work, and to display a strongly-marked individuality”—and this June 1866 statement that Oliphant’s novel—“Not being overcrowded with incident, the characters have room to work, and to display a strongly marked individuality in which the true merit of the story lies” suggest that either the reviews were recycled or the values were so strongly present in the minds of the reviewers that they became repetitive. Interestingly, like Gaskell’s novel, Oliphant’s contains sensational elements that are “domesticated.” I discuss *Victoria’s* endorsement of domesticated sensationalism later in this chapter.

17. I have quoted the brief reviews of Braddon and Wood in their entirety.

18. The level of control exerted by Head is unclear. Robinson claims that he took over the editorship of the magazine, but Stone maintains that while he owned half of the press, Faithfull “alone decided the contents of the magazine” (73).

19. Davies heralded his involvement in the press in 1864: “This is what has been wanted all along, a responsible manager who knows the business. . . . He fully believes in women writers but not in indulging them” (Letter 337f).

20. In August 1865 an article called “A Plea for Prudence” acknowledges the similarities between the themes and plots of sensation novels and the events presented in recent news reports, which have “run a neck-in-neck race with the sensation novelist” (359). *Victoria*, however, concludes that sensation fiction is irresponsible because its characters do not receive the same punishment as England’s
criminals, who are “no visionary beings, the creation of a lively imagination, [but] are flesh and blood like ourselves, beings with hearts to break, nerves to agonise, and souls to prepare for the great tribunal of justice” (ibid.).

21. Only “Written for My Daughter” omits this obligatory and often humorous character. However, the advice given to the narrator’s daughter could lead the girl to shun romantic involvement altogether and become an “old maid” herself.
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