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The Politics of Sympathy in the Popular Fiction of Mary Ward and Marie Corelli 1886 – 1908

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Thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Abstract

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This thesis demonstrates that the hitherto under-recognised resurgence of sympathy in late-nineteenth-century fiction was key to the social and literary politics of Mary Ward's and Marie Corelli's *fin-de-siècle* popular fiction and to their work's impact on readers. It argues that their popular fiction thereby provided a new democratic forum for public debate on issues of class, social reform, public morality, and cultural inclusion. The diversity of interpretations and associations of sympathy in the nineteenth century underpinned both Ward's ethics of fellow feeling and Corelli's concept of a bond of sympathy with readers. For both, the stimulation of sympathetic reading experiences was key. Readers were encouraged to think and feel along with fictional characters torn by ideological conflict in Ward's dialogical fiction of ideas, while Corelli's readers were offered validation of their political and cultural status while being enticed with an alternative fictional world of spiritual and moral uplift that was derided by critics. Extensive and original archival research in the British Newspaper Archive and elsewhere reveals how their work was received. It shows how readers, unlike many critics, took their work seriously, even when, as with Corelli's morally controversial novels, the fiction could be seen as self-contradictory. Whether intentionally (Ward) or unintentionally (Corelli), readers were drawn into dialogue and debate with their fiction. While Ward's novels engaged particularly the movers and shakers of the time, Corelli's fiction was subject to widespread public debate between supporters and opponents, as recorded in the pages of local newspapers. Through this investigation a contribution is made to recent critical debates about the nature and effect of sympathy engendered through the act of reading and about the role of popular fiction in the public sphere.

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Research Thesis: Declaration of Authorship

Stephen William Edwards

The Politics of Sympathy in the Popular Fiction of Mary Ward and Marie Corelli1886 – 1908

I declare that this thesis and the work presented in it are my own and has been generated by me as the result of my own original research.

I confirm that:

1. This work was done wholly or mainly while in candidature for a research degree at this University;
2. Where any part of this thesis has previously been submitted for a degree or any other qualification at this University or any other institution, this has been clearly stated;
3. Where I have consulted the published work of others, this is always clearly attributed;
4. Where I have quoted from the work of others, the source is always given. With the exception of such quotations, this thesis is entirely my own work;
5. I have acknowledged all main sources of help;
6. Where the thesis is based on work done by myself jointly with others, I have made clear exactly what was done by others and what I have contributed myself;
7. None of this work has been published before submission

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Introduction

Overview, Aims and Rationale

> It is a privilege to work for such a public […] the [author's] reward is great though it is not discovered in a mere 'cash question' or in newspaper notoriety. It is in the sympathy of thousands; the knowledge that everywhere there are friends, even if there must also be enemies […].[1]
>
> Let me ask you to believe that sympathy for the workman's life, and a desire to bring the resources of the richer and more educated classes to his aid has been one of the strongest feelings of my life. You will find it, I think, in all my books […].[2]

The credos of Marie Corelli and Mary Ward cited above point to the hitherto under-recognised resurgence of sympathy in late-nineteenth-century fiction and the key part it played in the appeal of their *fin-de-siècle* popular fiction. This thesis argues that sympathy was crucial to the emotionally and intellectually engaged reading experiences Ward and Corelli's work desired to stimulate and the social and literary politics these were based upon. Corelli's reliance on 'the sympathy of thousands' and her castigation of her 'enemies' resulted from the critical savaging of her fiction, such as that of *Barabbas* (1893). A close bond of sympathy with her readers was therefore elevated alongside excoriation of allegedly corrupt political and literary establishments. Thereby she sought to validate both her own cultural and political standing as a popular novelist and that of a newly literate reading 'public'. Corelli's consequent resistance to the operation of the literary marketplace attempted to resolve the 'cash question' by an alternative model of fair financial exchange for moral and spiritual uplift. Indeed, her romances sought to entice their 'public' into a just, divine world of love that was more 'real' than that of contemporary realist or decadent fiction — and superior to lurid 'newspaper notoriety'.

By contrast, Ward's often melodramatic realist fiction explored the search for an ethics of sympathy, that of fellow feeling and service to others, in particular to the working class and urban poor. In the process of exploring ways that 'the resources of the richer and more educated classes' could be more widely spread, it encouraged readers to think and share 'the strongest feelings' of fictional characters torn by religious and political conflict. Success for both authors, therefore, required the stimulation of sympathetic reading experiences. Crucially, Ward, in depicting contemporary ideological conflicts and their effect on human lives, sought to create a

[1] Marie Corelli, '"*Barabbas*" — and After', *The Idler,* 7 (February to July 1895), 120–34 (p.134)
[2] Letter from Mary A. Ward to Mr J.J. Dent, 28 October 1904 (in Scrapbook relating to University Hall and the Passmore Edwards settlement), Mary Ward Settlement collection (LMA 4524/K/05/001), London Metropolitan Archives, London.

captivating fiction of ideas that — comparable in some ways to her philanthropic university settlement work that prompted the letter above about the barriers between 'classes' — addressed political, moral, and religious questions. For example, her fiction aimed to stimulate public debate about contemporary solutions to political reform and the extension of democracy — in the light of her characters' moral and political journeys and their attempted interventions in the public sphere.

In Ward's case, therefore, the desired sympathetic reading experience was also a dialogical one. Corelli's more didactic and strident fiction, whose satirical parody of contemporary fiction proved morally controversial, also prompted much impassioned argument between supporters and opponents. In both cases, whether intentionally (Ward) or unintentionally (Corelli), the sympathy driving their commercially successful fiction provided a forum for debate. It will be argued that this forum was to varying degrees enfranchising (Corelli's appeal to the common reader above the heads of the critics) or concerned with questions of enfranchisement (Ward). My extensive and original archival research into contemporary reading experiences analyses how readers, if not always critics, engaged seriously with such approaches. Thereby, I contribute to recent critical debates about the nature and effect of sympathy engendered through reading and about the role of popular fiction in the public sphere — as well as nuancing and extending the timeline of the operation of sympathy in nineteenth-century fiction.

The aims of my thesis and the research questions it seeks to answer put the above overview into context. These questions are as follows:

In what ways did sympathy re-emerge in late-nineteenth-century popular fiction?

How did sympathy relate to Mary Ward's and Marie Corelli's understandings of fiction's moral role, their class-based and literary politics, and the reading experiences they wished to provide?

How did contemporary readers respond to the aims and practice of Ward's and Corelli's fiction?

To what extent did popular fiction influence public political and cultural debate?

Although such questions may seem to risk over-ambition — the often ephemeral or fugitive nature of evidence of readers' responses can be a constraining factor to evaluation of texts' impact, while critics have deemed sympathy to have declined in importance in the second half of the nineteenth century — they offer a viable and profitable way forward. These questions enable me to unpick and highlight the various latent strands in late-nineteenth-century assumptions

about sympathy's role in defining and underpinning ethics, and about the relationship between readers, authors, and fictional characters. The lens of Walter Besant's paean to sympathy in *The Art of Fiction* (1884) that I use in the following chapter is therefore a useful one to contextualise the fin-de-siècle literary marketplace and the idealism as well as authorial self-interest that was brought to it. The purpose is thereby to illuminate the ensuing related social and literary political interventions of two different commercially successful *fin-de-siècle* women writers and to investigate the effectiveness of the role they envisaged for their fiction. My research therefore unearths new evidence, and re-evaluates existing evidence of readers' responses, in order to analyse how far readers read in sympathy with Ward's and Corelli's novels and were stimulated, despite critics' adverse verdicts, to form their own judgments on contemporary moral and cultural questions as well as issues of class politics.

At this stage, it is important to explain the reasons for the apparently unlikely pairing of Mary Ward and Marie Corelli and for the selected timeframe of 1886–1908. Certainly, the two authors had few social or literary points of contact. Indeed, in a letter to her publisher George Bentley, Corelli criticised Ward for spreading the 'evils of materialism,' and in print satirised Ward's inflexible, 'uninteresting' religious 'groove', which she could not 'endure' since it 'bored' the 'reading world' in 'a-prosing us to death'.[3] For their contemporaries little connected the two writers. One newspaper compared an unlikely theatrical collaboration with the equally unlikely prospect of a joint novel by Ward and Corelli, which would be a 'composite creature […] with a fanciful fairy head and a pair of sound human legs.'[4] Ward's 'sound'ness stemmed from realist, if sometimes melodramatic, fiction whose prominence began with the controversial *Robert Elsmere* (1888) concerning the hero's loss of faith in traditional Christian dogma and then continued with novels investigating interventionist politics of social reform — *Marcella* (1894) and its sequel *Sir George Tressady* (1896). In contrast to Ward's world of ideas and her depiction of a high society world where passion and duty could conflict, as in *Lady Rose's Daughter* (1903), Corelli's 'fanciful fairy head'ed fiction both detested and often parodied realist fiction. Her success started with the religiously heterodox *A Romance of Two Worlds* (1886), with its story of trance-induced spirit travel, and *Wormwood*'s (1890) satire of decadent, absinthe-debilitated Parisian society. Commercial success increased considerably with *The Sorrows of Satan* (1895) — the adventures of an aspiring novelist who succumbs to the temptations of the flesh laid by the devil in disguise — and endured throughout the next century's first decade. Indeed, the hymn to unconditional love

[3] Brian Masters, *Now Barabbas Was a Rotter: The Extraordinary Life of Marie Corelli* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1978), p.80; [Marie Corelli], *The Silver Domino; or Side Whispers, Social and Literary* (London: Lamley and Co, 1895 [1892]), pp.152, 336 [published anonymously].
[4] *The Sheffield and Rotherham Independent*, 25 February 1899, p.6.

and idyllic rural poverty, *The Treasure of Heaven* (1906), sold 100,000 copies on release — partly on account of its inclusion of the first authorised photograph of the author.

Hence, when Corelli and Ward were paired together it was on account of their relative commercial success. As early as 1892, newspapers were comparing Corelli's annual royalty income of £1,000, based on a model of retaining her copyright, with Ward's practice of selling hers.[5] Years later a 1906 press article cites 'Mr Denny, the well-known Strand bookseller' as estimating the 'approximate yearly sale' of leading 'male and female authors', with Marie Corelli in first place (100,000), and with only two men surpassing 'Mrs H. Ward' (35,000), Hall Caine (45,000) and Rudyard Kipling (40,000).[6] In the same year, a press report recorded that Ward and Corelli 'run a close race for popularity with library readers', with Mudie taking 3,000 copies of each author's new novel, compared with 2,000 for 'third favourite' Hall Caine. It noted that 'these figures represent a larger circulation than most novels have from the beginning to the end of their short lives'.[7] By the Edwardian period, therefore, it appears that Corelli was the most popular author of the day and that Ward featured prominently among those following in her wake. Of course, this was but the outcome of much earlier commercial success — Ward being used in 1894 as an example of 'the profits of literature', having made more than £40,000 'for three books written during a period of about six years.'[8] The press interest in Corelli's sales and earnings was even greater, reinforced by publisher adverts for new editions — *The Clarion* in 1896, for example, noting that the 17th edition of *The Sorrows of Satan* made it 'one of the most successful novels of the last ten years'.[9] Indeed, it was subsequently noted that the top two of the six new novels of 1896 'selling in all the bookshops at present to an extent which makes the sale of other books into small proportions indeed' were Corelli's *The Murder of Delicia* and Ward's *Sir George Tressady.*[10] My joint focus on Ward and Corelli therefore results from their position as the most commercially successful *fin-de-siècle* women writers fighting similar battles in order to be taken seriously, battles which, I argue, were reflected in their fiction's reliance on different but related models of sympathy.

As this thesis will show, the high purpose Ward and Corelli, along with Walter Besant, attributed to fiction was often rather different from the way their work was regarded by contemporary critics. As popular women writers, they faced a double challenge. For some

[5] *The Preston Herald*, 16 April 1892, p.12
[6] 'Lady Novelists Lead – A Tale of Book Circulations', *The Hampshire Telegraph*, 13 October 1906, p.11.
[7] *The Edinburgh Evening News*, 10 May 1906, p.6.
[8] *Northern Daily Mail*, 14 May 1894, p.2.
[9] *The Clarion*, 14 March 1896, p.82.
[10] East Anglian Daily Times, 9 November 1896, p.3.

commentators, popular novels threatened literature itself since, according to Henry James, they were read or 'absorbed' by 'millions for whom taste is but an obscure, confused, immediate instinct.'[11] Then, for others, women's literary capacities appeared limited. The typical opinion was, as the *Telegraph* reviewer William Courtney put it, that women writers lacked 'the neutrality of the artistic mind'.[12] The critical tenor of the time was, as Mary Hammond has noted, that 'to be popular was bad enough. To be both female and popular was, it seems, beyond the pale'.[13] Hence, one reviewer condemned Corelli's 'knowledge of the popular taste', her propensity to 'judge the popular demand to a nicety', concluding that 'if we condemn her highly-coloured extravagances we censure not her alone, but the whole of that vast reading public with whom she is so much in sympathy.'[14] This underlines what was at stake: not just the status of work that, from the author's point of view, attempted to provide imaginative connection for readers to 'the beauty of life at its highest, and the perfection of ideals', but also the very status of those readers too.[15] Moreover, gendered criticism of Corelli in particular sometimes descended to extreme abuse. J.M. Stuart-Young (a former fan) condemned her as an 'erotic degenerate', a 'man-woman' whose 'womanliness is diseased' and whose writing was therefore pernicious to the moral health of the nation.[16]

Although Ward mostly escaped the derisive abuse that Corelli faced, she still felt that her fiction was much misunderstood. Adverse reviews in the quarterlies of *The History of David Grieve* (1892) led her to pen an angry response defending her fiction as 'criticism of life'. This, as will be shown in more detail in chapter one, was conceived as an appeal to readers to '"Think with me!", "See with me!"', becoming in Ward's mature work a fiction of debate encouraging readers to make up their own minds about conflicts in the world of ideas — for example, arguments about the path of social reform.[17] In Ward's case, critical judgment most often exhibited misrepresentation rather than gendered vituperation. Arnold Bennett's fantasy about Ward's 'tiresomely absurd' and 'excruciating heroines' receiving their 'just' desserts — rape by a 'brutal

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[11] Henry James, 'Future of the Novel', *New York Times*, 11 August 1900, p.13.
[12] W. L. Courtney, *The Feminine Note in Fiction* (London: Chapman & Hall, 1904), p.xii.
[13] Mary Hammond, *Reading, Publishing and the Formation of Literary Taste in England, 1880–1914* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), pp.143–44.
[14] 'Simplicissimus', 'Marie Corelli's New Book, "*Temporal Power: A Study in Supremacy*" – A Remarkable Tract of the Times', *The Lancashire Daily Post*, 28 August 1902, p.2. For a fuller extract of this hostile review concerning the deleterious influence of Corelli's popular fiction, see Appendix B, section 2 a).
[15] Marie Corelli, 'The Vanishing Gift', in *Free Opinions Freely Expressed on Certain Phases of Modern Social Life and Conduct* (London: Archibald Constable, 1905), pp.273–91 (p.273).
[16] 'A Note Upon Marie Corelli: By Another Writer of Less Repute' [J.M. Stuart-Young], *Westminster Review*, 166 (December 1906), 680–92 (p.691) — for fuller extracts of this critical attack on Corelli's allegedly pernicious popular fiction, see appendix B, section 2 b).
[17] *The Writings of Mrs Humphry Ward*, with introductions by the author, vol III: *The History of David Grieve*, vol 1 (Boston: Houghton Mifflin 1909), p.xviii.

and licentious' invading army — is an exception to a generally respectful reception.[18] More often critical provocation comprised the labelling of Ward's work as 'novels with a purpose' with 'a direct object in view', or the author's indictment as 'a pamphleteer, a theologian, a politician […] but not a novelist'.[19] Ward faced such charges throughout her writing career — the reasons for which will be explored in chapter two.

Hence both authors sought through fiction built on varying but related aspects of sympathy to bolster their cultural and intellectual standing and serious intent by appealing directly to readers. Allowing for differences in degree and kind, both Ward and Corelli sought fiction that would gain influence through its appeal to the emotions as well as the mind. The quality and nature of sympathetic reading experiences was key — and sympathy explored in and generated by fiction will be explained more fully in the next chapter. For now, it must be stressed that the purpose behind engendering such reading experiences reflected their attitude towards popularity. Conan Doyle summed up this view in 1895 when he declared: 'I think the age of fiction is coming — the age when religious and social and political changes will be effected by means of a novelist'.[20] Popularity, for Ward and Corelli, could be embraced if it facilitated wider influence. That desired influence, didactic for Corelli, dialogical for Ward, informed their divergent analyses of what it might take to effect 'religious and social and political changes'. As Arnold Bennett remarked with greater grace in 1908, while many 'very successful novelists' exhibit 'intellectual sluggishness', Hall Caine, Mrs Humphry Ward and Miss Marie Corelli 'have the merit of being interested in the wide aspects of their age.'[21] Readers were challenged to think about the issues of the day and the helpful (or harmful) contribution that popular fiction brought.

The *fin-de-siècle* age in which Mary Ward and Marie Corelli flourished has been defined by some critics as spanning the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. For example, as Matthew Potolosky has noted, the term *fin de siècle* has been interpreted as alluding to 'a mood' or 'intellectual milieu' which overlaps with the beginning of modernism.[22] Indeed, several collections of critical studies do not separate Victorian and Edwardian cultural worlds, with some extending

[18] Arnold Bennett, 'Mrs Humphry Ward's Heroines', in *Books and Persons: Being Comments on a Past Epoch, 1908–1911* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1917), pp.47–52 (p.52).
[19] 'Novels with a Purpose', *The Daily Mail* [Hull], 17 December 1907, p.6; 'Mrs Humphry Ward's Latest, and Others', *The Saturday Review*, 90 (10 November 1900), 591–92 (p.591). See also: Stephen Gwynn, *Mrs Humphry Ward* (London: Nisbet, 1917) pp.9, 16 on Ward as a 'publicist', 'predisposed to instruct'.
[20] 'A Chat with Conan Doyle', *The Idler,* 6 (January 1895), 340–49 (p.348).
[21] Arnold Bennett, 'W.W. Jacobs and Aristophanes', in *Books and Persons*, pp.53–56 (p.56).
[22] Matthew Potolosky, 'Fin de Siècle', in 'Definitions Issue', *Victorian Literature and Culture,* 46 (Fall/Winter 2018), 697-700 (p.698).

the timespan to 1914.[23] For the purposes of this thesis, I examine the period 1886–1908 since this comprises the years in which Corelli and Ward achieved and maintained their popularity. Of course, this was not precisely the same for both authors, but the difference is less significant than the overlap. Corelli's first novel was two years earlier than Ward's first success in 1888 and her phenomenal sales continued for two years after Ward's considerable American market was diminished by *Daphne*'s (1909) criticism of allegedly loose divorce law. Crucially, therefore, the selling power of both spanned the final decade of the nineteenth century and much of the following decade.

In this period, I argue, their fiction continued in much the same fashion, based on its late-Victorian roots and reliance on sympathy. For example, Corelli's anachronistic World War 1 courtly romance, *Innocent* (1914), reworks *The Murder of Delicia's* (1896) theme of male perfidy destroying the life of the idealistic, vulnerable woman romance writer. Significantly, Corelli's 'Author's Prologue' to *The Life Everlasting* (1911) claims its idealised metaphysical universe of love as the culmination of a creed developed over the preceding twenty-five years through seven novels. In addition, the commonly observed uneven quality of Ward's twentieth-century fiction cannot conceal the consistency of its concerns with the 1890s. The journey of *Diana Mallory*'s (1908) heroine to a selfless ethics of sympathy through marriage is recognisably similar to that of *Marcella* (1894), whose political debate is also revisited in *The Coryston Family* (1913) — albeit with a more pessimistic picture of the potential dialogue between conservative and socialist politics. *Delia Blanchflower* (1914) with its arguments for and against women's suffrage 'exemplifies Ward's dialogic "criticism of life"' according to Beth Sutton-Ramspeck, and I shall be examining in chapter three Ward's path to a dialogical fiction of debate through the 1890s.[24] The relatively unchanging nature of Ward's and Corelli's Edwardian fiction was both its strength and its eventual weakness. Perhaps what is most remarkable is not that their time in the public eye eventually passed but that it endured for so long. In a culturally contested and gendered marketplace, their reliance on sympathy underpinned an appeal to both male and female readers. The defiant existence of Corelli's proposed mutually beneficial two-way bond of sympathy between author and reader, one which validated the aesthetic taste and sound moral sense of the common reader of popular fiction as well as the status of its creator, was one of considerable power. Then, the moral associations of sympathy in Ward's would-be intellectually challenging and emotionally captivating fiction of debate sought to engage readers, particularly those in

[23] *Cultural Politics at the Fin de Siècle,* ed. by Sally Ledger and Scott McCracken (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); *The Fin de Siècle World*, ed. by Michael Saler (London: Routledge, 2014).
[24] Beth Sutton-Ramspeck, *Raising the Dust: The Literary Housekeeping of Mary Ward, Sarah Grand, and Charlotte Perkins Gilman* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2004), p.57.

powerful or influential positions, to question the paths to greater social justice and class cohesion. For both, the sympathy engendered by the act of reading remained crucial throughout.

Literature Review

My arguments build on, and enter into dialogue with, existing critical understandings of the two authors and of their literary and political environment — but also, in Ward's case, largely differ from the critical legacy. Critical responses to Ward have, until recently, been marked by ambivalence, some of which is understandable given Ward's leadership of the National Women's Anti-Suffrage League from 1908, which, as her biographer John Sutherland has remarked, proved to be a 'ticket to oblivion' for her reputation.[25] Critics have largely felt unable to reclaim Ward for proto-feminist gender politics or as a New Woman novelist and consequently have pictured a conservative, didactic writer wedded to old-fashioned marriage plots.[26] Those approaching Ward from either the perspective of the history of ideas (principally nineteenth-century theological change) or that of bestselling author have not markedly altered such opinions.[27] Sutton-Ramspeck has been alone among literary critics in arguing that Ward's fiction was not 'anti-feminist' but dialogical in 'negotiating between competing and often contradictory feminisms'.[28] For her, Ward's 'literary housekeeping' reaches beyond the domestic, 'representing responsibilities with enormous public impact', and 'sweeps away boundaries between the artistic and the practical,

[25] John Sutherland, 'The Suffragettes' Unlikeliest Enemy', *The Guardian*, 4 June 2013. <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2013/jun/04/suffragettes-mary-ward> [accessed 7 March 2019].

[26] For example: Ann L. Ardis, *New Women, New Novels: Feminism and Early Modernism* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1990); Anne M. Bindslev, *Mrs. Humphry Ward: A Study in Late-Victorian Feminine Consciousness and Creative Expression* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1985); Valerie Sanders, *Eve's Renegades: Victorian Anti-Feminist Women Novelists* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1996); Judith Wilt, *Behind Her Times: Transition England in the Novels of Mary Arnold Ward* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2005); Rita S. Kranidis, *Subversive Discourse: The Cultural Production of Late Victorian Feminist Novels* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1995); Rosemarie Bodenheimer, *The Politics of Story in Victorian Social Fiction* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988).

[27] Norman Vance, *Bible and Novel: Narrative Authority and the Death of God* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013); Margaret M. Maison, *The Victorian Vision: Studies in the Religious Novel* (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1961); J. Russell Perkin, *Theology and the Victorian Novel* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2009); William S. Peterson, *Victorian Heretic: Mrs Humphry Ward's Robert Elsmere* (Leicester: Leicester University Press: 1976).
Philip J. Waller, *Writers, Readers and Reputations: Literary Life in Britain, 1870–1918 (*Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008); John Sutherland, *Mrs Humphry Ward: Eminent Victorian, Pre-eminent Edwardian* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991).

[28] Beth Sutton-Ramspeck, 'Shot out of the Canon: Mary Ward and the claims of conflicting feminisms', in *Victorian Writers and the Woman Question*, ed. by Nicola Diane Thompson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp.204–19 (p.205).

the personal and political, the public and private'.[29] Until recently, only non-literary scholars have joined Sutton-Ramspeck in successfully illuminating Ward's political values. For example, Julia Bush's historical study of 'female anti-suffragism' argues that, since suffragists and opponents shared similar values concerning the duty of women, Ward's advocacy of women's active role in public life, including local government, was not without 'more progressive arguments'.[30] Similarly, Jane Lewis's social science study identifies Ward's philanthropic university settlement initiatives as key to understanding her fiction. Crucially, she argues that Ward, rather than being solely conservative, was 'more of a transitional figure than most of her critics have been willing to acknowledge', with her 'literary work and social action intertwined' such that they illuminate each other.[31] This comment inspired chapter two's approach to unlocking the politics of sympathy in *Marcella*. Other social history studies which have identified the importance of sympathy to nineteenth-century philanthropy also support my focus.[32]

Recently some literary and education scholars have started to explore the significance of Ward's philanthropy and philosophy. My thesis therefore contributes to the debate about the wider political implications of Ward's debt to T.H. Green, philosophical idealism, and her university settlement work. Benjamin Kohlmann's valuable study of the emergence of 'a reformist literary mode around 1900' influenced by 'British Hegelianism' argues convincingly for its political thinking having made 'it possible to imagine state institutions in terms of shared forms of life'.[33] My reading of *Robert Elsmere*'s 'New Brotherhood' in chapter two differs from Kohlmann in arguing that although it reflected idealism's synthesis of the real and ideal, it was not as yet a full realisation of the aspiration for 'more democratic and egalitarian' forms of life.[34] That, I argue, came later with the real life Passmore Edwards settlement, the culmination of Ward's philanthropic learning journey, the early part of which suffuses the social and literary politics of *Marcella.* In addition, my dialogue with Kohlmann also draws usefully on related references to Jürgen Habermas's social theory — the relevance of which I will explain shortly. Likewise, I explore some of the same territory as Helen Loader's historical study of Green's influence on the

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[29] Beth Sutton-Ramspeck, *Raising the Dust*, p.3.
[30] Julia Bush, *Women Against the Vote: Female Anti-Suffragism in Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp.27, 152.
[31] Jane Lewis, *Women and Social Action in Victorian and Edwardian England* (Aldershot: Edward Elgar, 1991), pp.195, 196, 197.
[32] Dorice Williams Elliott, *The Angel Out of the House: Philanthropy and Gender in Nineteenth-Century England* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2002), p.17 on sympathy as tying 'personal virtue to public benefit' and leading to 'class negotiations'; Seth Koven, *Slumming: Sexual and Social Politics in Victorian London* (Princeton: Princeton University Press), p.240 on the 'ties of loving sympathy between rich and poor' in Samuel and Henrietta Barnett's Toynbee Hall.
[33] Benjamin Kohlmann, *British Literature and the Life of Institutions: Speculative States* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), pp.2–3.
[34] Kohlmann, p.17.

'remarkable' contribution of Ward's writing and social reform work. However, while Loader's (persuasive) proposition is that Ward's stance towards patriarchal power structures constricting women's opportunities had both progressive and regressive elements, I am more concerned here with the relation of Green's philosophy to Ward's ethics of sympathy and how this related to an increasingly dialogical, aesthetically ambitious, and emotionally engaging fiction of ideas.[35] Therefore I turn to contemporary evidence to explore and qualify judgments of Ward as a 'public benefactor', with 'good service having been rendered to the State' by her fiction.[36] I analyse Ward's intervention in contemporary debates about philanthropy and socialism in *Marcella*, and arguments about individualism, self-help and collective solutions in *Sir George Tressady,* to illuminate the way her fiction interrogated paths to greater democratic equality.[37] Hence, my approach relates to, but differs from, Christina Murdoch's case for Ward as a writer of philanthropic romance in which love and sexual desire is key to sympathy for others.[38] My understanding of *Marcella*'s culminating marriage partnership is that it both symbolises and embodies the practical means by which an ethics of sympathy and openness to dialogue between ideologies can advance the public realm.

Corelli has historically attracted fuller and more extensive criticism than Ward. Some critics profitably examine the pitfalls of Corelli's bestselling status,[39] the oppressive, gendered politics of the literary marketplace[40] and her vulnerable relationship with her first publisher,[41] while others dissect the generic instability of Corelli's engagement with decadence, gothic and the New

[35] Helen Loader, *Mrs Humphry Ward and Greenian Philosophy: Religion, Society and Politics* (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2029), pp.6, 12, 13.
[36] J. Stuart Walters, *Mrs. Humphry Ward: Her Work and Influence* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner, 1912), p.58.
[37] For example: *The Universities and the Social Problem: An Account of the University Settlements in East London*, ed by John M. Knapp (London: Rivington, Percival, 1895); Janet Penrose Trevelyan, *Evening Play Centres for Children: The Story of their Origin and Growth* (London: Methuen, 1920); *University and Social Settlements*, ed. by W. Reason (London: Methuen, 1898).
[38] Christina Murdoch, '"A Large and Passionate Humanity Plays About Her": Women and Moral Agency in the Late Victorian Social Problem Novel' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Glasgow, 2012).
[39] Waller, *Writers, Readers and Reputations* cf. Martin Hipsky, *Modernism and the Women's Popular Romance in Britain, 1885–1925* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2011) and Mary Hammond, *Reading, Publishing and the Formation of Literary Taste*.
[40] Annette R. Federico, *Idol of Suburbia: Marie Corelli and Late-Victorian Literary Culture* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2000); Janet Galligani Casey, 'Marie Corelli and Fin de Siècle Feminism', *English Literature in Transition*, 32 (1992), 163–78; Sharon Crozier-De Rosa, 'Marie Corelli's British New Woman: A threat to empire?', *The History of the Family: An International Quarterly*, 14 (2009), 416–29.
[41] Colleen Morrissey, 'From "Girl Alone" to "Genius": Corelli's Transforming Epistolary Rhetoric', in *Reinventing Marie Corelli for the Twenty-First Century*, ed. by Brenda Ayres and Sarah E. Maier (London: Anthem Press, 2019), pp.43–59; Kirsten MacLeod, '"The Power of Her Pen": Marie Corelli, Authorial Identity and Literary Value', in *New Directions in Popular Fiction: Genre, Distribution, Reproduction* ed. by Ken Gelder (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), pp. 309–26.

Woman,[42] and yet more have analysed Corelli's heterodox religious beliefs and fascination with reincarnation.[43] Much criticism re-claims Corelli, if not quite for proto-feminist status, then for celebration as a fierce critic of nineteenth-century masculinity and patriarchy.[44] Although my thesis touches on gender issues, it primarily seeks to tease out the paradoxes in Corelli's literary politics. It therefore principally engages with those critics who have analysed Corelli's critique of an allegedly corrupt, capitalist literary marketplace,[45] as well as her opposition to an invasive celebrity culture.[46] I therefore engage with critics such as Martin Hipsky and Andrew McCann who have analysed the persistent figure in Corelli's fiction of the lonely, idealistic, spiritual woman artist persecuted by jealous or uncomprehending critics — and with Jill Galvan's concept of the artist as medium. This is in order to reveal the mixture of self-interest and idealism that Corelli's self-protective strategy of the bond of sympathy between author and reader deployed — as well as the potential power of its alternative model of the literary marketplace, one where the author provided authoritative moral guidance in exchange for financial independence. I also build on Rita Felski's and Julia Kuehn's ground-breaking analyses of the author's 'feminine' or 'hysterical' sublime and Simon James's understanding of a literary aesthetics of pleasure where didacticism licenced readers' enjoyment of 'excess'.[47] Their work facilitates my approach to illuminating the nature of the sympathetic reading experience that Corelli sought to provide to readers through

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[42] Angie Blumberg, '"Something Vile in the Composition": Marie Corelli's *Ziska*, Decadent Portraiture and the New Woman' in *Reinventing Marie Corelli for the Twenty-First Century*, pp.177–91; Elaine M. Hartnell, 'Morals and Metaphysics: Marie Corelli, Religion and the Gothic', *Women's Writing*, 13 (June 2006), 284–303.

[43] Nickianne Moody, 'Moral Uncertainty and the Afterlife: Explaining the Popularity of Marie Corelli's Early Novels', *Women's Writing*, 13 (June 2006), 188–205; Robyn Hallim, 'Marie Corelli's Best-selling Electric Creed'*, Women's Writing,* 13 (June 2006) 267–83; Brenda Ayres, '"The Story of a Dead Self": The Theosophical Novels of Marie Corelli', in *Reinventing Marie Corelli for the Twenty-First Century*, pp.157–175; J. Jeffrey Franklin, *The Lotus and the Lion: Buddhism and the British Empire* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008); Jill Galvan, *The Sympathetic Medium: Feminine Channeling, the Occult, and Communication Technologies, 1859–1919* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2010).

[44] Among others: Julianne Smith, 'The Devil & Miss Corelli: Re-gendering the Diabolical and the Redemptive in *The Sorrows of Satan*', in *Reinventing Marie Corelli for the Twenty-First Century,* pp.101–17; Carol Margaret Davison, 'Over her (Un)dead Body: Gender Politics, Mediumship and Feminist Spiritual Theology in the Works of Marie Corelli', in *Reinventing Marie Corelli for the Twenty-First Century*, pp.137–55; Gareth Hadyk-De-Lodder, 'Muscular Christianity Unbound: Masculinity in *Ardath*', *Reinventing Marie Corelli for the Twenty-First Century,* pp.119–135.

[45] Hipsky, pp. 67–112; Julia Kuehn, 'Marie Corelli, The Public Sphere and Public Opinion', in *Reinventing Marie Corelli for the Twenty-First Century,* pp.61–79; Andrew McCann, *Popular Literature, Authorship and the Occult in Late Victorian Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

[46] Alexis Easley, *Literary Celebrity, Gender, and Victorian Authorship, 1850–1914* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2011); Lizzie White, 'Commodifying the Self: Portraits of the Artist in the Novels of Marie Corelli', in *Women Writers and the Artifacts of Celebrity in the Long Nineteenth Century,* ed. by Ann R. Hawkins and Maura Ives (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012), pp.205–18.

[47] Simon J. James, 'Marie Corelli and the Value of Literary Self-Consciousness: *The Sorrows of Satan*, Popular Fiction, and the *Fin-de-Siècle* Canon', *Journal of Victorian Culture*, 18 (2013), 134–51 (p.139); Rita Felski, *The Gender of Modernity* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1995) and Julia Kuehn, *Glorious Vulgarity: Marie Corelli's Feminine Sublime in a Popular Context* (Berlin: Logos Verlag, 2004).

the potentially titillating aspects of her parody of decadence and realism. Moreover, the work of Julia Kuehn in analysing Corelli's intervention in the public sphere, and how this (like Ward's) might also be better understood in relation to Habermas's theory, facilitates a better comparison of the two authors.[48]

For the spirit of my arguments for the democratic usefulness of the political, moral, and aesthetic debate that Ward's and Corelli's fiction aroused, I bow to Isobel Armstrong's ground-breaking *Novel Politics*. Armstrong shows how nineteenth-century fiction's 'democratic imaginations' have been obscured by a long-lasting critical tradition which has characterised the novel's domestic values as a search for a refuge, a 'conservative default mode'.[49] Chapter two analyses in more detail the effect of this default mode on critical misunderstanding of the class attitudes of Ward's social politics. Throughout, I have also sought to build on the historicist footsteps of those scholars who theorize the operation of sympathy in the nineteenth-century novel as a potentially progressive force — Brigid Lowe, for example.[50] I engage more fully with such arguments in the following chapter.

More immediately, it is important to acknowledge that my analysis of readers' responses to Ward's and Corelli's fiction owes debts to the ground-breaking work of book historians such as Jonathan Rose and Kate Flint, as well as many recent stimulating contributions to *The Edinburgh History of Reading.*[51] The latter along with the work of Howard Sklar, among others, provides a further evidential base for my interpretation of sympathetic reading experiences.[52] Moreover, this thesis's intervention in critical debate has also been facilitated by dialogue with those scholars who have analysed how texts themselves construct an ideal reader. From Philip Davis to Matthew Bradley, such contributions to reading history constitute the base on which I have built.[53] Such concerns lead on to questions of methodology.

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[48] Julia Kuehn, 'Marie Corelli, The Public Sphere and Public Opinion'.
[49] Isobel Armstrong, *Novel Politics: Democratic Imaginations in Nineteenth-Century Fiction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), pp.3, 15; cf. Christine Gallagher, *The Industrial Reformation of English Fiction: Social Discourse and Narrative Form, 1832–1867* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985).
[50] Brigid Lowe, *Victorian Fiction and the Insights of Sympathy: An Alternative to the Hermeneutics of Suspicion* (London: Anthem Press, 2007).
[51] Jonathan Rose, *The Intellectual Life of the British Working Classes,* 3rd edn (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2021 [2001]); Kate Flint, *The Woman Reader, 1837-1914* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993); *The Edinburgh History of* Reading, 4 vols, ed. by Mary Hammond and Jonathan Rose ((Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2020).
[52] Howard Sklar, *The Art of Sympathy in Fiction: Forms of Ethical and Emotional Persuasion* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2013).
[53] *Real Voices on Reading*, ed. by Philip Davis (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1997); David Vincent, *Literacy and Popular Culture: England 1750–1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989); Kelly J. Mays, 'The Disease of Reading and Victorian Periodicals', in *Literature in the Marketplace: Nineteenth-Century British Publishing and Reading Practices*, ed. by John O. Jordan and Robert L. Patten (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); *The Feeling of Reading: Affective Experience & Victorian Literature*, ed. by Rachel

Methodology and Theory

My thesis's methodology and theoretical approach — in relying on empirical evidence of *fin-de-siècle* understandings of sympathy, popular fiction, and reading — is tried and tested. I follow the path of those 'scholars of reading' who investigate, as Rachel Ablow puts it, 'how we are *expected* to read,' and 'how did nineteenth-century readers and writers think about the experience of reading?' in order to reveal what these 'tell us about the texts themselves'.[54] Mary Hammond also attests to the usefulness of empirical evidence and adds further consequences:

> I have long found it useful to test theoretical and ideologically-driven analyses of readers of the past against real empirical evidence provided by these readers themselves, a methodology that I believe casts light in both directions. Readers can often surprise us by resisting, absorbing, normalising, or simply ignoring the implications of the cultural constructions in which they are thought to have played a part.[55]

Similarly, I follow an empirical methodology that seeks to 'test' and refine book and reading history theory. In combining this with close readings of examples of key texts within their historical context, I aim to illuminate both how some late-nineteenth-century popular texts were set up to be interpreted and how readers actually responded to them — in the context of frequent critical misunderstanding or sometimes derision. I use the focus of how Ward's and Corelli's class and literary politics relied on conceptions of sympathy — including their hopes for how their texts would be understood and appreciated — and then test their market intervention against readers' responses. Importantly, therefore, my approach sheds light on what kinds of meaning and significance readers derived from and attributed to *fin-de-siècle* popular fiction and hones our 'cultural constructions' of the *fin-de-siècle* literary marketplace. Readers can 'surprise' by resisting critics as much as authors. Hence, one surprise (for me) has been to discover just how large a contingent of Corelli's readers adhered to her model of the bond of sympathy and valued their reading experience as the source of authoritative moral truth. So, just as Hammond identifies evidence of nineteenth-century women's resistance to cultural pressures through the freedom of reading while travelling, so I seek to demonstrate the self-confidence of some of Corelli's readers to value her work, despite cultural arbiters' opinions.

Ablow (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2010); Leah Price, 'Victorian Reading', in *The Cambridge History of Victorian Literature*, ed. by Kate Flint (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012); *Reading and the Victorians*, ed. by Matthew Bradley and Juliet John (Farnham: Ashgate, 2015).

[54] Ablow, 'Introduction', in *The Feeling of Reading*, pp.1–10 (pp.3–4).

[55] Mary Hammond, 'Reading While Travelling in the Long Nineteenth Century', in *The Edinburgh History of Reading: Modern Readers*, ed. by Mary Hammond (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2020), pp.104-123 (p.107).

The availability or otherwise of 'real empirical evidence' has been much debated. Although Jonathan Rose and Kate Flint have done great work in investigating nineteenth-century reading experiences, Flint has felt that 'what happened between [readers] and the words on the page' is 'very hard to recover, except through hypothesis'.[56] Such reservations still remain. Elaine Auyong argues that 'even as critics of Victorian fiction have made powerful claims about how nineteenth-century novels teach, train, interpellate, conscript, and construct their readers, what exactly happens during the reading process in many ways remains a mystery in literary studies.'[57] Such recovery can indeed be a 'very hard' task, and one that must be undertaken with caution, but it is not always impossible. In this thesis, I am bringing to light new empirical evidence in the form of hitherto under-researched records of readers' reactions and debates in local newspapers (for Corelli), as well as a reinterpretation of archived correspondence from readers (for Ward). This demonstrates that, in some cases, revealing insights into actual reading experiences can be recovered. As I attempt to show, some of Ward's and Corelli's readers can be seen as refining their own cultural and political identity as they grappled with fiction that generated moral and political argument. Although the evidence is partial, and one cannot ask for clarification of readers' opinions, it is striking how important reading and the debate it generated was to those involved. We become aware, as Philip Davis puts it, that readers can become 'the translators between writing and living', the 'personal testers of the troublesome relation between the thoughts and feelings they get from books and the lives they lead even so'.[58]

In addition, noting the advisability of book history taking a 'hybrid or blended approach', I seek to follow a methodology that 'mine[s] extant historical or anecdotal sources such as journalism, criticism, life writing, and literature that attest to the motivations underpinning audiences consumption of reading matter'.[59] A memoir, therefore, such as that of William Stuart Scott's in which he compares his enthusiastic youthful absorption in Corelli's work with his later adult encounter with the author herself, is invaluable.[60] I also seek to combine analysis of letters to the editor and newspaper reports of local societies and debating groups with consideration of the contribution of local newspapers to broadening cultural debate. This reflects Jonathan Rose's

[56] Kate Flint, 'The Victorian Novel and its Readers', in *The Cambridge Companion to The Victorian Novel*, ed. by Deidre David (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp.17–36 (pp.30–31).
[57] Elaine Auyong, 'Reading', in 'Definitions Issue', *Victorian Literature and Culture*, 46 (Fall/Winter 2018), 823–25 (p.824).
[58] Philip Davis, 'Micro and Macro', in *Real Voices on Reading*, 137–64 (p.142).
[59] Anna Gasparini and Paul Raphael Rooney, 'Introduction', in *Media and Print Culture Consumption in Nineteenth-Century Britain: The Victorian Reading Experience*, ed. by Anna Gasparini and Paul Raphael Rooney (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), pp.1–13 (p.7).
[60] William Stuart Scott, *Marie Corelli: The Story of a Friendship* (London: Hutchinson, 1955).

recommendation to use diverse sources and approaches to study 'ordinary' readers.[61] Of course, there are pitfalls to negotiate. The danger of 'presentism' remains —rereading the past from the position of the present, and assuming that now is the source of meaning and relevance. As Sally Ledger and Scott McCracken argue, what is required is 'a sophisticated historical criticism which is capable of standing back not only from the period, but also from our own time, and then examining the dialectical relationship between the two'.[62] Hence evidence from modern-day reading groups is used here, cautiously, to throw light on some potential common threads in reading experiences across the centuries.

Finally, I aim to use my empirical findings to engage with wider literary, philosophical, and historical theories about the effect of sympathy generated by reading and about the potentially democratic role of literature in the public sphere. This attempts to put my findings and arguments about Ward and Corelli into a wider social and political context. As well as theoretical arguments about the usefulness or otherwise of the sympathy generated by fiction-reading — for example the debate between Martha Nussbaum and her critics about fiction's capacity to create sensitive, upright citizens — I also analyse Ward's and Corelli's fiction of debate in relation to the political and economic theory of Jürgen Habermas concerning the transformation of the public sphere in the nineteenth century. Ward can be seen to be attempting to re-create what Habermas sees as having been lost — the eighteenth-century's 'bourgeois public sphere' of 'private people coming together as a public' with 'an erasure of status: as art and literature were […] in principle, accessible to all'.[63] Corelli's savage condemnation of literary marketplace hierarchies is also interpreted here in relation to Habermas's critique of the failings of the nineteenth-century public sphere — along with her controversial fiction's capacity to generate debate in unintended ways. Hence, Habermas's theory is a useful contextualisation of both the democratising impulse permeating Ward's fiction of ideas — which had as its practical, public adjunct the culturally enfranchising philanthropy of her Passmore Edwards settlement — and also Corelli's elevation of the new board-school-educated reading public entering the public domain as a result of the Elementary Education Act (1870).

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[61] Jonathan Rose, 'Altick's Map: The New Historiography of the Common Reader' in *The History of Reading,* vol 3: *Methods, Strategies, Tactics*, ed. by Rosalind Crone and Shafquat Towheed (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), pp.15–16.

[62] Sally Ledger and Scott McCracken, 'Introduction', in *Cultural Politics at the Fin de Siècle*, ed. by Sally Ledger and Scott McCracken (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 1–10 (pp.3, 4).

[63] Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, trans. by T. Burger (Cambridge: Polity, 1989 (1962), pp.39–41.

Thesis Structure, Chapter Outlines and Contribution to Scholarship

In order to further such exploration of the role and effectiveness of Ward's and Corelli's fiction, my thesis firstly considers the two authors together in relation to the late-nineteenth-century associations of sympathy. Then each author is examined separately, with each allotted two chapters investigating their social and literary politics, before the thesis's concluding observations.

Chapter one adds to this introduction by examining in detail the ways sympathy suffused some quarters of late-nineteenth-century popular fiction — an influence that has not so far been sufficiently acknowledged. It analyses how interpretations of sympathy changed through the course of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and summarises the various ways that critics have responded to such diversity. Rather than trying to define sympathy in any one particular and potentially limiting way, or rejecting and replacing historical understandings of sympathy on the grounds of incoherence, I argue that it is helpful to embrace the concept's diversity — on the grounds of its contemporary importance and centrality to moral argument and to conceptions of uplifting reading experiences. The chapter then analyses how the related but differing concerns of Ward's *Eleanor* (1900) and Corelli's *Thelma* (1887) can be understood in relation to Besant's lecture on *The Art of Fiction* (1884). Sympathy in fiction is there associated with four key areas: an uplifting, educative morality; fellow feeling with the lower classes and understanding and expressing their feelings; the status and deserved commercial reward of authors; and the provision of powerful and inspiring reading experiences.[64] Hence, Corelli's view of the novelist as upright dispenser of moral truth is contextualised by Besant's praise of fiction as embodying a 'higher morality', and her sympathy for 'the people', along with her concept of the bond of sympathy between author and common reader, can be understood in relation to Besant's elevation of the cultural standing of novelists and fiction's ability to understand the poor. Then, Ward's concern for the cultural enfranchisement of the working class and her development of a fiction of ideas, or 'criticism of life', is illuminated by Besant's understanding of sympathy in fiction as an 'engine of popular influence', 'deepening' and 'widening' access to the world of culture. The chapter ends by analysing the importance of Besant's association of sympathy with 'power of vision and feeling' for the related intellectual and emotional reading experiences to which Ward and Corelli aspired to provide for readers, men as well as women.[65]

[64] Walter Besant, *The Art of Fiction: A Lecture, Delivered at the Royal Institution on Friday Evening, April 25, 1884* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1884).
[65] For fuller quotations and textual references, please see chapter one.

The class analysis and market intervention of Ward's and Corelli's fiction, the extent to which readers responded in the ways desired, and the nature of the debate their fiction created, are the subjects of the ensuing chapters. Chapter two discusses the search for a politics of social reform in Ward's *Marcella* (1894) in which the heroine wrestles with socialist ideas and undergoes a personal moral transformation — finally being able to embark on selfless service for others through a marital partnership. It demonstrates how this novel can be better understood in relation to the ethics of sympathy that drove Ward's own philanthropic efforts in her university settlements.

Chapter three examines Ward's literary aim to create 'criticism of life' — a concept which emerged from but ultimately moved beyond her uncle, Matthew Arnold's, thinking. Her desire for an aesthetic, emotionally involving fiction of debate is shown to have evolved through a dialogue with 'critical friends' providing feedback about her early novels. The resulting dialogical fiction is analysed with particular reference to *Sir George Tressady* (1896) which tests the integrity and capacity of Marcella's ideals of sympathy for the under-privileged to overcome *laissez faire* liberal political arguments. Ward's correspondence with establishment figures about her work is then analysed to show the extent to which her emotionally charged fiction of ideas was successful in encouraging the aesthetic, intellectual and political sensitivity she hoped sympathetic reading experiences would foster. It argues that these reader responses have much to tell us about the nature of the sympathy engendered through the reading experience and the democratic impact of popular fiction's capacity to create a forum for debate.

Chapter four demonstrates how Corelli's contrasting sympathy for 'the people' was related to an anti-establishment critique of corrupt power structures, which features prominently in *Temporal Power* (1902). It then investigates how this led to an envisaged bond of sympathy with readers, deemed to be unsullied by the immorality of society, and to Corelli's consequent desire for a purer alternative to a capitalist literary marketplace. This is analysed in relation to the would-be scriptural status of fiction such as *The Treasure of Heaven* (1906). However, Corelli's claims for moral authority and high cultural status were potentially undermined by a self-contradictory fiction that evoked the immoral fiction it sought to condemn. The interpretative challenge this set readers is discussed in relation to sexually explicit passages in *Ardath* (1889).

Chapter five then explores how readers met this challenge — with striking new evidence of readers' opinions garnered from the pages of local newspapers. Some felt that Corelli's political and moral critique spoke for them and provided a powerful voice for the voiceless, often endorsing the uplifting moral insight that could be gained through reading in sympathy with the author. However, others were stimulated to express their own contrary opinions, worried that a

fiction of temptation was immoral or dangerous. A would-be morally didactic fiction seeking to satirize decadent, realist modes therefore both contributed to a burgeoning fan culture stimulated by authorial celebrity, and provoked widespread debate about the cultural worth and moral influence of popular fiction and about how fiction should be read.

Finally, the Conclusion underlines the thesis's contribution to scholarship in investigating the (hitherto unrecognised) importance of sympathy, and particularly the sympathetic reading experience, to the democratic influence of Ward's and Corelli's *fin-de-siècle* fiction. The nature and impact of Ward's and Corelli's work is contextualised by recent critical thinking about the role and influence of popular fiction. In addition, comparison with critical understandings of modern fan culture reveals the extent to which they too stimulated readers' own agency. Lastly, comments are offered on the potential profitability of future research in newspaper archives and suggestions are made concerning incomplete or currently unmet avenues of research into Corelli's and Ward's politics. These include the factors behind the declining, or rather fluctuating, popularity of their late work.

Chapter 1 Sympathy in Late-Nineteenth-Century Popular Fiction

Introduction

> The novel's cultivation of sympathy in its readers, modelled in part by the multiple perspectives and focalizations through different characters afforded by omniscient narration, has long been central to accounts of the nineteenth-century realist novel. In these accounts, readers might through their imaginative engagement with fictional characters, who themselves often engage in acts of sympathy within the novel, better imagine and sympathize with the lives of others in the world. Documenting the centrality of sympathy in diverse strands of Victorian thought, structuring ways of thinking about social reform, friendship, marriage, national bonds, ethics, relations between rich and poor, and more, has been one of the most productive critical projects of the past two decades, and sympathy has been one of the key terms in critical accounts of the novel's social effects and purpose.[1]

As Gage McWeeny neatly summarises, the concept of sympathy has been important for the study of nineteenth-century culture, morality, and fiction. She points out how sympathy for others was fundamental to the subject matter, ethics, class politics and the very form of the century's fiction, as well as with the morally improving and inspiring reading experience many novels provided. The ethics of sympathy and 'cultivation of sympathy' in readers are themes which this chapter is going to analyse in more detail. For example, it will show just how important 'thinking about social reform' and 'relations between rich and poor' was for Mary Ward's fiction, and how the concept of 'friendship' between author and readers was crucial to Corelli's literary aims. Moreover, the question of 'imaginative engagement with fictional characters' was vital to Ward and illuminates what Corelli sought to achieve. However, two important considerations must be added to McWeeny's helpful summary of recent 'productive critical projects'. First, most critics have assumed that by the end of the nineteenth century sympathy was much diminished as a literary preoccupation. Second, numerous critical studies have amply demonstrated how, since understandings of sympathy both historically and currently have differed markedly, sympathy has become a complex, critically contested concept. Therefore, for some commentators, sympathy has become an increasingly problematic term, one that must be re-focussed or re-defined in order to provide a useful critical tool.

[1] Gage McWeeny, *The Comfort of Strangers: Social Life and Literary Form* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016) p.14.

However, this chapter argues firstly that the imprecision of nineteenth-century understandings of sympathy should not distract us from recognising the importance of its differing and sometimes conflicting associations. In particular, they reveal much about the political allegiances of those quarters of popular fiction which addressed the question of imbalanced class relations. Second, this chapter shows how sympathy as an important source of fiction's moral principles, as well as underpinning authorial aims for morally and politically influential reading experiences, did not disappear by the end of the century but re-emerged in some fin-de-siècle popular fiction. Third, it argues that Mary Ward's and Marie Corelli's related but differing understandings of sympathy were integral to their distinctive literary politics and democratising social politics — public interventions which can be better understood in relation to their contemporary Walter Besant's praise of sympathy. Lastly, it shows how the associated 'omniscient narration' McWeeny identifies was used in contrasting ways by the two authors. Ward's fiction of ideas hoped to elicit intellectually and emotionally engaged reading experiences in order to stimulate debate about the way forward for the nation. However, for Corelli, success depended on readers' communion with texts claiming to be authoritative, and hence on a literary model of a bond of sympathy between author and reader. Overall, my contention is that the sympathy underpinning the two authors' popular fiction facilitated a forum for debate about class inequities, about the link between personal and public ethics, and the role and value of popular fiction. My aim here is therefore to set the background for later chapters' empirical study of contemporary readers' debates and their reflection on the nature and effect of sympathy fostered by reading.

Hence, this chapter starts by analysing the wide variety of interpretations and associations of sympathy in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and then situates its arguments in relation to critical discussions of sympathy responding to such diversity. The remainder of the chapter uses the focus of Walter Besant's encomium to sympathy in his lecture 'The Art of Fiction' (1884) to illuminate the literary and social politics of Ward's and Corelli's turn-of-the-century popular fiction. Although Besant had no overt influence on the two authors, similar assumptions and associations of sympathy to his suffused their work and both were also supportive of his related efforts to defend the status of fiction and the novelist. Late-nineteenth-century sympathy is thereby shown to be associated with four key areas: an uplifting, educative morality; acknowledgment of the rights of the lower classes; the status and deserved commercial reward of authors; and the provision of powerful and inspiring reading experiences. The comparisons and contrasts of Ward's and Corelli's understandings of sympathy that Besant's thinking facilitate are illustrated by analysis of Ward's novel *Eleanor* (1901) and Corelli's novel *Thelma* (1887).

Sympathy in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries

Attempts at historical definitions of sympathy become problematic when they try to pin down the concept. One critic contends that sympathy 'most broadly refers, during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, to a primarily emotional experience that is to some extent shared between people.'[2] However, the judgment that it was 'primarily emotional' is not supported by critics such as Isobel Armstrong. She identifies the moral and rational consequence of feeling for others stemming from 'the faculty of sharing and understanding the situation of another person by being able to change places with him in imagination'.[3] Armstrong's persuasive analysis depends very much on her interpretation of how Adam Smith's thinking suffused nineteenth-century literature. Other critics have somewhat contentiously defined sympathy as unquestioning identification with another person; Talia Schaffer, for example, argues that it was 'essentially synonymous with what we call "empathy" today'.[4] However, Jonathan Lamb avoids implications of the loss of self when defining sympathy as ''the actual affective and imaginative experience of feeling what it is like to be someone or something other than one's self'.[5] In any case, it is helpful to at least try to distinguish between the 'feeling with' of empathy, a twentieth-century term, from the consciously imagined 'feeling for' of sympathy that Armstrong identifies. The slipperiness of both terms however does mean that what sympathy did or did not comprise, and what the moral and aesthetic consequences for the reader were, are subject to different interpretations and therefore almost impossible to pin down in any single, straightforward way.

This is not surprising if we turn to the genesis and rich evolution of concepts of sympathy in the eighteenth century. Ryan Hanley describes sympathy in this period as 'a sophisticated philosophical response to a pressing practical challenge' of social change when 'societies of strangers emerged alongside more traditional and familiar communities of intimates'.[6] However, from the start, philosophical discourses pulled in different directions: sympathy as the involuntary contagion of feeling in Hume's early thought; Burke's concept of human ignorance in the face of what deeply moves us; and Adam Smith's attempt to regulate such attitudes towards the passions. For Smith, sympathy was a deliberate act of imaginative fellow feeling, part of a

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[2] Jeanne M. Britton, *Vicarious Narratives: A Literary History of Sympathy, 1750–1850* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), pp.1–2.
[3] Isobel Armstrong, *Victorian Scrutinies: Reviews of Poetry 1830–1870* (London: The Athlone Press, 1972), p.9.
[4] Talia Schaffer, *Communities of Care: The Social Ethics of Victorian Fiction (*Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2021), p.119.
[5] Jonathan Lamb, *The Evolution of Sympathy in the Long Eighteenth Century* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2009), p.1.
[6] Ryan Patrick Hanley, 'The Eighteenth-Century Context of Sympathy from Spinoza to Kant', in *Sympathy: A History* ed. by Eric Schliesser (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), pp.171– 98 (p. 173).

cognitive process that formed views about our responsibilities and fostered 'social bonds' such as 'benevolence' and 'humanity'.[7] Since he stated that the senses 'never did, and never can, carry us beyond our own person, and it is by the imagination only that we can form any conception of what are [others'] sensations', then for Smith at least sympathy did not involve complete identification.[8] It did involve 'the sympathetic emotions of the spectator', which were then subject to reflection and verification of their validity by appeal to 'the tribunal of [our] own consciences, to that of the supposed impartial and well-informed spectator, to that of the man within the breast, the great judge and arbiter of [our] conduct'.[9]

However, Smith's judicious, cautious views did not transfer to the next century in any simple, direct way – despite critics' concentration on his contribution. Sympathy took on new urgency and meaning in the context of the urbanisation of the Industrial Revolution. The emotional compassion for others' suffering that is stressed in Gaskell's *Mary Barton* (1848), for example, is arguably closer to Hume than Smith, and more concerned with social injustice. The 'ethical investment' of the mid-century novels of Gaskell and Dickens, as Jan-Melissa Schramm puts it, 'lay in this hope that sympathy could serve to close the gap between suffering and benevolent action: that conversion produced by affect could result in responsibility' and that individuals' fellow feeling with others would 'generate a wider social concord'.[10] In Gaskell, even more than in Dickens, where 'characters would turn from implacably destructive social institutions to a small domestic community', sympathy was an emotional spur to action in an attempt to cross the class divide.[11] As the preface of Gaskell's novel stated, she aimed 'to give some utterance to the agony which […] convulses' people like the 'care-worn' Manchester factory hands with whom she felt a 'deep sympathy'.[12] Sympathy therefore was all-encompassing, extending to the novel's subject, its emotional method, and its intended stirring effect on the reader.

Here we can also see sympathy starting to become a gendered concept. As Mary Poovey puts it, social problem novels 'were implicitly arguing that a feminized genre that individualized distress and aroused sympathy was more appropriate to the delineation of contemporary

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[7] Nancy Yousef, *Romantic Intimacy* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013), p.5.
[8] Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (London: Henry G. Bohn, 1853 [1759]), pp.3–4.
[9] Smith, pp.14, 185.
[10] Jan-Melissa Schramm, *Atonement and Self-Sacrifice in Nineteenth-Century Narrative* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012) p.15.
[11] Bradley Deane, *The Making of the Victorian Novelist: Anxieties of Authorship in the Mass Market* (New York: Routledge 2003), p.123.
[12] Elizabeth Gaskell, *Mary Barton: A Tale of Manchester Life,* 2 vols (London: Chapman and Hall, 1848), I, pp.vii, vi.

problems than were the rationalizing abstractions of a masculine genre like political economy'.[13] The reason for this apparent 'feminized' outlook was because sympathy in women, as Carolyn Burdett notes, was seen as 'natural' and hence 'womanly sympathy' was made 'central to the development of middle-class domestic ideology in the nineteenth century and the "separate spheres" appropriate to men and women'.[14] Such presuppositions did indeed influence the thinking of John Ruskin and Coventry Patmore in defining and constricting the role of women. However, philanthropy could therefore be seen as a natural extension of women's domestic expertise and provide entry to the public arena. In *North and South* (1855), for example, it is Margaret Hale that is able to fund Thornton's class-crossing experiment for a dining room shared by workers and employers – acting as a 'a sympathetic lady philanthropist', as Pamela Parker phrases it.[15] Unsurprisingly, therefore, the language of sympathy permeated philanthropic discourse — and right to the end of the century sought to break class barriers. In a collection of congress reports, tellingly entitled *Women's Mission*, the philanthropist Angela Burdett-Coutts spoke of 'the dissociation of labour' from 'common human sympathies' and the necessity for 'countless beneficent associations' working with 'large-hearted benevolence, and warm sympathy with the poor and suffering'.[16] Yet by then the divergent consequences of sympathy had become evident. As chapter two's investigation of Ward's philanthropy will demonstrate, sympathy could either be considered in classic liberal terms as motivation for self-help or a prompt for state intervention. Indeed, on the one hand, philanthropic sympathy might cloak selfishness, condescension, and hypocrisy — as the satirical portraits of Dickens' Mrs Pardiggle and Collins's Drusilla Clack indicate. On the other hand, compassion for the poor drove late-century social reform fiction such as L.T. Meade's *A Princess of the Gutter* (1896), where a philanthropic heiress goes to live among the poor, creating a community of loving women, Father Sturt's intervention in an East End slum in Arthur Morrison's *A Child of the Jago* (1896), and Margaret Harkness's socialist novels exploring urban poverty — not to mention Besant's work (of which more later).

In addition to this proliferation of conflicting interpretations, the late nineteenth century saw counter discourses of sympathy emerge. Jonathan Lamb observes that with evolutionary science, sympathy became less 'an expression of humanity' and more 'a sensibility shared' with other animals. He perceives 'sympathy giv[ing] way in radical thought to notions of individual

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[13] Mary Poovey, *Making a Social Body: British Cultural Formation 1830–1864* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1995), p.133.
[14] Carolyn Burdett, 'Sympathy', in *The History of British Women's Writing, 1830–1880* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), pp.320–35 (p.323).
[15] Pamela Corpron Parker, 'Fictional Philanthropy in Elizabeth Gaskell's *Mary Barton* and *North and South*', *Victorian Literature and Culture*, 25 (1997), 321–31 (p.322).
[16] *Woman's Mission: A Series of Congress Papers on the Philanthropic Work of Women by Eminent Writers*, ed. by The Baroness [Angela] Burdett-Coutts (New York: Charles Scribner's, 1893), pp.xix, xx, 285.

rights' and attached more 'to sympathy with animal suffering'.[17] Further confusion arose when the language of sympathy became entwined with the related concept of 'altruism' (a Comtean term for the opposite of egoism, first used in English by G.H. Lewes).[18] In some evolutionary circles these terms were associated with biological instinct or the benefits of co-operation and used to justify vivisection,[19] whereas in medicine and the emerging science of psychology, the language of sympathy was associated either with women's maternal strengths or, conversely, nervous illnesses.[20] Therefore, such were sympathy's range of meanings, associations, and contexts that we should speak of sympathies in the plural — the sites of contested class and gender politics, moral arguments, and scientific debate — and, owing to that, perhaps more important than any anodyne consensus would have allowed.

One other aspect of nineteenth-century sympathy that is crucial for this thesis addressed the relationship of author to reader. Deidre Lynch identifies a 'personalization of literature' in the eighteenth century, the treatment of it as a person not a thing, with the idea of books as friends emerging in Hume and William Godwin.[21] These ideas developed further in the following century. Bradley Deane notes the 'emergence of early Victorian representations of novelists as sympathetic, intimate, and friendly' as a response to the growth of the literary marketplace. In particular 'Dickens's emergence as a sympathetic friend to his readers' was part of a strategy to offset the potential impersonality of texts and the distance separating writer from purchaser.[22] Hence, the concept of a friendly relationship with fictional characters became the 'dominant metaphor of the relationship between novelists and their readers', 'a staged denial of the public world of the market, or more specifically, of the increasingly industrial relations of production and circulation that actually dictated the relationships of textual circulation'.[23] Arguably, Dickens established 'the greatest rapport with his readers' of all Victorian novelists, changing storylines in mid serialization to meet readers' responses.[24] Carolyn Oulton has analysed how Dickens created an 'ideal reader', blurring 'the lines between […] public and private' and persuading the reader to

[17] Lamb, pp.11, 2.
[18] See: Thomas Dixon, *The Invention of Altruism: Making Moral Meanings in Victorian Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).
[19] See: Rob Boddice, *The Science of Sympathy: Morality, Evolution, and Victorian Civilization* ((Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2016).
[20] Patrick Geddes and J. Arthur Thomson, *The Evolution of Sex* (London: Walter Scott, 1889); James Paget, 'Clinical Lectures on the Nervous Mimicry of Diseases', *The Lancet,* 102 (11 October 1873), 511–13; John K. Mitchell, *Self-Help for Nervous Women (*Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott,1909).
[21] Deidre Shauna Lynch, *Loving Literature: A Cultural History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015) pp.78, 7.
[22] Deane, p.xiii.
[23] Deane, p.28.
[24] Patrick Brantlinger, *The Reading Lesson: The Threat of Mass Literacy in Nineteenth-Century British Fiction* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998), p.13.

'accept that intimacy can exist between people who have never met'. This she argues went as far as 'the sense of a shared identity, which will be accessible across class boundaries', an attempt to 'conflate' writer and reader 'in an imaginative bond'.[25] These associations of sympathy are highly relevant to Corelli's understanding of the writer and reader relationship, and indeed constituted an essential part of her literary model, as we shall later see.

For now, it is important to emphasize that despite the diversity of sympathies and their various associations, the fact that they were important motivating and shaping forces behind much nineteenth-century fiction indicates that it is worth trying to unpick and contextualise their meanings. In particular, if we are to understand responses to the growing commercial potential of the novel, and the growth and widening of its readership, it is essential to comprehend the strategies and moral and political ideology that drove certain types of popular fiction. Diversity and imprecision matter less than a recognition that throughout the century, sympathy was deemed a crucially important factor in the reading experience. As one educator put it:

> If there be one quality or faculty which, in the present conditions of social life, it is more necessary we should cultivate than another, it is that of Sympathy. […] It is because the higher Fiction cherishes and enforces Sympathy that I plead for it as an agency in the moral and intellectual culture of our Girls.[26]

That the morally improving, educative nature of the sympathy engendered by the reading experience remained crucial to the end of the century — instilling here the belief that sympathy could be both enforced and cherished as a result — deserves greater acknowledgment, as does its applicability to men as well as women, which I will shortly explore.

Critical Approaches to Sympathy

Given sympathies' range of meanings and associations, it is not surprising that scholarly debate has responded with a variety of critical approaches. Each one, in attempting to provide a coherent focus to an elusive subject, exhibits different strengths and weaknesses, and only some are relevant and useful to the concerns of this thesis. For example, one critical trend has minimised the significance of the moral and emotive content of nineteenth-century fiction in order to reveal sympathy's influence on the form of the realist novel. So, Rae Greiner argues that sympathy as established by Adam Smith constituted a 'complex formal process, a mental exercise' and that

[25] Carolyn W. de la L. Oulton, *Dickens and the Myth of the Reader* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2017) pp.1, 11, 12.
[26] 'One Who Knows Them', *Girls and their Ways* (London: John Hogg, 1881), p.170.

'sympathetic processes of thought were central to the narrative forms of nineteenth-century fiction' such as omniscient narration and free indirect discourse.[27] The valuable insights this approach gives arguably overlook the content and desired effect of novels, those of Ward, Corelli, as well as Gaskell for example, where the moral imperatives and emotional associations of sympathy are all-important.

A second approach has been to question the viability of sympathy as a construct, exploring how Victorian fiction questioned its ethical probity. Hence, Talia Schaffer argues that *Daniel Deronda* demonstrates that Eliot's belief in the 'extension of our sympathies' as the basis of 'moral sentiment' had changed to sympathy as 'passive specularity' and ineffective personal 'moral sensitivity', while Rachel Ablow examines Dickens's and Eliot's exploration of the drawbacks of sympathy as a 'psychic structure' of formulation of the individual. This was one that sought problematic, gendered 'homologies between marital and readerly sympathy', she argues.[28] A further example, Audrey Jaffe's Marxist-influenced analysis of sympathy, identifies a selfish, middle-class 'absence of reciprocity', spectatorship that threatens 'the foundation of feeling on which individual identity is supposedly based'.[29] Such an approach runs the danger of historical misunderstanding and in Jaffe's case arguably misreads Smith's concept of the spectator as a visual metaphor instead of an inner conscience – what he described as 'the abstract and ideal spectator of our sentiments and conduct'.[30] Moreover, even when a cogent case for a particular aspect of sympathy is made (for example by Ablow and Tara MacDonald), the potential drawback of limited applicability outside the strict confines of its initial use remains .[31]

Such has been the perceived 'vagueness that surrounds the term', therefore, that some critics like Sophie Ratcliffe have felt impelled to take sympathy away from its eighteenth-century origins altogether and to completely redefine it in order to turn it into a useful critical tool. Influenced by cognitive philosophy she conceives of sympathy relating to 'a lack of knowledge and

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[27] D. Rae Greiner, 'Thinking of Me Thinking of You: Sympathy versus Empathy in the Realist Novel', *Victorian Studies,* 53 (Spring 2011), 417–26 (p.418); Rae Greiner, *Sympathetic Realism in Nineteenth-Century British Fiction* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 2012), p.4. Variations of this argument to be found in: Jesse Rosenthal, *Good Form: The Ethical Experience of the Victorian Novel* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017) and Jeanne M. Britton, *Vicarious Narratives.*

[28] Schaffer, *Communities of* Care, p.118; Rachel Ablow, *The Marriage of Minds: Reading Sympathy in the Victorian Marriage Plot* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007), pp.2, 14.

[29] Audrey Jaffe, *Scenes of Sympathy: Identity and Representation in Victorian Fiction* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000), pp.8, 4, 7, 16.

[30] Smith, p.216. See also Geoffrey Sayre-McCord, 'Hume and Smith on Sympathy, Approbation, and Moral Judgment', in *Sympathy: A History* ed. by Eric Schliesser (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), pp.208–46 (pp.238–39, and Rae Greiner, 'Sympathy Time: Adam Smith, George Eliot, and the Realist Novel', *Narrative*, 17 (October 2009), 291–311 (p.295).

[31] Tara MacDonald, 'Bodily Sympathy, Affect, and Victorian Sensation', in *Affect Theory and Literary Critical Practice*, ed. by Stephen Ahern (Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), pp.121–37.

the presence of wonder' at the fact that 'our worldview is not necessarily definitive'.[32] In related fashion, Kirsty Martin characterises sympathy in Woolf's and Lawrence's work as 'a complex form of sensory entanglement', a threatening transcendence which can 'disrupt autonomy'.[33] Useful as this third type of approach to sympathy may be to explicate richly ambiguous, modernist, or proto-modernist texts, it disregards much of the moral and political concerns of mid-century fiction and the popular late-nineteenth-century fiction that I wish to examine.

The critical approaches to sympathy with which I therefore wish to engage and debate are rather those which, first, consider that sympathy's importance in fiction declined over the course of the century, second, investigate how a historically contextualised sympathy in Victorian fiction can be interpreted as offering a potent political critique of class problems, and third, debate the effects of the sympathy generated by the reading experience.

Most critics have judged that the position and nature of sympathy had changed markedly by the end of the century. For example, Carolyn Burdett argues that 'sympathy was a highly-overburdened concept and […] Victorian evolutionary science of the later nineteenth century played an important part in ending its moral centrality'.[34] The assumption that has typically followed is that sympathy's role in fiction likewise diminished. George Eliot, the prime proponent of the moral sentiments that could be aroused by art's 'extension of our sympathies' has long been considered by critics to have complicated the concept or, more recently, to have turned away from it completely in favour of an active 'ethics of care'.[35] Rachel Hollander similarly espies an 'ethics of hospitality' replacing 'an ethics based on sympathy and the ability of the self to identify with others' in Hardy and Olive Schreiner.[36] Bradley Deane considers that in sensation fiction too 'metaphors of sympathy and friendship [… are] displaced by tropes of professionalism and by a rhetoric of disease that turned on its head the optimistic notion of universal sympathy'. Henry James then marks 'the demise of the Victorian paradigm of sympathetic novelists and heralds the advent of modernist literary authority', with its 'limited relationship of appreciation by which both novelists and their readers could demonstrate their cultural distinction'.[37] Modernism is therefore usually seen as sealing the fate of an old-fashioned concept. Meghan Hammond, for

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[32] Sophie Ratcliffe, *On Sympathy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp.5, 8, 19.
[33] Kirsty Martin, *Modernism and the Rhythms of Sympathy: Vernon Lee, Virginia Woolf, D.H. Lawrence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp.8, 9.
[34] Carolyn Burdett, review of *The Science of Sympathy*, *Annals of Science,* 74 (2017) 337–39 (p.339).
[35] For example: Andrew H. Miller, *The Burdens of Perfection: On Ethics and Reading in Nineteenth-Century British Literature* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008), p.71 on Deronda's ineffective sympathy; Schaffer, p.121.
[36] Rachel Hollander, *Narrative Hospitality in Late Victorian Fiction: Novel Ethics* (New York: Routledge, 2013), p.1.
[37] Deane, pp.61, xiv, 93.

example, addresses modernism's 'turn away from sympathetic representation' and its characteristic 'deep ambivalence about empathetic experience'.[38] Deane does acknowledge 'Besant's reiteration of the old Victorian model of sympathy' in his lecture, 'The Art of Fiction' (which was in the past treated by critics as a mere prompt to James's more sophisticated response)[39] but does not explore the extent to which Jamesian priorities 'were neither welcomed nor pursued by all novelists'.[40] In the following sections of this chapter, I will however explore in some detail how Mary Ward and Marie Corelli in their different ways, related to much of Besant's thinking about what he saw as 'modern Sympathy' — not an outdated concept, therefore, but one deemed relevant to the late nineteenth century.

In the process of exploring the literary and social politics which this concept prompted, I will be seeking to build on the work of those critics who have seen sympathy as a potent political force. For example, Jennifer MacLure argues that 'Gaskell's turn to sympathy as a political solution can be read not as a naive appeal to the emotions of middle-class individuals but rather as a critique of the systematic modification of human relations brought about by the onset of industrial capitalism' — one which highlighted 'the integral function of "laissez mourir" in the free market economic system'.[41] Her analysis of the visceral and the vulnerable in Gaskell's critique of classic liberal *laissez faire* economics suggests that sympathy was more vigorous than past accusations of emotive sentimentality masquerading as radical politics have alleged.[42] Indeed, Carolyn Burdett concludes that for Gaskell sympathy was 'a resource that requires great effort of conscious will and self-control, supported fundamentally by religious faith'.[43] The combination here of sacred and secular with self-aware intellectual effort is one that we will also see in Ward's and Corelli's work. Brigid Lowe takes the strength and tenacity of mid-century sympathy even further, interpreting 'sympathy as a weapon, pitted against […] inequality, and as a force capable of imagining and realising a better future'. She characterises the emotional quality of much Victorian fiction as 'the site of a naked struggle between rival conceptions of human nature, society and the proper scope of sympathy' where a 'battle is hotly fought out' over 'the separation of personal and moral from the social and political'. Moreover, Lowe's analysis of the deconstruction of 'separate-spheres' ideology in even Yonge's conservative fiction — in particular

[38] Meghan Marie Hammond, *Empathy and the Psychology of Literary Modernism* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014) p.4.
[39] For example: Mark Spilka, 'Henry James and Walter Besant: "The Art of Fiction" Controversy', *Novel,* 6 (Winter 1973), 101–19.
[40] Deane, p.106.
[41] Jennifer MacLure, 'Diagnosing Capitalism: Vital Economics and the Structure of Sympathy in Gaskell's Industrial Novels', *Nineteenth-Century Contexts*, 38 (2016) 343–52 (p.344).
[42] For example: Elaine Feelgood, 'The Novelist and the Poor', *Novel*, 47 (2014), 210–33 (p.218).
[43] Burdett, 'Sympathy', p.325.

her reference to the extension of 'domestic values to encompass the public sphere' — is a useful prompt to the relevance of Jürgen Habermas's theoretical thinking despite its absence here.[44] That sympathy could play a political role in combatting what Habermas saw as the nineteenth-Century transformation of the public sphere away from the democratic debate of a literary forum of intimacy is an idea that later parts of this thesis will pursue. Indeed, it is my contention that the sympathy driving Ward's and Corelli's popular fiction facilitated the provision of a widened forum for debate about public morality and class relations.

In order to draw readers into this debate, the emotional and intellectual quality of the reading experience was crucial — eliciting the reader's sympathy for both the plight of fictional characters and the issues with which they had to grapple. The nature and consequences of the sympathy aroused by reading is a subject that has prompted much disagreement. On one side stand critics such as Martin and Ratcliffe who reject a fuzzy 'vogue for empathy', on the other the moral philosopher Martha Nussbaum.[45] Nussbaum deems that fiction-reading can build moral understanding and fellow feeling in a practical way, to create sympathetic, upright citizens.[46] So contested is this territory that the ensuing interventions have been many and various. I will engage with those critics, including Suzanne Keen and Howard Sklar, who address the subject both theoretically and through empirical study to qualify Nussbaum's bold claims.[47] My own analysis of new empirical evidence of readers' responses to Ward and Corelli's fiction in chapters three and five will add further weight here, exploring the extent to which their sympathy, engaged emotionally and intellectually through reading, contributed to a public forum of debate. I will therefore complicate Jesse Rosenthal's proposition that 'the experience of narrative is not the same as the experience of literary sympathy', not an 'imagined projection of "if I were in their place"' but a reflective process over time.[48] My empirical evidence will show that it is both. Hence, Rae Greiner's related argument that Victorian sympathy was primarily a rational and formal process will also be challenged. Her contention that Adam Smith envisaged 'an imaginative undertaking in which feeling played no absolutely necessary part' perhaps over-emphasizes one part of the equation, and in any case is belied by the evidence of readers' reactions.[49]

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[44] Brigid Lowe, *Victorian Fiction and the Insights of Sympathy: An Alternative to the Hermeneutics of Suspicion* (London: Anthem Press, 2007), pp.14, 20, 133; Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, trans. by T. Burger (Cambridge: Polity, 1989 [1962]).
[45] Ratcliffe, p.5.
[46] For example, in Martha Nussbaum, *Political Emotions: Why Love Matters for Justice* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2013).
[47] Suzanne Keen, *Empathy and the Novel* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007; Howard Sklar, *The Art of Sympathy in Fiction: Forms of Ethical and Emotional Persuasion* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2013).
[48] Rosenthal, p.23.
[49] Greiner, *Sympathetic Realism*, p.1.

I now turn to Besant's 'The Art of Fiction' (1884) where 'modern Sympathy' re-emerged as a key underpinning of the novel. This is in order to demonstrate in detail the extent to which Ward and Corelli related to contemporary discussion of such ideas, and their era's consequent assumptions, and to reveal the serious intent of their popular fiction.

Besant, Sympathy, and the Fiction of Ward and Corelli

Besant's understanding of the crucial role of sympathy in fiction is a highly illuminating one for understanding the social and literary politics of Ward and Corelli's commercially successful fiction and what their fiction brought to national debate. Turning to Besant to understand what sympathy could mean in the late-nineteenth public sphere is particularly helpful because, despite its underlying importance to her fiction, Ward never fully articulated the role of sympathy, while Corelli's bond of sympathy with readers was expressed in characteristically idiosyncratic terms. I want to highlight how Besant's thinking in 'The Art of Fiction' lecture provides the key to unlock the ways a variety of associations of sympathy drove their popular fiction's market intervention. His lecture is pertinent in four key areas. First, it highlights the consequences for fiction of a sympathy which was associated with moral influence and, secondly, with a closely related politics of fellow feeling for the working class. Ward's fictional search for a sustainable moral selfhood which might inspire social reform influenced, and was influenced by, her own philanthropy, just as Besant's fiction inspired philanthropic initiative. Third, Besant's attempt to elevate the status and financial reward of the novelist, based on the moral and educational role of popular fiction driven by sympathy, provides a useful context to understanding Corelli's concept of the bond of sympathy uniting author and reader. Her literary politics attempted to bypass the critics and to protect her fiction's cultural status from critical attacks on its commercial success. Lastly, his lecture underlines the fundamental importance he and they attached to powerful and influential reading experiences that affected readers emotionally and intellectually. In Ward's case, this involved encouraging sensitivity to moral and political debate, and in Corelli's case communion with the author's moral and aesthetic world of the imagination.

Overall, I argue for the importance of understanding a scantly acknowledged resurgence of sympathy in late-nineteenth-century popular fiction. It was, I suggest, crucial as the motivating force of Corelli's desire for her popular fiction to democratize the late-nineteenth-century literary marketplace and for Ward's examination of how peaceful democratic change could be brought about. In ways that were both intentional (Ward's fiction of ideas), and partly unintentional

(Corelli's morally controversial fiction), their works' reliance on various meanings and associations of sympathy, this thesis will show, was key to their provision of a public forum for debate.

The Morality of Sympathy

> [Fiction] not only requires of its followers, but also creates in readers, that sentiment which is destined to be a most mighty engine in deepening and widening the civilization of the world. We call it Sympathy, but it means a great deal more than was formerly understood by the word. It means in fact, what Professor Seeley once called the Enthusiasm of Humanity, and it first appeared, I think, about a hundred and fifty years ago, when the modern novel came into existence. […] modern Sympathy includes not only the power to pity the sufferings of others, but also […] the perception of one man's relation to another, his duties and responsibilities.[50]

Here we see Besant declaring sympathy to be both the moral preoccupation of fiction and a commanding moral influence on its readers — an influence that would have a democratising influence, 'deepening and widening' civilisation itself. In these grand claims Besant is building on the mid-century sympathy of condition of England novels — indeed, one critic has called him a 'latter day Dickens' — but he is conceiving of it as more powerful and effective than previously acknowledged.[51] For Besant, its origin and power stems from its links with religion — just as it did for Ward. Besant refers to Seeley's *Ecce Homo* (1865) which interpreted Christ's teaching as a moral force whose purpose was the progress of mankind in this world — hence Besant's argument for it leading to 'one man's relation to another, his duties and responsibilities'. In related fashion, Ward in *Robert Elsmere* (1888) defended a religion eschewing belief in the historical basis of Christianity (owing to changing understandings of the reliability of 'testimony' over the ages) but espousing the active moral imperative of service for others, based on Christ's human example. Here, her youthful historical training, working on Spanish church history in the Bodleian, and the influence of her Oxford mentors Mark Pattison and Benjamin Jowett, were more pertinent influences than Seeley. Jowett and Pattison both contributed to the controversial *Essays and Reviews* (1860) which was the introduction for many English readers to German biblical criticism and contributed to an age of increasing religious doubt — against which Elsmere has to reformulate religious belief.

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[50] Walter Besant, *The Art of Fiction: A Lecture, Delivered at the Royal Institution on Friday Evening, April 25, 1884* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1884), pp.11–12.

[51] Andrzej Diniejko, 'Walter Besant: A Latter-Day Dickens?', in *Walter Besant: The Business of Literature and the Pleasures of Reform*, ed. by Kevin A. Morrison (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2019), pp.225–42.

Moreover, Besant's based his conception of sympathy as a 'most mighty engine' of 'sentiment' 'destined' to change the world on fiction's ability to portray 'the appreciation of lives made beautiful by devotion and self-denial, the sense of personal responsibility'.[52] This was even more crucial to Ward's work than Besant's. The greatest influence on Ward's moral and religious thinking was T.H. Green, the philosophical idealist, who appears in *Robert Elsmere* as Grey. Green's lay sermon 'The Witness of God' is quoted in the novel where we are told that God is to be found 'in all thought', 'in philosophies', and 'the life of charity'.[53] Green's sermon expounds his moral philosophy of self-realisation achieved through self-sacrifice, following the example of Christ. He speaks of 'moral death into life', 'denial of self', 'self-sacrificing citizenship' and 'Christian fellowship where no man seeks his own, but everyone another's good'.[54] Thomas Dixon notes that one of the central claims of idealist ethics was that the dichotomy between egoism and compassion for others was a false and unhelpful one, since self-realisation was part of the process of self-sacrifice.[55] Green deemed the defeat of the lower self and the cultivation of the better self as essential, the paradox of self-fulfilment through service for others. Indeed, Green's admirer, Hugh Price Davies, argued in his sermon 'The Brotherhood of Man' that 'legitimate and heathy self-love' was compatible with 'altruism' and Christ's declaration that 'he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it'.[56] It is this self-definition and sacrifice that Elsmere's life (and early death) signifies.

Benjamin Kohlmann is surely right to argue that literary work such as *Robert Elsmere* set out 'to imagine the forms of life that would lend substance to [Green's] abstractions' and that it propounded 'the social conception of citizenship developed by Green in the lead-up to the Third Reform Act (1884) that edged Britain closer towards adult male democracy'.[57] I would add, however, that Ward did this through the depiction of sympathy in human form. Elsmere, for example, characterises the divine as human acts of self-sacrifice, revealed 'whenever a man helps his neighbour, or a mother denies herself for her child; whenever a soldier dies without a murmur for his country, or a sailor puts out in the darkness to rescue the perishing'. Indeed, we learn of Robert's practice of reading aloud to his boy's society and then to his London brotherhood that 'In these performances Elsmere's aim had always been twofold – the rousing of moral sympathy and

[52] Besant, *Art of Fiction,* p.24.
[53] Mrs Humphry Ward, *Robert Elsmere* (Brighton: Victorian Secrets, 2013 [1888]), p.362.
[54] T.H. Green, *The Witness of God and Faith: Two Lay Sermons*, ed. and intr. by Arnold Toynbee (London: Longmans, Green, 1885), pp.16,19, 25, 35.
[55] Dixon, *The Invention of Altruism*, p.260.
[56] Hugh Price Hughes, *Essential Christianity: A Series of Explanatory Sermons* (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1894), pp.41, 42.
[57] Benjamin Kohlmann, *British Literature and the Life of Institutions: Speculative States* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), pp.45, 9.

the awakening of the imaginative power pure and simple'.[58] It was the emotional power of an ungendered sympathy's 'sentiment' and its capacity in both men and women to stimulate imaginative connection with others that made prioritising service for others possible. The compatibility of Ward's this-worldly ethics of sympathy with Besant's reference to 'enthusiasm for Humanity' is underlined by Ward's later use of the same phrase to characterise the mission of her own University Hall settlement.[59]

In addition, the moral journeys of Ward's protagonists in her *bildungsromans* reflected the tension in Besant's approach to didacticism. Besant declared that 'the preaching novel is the least desirable of any', but also claimed that fiction 'preaches a higher morality than is seen in the actual world' and argued that when novels start without 'conscious moral purpose […] one feels as if there has been a debasement of the Art'.[60] Balancing the author's moral point of view with the avoidance of 'preaching' was always a key issue for Ward, whose fiction was often pigeon-holed by critics as didactic 'fiction with a purpose'. Preaching 'higher morality' was much closer to Corelli's view of the novelist as an upright dispenser of moral truth. For Corelli, 'the Power of the Pen' derived from standing 'for Right, for Justice, and for final Good' and from commitment to 'root up lies, to destroy hypocrisies, shams'.[61] In contrast, Ward's mature fiction comprised a self-questioning journey of her characters toward maturity and intervention in the public world. *Marcella* (1894), analysed in chapter two, depicts the spiritual progress of its eponymous protagonist to relinquishing egotistic attempts at noblesse oblige style philanthropy toward a marriage partnership through which sympathy for others — in Besant's terms 'pity' for those suffering and the imperative of 'one man's relation to another' — seeks effective expression. Here, it is the personal transformation that sympathy facilitates that gives individuals the ability to tackle social problems. Chapter three shows how Ward thereby moved away from the didactic religious teaching of *Robert Elsmere* toward a more dialogical interrogation of ideas. This informed a fiction of debate able to explore the strengths and weaknesses of, among other ethical ideals, sympathy — as demonstrated by *Sir George Tressady*'s (1896) questioning of the effectiveness of the heroine's fellow feeling for others.

As a precursor to those discussions, in order to illustrate the interrogative nature and ethical quest of Ward's mature fiction, one can turn to *Eleanor* (1901) and its anguished analysis of sympathy. The book, set in Italy, depicts a love triangle comprising the overbearing, egotistical

[58] Ward, *Robert Elsmere,* pp.494, 472.
[59] Mrs Humphry Ward, *A Writer's Recollections* (London: Collins, 1918), p.290.
[60] Besant, *The Art of Fiction,* pp.9, 24.
[61] Marie Corelli, 'The Power of the Pen', in *Free Opinions Freely Expressed on Certain Phases of Modern Social Life and Conduct* (London: Archibald Constable, 1905), pp.292–309 (pp.297, 308).

Manisty, the young, innocent American girl Lucy with whom he falls in love, and the older Eleanor whose desire for a marital partnership with Manisty is thwarted. Aghast that she has destroyed her friend's hopes, Lucy runs away and hides with the embittered Eleanor, but eventually Eleanor is drawn to sacrifice herself in favour of Lucy's own love. In Ward's introduction to the book, she declares that the plot develops through Eleanor's 'tragic, irresistible sympathy with a girl's passion'.[62] The fragile Eleanor had initially helped Manisty with his book on the flaws of the recently minted Italian state, but when he is forced to acknowledge its own unviability, she is rejected. 'That vibrating sympathy of thought which had arisen between them' was gone and she sees 'her whole existence as a refused petition, a rejected gift. She had offered Edward Manisty her all of sympathy and intelligence, and he was throwing it back lightly, inexorably upon her hands'.[63] Sympathy here, although severely limited in terms of the woman's own empowerment, involves emotional fellow feeling as well as 'intelligence' — an intellectual meeting of minds or solidarity. Eleanor's feelings of rejection turn to understandable desire for revenge and her potential for 'vibrating sympathy' turns into its opposite, 'a hardness, almost a ferocity of determination, which was stiffening and transforming the whole soul'. Making Lucy feel guilty for her loss is hence a perversion of true sympathy. In contrast, Lucy's natural 'wide and rare human sympathy' is manifested when she agrees to hide from Manisty, clutching Eleanor to her breast 'feeling her whole being passing out to Eleanor's in a great tide of passionate will and pity'.[64] Feelings of compassion, ethical obligation, tolerance, and humility are key ingredients of a sympathy which is the novel's ethical pinnacle — at the same time as we are asked to understand why Eleanor fights against it.

When Eleanor encounters Father Benecke, recently defrocked for questioning Christ's divinity, he acts as a moral guide arguing that selfishness should be supplanted by self-sacrifice. In the same terms later used by the male protagonist of *The Marriage of William Ashe* (1905), Eleanor acknowledges 'the "dying to live" of Christianity', groping toward an attainment of self-fulfilment and identity through a sympathetic, unselfish prioritisation of the welfare of others. Here we see that sympathy for Ward was not gendered but associated with ethics that applied to men as well as women. Hence, we can identify Ward's debt to T.H. Green's moral philosophy when Eleanor finds that losing or 'dispos[ing]' of the world' (or her self-interest in it) is the only way to attain true selfhood.[65] As she accepts this, the result is emotional, intellectual, and ethical release, a spiritual epiphany. When Eleanor reveals Lucy's whereabouts to Manisty and discloses

[62] *The Writings of Mrs Humphry Ward*, with introductions by the author, vol X: *Eleanor* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1910,) p.x.
[63] Ward, *Eleanor,* pp.151, 152–53.
[64] Ibid, pp.331, 448, 283.
[65] Ibid, p.555.

that Lucy loves him, 'Eleanor's being was flooded with the strangest, most ecstatic sense of deliverance. She had been her own executioner; and this was not death but life!' When she declares 'I'm the spectator—the friend', Eleanor at last mirrors the role of Adam's Smith's sympathetic judicious spectator, throwing her mind into those of both Lucy and Manisty, and acting accordingly.[66]

Yet it is also a belief system that is almost too good to endure. Dying to live soon becomes, in Eleanor's feeble state of health, a pathway to death itself. She looks on Manisty 'full of a dignity recovered, and never to be lost again, the gaze indeed of a soul that was already withdrawing itself gently, imperceptibly from the things of earth and sense'. Her sympathy is both noble and self-defeating, almost 'sense'-less — 'a love that won't let me rest; that is killing me before the time!'[67] Strength and weakness are almost impossible to disentangle here. We sense inexorable forces at work, as the wisdom of age gives way gracefully to youthful vitality, but not without a feeling of loss. The novel asks whether the self-sacrifice of Eleanor's subsequent death is too high a price to pay. The sympathy of fellow feeling was put to the test here – an indication of Ward's interest in ethical debate. Indeed, her popular and influential fiction attempted, as chapter three will show, to engage with opinion formers and decision-makers, and contribute to national debate about the links between personal ethics and social reform. It argues that Ward's fiction can therefore be understood in Habermas's terms as attempting a recreation of a literary public sphere of open democratic debate that Habermas felt had been lost after its original eighteenth-century flowering.

Sympathy, Class Politics and Philanthropy

> The modern Sympathy includes […] the reverence for man, the respect for his personality, the recognition of his individuality, and the enormous value of the one man […]. […] Through the strength of this newly-born faculty, and aided by the guidance of a great artist, we are enabled to discern the real indestructible man beneath the rags and filth of a common castaway, and the possibilities of the meanest gutter child that steals in the streets for its daily bread. Surely that is a wonderful Art which endows the people — all the people — with this power of vision and feeling.[68]

Sympathy for Besant was also crucial to the public sphere, bound up with what it meant to be a human individual in an unequal society. For him, 'modern' sympathy is associated with the very

[66] Ibid, pp.509, 506.
[67] Ibid, pp.510–11, 562.
[68] Besant, *Art of Fiction,* p.12.

essence of the novel form which embodied more than 'the power to pity the sufferings of others' which had powered the century's earlier fiction, and had been noticeable by its absence in Defoe earlier. Fiction now expresses 'reverence for man' and 'the recognition of his individuality' exploring the rights, feelings, and cultural needs of a wider range of individuals. Fiction's interiority, its human stories, were therefore essentially political. Indeed, Besant's was a politics of recognition that sought to cross the class divide: 'the fundamental ethical act of perception in regard to others is to see them (as oneself) in their unique subjectivity', as Kevin Swafford puts it.[69] Although it is debatable how far Besant's fiction achieved this feat, he did argue that *Children of Gibeon* was 'the most truthful of anything I have ever written' as far as 'as a long and patient investigation could make it' in its depiction of 'the daily life and manners […] of the girls who do the rougher and coarser work of sewing in their own lodgings'.[70]

Whatever his success in embodying the subjectivity of working-class characters in his fiction, its theoretical acknowledgment led to strong political allegiances — fellow feeling with 'the rags and filth of the common castaway' or 'gutter child'. Moreover, since 'all the people' are given 'power of vision and feeling' through fiction to feel likewise, sympathy possesses potential democratic influence — the political power to foster the 'deepening and widening' of civilisation and access to it. The moral and political are therefore inextricably intertwined in Besant's thinking since the novel can 'endow' everyone with 'recognition' of the future 'possibilities' of the poor and disadvantaged, and appreciation of what is 'indestructible' beneath outward appearance. Hence, Besant's class-based politics of shared humanity envisaged a path towards more equal opportunities for all. His beliefs fed through, as we shall shortly see, into the philanthropic outlook and influence of his own fiction.

Besant's image of a ragged castaway is a helpful introduction to Corelli's related but rather different politics of solidarity with the lower classes. She used the similar image of a 'ragged woman in the streets picking up scraps' in *Ardath* (1889) to explain her own fiction — in order to contrast it with the 'frequently hideous Commonplace' of realism. Her contention was that realism failed to reveal the woman's 'inner Self' by concentrating on 'the outer Appearance' whereas visionary 'romance' could reveal 'the Real'.[71] However, she was not echoing Besant's claims for fiction's intimate knowledge of others here but asserting her fiction's claims to a connection with the spiritual. Her aim was not to investigate the emotional interiority of

[69] Kevin Swafford, 'The Ethics of Perception and the Politics of Recognition: Walter Besant's *All Sorts and Conditions of Men',* in *Walter Besant: The Business of Literature*, ed. by Kevin A. Morrison, pp.171–86 (p.182).
[70] *Autobiography of Sir Walter Besant* (New York, Dodd Mead, 1902), pp.246,247).
[71] Marie Corelli, '*Ardath': The Story of a Dead Self* (London: Methuen, 1925 [1889]), p.491.

characters so that readers could sympathise with them but to entice readers into the splendours of an inner spiritual world of imagination and love and to condemn its opposite, the depravity of a diseased earthly world. Sympathy with the common people in Corelli's more combative class politics contrasted their deemed moral rectitude with the selfish and corrupt values of elite society. While Besant's fiction embraced social reform, Corelli concentrated on vitriolic satire of the rich and powerful in novels such as *Temporal Power* (1902) which will be analysed in chapter four. There we can identify a provocative social politics of abuse, rather than any programme for active political change. This was however an integral part of Corelli's literary politics which I will shortly examine, where fellow feeling between the author and 'the people' or readers was paramount.

We can see the origins of Corelli's aversion to society's values and the literary alternatives to which she aspired in *Thelm*a (1887). Here, envious and disappointed members of a morally corrupt London high society seek to destroy the marriage of Sir Philip Errington to a Norwegian outsider. Thelma is a naïve, artless but upright and loving maiden who is inherently vulnerable to upper-class duplicity. Lord Winsleigh, when exposing his wife's 'love of mischief, and the gratification of private spite', in deceiving Thelma and making her believe her husband no longer loved her, remarks sarcastically on their 'so many sympathies in common'.[72] The perversion of sympathetic fellow feeling therefore lies at the heart of society's depravity. This is offset by a realm of chivalry and of pagan but morally sound Norse mythology from which Thelma emerges. The novel therefore sees its role as unmasking corruption, treachery, and inhumanity in both society's power brokers and cultural arbiters. A diseased sensibility is seen to permeate, and perhaps even stem from, an unprincipled literary culture with corrupted aesthetics. Tellingly, one character 'gloat[s] over' Zola's novels 'that were so indelicately realistic!'[73] A taste for the depravities of naturalism is matched by the diseased sensibilities of English writers.

> [Thelma] had once imagined that all the men and women of culture who followed the higher professions must perforce be a sort of 'Joyous Fraternity', superior to other mortals not so gifted […]. She had fancied that they must of necessity be all refined, sympathetic, large-hearted, and noble-minded — alas! How grievously was she disappointed! She found […] that the 'Joyous Fraternity' were not joyous at all — but, on the contrary, inclined to dyspepsia and discontentment […] that novelists, professing to be in sympathy with the heart of humanity, were no sooner brought into contact one with another, than they plainly showed by look, voice, and manner, the contempt they entertained for each other's work.[74]

[72] Marie Corelli, *Thelma: A Society Novel* (New York: Hooper, Clarke & Co., n.d. [1887]), p.415.
[73] Corelli, *Thelma,* p.288.
[74] Ibid, pp.299–300.

As so often in Corelli's oeuvre, the subject of the true task of fiction is centre stage. 'Literature', as conceived and approved by the literary marketplace, is seen to be permeated with selfishness and back-biting and therefore to be indigestible and morally pernicious. In contrast, Corelli's novel sees itself 'in sympathy with the heart of humanity', offering enriching and ennobling reading. *Thelma* here tries to draw readers into a mutually-validating sense of worthiness and into endorsement of what it defines as 'refined, sympathetic, large-hearted, and noble-minded' – in short, the values of Corelli's imaginative, idealising, if arguably sometimes clichéd, romance world. Rejection of establishment culture is what is deemed to connect author and reader.

Ward, however, was more closely aligned with Besant in embodying 'the possibilities of the meanest gutter child' although she too struggled to represent the subjective life experience of the working class. Although accuracy was important — for example, accompanying her sister-in-law Gertrude Ward on her rounds as a district nurse as research for the portrayal of London slums in *Marcella* — most of Ward's central characters came from familiar middle-class or upper-class worlds.[75] As we will see, her novels' exploration of subjectivity was more an interrogation of the motivations of her privileged protagonists as they seek to find paths to a sustainable moral self that might then help improve the lives of the disadvantaged. Yet, she was close to Besant's estimation of the consequences of 'the development of modern sympathy'. These comprised, he maintained, 'forces which act strongly upon the artist as well as upon his readers', forces of 'moral purpose' where 'growing reverence for the individual' implied that political action was necessary.[76] It was only through the democratisation of access to the public world of culture, with the rights of more participants in it recognised, that the 'widening and deepening' of culture was to be achieved. For example, in Besant's *All Sorts and Conditions of Men* (1882), the heroine, heiress Angela Messenger, is able to prescribe the solution to the perceived problem of East End 'monotony' with her cultural institution, a 'Palace of Delight'.[77] It has been said that Besant's novel 'fired the public imagination', then 'fused with [Edmund] Currie's plan for a People's Palace', thereby generating publicity which 'helped attract the £75,000 needed to erect it' — leading to its opening by Queen Victoria in 1887.[78] Kevin Morrison argues for 'the mutually constitutive interplay in Besant's career between philanthropy' and his writing, especially his 'professionalization of authorship'.[79] A related connection exists between Ward's conception of

[75] Beth Sutton-Ramspeck, *Raising the Dust: The Literary Housekeeping of Mary Ward, Sarah Grand, and Charlotte Perkins-Gilman* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2004), p.136.
[76] Besant, *Art of Fiction,* p.24.
[77] Walter Besant, *All Sorts and Conditions of Men: An Impossible Story* (New York: Harper 1889 [1882]), pp.402, 63.
[78] Kirsten Escobar, 'Sir Walter Besant', in *Dictionary of Literary Biography*, *vol 190: British Reform Writers, 1832–1914*, ed. by Gary Kelly and Edd Applegate (Detroit: Gale Research, 1998)) pp.32–42 (p.39).
[79] Kevin A. Morrison, 'Introduction: Walter Besant Now', in *Walter Besant: The Business of Literature*, p.7.

the role of fiction and the sympathy embodied by her own university settlement philanthropy. Indeed, *Marcella* reflected the issues and conflicting political ideologies she grappled with at the time of writing, as her settlement addressed similar questions concerning the cultural enfranchisement of the working class identified in the Introduction's epigraph.

Yet, this is not to suggest that Besant and Ward were writing similar types of fiction. There is little sense in Besant's novels of East End poverty and desperation as there is in Ward's *Marcella* where, when the heroine becomes a professional nurse, she has to deal with the aftermath of domestic violence in tenement buildings. Therefore, what Kirsten Escobar calls Besant's 'working-class romances' with their arguably wish-fulfilment solutions can be said to be rather different from Ward's philanthropic sympathy.[80] Both did try to raise awareness concerning the problems posed by contemporary social inequality — but in different ways. Of *Children of Gibeon* (1886), Besant's second philanthropic novel, it has been said that it 'contributed significantly to the public debate on sweated labour' being widely discussed in a debate which led to an 1891 report by a committee of the House of Lords, which in turn led to the passing of the Factory and Workshops Act (1895).[81] Yet, Besant's later autobiography sheds doubt on how far his fiction had set out with such practical intent.[82] In any case, Besant's treatment of such questions contrasts with the political debate in Ward's fiction. In *Marcella*, the heroine's progress toward selfless sympathy involves an agonised search for solutions to political problems at a time when radical socialist solutions, including the land tax ideas of Henry George, conflict with the more moderate collective reforms proposed by Arnold Toynbee. In the sequel *Sir George Tressady* (1896) debate about the liberties or injustices of an economic system of sweated labour airs both sides of the argument. Hence Ward's fiction became less concerned to offer ready solutions and concentrated more on the continuing search for answers. Chapter two examines Ward's attempted balancing of collective solutions and cultural enfranchisement with liberal ideology of self-help, in both her novel and her Passmore Edwards settlement. It explores how far the settlement, even more than the fiction, could withstand the charge of 'upper- and middle-class acculturation' laid against Besant's well-meaning fictional philanthropy.[83]

Here, however, it is more important to reveal the importance of sympathy to the class analysis of Ward's fiction and its exploration of conflicting religious, moral, and political ideologies as they impacted on human lives. This can be illuminated by further examination of *Eleanor*. There, the political potency of Lucy's sympathy manages to change Manisty's regressive

[80] Escobar, p.37.
[81] Diniejko, pp.237–38.
[82] See chapter 2, p.60 for Besant's explanation of how he had 'dropped' into philanthropy 'unconsciously'.
[83] Escobar, p.39.

worldview, epitomised in his intended book's 'impassioned defence of tradition, of Catholicism and the papacy'.[84] Paradoxically, his critique of the feebleness of Italian democracy upholds the validity of such hierarchical power structures despite his own personal religious scepticism. In contrast, Lucy has a natural openness and fellow feeling that is not constrained by class or tradition: 'She had that "respect of persons" which comes not from snobbishness, but from imagination and sympathy'. Therefore, she instinctively feels for the growing pains of the new, democratic Italian state which Manisty's book sought to undermine: 'And her young ignorance and sympathy were up in arms so far on behalf of Italy — Who and what was this critic that he should blame so freely, praise so little?'[85] Lucy's response directly reflect Ward's own feelings at the time of writing. She recalled in her memoirs her 'deep and passionate sympathy for the modern Italian State and its people', a 'sympathy widely different from that common temper in the European traveller', being 'often indignantly aware of a tone which seemed to me ungenerous and unjust towards the struggling Italian State'.[86] It is in searching for Lucy, seeing Italy through her eyes that Manisty realizes:

> There are forces in Italy, forces of land and soil and race — only now fully let loose — that will remake Church no less than State, as the generations go by.
> Sometimes I have felt as though this country were the youngest in Europe; with a future as fresh and teeming as the future of America.[87]

Ultimately, his implicit acknowledgment of the insights of the emotions, and their applicability to men and the public world of democracy, stems from his realisation of the superiority of understanding that stems from Lucy's fellow feeling. His is a reversal that has to face up to the weakness of a masculine logic relying on coercive, hierarchical power structures and the superiority of values which cannot be closeted in female domestic spheres but must be applied to the world of human struggle. There, solidarity with, and aspiration for others, Ward believed, should be pre-eminent.

Hence, despite their differences, the role of fiction for both Besant and Ward lay in working for 'deepening and widening' access to civilization and democratic progress. For Ward, the political values of solidarity, enlarged understanding, and fellow feeling were paramount. As we shall see in the next chapter, these values suffused her use of the language of sympathy in speeches about her philanthropy's attempt to surmount class boundaries. As Samuel Barnett, founder of Toynbee Hall, wrote in a letter read out at the opening ceremony of Ward's own Passmore Edwards settlement in 1898: 'The greatest need of the moment is social unity, and it

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[84] Ward, *Eleanor,* p.43.
[85] Ward, *Eleanor,* pp. 83, 72.
[86] Ward, *A Writer's Recollections*, p.349.
[87] Ward, *Eleanor,* pp.470–71.

will not be reached by any form of what Matthew Arnold called "Machinery" so well as by mutual understanding and enlarged human feeling'.[88]

Sympathy and the Status of the Novelist

It was because of the power of the understanding, moral influence, and enlarged feeling that the novel's sympathy generated that Besant could elevate the cultural value and status of the novel as an artistic form — and, by extension, that of the novelist. Because 'fiction is an Art in every way worthy to be called the sister and equal of the Arts of Painting, Sculpture, Music, and Poetry', those 'who follow and profess the Art of Fiction must be recognized as artists', he declared in 'The Art of Fiction'. Moreover, its moral qualities were associated with popularity. 'It has always been the most popular, because it requires neither culture, education, nor natural genius to understand and listen to a story.' Moreover, 'it is the greatest teaching power, because its lessons are most readily apprehended and understood' and because of the novel's accessibility, comprehensibility, and educational potential, it becomes a 'tremendous engine of popular influence'.[89] Not everyone agreed. Edmund Gosse exemplifies the cultural prejudices and fear of popularity in some quarters of the literary marketplace that Besant was trying to combat. In one article, Gosse dismissed the novel as 'the admitted tyrant of the whole family of literature', arguing 'to what inanities do we not presently descend! […] the conventionality, the narrowness, the monotony'.[90] Such attempts to belittle the evident attractions of fiction were accompanied by suspicion of those reading it. Gosse also objected to the 'enlargement of the circle of readers' which entailed 'an increase of persons who, without ear, are admitted to the concert of literature' — and elsewhere Corelli's fiction was singled out as particularly responsible.[91] To these concerns must be added the century-long anxiety Patrick Brantlinger has identified — that 'something less misleading, less addictive, less seductive, less toxic' than a novel could be read.[92] Such fears are what Besant's ebullient advancement of fiction's popular influence and authors' status sought to dispel.

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[88] 'Proceedings at the Opening of the New Buildings, on the 12th February 1898, by The Right Hon. John Morley, M.P, Passmore Edwards Settlement, Tavistock Place, W.C.' (London: The London News Agency, 1898), p.11 — Mary Ward Settlement collection (LMA 4524/K/03/001), London Metropolitan Archives, London.

[89] Besant, *Art of Fiction,* pp.3, 4, 8.

[90] Edmund Gosse, 'The Tyranny of the Novel', in *Questions at Issue* (London: William Heinemann, 1893), pp.3–31 (pp.4, 30).

[91] Gosse, 'The Influence of Democracy on Literature', in *Questions at Issue*, pp.35–67 (pp.51, 52); for similar evaluation of Corelli's baleful popular influence in particular, see 'Our Lady of Pars', *The Saturday Review*, 82 (26 September 1896), 337 — in Appendix B, section 2 c).

[92] Brantlinger, p.212.

Lack of public acknowledgment of fiction's cultural standing was integrally connected, he felt, with the denial of authors' deserved financial recompense. 'The art of novel-writing has always been […] undervalued', he stated, and, as he put it more plainly elsewhere, the profession of authorship as a 'poorly remunerated calling is always more or less contemptible' in 'the eyes of the world'.[93] It was this perception that his fiction theory primarily sought to vanquish. The argument was that novelists' higher cultural standing depended on better payment for their work. Such beliefs impelled him to set up the Society of Authors in 1884.

Besant's defence of fiction's popularity and status originating from the sympathy the novel could command, and the consequent link with commercial success and fair payment, spoke to both Ward and Corelli. Throughout her career, Ward was much exercised to justify the validity of her bestselling fiction as a serious 'criticism of life'. The concept's development from the starting point of Arnold's understanding of literature's purpose to the aim for a literature of ideas and debate will be analysed further in chapter three. Her idealistic belief in the seriousness and power of fiction and of reading co-existed with a desire for commercial success, both to attain the widest possible public reach as well as to fund an increasingly expensive lifestyle, with country houses and foreign holidays.[94] Hence, like Corelli, she keenly supported Besant's Society of Authors, joining its council in 1897.[95] In effect she supported Besant's understanding that the author 'always has written for money and he always will' with the corollary that a book was potentially 'a property of great value'.[96] Indeed, Besant accepted 'the work of art as a commodity' since that 'exchange value made the production of art possible'.[97] Moreover, as Ayşe Çelikkol further comments, a 'literary market where authors get paid is both a result and an index of the nation's rising esteem for literature'. Hence, both Ward and Besant believed that only art with a price tag could command the respect and influence they thought it deserved.

Besant's position on authors' income, status, and the cultural influence stemming from popularity was even more crucial for Corelli. Although he, unlike her, was careful not to suggest the inevitability of a link between popularity and cultural worth — 'a failure to hit the popular taste does not always imply failure in Art' — Besant was concerned to analyse the mistakes of those who 'have not the least chance of success' and to laud those novels which every year pass

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[93] Besant, *Art of Fiction*, p.5; Walter Besant, 'Literature as a Career', *Forum*, 13 (March–August 1892), 693–708 (p.701).
[94] The financial burden of her country mansion 'Stocks' is detailed in John Sutherland, *Mrs Humphry Ward: Eminent Victorian, Pre-Eminent Edwardian* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), pp.186–90.
[95] *The Globe*, 27 February 1897, p. 4.
[96] Walter Besant, *The Pen and the Book* (London: Thomas Burleigh, 1899), pp.15–16, 145.
[97] Ayşe Çelikkol, 'Workers as Artists — From Copyright to the Palace of Delight in Besant's Writings', in *Walter Besant: The Business of Literature*, ed. by Kevin A. Morrison, pp.131–48 (pp.132, 133, 146).

'the verdict of our contemporaries'.[98] A work of art bought and sold in a literary marketplace inevitably had financial value attached to it — and commercial success could work to advance its artistic or moral influence. The 'verdict' of the reading public was worth something in all senses. However, although Corelli's literary politics emerged from similar beliefs to Besant's in writing morally upright and inspiring fiction for 'the people' or 'the public', in her case it was much more fundamental to bypass critics who sneered at the cultural value of the popular novel. She deemed an unbroken trust between creator and reader fundamental to the author's status:

> We see therefore that we must *read* our authors for ourselves, and *judge* them for ourselves. We must not trust the 'middle-man', who *may* have his prejudices, as well as his limitations. We should take our books as we take our friends — prepared not to find fault, but to enjoy their company.[99]

Rather than fictional characters as Dickensian-style friends, it is the books themselves, the distilled essence of the author's idealism, that become friends, tying together the author and reader in a pact against the 'middle-man', or biased critic. In *The Sorrows of Satan* (1895), the romance writer Mavis Clare, who significantly had the same initials as Corelli, defiantly names her doves after the periodicals who write slashing reviews of her books and feeds the reviews to her dog (just as Corelli did herself). Crucially, Mavis's commercial success stems from 'how she has won her public […] by the absolute conviction she has herself of the theories of life she tries to instil'. Consequently, she earns 'just enough to keep me working steadily, which is as it should be'.[100] In similar fashion, as chapter five will demonstrate, Corelli considered commercial success, as a marker of readers' approval, thereby countering critics, including those who banned her books from public libraries, and validating her status.

Therefore, Andrew McCann is surely right to assert that Corelli 'replays the conception of authorship Besant articulated' and that Mavis Clare is exactly the sort of rational, professional and democratically inclined author that Besant imagined representing the dignity of literature'. She mirrors Besant's 'basic assumption that authors write for the market — for the public, for the people'.[101] One must add the caveat that although the serene and contented Mavis Clare might represent the 'dignity' of the professional author, Corelli herself was a fractious figure, constantly fighting a battle with her enemies in the press and with the slights that came her way. In any case,

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[98] Besant, *Art of Fiction,* pp.32, 33.
[99] Marie Corelli, 'A Little Talk about Literature' [unpaginated], a lecture given to Heaton Mersey Philosophical Society 19 January 1903 (emphasis as per the original manuscript); Marie Corelli Archives, DR 777/25, Shakespeare Birthplace Trust, Stratford.
[100] Marie Corelli, *The Sorrows of Satan, or The Strange Experience of One Geoffrey Tempest, Millionaire: A Romance,* ed. with an introduction and notes by Julia Kuehn (Kansas City: Valancourt Books, 2008 [1895]), pp.237, 173.
[101] Andrew McCann, *Popular Literature, Authorship and the Occult in Late Victorian Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), pp.228, 40.

Corelli's stance did indeed have implications for the democratisation of the literary marketplace — popularity fostered the very expansion of the reading public. As McCann further comments, Besant's 'vision of authorship as a meritocracy and as a mode of producing property and profit' was 'at the centre of a democratized literary public sphere in which everyone, apparently, could be treated fairly'.[102] Therefore, if she was arguably less involved than Ward in 'deepening' civilisation, Corelli was fiercely committed to its 'widening' by welcoming new entrants to the literary marketplace, recently literate readers emerging as a result of the 1870 Elementary Education Acts. McCann's ensuing challenge to the 'apparent' cohesiveness and probity of Corelli's conception of the literary marketplace will be examined later in this thesis. For now, it is most important to see where her concept of the bond of sympathy linking reader and author both differed from, as well as chimed with, Besant's intervention.

McCann argues that 'Besant correlated literary property not just with a mass readership, but with […] the almost total erasure of literature's resistance to other forms of economic production'.[103] Whether or not this is true for Besant, it does not apply to Corelli. For her, sympathy comprised a meeting of minds which could then facilitate a purified market exchange and resistance to the competitiveness of the free market. Her literary model involved the pecuniary but not for its own sake. In *The Sorrows of Satan*, the devil, Lucio, warns that 'any era that is dominated by the love of money only, has a rotten core within it and must perish' and that literature becomes problematic when 'art is made subservient to the love of money'.[104] Her idealistic desire to 'instil' 'theories of life' in her readers meant she challenged the perceived vulgarity of an unprincipled marketplace willing to do anything to make money. It is apposite to recall Jasper Milvain's aim in Gissing's *New Grub Street* (1891) to produce 'good, coarse marketable stuff for the world's vulgar', and to cheerfully 'despise the people I write for'.[105] In contrast, Corelli aspired to create a spiritual and moral link between writer and reader through work 'for the Public,—to charm, to elevate, to refine the public taste,— to lift the public mind to higher and more imaginative phases of thought than the daily round of toil and care'.[106] Imaginative and moral inspiration of the reader were, she hoped, inextricable, and communion of minds essential. Elsewhere this rapport created through the readers' direct, unmediated experience of the text alone was expressed in stronger terms as a bond of sympathy:

> I count no 'friend on the press', and I owe no 'distinguished critic' any debt of gratitude. I have come, by happy chance, straight into close and sympathetic union with my public, and attained to independence and good fortune. […] this

[102] McCann, p.42.
[103] Ibid, p.21.
[104] Corelli, *The Sorrows of Satan,* p.56.
[105] George Gissing, *New Grub Street,* 3 vols (London: Smith, Elder, 1891), I, pp.17, 133.
[106] Corelli, 'A Little Talk about Literature' [unpaginated].

> 'incomprehensible success' has been attained, I rejoice to say, without either 'log-roller' or 'boom' […]. Certainly, I used to hope for what Britishers aptly call 'fair play' from the critics, but I have ceased to expect that now. It is evidently a delight to them to abuse me […]. The public are beyond them altogether.[107]

Corelli's market intervention therefore comprised a bond of mutual understanding between author and reader of a critically abused popular fiction. It sought to rise above the dubious publishing practices that sought to artificially inflate sales and to bypass critics by placing confidence in the upright and improving exchange that a sympathetic reading experience offered. A financially self-supporting, independent author could rise above a divided and divisive marketplace where commercial success was vilified and enter 'close' communion with the 'public' who were 'beyond' outside influences. The attainment of 'good fortune' applied to both sides. Here we see the status of a potentially vulnerable woman writer in a contested, unforgiving literary marketplace establishing her credentials from, and giving validity to, readers of popular fiction. Everything depended on the claim that she could 'write straight from my own heart to the hearts of others'.[108] Like Mavis Clare and her readers, Corelli was 'so conscious of their sympathy that I love them in return without the necessity of personal acquaintance. They have hearts which respond to my heart – that is all the power I care about'.[109] This sympathetic bond was not primarily a gendered one, however. Despite, or perhaps because of, the gendered criticism she received, Corelli's emotional communication with male and female readers through the text alone attempted both an idealistic moral critique of the literary marketplace, and the hoped-for means of opting out of it — a public intervention that all were invited to accept.

Chapter four analyses in more detail Corelli's literary model, where it will be seen that both idealism and self-interest arose from the desire to 'become united in sympathy and love to my readers', as she put it in the 'author's note' to *The Treasure of Heaven* (1906).[110] Chapter five then investigates how far some of Corelli's readers took seriously her concept of a purified literary marketplace in which Besant's 'exchange and circulation' involved fair financial payment in exchange for moral instruction and spiritual and imaginative uplift.[111] Her literary model may have been more attuned than Ward's to Besant's view that fiction was 'the most moral' form of art 'because the world has always been taught whatever little morality it possesses by way of story, fable, apologue, parable, and allegory'.[112] However, her romance form's didactic use of 'parable' and 'allegory' involved parody and subversion of decadent and naturalist tropes in a morally

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[107] Marie Corelli, '*My First Book: "A Romance of Two Worlds"*', *The Idler,* 4 (January 1894), 239–52 **(**p.250).
[108] Corelli, *My First Book*, p.239.
[109] Corelli, *Sorrows of Satan*, p.251.
[110] Marie Corelli, *The Treasure of Heaven: A Romance of Riches* (London: Archibald Constable, 1906), p.ix.
[111] Çelikkol, p.133.
[112] Besant, *Art of Fiction,* p.8.

controversial way that challenged the very foundations of the morality it was intended to support. The responses from supporters and opponents analysed in chapter five therefore illuminate the differing ways in which Corelli's popular fiction stimulated controversy and can be compared — once again with reference to Habermas's critique of the democratic deficit in the nineteenth-century public sphere — to Ward's provision of a public forum for debate.

Sympathy and the Reading Experience

The meeting of minds and hearts that was so important to Corelli, and the moral and political sensitivity Ward's sympathy of fellow feeling encouraged, had implications for the reading experience they desired to inspire. Here too, Besant's understanding of sympathy is highly relevant. Fiction, he declared in his lecture, 'creates and keeps alive the sense of sympathy' in its readers'. It 'commands the emotions of pity, admiration, and terror' and 'redeems [readers'] lives from dullness, puts thoughts, desires, knowledge, and even ambitions into their hearts'. An overpowering emotional and intellectual reading experience is therefore at the heart of the sympathy created in readers by novel reading. Feeling for fictional characters is part of 'this power of vision and feeling', that generates a path to knowledge of others — 'the only way in which people can learn what other men and women are like', the perception of 'understanding their very souls'.[113] Such ambitious, grand claims for the insights of omniscient narration are matched by Besant's estimation of the creativity of the reading experience. Fiction 'becomes a vehicle, not only for the best thoughts of the writer, but also for those of the reader, so that a novelist may write truthfully and faithfully, but simply, and yet be understood in a far fuller and nobler sense than was present to his mind'.[114]

Whether or not Ward would have subscribed to Besant's seemingly naive claims for absolute knowledge of others through the novel, she certainly agreed with him that sympathy was crucial to a positive reading experience, when it then became partly a creative one. Of the response to *Robert Elsmere,* she noted that its 'suggestive, symbolic character' resulted from 'the reader's eager sympathy' and the process whereby they 'lend it their own thoughts' which then 'completes the effort of the writer'.[115] Ward here understood the fortunes of *Robert Elsmere* to have been 'lifted' by a 'wave of sympathy' and retrospectively acknowledged the 'welcoming

[113] Besant, *Art of Fiction,* pp.9, 11–12.
[114] Ibid*,* p.13.
[115] *The Writings of Mrs Humphry Ward,* with introductions by the author, vol I: *Robert Elsmere,* vol 1 (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1909), p.xxix.

hands to these books of mine' which had prompted her own 'longing to keep the sympathy gained, and the ambition to deserve it more and more'.[116] In a related if different way to Corelli, sympathetic reading experiences provided succour for both writer and reader. Furthermore, the sympathy and 'thoughts' lent by readers did not necessarily always involve the 'assents' to which Corelli aspired but included 'denials' too. A dialogue is created through an 'eager' response which is marked by the 'passion' aroused by the issues at stake — as chapter three examines in more detail. The facilitation of an emotional and intellectual reading experience was key to a book's success, a 'welcoming', however questioning, of its ambition to portray the impact on vulnerable human lives of conflicting ideologies and moral judgments.

Besant's and Ward's understanding of the sympathetic reading experience can be contextualised by the contemporary journalist and progressive politician Frederick Dolman's discussion of the fictional aesthetics that sustained social reform novels. Dolman argued that Kingsley's fiction 'touches the different chords of human feeling', in abhorring 'the impersonal', while Besant's fiction exhibits 'the power of the imaginative faculty' and 'stirring influence'.[117] Christina Murdoch interprets this as meaning that 'the novel could succeed where political literature failed. An emotional interaction, and a sympathetic identification, took place during the process of reading'.[118] The question of the role and nature of any 'sympathetic identification' in the process of 'emotional interaction' in the reading experience is indeed key. The term 'identification' is problematic however as it carries associations of the 'feeling with' of empathy, rather than the 'feeling for' of sympathy — as defined earlier, albeit tentatively given the imprecision surrounding the term. The latter seems more appropriate to Ward's work.

The question is illuminated if we turn back to Besant's discussion of readers' friendship with fictional characters. He wrote: 'we can always trust them, because they will never fail us, never disappoint us, never change, because we understand them so thoroughly. So well do we know them that they become our advisers, our guides, and our best friends'.[119] The common trope of books as friends goes back, as we have seen, to the eighteenth century, but Besant's case is stronger and perhaps cruder, based on his belief in the absolute knowledge realism could provide.[120] However, readers' perceptions of the simultaneous fictionality and seeming reality of

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[116] *The Writings of Mrs Humphry Ward*, with introductions by the author, vol III: *The History of David Grieve,* vol 1 (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1909), pp.xxii, xxiii.
[117] Frederick Dolman, 'The Social reformer in Fiction', *Westminster Review*, 137 (January 1892), 528–37 (pp.530, 537).
[118] Christina Murdoch, '"A Large and Passionate Humanity Plays About Her": Women and Moral Agency in the Late-Victorian Social Problem Novel' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Glasgow, 2012), p.10.
[119] Besant, *Art of Fiction,* p. 22.
[120] Lynch, p.78.

fictional friends could be more complex and self-aware, as the reactions of Ward' readers described in chapter five will demonstrate. Its analysis of the extent to which readers' experience was one of emotional sensitivity and intellectual questioning, as Ward hoped, will therefore help to nuance claims, for example those of Martha Nussbaum, that novel reading can be directly morally improving and result in practical, pro-social outcomes. These responses therefore have significant implications for how the critically contested subject of the sympathy engendered through the reading process is understood. The empirical evidence there shows how readers' complex fellow feeling for fictional friends was part of the process of generating their own 'thoughts' and understanding their own feelings.

I give one prior example here. Ward's memoirs quote a letter of praise for *Eleanor* from the American editor of *The Century*, Richard Watson Gilder. It 'keeps a poor fellow reading it to a finish till after three in the morning […] sobbing and sighing "like a furnace"', both 'charms him and makes him angry' and 'will not let him go 'til all is done!'[121] That he should deem 'sighing and sobbing' an appropriate and complimentary response indicates the power of his own sympathetic reading experience — one that responded to the emotional triggers of the text. Unlike many reviewers, he was able to respond to the novel's heightened expressive and sometimes melodramatic mode. He welcomed the 'charm' of Lucy, and the veracity of her incarnation of the New England puritan tradition, but was also made 'angry', perhaps by Manisty's selfishness, riveted enough to read late into the night. Gilder goes on to detail the depth of his engagement, identifying its revelation of 'deeper things': 'the scene of the confessional; and that sudden phrase of Eleanor's in her talk with Manisty that makes the whole world — and the whole book — right: 'She loves you!" That is art'. This was recognition of a mode of writing which stimulated an intellectual response through its engagement of the emotions, not 'identification' but awareness of both the truth and fictionality of 'art'. As Rachel Ablow puts it, 'Victorians did not just interpret but also "felt" the texts they consumed', aware of 'the disconnection — as well as the connection— between world and text'.[122]

The democratic and moral effectiveness that Ward desired the fiction-reading experience to have can be understood in similar terms to those of John Morley, the Liberal statesman and former editor of the *Pall Mall Gazette*, who gave the opening speech at the Passmore Edwards settlement in 1898. In his earlier writing he extolled art, 'stirring within the intelligence of the spectator active thought and curiosity [.....] at once enlarging and elevating the range of his

[121] Ward, *A Writer's Recollections*, p.348.
[122] Rachel Ablow, 'Introduction', in *The Feeling of Reading: Affective Experience & Victorian Literature*, ed. by Rachel Ablow (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2010) p.4.

reflections on mankind, ever kindling his sympathies […] fill[ing] men with that love of humanity which is the best inspirer of virtue'.[123] If this stressed the rational side of the reading experience as a way to stimulate readers' own thinking and enlarge their moral compass, he later emphasized the role of the emotions. They aided 'cherishing within us the ideal' acting through 'the cultivation of the sympathies and imagination, the quickening of the moral sensibilities'.[124] Such enlarged awareness and sensibilities encapsulate Ward's aspiration for the outcome of the reading of her fiction.

In Corelli's case, the reading experience was intended to be a more directly influenced, didactic process where the reader communed, as we have seen, with the author's vision. Here too, an overpowering emotional reading experience was essential if Corelli's bond of sympathy was to work. As has already been noted it was the author/reader relationship that was one of friendship rather than readers' feeling for believable fictional characters. Hence the reading experience was intended to be one of willing entrance and participation in the world Corelli had created — either one of terror, or of inspiration, depending on whether the subject was contemporary society or the author's 'real' spiritual universe of eternal love.

Once again, we can see the seeds being sown in Corelli's early novel, *Thelma.* While London society is backbiting and vicious, the hero and heroine grow toward perfect union. So, 'as each day passed, the more close and perfect grew the sympathies of husband and wife,— they were like two notes of a perfect chord, sounding together in sweetest harmony'.[125] This was fiction that sought to express the inexpressible, to give a voice to, as Corelli later put it, 'the unspeakable outcoming of human emotion and sympathy too great to be contained within itself,— the tremulous desire,— half vague and wholly innocent,— of the human soul for its mate'.[126] *Thelma's* readers were therefore encouraged to make a heartfelt connection with the depiction of Sir Philip's and Thelma's 'paradise of perfect union and absolute sympathy' – with its associations of holiness, exhilarating rapture, and emotional fulfilment. The novel's opening sets up a model of the ideal reader's ability to connect with a rapturous experience of epiphany. It starts with a description of the 'glorious' midnight sun in 'almost unearthly' revels making 'the landscape a living poem fairer than the visions of Endymion'. A would-be poetic fictional form is capable of awe-inspiring revelation:

> It was, for him, one of those sudden halts in life which we all experience,— an instant,— when time and the world seem to stand still, as though to permit us easy breathing; a brief space,— in which we are allowed to stop and wonder

[123] 'On "*The Ring and the Book*"', *Fortnightly Review* (March 1869) 331–43 (pp.336–37) [John Morley].
[124] John Morley, *Studies in Literature* (London: Macmillan, 1891), p.201.
[125] Marie Corelli, *Thelma,* p.261.
[126] Corelli, '"Imaginary" Love', in *Free Opinions*, pp.162–68 (p.162).

> awhile at the strange unaccountable force within us, that enables us to stand with such calm, smiling audacity, on our small pin's point of the present, between the wide dark gaps of past and future; a small hush,— in which the gigantic engines of the universe appear to revolve no more, and the immortal Soul of man itself is subjected and over-ruled by supreme and eternal Thought. Drifting away on those delicate imperceptible lines that lie between reality and dreamland, the watcher of the midnight sun gave himself up to the half painful, half delicious sense of being drawn in, absorbed, and lost in infinite imaginings […].[127]

Here the piling up of clauses with their abundance of hyphens enacts the stream of consciousness of the observer. The reader becomes part of Philip's observation, as 'we all' feel suspended between past and future, alternating between a sense of insignificance and the feeling that the universe is revolving about us. The language used conveys a sense of stillness and wonder, the experience of feeling subject to eternal processes that will determine the fate of one's soul. Near tautology ('strange, 'unaccountable') and portentous capitalisation ('Thought') help to register the numinous nature of the experience. The text inhabits the world of the 'infinite' and is therefore implicitly setting itself up against realism, which it elsewhere depicts as permeating and degrading English culture. Philip's sensitivity here stands as a type for the kind of sympathetic interaction the reader, too, is being encouraged to have with a text that is itself enacting its own straining after the numinous. The novel, too, is conceived of as crossing 'time' and 'space' to create with an 'unaccountable force' and 'smiling audacity' the revelations of the 'eternal'. The reader is invited into a relationship with fiction that could make the exterior world 'stand still' and reach beyond for glimpses of the real, poised between 'reality and dreamland'. A world that is figuratively divine proffers the reader the same experience as Philip had of the 'half painful, half delicious sense of being drawn in, absorbed, and lost in infinite imaginings'. Such sympathetic connection with the author's visionary perception, Corelli's omniscient narration implied, could only be provided through the intensity of the reading experience. It was an experience that sought to bind reader and author together in a not dissimilar way to that of Philip and Thelma. A meeting of minds and hearts would appreciate the 'painful' as well as the 'delicious' in its condemnation of English high society and contrasting idealised romance world.

Besant's interpretation of the meaning and consequences of sympathy for the inspiring reading experience fiction offered — as well as for novelists' status, their works' moral purpose and political determination to overcome class boundaries — therefore constitutes a crucial starting point to understand the intent of Ward's and Corelli's popular fiction. The varying literary and social politics that they developed from these associations of sympathy were, perhaps even more so than was the case with Besant, 'a tangible moment in the self-conscious democratization

[127] Marie Corelli, *Thelma,* pp.4, 5.

of late nineteenth-century literary culture'.[128] The capacity of their fiction to engage readers, to draw them in to debate about the moral and political direction of society, thereby exploring (in Ward's case) and advocating (in Corelli's case) the 'deepening' or 'widening' access to the world of culture, will be the subject of the rest of this thesis.

It must be emphasized how what follows builds on the findings and arguments of this chapter. The search for a politics of social reform in Ward's *Marcella* can be better understood by analysing the sympathy which drove her own university settlement philanthropy. The divergence of Ward's 'criticism of life' from its Arnoldian origins also reveals her literary aims for a dialogical fiction of debate stimulated through sympathetic reading experiences. Analysis of Ward's correspondence with establishment figures about her work divulges the extent to which an emotionally charged fiction of ideas, such as *Sir George Tressady,* was successful in encouraging among many influential people the aesthetic, intellectual and political sensitive reading experiences she desired. Then, examination of Corelli's envisaged bond of sympathy with readers and 'the people' reveals how central it was to her critique of corrupt power structures and her literary politics. However, the ensuing purified literary marketplace she upheld was challenged by a self-contradictory fiction that evoked the immoral fiction it condemned — as will be seen, for example, in my own and contemporary readers' interpretations of *Ardath.* A literary model of sympathy could be both attractive and provocatively challenging. Although some felt the fiction spoke for them, seeing it as authoritative and its author deserving of the status she asserted, others were stimulated to express their own contrary opinions as to its moral validity. Therefore, in analysing the public and private debate that flowed out of the related consequences of sympathy for Ward's and Corelli's fiction, we can better understand their contribution to the contemporary literary marketplace. Overall, this thesis aims to show that the resurgence of sympathy in late-nineteenth-century fiction was a significant factor in popular fiction's powerful potential to facilitate wider cultural and political enfranchisement.

[128] McCann, p.27.

Chapter 2 Ward's Social Politics of Sympathy

Introduction

This chapter analyses the social politics of sympathy of Mary Ward's fiction and its class attitudes by interpreting *Marcella* (1894) through the lens of her university settlement philanthropy. Since Ward's attitudes towards class have been much misunderstood, the purpose of illuminating her protagonist's search for the path to greater equality and more harmonious class relations is to reveal Ward's juxtaposition and integration of opposed political solutions, including progressive and more conservative strands within liberal thinking. This is an essential precursor to understanding Ward's literary politics (explored in detail in chapter three); for how she wished her social politics to be interpreted related directly to the dialogue she wanted her fiction to foster and to the kind of sympathetic reading experience she sought to stimulate — receptiveness to the emotional tenor of stories where characters grapple with the battle of ideas. This chapter's methodology of revealing, through *Marcella's* dialogue with the problems encountered in Ward's philanthropy, the importance of sympathy to the fiction's social politics is necessary because Ward did not directly address the question of sympathy in her literary writing. However, the novel is underpinned by crucial assumptions about sympathy, which is clearly associated in the philanthropy with fellow feeling or compassion for the less fortunate that challenges class boundaries, and with ethical obligations to widen access in society to culture, education, and the world of political debate. Sympathy is therefore crucial to understanding *Marcella*'s political debate about the path of social reform. Since misunderstanding of Ward's social politics has dogged critical interpretation of her fiction's purpose (and her reputation), from her own time to the present day, my aim is to challenge the legacy of this critical tradition.

The problem has been that most modern critics have assumed that what they read as Ward's conservative stance on gender politics was replicated by conservative social politics which then led to a problematic populism in her literary politics. For example, Martin Hipsky argues that 'conversion of intellectually and psychologically dependent women to the beliefs of their superior male lovers' was part of Ward's outlook in which 'conservative attitudes regarding social class are […] encoded' in her fiction. For Hipsky, Ward then sought to 'flatter her audience's chauvinisms and unexamined prejudices' in order 'to appeal to the broadest book-buying public' as her 'cultural politics move rightward'.[1] Such estimations of Ward's fiction are not counteracted by

[1] Martin Hipsky, *Modernism and the Woman's Popular Romance in Britain, 1885–1925* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2011), pp.33, 45, 55, 56.

opinions, such as that of her biographer, that she became 'a money-generating fiction machine'.[2] These examples represent a widespread late-twentieth-century tradition of Ward criticism which felt unable to recuperate her reputation from a legacy of opposition to women's suffrage and an old-fashioned predilection for marriage plots. Rosemarie Bodenheimer's concept of the 'romance of the female paternalist', in which Ward allegedly worked, has been particularly influential. Her argument was that 'a wish for revised models of social government' was contradicted by women's inability to change the patriarchal political system through marriage. 'A fantasy of intervention without power' which 'split moral from social power' indicated 'an uneasy embrace of late Victorian paternalism'.[3] Similar judgments linking conservative gender and social politics have followed, and indeed predominated, with Beth Sutton-Ramspeck's attempt to argue that Ward negotiated between the public-facing 'liberal feminism' of Wollstonecraft and the 'nurturance and compassion' of Hannah More's 'difference feminism' being ignored.[4] Helen Loader's recent contention that Ward 'simultaneously challenged and was complicit with power structures' limiting women's political involvement hopefully points toward more nuanced analysis of the novels' gender politics in future.[5]

The mainstream critical tradition has a long history. Some contemporary criticism of Ward's fiction saw its upper-class milieu reflecting support for a conservative status quo. Hence, in 1913, A.G. Gardiner described Ward as an 'intellectual aristocrat' who was 'against democracy' and 'whose ideal is of a small governing class of exquisite souls who would behave nicely to the poor, make just laws for them, and generally keep them in their proper station'.[6] Somewhat similarly, Muriel Harris depicted someone with 'an exclusive love of duchesses' who became 'one of the most conservative' figures of the age, 'a hero-worshipper of all government', seeing herself as one 'of the elect in the romantic role of aiding with counsel'.[7] Such accusations are not wholly without

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[2] John Sutherland, *Mrs Humphry Ward, Eminent Victorian, Pre-eminent Edwardian* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), p.133.

[3] Rosemarie Bodenheimer, *The Politics of Story in Victorian Social Fiction* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988), pp.22–23, 68, 231.

[4]Judgments of conservatism: Judith Wilt, *Behind Her Times: Transition England in the Novels of Mary Arnold Ward* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2005), p.88; Christina Murdoch, '"A Large and Passionate Humanity Plays About Her": Women and Moral Agency in the Late Victorian Social Problem Novel' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Glasgow, 2012), pp.14, 40, 46; Sutherland, pp.142, 241; Valerie Sanders, *Eve's Renegades: Victorian Anti-Feminist Women Novelists* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1996), pp.82, 121.

Cf: Beth Sutton-Ramspeck, 'Shot Out of the Canon: Mary Ward and the Claims of Conflicting Feminisms', in *Victorian Writers and the Woman Question*, ed. by Nicola Diane Thompson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp.204–19 (p.205).

[5] Helen Loader, Mrs Humphry Ward and Greenian Philosophy: Religion, Society, Politics (Cham: Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), p.6.

[6] A.G. Gardiner, *Pillars of Society* (London: James Nisbet, 1913), p.130.

[7] Muriel Harris, 'Mrs Humphry Ward', *Nation*, 110 (3 April 1920), 424–425 (p.425); Muriel Harris, 'Mrs Humphry Ward', *The North American Review*, 211 (June 1920), 818–25 (pp.821-22).

substance but, as this chapter will show, that substance is only part of the whole picture and, when isolated from the whole, misleading. If that were not enough, another aspect of the critical tradition which has fostered wariness towards Ward's social politics is the widespread contemporary criticism of her work as inherently self-contradictory. In particular, she was charged with writing 'fiction with a purpose' — didactic work whose grappling with ideas was unsuccessful either because it was inherently inartistic or because it was confusing. Thus, for example, many of *Marcella*'s reviewers and commentators were certain either that the novel was 'a tract for the times' and therefore 'a failure as a novel', adamant that it was 'rid[ing] the purpose of her novel to death' and therefore 'splendidly futile' as 'Art' (with a capital A), or that it was narratively 'unsatisfactory' in often pausing 'while some one develops a new proposition in politics' — or even a worthless 'essay' that 'teaches nothing that was not a commonplace before'.[8] Others stressed the incoherence of the alleged political didacticism. It was 'too burdened' with 'propaganda' for one reviewer, being 'obviously the manifesto of that strange person, the Tory-democrat', while another accused the author of being 'buffeted and tossed upon a sea of conflicting opinions' and 'resent[ed] the airs of authority' of a character who 'will certainly change her convictions tomorrow'.[9] The *Church Quarterly Review* found it 'too scrappy and discursive' to provide 'the solution of deep and difficult problems' while the American critic William Lyon Phelps deemed it 'a political-didactic-realistic novel' typical of Ward's work generally, being 'a voluminous statement of various aspects of the problem, with no solution at all'. For him, she was an example of an 'orator' who can only state problems 'and then state them again'.[10]

However, through examining in detail the sympathy which drove Ward's philanthropy, and which is reflected in *Marcella,* one arrives at a fuller and more accurate understanding of Ward's social politics and what her fiction's political engagement was trying to achieve. It did indeed set out to 'state problems' and examine new political 'proposition[s]' but not in a confusing way. Significantly, as Ward's retrospective 1910 introduction to *Marcella* recalled, its 'ideas […], the righteous impatience of the poor with the compunctions or the selfishness of the rich […] owed a good deal to the founding of a Settlement in which I was concerned'.[11] The ethical obligations of

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[8] '*Marcella* and *Pembroke', Atlantic Monthly* 74 (August 1894), 272–74 (p.273); Haldane Macfall, 'Mrs Humphry Ward: A Pen and Ink Portrait', *The Leeds Mercury,* 7 May 1904, p.9; *Athenaeum,* (14 April 1894): 469–70 (p.470); 'Recent Novels: *Marcella*', *The Morning Post*, 7 April 1894, p.1. For fuller extracts of critical arguments about Ward's 'fiction with a purpose' in reviews of *Marcella*, see Appendix A, section 2 a), b), c) and d).

[9] W.J. Dawson, 'Half-Hours in the Library', *The Young Woman*, 1 June 1894, pp.311–12 (p.311); *The Edinburgh Review*, 180 (July 1894), 108–130 (p.113).

[10] *Church Quarterly Review,* 38 (July 1894), 457–60 (p. 458); William Lyon Phelps, *Essays on Modern Novelists* (New York: Macmillan, 1910), p.197.

[11] *The Writings of Mrs Humphry Ward*, with introductions by the author, vol V: *Marcella*, vol 1 (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1910 [1894]), p.xvii.

sympathy explored in the fiction's analysis of problems without ready-made solutions can therefore be illuminated by the sympathy driving philanthropy's desire to break down class barriers and to further democracy and cultural inclusion. This chapter will therefore enter into dialogue with those few dissenting critical voices, notably Sutton-Ramspeck, Loader and Benjamin Kohlmann, who have argued that Ward's political stance and, the interaction between the philanthropy and the fiction, should not be interpreted as simply conservative or regressive. However, unlike Loader and Sutton-Ramspeck, I do not assume that Ward's university settlements simply represented the 'physical embodiment' of ideas that are given 'literary embodiment in Ward's fiction', but rather that the relationship between the two was one of dialogue — which this thesis will argue was a key feature of the fiction.[12] Of course, the former interpretation reflects contemporary opinion at the time. As the *Times* remarked on 11 February 1898, after the opening of the Passmore Edwards settlement, the scheme of *Robert Elsmere* (1888), with its East End brotherhood established by its hero, 'has now passed from the realm of fiction into that of fact', with its 'ideal of equality and fraternity' and 'the realisation of human friendship'.[13] *Marcella*'s concerns, as I will show, certainly reflected some of the ideals and motivation of Ward's philanthropy — in particular, the heroine's decision to 'choose equality' without toppling the foundations of property ownership, the novel's acknowledgment of the socialist challenge to economic liberalism, its engagement with opposed political philosophies, and its implicit desire to spread opportunities for individual self-development. However, the novel's target audience and role were slightly different to those of the philanthropy. My contention is that one needs to understand the difference between a practical philanthropic sympathy and a fictional exploration of the ethics of sympathy in order to elucidate *Marcella*'s purpose. The ensuing sections of this chapter therefore compare and contrast the differing focus and audience of Ward's fiction and her Passmore Edwards settlement, illuminate their shared political balancing act and desire to foster political debate, and, finally, start to analyse how the fiction sought to be interpreted and experienced.

[12] Beth Sutton-Ramspeck, *Raising the Dust: The Literary Housekeeping of Mary Ward, Sarah Grand, and Charlotte Perkins-Gilman* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2004), p.137.
[13] Ward Family Papers (MS ADD202/120), University College London Special Collections, UCL Archives, London [henceforth referenced as UCL], box 27: newspaper cuttings on the Passmore Edwards settlement, The *Times*, 11 February 1898.

The Politics of Sympathy in Ward's Philanthropy and *Marcella*

First, a brief outline of *Marcella*'s plot will help to indicate the potential relevance of Ward's philanthropic work. The novel's eponymous protagonist starts as a spirited, well-intentioned, and impressionable young woman drawn to the socialist critique of an unjust society. She is a heroine whose path to maturity revolves around the choice between two lovers, the dishonest socialist Wharton and the reforming grandson of a landed aristocrat, Raeburn, through potential marriage to whom her self-aggrandising philanthropic schemes appear possible. After disagreement over the fate of a local poacher found guilty of murdering a gamekeeper, Marcella breaks her engagement to Raeburn, and moves to London to work as a nurse. There, while living among the urban poor, her journey of personal self-discovery, and her political education in questions of social reform, begin under the guidance of the thinker Hallin. After reconciliation with Raeburn, she reflects that her 'passionate sympathy with the poor — that hatred of oppression' remains, but that now the combination of unselfishness ('the full liberty to make her own sacrifices'), wealth, and an influential social position, will enable her 'to realise her own dreamlands' of evolutionary rather than revolutionary social change. These, despite her new position of power, stem from her commitment to "choose equality"'.[14]

Five years later, Ward herself chose to repeat the highlighted phrase, borrowed from an essay by her uncle, Matthew Arnold, in a speech about her university settlement. She praised its warden, John Russell, for his 'extraordinary gift of popular sympathy' with both clients and residents and his 'eager "choosing of equality"'.[15] The motivation of challenging class barriers and exploring how the pleasures and benefits of cultural education can be better shared is common to both fiction and philanthropy. Indeed, such motivation, influenced by the idealist philosophy of T.H. Green powered the university settlement movement through his Balliol disciples.[16] As Anne Summers puts it, the 'language of self-sacrifice' of T.H. Green's *Lectures on the Principles of Political Obligation* 'inspired a generation of male graduates to work in the slums and then in local and municipal politics.'[17] The philosophy of Green, to whom the Passmore Edwards settlement library was dedicated, permeates the novel.[18] There we find a fictional portrait of Green's pupil,

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[14] Mrs Humphry Ward, *Marcella* (London: Virago Press, 1984 [1903 Smith, Elder edition, first published 1894]), pp.554, 555.
[15] [Untitled draft of a presentation on the Passmore Edwards settlement and settlement work in general, probably planned to be given at Manchester, 1899], pp.14–15, Mary Ward Settlement collection (LMA/4524/M/003/005), London Metropolitan Archives, London [henceforth referenced as LMA].
[16] Nigel Scotland, *Squires in the Slums: Settlements and Missions in Late-Victorian London* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2007), p.23.
[17] Anne Summers, *Female Lives, Moral States* (Newbury: Threshold Press, 2000), p.133.
[18] Loader, p.2; Sutherland, p.222.

Arnold Toynbee (Hallin), and a Greenian ethical search for self-realisation which culminates in Marcella's decision to sacrifice ego and dedicate herself to the service of others. Hence what Ward termed the 'equalisation of human joys and opportunities' in society in her 1897 opening 'Social Ideals' address at the Passmore Edwards settlement is evident in Marcella's final creed.[19] However, the differences as well as the similarities between Marcella's journey towards an intellectually coherent, morally sound politics of social justice and the sympathy exhibited in Ward's university settlements have much to tell us.

Ward's own philanthropic learning journey can therefore shed much light on *Marcella* as a *bildungsroman*. The religious aims of Ward's initial settlement, University Hall (1890), met with apathy, unlike the secular focus of its sister institution, Marchmont Hall, starting not long afterwards (1891). The result was a move toward the more successful cultural work mission of the larger, specially designed Passmore Edwards settlement (1897). The aim of University Hall, Ward declared on opening it, was to promote the de-mythologised religious faith that inspired Elsmere's community brotherhood — 'it is in sight of that great ideal that we ask for your help and your sympathy'. Here it was the 'moral sympathy' of the audience, from whom funding was sought, that was targeted. The hope was that theological concerns would appeal to 'a large section of the working class' which had 'parted with the old beliefs, without at the same time parting with the religious sensitiveness which is perhaps their heritage'.[20] Kohlmann's analysis of *Robert Elsmere* makes a strong case for Ward being part of a 'progressive and aspirational' 'reformist literary mode around 1900', inspired by British Hegelianism such as the active citizenship of T.H. Green, which imagined 'state institutions in terms of shared forms of life'. He interprets this mode in the light of Jürgen Habermas's theory of *entgegenkommende Lebensformen,* anticipatory or emergent forms of social life that 'will be more democratic and egalitarian'.[21] However, in order not to misjudge the novel, it is important to acknowledge the idealisation of its protagonist and its wish-fulfilment strategy. Kohlmann's contention that *Robert Elsmere* conceives of the hero's Brotherhood as an institution whose 'vital life force' sprang from 'contradiction and disagreement' is therefore unconvincing.[22] Indeed, the novel suggests that the participation of the socialist Andrews with his 'long cantankerous sentences', 'harsh savour and eloquence' and 'fierce denunciation of priests' counters Elsmere's desire for a forum for

[19] 'Social Ideals: Address by Mrs Humphry Ward' [Opening Lecture at the Passmore Edwards Settlement], (MS ADD202/120), UCL, box 27 (newspaper cuttings), *The Manchester Guardian,* 11 October 1897, p.5.
[20] Draft Opening Address to University Hall, 29 November 1890, pp.54, 2, 50 (LMA/4524/M/03/007), LMA.
[21] Benjamin Kohlmann, *British Literature and the Life of Institutions: Speculative States* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), pp. 2, 3, 17.
[22] Kohlmann, p.76.

promulgating modernist theology.[23] That the novel's 'New Brotherhood still exists and grows' after Elsmere's tragic early death contrasts with the fate of its real life incarnation which proved a dismal failure.[24] Ward, in one of her speeches on settlements, acknowledged the 'weaknesses' of this first experiment in attempting to generate an audience for 'religious thought' and biblical criticism — 'the bond of common opinion' being 'too narrow'. Instead, her new Passmore Edwards settlement was now building on the more popular and secular 'social work' of Marchmont Hall (which had initially been forced on her by University Hall's residents).[25]

Hence, sympathy as a driving force moved from being an emotional and intellectual bond with its founders to fellow feeling with its users — what Ward called 'an attitude of sympathy and comprehension'.[26] Just as Hallin in *Marcella* wants to extend the possibility of 'self-realisation' to his 'working-men friends' and encourage 'that continuous appropriation by the race of its moral and spiritual heritage', so the practical 'sympathy and comprehension' of Ward's new settlement involved widening of access to intellectual debate and culture across the class divide.[27] The consequences of this fellow feeling she expressed in Greenian fashion, considering anyone, whatever their social class, 'a being claiming the bettering and expansion of his or her own nature; in other words, a person with an end of self-fulfilment which cannot be crushed or hindered without injury or loss to the society of which he or she forms part'.[28] The ambition to avoid 'injury or loss' to all sectors of society could only be achieved if the power of those with wealth and education was more widely shared. Tellingly, one of her earlier letters to her father about the planning for the Passmore Edwards settlement indicated a willingness to respond to the expressed needs of its potential clients, remarking that she was considering suggestions in a number of letters from working men on 'the past and future of the Hall, parts of which I am embodying in the Appeal' for the new settlement.[29] Success depended on responding to expressed need. It also required more direct involvement of its users. Passmore Edwards settlement attendees were therefore encouraged to become supporters or associates and the

[23] Mrs Humphry Ward, *Robert Elsmere* (Brighton: Victorian Secrets, 2013 [1888]), p.499.
[24] Ward, *Robert Elsmere*, p.600.
[25] [Untitled draft of a presentation on the Passmore Edwards settlement], pp.8–9 (LMA/4524/M/003/005), LMA; Sutherland, pp.220–21 describes the 'rebellion' of the residents.
[26] [Untitled draft], pp.10–11 (LMA/4524/M/003/005), LMA. Ward's letter to Reverend Armstrong, 20 May 1892, shows that she had come round to Marchmont Hall as a 'social wing' which had made a 'real start' with 60 working-class members 'helping in the government', Miscellaneous Letters and Papers, 1738–1937, A-J (Add MS 71581), British Library, London, ff.19–27: letters between Reverend Richard Acland Armstrong and Mary Augusta Ward.
[27] Ward, *Marcella,* p.412.
[28] Social Ideals: Address by Mrs Humphry Ward', UCL, box 27.
[29] Quoted in Seth Koven, 'Borderlands: Women, Voluntary Action, and Child Welfare in Britain, 1840 to 1914', in *Mothers of a New World: Maternalist Politics and the Origins of Welfare States*, ed. by Seth Koven and Sonya Michel (New York: Routledge, 1993), pp.94–135, (p. 131 (footnote)).

latter were allocated representation on the governing council. Ward also records that initiatives such as the Girl's Club, 'one of the most profitable and flourishing enterprises of the Settlement', was 'mainly the creation of Mrs Grant, one of our Associates'.[30] Hence 'equalisation' of access to cultural and educational opportunities aspired to give people a stake in the public arena, to begin to involve them in decision-making, and thereby to equip the respectable and artisan working classes with tools to become upwardly mobile.

This relative responsiveness and the nature of the cultural offer that flowed out of the sympathy driving Ward's Passmore Edwards settlement can be better understood by comparison with the more top-down approach of the People's Palace. This had been inspired by Walter Besant's fictional Palace of Delight in *All Sorts and Conditions of Men* (1882) and, like Elsmere's Brotherhood and Ward's University Hall, was an exercise in wish fulfilment. The novel had, as Besant later saw it, diagnosed an East End problem of 'mean monotony' rather than poverty and reflected how he had 'dropped […] even unconsciously into philanthropic work' so that 'people supposed […] my heart was full of sympathy'.[31] Such casual, unformed kind of sympathy led to the novel's observation that the East End lacked 'sweet diversions' and 'any kind of amusement whatever'. It therefore imagined 'a glorified crystal palace' in which, miraculously, 'all the work actually is done for nothing'. It envisioned 'educating people in sweet and pleasant things' and inspiring 'the more delightful forms of literature — so that poets and novelists should arise'.[32] One scholar has concluded that 'the cultural influence of the People's Palace' which opened in 1887 proved 'quite limited and controversial' and that it 'failed to attract the poorest residents of the East End and did not help workers to develop their own cultural activity'.[33] Eventually, the administration of the People's Palace was taken over by the Draper's Company, which changed its principal goal and it was turned into a polytechnic, which became part of the University of London in 1907. Kevin Swafford comments that the original 'utopian' thinking of the People's Palace derived from Arnold's conception of culture as 'the best that has been thought and said' and hence was setting itself up to be 'normative'.[34] In contrast, Ward's settlement sought to be a place where individuals could be drawn into educational or improving culture in its widest possible and most informal sense, including clubs, concerts, a gym, a library, lectures, readings,

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[30] Mrs Humphry Ward, 'The Passmore Edwards Settlement' [pamphlet illustrated by Flashlight and other photographs] (London: The Passmore Edwards Council, 1901), p.15, (LMA/4524/K/03/003), LMA.
[31] *Autobiography of Sir Walter Besant* (London: Hutchinson, 1902), pp.244, 260.
[32] Walter Besant, *All Sorts and Conditions of Men: An Impossible Story* (New York: Harper 1889 [1882]) pp. 164, 165, 402, 69, 66.
[33] Andrzej Diniejko, 'Walter Besant: A Latter-Day Dickens?', in *Walter Besant: The Business of Literature*, ed. by Kevin A. Morrison, pp.225–42 (pp.236–37).
[34] Kevin Swafford, 'The Ethics of Perception and the Politics of Recognition: Walter Besant's *All Sorts and Conditions of Men',* in *Walter Besant: The Business of Literature*, ed. by Kevin A. Morrison, pp.171–86 (p.185).

classes and debates. The major innovations in her settlement, aside from the School for Invalid Children (the first of its kind in Europe, Ward proudly claimed), were not formally educational in their targeting of young people — particularly the play centres and summer vacation schools which spread to thousands across London. Passmore Edwards was, as she characterised it, 'the House Beautiful' creating its own community and providing access to 'the beauties and dignities of life' — thereby crossing the boundaries between the domestic and public, between education and wellbeing, between the aesthetic and the everyday, and tempering paternalist provision through user involvement.[35] Its sympathy of fellow feeling can therefore be said to have imagined a broader culture than that envisaged by both Matthew Arnold and Besant and been more inclusive regarding who could establish what that culture should involve. It was closer to Raymond Williams's 'social' definition of culture, one describing 'a particular way of life, which expresses certain meanings and values not only in art and learning but also in institutions and ordinary behaviour'.[36]

Here, the philanthropy and the fiction can be seen to diverge, and this has much to tell us about Ward's aims in *Marcella*. At first sight, the heroine's trajectory toward maturity and selfless commitment to the service of others might seem to mirror Ward's own University Hall experience and the changes in her underlying assumptions about the ethical obligations of sympathy. Marcella's 'freshness' and 'human sympathy' at the start of the novel is mixed with 'egotism and extravagance' which leads to naïve and selfish attempts at social manipulation. Her insensitive *noblesse oblige* mentality is demonstrated in unwelcome visits to villagers' homes and her failure to persuade them of the benefits of her straw-plaiting cooperative as an alternative to their traditional business model. However, her political and moral *bildungsroman* ends in mature understanding that in 'things of social sympathy and relation — alterable at every turn […] lie the real barriers that divide us'. Here the aspiration is for 'social sympathy' to break down 'alterable' class barriers, just as the university settlement intended. The heroine's transformation has been achieved 'by daily life in natural relations with the poor' and 'by the influence of a noble friendship' with Hallin so that 'what had once been mere tawdry and violent hearsay had passed into a true devotion, a true thirst for social good'.[37] Meeting the 'true' needs of the 'poor' might seem to be in prospect here. However, the novel's primary focus is not on potentially realisable 'things of social sympathy' themselves but on Marcella's personal self-development. This is her path towards authentic feeling, independent thinking, and the capacity to intervene effectively in the public world of philanthropy. It is the motivation and self-realisation of the rich and powerful

[35] Ward, 'The Passmore Edwards Settlement', pp.20, 22 (LMA/4524/K/03/003), LMA.
[36] Raymond Williams, *The Long Revolution* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1961), p.41.
[37] Ward, *Marcella,* pp.33, 554.

that could bring about social change that is the novel's concern, not lower-class opinions about what was 'alterable'.

We can see this clearly throughout Marcella's journey of self-development. After being initially divided from Raeburn, she falls into debilitating spiritual aridity. Although she turns to the professional discipline of nursing in a search for purpose, self-reliance proves soulless. While working in the East End she experiences 'a dryness, a numbness that appalled her' as 'a cloud of impotence fell upon' her. This is more a religious than a sexual terminology, however. As she agonizes over her 'numbness', she yearns for 'this "grace" that "sustaineth"', 'the motive power of life—something subduing, transforming, delivering'.[38] It is notable that this sense of empowerment and self-realisation requires a spiritual discipline of 'subduing' the self, the same paradox derived from T.H. Green, of sacrificing ego in order to achieve wholeness, that chapter one identified in *Eleanor* (1901). Marcella craves 'first, some moral change, she knew not what — then Aldous Raeburn's pardon and friendship — then and above all, the power to lose herself — the power to *love*'.[39] Here, associations of romantic love, moral force and self-discovery combine, with the implication that therein lies true fellow feeling with the poor. When this personal transformation is finally accomplished, she is able to distinguish the love and respect that she feels for Raeburn from the transient attraction that she held for Wharton before. She now arrives at a morally based sympathy of connection that, in breaking class barriers, is experienced as immensely powerful and emotionally and psychologically fulfilling. She commits:

> never to give up the struggle for a nobler human fellowship, the lifelong toil to understand, the passionate effort to bring honour and independence and joy to those who had them not. […] Her whole rich being was wrought to an intoxication of self-giving.[40]

However, in contrast to her ecstatic re-birth, the 'independence and joy' of the disadvantaged remains purely theoretical and unrealised. Unlike Ward's philanthropy, the novel gives this impulse for 'a nobler human fellowship' no significant practical, political outcome. The only new scheme that Marcella can imagine is to turn the drawing-room of her manor house library into 'a village drawing-room' — an idea based on no local consultation or identification of need and with no great thought as to whether villagers would feel able to cross the threshold. Hence the idea of a 'separate door, and scraper, and mat all to itself' does not sound like the 'House Beautiful' of the later Passmore Edwards settlement or even the successful invitation of the contemporary

[38] Ibid, pp.385, 386–87.
[39] Ibid, p.387.
[40] Ibid, p.556.

Marchmont Hall. Nor does Marcella's 'self-giving' seem to have moved sufficiently beyond the straw-plaiting scheme's intent that 'they would be grateful, they would let themselves be led'.[41]

The novel's more top-down concern, compared to that of Ward's philanthropy, is the result of its focus on the exploration of middle- and upper-class values and its assumption that changes in individuals were needed before changes in the public sphere were achievable. The marriage partnership is seen as both the symbolic and practical embodiment of the way to drive social reform. A partnership of negotiation and mutual support is envisaged, one that will enable the couple to carry through joint projects. Marcella 'would always be for experiments' while Raeburn would bring a 'critical temper'.[42] He has a pessimism that her enthusiasm will counteract. Raeburn, the narrator had reflected earlier, 'was no democrat by conviction, had no comforting faith in what seemed to him the rule of a multitudinous ignorance'. Indeed, he had 'little of that poet's sympathy with the crowd […] which had given Hallin his power'. Yet if he lacks his friend's sympathy, like every 'sane man of today' he still accepts intellectually that 'the world has taken the road of democracy' and that he must unravel 'the key to the future'.[43] It is marriage to Marcella that enables him to do this. The reciprocal partnership involved in marriage generates an effective sympathy enabling both of them to confront problems of the public world. Hence, it is clear that the novel is written about the perceived needs rather than the expressed interests of the working classes, and from the perspective of those with social power — those holding 'the key to the future'. It therefore neither details nor engages with working-class opinions since these are not of prime concern. Here the target audience is those for whom 'wealth' is 'a true moral burden and test, the source of half the difficulties and pains — of half the nobleness also — of a man's life'.[44] The concern is for the moral motivation determining the actions of those with means and influence. As one contemporary commentator put it, Ward 'analyses for our benefit the hearts of all these people, who, in what we are pleased to call a democratic country, are in no small degree the leaders and directors of the nation — in its political, social, and intellectual movements'.[45]

Despite the limited scope of the novel's social politics, however, the intention remains to encourage support for greater equality in society — an unjust status quo is not an option. Its hope, as I will now argue, was that progress could be achieved through the evolution of existing power structures rather than the revolutionary upheaval of socialism and through engaging with

[41] Ibid, pp.533, 74.
[42] Ibid, p.555.
[43] Ibid, p.526.
[44] Ibid, p.554.
[45] 'Knowledge is Power. A Weekly Column of Popular Culture, edited by "Self-Help": The Novels of Mrs Humphry Ward, II', *The Morpeth Herald and Reporter*, 29 April 1905, p.2.

all shades of political opinion — facilitated by a fiction of ideas and debate. Such fiction can be more fully understood through its similarity with the philanthropy's political breadth and commitment to debate — to which I now turn.

Political Dialogue in Ward's Philanthropy and *Marcella*

Marcella's intervention in contemporary political debates reflects the issues raised by the University Hall initiative, as Ward's introduction acknowledges. These included arguments both within philanthropy and between progressive and conservative sides of liberal thinking about the right path of social reform. The novel's desire to reach across political and ideological divides can therefore be illustrated by the philanthropy's similar efforts. These elucidate just how much this is a novel of ideas that is concerned with, and indeed takes its form from, juxtaposing, interrogating, and integrating opposing political solutions.

Lauren Goodlad has identified not just the 'duelling worldviews' of nineteenth-century Liberalism and Fabianism, their contest of 'idealism and materialism' and of 'voluntarism vs. centralized bureaucracy', but also the divisions within liberalism itself. These contained similar arguments about 'the priority of moral character vs. that of environmental or physical condition'. Goodlad analyses the 'tension within liberal thinking' between 'laissez-faire economic theory' and reliance on 'character and the moral worldview' on the one hand, and the 'New Liberal agenda' of 'national pastorship' which required greater state intervention on the other.[46] Kohlmann has also noted the division of British 'Hegelianism into Left and Right', between those highlighting the 'inadequacy of current state provisions in order to make the case for more intervention' and those calling 'for less state intervention'.[47] All these tensions and arguments permeated the world of philanthropic initiative and their alternate poles of conservative self-help and communal intervention are very much reflected in *Marcella*. Sympathy, whether applicable at the individual level or nationally, was at the heart of the debate.

Different approaches within philanthropy illustrate just what was at stake. At one end of the spectrum, W.A. Bailward expressed disquiet about a 'new political era' in which 'the centre of gravity has shifted, and political power is in the hands of those who have not much time to read

[46] Lauren M.E. Goodlad, *Victorian Literature and the Victorian State: Character and Governance in a Liberal Society* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 2003), pp.22, viii, ix, xii, xiv.
[47] Kohlmann, p.10.

or think'. The problem was that 'we hear, on all sides, of all sorts of schemes for the abolition of poverty by State relief. The reform of the poor-law is in everybody's mouth, and "altruism" and "collectivism" are the commonplaces of every would-be social reformer'.[48] The loose use of terminology — the more secular associations of altruism rather than the religiously compatible ones of sympathy are overlooked — cannot conceal that his was the politics of 'self-help and private beneficence', to use Herbert Spencer's phrase.[49] This was a sympathy associated with individualism and terrified by collective state solutions, let alone the redistributive aims of socialism. Bailward therefore deemed the role of university settlements as better coordination of the 'scattered threads of East End philanthropy', and steering 'charitable reform' away from communal support of a 'pauper class' which 'is a millstone round the neck of those who wish to retain their independence'.[50] Seth Koven argues that the authoritarian policies of Bailward's conservative Oxford House settlement, a staunchly Anglican institution, constrained them 'from initiating a truly democratic reordering of class, gender, and sexual hierarchies'.[51] Those who had no 'time to read or think' had the thinking done for them.

Ward's Passmore Edwards settlement, on the other hand, had reading and thinking at its heart (as we shall shortly see), with its debating society and Ward's regular contribution to the settlement — sessions reading stories aloud to a young audience.[52] It also sought to combine the duelling worldviews of individualism and collectivism within its philanthropy. Its Invalid Children's school (established in 1899) was a prototype, one which required cooperation from the local authority at the outset — initially with provision of transport and equipment.[53] The impact of the school and of Ward's campaigning for greater state commitment in this area was such that two further London schools followed by the end of 1900, with others shortly afterwards in six other cities.[54] The settlement's ground-breaking work with play centres and vacation schools followed the same model — experimentation succeeded by a wider network of partly state-funded centres, followed by long, slow progress in arguing for fuller state provision. For example, a visit arranged in 1906 for the Secretary of State, Mr Birrell, to see the Somers Town play centre resulted in enabling legislation for local council play centres and vacation schools — a children's charter in the 1907 Education (Administrative Provisions) Act. Ward saw the ethical sympathy of

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[48] W.A. Bailward, 'The Oxford House and the Organization of Charity', in *The Universities and the Social Problem: An Account of the University Settlements in East London*, ed. by John M. Knapp (London: Rivington, Percival, 1895), pp.149–70 (p. 167).
[49] Herbert Spencer, *The Principles of Ethics*, 2 vols (London: Williams and Norgate, 1892–3), II, p.394.
[50] Bailward, pp.170, 169, 168.
[51] Seth Koven, *Slumming: Sexual and Social Politics in Victorian London* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), p.281.
[52] Janet Penrose Trevelyan, *The Life of Mrs Humphry Ward* (London: Constable, 1923), p.124.
[53] Koven, 'Borderlands', pp.111–12.
[54] Scotland, p.190.

settlements as requiring small-scale private social experiments, which, if successful, would then persuade the state to widen its remit. For example, her Liverpool speech (1900) declared that 'these irregular individualistic experiments are the necessary pioneers and accompaniments with us of all collective action. We don't wait for Governments; we like to force the hand of governments.' Significantly, she believed that such evolutionary change, such 'collective and legal methods of social reform, suit our English temper and our present English society'.[55]

Collective and individual solutions came together in 'the power of friendship and sympathy to lighten the inequalities and privations of life'.[56] Fostering individuals' self-development required engagement with the socialist mindset, if not socialist solutions. The keen socialist she argued would 'admit that his goal is far, far distant […] let all of us reach meanwhile for something near our hands […] for the spread that is, of knowledge of the higher pleasures, and of a true social power among the English working class'.[57] This argument expressed similar concern for striking a balance between personal and political, individual and collective, private and public, tradition and reform to that explored in *Marcella*, as we shall shortly see. Like the partnership between Marcella and Raeburn's differing political instincts, the sympathy driving the Passmore Edwards Settlement crossed ideological boundaries and promoted intellectual bridge-building. Ward was more than happy to work throughout the 1890s with Graham Wallas, a Fabian on the settlement council, on specifications for the Passmore Edwards building as well as on public funding for the invalid school. This governing council also included Helen Bosanquet, supporter of the conservative self-help approach of the Charity Organisation Society, and J.J. Dent, the nominee of the Working Men's Club and Institute Union. University Hall's board had included the Fabian Beatrice Webb and the feminist suffrage supporter Frances Power Cobbe — indicative, Jane Lewis concludes, of Ward's 'conciliatory, inclusive rather than exclusive, middle way'.[58] These members espoused views not necessarily in accord with Ward's, but her settlement strategy was to establish common objectives through the interaction of different points of view. For example, Beatrice Webb's Fabian political views differed from Ward's but Webb gave a series of lectures on the co-operative movement at University Hall and they were able to collaborate on a book about the Factory Acts.[59]

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[55] [Text of a speech on settlements, Liverpool, 1890], p. 2, (LMA/4524/M/03/012), LMA.
[56] [Untitled draft of a presentation on the Passmore Edwards settlement], pp.13–14 (LMA/4524/M/003/005), LMA.
[57] Ward, 'The Passmore Edwards Settlement' p. 22 (LMA/4524/K/03/003), LMA.
[58] 'The Passmore Edwards Prospectus', (LMA/4524/K/05/001), LMA; Jane Lewis, *Women and Social Action in Victorian and Edwardian England* (Aldershot: Edward Elgar, 1991), pp.207, 211.
[59] Beatrice Webb, *The Case for The Factory Acts*, with an introduction by Mrs Humphry Ward (London: Grant Richards, 1902); *The Letters of Sidney and Beatrice Webb*, vol 1: *Apprenticeships 1873–1892*, ed. by Norman Mackenzie (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), p.177.

This concept of inclusive bridge-building and fruitful intellectual dialogue across political divides is fundamental to *Marcella.* The heroine is initially wedded to a socialist worldview she acquires from friends for whom 'the luxuries and the charities of the rich were equally odious' and for whom the idea of 'any "right" in private property or private wealth' was 'incredible'.[60] Marcella's eventual social politics, however, eschews what she sees as one-sided analyses. Here her mentor is Hallin, a character based on Arnold Toynbee, the economic historian noted for his social commitment. Toynbee had died tragically young in 1883 but by that time he had helped establish public libraries in the slums of Whitechapel, supported trades unions and co-operatives, and encouraged his students to offer free classes to the working class. Such had been his impact on working with Samuel and Henrietta Barnett that Toynbee Hall (founded 1884) had been named after him. In the novel Hallin acts as the spiritually idealistic thinker who guides Marcella away from Marxist socialism toward a position that acknowledges the claims of classic liberal self-help arguments as well as Fabian pleas for greater social intervention. She comes to engage with Hegelianism of the right (such as that of Helen Bosanquet's husband, Bernard, to whom Ward sent a draft of *Robert Elsmere* for feedback) as well of those of the left. This is not an easy process. At meetings in her London tenement building where she lives while a nurse, she grapples with the arguments of 'all sorts — Socialists, Conservatives, Radicals'. As she tries to make sense of these she confesses 'a year ago […] the world was all black — or white — to me. Now I lie awake at night, puzzling my head about the shades between — which makes all the difference'. It is Hallin who helps her comes to terms with the politics of shades of grey and to combat the 'divine discontents' sown in her mind by her socialist, opportunist admirer Wharton.[61] Hallin's thinking shares both some of Bailward's conservative liberal beliefs outlined above and also anticipates what came to be the 'New Liberalism' of Campbell-Bannerman's and Asquith's Edwardian governments in their extension of the state's remit. The narrator describes how Hallin's sympathy with socialism had grown weaker so that although he still believed 'that common property will be in the future enormously extended', this is less crucial than the spiritual illumination that must come with it. What was needed was the distribution of 'the discipline and trust of personal and private possession among an infinitely greater number of hands than possess them already […] for the sake of that continuous appropriation by the race of its moral and spiritual heritage'.[62] Respect for private property is aligned with a wider understanding of property as 'moral and spiritual' wealth. This conservative interpretation — like T.H. Green he

[60] Ward, *Marcella,* pp.15–16.
[61] Ibid, pp.400, 202.
[62] Ibid, p.412.

believes that ownership of private property is crucial to the ethics of the public sphere — is juxtaposed with desire for an evolutionary change in the ownership of wealth and land.

Here we can see how crucial Ward's philanthropic experience was in prompting the concerns of the novel. Ward later commented that 'through the settlement' she had been 'brought across the various strains of social theory then chiefly in vogue' mentioning alongside Fabian essays and German social democracy, 'Arnold Toynbee's beautiful life' and 'the doctrines of Henry George and the single-taxers [which] had been sweeping through the working-class like a tidal wave'.[63] George's goal of land value taxation (outlined in *Progress and Poverty* [1879]) is clearly in Hallin's mind when he envisages:

> by the continuous pressure of an emancipating legislation, relieving land from shackles long since struck off other kinds of property — by the assertion, within a certain limited range, of communal initiative and control—and above all by the continuous private effort in all sorts of ways and spheres of 'men of good will'.[64]

It should be noted that Toynbee's last lectures 'Progress and Poverty' in 1883 took as their subject 'A criticism of Henry George', lectures at which he was heckled by his audience just as Hallin faces opposition in the novel. These argued that to place the 'great burden' of taxation 'upon one class alone' was 'unjust' and he proposed instead a 'graduated tax' according to the size of estates and incomes.[65] In the passage above, we see his fictional alter ego groping after alternatives to George's tax on land that shares burdensome responsibilities between all citizens. It aspires to a balance between public and private duties, a role for the state in 'communal' initiatives and reforming legislation, but also a role for the enlightened citizen T.H. Green envisaged working for the common good. Hallin hopes perceptive and forceful individuals will influence legislative change, addressing inequalities of ownership. Such 'private effort' includes Marcella, her fiancé Raeburn, and of course Ward herself, and it is possible to read Hallin's vision as the kind of private/public partnership that Ward developed with her play schemes — albeit that here stress is placed on the 'limited' nature of communal activity. It was a social politics whose class attitudes were motivated by a sympathy that simultaneously straddled several political stools in its embrace of individualism and collectivism. Arnold Toynbee himself acknowledged this in his lecture 'Are Radicals Socialists?' This claimed not to have 'abandoned our old belief in liberty, justice and self-help' but espoused the role of 'the state representing directly the whole people' to intervene to help people provided this did not 'diminish' 'those habits of individual self-reliance

[63] *The Writings of Mrs Humphry Ward*, vol V: *Marcella*, p.xviii.
[64] Ward, *Marcella* [Virago edn], p.412.
[65] Arnold Toynbee, *'Progress and Poverty,' A Criticism of Henry George* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, 1883), p.49.

and voluntary association which have built up the greatness of the English people'.[66] The novel's depiction of Toynbee's/Hallin's arguments therefore supports Loader's conclusion that Ward's 'political views were a mixture of liberalism and conservatism' and 'reflect a wide range of interpretations of liberalism in late-Victorian and Edwardian Britain'.[67]

What is evident behind the novel's endorsement of Hallin's political positioning is the validation of engagement with opposed arguments and of the attempt to seek synthesis or some kind of equilibrium of differing viewpoints. It is said of Raeburn, who also considers Hallin his mentor, that 'his tastes, his sympathies, his affinities were all with the old order; but the old faiths — economical, social, religious — were fermenting within him in different stages of disintegration and reconstruction.'[68] Sutton-Rampseck is therefore surely right to interpret Hallin as attempting 'a balance of private and public responsibility [….] combining both individualism and collectivism, but recognis[ing] the challenges of this approach'. She sees the novel exploring a 'dilemma' confronting 'the difficulty of reconciling' philosophies 'advocating widespread "social improvement" based on both the individualism on which capitalism is founded and a rejection of many of the supposedly "inevitable" consequences of capitalist competition'.[69] My supplementary argument here is that this 'dilemma' and 'difficulty' encourages readers alongside Marcella to engage in debate with all sides of these political questions — as the next section of this chapter will now show.

Sympathy, Political Debate, and the Reading Experience

If we examine certain key passages of the novel, we can see exactly how *Marcella*'s juxtaposition of, and dialogue between, usually opposed political opinions sought to involve readers in the debate this created. As Marcella 'develops a more reasoned, critical and balanced way of thinking' through the novel (as Sutton-Ramspeck puts it) — 'never to give up the struggle for a nobler human fellowship, the lifelong toil to understand' as the novel's narrator conceives it — opposing political positions inform the very structure of the novel and explain why so many contemporary critics and reviewers were confused by its dialectic of debate.[70] The novel's analysis of social

[66] Arnold Toynbee, *Lectures on the Industrial Revolution of the Eighteenth Century in England, Popular Addresses, Notes, and Other Fragments* (London: Longmans, Green, 1908) p.237.
[67] Loader, pp.182, 183.
[68] Ward, *Marcella,* p.47.
[69] Mary Augusta Ward, *Marcella,* ed. by Beth Sutton-Ramspeck and Nicole B. Mellor (Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview Press, 2002), 'Introduction', pp.11–26 (pp.20–21).
[70] Sutton-Ramspeck and Mellor, 'Introduction', p.23; Ward, *Marcella*, p.556.

politics, however, attempts to be an inclusive, enabling dialogue rather like the cultural remit of the Passmore Edwards settlement. Here, the emotional connection readers could feel with characters' dilemmas and difficulties was key.

The first excerpt concerns how Marcella as a professional nurse in London sees the problems of urban poverty and crime that surround her. At one point, she explains to Wharton her divergence from socialism 'so far as Socialism means a political system':

> as I go about among these wage-earners, the emphasis—do what I will—comes to lie less and less on possession—more and more on character. I go to two tenements in the same building. One is Hell — the other Heaven. Why? Both belong to well-paid artisans with equal opportunities. […] But one is a man; the other, with all his belongings, will soon be a vagabond. That is not all, I know — oh! Don't trouble to tell me so — but it is more than I thought. No! — my sympathies […] are not so much with the Socialists that I know here […] but with the people, for instance, that slave at Charity Organisation! And get all the abuse from all sides.[71]

It is revealing to note that W.A. Bailward cited this scene from *Marcella* in his 1895 article on settlements to justify his opposition to state interference and subsidy of the poor. He thought that it supported his judgment that the origin of poverty was 'largely one of character' since 'the great majority of the working-classes are happily independent of relief'.[72] The supportive reference to the Charity Organisation Society is seen as significant since those leading it, like Octavia Hill, thought charity should prioritise giving advice and setting an example, rather than directly providing aid. Other critics and commentators agreed that the novel was essentially conservative. W.T. Stead declared that the 'doctrines' of the book were essentially 'a plea for progress upon the basis of character and individual freedom', and that 'in general, it controverts the collectivist ideal'.[73] Elsewhere it was seen as 'both wise and conservative' or 'in favour of the rule of high character'.[74] That was indeed one belief powering Ward's own settlement; certainly upheld by her fellow Passmore Edwards council member Helen Bosanquet who published *The Strength of the People* in 1902. This the historian of the Charity Organisation Society, C.L. Mowat, described in 1961 as 'a long sermon on the importance of character in making one family rich and another poor'.[75]

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[71] Ward, *Marcella* (Virago edn), p.376.
[72] Bailward, p.167.
[73] '"*Marcella*", Mrs Humphry Ward's New Novel on Socialism and Wealth', *Review of Reviews,* 9 (April 1894), 492–93.
[74] William Morton Payne, Recent Fiction'**,** *The Dial,* 16 (16 June 1894), 363–68 (p.364); *The Queen,* 12 May 1894, p.775.
[75] Quoted by Stefan Collini, *Public Moralists: Political Thought and Intellectual Life in Britain 1850–1930* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993 [1991]), p.93.

Yet, it is also important to note the passage's equivocations alongside its stark opposition of the 'heaven' of resolute 'character' and the 'hell' of the feckless 'vagabond'. 'Character' is 'not all', Marcella acknowledges, just 'more' than she had thought — a factor with which any collective solution must negotiate. Nor does she reject socialist values, but more their manifestation in a 'political system' that might be seen as inhibiting individual responsibility (just as Toynbee did). In any case this passage is followed not long afterwards by a scene in which Marcella, while attending a sick child in 'a street not much worse than others' is injured. When preventing a drunken husband from throwing his wife downstairs she is attacked with a broken chair leg. In this apartment with 'signs of human ruin and damnation', the injured Marcella looks on the unconscious woman 'in a passion of anguished pity'.[76] This exhibition of sympathetic fellow feeling and social intervention carries a rather different tone than that of the previous scene. The question of blame or responsibility for the creation of this tragedy is nowhere raised and its sense of class-crossing solidarity is very different from the more hierarchical and coldly professional approach of the Charity Organisation Society. I will return to the importance of emotional responses to the sympathy engendered in and through the text shortly. For the moment, it is necessary to remind ourselves that elsewhere the novel acknowledges the need for state intervention and for effective, protectionist public services. Early on, Marcella refers to the local authority's need to intervene to force her father to repair his tenants' cottages, and later, as a district nurse, she both challenges the authority of a drunken, incompetent doctor and summons a sanitary inspector to an unhealthy tenement. Hallin too acknowledges, as we have seen, that 'big changes may come — the big Collectivist changes' toward 'communal initiative and control'.[77]

It is therefore instructive to note that the novel's engagement with socialist ideas led many contemporary critics to interpret the novel as primarily a 'study of Socialistic problems' or the 'Socialist controversy', while as late as 1904, one interviewer somewhat baldly and contentiously described Ward as an 'advocate of Christian Socialism'.[78] Some went so far as to declare that 'the Fabian Society is to be congratulated on its new ally in literature', that the novel's 'gift for preaching' was manifested as 'a digest of the Fabian essays', or that as a 'novel with a purpose' it comprised 'the work of propaganda' aiming 'at the awakening of the State conscience'.[79] This also raises the question of the practical effect fiction has on its readers, a question addressed in the next chapter. More immediately it is important to note that the conclusion elsewhere that Ward

[76] Ward, *Marcella,* pp.421, 422.
[77] Ibid, pp.538, 412.
[78] *The Daily Telegraph,* 3 April 1894, p.3; *The Spectator*, 28 April 1894, pp.586–67 (p.586); W.B. Northrop, *With Pen and Camera: Interviews with Celebrities* (London: R.A. Everett, 1904), p.167.
[79] *The Leeds Mercury,* 4 April 1894, p.8; *The Bookman,* 6 (May 1894), 55–56 (p.56); J. Stuart Walters, *Mrs Humphry Ward: Her Work and Influence* (London: Keegan Paul, Trench, 1912), p.91.

was 'a Socialist in her conscience, but not always a Socialist in her judgment' suggests that something less one-sided was going on than many critics thought.[80]

The fact that critics had some foundation to their divergent judgments of the novel leaning to the left or the right reinforces my argument that readers were asked to consider both political tendencies. They were required to assimilate arguments for the importance of both character and collective changes, in the context of instinctive fellow feeling with those suffering injustice. This process can be illuminated by examining the 'dialogic' intent that Sutton-Ramspeck has identified in Ward's fiction, key to which was the 'structuring of stories […] in conflicts of ideas'.[81] Ward's approach in her philanthropy is revealing here — conflict could be empowering. As she put it in her opening speech to the Passmore Edwards settlement:

> What we wish to feel here in the treatment of those great questions, religious or social, on which conduct or daily life depend is […] the temper which, amid its own fervour, always seeks to see the case of the opponent at its strongest, and feels injustice and violence like a wound.[82]

Seeing 'the case of the opponent at its strongest' emphasized the importance of interrogating ideas fully and fairly because of their moral consequences and their impact on 'daily life'. 'Injustice' in this context was self-defeating. 'Great questions' at stake also required the largest possible audience:

> Education, social intercourse, and debate of the wider sort — music, books, pictures, travel […] have been, and still are, in spite of all improvements, sadly lacking to the great mass of our people. But it is these that make life rich and animated, that ease the burden of it.[83]

'Rich and animated' debate, within an educational cultural offering that encouraged 'wider' inclusion in 'social intercourse', could provide the means of alleviating the incomprehensibility and burdensome nature of life — perhaps even more so for those hitherto excluded. Debate could be both civilised and civilising. Ward's 1901 booklet, which described a typical day at the settlement, stressed the popularity of the debating society which 'attack[s] all the great questions of the day – The Transvaal, Public House Reform, the Housing Question, The New Factory Bill, Compulsory Military Service, [...] The Effacement of Political Parties, Does Free Trade Injure English Workmen? — and so forth'.[84] A wider audience was therefore ushered into the world of public policy and ethical enquiry. Ward's opening address celebrated the settlement as a 'place of ideals' with 'unity of spirit' that embraced 'many different or even contradictory ideals' since 'a

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[80] Laurence Hutton, 'Literary Notes', *Harper's Monthly*, 89 (August 1894), [after] 486 (supplement pp.3–4 (p.4)).
[81] Sutton-Ramspeck, *Raising the Dust,* p.49.
[82] 'Social Ideals: Address by Mrs Humphry Ward', UCL, box 27.
[83] Ibid.
[84] Ward, 'The Passmore Edwards Settlement', p.15, (LMA/4524/K/03/003), LMA.

settlement draws to itself the worshipers of many dreams.' Participants in debates were therefore invited to engage with the propositions on offer. For example, Mackenzie King, a future Prime Minister of Canada, gave a series of lectures on labour relations during his time at the settlement (1899-1900) which ran counter to Ward's own views on the sweating trades and the need for protective legislation for workers. Yet, he was part of the settlement's urbane aspiration for treatment of 'great questions' of the public realm to encourage wider civilising dialogue. King's diary entry for 4 December 1899, for example, records that a smoking debate on labour relations attracted an 'exceedingly attentive' audience of about 150 workingmen and 50 women and encouraged speakers from the floor to the extent that 'there was much truth mixed up with a great deal of general calumny, and irrelevant remarks.' As he concluded about an earlier debate on the ethics of war, 'I believe the debate did good.'[85]

The benefits of this dialogical debate were deemed as fundamental to the fiction of Marcella's 'dreamlands' as they were to the philanthropy — even if the target audience was different. There too 'rich and animated' discussion could offer the 'ease' of understanding and inclusive debate. Even if *Marcella* did not directly canvass 'the great mass of our people' all readers were invited to engage with the issues facing society's decision makers. This meant that, as Sutton-Rampeck argues, Ward's dialogical novels 'feature fully realized, independent-voiced characters of the idea', in precisely the way Bakhtin identified in his early critical theory and its analysis of Dostoevsky. Hence, 'in *Marcella*, characters embody a range of political opinion, from radical socialism to deep conservatism'.[86] Indeed, minor as well as major characters embody Fabian beliefs (the Cravens), Liberal paternalism (Lord Maxwell), and varieties of Conservatism (Frank Leven, Agneta Raeburn, Richard Boyce), respectively. The conflict of ideas they represent in confronting the 'great questions' of the day has consequences for how the novel's dialogism is to be understood. It is rather more than the second characteristic Sutton-Ramspeck assigns to it, the 'collaborative' 'relationship between the writer and the reader'.[87] This was also fiction that wanted readers to think for themselves. This is the strong implication of a hitherto undiscovered comment by Ward herself in a newspaper interview:

> Mrs Humphry Ward said, "I would not call it a novel with a purpose. It is a story of English country life, and of life among the London poor, called out by the perpetual debate of the time — the relation of poverty to wealth, and the social

[85] Diaries of William Lyon Mackenzie King, 4 December 1899, 23 October 1899, Library and Archives Canada <http://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/politics-government/prime-ministers/william-lyon-mackenzie-king> [accessed 19 February 2019].
[86] Sutton-Ramspeck, *Raising the Dust,* p.59.
[87] Ibid, pp.49, 56.

> burden on the individual conscience. It does not attempt a solution; it offers a picture."[88]

Readers were being expected to grapple with a full 'picture' of the era in all its complexity. It portrayed contemporary 'perpetual debate' which had no 'solution' as such, but a diversity of ideologies from which readers could draw their own conclusions. Its dialogism, as the next chapter will elaborate, was an active one that demanded the reader's participation and response. Such was the reaction that Ward's passage on the importance of character in London tenements hoped to provoke.

Moreover, the juxtaposition of that passage with what comes before and afterwards helps us to position *Marcella* in relation to the 'contradiction and disagreement' and the acceptance of the 'acute challenges of working-class atheism and socialism' that Kohlmann perceives in *Robert Elsmere*, but which I have demonstrated was eventually largely true of the Passmore Edwards settlement.[89] The next chapter will examine in more detail the progress of Ward's fiction from didacticism to dialogical debate where the authorial point of view was less prominent. For now, one can observe that *Marcella* marks progress towards this dialogical ideal of embodiment of 'contradiction and disagreement', even if it cannot fully escape the charge of didacticism. Indeed, its treatment of Hallin is close to the hero worship of the protagonist of *Robert Elsmere.* The endorsement of Hallin's political values (however balanced these themselves may be) means that any challenge to his class politics is at best merely an indirect one through acknowledgment of contrary arguments; however, the thinking behind some workers' opposition to his lectures is not given expression. Indeed, the fictional portrayal of Hallin's human side is rather thin and unconvincing — a verdict substantiated by one critic labelling him an 'unnecessary Extension Lecturing prig' and by an American reader's view of him as embodying 'rather the didactic than the artistic' despite her desire to dissociate Ward from the 'novel for a *Purpose,* with a capital P'.[90] It is not until the novel's sequel, which will be examined in the next chapter, that we start to see the validity and strength of the ethical and political associations of Hallin's sympathy put to the test.

If more evidence were needed, however, that the treatment of Hallin in *Marcella* was the exception to the rule elsewhere, we could turn to the novel's poacher plotline. Significantly, this episode also reveals the importance of the emotional tenor of the book's debate. Loader's

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[88] 'Here, There, and Everywhere', *The Westminster Gazette,* 7 March 1894, p.8.
[89] Kohlmann, p.76.
[90] 'Mrs Humphry Ward's New Novel: Socialism and Society', *St James's Gazette*, 3 April 1894, pp.3–4 (p.4); Mary Wickliffe Van Ness, 'Mrs Humphry Ward's *Marcella',* in *Matthew Arnold and the by Spirit of the Age: Papers of the English Club of Sewanee,* ed. by The Reverend Greenough White (New York: G.P. Puttnam's, 1898) pp.123–128 (p.127).

assumption that the novel's fictionalisation of an actual 1891 case of the murder of a gamekeeper by an Aldbury poacher was one that mirrored Green's opposition to unjust game laws misunderstands its structural function and desired emotional appeal. The death sentence passed on Hurd the poacher gives an opportunity for Wharton and Marcella's arguments for leniency, in the light of the inequitable nature of current legislation, to be juxtaposed with Raeburn's and Lord Maxwell's arguments for personal responsibility and respect for the law. The reader is asked to consider both 'Green's sentiments concerning the way in which the game laws exacerbated poverty and discontent in rural communities' and the fact that Marcella's refusal to consider the other side's position on the appropriate penalty for murder leads to the rupture of their relationship.[91] She accuses Raeburn of 'incapacity to put the human pity first' for one 'stunted and starved by life', while he complains 'my scruple, my feelings, were nothing' to her.[92] The reader is encouraged to consider the extent to which Marcella might have done wrong by not at least acknowledging that the other side has a point to make — and to feel with both seemingly wronged parties. We are confronted by the pain caused by Marcella's intolerance (but instinctive humanity) and Raeburn's inflexibility (but upright principled nature). The dialogical treatment of Hurd's case serves to highlight for readers the human impact of the political conundrums it raises and to illustrate the strong emotions unleashed by the clash of ideas. It points toward how Ward's text was structured to elicit the readers' sympathy.

Its emotional tenor can be illustrated by another key passage — Marcella's final memory of Hallin's message as the novel draws to a conclusion. This expresses the novel's fundamental philosophical stance:

> Hold what you please about systems and movements, and fight for what you hold; only, as an individual — *never say — never think!* — that it is in the order of things, in the purpose of God, that one of these little ones—this Board-School child, this man honestly out of work, this woman 'sweated' out of her life — should perish! A contradiction, or a commonplace, you say? Well and good. The only truths that burn themselves into the conscience, that work themselves out […] into a pattern of social improvement are the contradictions and the commonplaces.[93]

This exhortation is simultaneously an appeal to 'the young Conservative with whom he had been having a long economic and social argument' and also, in becoming Marcella's pledge of faith, an appeal to the reader. It carries within it the seeds of how Ward wished the novel to be interpreted. It attempts both to validate the novel's dependence on the 'contradictions' of opposing political arguments and to defend the 'commonplace' of its own emotive discourse that

[91] Loader, p.203.
[92] Ward, *Marcella*, p.305.
[93] Ward, *Marcella,* p.556.

solicits the reader's fellow feeling. Ultimately the ethical obligations of sympathy stem from an emotional connection with those suffering poverty and injustice — a protest against any acceptance that any of 'these little ones', for example a poorly educated Board School child, should 'perish' on the altar of political dogma. That the 'little ones' should be deemed to include an unemployed adult man and a woman suffering from the excessive demands of 'sweated' labour certainly indicates the novel's top-down paternalist focus that has been highlighted above. However, it also underlines, just as Marcella's painful path to maturity did, and as the emotional plight and insecure future of Hurd's family did, that this is a fiction of ideas that is concerned with their impact on human life. Readers are therefore asked to respond with both feeling and intellect. The contention is that the desired reading experience should be one that is powerful enough to 'burn' itself 'into the conscience'. It is the emotional 'commonplace' of pictures of human suffering, or the immediately ensuing ecstatic epiphany of Marcella's final 'intoxication of self-giving' as she thinks 'with mingled smiles and tears of her plans', that seek to speak to the heart and mind of the reader.[94] Only with acknowledgment of the human impact of the clash of political ideas would any 'pattern of social improvement' be identified and hence Marcella, in praying 'for the open mind, the listening heart', invites the reader to do likewise.

That it proved possible for some readers, and a handful of critics, to respond emotionally and intellectually to *Marcella*'s 'criticism of life' is borne out by some records of the reading experiences the novel prompted. An anonymous first-person Canadian reviewer felt it 'so tender and exquisite that one feels certain passages of it were written either in tears or that repressed trembling that is even more emotional than a "raining from the eyes"' — recording that 'there is a hurt in the heart at the reading of it.'[95] If this stressed the purely emotional nature of their reading experience, others praised the book's ability to speak to mind and heart simultaneously. The American essayist, editor and lecturer, Hamilton Mabie, argued that 'to reproduce in fiction a great human experience one must not only feel it to the very heart, but be able to stand apart from it and see it in true relations to the whole of life.' He went on to record that for him 'no other novel dealing with the social question approaches *Marcella* in power and artistic significance because no other has so completely translated it into terms of human life.'[96] For Mabie, the balancing of ideas with their human embodiment and impact, the intermingling of art with philosophy, the combination of a receptive 'heart' with the judgment made possible by a more distanced appraisal — all these are crucial to the novel's perceived success. Claims wider

[94] Ibid, pp.556, 555.
[95] *The Toronto Daily Mail*, 2 June 1894, p.5.
[96] Hamilton W. Mabie, ''Two Opinions of Mrs Humphry Ward's *Marcella*: II', *Book Reviews,* 1 (April 1894), 276–79 (p.278).

than aesthetic ones were made by the editor of the *Pall Mall Gazette*, Frederick Greenwood — someone who had completed Gaskell's *Wives and Daughters* after her death in 1865 so was fully aware of the importance of sympathy to mid-century fiction. He hoped that readers would find some 'scene of pathos or humour that touched his sympathies, enlarged his knowledge of human nature, or brought him nearer to his kind'. Greenwood went on to say that 'if, besides, he obtains a clearer view of social questions which most of us chatter about [...] so much the better for him mentally and as a citizen.'[97] The larger suggestion here is that a novel whose underlying concern is one of sympathy could also generate some kind of sympathy and practically useful understanding in the reader. A related claim was made by the American novelist F. Marion Crawford, who judged that our fellow feeling with the heroine was 'a sure sign of the book's worth', and her apparently 'hopeless' quest 'a strong arouser of sympathy'.[98]

What sympathy was intended to accomplish in its effect on the reader 'as a citizen', and what an increasingly dialogical fiction succeeded in accomplishing, are now key questions to address. It is also necessary to consider how typical and how widespread the kinds of responses I have just quoted actually were. This chapter has shown how Ward's sympathy for the under-privileged, which was accompanied by desire for greater equality of opportunity and cultural enfranchisement, impacted on fiction that desired to engage readers in debate and touch their minds and hearts. The next chapter will now examine in more detail the theory and practice of Ward's fiction of debate to analyse what kind of influence Ward hoped the desired engaged reading experience would have — and actually did have.

[97] Frederick Greenwood, 'Mrs Humphry Ward's New Book', *Pall Mall Gazette*, 3 April 1894, 1–2 (p.2).
[98] F. Marion Crawford, '*Marcella*: Mrs Humphry Ward's New Book', *Current Literature*, 15 (May 1894), 396.

Chapter 3 Ward's Dialogical Fiction and the Sympathetic Reading Experience

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to examine Mary Ward's literary politics that flowed out of *Marcella*'s social politics of sympathy examined in chapter two — compassion for the under-privileged and desire for wider access in society to the worlds of culture, education, and political debate. This chapter explores more closely the envisaged dialogical, sympathetic reading experience that was the consequence of such sympathy. Ward hoped that readers' sympathy toward the concerns of the text would combine emotional responses to stories of affect, in which characters' lives were torn apart by ideological conflict, and intellectual engagement with differing arguments about how greater social justice was to be achieved. This chapter will therefore show how Ward's literary aims grew from the starting point of Matthew Arnold's concept of literature as 'criticism of life'. They then developed through a dialogue with trusted readers which focussed on how a fiction of ideas could avoid didacticism and address political questions arising naturally out of convincing human stories. The aim was to tie together the emotional reactions prompted by the plight of believable fictional characters with a judicious consideration of all sides of the moral and political questions raised. The sequel to *Marcella, Sir George Tressady* (1896), is analysed as a test case of the sympathetic reading experience and openness to debate to which Ward now aspired, which, in interrogating the ethical sympathy elevated in *Marcella*, posed interpretative challenges to readers. The chapter then compares the theory of what Ward's fiction was attempting to achieve with empirical evidence for how it worked in practice. The aim is to explore the extent to which Ward's readers engaged both intellectually *and* emotionally with dialogical fiction that explored opposed political and ethical viewpoints. In contrast to the critical misunderstanding and misrepresentation of allegedly heavy-handed 'fiction with a purpose' analysed in the last chapter, Ward hoped the unresolved nature of her dialogical fiction would provide readers with a forum for political and moral debate. My fresh exploration and analysis of archival records therefore reveals much that is new about the potentially powerful role Ward's fiction played for some readers in developing and deepening their own thinking. In particular, the evidence will show that readers in positions of power or social influence were stimulated to debate issues of social reform and public ethics. Effectiveness depended on engaging readers with the texts' aesthetic aspiration to depict moving human

stories embodying such issues and conundrums. The stimulation, to some degree, of sympathetic reading experiences was key to the fiction's potential usefulness.

Such discussion of Ward's literary politics is contextualised and interpreted firstly in relation to Habermas's theory of the breakdown of the nineteenth-century public sphere. Popular fiction's provision of a public forum for debate can be seen to have played a part in offsetting the democratic deficit Habermas envisages emanating from the loss of the accessible eighteenth-century 'literary' or 'bourgeois public sphere'. Although Patrocinio Schweickart has pointed out that care must be taken when applying to literature Habermas's heavily Enlightenment-influenced thinking about communication as a rational way to arrive at mutual understanding and agreement, Habermas's ideas are of relevance to Ward's fiction of ideas — one where debate comprises its form and outcome, albeit resolution of that debate is in question.[1] Second, my analysis of Ward's readers' responses is sited within the present-day, highly contested critical debate about the nature and operation of the sympathy and moral understanding aroused by personal reading experiences. My identification of emotional yet self-aware responses to Ward's fiction, feelings of awe and friendship with fictional characters combined with intellectual judgment and argument, highlights that often highly sophisticated reading experiences occurred. My understanding of the cognitive and emotional nature of sympathy fostered by reading therefore engages with the debate between Martha Nussbaum and Rae Greiner, among others, concerning the nature of sympathy and its influence on behaviour and ethical sensitivity in the world outside the novel. My argument, based on empirical evidence and supported by the research of Howard Sklar, will be that Ward's demanding popular fiction of debate facilitated sensitivity to ethical and political ideas and the search for social progress.

As a precursor, it is important to acknowledge how the apparent difference in Ward's readership compared to Marie Corelli's affected the nature of their respective reception records. Whereas the broad appeal of Corelli's fiction is clearly evident in the blow-by-blow newspaper accounts of widespread, class-crossing debates of its alleged controversial nature, Ward's reception within a general readership is much less in evidence. Although Ward's less controversial fiction was occasionally the subject of discussion at literary societies and clubs, press coverage of such discussion was scanty — one typical example in the *Rochdale Observer* limiting itself to the observation that discussion of *Marcella* at the Castleton Literary and Scientific Society following Mrs Ormerod's paper was 'animated'.[2] Evidence for the general appeal of her fiction tends to be

[1] Patrocinio Schweickart, 'Understanding an Other: Reading as a Receptive Form of Communicative Action', in *New Directions in American Reception Study,* ed. by Philip Goldstein and James L. Machor (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp.3–22 (pp.4–9).
[2] *The Rochdale Observer*, 8 December 1915, p.7.

tantalisingly brief and infrequent. Her daughter records that Ward was 'deeply impressed by a visit she had paid to Toynbee Hall with Max Creighton' to discover that the library copy of *Robert Elsmere* had been 'read to pieces' and inspired a 'workmen's club' after Robert's example.[3] However, instances of such influence were rare. The effect of Ward's fiction can therefore better be judged, not as Corelli's can, from the press record — infrequent letters to newspapers from supporters or opponents of her broadly Unitarian religious views, philanthropy, or campaigning — but in private correspondence from small circles of middle- and upper-class letter-writers.[4] Sometimes correspondents had been sent a copy of the author's latest work in an attempt to grab their attention. However, it is important to stress that the responses analysed below go beyond friends' ego massaging. Often her books were sent to acquaintances rather than friends and archival records also include some of the many letters from England and America that she received from complete strangers. This indicates the seriousness with which some readers took the political analysis of her fiction and debated the ideas they contained.

Crucially, the fact that Ward's reception record does not reflect the broad public reach from royalty to working-class readers that Corelli quite clearly had reflects the tensions that existed within Ward's desire for popularity. The initial audience for her first four adult novels in Britain was constrained, despite the relative bestseller status of *Robert Elsmere,* by being published as expensive triple-deckers — albeit lack of copyright protection in America generated wider distribution there. Moreover, although Ward did want to speak to the widest possible audience, it was only on her own terms. Even when published in single volume, six shillings, format from 1895 onwards, limitations were imposed by the parameters of an intellectually engaged, sophisticated fiction, targeting the attention and concerns of middle-class and upper-class circles. As she wrote tellingly to her mentor Mandell Creighton of *Eleanor* in 1901:

> I did not think at all of the 'public', that is to say of the big buying public in writing this story — which does not mean that I shall be indifferent to its success or failure, — quite the contrary. But I have thought often of the sympathy and understanding of those to whom these subtler and more cosmopolitan types of life are familiar through experience or literature.[5]

It was hoped that the purchase record of the 'buying public' would continue, but the fiction was aimed at the concerns of a smaller group of 'subtler' readers. It was on the appeal to their 'sympathy and understanding' that its artistic 'success or failure' would depend. Ward's themes

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[3] Janet Penrose Trevelyan, *The Life of Mrs Humphry Ward* (London: Constable, 1923), p.79.
[4] This judgment is based on an exhaustive comparative analysis of thousands of references to both Ward and Corelli in the British Newspaper Archive 1888–1908.
[5] Letter from Mary Ward to Mandell Creighton, 29 July 1900, Mrs Humphry Ward Papers, 1857–1935 (H-Mss-0927), 29.13 (box 29, folder 13), Special Collections, The Claremont Colleges Library, Claremont, California [henceforth referenced as MHWP].

and characters therefore most frequently emerged from the society in which she moved — although she was thrilled when her work achieved a wider appeal, as in the Toynbee Hall instance above. Therefore, as we have seen in chapter two, a novel such as *Marcella* was written more for an audience of the great and the good about what could be done for the poor and excluded rather than addressing the poor and excluded themselves. When working-class voices entered her fiction, it was only with some effort. For *David Grieve* detailed research in Lancashire and Derbyshire was needed, and we are told 'the novelist's guide to family life in Oldham and Bacup was Beatrice Potter'.[6] Hence, the 'cosmopolitan' middle- and upper-class fictional worlds Ward more naturally created, the influence she strove for, and the kind of reading experience her fiction offered, is best illuminated by turning to the smaller groups who helped her shape her fiction and to those with positions in society who responded favourably to a dialogical fiction which, as she put it, explored 'the wish "to reform the world"'.[7]

The Dialogical Reading Experience: 'Criticism of Life'

The last chapter argued that *Marcella* marked a stage in Ward's development of a more fully dialogical fiction that sought to engage its readers in debate through its emotional appeal. It is now necessary to examine the journey Ward's literary politics took in more detail in order to understand what part the underlying assumptions and associations of sympathy played both in a fiction of ideas and in Ward's conception of the ideal reading experience. The starting point was her justification of the all-important follow-up to the surprise commercial success of *Robert Elsmere* (1888), *The History of David Grieve* (1892), which spawned criticism in the heavyweight quarterly press.[8] The *Quarterly Review*'s accusation of divisive class intervention in the novel's depiction of a working-class hero, and his auto-didactic progress to respectability as a co-operative bookseller in Manchester, had been particularly wounding — the charge of democratic tendencies generating 'anarchy' being an implicit reference to the cultural theory of Ward's uncle, Mathew Arnold.[9] The implication was that Ward's commercially successful fiction was fostering the anarchy that Arnold had wished a civilising culture to prevent, reflecting the working-class's

[6] The prominent Fabian, later to become Beatrice Webb: Gertrude Ward's Notebook 1884–89, quoted in Peter Collister, 'Some Literary and Popular Sources for Mrs Humphry Ward's *The History of David Grieve*', *The Review of English Studies*, 40 (May 1989), 215–31 (p.222).
[7] *The Writings of Mrs Humphry Ward*, with introductions by the author, vol III: *The History of David Grieve*, vol 1 (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1909), p.xix.
[8] For fuller extracts of the 3 reviews of *David Grieve* in question which prompted Ward to define her approach to fiction, see Appendix A, section 1).
[9] Arnold's *Culture and Anarchy* (1869).

growing, but allegedly adverse, political and cultural influence.[10] It is not surprising therefore that Ward's angry response, in an open letter to her publisher which then became the preface to the novel's popular edition, took the form of justification in Arnoldian terms. This attempted to claim cultural status for her fiction by relating it to Arnold's concept of poetry. This he had conceived as possessing 'high seriousness', of being 'criticism of life under the conditions fixed for such criticism by the laws of poetic truth and poetic beauty', which could 'interpret life for us'.[11] 'Criticism' for Arnold was a key term signifying 'disinterested love of a free play of the mind on all subjects, for its own sake […] to try to know the best that is known and thought in the world, irrespectively of practice, politics and everything of the kind'.[12] Ward argued that Matthew Arnold's definition of poetry applied equally to her fiction of ideas: 'A criticism of life under the conditions of imaginative truth and imaginative beauty'.[13] However, despite her proud allegiance to the Arnold family legacy, and despite her perceived debt to 'Arnoldian dialectic' in the radical religious opinions of *Robert Elsmere,* Ward's artistic theory and practice soon began to diverge from Arnold's.[14] Although there were important points of convergence, such as the imperative of an interpretative literature of ideas, and a high-minded ethical idealism, Ward came to differ in desiring her fiction, not to rise above everyday politics but to scrutinise their importance. She moved away from the aim of advancing 'in the hearts' of readers 'thoughts and causes dear' to the writer and wished her fiction to offer a dialogical reading experience which dramatized the clash and emotional impact of conflicting political ideologies on human life.[15] In giving ideas human form and relevance to the everyday world, it was allied to a wider and more accessible form of culture. That, as we have seen in the last chapter, was key to the openness to debate of both her philanthropy and her fiction. Crucially, Ward's fiction theory and practice was directly affected by her dialogue with key readers who helped her to hone her aims beyond the confines of Arnold's thinking.

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[10] 'They arrive, these masses, eager to enter into possession of the world […] their natural educators and initiators are those immediately above them, the middle classes. If these classes cannot win their sympathy or give them their direction, society is in danger of falling into anarchy': Matthew Arnold, 'Democracy', in *Mixed Essays* (New York: Macmillan, 1880), pp.1–47 (p.41).

[11] Matthew Arnold, 'The Study of Poetry', in *Essays in Criticism*, ed. by Susan S Sheridan (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1896), pp.1–31 (pp.27, 3, 2) — the essay first appeared as the introduction to Ward's husband's edited collection, *The English Poets* (1880); the phrase 'criticism of life' first appeared in the essay 'Joubert' in *Essays in Criticism* (1865) where it is applied to literature as a whole.

[12] Matthew Arnold, 'The Function of Criticism at the Present Time', in *Essays in Criticism* (London: Macmillan, 1865), pp.1–41 (p.17).

[13] *The Writings of Mrs Humphry Ward*, vol III: *David Grieve*, p.xix.

[14] William S. Peterson, *Victorian Heretic: Mrs Humphry Ward's Robert Elsmere* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1976), pp.136–37.

[15] *The Writings of Mrs Humphry Ward*, vol III: *David Grieve,* p.xviii.

Throughout her life, the author's dialogue with certain trusted readers, supportive but keen to point out where improvement was needed — we would call them 'critical friends' in modern parlance — helped her revise her writing, as well as check factual accuracy.[16] Debate therefore informed the creative process as well as the content of the fiction. I focus here on two of the most important for Ward's development, Benjamin Jowett and Mandell Creighton. The Master of Balliol, the radical theologian Benjamin Jowett, whom Ward had first met in her Oxford youth, proved influential in Ward's turn from primarily religious or spiritual subjects to more dialogical consideration of the political implications of her ethical beliefs. As she was in the process of writing *David Grieve*, Jowett wrote to her, expressing his dislike for *Robert Elsmere*'s dead end of 'a small dissenting chapel', and arguing that the way forward for her fiction lay in exploring 'how the world might go on, if this faith as it is called in a personal God were subtracted'. Such an exploration would require not instruction but inspection of problems that required 'a great deal of consideration'. For example, a more secular fiction could challenge perceptions about the artisan class and 'show that there is more sense of right and honesty among them than is commonly supposed'.[17] When Jowett had read the finished novel, and wrote again, the implications of the need for 'consideration' became clearer:

> I foresee that you may have a great future as a novelist, not exactly by always keeping on these lines, but by always improving and thinking [how] you may picture the mind of the time, and especially of the middle classes, getting rid of lords and ladies so as to do great good. […] It is one of the most subtle and delicate questions […] how classes can be made to understand and respect one another.[18]

Evidently, for him, the story of an orphaned peasant, rising through the ranks to sell books and discuss theology with a Lord, a Dean, and a church canon, and also create his own co-operative business, had more class implications than the book had managed to explore. Picturing the 'mind of the time' required, Jowett suggested, a more politically explicit fiction challenging the reader to examine how dysfunctional class relationships could be addressed. Since it would deal with 'subtle and delicate questions', the implication was that the reader should be presented not with spiritual answers but with discussion of social problems. Ward's written reply, if any, does not remain but, tellingly, we do see *Marcella* moving in this new direction. Although it was not 'rid of lords and ladies', the work did involve, as we have seen in chapter two, interrogation and integration of socialist, liberal and conservative solutions to social reform questions. Perhaps

[16] Examples of checking factual accuracy include 1898 correspondence with Mr W. Addis concerning Catholic ritual in *Helbeck of Bannisdale* (MHWP, 2.38 and 31.2), and correspondence with Sidney Buxton concerning parliamentary details of *Sir George Tressady* (HWMP, 31.1 and 2.30) and political background of *Diana Mallory* (1908) (HWMP, 5.12).
[17] Letter from Benjamin Jowett to Mary Ward, c. January 1891, MHWP, 41.2.
[18] Letter from Benjamin Jowett to Mary Ward, 24 January 1892, MHWP, 41.2.

influenced by Jowett's intervention, she widened the scope of Arnold's idea of culture which took one away from the everyday, 'practice, politics and everything of the kind' in order to discuss 'how classes can be made to understand and respect one another'. Of course, as many recent critics have argued, Arnold's thinking was deeply political, radically so, in that he wanted the state to intervene to educate the populace to make his Olympian culture possible.[19] However, he saw English pragmatism and obsession with the party political as deleterious to the aim of reaching 'the best that is known and thought'.[20] Ward, in responding to Jowett's encouragement to draw out the political consequences of her fiction, came to believe that culture could not exclude the political cut and thrust and the practically useful examination of its impact on everyday concerns.

The responses from Mandell Creighton to Ward's fiction were even more important in her development of literary aesthetics which qualified Matthew Arnold's thinking while moving away from didacticism. Creighton was an academic, historian and Church of England bishop who from Ward's Oxford days was a close friend and mentor with whom she shared drafts of her novels. At one stage she thanked him for the 'fairness and candour' of his critique, declaring: 'perhaps it is an affectation to say always that one likes candour! — but I certainly like it from you and I should be aggrieved if you did not give it me'.[21] In some sense, he was close to being Ward's ideal reader, supportive when she came under attack from critics, but always challenging her to reach the highest standards of art. That Creighton's criticisms and suggestions had a material influence on her writing is demonstrated by Ward's comment in a letter to Louise Creighton, Mandell's wife, about *Sir George Tressady* (1896) that 'I have considerably improved the balance of the book since it came out in the *Century* and since Max saw it. […] See what it is to take one's friends' advice'.[22]

Right from the start, Creighton challenged her on the very premise of 'criticism of life'. In his severe comments on her first adult novel, *Miss Bretherton* (1884), he contended that the author had been too much the 'critic' and not given him 'an entire slice of life'. She had concentrated on 'the intellectual convictions of Miss Bretherton rather than her emotional capacity […]. How is this properly a subject of art? Is it not too didactic?' For her to be a successful novelist, she would have to 'let yourself go as a partner of common joys, common sorrows and

[19] For example, H.S. Jones, *Victorian Political Thought* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000); Stefan Collini, *Matthew Arnold: A Critical Portrait* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994); Kate Campbell, *Matthew Arnold* (Tavistock: Northcote House, 2008).
[20] See Arnold, 'The Function of Criticism', p.17.
[21] Letter from Mary Ward to Mandell Creighton, 13 March 1888, in William S. Peterson, 'Mrs Humphry Ward on *Robert Elsmere*: Six New Letters', *Bulletin of the New York Public Library*, 74 (1970) 587–97 (p.590).
[22] Letter from Mary Ward to Louise Creighton, 29 September 1896, MHWP, 29.6.

common perplexities.'[23] His argument was that fiction's human representation must strike the reader first rather than the ideas which inspired it. The 'emotional capacity' of believable fictional characters and the embodiment of 'common' emotions and problems were key to the potential impact of any fiction of ideas. The novelist's art demanded that 'imaginative truth and imaginative beauty' be the first concern.

> He therefore saluted the progress marked by *David Grieve,* which he judged to be:
>
> thoroughly human throughout and sends down many shafts deep into the recesses of human nature. It has convinced me that you are quite right in writing novels, and that you are enriching English Literature with a new mode of expressing profound truths in a simple and attractive form. You have given an imaginative expression of many of the great problems of modern life with great subtlety and refined analysis. […] My interest in you will allow me to say that I think the advance on '*Robert Elsmere*' is enormous. […] The characters are much stronger, the realisation is much more complete. All the people in 'David' are real people, not types but realities. […]. The reason why I set David above Robert is because the intellectual side of things is subordinate to the purely human. Tendency is a foe to art; and the exact form of repose which David found for his soul is his own concern. […] But there are passages in his 'diary' which were written by Mrs Ward and not by himself.[24]

Here, Creighton praises Ward's improvement as a novelist since the abstract philosophical tendencies of *Miss Bretherton* and the idealising 'tendency' of *Robert Elsmere,* whose protagonist had acted as a mouthpiece for Ward's own theological and ethical beliefs. A more convincingly artistic form which avoided didacticism in its analysis of the issues of the day was now apparent. Hence, *David Grieve* featured 'purely human' characters which were 'real people, not types'. The 'imaginative expression' of 'the great problems of modern life' and of 'profound truths' was key. Ward had at last become a novelist 'enriching English Literature' as well as philosophy, and one with a 'new mode' of expression. 'Truths' emerge from 'the recesses of human nature' rather than being imposed from without. Here, as with Jowett, we see that Ward only partly followed Creighton's advice. For her, characters both impersonated 'real people' and acted as 'types' — representing in this novel the range of belief from evangelicalism to atheism. However, more importantly, Creighton's argument is that *David Grieve* had not achieved balance between the 'the intellectual side of things' and the 'purely human' throughout. David's diary, Creighton implies, was Ward's own somewhat turgid philosophising and, as a supposed exemplum of the self-made man, 'David's power of assimilating knowledge is really too rapid'. He finishes by saying

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[23] Letter from Mandell Creighton to Mary Ward, 9 December 1884, MHWP, 30.14. For fuller texts of the Ward/Creighton correspondence showing his influence on the development of her fiction's aims and practice, see Appendix A section 3).

[24] Letter from Mandell Creighton to Mary Ward, 3 February 1892, in Louise Creighton, *Life and Letters of Mandell Creighton*, *D.D. Oxon and Cam., sometime Bishop of London, by his Wife,* two volumes in one (London: Longmans, Green, 1904), II, pp.101–02.

'I only wish to point out a temptation which you will be greater if you resist'. Progress had been made, then, but didactic elements still remained. A subsequent letter added the further comment, that he was 'very sorry' to hear of the 'ungenerous' criticism it had received but told her frankly that fiction such as hers risked 'misunderstanding and misrepresentation' since she was still assuming — the implication was dangerously so — 'the function of a teacher'.[25]

Creighton's argument that didactic 'tendency is a foe to art' and that 'the intellectual side of things is subordinate to the purely human' went to the heart of his critique of Ward's initial 'criticism of life'. In Ward's preface to the novel, one can discern an unresolved tension between the idea that her fiction as 'the torch for exploring life' should be distinguished from the 'opprobrious category of "Novels with a purpose"' but that 'criticism of life' could 'advance, whether in the hearts of the many or the few, thoughts and causes dear to the writers'.[26] At this stage she was not fully sure of the balance between 'disinterested' analysis of ideas, to use Arnold's phrase, and the didactic. However, under Creighton's influence Ward's theoretical thinking moved away from Arnold's paradoxical combination of the 'disinterested' with the partisan — a culture comprised of 'the best that is known and thought in the world'. So, when she came to characterise her fiction again in a 1901 speech, she emphasized its dialogical capacity to illuminate both sides of contemporary problems, 'the play of religious opinion, or social reform, or political power, as they affect human life'.[27] Here her desire was for readers to explore with her the human anxieties that intellectual conflict created. Ward thereby diverged from Arnold's view of culture as the path to harmony — the 'pursuit of perfection […] the pursuit of sweetness and light'.[28] For him the cultural goal was the civilised discussion of ideas in order to identify and bask in an uplifting, alternative world of culture. Stefan Collini notes how Arnold's interpretation of his Greek legacy was 'selective', stressing 'their balance, control, serenity […] rather than any unbalancing extremes of passion'.[29] In contrast, Ward maintained, partly as a result of Creighton's influence, that the 'unbalancing extremes of passion' and human dramatization of 'the great problems of modern life' should be the (still civilising) subject of fiction. As, chapter two has already argued, Ward's definition of culture was wider, more all-encompassing than Arnold's. It was very different in tone too. Her dialogical exploration of the human condition invited the reader to confront the human problems resulting from conflicts of ideas and the unresolved clash

[25] Letter from Mandell Creighton to Mary Ward, 6 February 1892, MHWP, 30.16.
[26] *The Writings of Mrs Humphry Ward*, vol III: *David Grieve*, pp. xx, xvii, xviii.
[27] 'Mrs Humphry Ward at the Authors' Club', *Queen*, 109, 25 May 1901, p.827. For fuller extracts from Ward's speech about how ideas could mesh with an art of the emotions, see Appendix A, section 2 j).
[28] Matthew Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy: An Essay in Political and Social Criticism*, 3rd edn (London: Smith, Elder, 1882 [1869]), p.43.
[29] Collini, *Matthew Arnold*, p.84.

of beliefs and feelings. It was one where an enlightening reading experience would be both emotional and intellectual, where readers would feel in sympathy with what the fiction was trying to achieve.

Creighton validated these very aspects in *Helbeck of Bannisdale* (1898). In this novel the repressive repercussions of the engagement of an ill-educated, and therefore vulnerable, daughter of a free thinker with an austere Catholic culminated in the girl's suicide. He wrote of his own reading experience that: 'I think you have got hold of a very real tragedy, and have worked it out with admirable precision. The war of the intellect and the feelings is perhaps the deepest form which the tragic motive takes in our time'.[30] For him, aesthetic 'tragedy' stemmed from the intellectual 'precision' of its human embodiment of deep contemporary divides. These divides stemmed from the vast difference in men and women's education in the nineteenth century and the battle of belief and unbelief. These had been captured in a portrayal of the incompatibility of Helbeck, 'formed by a system which especially aims at forming character', with Laura, who has 'never been formed at all'. 'Of course if Laura had possessed any system of her own, she could have dealt with another system […]. But no system will not do.' Hence her 'excellent impulses of the free spirit dash and are broken against the power of character even when formed upon an exaggerated and unintelligent basis.' Laura's 'excellent impulses' fail because the beliefs instilled in her by her father have an emotional basis but no solid intellectual foundations. The result was a human drama depicting the 'war of the intellect and the feelings'. Ward replied:

> Of course you have seen the point of *Helbeck,* which so many people have missed. Life cannot be lived safely without guiding ideas […]. But I confess the story took so much hold upon me as a love-story, that I never was less concerned to point a moral or uphold an 'ism'. There *is* a moral — but I think and hope it grew, as it does in life, out of situation and character.[31]

She now agreed that the authorial point of view should arise out of 'situation and character' and that the force of its 'moral' resulted from not upholding an 'ism'. The reader, she assented, had been invited to appreciate and understand the human implications of a lack of 'guiding ideas' through a doomed 'love-story'. That it could stimulate debate is evidenced by Creighton's own lengthy response to the book's 'question' which had 'interested me greatly' of the balance between the individual's freedom of thought and reliance on 'systems by which he is surrounded'. The dialogical reading experience on offer was therefore a complex interplay of the intellectual, ethical, and emotional — whose human dilemmas could take 'hold' of the reader as much as the author. The reader was encouraged to make sense of the clash of different 'modes of looking at life' as Creighton put it.

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[30] Letter from Mandell Creighton to Mary Ward, 5 August 1898, in Creighton, *Life and Letters,* II, pp.344-45.
[31] Letter from Mary Ward to Mandell Creighton, 9 August 1898, MHWP, 29.13.

Hence in being influenced by trusted readers to move to a more political and dialogical fiction that was dealing with the human effects of the clash of ideas Ward could be said, as Jowett put it, to reflect 'the mind of the time'. It is striking that at the beginning of the twentieth century Conan Doyle identified Ward's fiction as the place where 'the student of 2000' would 'form a just estimate of our Victorian age'. Here the reader of the future would find the upheavals and challenges of the age, 'its mental unrest, its groping after new truths, its sharp contrasts between old conditions and new problems' — all this depicted with 'a very high and rare power, the power of broad sympathy with many divergent and even contradictory forms of faith'.[32] The 'challenge' to the reader of the 'contradictory' and 'groping' after truth, along with responsiveness to its emotional 'rare power', was central to 'criticism of life' and the sympathetic reading experience it sought to provide. This was a particularly demanding kind of popular culture, as Doyle's comments acknowledged, one that could help contemporary readers too to better understand the world around them.

The Sympathetic Reading Experience: *Sir George Tressady* (1896) — a Case Study

To grasp the 'high and rare power' of the sympathetic reading experience that Ward strove to provide for readers, one can turn to *Sir George Tressady.* Here we can see the combination of the emotional and the intellectual that Ward was now striving for, in a story where ideas drive the characters and lead to personal crises. In grappling with the conflicting political ideologies that help destroy the eponymous character's life, the novel's deeply felt dialogism is key. Here, the text itself sought to interrogate the strengths and weaknesses of Marcella's social politics of sympathy, by inviting readers to share the emotional experience of the characters' dilemmas. As a result, the novel aspired to an artistry that avoided didacticism and moved readers' hearts while stimulating their minds. Such terminology might suggest kinship with Corelli but Ward's methodology and desired outcome were different. Readers were challenged to come to terms with a text that attempted to balance opposed ideas and conflicting emotions — thereby encouraging them to refine their own thinking.

[32] 'Mrs Humphry Ward at the Authors' Club', p.827.

A sequel to *Marcella,* and the only sequel that Ward ever wrote, the book was prompted, as her introduction to the Westmoreland edition indicated, by readers' demands to know what had happened next:

> The demand of readers in many parts of the world was for 'something more about Marcella'. How did that once thorny young lady comport herself in marriage? What became of her social ideals? Did she succeed in harmonising the role of prophetess with that of great lady as Maxwell's wife?[33]

Since Ward also 'was anxious to follow out her fortunes' both author and readers wanted to discover how effective Marcella's 'social ideals' proved to be. In exploring how far Marcella's youthful interventionist promise was realised after (and through) her marriage, the novel confronts the emotional and ethical problems Marcella's sympathy creates when applied to the parliamentary arena. This exploration is mediated through an unrealisable love affair and its tragic outcome for George Tressady. Marcella's unwitting emotional influence causes Tressady to fall in love with her, to vote in Parliament against his convictions and in favour of the anti-sweating labour legislation Marcella and her husband are fighting for. This ruins his career, imperils his marriage, and leads to his sacrificial death in his own coal mine as he tries to save his miners from a rock fall.

The reader is confronted by a human dramatization of the political debate between Marcella's interventionist arguments against an unfettered capitalist free market and Tressady's *laissez faire* economics. Here the novel's dialogical intent is quite clear. W.L. Courtney noted in his review that 'two conceptions of liberty […] are arrayed for combat in Mrs Humphry Ward's arena — the liberty of the individual who claims for himself the right to work as he will [… and] the socialistic notion of the freedom gained for the working classes, not by individual effort, but by co-operation'.[34] Once again, as in *Marcella,* contemporary debates within liberalism and between conservative-leaning liberalism and Fabian-influenced solutions comes to the fore. This time debate arises from Marcella's good intentions being undermined by her naïve, inadvertent sway over her opponent's affections. The challenge to George's initial, ill-considered individualist assumptions therefore come to exhibit Creighton's 'war of the intellect and the feelings'. Marcella hopes to inspire in Tressady desire 'to reform the world' yet her private discussions with him both transform his political and personal identity, and, in the process, question the probity and practicality of the sympathy she upholds. More positively, Tressady loses his condescension toward women, acknowledging they are no mere society ornaments but have an important contribution to make to the public world. His encounter with Marcella builds up 'a new self in me'

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[33] *The Writings of Mrs Humphry Ward*, with introductions by the author, vol VII: *Sir George Tressady*, vol 1 (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1911), p.ix.
[34] W.L. Courtney, 'Books of the Day – Politics and passion', *The Daily Telegraph*, 25 September 1896, p.4

and he discovers to his surprise that 'these heavenly, exquisite things that some men talk of — this sympathy, and purity, and sweetness — were true!'[35] However, although a woman's 'heavenly' influence challenges his presuppositions about reforming labour laws, he is unable to assimilate it into a coherent philosophy. Therefore, 'in matters that concerned the Bill before Parliament, *her* influence, helped by the power of an expanding mind, had developed in him that fatal capacity for sympathy, for the double-seeing of compromise' that leads to internal turmoil and disintegration.[36] His new emotional and ethical insight proves to be 'fatal' in the public sphere, where his party consider him a traitor, and psychologically damaging in the domestic sphere, where the triviality of his attachment to his shallow wife is exposed. The reader is therefore confronted by the negative implications for Tressady of Marcella's admirable idealism. Her ethical sympathy with exploited workers is successful in promoting the 'double-seeing of compromise' in Parliament, a 'double-seeing' that underpins the dialogism of the novel itself, but one that leads to tragedy. Hence, as the novel puts that sympathy to the test, the question of readers' reactions to Tressady's travails comes to the fore.

Therefore, complex interpretative questions confront readers as they experience Marcella's remorse on realising the damage George's feelings for her have created, and share George's confusion as he battles with his wife. The potentially uplifting jostles with the disturbing. How far could Tressady's 'new self' ever have been a sustainable holistic one? Do Marcella's faults — she has to confess to Raeburn, her husband, she used her feminine charms carelessly — mitigate against the value of her philosophy? Is Tresssady's death in the pit, a heroic self-sacrifice, an indicator of his new-found humanity? Is his vision of Marcella, as he dies, a transfiguring epiphany or a mere hallucination? The novel therefore aimed to stimulate sympathetic reading experiences that were more challenging and complex than most critics imagined possible. The very diversity of contemporary reviews demonstrates the confusion often felt by critics — not helped by the short time many had to read the novel and commit their views to print. One review, noting Marcella's 'deep and impassioned note of sympathy […] with the unredressed grievances of the dim, inarticulate masses', deemed her 'noble […] inspired by love and sympathy to acts of the most difficult and daring self-sacrifice.[37] However, *The Graphic* found Marcella 'too perfect for ordinary recognition', while the feminist *Woman's Signal* deemed her 'more repellent than the designedly contemptible characters'.[38] Similarly, some reviewers felt that 'Sir George bravely

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[35] Mrs Humphry Ward, *Sir George Tressady* (London: Smith, Elder, 1896), p.426.
[36] Ward, *Tressady*, p.363.
[37] *The Leeds Mercury*, 25 September 1896, p.5.
[38] '*Marcella* Continued', *The Graphic*, 3 October 1896, p.427; 'Mrs Humphry Ward's New Novel', *The Woman's Signal*, 10 December 1896, pp.369–71 (p.369). For fuller texts of contrasting reviews of *Sir George Tressady* debating its political content and purpose, see appendix A, section 2 e), f), and g).

descends the pit with the rescue party, and meets his death like a hero' or that **'**the spectacle of his unhesitating heroism stands in such magnificent contrast to the life maimed by his weakness and lack of self-confidence'.[39] Others, however, found the 'highly worked up ending of the novel, in which every point of pathos bears the stamp of calculation […] theatrical' or even 'cruel […] with what we cannot but think an inconsequent, an arbitrary, and we will even say a perverse, harshness of conception'.[40]

To understand what Ward hoped readers, if not critics, would be able to comprehend one must turn to the nuanced demands of the text. The tone of the description of Tressady's final moments is illuminating here:

> And while he listened, from the eternal darkness about him, dim tragic forms would break, in a faltering procession — men or young boys, burnt and marred and slain like himself — turning to him faces he remembered. It was as though the scorn for pity he had once flung at Marcella Maxwell had been but the fruit of some obscure and shrinking foresight that he himself should die drowned and lost in pity; for as he waited for death his soul seemed to sink into the suffering of the world, as a spent swimmer sinks into the wave.[41]

It is striking that Tressady should be thinking of others, his miners, 'burnt and marred and slain like himself', as he is dying. Yet any hint of heroism is qualified by the implication that his erstwhile 'scorn for pity' means that he is being punished by the 'suffering of the world' as he sinks like a 'spent swimmer'. The pity Tressady is 'lost in' is surely as much for himself as for his fellow victims. The darkness around is now 'eternal' so we cannot entirely escape hints of damnation. On the other hand, he is in some sense almost Christ-like in embracing the 'suffering of the world' as he sinks below the metaphoric waves. That this final passage of the book was intended to be experienced as challenging and overwhelming is suggested by Ward's later Westmoreland edition introduction:

> I can still recall, not without shrinking, the two or three summer days during which I lived absorbed in it, alone in the country with my work, and can still remember the moment when I laid down the pen, and escaped into the June garden, trying to still — between mockery and tears — the tumult of feeling in which it left me.[42]

Hence, one can conclude that the reader too was not only being invited to partake in 'the tumult of feeling' and of ideas, but to be torn between the positive and negative connotations of their phrasing. This balancing act between tragedy and transcendence — and Ward's use of the term 'mockery' underlines the ambiguity of its seriousness — continues to the very last line. On the

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[39] 'Mrs Ward's New Novel (published today)', *The Dundee Advertiser*, 25 September 1896, p.7; Douglas Sladen, 'A New Book by Mrs Humphry Ward', *The Queen*, 10 October 1896, pp.700–01.
[40] *The Graphic*, 3 October 1896, p.427; 'The Novel of the Day — *Sir George Tressady'*, *The Newcastle Daily Chronicle*, 16 November 1896, p.6.
[41] Ward, *Tressady*, p.570.
[42] *The Writings of Mrs Humphry Ward,* vol VII: *Sir George Tressady*, p.x.

final page, Tressady has a vision of a smiling Marcella taking his hand with 'sweetness in her dark eyes' but the incandescence that surrounds him is described as 'blinding, featureless light'.[43] The value of the comfort and compassion of Marcella's sympathy comes to the fore, but the connotations of 'blinding' and 'featureless' are less auspicious. The intention is surely not to undermine the sympathy which has been the fundamental motivation of both Marcella's and Ward's own desire for social reform, but to show that it comes, sometimes, at a heavy price. The yoking of opposites here is entirely at one with the content, form, and aesthetics of the novel as a whole — questions rather than easy answers are left for readers to contemplate.

Ward's aesthetic concerns here, to create a novel where the reader is asked to stay alert to every nuance, and association, to enter into its interrogative, reflective spirit, and the numinous but hallucinatory quality of its close, were ones that demanded that the reader should make up their own minds about the issues at stake. Above all, she wanted readers that would respond to the novel form as an emotionally heightened work of art out of which its engagement with the everyday world and its relevance for the public sphere would grow. This is evident in a letter Ward wrote to her publisher, George Smith, in October 1896. In this she expressed irritation at the wrong impression given by 'hostile reviews' which were 'taking the line that the book is a pamphlet and not a story'. For example, the *Evening Standard*'s damning verdict had been that the novel was 'too purposeful — the great novels of genius have been destitute of purpose'.[44] In contravention of such accusations of didacticism Ward insisted that 'the persons of the story were everything to me, and the framework — comparatively — nothing'. She went on to declare it 'absurd' to 'suppose that I chose my people to illustrate *anything,* and carried them through with this cold intellectual motive'. If her irritation here perhaps stimulated her to over-emphasize one side of the equation, it was because she wanted ideas and conflict to arise naturally from her characters, and their fervently held beliefs. If her characters were not mere illustrations, this was because the debate she wished the reader to engage in would only work if 'the persons of the story' took precedence over the 'framework' — a 'cold' embodiment of them would thwart any 'intellectual motive' and significance that would then arise. As she went on to admit 'I was brought up with people in whom the strongest emotions of life were generally combined with some intellectual end, and I suppose this reflects itself in the books.'[45] She is here groping to express the sense of a dialectic of ideas and humanist, aesthetic form in which intellect and emotion meld together. She was walking a knife edge, wanting her novel to reach beyond the

[43] Ward, *Tressady*, (Smith, Elder), p.571.
[44] 'Mrs Humphry Ward's New Novel', *London Evening Standard*, 25 September 1896, p.6.
[45] Letter from Mary Ward to George Smith, 6 October 1896, MHWP, 2.1. For the fuller text of Ward's response to critics' perceptions of 'fiction with a purpose' or a 'pamphlet', see Appendix A section 2 i).

confines of the 'purposeful' to stimulate interrogative, sympathetic reading experiences — ones responding to heightened representation of human conundrums and requiring interpretation of the intellectual conflict of her time. Ultimately Ward hoped the 'imaginative truth and imaginative beauty' of her fiction would speak to readers who, unlike many critics, would respond to the novel's depiction of the difficulties faced on the path to social reform.

Ward's Readers' Dialogical Reading Experiences

Remaining empirical evidence — the letters Ward received from a variety of readers, some completely unknown to her, others powerful figures or acquaintances she wished to influence by sending them copies of her novels — demonstrates that many did indeed respond to her fiction with greater understanding than most critics. The readers' responses examined in this section demonstrate in particular the engaged intellectual side of the sympathetic reading experience that Ward aspired to stimulate. Of course, as has been stated earlier, this evidence only extends as far as middle- and upper-class circles — ones with which she particularly wished to engage. Moreover, one must also say that the ideal reader as envisaged by Ward's texts did not, and perhaps could not, exist. Even Mandell Creighton had to be persuaded on occasion as to the merits of her characters. At one point the author argued with him that his reading was incomplete and his complaint about the over-assertive Marcella should acknowledge that a 'chit' or 'ugly duckling' had become a 'swan' by the end of the book.[46] Ward's readers also sometimes found evidence in her books to support their existing political views rather than to challenge them. However, it is fair to say that often readers' views were deepened by the reading experience and that her books seemed to be speaking for as well as to them — giving form to their own thoughts. For others, who did not always agree with the characters' arguments or beliefs, the novels' emotional power still spoke to them and demanded a response. This section analyses readers' responses to three of Ward's novels including *David Grieve* and the two devoted to Marcella, analysed in chapter two and above.

In her 1909 Westmoreland edition introduction to *David Grieve* Ward noted how the many 'letters it has brought me, both at the time of its publication and since, have been among those from which a story-teller draws a kind of troubled joy, so far above his desserts they seem to be'.[47] Some of those letters validated her initial, partial move to a more dialogical fiction.

[46] Letter from Mary Ward to Mandell Creighton, 20 December 1893, MHWP, 29.13.
[47] *The Writings of Mrs Humphry Ward*, vol III: *David Grieve*, p.xxxvi.

Thomas Huxley wrote to praise 'the Parisian episode of David's life' where his free-love escapade with an artist brings both joy and despair, and near suicide: 'It is alive — every word of it — and without note or comment produces its ethical effect after the manner of that "gifted authoress", Dame Nature, who never moralizes'. Like Mandell Creighton, he felt that elsewhere the book was more overtly didactic, declaring 'I should have liked the rest to be in the same vein'.[48] He preferred the section where she was following Creighton's preference for letting human 'nature' speak for itself. Other readers too praised the book's less overt didacticism. For example, the Unitarian minister Brooke Herford wrote to praise 'the way in which, with absolute absence of the most didactic element, you have in wonderful *life-development'* brought out the moral benefits of David's dutiful marriage.[49] On his return from Paris to Manchester, David marries out of a sense of obligation a young woman who has helped him protect his book-selling business. Despite her comparative superficiality and lack of education, the couple eventually form a mutually uplifting bond as his wife faces a terminal illness. For Herford, the tension between an authorial point of view on the emotional and ethical benefits of marriage and the convincing nature of the 'life development' the novel sought to capture was a successful one — albeit his comments imply that the novel reflected his existing thinking.

Retrospectively Ward saw her early fiction as possessing 'representative and pioneering force; […] to some extent, the generation in which it appeared had spoken through it'. Here readers' responses to a dialogical fiction are almost part of the creative process since 'the public in a sense cooperates in the book. […] unconsciously lend it their own thoughts, the passion of their own assents and denials'.[50] Crucially, the 'cooperation' involved in the 'suggestive' nature of the book is conceived as accommodating both acceptance and 'antagonism'. We can see this too in the responses to *David Grieve,* some readers valuing the novel despite disagreeing with its religious stance. The writer Mary Darmesteter, for example, found David's faith 'dubious', '"truths" of which one's inmost soul is unconvinced', but she felt it raised an important ethical question — how to ordain 'worthily the moral life of a nation without some enforced religious standard'.[51] Despite his contrasting inability to 'follow you and [David] to all the conclusions arrived', the more orthodox C.J. Robinson was stimulated by the book's 'shadows and questionings and struggles — mental and spiritual'. Here we see the combination of 'assents and

[48] Letter from Thomas Henry Huxley to Mary Ward, 1 July 1892, MHWP, 30.16.
[49] Letter from Brooke Herford to Mary Ward [TSU extract], 24 March 1892, Mrs Humphry Ward Collection III, Correspondence No. 22, Balliol College Archives and Manuscripts, Oxford [henceforward referenced as BCA]. For a fuller text of Herford's engaged response to *David Grieve,* see Appendix A, section 4 a).
[50] *The Writings of Mrs Humphry Ward*, with introductions by the author, vol I: *Robert Elsmere*, vol 1 (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1909), p.xxix.
[51] Letter from Mary Darmesteter to Mary Ward, 27 January 1892, BCA, Correspondence No. 16.

denials' in dialogue with Ward's text. Ward's correspondents therefore responded positively to a fictional mode capturing, as the author put it in her preface, 'the drama of human existence about me' and 'the ideas which torture and divide' through which 'throbs the wish "to reform the world"'.[52]

The extent to which such dialogical reading experiences helped some readers, including some of the movers and shakers of the day, to develop their own political thinking about social reform is best illustrated by turning to responses to *Marcella* and the more consistently dialogical *Sir George Tressady*.[53] Sometimes eminent figures contacted Ward unbidden, such as the American economist and author of *Principles of Social Economics* (1891), George Gunton. He was seeking for a middle way between Marx, the single land taxer Henry George, and Adam Smith, and took Ward's political analysis immensely seriously. After reading *Marcella* in 1894, he wrote to her praising 'the development of [the heroine's] mind toward the social problem' and saying he 'would give a good deal to have the history of the next twenty-five years of her life' — particularly concerning what she would do for the peasants on her estate. It is almost as if he is not reading a novel but examining a doctoral dissertation. Being a student himself of the 'labour problem', he declared:

> if socialism will not do it, the story needs to be told what will; how this improvement is to be accomplished which if it is to come at all must come through the evolution of character, and the capacity for the labourers to take, and keep, and use for themselves, and so become a permanently increasing part of the consumers of the products of civilisation without violence or charity […].[54]

He therefore requested 'the favour of an interview before I return to America' to discuss these matters further. Clearly, for him, what might happen next to Marcella could throw light on serious and contentious economic issues. If this was fiction envisaged as potential economic treatise rather than art — 'the story needs to be told' of how 'improvement' of class mobility 'is to be accomplished' — it was one where the economist felt he would benefit from the novelist's expertise. In particular, he wanted to explore how 'the evolution of character' might be brought about by consultation with the creator of fictional characters. It is the capacity of a yet unwritten novel to influence Gunton's thinking on turning 'labourers' into economically active 'consumers' which is so striking here. Sadly, no record of their meeting exists, but one suspects that Ward would have been as much interested in Gunton's questions as his answers. The ability of Ward's

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[52] *The Writings of Mrs Humphry Ward*, vol III: *David Grieve*, pp.xxii, xxi, xix.
[53] The term 'movers and shakers' was first used by Arthur O' Shaughnessy in his poem 'Ode' (1874) to describe society's powerful, active, and influential individuals.
[54] Letter from George Gunton to Mrs Humphry Ward, 27 July 1894, HWMP, 30.17. For fuller texts of key letters responding to the intellectual and emotional content of *Marcella*, see Appendix A, section 4 b), c), d) and e).

fiction to generate stimulating political debate was not in doubt however. Gunton was surely one of those readers who prompted Ward to write 'something more about Marcella'.

For the English Liberal politician and journalist Harold Spender, the internal debate the novel generated was less clear and more anxious. He wrote to Ward in July 1894 to say that the novel 'appeals to me because I have grappled with Marcella's problem of trying to solve a moral problem by material weapons. He was worried about 'the vast multitude of readers' who 'still split up the moral and the material and rigidly relegate politics and the social problem to the latter'. So, the importance of strong character in being able to rise above poverty could not be ignored, but neither could the solution of the more materialist Fabians who used 'a mixture of sentiment in action and realism in talk'. The question of where the balance lay was clearly an agonised one for he went on to say:

> my life is one eternal dialectical conflict between the material and moral sides of the social problem. I have been taught by the Barnetts and others to think the moral side 'character' — everything; but I have been driven by experience to admit in politics and literature the large part — not always a bad part — played by intellect without character.[55]

Spender had in mind 'the value of the somewhat irritating brusquerie of the Fabians' which should not be discounted, just as the contributions of Samuel Barnett's Toynbee Hall in encouraging self-help should not be over-rated**.** The theory of the importance of 'character' was doing battle with his own experience of what could be achieved by those prioritising the 'material' and 'intellect' over the 'moral'. Hallin's voicing of Arnold Toynbee's attempted combination of the spiritual and materialist, individualist and collective, provide no final answer since Spender's 'dialectical conflict' about solutions to the 'social problem' remain. He fears that 'you rather under-rate the value' of the Fabians, drawing on his own experience of being 'often annoyed and offended' when collaborating with them — 'but at the end I find myself infinitely better for the work'. Hence stimulated by the novel's thinking, he outlines at length an internal intellectual and psychological conflict still in the process of resolution. Unlike George Gunton's response to the novel, his reading experience was of a useful but painful encapsulation of a troubling quandary, the identification of issues that he must continue to grapple with.

It would be wrong however to over-emphasize the novel's success in stimulating readers to re-consider their views. Sometimes, it seems to have served to deepen existing thinking. Boston philanthropist, housing provider and activist for the urban poor, Alice N. Lincoln wrote to the author 'because I believe an author must always be glad to know that she has spoken truth; the truth which reaches others' hearts. […] You touch a chord to which every worker among the

[55] Letter from Harold Spender to Mrs Humphry Ward, 27 July 1894, HWMP, 30. 17.

poor must respond'. Recording her own burning indignation at the state of tenements in her own city**,** she identified with Marcella's experience, while working as a district nurse, of indifference to social problems. Lincoln had also encountered an incompetent, unprincipled doctor who in her case, failing to treat a child for burns, claimed 'humanity don't pay!'[56] So for her, it was the heightened reality of fiction that registered: 'even such struggles as Marcella had with public matters are real'. Emotional satisfaction came from reading fiction that was socially useful because it identified the 'real' that could not be ignored — reading it was 'a pleasure which is a benefit as well'. If this was not quite a dialogue with the issues that the novel raised, there is a clear sense of this reader's confidence in her own ethical philosophy having been bolstered. Confirmation of following the right political interventionist path was this reader's emotional experience of reading a novel that spoke to the issues of the day. Hence her urge to write 'in an attempt to express my gratitude'. Her thinking had been justified and reinvigorated by feeling and thinking with Marcella about the human impact of political ideologies.

Mary J. Eastman, too felt it necessary to write from Washington despite the 'impertinence' and 'intrusiveness of too enthusiastic readers' to express her 'most hearty admiration and gratitude':

> I especially rejoice in the name of all advancing womanhood that someone has at last drawn the line between that progress which is a vital growth and the kangaroo leaps that take one out of oneself perhaps, but also out of all the belongings of domestic and social status that it seems to me should be used as leverage, rather than thrown away as impediments.[57]

This reader felt that the novel's inter-penetration of private and public spheres had achieved the right balance between women's progress for a greater role in society and retaining the influence evolution from a 'domestic' base might bring. Rather than interpret Marcella as a potentially menacing New Woman, Eastman considered the 'swan' that Marcella became as exhibiting the benefits of building on women's traditional spheres of operation. If Eastman's somewhat conservative opinions on gender were not challenged by the novel, then they were deepened by consideration of having watched in the heroine 'the development of a rich and generous character'. However, unlike the critic W.L Courtney she did not see Marcella's interventions as 'an intolerable intrusion into the masculine domain, a mournful instance of the impertinent restlessness of the "eternal feminine"'.[58] Rather, Marcella's 'intrusion' causes her to reflect on 'the vital and vulnerable point of much of our so-called charitable work', in highlighting 'the difficulty of rendering direct and effective personal service to those far below one's own social

[56] Letter from Alice N. Lincoln to Mrs Humphry Ward, 5 August 1894, HWMP, 30.17.
[57] Letter from Mary J. Eastman to Mrs Humphry Ward, 15 October 1894, HWMP, 30.17.
[58] W.L. Courtney, *The Feminine Note in Fiction* (London: Chapman & Hall, 1904), p.16.

and intellectual standing'. However difficult, human contact across the class divide must continue to be made with 'Jones helping Smith on the step just below or beside him, and even ready to give a prop to Brown on the step above, who in his turn reaches out a friendly hand to Jones'. The novel prompted her comprehension of a communal network where self-help and 'character' blend with the interventionist impulse to enrich the lives of individuals and of society itself. Reading the novel had encouraged her to express her own thoughts about how these potentially conflicting elements in contemporary philanthropy, as analysed in chapter two, could be brought together.

Marcella's fate engaged not only those with conservative instincts but also spoke to those on the more radical wing of politics. J.W. Mackail, biographer of William Morris, thanked Ward for sending him a copy of *Sir George Tressady,* which he had read 'with great interest and pleasure'. Noting that she had re-drawn the parliamentary party-political map in order to further her novel's philosophical debate, he went on to ponder whether 'Socialism is becoming more and more extra-Parliamentarian in its methods'. His hope was that the debate in Ward's novel might be followed by 'remedial legislation (however far it may represent a concession to Socialist principles)' that 'may or may not be contentious but by which Governments do not in either case stand or fall'.[59] If this is not a vision of potential political consensus, perhaps it is a more positive version of Tressady's 'double-seeing of compromise' — 'remedial' legislation not averse to collectivist ideas may be possible. For Mackail himself, 'this change (if it be a real one) makes the conduct of life for the convinced Socialist an easier thing than it was half a dozen years ago'. The implication was that her novel might play its part in increasing awareness of such possibilities.

This was even more explicitly the case with the Fabian activist, Beatrice Webb's reaction on receiving the author's gift of the book. A friend of Mandell Creighton's wife Louise, Webb praised *Sir George Tressady*'s useful awareness-raising function. Webb noted the 'indescribable power of making your readers sympathise with all your characters', but her reaction was primarily that of a 'strict utilitarian':

> From this point of view it is the most useful bit of work that has been done for many a long day. You have managed to give the arguments for and against factory legislation and a fixed standard of life with admirable lucidity and picturesqueness — in a way that will make them comprehensible to the ordinary person without any technical knowledge. I especially admire your real intellectual impartiality and capacity to give the best arguments on both sides, though naturally I am glad to see that your sympathy is on the whole with us on these questions.[60]

[59] Letter from J.W. Mackail to Mrs Humphry Ward, 28 September 1896, HWMP, 31.1.
[60] Letter from Beatrice Webb to Mrs Humphry Ward, [undated 1896], HWMP, 31.1. For a fuller text of Webb's utilitarian response to *Sir George Tressady,* see Appendix A, Section 4 f).

Here we see support for the balancing act that Ward was attempting between an ethical sympathy that raised awareness of injustice and of the need for political change and a relative 'impartiality' which could give voice to 'the best arguments on both sides'. This in itself constituted for Webb a most 'useful bit of work' for educational purposes that could supplement her own campaigning, lecturing, and writing. Once again, the work was being evaluated in the dreaded terms of a 'treatise' but at least, since the issues it raised were made 'comprehensible' via sympathetic characters, the prospect is that the novel might be more beneficial than arguments in non-fiction form.

If readers such as George Gunton and Beatrice Webb conceived of dialogism in 'utilitarian' fiction in slightly different ways to Ward, then at least they found her exposition of political problems both helpful and potentially influential. In addition, both Mary Eastman and Alice Lincoln found that Marcella's 'intrusion' into the male sphere of action a helpful corrective. Like Webb they saw her story as a 'useful bit of work' that could influence public opinion in stimulating thought about the way forward for philanthropy. However, such readers did not go so far as the commentator J. Stuart Walters who argued that *Marcella*'s and *Sir George Tressady*'s depiction of urban squalor and poor village sanitation generated a 'flood of sympathy' in the middle classes which:

> sent hundreds into the ranks of the Fabian Socialists, who, with a fresh influx of financial and moral support, were thus able to redouble their activities and so to influence the great army of 'wobblers' in favour of social reform.[61]

No evidence remains to suggest that this happened. Therefore, if his claim seems exaggerated, then Ward's readers' responses seem rather to envisage a broader, more indirect kind of motivational social influence arising from Ward's fiction of ideas — one that might inform, if not drive, a spirit of political change. As we saw in the last chapter, Ward saw *Marcella* as reflecting and interrogating 'collectivist ideas' which 'were making way in the educated middle class'. These she commented had left a 'hidden deposit which perhaps only now in these latest years — I write while Mr. Lloyd George's Budget of 1909 is pursuing its tempestuous way through the House of Commons — is revealing its presence and effect'.[62] Perhaps the unspoken thought here is that the novel too might have played a part, however small, of 'revealing' political ideas that later had a 'presence and effect'.

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[61] J Stuart Walters, *Mrs. Humphry Ward: Her Work and Influence* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner, 1912), pp.100, 154.
[62] *The Writings of Mrs Humphry Ward*, with introductions by the author, vol V: *Marcella*, vol 1 (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1910), p.xviii.

The role of Ward's dialogical fiction and its encouragement of political debate can therefore perhaps be better evaluated in relation to Habermas's seminal theory concerning the breakdown of the public sphere. More specifically Ward was implicitly attempting, I would contend, through a demanding but accessible popular fiction, to recreate a bourgeois, democratic public sphere that Habermas believes was lost in the course of the nineteenth century. Habermas conceives of the age of Enlightenment as inclusive, with the democratic involvement of a critical middle-class public in the public sphere. The problem of nineteenth-century liberalism then was that it was more 'concerned with conflict management' and emphasized 'the dangers of public opinion and the importance of defending individual liberties from the tyranny of the majority'. In this way, 'the economic realm and the domestic sphere became unhinged from one another' and the domestic realm became a 'hollowed out' realm of privacy.[63] Ward's 'criticism of life' can therefore be considered as returning to Habermas's description of the ideals of an earlier age when the 'literary public sphere' based 'in the private realms of intimacy' helped to constitute a 'bourgeois public sphere' of 'private people coming together as a public'. This facilitated 'an erasure of status: as art and literature were […] in principle, accessible to all'.[64] If 'erasure of status' was not fully possible in a fiction reflecting middle- and upper-class concerns, then it could at least play its part in changing attitudes towards class barriers — a task that Benjamin Jowett had pointed out to her was essential for the novel to attempt. It must be stated that the extent to which Habermas's idealization of eighteenth-century attitudes is historically accurate has been debated. However, it serves here as a useful theoretical model against which to interpret the cultural offer underpinning the reading experience offered by Ward's fiction and the extent to which it sought to further democratic developments.[65] It was not approaching Habermas's concept of *entgegenkommende Lebensformen* (anticipatory, more democratic, and egalitarian forms of social life) that chapter two argued was largely true of Ward's later philanthropy. However, the fiction's forum for debate was an invaluable precursor to any subsequent wider public transformation.

To some extent, as has been argued in chapter one, Ward built on the earlier nineteenth-century fictional tradition identified by Brigid Lowe, which deconstructed 'separate-spheres' ideology and demolished barriers between the public world of action and the private world of

[63] Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, trans. by T. Burger (Cambridge: Polity, 1989 [1962]), pp.133–34, 152, 157.
[64] Habermas, pp.39–41.
[65] For example, Jon P. Klancher, *The Making of English Reading Audiences 1790–1832* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1987), p.15 thinks the public sphere was deeply compromised from the start; Luke Goode, *Jürgen Habermas: Democracy and the Public Sphere* (London: Pluto Press, 2005), p.4 argues that Habermas's theory should not be used to provide a nostalgic history.

ethics. Their fiction, says Lowe, used 'sympathy as a weapon, pitted against individualism, victimisation and inequality, and as a force capable of imagining and realising a better future'.[66] However, Ward was doing so more explicitly, the debate of contentious public issues emerging directly from, in Habermas's terms, an influential 'domestic' power base penetrating the 'economic realm'. This was exactly what Mary Eastman considered to be *Marcella*'s achievement too. Ward did so in a competitive and conflicted literary marketplace in which the place of women writers and the effects of popular literature were matters of concern to many male arbiters of taste. In response, Ward sought to create an intellectually respectable, ungendered popular fiction that appealed to both men and women — sympathetically responsive readers willing to debate the path of social reform. In particular, she posed questions about the balance needed between classic liberal individualism and new Liberal or socialist collectivism, questions which enervated people such as George Gunton and Harold Spender. Even more politically partisan readers, such as Beatrice Webb, J.W. Mackail and Alice Lincoln, considered Ward's 'criticism of life' capable of creating a common literary space with a valuable politically educational role.

Of course, the influence of the debate this generated had its limits. Since Ward's fiction did indeed remain 'bourgeois' as regards its values and primary target audience, its ethics and exploration of sympathy did not necessarily directly influence a wider audience. As has been pointed out at the beginning of this chapter, this was a fiction in which great tension existed between desire for popularity and unwillingness to deliver on anything but its own terms. Her works' very nature and the social milieu which they largely reflected put access to her public forum of debate in danger of being somewhat circumscribed. Despite this, the readers' responses to Ward's fiction analysed above suggest that it still prompted useful debate. They suggest that it may have played a part, the extent of which it is now hard to gauge, in informing opinion-making and decision-taking as to how wider democratic involvement in public life could be achieved. It may therefore have had the indirect influence on the public realm that Beatrice Webb, among others, hoped for.

Ward's Readers' Sympathetic Reading Experiences

Ward's fiction moved beyond Habermas, however, in believing that an intellectually challenging forum for public debate required the provision of aesthetically satisfying and emotionally

[66] Brigid Lowe, *Victorian Fiction and the Insights of Sympathy: An Alternative to the Hermeneutics of Suspicion* (London: Anthem Press, 2007), p.14.

engaging reading experiences. The extent to which readers found the humanity and the urgency of Ward's exploration of political ideas and ethical dilemmas moving as well as thought-provoking, emotionally engaging, and cognitive, is the concern of this final section. It leads on to a contribution to current critical debate about the wider significance, or otherwise, of the sympathy aroused by reading.

Chapter one identified the similarities as well as the differences between Ward's and Marie Corelli's understanding of sympathy. Both wished to engender in readers deeply sympathetic relationships with their texts and both regarded the celebrity author interview with distaste, wanting their novels to speak for themselves. Corelli was of course more extreme in envisaging that sympathy should engender the reader's complete trust in the author, such that the texts would direct their thoughts and feelings. Corelli's readers' rather more diverse, often either highly supportive or immensely critical, reactions will be examined in chapter five. Ward's more down-to-earth, if still idealistic, version of Corelli's bond with readers she described as a 'wave of sympathy which lifted' *Robert Elsmere* and which she hoped would lift *David Grieve* 'to carry it also into prosperous seas'.[67] The hope was that the subtle 'sympathy and understanding' of those circles who intuited what her fiction was about would ripple outwards. Moreover, as we have seen earlier, Ward envisaged that 'when the particular ideas put forward have a high degree of life and significance for a great many people, the public in a sense cooperates in the book'. Indeed, 'the reader's eager sympathy' meant that they 'unconsciously lend it their own thoughts, the passion of their own assents and denials'. Both kinds of emotionally driven responses were part of the process in which the reader 'completes the effort of the writer'. For the readers' responses to 'stir, and quicken, and encourage' the author, 'thoughts' and 'passion' must first have been stimulated similarly in readers, unleashing interactive relationships to the text.[68] Readers' co-operation resulted from the intersection of heightened emotions and thinking.

Indeed, some readers of *David Grieve* saluted the novel's seeming ability to focus and reflect their own thoughts and emotions. The Rev. Henry Gow found the book 'helpful', writing:

> I only wish I could tell you how your books help me; the way in which they voice dim feelings that we hardly know we possess until they are expressed by someone else and so strengthen them and increase our self-knowledge.[69]

Drawing out 'dim feelings' and increasing 'self-knowledge' encapsulates the effectiveness of Ward's novel to both 'picture the mind of the time', as Jowett had put it, and to express its emotional impact. Many readers stressed the novel's emotional punch. The Irish novelist Emily

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[67] *The Writings of Mrs Humphry Ward*, vol III: *David Grieve*, pp.xxii–xxiii.
[68] *The Writings of Mrs Humphry Ward*, vol I: *Robert Elsmere*, p.xxix.
[69] Letter from Henry Gow to Mary Ward, 16 March 1892 [TSU extract], BCA, Correspondence No. 21.

Lawless's wrote to say that she was '*enormously* impressed', that the 'most striking and powerful' passages about David's youth 'had 'quite carried me off my feet' and the 'brilliant audacity' of her conception of his wild, amoral sister' took me utterly by surprise'.[70] Helen Child's acknowledgment of the book's emotional tenor indicated its potentially wider implication. In praising the book's 'growth in power, in variety and in the dramatic faculty' compared to its predecessor, she concluded it was a 'beautiful and noble book' which 'has stirred me deeply', having closed it with 'a feeling of awe'.[71] Following somewhat similar lines, the Unitarian minister Brooke Herford noted 'how very deeply it has stirred and touched me', and praised the 'white-hot moral power' of passages such as those dealing with David's deprived, orphaned childhood. It is clear that for Herford, like Helen Child, a vibrant, emotionally stimulating reading experience was key to its moral and intellectual engagement. Even those who were opposed to Ward's radical theology, expounded in David's journal entries at the end, were touched by the book's urgent tenor. The Reverend C.J. Robinson recorded that 'I cannot follow you and him to all the conclusions arrived at', but was moved by the 'yearning after holiness, truth and love' and its plumbing of 'deep things of the soul'.[72] The saintly writer and philanthropist Felicia Skene found reading the protagonist's radical creed 'intensely painful' but praised a 'wonderfully powerful book' with the 'revelation' of the free love episode and its 'marvellous insight into human passions', deeming that 'no one can take it up without being enthralled by it to the end'.[73]

To understand more fully the feeling of 'awe' that Helen Child referred to, one can look to one particularly emotionally engaged reader, the New England novelist, Sarah Orne Jewett. She met Ward on a visit to Europe in 1892 and corresponded with her until her death in 1909. In one letter, she recorded that her encounter with *Sir George Tressady* had been an overwhelming one. She wrote to say 'how full of rejoicing my heart is to think that now, in this very day, so great a story has been written, so *beautiful* a story', adding 'it has the inevitable feeling of the best art of all to which I can but reach with all my heart — and thank you here with deepest gratitude'.[74] That her sophisticated reading experience was one in which ideas were expressed through 'feeling', and where the union of opposing ideas and forces were stimulating and 'beautiful' is suggested by her feedback on Ward's subsequent novels.

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[70] Letter from Emily Lawless, [1892], MHWP, 30.16.
[71] Letter from Helen M.C. Child to Mary Ward, 7 March 1892 [TSU extract with MS note], BCA, Correspondence No. 15.
[72] Letter from Rev. C.J. Robinson to Mary Ward, 7 August 1892 [TSU extract], BCA, Correspondence No. 33.
[73] Letter from F.M.F. Skene to Mary Ward, 7 November 1892 [TSU copy], BCA, Correspondence No. 35.
[74] Letter from Sarah Orne Jewett to Mary Ward, 7 July 1896, Thomas Humphry Ward Collection (MS-4409), 2.4, Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas at Austin [henceforth referenced as THWC]. For fuller texts of Jewett's ecstatic responses to Ward's fiction, see Appendix A, Section 4 g) and h).

Here, one can say that for Jewett the reading experience offered by Ward's fiction was a sublime one. The ending of *The Marriage of William Ashe* (1905), where Ashe searches for his errant and ailing wife, touched her particularly. Just before their tender reunion and her death, Ashe receives, in the same Simplon Pass where Wordsworth had the epiphany recorded in *The Prelude*, his own visionary insight into 'dying to live'. This, chapter one has shown to be at the heart of Ward's ethics of sympathy, reiterated in Marcella's surrender of 'self' and Eleanor's defeat of ego. For Jewett, 'these last chapters seemed to me to lift themselves into a beautiful transfiguration — a glory of shining truth', adding 'I cannot say how wonderfully you did all these! It reaches a great height […] and you and I know that books bring us closer than letters ever can, when they reveal a writer's heart like this'.[75] There are echoes here of Corelli's idea of the author speaking from her own heart to the heart of readers, although one must acknowledge that Jewett did actually know Ward personally and might perhaps have baulked at Corelli's assumptions about direct communication with unknown readers. However, there is no mistaking the genuineness of her continuing ecstatic encounter with Ward's novels. Of *Diana Mallory* (1908) she declared: 'My heart is full of your story, my dear friend', explaining 'I have been reading again and again with real admiration of your most noble and beautiful gifts, — the gifts of heaven — of sympathy and feeling and insight above all'.[76] The phrase 'gifts of heaven' suggests that the novels were transporting her to an alternative higher universe. Indeed, one can conclude that the author's feeling for her characters is deemed to become, in a transubstantiation hovering between the religious and the secular, the reader's sympathy for what the author had achieved. Since words like 'truth' and 'lesson' also feature in Jewett's letters, it is clear that her experience of transcendence linked emotional identification with fictional characters, dialogical engagement with the fiction's ideas, and aesthetic appreciation. This she praised as 'the best art of all'.[77] The wider significance of these aspects of readers' sympathetic reading experiences now requires further examination.

Reactions to Ward's fiction, I believe, can tell us much about the nature and effect of sympathy arising from reading fiction. To contextualise my argument, the above empirical analysis of the nature of readers' responses must now be placed within a larger and somewhat contentious theoretical debate. At one end of the spectrum are those who argue for reading's potential to impact practically on the public sphere. For example, the moral philosopher Martha Nussbaum associates novel reading, particularly of social problem fiction such as Dickens's *Hard*

[75] Letter from Sarah Orne Jewett to Mary Ward, 18 April 1905, MHWP, 31.3.
[76] Letter from Sarah Orne Jewett to Dorothy and Mary Ward, 1 October 1908, in *Letters of Sarah Orne Jewett*, ed. by Annie Fields (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1911), pp.240–41.
[77] Letter from Sarah Orne Jewett to Mary Ward, 7 July 1896, THWC, 2.4.

Times (1854), with an emotional connection that leads to civic virtue and liberal humanitarianism. She envisages a deep connection between Dickensian '"fancy" and democratic equality' and claims that fiction can 'promote identification and sympathy in the reader' in ways that directly impact beliefs and behaviour — it 'generally constructs empathy and compassion in ways highly relevant to citizenship'.[78] For example, the ability of fiction-reading to foster mutual understanding could be of great use to jurors or judges. She esteems the cognitive role of the emotions and their 'intelligent responses to the perception of value' which makes them 'part and parcel of the system of ethical reasoning'.[79] In particular, 'the emotion of compassion' is deemed 'crucial for motivating and sustaining altruistic action and egalitarian institutions', rooted as it often is in 'narratives of struggle'.[80] At the other end of the spectrum, we find critics like Sophie Ratcliffe who, as chapter one has discussed, reject the fuzzy 'vogue for empathy' and re-define sympathy in the light of cognitive philosophy.[81] In the middle, critics such as Suzanne Keen take a more empirical approach, in her case arguing that while 'the case for altruism stemming from novel reading is inconclusive at best and nearly always exaggerated' there is worth in the 'more nuanced study of the consequences of experiencing aesthetic emotions'.[82] In particular, she argues that empathy with fictional characters can help us 'stretch imaginatively' such that, in a teaching setting, discussion about reading can change opinions, awareness and moral sensitivity — connecting 'the dots between reactions to fiction and options for action in the real world'.[83]

I would argue on the basis of my earlier analysis that although the term sympathy is sometimes deployed imprecisely in Ward's texts, assumptions about its importance to the reading experience underpin them. It is clearly a powerful and important factor in the way her novels were constructed and received. In addition, it would seem clear that Ward's distress at charges of didacticism mean that it is hard to place the sympathy she sought from readers in the explicitly pro-social bracket that Martha Nussbaum espouses. On the other hand, Nussbaum's concept of emotions as part of the rational process of defining ethical values is a key aspect of the way some of Ward's readers experienced her texts as conveying 'truth'. This was reflected in the emotional intensity that readers like Brook Herford and Sarah Orne Jewett felt when reading and that the author felt while writing — *Robert Elsmere,* for example, she told her mother, had been written in

[78] Martha C Nussbaum, *Poetic Justice: The Literary Imagination and Public Life* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995), pp.4, 5, 10.
[79] Martha C. Nussbaum, *Upheavals of Thought: The Intelligence of the Emotions (*Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p.1.
[80] Martha C Nussbaum*, Political Emotions: Why Love Matters for Justice* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2013), pp.21, 209.
[81] Sophie Ratcliffe, *On Sympathy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008, pp.5, 19.
[82] Suzanne Keen, *Empathy and the Novel* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp.vii, xxv.
[83] Keen, pp.101, 146.

her 'heart's blood'.[84] Since the combination of emotional and intellectual responses to Ward's texts have been shown to be key, I would wish to modify Rae Greiner's understanding of how sympathy worked in the nineteenth-century realist novel. For Greiner, sympathy was 'a complex formal process, a mental exercise but not an emotion', a 'set of formal protocols for feeling ourselves thinking with real people and fictional ones', which now need to be shed of the 'moralistic overtones' and assumptions about empathy.[85] However, Ward surely relates to the 'moral sentiment' associations of sympathy flowing from Adam Smith and David Hume, as discussed in chapter one, which influenced mid-nineteenth-century social problem fiction and then re-surfaced in late-century form with Walter Besant. The combined emotional and intellectual responses of readers to *David Grieve* suggests that the rationality of 'protocols' is not how they saw their reading experience. Nor do they suggest that they experienced an empathy, in the sense of complete identification with characters, from which Greiner is concerned to distinguish sympathy's capacity to judge.

Indeed, the way contemporary readers experienced characters as friends demonstrates a very sophisticated response taking place, greater than the usual commonplaces using such terms. Helen Child, for example, declared 'David Grieve is a real person and one of my friends' — suggesting that Ward's fictional invention had captured the 'real'.[86] The interaction of reader's mind and the text could somehow create an existential 'other' that was knowable and personally beneficial. Likewise, Brooke Herford expressed regret that David's wife, Lucy, had to die in the novel since:

> these personalities whom *some* writers make such living friends and acquaintances, have no resurrection — no future life. They lie in one's mind 'fixed in one eternal state', and the effect on my mind is like a sort of Calvinism, leaving one stunned and hopeless. Forgive the freedom of *this* criticism. It is because you have made these characters *so* living to me — you their *Creator,* as it were, — that I feel it all this way.[87]

This reaction does not suggest overpowering empathy since the fictional character remains very much an 'other', and the reader though 'stunned' is still in possession of his critical judgment — a judicious observer in Adam Smith's terms. However, it does underline the importance of the sympathetic connection that could be made with the fates of the characters through the hyperbole of their loss being worse than the loss of an actual friend. That the characters are 'so

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[84] Quoted in John Sutherland, *Mrs Humphry Ward: Eminent Victorian Pre-eminent Edwardian* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), p.112.
[85] Rae Greiner, 'Thinking of Me Thinking of You: Sympathy Versus Empathy in the Realist Novel', *Victorian Studies*, 53 (Spring 2011), 417–26 (pp.417, 419, 418).
[86] Letter from Helen M.C. Child to Mary Ward, 7 March 1892, BCA, Corr. No. 15.
[87] Letter from Brooke Herford to Mary Ward, 24 March 1892, BCA, Corr. No. 22.

living' draws Herford to connect with the deeper explorations of the text. Indeed, he implicitly acknowledges the inadequate (if understandable — and complimentary) side of his wish for Lucy to continue to 'live', since it is through his emotional feeling for characters denied 'resurrection' that readerly satisfaction and intellectual and ethical engagement are attained. Hence, although he read part of the book 'with an almost shuddering holding of the breath, wondering what could make such terrible pictures *worthwhile*', he 'rose up at the end feeling they were an integral necessity for bringing out the full force of the lesson'. In some sense these readers through feeling themselves feeling with fictional characters were 'feeling themselves thinking' with them, too. Characters were 'real' in their ability to think and feel for readers, expressing their anxieties and desires — another way, perhaps, that the fiction was voicing readers' thoughts for them. The reading experience became cognitive through emotional connection with fictional characters who took on a reality of their own.

Therefore, when Keen is sceptical of the intent of nineteenth-century 'novels-with-a-purpose' and the extent to which they 'actually swayed readers, changed minds, and resulted in different behaviour', one must point to Ward's re-definition of what novels labelled as such were trying to do.[88] In avoiding overt didacticism, 'criticism of life' emphasized the interplay of the emotional and intellectual within the dynamics of the fiction reading process. As Howard Sklar points out, 'the fact that readers must "process" narrative texts suggests that there is an additional cognitive layer between the act of reading and the emotions that readers experience' and that 'the observer role – a form of aesthetic distance – is critical to understanding the nature of narrative sympathy'. The thoughts and feelings narratives provoke, if reflected on, mean 'we sometimes carry the experiences that we have had while reading into our everyday lives'.[89] Sklar's research into how compassion for flawed characters engendered by reading can lead to ethical sensitivity in everyday life is highly relevant to the challenge of *Sir George Tressady*. Since that novel asked readers to reflect on the strengths and weaknesses of sympathy, and to feel torn between the characters, judgment and feeling were combined. Significantly, Sarah Jewett found its art 'beautiful', its 'inevitable feeling' a cause for 'rejoicing'. Furthermore: 'you have made that greatest character that an artist can make: a person who may be loved! […] I cannot help loving her more and more and holding her very real and helpful'.[90] An interaction between 'emotions' and the 'cognitive', between fellow feeling and reflection, that is the result of 'aesthetic distance', seems to be the case here. Jewett's sense of heightened reality, her emotional connection with a

[88] Keen, p.52
[89] Howard Sklar, *The Art of Sympathy in Fiction: Forms of Ethical and Emotional Persuasion* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2013), pp.41, 55, 43.
[90] Letter from Sarah Orne Jewett to Mary Ward, 7 July 1896, THWC, 2.4.

fictional friend, and gratitude for helpfulness, combines identification and external contemplation in a striking way. 'Love' and judgment co-exist. Of *William Ashe* she reported 'one always lived along its pages gathering new friends and foes all the way', adding '"real life" is a good bit above realism'.[91] Here she almost echoes Corelli in elevating fiction's capacity to embody the 'real' and distinguishing it from realism's attention to the detail of the everyday world. It appears that the emotional, ethical and intellectual experience of fiction-reading created an alternative 'real' world that became the lens through which the everyday world could be viewed.

This indicates the potential importance of reading in somewhat more nuanced terms than the creation of ideal citizens. Thinking and feeling in sympathy with Ward's characters, and the complexity of being both observer and participant, encouraged reflective self-awareness. The outcome of the interplay of the cognitive and the emotional could be a dialogical and aesthetic sensitivity to fiction of ethical and political ideas. If encouraging readers' compassion for the unfortunate through the exploration of narrative sympathy in a classroom setting (as per the empirical experiments of Howard Sklar) was not an option in Ward's time, it is notable that her regular practical contribution to the Passmore Edwards settlement comprised sessions reading stories aloud to a young audience.[92] Tellingly, David Grieve's mind and aspirations were also broadened by reading Charlotte Brontë and Dickens. Of *Shirley* and *Nicholas Nickleby,* it is said 'he felt them in his veins like new wine', and encounters with 'human beings like those he heard of or talked with every day' made him 'take sides, compare himself to them, join in their fights and hatreds, pity and exult with them'. It leads to 'a more intense self-consciousness than any he had yet known' so that 'he began to realise the problem of his own life with a singular keenness and clearness'.[93] As Beth Sutton-Ramspeck comments, 'the dialogic interaction between reader and novel offers a model for the uses of literature.'[94] Moreover, Ward's hope was that the intellectual sensitivity and emotional sensibility brought about by reading would contribute to social progress. Ward' speech at Edmonton Public Library in 1897, saluted 'the spiritual kingdom of knowledge and imagination' it 'opened up and widened', maintaining that 'we depend for the solution of our national difficulties, far more than most of us imagine, upon the humanising of English feeling and imagination' that reading could 'nurture'.[95] 'Knowledge', 'feeling and imagination' were also crucial to her fiction of debate which could, Ward hoped, help transform the public sphere — a

[91] Letter from Sarah Orne Jewett to Mary Ward, 18 April 1905, MHWP, 31.3.
[92] Trevelyan, *The Life of Mrs Humphry Ward*, p.124.
[93] *The Writings of Mrs Humphry Ward*, vol III: *David Grieve*, pp.152–53.
[94] Beth Sutton-Ramspeck, *Raising the Dust: The Literary Housekeeping of Mary Ward, Sarah Grand, and Charlotte Perkins-Gilman* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2004), p.54.
[95] J. Passmore Edwards, *A Few Footprints* (London: Watts, 1906), [Speech given by Mrs Humphry Ward on laying the foundation stone of Edmonton Public Library in April 1897, 'Appendix', pp.82–83].

belief in its important role shared by many in her close circles of readers. Marie Corelli's conception of the sympathetic reading experience was rather different but equally ambitious, and it is to the public intervention of her fiction that we now turn.

Chapter 4 Corelli's Social and Literary Politics of Sympathy

Introduction

This chapter examines the class attitudes and literary politics of Marie Corelli's fiction that emerged alongside her concept of a bond of sympathy between author and reader. Chapter one analysed how Corelli aspired 'to write straight from my own heart to the hearts of others', deeming a 'close and sympathetic union with my public' essential as a way of uniting readers and author against widespread critical abuse of her popular fiction and the related disparagement of her audience for demeaning culture through their reading preferences.[1] This chapter analyses the literary politics of Corelli's model of sympathy which equated 'the people' with her readers and asserted that both shared the author's moral vision. It explores first how Corelli's sympathy with the common people led to a combative condemnation of the perceived immorality and corruption at the heart of political power structures, and of a biased, censorious literary marketplace. Then, it demonstrates how the bond of sympathy resulted in Corelli's model of a purified literary marketplace, free of the capitalist profit motive, and aiming to counter the harmful power of the press and the financial corruption, misinformation and class bias infecting national politics and culture. Here, Corelli's alternative literary model envisaged the author as a voice of truth, articulating the people's otherwise inarticulate political protest against a class system where self-serving elites sought both to maintain their wealth and power and to manipulate public discourse. It encouraged readers to be of one mind and to assert their own influence by uniting with the author's vision and saluting the claimed honesty and force of her political and moral critique. This was very different to Mary Ward's fiction of ideas and to the capacity of 'criticism of life' to stimulate a dialogue with readers' 'assents and denials'. Indeed, the corollary of Corelli's critique was a conception of her fiction as secular scripture that was spiritually authoritative, providing inspired moral guidance in exchange for modest payment, and thereby acknowledging the right of the author to independence and freedom of thought.

Therefore, finally, the chapter identifies the inconsistencies and interpretative challenges that Corelli's literary model of sympathy posed for its readers as theory and practice came into conflict. I will demonstrate how the idealisation of poverty in Corelli's commercially successful

[1] Marie Corelli, '*My First Book:* "*A Romance of Two Worlds*"', *The Idler,* 4 (January 1894), 239–52 **(**p.239).

fiction and its vitriolic class critique were both powerful and risked self-contradiction, the tone of the class politics sitting uncomfortably with the accompanying elevation of an alternative universe of spiritual love. In addition, readers were confronted by a didactic fiction dealing in moral absolutes whose parody of realism and decadence allowed it the licence to portray in detail the vice it condemned. As we will see, the entangled ambiguities and power of Corelli's literary model of sympathy presented challenges to both the established tenets of the contemporary literary marketplace and to readers' sense of propriety. These need to be understood before I move on to investigate the diversity of readers' actual, active reading experiences — often different to those anticipated by Corelli's model, but thereby comparable with the impact of Ward's fiction. Chapter five will show how the popularity, or notoriety, of Corelli's fiction made an enfranchising democratic contribution to cultural debate as supporters and opponents were provoked into vociferous exchanges of opinions.

The Social Politics of Sympathy for the People

The class analysis of Corelli's social and literary politics grew out of her equation of her readers with 'the people' or 'the public'. The interchangeability and looseness of her terminology here is unmistakeable. One of Corelli's speeches hailed 'the steady spread of Education among the People, and the equally steady rise of an intelligent Democracy' as 'perhaps the most striking and powerful' of 'signs of the times'.[2] Education, the board-school elementary education brought about by the 1870 Education Act which Gosse feared was creating semi-literate, ill-prepared entrants to the public sphere, was seen by Corelli as wholly positive. As a publisher remarks in *The Sorrows of Satan* (1895), 'You see people have got Compulsory Education now, and I'm afraid they begin to mistrust criticism, preferring to form their own independent opinions'.[3] Newly literate readers ('people') are hailed for their independence of taste and thought — and predilection for Corelli's romance fiction. As the narrator in *Wormwood* (1890) declares: 'The Public itself is the supreme critic now, — its "review" does not appear in print, but nevertheless its unwritten verdict declares itself with […] an amazing weight of influence.'[4] There was clearly a measure of wishful thinking in the conflation of reader, 'Public', and 'people' but it was central to Corelli's

[2] Unattributed quotation in Annette R. Federico, *Idol of Suburbia: Marie Corelli and Late-Victorian Literary Culture* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2000), p.68 [presumably from Corelli's 'Signs of the Times' address to the Scottish Society of Literature and Art, 20 February 1902].
[3] Marie Corelli, *The Sorrows of Satan, or, The Strange Experiences of One Geoffrey Tempest, Millionaire: A Romance*, ed. with an introduction and notes by Julia Kuehn (Kansas City: Valancourt Books, 2008 [1895]), p.154
[4] Marie Corelli, *Wormwood: A Drama of Paris* (Chicago: M.A. Donohue, n.d. [1890]), p.295.

literary politics. Her fiction constantly saluted such 'unwritten' verdicts and aimed to magnify their perceived 'influence'. Early in Corelli's career, when readers' letters were added to later editions of her first novel, *A Romance of Two Worlds* (1886), Corelli's introduction hailed the 'sympathy' demonstrated by readers' 'touching and seemingly sincere language' recording 'the consolation and hope they have derived from its unpretending pages'. Tellingly**,** her intention was to correct 'the rebuffs, both hot and cold, bestowed on me by the Sir Oracles of the Press, the critics' and to prove that her book 'is being very widely read […] and loved'.[5] The bond of sympathy between author and reader is deemed to allow both to rise above the insults of critics.

The potentially baleful influence of the press on both Corelli's reputation and the confidence readers could place in their reading will be examined in more detail in the next section. First, it is important to stress that the corollary of Corelli's belief in the honest judgment of readers or 'the people', and in the dishonesty of critical arbiters of taste in the press, was a coruscating class critique. This deemed the upper circles of political power brokers (like opinion-makers in the literary marketplace) to be immoral, antipathetic to the values bonding author and readers. Therefore, she lauded the 'common sense' and moral rectitude of 'the People, who standing in their millions outside "society" and its endless intrigues, pass judgments on the events of the day'.[6] Corelli's perception of being an outsider in the literary marketplace, a status that she considered she shared with her readers (not without justification as we saw in chapter one), entailed a mutually supportive bond of sympathy extending to understandings of class differences. In novel after novel, the abusive and corrupt behaviour of the powerful in a gender-biased and unequal society is subject to appalled ridicule. For example, the selfishness, unfaithfulness, and cupidity of Lord Carlyon that shocks and ultimately leads to the death of his idealistic, romance-writing wife in *The Murder of Delicia* (1896) is but one of many of Corelli's fictional portraits of aristocratic decadence. The implication was that the novel, and its appreciative male and female readers, were standing against society's corrupt values. It venerated 'the martyrdom of life and love endured by thousands of patiently-working, self-denying women' and supported the judgment of men like Valdis who formed a chaste bond with Delicia and proclaimed the need for 'terrific vengeance' on 'callous egotists' after her death.[7] Corelli therefore portrayed high society's combination of spite and disrespect as being at war with the spiritual aspirations of her own fiction. Hence, as we saw in chapter one's analysis of *Thelma* (1887), London society's wilful attempt to destroy the marriage of the innocent, idealised heroine

[5] Marie Corelli, *A Romance of Two Worlds*, 37th edn (London: Methuen, 1921 [1886]), p.xv.
[6] Marie Corelli, 'The Decay of Home Life in England', in *Free Opinions Freely Expressed on Certain Phases of Modern Social Life and Conduct* (London: Archibald Constable, 1905), pp.207–32 (p.221).
[7] Marie Corelli, *The Murder of Delicia* (London: Skeffington & Son, 1896), p.287.

is ultimately defeated by the honest, harmonious, if vulnerable, romance universe of divine (here pagan) love from whence the idealised Norwegian maiden comes. In addition, *The Sorrows of Satan* satirises the greed and thoughtless degeneracy of '"swagger" society'. Until the blameless example of the writer Mavis Clare shows him the way, the would-be novelist, Geoffrey Tempest, practices 'every sort of dissipation' favoured by the empty-headed who 'with the usual inanity of noodles, plunged into the filth of life merely because to be morally dirty was also at the moment fashionable and much applauded by society.'[8] Such 'fashionable' degradation, Corelli claimed, required the opposition of her would-be morally upright fiction and its influential link with readers to combat it. As Tempest discovers at the end of the novel, the honest status of a writer who earns a living through public appreciation is preferable to riches, sensual pleasures, and bogus critical acclaim.

Hence, Corelli's sympathy for the people was integral to her fiction's combative political aims. Tellingly at the end of *The Sorrows of Satan*, the devil, Lucio, is seen walking arm in arm with a 'Cabinet minister' into Parliament, 'Devil and Man, — together' once again.[9] Since government and society concealed the intrinsic evil beneath their veneer of respectability, the role of her literature was to expose this and give a voice of protest to voiceless readers. It was able to do so, Corelli thought, because it was potentially more powerful than the organs of state:

> It can crush opposition. Armed with truth and justice, its authority is greater than that of governments, — for it can upset governments. It would seem impossible to dethrone an unworthy king; but it has been done — by the Power of the Pen!'[10]

Here, with characteristic hyperbole, Corelli asserts her hope that the cultural and moral influence of her fiction and its social critique, would be powerfully articulated enough to change society. Her desire that 'the People' as a whole could, through their affiliation with a right-thinking fiction, 'upset' the status quo and 'crush' political elites was certainly wishful thinking. However, it was motivated by the belief that fiction should and could give readers' concerns and complaints a voice. Corelli's desire was that her fiction would provide weapons for her readers, reinforcing the strength of their opinions and vigorously articulating for them a moral vision that they might otherwise struggle to express. The voice she deployed was therefore to some extent educational and informative and to some extent propagandist, facilitating and encouraging wider contributions to debate about the morality of the public sphere.

This is amply demonstrated in *Temporal Power* (1902). In this novel the King's erstwhile tolerance of corruption and sycophancy has generated corrupt government and political unrest.

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[8] Corelli, *The Sorrows of Satan*, pp.48, 129.
[9] Ibid, pp.353, 354.
[10] Corelli, 'The Power of the Pen', in *Free Opinions,* pp.292–309 (p.308).

Acknowledging the error of his laxity, the King resolves to 'study the ways, the movements, the desires of my people, and prove myself their friend, as well as their king'.[11] Therefore, he joins a band of socialists in disguise as they plot against the government and the monarchy itself and manages to eject those in power so that rule for the benefit of the people is restored. The driving inspiration for the socialists and the King is Lotys, who mirrors Corelli's own sympathy for the people with her 'passionate sympathy with the wrongs of others' and 'pity for human kind'.[12] In a long speech that forms the centrepiece of the novel's political arguments, Lotys addresses an attentive crowd of demonstrators in the 'People's Assembly Rooms' about the 'Corruption of the State'. She declares that 'there is no trust to be placed in Churches, Kings or Parliaments; — that the world is in a state of ferment and unrest, — moving towards Change'.[13] The main pillars of state are therefore seen to be dysfunctional and working against the interests of the people, just as the King had feared. The question is how rightful 'change' can be brought about.

For Lotys the answer lies in stirring up the people to be more assertive. The reason why 'a Society so criminal in historic annals should yet remain as a force' is because 'it is of One Mind!' This being so, Lotys urges her audience to be likewise unified: 'were you like them, also of One Mind, your injuries, your oppressions, your taxations would not last long!' They should not have 'lost heart' or 'lost patience' but instead should now together 'seize the hour' to assert the 'rights of your humanity'.[14] The novel thereby seeks to assume its propagandist role through Lotys's urgent request for anti-establishment solidarity and for the people's voice to be heard. 'How is it that you do not realise your own strength?' Lotys asks her audience:

> let your authority as the workers, the ratepayers, and supporters of the State be heard; and do not You, without whom even the King could not keep his throne, consent to be set aside as the Unvalued Majority! Prove, by your own firm attitude that without You, nothing can be done! It is time, O people of my heart! — it is time you spoke clearly![15]

Here we see encapsulated Corelli's desire for the people to realise their powerful potential and her fear that they were not doing so. The 'You' addressed is both Lotys's fictional audience and Corelli's readers, symbolic of the 'majority', or general public, who should value themselves more highly and make their voice heard more 'clearly'. In effect, the novel articulates what it perceives as its readers' latent opinions but with the rhetorical force that they are unable to bring to bear. In challenging apathy and intellectual timidity, its strategy is to stand 'firm' with the 'people of my heart' and assert their status and power: 'There is no voice so resonant and convincing as the

[11] Marie Corelli, *Temporal Power: A Study in Supremacy* (London: Methuen, 1902), p.25.
[12] Corelli, *Temporal Power,* p.269.
[13] Ibid, pp.267, 275, 281.
[14] Ibid*,* pp.278, 281, 284.
[15] Ibid, p.282.

voice of the public; there is no power on earth more strong or more irresistible than the power of the People!'[16] The 'power of the People', however, stems principally from the 'resonant' and 'convincing' voice that Corelli adopts through Lotys as her mouthpiece. If Lotys's listeners, and by extension Corelli's readers, were not in a position to speak 'clearly', then the fiction, empowered by its connection with the 'heart' of its readers, its bond of sympathy, would do so for them.

The self-confident, outspoken narrative voice that Corelli deploys to accompany Lotys's strictures reflects a 'them and us' tactics of opposition to those in positions of power. Hence its tone is savagely satirical. For example, the Prime Minister, the Marquis de Lutera, is described as physically repulsive. He has 'small furtive eyes, a ponderous jaw' and a 'frigid manner […] profoundly discouraging to all who sought to win his attention or sympathy'. Some 'consider a Prime Minister great and exalted' but they should see this 'ungainly' and 'over-stout, difficult to clothe' man whose lack of 'dignity' is matched by a mindset of a 'stock-jobber, not a statesman'. Moreover, his capitalist instincts are utterly corrupt. Hence, his '"patriotism" is satisfied', we are told with heavy irony, by securing 'millions of money', 'a handsome endowment' for himself and his heirs.[17] Here we can see very clearly exemplified Corelli's technique of exuberant caricature and subversive parody. The Prime Minister's right-hand man, Carl Pérousse, is similarly dismissed as a small-minded capitalist, 'a mere manufacturer of kitchen goods, who through our folly was returned to this country's senate'.[18] Upper-class greed in league with middle-class commercial self-interest is fleecing the nation, while a Parliament of complacent petty-bourgeois capitalists is deemed too feeble to control a misbehaving executive. The voice Corelli assumed on behalf of the people was therefore an opinionated and exaggerated one — but, she felt, conveyed truth.

The educational side of Corelli's voice was rather more sophisticated. This can best be understood in terms of Foucault's analysis of resistance. In an early essay, Foucault argued that domination springs from the imposition of rules but that:

> The successes of history belong to those who are capable of seizing these rules, […] to disguise themselves so as to pervert them, invert their meaning, and redirect them against those who had initially imposed them; controlling this complex mechanism, they will make it function so as to overcome the rulers through their own rules.[19]

'Disguise' and perversion or inversion of meaning were exactly the strategies of artistic expression that Corelli sought to follow. It was not just a matter of the author's own 'disguise', the 'creation

[16] Ibid, p.285.
[17] Ibid, pp.140, 210–11.
[18] Ibid, p.78.
[19] Michel Foucault, 'Nietzsche, Genealogy and History', in *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews,* ed. by D.F. Bouchard (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977), pp.139–64 (p.151).

of ''Marie Corelli'' out of Minnie Mackay', that Rita Felski notes provided a protective cloak against critical attack for a vulnerable writer of uncertain parentage.[20] Nor was it just that she sought to maintain the mystery and privacy of this persona. In *Temporal Power*, even more than in her earlier work, Corelli 'inverted' the 'meaning' of authority and the 'rules' (such as parliamentary democracy) which upheld it. She did this through the creation of a fictional character in disguise who seeks to expose and 'pervert' the corrupted 'rules' that the state follows — acting and speaking on behalf of the people. So, the King, rebelling against his role as constitutional monarch, disguises himself as Pasquin Leroy to infiltrate not just Lotys's band of socialists but also a triumvirate of evil plotters in the government and the press leading the country into war, financial ruin, and the yoke of the church. Leroy does not just subvert their plans, in the process visiting a press baron in disguise as a secret service agent, but he also takes on another camouflage as a disruptive underground journalist, exposing the truth concealed from the people. The King in disguise therefore acts as the fictional alter ego of the novelist, enacting the potential capacity of Corelli's novel to expose a corrupt political world, oppose the power of the press, and provide an alternative vision to it. Corelli hopes that, through the parallels of the King's subversive designs with her own, readers too might see through the obfuscation of political rules and of press mediation of political discourse. The serious duty of her fiction was to cut through disguise to deliver a state-of-the-nation message.

The Bond of Sympathy and the Literary Marketplace

The persuasiveness of this message depended on readers' willing acquiescence and engagement with an alternative literary model of honest exchange based on Corelli's envisaged bond of sympathy. This model, which I will now examine in more detail, envisaged the fiction embodying moral values that rose above those of politicians, a misleading press, and a commercialised publishing industry, all wedded to a corrupting capitalism. Money was necessary for the author to remain independent and to offer moral guidance, but financial greed and the profit motive must be resisted. Reading in tune, or in sympathy, with the author was key to Corelli's literary marketplace model, where the reader was offered uplifting moral instruction in exchange for (arguably) modest payment. As this section will demonstrate, how readers were asked to

[20] Rita Felski, *The Gender of Modernity* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1995), p.124; The press tried to subvert this subversion – the review of *Barabbas* in *The National Observer* 21 October 1893 was entitled 'The Real Mackay' in teasing reference to Corelli's family name, as (illegitimate) daughter of Charles Mackay. For fuller extracts from the text see Appendix B, section 1 a).

experience and value texts that sought to be morally authoritative, and to provide an imaginative, inspiring, and spiritual alternative to realist fiction, was at the heart of Corelli's conception of readers thinking in unison with her texts and of her fiction's ability to articulate readers' voices.

First, fostering resistance to the propagandising influence and financial imperatives of the national press was crucial. The problem was, Corelli thought, that the press was 'the bound and paid Slave of Capitalists' as she put it in *Temporal Power*.[21] There the fourth estate conspires with two of the pillars of democracy, the executive, and the legislature, in pursuit of profit. The speculators at the heart of government are joined by the press baron David Jost who fosters rumours of foreign wars in his newspapers in order to make money on the stock exchange. He becomes the 'chief tool' of the politicians, 'sole proprietor of the most influential newspaper in the kingdom', shareholder in three others 'all apparently differing in party views' but working 'for the same ends'. Hence 'what was euphoniously termed "public opinion" was the opinion of Jost'.[22] Therefore, Lotys advises the people: 'do not let a hired Press think for you! Think for yourselves — judge for yourselves, and act for yourselves!' [23] This is needed because, as Lotys tells us, 'there is no journal in this country that will, or dare, publish the true reflex of popular opinion'.[24] The people are in danger of being left voiceless as the country is hijacked for private profit. However, the implication is that Corelli's fiction in speaking its mind can be trusted to be the 'true reflex of popular opinion' and can be regarded as the touchstone of political honesty.

Moreover, rather than free market forces operating as per classic liberal nineteenth-century thinking, Corelli perceived the capitalist marketplace as fostering unhealthy competitiveness. 'Free trade' fostered, according to her first novel, 'vulgar competition of all countries and all classes to see which can most quickly jostle the other out of existence'.[25] Corelli's post-Darwinian disapproval of the survival of the fittest as the basis for a healthy economy therefore criticised the way the marketplace generated rivalry and partisan in-fighting. The budding novelist in *The Treasure of Heaven* (1906), Angus Reay, an ex-journalist who was sacked for writing a whistle-blowing financial exposé, condemns the press's corrupt, cliquey nature:

> There's no longer any real 'criticism' of literary work in the papers nowadays. There's only extravagant eulogium written by an author's personal friends and wormed somehow into the Press — or equally extravagant abuse, written and insinuated in similar fashion by an author's personal enemies.[26]

[21] Corelli, *Temporal Power,* p.275.
[22] Corelli, *Temporal Power*, pp.115, 192.
[23] Ibid*,* pp.278 –79.
[24] Ibid, p.275.
[25] Corelli, *Romance of Two Worlds*, p.61.
[26] Marie Corelli, *The Treasure of Heaven: A Romance of Riches* (London: Archibald Constable, 1906), p.345.

Corelli conflates here the corruption of the press with the evils of the wider literary marketplace. A dysfunctional literary marketplace is described as either sycophantic or vindictive, an alternation of 'booming' and slashing depending on the critic's or proprietors' personal allegiances — or, as she insinuated in *The Sorrows of Satan*, financial corruption (where McWhing is a critic for hire). Her own satirical exposé of the literary world, *The Silver Domino* (1892), ridiculed the critic Andrew Lang for being 'a Press jack-of-all-trades', criticised Gladstone for unwittingly 'booming' Ward's *Robert Elsmere,* and satirised the 'pious publisher' (presumably her own, George Bentley) who 'always says "God bless you!" to the author he is cheating'.[27] Indeed, Corelli believed that the profit motive itself was the source of the corruption uniting press and the world of publishing. A newspaper, Reay states, is 'composed for the sole end and object for making as much profit out of the public as possible', while journalists 'are paid as little as their self-respect will allow them to take'. As an important pillar of the state, a dishonest press is seen to be failing in its duty to inform the people impartially with 'the "doctoring up" of social scandals' and 'tampering with the news'.[28] Competition requires misleading reporting because sensationalism sells and increases profit. It was in reaction to the ethics of the press and of publishing that Corelli constructed her own alternative model for the literary marketplace.

This involved confronting press intrusiveness which, in league with a literary marketplace seeking to maximise profit, gave rise to a celebrity culture where authors could become marketable commodities. Corelli's wrestling with the problems that celebrity status created, and her attempts to control the mediation of her public image, has been the focus of several revealing studies.[29] What is key here is Corelli's reluctance to accede to the demands for press profiles or photographs and to try to establish a bond of sympathy through the text alone, as chapter one established. A satirical episode at the end of *Ardath* (1889) is illuminating. There, a columnist named Tiger-Lily attempts to interview the poet Theos now that his poem has astonished the publishing world. Tellingly, she assumes he is one of those 'celebrities so exceedingly pleased to be given a little additional notoriety'. However, she is shown the door by his friend Frank Villiers who declares that such interviews as hers reflect 'the modern love of prying' and are 'unwholesome and utterly contemptible' — indeed, adopted only by 'literary charlatans, unworthy of the profession they have wrongfully adopted'.[30] However equivocal Corelli's actions

[27] [Marie Corelli], *The Silver Domino; or Side Whispers, Social and Literary* (London: Lamley and Co, 1895 [1892]), pp.316, 211 [published anonymously].
[28] Corelli, *Treasure of Heaven,* p.331.
[29] For example: Lizzie White, 'Commodifying the Self: Portraits of the Artist in the Novels of Marie Corelli', in *Women Writers and the Artifacts of Celebrity in the Long Nineteenth Century*, ed. by Ann R. Hawkins and Maura Ives (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012), pp.205–18; Alexis Easley, *Literary Celebrity, Gender, and Victorian Authorship, 1850–1914* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2011).
[30] Marie Corelli, *'Ardath': The Story of a Dead Self* (London: Methuen, 1925 [1889]), pp.506–07.

were forced to be by the pressures her commercial success brought, her theoretical standpoint remained principled. The trivialisation and commodification of the marketplace must be resisted and the primacy of the text as a means of direct communication between author and reader must be maintained. Just as countering the power of the press is an essential part of the King's campaign in *Temporal Power*, so it was for Corelli — and for her desire for how the author's role and status should be perceived by her readers.

She did however fluctuate in her evaluation of the effectiveness of her position. On the one hand, Corelli thought that evidence of discriminating choice in reading was 'a hopeful and blessed sign of increasing education and widening intellectual perception in the masses who will soon by their sturdy common sense win a position which is not to be "frighted with false fire"'.[31] Here the people seem about to attain an independent 'position' despite Press deceitfulness ('false fire') which sought, she believed, to hoodwink the public. On the other hand, the challenge of a compromised propagandist press seemed too great to counter. There, she lamented:

> Yet very few people really think. Many get no further than think they are thinking. To think is a kind of Work — too hard for many folks. In politics, for instance, some people let the Press think for them. […] Let us hope the British public has an opinion of its own entirely apart from the Press, and that it will declare that opinion bravely and openly.[32]

The power of the press to control the thinking of the intellectually ill-equipped looms oppressively here, and despite social change and educational improvements, the capacity of the 'public' to develop an 'opinion of its own', is a 'hope' rather than an expectation.

Hence, Corelli's hopes for her bond of sympathy with 'the people' went further, towards a literary politics of resistance, comparable in its strategy with that of her class critique. Capitalist values must be subverted and inhabited by an alternative model that was less harmful, more persuasive, and equitable. Corelli's literary model therefore grappled with the potentially contradictory questions of disdain for the commercial values of a capitalist publishing industry and arguing for just, appropriate payment for authors. The latter was both a marker of their worth and cultural status, as Besant argued, and a guarantee of their financial independence and ability to express themselves freely. Excessive wealth and financial greed were problematic but so was 'the cruel meaning of the word hunger' that would-be writer Geoffrey Tempest encounters at the start of *The Sorrows of Satan.*[33]

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[31] Marie Corelli, 'The "Strong" Book of the Ishbosheth', in *Free Opinions,* pp.245–51 (p.246).
[32] Marie Corelli, 'The Glory of Work', in *Free Opinions,* pp.310–25 (p.322).
[33] Corelli, *The Sorrows of Satan,* p.3.

Money in Corelli's fiction is therefore deemed to be both necessary and pernicious. The greatest danger is that financial greed corrupts personal relationships and values of mutual support and fair exchange. This was most clearly articulated in *The Treasure of Heaven,* significantly subtitled *A Romance of Riches*. Here, the problems of owning wealth that the 70-year-old millionaire Helmsley encounters are so great that he is unable to find any honest relationship in which he is valued for himself, or 'any creature to whom I can trust my business, or leave my fortune'.[34] Therefore, he takes to the road, disguised as a tramp, in search of 'the love that he had dreamed of when he was a boy — love strong and great and divine enough to outlive death'.[35] Here the idealisation of love exhibited in *Thelma* and *Ardath* is linked to honest use of money. For Helmsley finds selfless love among the marginalised class of poor but honest and self-sufficient peasants in the geographically marginal Somerset coast, far from the financial capital, London, where the action starts. Corelli's usual melodramatic juxtaposition of extraordinarily good and exceptionally bad characters here takes the form of an extreme contrast of the values of rich and poor, of city and country. The countryside and its combination of working people and tramps who have opted out of the economic system are idealised as noble and proudly independent but still members of a supportive community. On the road, Helmsley finds people who give 'kindness without caring how it might be received or rewarded' and reflects that he has 'met with more real kindness from the rough fellows' at the rural hostelry he has just stayed in 'than has ever been offered to me by those who know I am rich'. They do not value money for itself, but rather use it to furnish everyday needs and, where possible, to help others. An altruistic group of tramps and gypsies, for example, raise half-a-crown between them to aid Helmsley's travels westwards. This is in contrast to urban society where love of money fosters dishonest deceitfulness — when money was 'pouring in' Helmsley discovered 'the utter falsity of [people's] pretensions'.[36] Tellingly, Helmsley's transformation from millionaire to tramp is explained by the fact that he:

> longed for liberty — liberty to go where he liked without his movements being watched and commented upon by a degraded 'personal' press, — liberty to speak as he felt and do as he wished, without being compelled to weigh his words, or to consider his actions.[37]

The world of the honest poor is thereby linked with the freedom of Helmsley's, and the novel's, voice of truth to be heard — in contrast to an intrusive, judgmental and misrepresentative press.

[34] Corelli, *Treasure of Heaven*, p.11.
[35] Corelli, *Treasure of Heaven*, p.23.
[36] Ibid, pp.177–78.
[37] Ibid, pp.182, 202,

Against this background, the novel is concerned to ally the writer — here the would-be novelist Angus Reay — with the honest poverty of the people and against the capitalist values shared by the press and a dysfunctional literary marketplace. Reay declares that in contrast to the stream of published 'rag-books *called* novels', that have 'nothing "new" in them', his novel would deal with 'the humanity of today' and make him 'the twentieth century Scott and Dickens rolled into one stupendous literary Titan!'[38] As one of Corelli's many idealised romance writers and artists, Angus exemplifies the Corellian ideal of the writer in the context of a changing publishing industry — providing something 'new' by standing against current publishing trends and looking to the past for literary models or spiritual inspiration. His work attempts to address modern, adult issues of what constitutes 'humanity' without commercial considerations getting in the way. Significantly, because he makes 'no secret of the fact he was poor', Reay becomes a 'favourite' of the villagers and his work can identify with the people.[39] Living frugally among honest Somerset peasants, he stands outside society looking in, insulated from the pressures of a competitive marketplace. His criticism of the distorting profit motive suggests rejection of the structural shift to the 'late-capitalist, monopoly-capital mode of production', or patriarchal capitalist system, with which, rather contestably, N.N. Feltes associates Corelli.[40] The literary model resulting from sympathy for the honest poverty of the people, and based on a bond of sympathy voicing the protest of readers, was indeed Corelli's way of attempting to (partially) opt out of, and correct, a capitalist publishing system.

This involved Corelli in considerable, and indeed paradoxical, sleight of hand, in linking her own commercially successful fiction with honesty and poverty. It revolved around the idea of the writer as a worker, worthy of the payment received from grateful readers. Hence, Angus is described as 'endeavouring to earn a livelihood like all the rest of them', commensurate with the villagers' 'honest, hard labour'.[41] He, like them, is a worker, and similarly worthy of just recompense. This was even more explicitly stated in the depiction of the highly successful romance writer in *The Sorrows of Satan*, Mavis Clare. She claims to have been once 'shockingly poor; and even now I am not rich, but I've got just enough to keep me working steadily, which is as it should be'. Unlike the aspiring author Tempest, who is willing to pay critics to fraudulently 'boom' his first novel, and whose publisher announces a tenth edition even though previous editions are unsold, she self-identifies as 'different'. She can attract readers 'without the aid of

[38] Ibid, p.309.
[39] Ibid, p.372.
[40] N.N. Feltes, *Literary Capital and the Late Victorian Novel* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1993), pp.4–5.
[41] Corelli, *Treasure of Heaven*, pp.372, 371.

hard cash' and despite being 'maliciously slated' in Tempest's 'slaughtering article'.[42] Her exemplary literary life 'working steadily' for the edification of the people, and with great financial probity, is what draws Tempest away from the Devil's temptations of riches and returns him to honest literary work. Tellingly, it is only then that his novel begins to sell.

It is also significant that Mavis wields a 'Sword of Genius' and is both pugnacious and serenely content with her lot outside the literary establishment. Her combative nature is symbolised by her pets, a St Bernard dog that attacks Tempest's companion Lucio (the Devil), as well as 'quarrelsome' pigeons named after the periodicals that slate her.[43] This is no meek female writer but one who forcefully, if gracefully, defends her corner. Although Corelli was not in any usually understood way a protofeminist, being resolutely anti-suffragist for most of her life, it is striking how assertive she was in maintaining the intellectual equality and economic independence of the woman artist. In contrast, Lyn Pickett has noted that typically, the female artist in New Woman fiction had to negotiate various forms of self-sacrifice, 'the sacrifice of the self to or for art; the accommodation of her aesthetic ambitions to the demands of the marketplace' or 'the subsuming of her own aesthetic or professional ambitions to those of a male relative; the abandonment of them for domestic duties'.[44] Corelli, however, was not willing to make sacrifices or to submit to the verdicts of (usually male) critics and the arbiters of the marketplace. Acknowledgement of her status through appropriate financial reward, sufficient to maintain independent living and thinking, was therefore crucial.

Indeed, despite being the most commercially successful author of her day, Corelli considered herself, like Mavis Clare, to be a worker immune to financial greed, but impelled to ensure fair treatment. Her annual income in the 1900s has been estimated as £18,000, with advances of £7000 or more for each new book, while a July 1906 article pasted in one of her scrapbooks reiterates the same superior annual book sale figures compared with those of Hall Caine, Kipling and Mary Ward as *The Preston Herald's* article cited in the Introduction.[45] Like Ward's, her career spanned the change from the gentleman publisher to a mass market publishing industry as well as the growing professionalisation of the writing profession — for example she joined Walter Besant's Society of Authors as early as 1892.[46] Yet, for much of her

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[42] Corelli, *The Sorrows of Satan*, pp.173, 131, 163, 154, 164.
[43] Ibid, pp.230, 240, 236, 233.
[44] Lyn Pykett, 'Portraits of the Artist as a Young Woman: Representations of the female artist in the New Woman fiction of the 1890s', in *Victorian Writers and the Woman Question*, ed. by Nicola Diane Thompson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp.135–50 (p.142).
[45] Philip J. Waller, *Writers, Readers and Reputations: literary life in Britain 1870–1918* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p.772; an unattributed journal article in Corelli's own scrapbook, quoted by William Stuart Scott, *Marie Corelli: The Story of a Friendship* (London: Hutchinson, 1955), p.233.
[46] Waller, p.793.

career she avoided using the services of a literary agent to maximise her income. Corelli is quoted in 1901 as claiming 'I do not employ a literary agent, I consider that authors, like other people, should learn how to manage their own affairs themselves'. Like other skilled workers, she deemed that authors should be able to manage 'the practical part of their profession' as part of the discipline of earning just reward.[47] Her correspondence with her first publisher George Bentley was constantly concerned with sales, pricing, and the level of her remuneration. At one point she accused Bentley's firm of inadequate marketing of her back catalogue, as evidenced by colonial sales, in comparison to the greater success of Methuen (to whom she had recently moved) at promoting *Barabbas.*[48] However, it is possible to interpret this as not only concern for greater income (which Methuen had shown possible) but also desire for just treatment and for her work's widest possible reach.

Corelli's literary model therefore envisaged economic and philosophical independence as achievable through the financial probity of honest exchange between author and reader. What the reader gained from this exchange will be examined shortly. More immediately, it is important to note that throughout Corelli's fiction the writing of fiction itself is a recurrent theme, an integral part of the defence and elevation of the writing tradition, including the Romantic poets and earlier nineteenth-century novelists, that Corelli saw herself following. Therefore, it is almost impossible not to see the recurrent figures of morally upright writers and artists in Corelli's fiction, such as Mavis Clare, as symbolizing, if not Corelli herself (as she ardently maintained), then at least the kind of writer that she aspired to be. Martin Hipsky sees such figures as the means of critiquing a dehumanizing 'cultural modernity', reconciling 'the dissonance between a Christian discourse of virtue and an emergent free-market fundamentalism'.[49] Yet, I would argue, however, that they represent the denial of the dictates of the so-called 'free-market' — which Corelli, as we have seen, did not think operated freely. Instead, Corelli sought simultaneously to inhabit and reimagine market forces by maintaining the author's right to earn an honest living and provide something of value in return. Her model of the literary marketplace sought to find an alternative to the profit motive while protecting the vulnerable romance writer and reader from attack. Corelli's thinking was therefore a fascinating combination of ethical high-mindedness and wish fulfilment with combative self-interest. It desired to amend the working of the marketplace by placing the bond of sympathy between author and reader at its centre. As Andrew McCann notes,

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[47] Kent Carr, *Miss Marie Corelli* (London: Henry J. Drane, 1901), p.78. Marie Corelli started to use A.P. Watt's services as a literary agent in 1904.
[48] Letter from Marie Corelli to Richard Bentley, 14 June 1894, Bentley Papers, vol LXXXVII: 27 August 1892–29 January 1895 (Add MS 46646), British Library, London.
[49] Martin Hipsky, *Modernism and the Women's Popular Romance in Britain, 1885–1925* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2011), p.87.

Corelli like Hall Caine 'advocated changes in the book trade that had as their goal an unimpeded relationship between author and consumer that would apparently facilitate a democratic fidelity to the tastes of the average reader'.[50] Corelli built on Walter Besant's hope that a network of circulation between author and reader would mitigate the institutional biases of the marketplace.

This was not solely self-interest however because in promoting the inter-dependency of author and reader she was attempting not only to protect a highly comfortable income, but also the standing and awareness of readers recently entering the marketplace. On the one hand, therefore, artistic integrity for Corelli required publishers to present her 'brain work' fairly, doing 'the best they can for their authors, as well as for themselves'.[51] Self-interest figured greatly here as she wanted readers to purchase rather than to borrow her books. Hence, she believed that 'the true lover of books […] will manage to buy them and keep them as friends in the private household' — as opposed to 'the dirty habit' of perusing 'soiled' volumes borrowed from 'Free Libraries' maintained at the expense of the 'easily gulled' ratepayer.[52] On the other hand, the idea of books as friends also suggested an honest literary exchange. As a consequence of financial stability, those with 'the power of the Pen' 'will work always for the public, and try to win laurels from the public alone'. Thereby, the 'most healthful and happy life in the world' is a literary life because of the 'the refinement of taste it engenders, the love and sympathy of unknown thousands of one's fellow-creatures which it brings'.[53] Here Corelli was expressing her desire for a purified monetary exchange which would financially support an inspired author such as herself, who would in turn provide succour and guidance to sympathetic (paying) readers. This was nothing like the 'money standard' of 'merit' that Gosse bewailed was skewing disastrously the judgment of the literary marketplace.[54] The author was simultaneously a worker and an artist, worthy of status and proper payment, just as Walter Besant maintained. Equally, for Corelli, commercial success was vindicated if it turned pecuniary exchange into a meeting of minds in which the reader was fully paid back by 'refinement of taste', and moral instruction.

Her literary model therefore envisaged the imparting of moral 'truth' to readers as key. Significantly, Mavis Clare is described by the narrator as an 'angel at the gate of a lost Paradise' and 'personified truth' while Tempest also salutes her 'noble work'.[55] Here the bond of sympathy

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[50] Andrew McCann, *Popular Literature, Authorship and the Occult in Late Victorian Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), p.8.
[51] Corelli, 'The Happy Life', in *Free Opinions,* pp.326–39 (p.336).
[52] Marie Corelli, 'A Vital Point of Education', in *Free Opinions*, pp.1–13 (pp.9, 10).
[53] Corelli, 'The Power of the Pen', p.297; 'The Happy Life', p.339.
[54] Edmund Gosse, 'The Influence of Democracy on Literature', in *Questions at Issue* (London: William Heinemann, 1893), pp.35–67 (p.59).
[55] Corelli, *The Sorrows of Satan,* pp.167–68, 169, 176.

between writer and reader was conceived as involving the reader's communion with inspired text. It was a question of reading in sympathy with the author's vision: 'of giving one's self up to one's author, sans prejudice, sans criticism, sans everything that could possibly break or mar the spell, and being carried on the wings of gentle romance away from Self'.[56] In other words, the reader must submit to the author's vision. Indeed, Corelli's literary model was based on her fiction's status as authoritative religious instruction, which was intended to be experienced by readers as alternative secular scripture. A fuller analysis of one example, *A Romance of Two Worlds* (1886), and readers' responses to it will be analysed in chapter five. Here, it is apposite to note that Biblical texts were frequently used to underline the commanding status and intent of Corelli's fiction. Tellingly, when Lotys talks about the education being taken 'under any circumstances', she quotes Luke's gospel to support her argument: 'He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree'.[57] The implication is that Corelli's fiction is as authoritative, prophetic, and urgent as the Bible itself. Similarly, justification for *Ardath's* fierce denunciation of an amoral and irreligious modern civilisation is claimed by quoting Jesus's warning: 'Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword'.[58] This is a novel that both takes on the authority of the Messiah himself and the tone of an Old Testament prophet, with the use of the monk Heliobas as spokesperson for the Corellian worldview. More than that, Corelli's fiction almost considered itself as a replacement for scripture. For example, *The Treasure of Heaven* reworks Matthew 6. 20-21: 'lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also'. The sermon on the mount is explained and brought up to date for a turn-of-the-century world by a novel that could speak to an audience in a way that no bible text alone or sermon could do. Tellingly, the romance writer Irene Vassilius in *The Soul of Lilith* [1892] can mediate the divine — as a 'visionary […] you see things not at all of this world!'[59] Corelli's texts aspired to a spiritual and moral authority which appeared equal to, and its accessibility greater than, holy writ itself. It is no surprise therefore to find that Corelli's work prompted many sermons across the land over a long period in cathedrals, parish churches, chapels, and meeting rooms.[60]

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[56] Corelli, 'A Vital Point of Education', pp.5, 6.
[57] Luke 1. 52.
[58] Matthew 10. 34.
[59] Marie Corelli, *The Soul of Lilith* (London: Methuen, 1897 [1892]), p.218.
[60] For example: the unconventional Anglican Rev. H.R. Haweis preached on *The Sorrows of Satan* in the St James Chapel, Westmoreland Street (*The Greenock Telegraph and Clyde Shipping Gazette*, 24 April 1896, p.4); the Presbyterian minister, Rev. T. Foster Edwards gave an address on *The Master-Christian* at the Bexhill Institute (*Bexhill-on-Sea Observer*, 15 September 1900, p.2); *The Dean of Westminster* read the resurrection scene from *Barabbas* in Westminster Abbey on Easter Sunday (Eileen Bigland, *Marie Corelli: The Woman and the Legend, a Biography* (London: Jarrolds, 1953), p.145); the Rev. R. Roberts lectured on

Jill Galvan, and subsequently Andrew McCann, have explored some of the inconsistencies inherent in Corelli's concept of the author as a kind of religious medium, channelling higher spiritual truths. McCann, for example, argues that Corelli's active agency in the literary marketplace concerning the 'correlation of democratization and commercialization' was contradicted by the reduction of the author to 'the status of a cipher' or 'conduit' channelling messages from the spiritual world.[61] However, it is necessary to nuance this challenge to Corelli's concept of the writer's active spiritual agency — even if mediumship did imply some diminution of the author's personal creativity. In *Ardath,* the inspired poem Theos composes after a dream he later finds to have been composed word for word by the court poet in the ancient Babylonian civilisation of Al-Kyris. Paradoxically, his poem is both new and old. The reason why lies in Corelli's pan-religious mixture of Christianity and spiritualism with concepts from theosophy and Buddhism, that J. Jeffrey Franklin has revealed.[62] In *Ardath*, Theos encounters his earlier poetic self in a previous incarnation, and he discovers that it was this earlier incarnation that had created the inspired text which now speaks to the modern world. The concepts of reincarnation and karma are used here to underline the belief that great literature is timeless. Here what is stressed is not impersonal mediation of the spiritual world, but the agency and mission of the Corellian artist. Theos realises his task is: 'to fill human life with new symbols of hope […] to pour out on all [..] the divine-born balm of Sympathy, which, when given freely and sincerely from man to man, serves often as a check to vice'. Theos's art is therefore relevant to the modern world, like Angus Reay's, through its connection with the perceived eternal values of literature. Unlike books 'written for money only', his honest moral work is written 'with all the authority and persuasiveness of incisive rhetoric' allied to 'lofty purpose'.[63] The artist's work becomes authoritative through a uniquely strong connection with the 'divine-born' spiritual world and its ability to articulate its messages of comfort and admonition. Readers too are offered the prospect of entering this world if they respond to the author's concept of literature as connecting sympathy and moral instruction.

Reading in the 'right' way was therefore at the heart of Corelli's bond of sympathy. In 'A Vital Point of Education', Corelli criticised 'the "educated" class, who actually do not know the beginnings of "how" to read' since they 'take up a novel or a volume of essays, merely to find

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'Marie Corelli's Philosophy of Life' to the Bradford Ethical Society (*Bradford Daily Telegraph,* 20 October 1906, p.1); the Rev. J.D. Robertson preached on *Holy Orders* at the Sion Baptist Chapel, Burnley (*Burnley Express,* 30 September 1908, p.6).

[61] McCann, pp.28, 113.

[62] J. Jeffrey Franklin, *The Lotus and the Lion: Buddhism and the British Empir*e (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008), pp.90–127.

[63] Corelli, *Ardath,* pp.496, 582, 580.

fault with it and fling it aside half unread'.[64] The actual 'brutal bludgeoning' by 'educated' critics of *Barabbas* (1893) — which led to the author instructing her publisher to withhold her books for review — supported her argument.[65] In contrast, 'the million […] do read a good deal, if not yet in 'the right way', but 'if they are ever taught the right way to read, they may become wiser than any political government would like them to be'.[66] Crucially, novels should be read or experienced in a different way to that of critics, the press and the upper classes. The implication is not that readers will develop independent thought, since they will be dependent on the author's insight, but the prospect is that they will benefit by joining with the author in contesting the authority of political and literary establishments. 'For right reading makes right thinking', she argued, and could lead to political and cultural empowerment, since even 'the Education Act would no longer be necessary' as deeper 'education will only have just begun'.[67] Once again we see the perceived educative voice of her fiction, here an informal one potentially greater than formal Board School education. For, as Lotys points out in *Temporal Power*: 'Education is the thing to take at any price, and under any circumstances; — because it alone is capable of giving power!'[68] The implication is that if readers responded to the educative potential of Corelli's voice, then they would be armed culturally and intellectually, and their moral and cultural status bolstered. Here we can identify the potentially strong attractions of Corelli's literary model despite its prescriptiveness.

The idea of deeper reading in tune with the author, rather than the alleged 'skimming' practised by hasty critics, will be examined further in the next chapter when we will find readers joining in the debate about reading methodology. Meanwhile, it must be stressed that in asserting the connection of her writing with timeless spiritual truth and its consequent appeal to 'the people', Corelli was attempting to intervene in the fin-de-siècle art versus market debate. Her model of sympathy was countering Eliza Lynn Linton's contention that 'the democratic wave which has spread over society' was responsible for the literary market's 'vapid sentimentalism' and 'cartloads of absolute rubbish'.[69] However, Corelli was not so much trying to replace the 'high/low' divide with an 'art/market' negotiation which, as Mary Hammond has pointed out, many were trying to do.[70] She was trying to invert the status of the 'democratic wave' and of the high and low as she understood them.

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[64] Corelli, 'A Vital Point of Education', p.6.
[65] Marie Corelli, '"*Barabbas*" — and After', *The Idler,* 7 (February–July 1895), 120–34 (p.121); For an example of a hostile review, see 'The Gospel According to Miss Marie Corelli', *Westminster Gazette*, 26 December 1893, p.3 — in Appendix B, section 1 b).
[66] Corelli, 'A Vital Point of Education', pp.5–6, 13.
[67] Ibid, p.7.
[68] Corelli, *Temporal Power*, p.283.
[69] Eliza Lynn Linton, 'Literature Then and Now', *Fortnightly Review,* 47 (April 1890), 517–31 (p.527).
[70] Mary Hammond, *Reading, Publishing and the Formation of Literary Taste in England, 1880–1914* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), p.11.

This was in order to claim a unique place in the literary marketplace of the day for her own distinctive spiritual and moral contribution — and its reception by a popular fiction reading audience. It involved opposition to the perceived corrupting values driving contemporary publishing trends — including New Woman novels, atheism, aestheticism, decadence, and realism. For example, the path to suicide of Tempest's wife Sibyl in *The Sorrows of Satan* begins with the reading of a New Woman novel — full of 'horrible lasciviousness' but ironically 'praised in all the leading journals of the day'.[71] Its degrading influence is also linked to Swinburne's 'soul-corrupting' irreligious poetry. Furthermore, in *Ardath,* slighting reference is made to the 'ephemeral theories' and faith, so easy of destruction', of a novel about a clergyman 'overwhelmed by scholarship', no longer able to 'believe in the religion he is required to teach'.[72] Indeed, both Brian Masters and Philip Waller suggest that *Barabbas* was written in part as an answer to Ward's *Robert Elsmere*, published five years previously.[73] *Ardath*, too, attempts to refute realism — something Corelli understood rather loosely as permeating the style and content of most *fin-de-siècle* literature and associated with materialism and atheism. Hence, Theos starts out as a poet 'struck dumb by Materialism' but discovers that whereas 'Realism' deals with the 'frequently hideous Commonplace', his literary art reveals 'the Real'.[74] *Ardath* seeks to defeat and replace realist style and its preoccupation with the visible, material world with Corelli's own vision of the 'real' — defiantly comprising time travel, reincarnation, immortality of the soul, and parallel divine universes accessible through dream or trance. This exemplifies what Corelli understood her 'romance' mode could achieve — venturing far beyond the limits of realism, the 'commonplace', and the physical (albeit free in the process to condemn the political corruption of a materialist society) and gesturing towards a distinctively voiced universe of spiritual and moral instruction. It challenged the style, subject matter, and ethics of the entire contemporary literary marketplace.

In sum, therefore, Corelli's literary model of the bond of sympathy was ambitious and utopian as well as self-interested — a provocative and potentially powerful intervention. It claimed that 'the people' could be stirred, educated, and morally instructed by the reading experience itself. It was highly self-confident in aspiring to provide a voice of protest for the people, and ambitious for the status and authority sufficient to control the operation of its own corner of the literary marketplace. However, this proved, as chapter five will demonstrate, both attractive and contentious. On the one hand, it offered efficacy and value in helping readers to

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[71] Corelli, *The Sorrows of Satan,* p.294.
[72] Corelli, *Ardath,* pp.526–27.
[73] Brian Masters, *Now Barabbas was a Rotter: The Extraordinary Life of Marie Corelli* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1978), p.130; Waller, p.784.
[74] Corelli, *Ardath,* pp.29, 490–91.

negotiate the moral complexities and failures of modern society. On the other hand, Corelli's potentially over-prescriptive claims for moral authority were jeopardised by internal inconsistencies which proved controversial. As preparation for chapter five's analysis of readers diverse and opposed reactions it is now necessary to describe these ambiguities in more detail. The cultural authority of her late-Victorian literary model of sympathy was at stake.

The Challenge of the Sympathetic Reading Experience

The contentiousness of Corelli's fiction, and the problems of interpretation it set, commenced for some readers with the ambitious nature of its claim for authoritative moral status. Corelli's aspiration for her fiction to be considered as secular scripture risked becoming an authorial tactic that turned the reader/writer relationship into a prescriptive straitjacket — that of an inspired transmitter and passive receiver — despite *Temporal Power*'s admonition to 'not let a hired Press think for you' and to 'think for yourselves'. As Jill Galvan remarks, the relationship could be conceived as 'conveying a message-text from an author-sender to a reader-receiver'.[75] Indeed, the literary model of a purified financial exchange was put to the test by how convincing readers found the fiction's class analysis and its would-be upright condemnatory parody of immoral realist and decadent fiction. Moreover, readers were faced with the task of assimilating, or choosing from among, inconsistencies, contradictions, and alternation of tone between the lofty, the vitriolic and the titillating. Chapter five will show how seriously both supporters and opponents of Corelli's literary model took the challenges of the juxtaposition of genres and of contrasting tonal registers which were potentially at variance with each other. Fiction that could be accused of both pernicious immorality and praised for its uplifting moral influence proved to be the stimulus for a vociferous debate about reading methods, censorship, and the cultural, moral, and political authority of popular fiction.

First, readers were faced by contradictions in the fiction's class critique and its search for just rule on behalf of the people. For example, in *Temporal Power*, the King joins the band of socialists who are committed to overthrowing the monarchy, claiming paradoxically to 'have played two parts at once, — Revolutionist and King! But both parts are after all but two sides of the same nature'.[76] This sidesteps questions of how a king could be a revolutionary and what his place should be in a constitutional democracy. The paradox that Leroy embodies — both leader

[75] Jill Galvan, *The Sympathetic Medium: Feminine Channelling, the Occult, and Communication Technologies, 1859–1919* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2010), p.97.
[76] Corelli, *Temporal Power*, p.482.

and servant, 'the People's King' as he puts it — underlines the way the novel is simultaneously pointing in two directions. It desires both strong leadership and authority for the people. Lotys tells the King at one point that 'autocracy would be the best and noblest form of government in the world, if autocrats could be found who were intellectual and honest'.'[77] The problem for Leroy is that constitutional monarchy restrains his freedom to act: 'there is no greater slave in all the length and breadth of the world than a King! Bound by the chains of convention and custom, he is coerced more violently than any prisoner'.[78] As the narrator considers the likelihood of 'Revolution' or 'the burning of the rubbish', yearning is expressed for strong leadership to prevent loss of life: 'if there had been but one brave man,—one only!—and that man a King!'[79] It is not surprising that one critic went so far as to say the book's 'distinct moral is that a benevolent despotism is the best possible form of government'.[80] The novel is torn in different ways, drawn to revolutionary socialism, and the scope for greater democratic protest, but also to a royalism flirting with dictatorship — a somewhat troubling affiliation for the author's bond with the people envisaged by her literary model of sympathy. Leroy does overthrow the government, dissolve Parliament, and cut his revenue in half to offset the National Exchequer's deficit, thereby acting on behalf of his subjects, but the future organisation and status of democratic state apparatus is left unclear. Certainly, the King's final decision to abdicate serves to cover up the lacunae and inconsistencies in the novel's political thinking.

Indeed, there is little sense here how the voice or influence of the 'people' is to make itself heard or felt in any practical, constitutional fashion. Just as the novel's socialist credentials were questionable, so its sympathy for 'the people' was similarly ambiguous. Although lauded for their judgment, the people's collective influence seems problematic. Gathered together in a crowd, the public are in danger of becoming a mob, whose moods can be swayed, or spiral out of control. The 'rough justice of the mob' can be 'a terrible thing' the narrator comments and at various points in the novel the mob's instinctive, unthinking angry reactions need to be restrained by the heroic Lotys.[81] At one stage, she saves the King's life, before his true identity is revealed, taking a blow from an assassin's knife in his stead. Crowds can be fickle as well as dangerous. The narrator warns us a 'shouting mob', 'affected by hysteria' can fawn over royalty — 'for this cause a monarch should never rely too much on the plaudits of the mob in a time of conquest, or public festival of jubilation'.[82] While in tune with the needs and desires of the people, the all-powerful

[77] Ibid, p.390.
[78] Ibid, p.479.
[79] Ibid, p.431.
[80] W.H. Helm, 'Books of the Day — A "Plain, Unvarnished" Tale', *The Morning Po*st, 4 September 1902, p.2.
[81] Corelli, *Temporal Power,* p.548.
[82] Ibid, p.496.

leader must sometimes ignore the people's collective voice. However, how the people could follow Lotys's advice to 'seize the hour', if they were to remain a collection of individuals, is unclear. Torn in different directions the novel's critique was therefore inconsistent. Moreover, the novel's definition of 'the people' does not go beyond a vague generalisation. It excludes, according to Lotys, 'tyrants in trade', so there is little sense of how the lower-middle class fit into a multi-layered and changing class system.[83] Instead, Corelli's class politics comprise a somewhat simplistic them and us divide between the powerful and the powerless. If readers, therefore, were to take a coherent political message from the book, it would require concentrating on those elements of the class critique they found most persuasive and paying less attention to the other aspects pulling in different directions. Here the perceived strength of its articulation of readers' opinions was crucial.

Similar inconsistencies in Corelli's characterisation of her readers posed questions about the coherence of her would-be high-minded commercial literary model of exchange and of its aspiration to speak for the common people. The prominence of a highly commercially successful body of fiction could not be put down solely to its attractions to (and affordability for) the newly literate, board-school-educated reading public. Indeed, Corelli was not above citing Queen Victoria's request to be sent her books as evidence of their worth, making sure that the press passed on the good news.[84] She sought cultural validation by publicising the good opinions of royalty worldwide and ensuring that these were included in rare authorised press profiles or support from apologists.[85] An ingratiating attitude to royalty co-existed uneasily with *The Treasure of Heaven*'s idealisation of the peasantry. Moreover, it seems fair to conclude, as Philip Waller does, that Corelli 'was read by all social classes, with perhaps a preponderance in that expanding group of aspiring upper-working class and lower-middle class'.[86] Records demonstrate that she was indeed read by a wide audience ranging from statesmen such as Gladstone to English schoolgirls aged 15-18, seamen, soldiers, policemen and an impoverished Cornish mother — in

[83] Ibid, pp.281, 277.
[84] For example: Letter from Marie Corelli to the Editor, *The Middlesex County Times,* 1 October 1892, p.6. In intervening in the public debate concerning the ban of her books by Ealing Public Library Committee, she wrote to banish any 'doubt' about Her Majesty's 'liking for my books' which implicitly outweighed 'the spiteful abuse and rancorous sneers' of her critics.
[85] Arthur H. Lawrence, 'Illustrated Interviews LIX — Miss Marie Corelli', *Strand Magazine: An Illustrated Monthly*, 16 (July 1898), 17–26 (pp.23–24) refers to praise from Indian princes and Rajahs, and the Queens of Italy, Romania and Austria; Kent Carr, p.59 points out 'the fact that her work gave enjoyment to the best woman of her time—the late Queen'; Queen Victoria's approval was also highlighted by T.F.G. Coates and R.S. Warren Bell, *Marie Corelli: The Writer and the Woman* (Philadelphia: George W Jacobs, [1903]), p.147; A. St John Adcock, 'Marie Corelli: A Record and an Appreciation', *The Bookman*, 36 (May 1909), 59–78 (pp.62, 60, 64) contrasted the insults Corelli suffered 'at the rough hands of "the great vulgar and the small"' with the appreciation shown by Victoria and Gladstone.
[86] Waller, p.790.

other words, young and old, rich and poor, male and female, buyers and borrowers, across the class divide.[87] Corelli's dismissive attitude towards tradesmen being elected to Parliament in *Temporal Power* fits ill with the fact that such people would have figured significantly among her readership, their income being sufficient to afford to buy her novels. For example, Stratford oral history records show that one of Corelli's fellow residents, the wife of the owner of a window cleaning and carpet beating business, had 'a bookcase full' of her novels, always buying 'hot off the press' her 'latest'.[88] Tellingly, Corelli fails to acknowledge that the *Treasure of Heaven*'s altruistic group of tramps and gypsies, who raise half-a-crown between them to aid Helmsley's travels westwards, could never have afforded the six shillings necessary (or four shillings and sixpence in cash) to purchase the very novel which extols their virtue.[89] Their gift is 'made up of coppers and one sixpence', indicating the poverty of these supportive vagrants. It proves ironic that this money is never spent but 'enclosed in a casket of gold' after Helmsley's death – the ostentatious display of wealth is the only way the novel conceives that the tramps' self-sacrifice can be commemorated.[90]

Hence, Andrew McCann considers that what he terms Corelli's 'political theology' registers 'duplicitously the appearance of "the people" as a locus of undecidability'. On the one hand, he argues, readers are 'a collection of consumers, on the other an entity with a claim to recognition that can't be addressed through the mechanisms of the marketplace'.[91] McCann's point is a strong one but is open to further nuance. Certainly, Corelli's concept of her readers was a loose and problematic one. Moreover, Corelli was understandably unable to resist the force of the 'mechanisms of the marketplace' and hence occasionally acceded to the pressure for press profiles as noted above (albeit only when she was in control of the final result). Certainly, she could also not entirely escape authorial commodification and finally agreed, in the frontispiece to *The Treasure of Heaven,* to her publisher's demand for an authorised photograph. And indeed,

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[87] Respectively: Bigland, pp.109–10; Kate Flint, *The Woman Reader 1837–1914* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), p.159; Waller, p.789; *UK RED*, the Reading Experience database: <http://www.open.ac.uk/Arts/reading/UK/search_basic_results.php?keyword=corelli > [accessed 28 October 2015]; Waller, p.71; *UK RED*.

[88] Memory of Eileen White's grandmother: 'Transcript of the Stratford memories of Joy Collins (b. 1920) and George & Eileen White (b. 1916/1917 respectively), interviewed by Cyril Bennis, 19 November 1990, for the Stratford Oral History Project', Marie Corelli Archives (DR 730/2/2), Shakespeare Birthplace Trust, Stratford.

[89] For example, adverts for *The Treasure of Heaven* quoted a 'cash price' of 4s 6d charged by Jarrolds in the *Eastern Daily Press*, 19 September 1906, p.6; the same charge was made for Corelli's *God's Good Man* (1904) by William Hunter, as with other popular novels such as by Hall Caine — *The Evening Post* [Dundee}, 2 December 1904, p.6.

[90] Corelli, *Treasure of Heaven*, p.545.

[91] McCann, p.114.

the press did revel in highlighting this news far more than it did in reviewing the book itself.[92] However, this does not mean that Corelli set out with the intention of treating her readers as 'a collection of consumers'. The problem was not so much confusion or duplicity in her conception of readers' experience of texts creating a sympathetic bond, more the inadequacies and gaps in Corelli's unpragmatic moral vision underpinning it. Just as the author could not bring herself to include library borrowers within her conception of her circle of readers, so her literary model was unable to relate the honest poverty of *The Treasure of Heaven*'s peasants, and potential readers of Angus Reay's novel, with the financial success that becoming a 'literary Titan' might generate. Excessive personal wealth is a problem that the novel cannot deal with.

Significantly, Helmsley is unable to conceive of any useful way for his millions to be spent. When he asks what would happen if 'some millionaire' were to leave his Somerset villagers a thousand pounds apiece, the local clergyman tells him 'their joy would be turned to misery […] and their little heaven would become a hell!' That 'they are all poor people in Winchcombe' is the reason why 'everyone not only seems, but is happy!'[93] The assumption is that self-sufficient living and happiness can be achieved through work which, in this idealised rural world, is never in short supply — utterly unlike Ward's world of sweating trades depicted in *Sir George Tressady*. Charitable interventions to improve public life are also not needed so Ward's philanthropy is not an option, either. Andrew Carnegie is described as 'planting "free" libraries (for which taxpayers are rated) all over the country — and pauperising Scottish University education by grants of money'. His actions are excoriated by Angus Reay as those of 'a sort of little Pontiff unto himself'.[94] University education according to Angus needs to be 'earned by hard work, hard living, patience, perseverance and grit' — financial self-reliance stems from character once again. Carnegie's (and Ward's) role as public benefactors is therefore denied to Helmsley as it represents counter-productive interference.

Since Helmsley is understandably unable to bequeath his wealth to the young gold-digger angling for a proposal at the start of the book, the only option remaining to him is to leave his money in his will to the noble villager Mary Deane who has given him a home — someone who does not need it and does not want it. After Helmsley dies, Mary receives the news of his bequest with 'dismay'. She declares she is 'very sorry that he has left his money to me — because it will be so difficult to know how to dispose of it for the best'. When her proudly independent fiancé

[92] In my research in the British Newspaper Archive, I noted, before I stopped counting, 20 references to the publication of Corelli's first authorised photograph, from *The Evening Telegraph* [Dublin], 1 August 1906, p.4, to *The People's Journal* [Aberdeen], 4 August 1906, p.5, to The Daily News [London] 3 August 1906, p.4.
[93] Corelli, *Treasure of Heaven*, p.495.
[94] Ibid, p.322.

Angus Reay hears the news he sinks 'deeper and deeper into the Slough of Despond', says it 'has ruined my life', and announces he cannot now marry her since he can only love 'the poor working woman' he first met.[95] Indeed, the rupture of their engagement and the responsibility of the money drives Mary to attempt suicide and, illogically, to leave all the money to Reay. A happy ending of ecstatic reconciliation is only made possible by abandoning any coherence of the pass-the-parcel plot and substituting a dramatic cliff-top rescue for inconvenient practical problems of how to spend money wisely. *The Globe* reviewer speculated that the couple could set up 'an "honest" newspaper' but the text itself, which the reviewer felt was 'unconvincing', was unwilling to go even this far.[96] Hence the novel's wish fulfilment belief in the self-sufficiency of work and love is unable to equate Angus's anticipated authorial success with the possession of wealth.

Such incompatibility despite its apparently lofty philosophy sat uneasily with a novel that reputedly sold a record 100,000 copies on publication and therefore provided considerable income for its author.[97] The contemporary press constantly reported Corelli's sales figures, advances, and royalties income, with *The Master-Christian* (1901) estimated to have earned £20,000.[98] Indeed, the *Yorkshire Evening Post* in January 1906 rather cheekily used the basis of Corelli's income per word as a point of comparison for its own competition offering £50 per line.[99] Therefore Corelli's elision of difference between reader and the people, and reliance on the sanction conferred by widespread popularity, could not avoid question marks posed by her commercial success. What reliance could be placed on her fiction's integrity and the judgments of its supporters? For example, *The Treasure of Heaven* prompted Father Ignatius of Llanthony Abbey to undertake a lecture tour extolling the moral virtues of the book. In 1906–07, he criss-crossed Southern England from Ilfracombe to Norwich, claiming that 'God must have put that extraordinary picture in Marie Corelli's mind'.[100] Ironically however, *The Torquay Times* noted that 'so greatly moved were certain ladies he was addressing, that they took off their jewellery and dropped it into the offertory bag'.[101] A novel about the evil of wealth was being used for fund-

[95] Ibid, pp.546, 552–53.
[96] *The Globe,* 30 August 1906, p.5.
[97] Federico, p.2; Julia Kuehn, *Glorious Vulgarity: Marie Corelli's Feminine Sublime in a Popular Context* (Berlin: Logos Verlag, 2004), p.12; 'Lady Novelists Lead – A Tale of Book Circulations', *The Hampshire Telegraph*, 13 October 1906, p.11.
[98] 'Successful Authors' Earnings', *Weekly Irish Times*, 14 December 1901, p.14.
[99] *The Yorkshire Evening Post*, 19 January 1906, p.3.
[100] *Folkestone Express*, 31 October 1906, p.3; Father Ignatius's 1906-07 speaking tour on *Treasure of Heaven* is recorded in *The Morning Post,* 6 October 1896, p.4, *Folkestone Express*, 31 October 1906, p.3, *The Evening News* (Portsmouth), 2 November 1906, p.3, *Norfolk News,* 8 June 1907, p.1, *Hastings & St Leonards Observer,* 3 November 1896, p.11, *Bournemouth Graphic,* 13 December 1906, p.375, *The Western Daily Press*, 15 December 1906, p.5, *The Western Times*, 30 April 1907, p.2, *The North Devon Journal,* 1 August 1907, p.3.
[101] *Torquay Times*, 3 May 1907, p.2.

raising. Such ironies may not have proved a stumbling block to those responding positively to Corelli's secular scripture, as we will see in the next chapter, but the fact of Corelli's commercial success did for others. The very exceptional level of her sales was such as to query the coherence of her fiction's financially idealistic status and potential authority.

Moreover, the lofty moral tone of Corelli's literary model and her fiction's elevation of a divine universe of the 'real' or 'ideal' sat uneasily alongside the caustic and strident strain of Corelli's political voice and her parody of the commonplace world of realist fiction. As chapter one established, Corelli's sympathetic bond with readers shared traits with her belief in the power of love to spiritually unite male and female souls. Such uplifting emotional communion connecting beings beyond death, above the constraints of space and time, to the eternal sphere of the Divine — and the uplifting search for such love even when it is thwarted and subverted by patriarchal attitudes — was a key theme throughout Corelli's career. The idea reached its mystical apotheosis in *The Life Everlasting* (1911), in which the heroine undergoes, in a series of visions, trials of her integrity, rising above 'criticism, ridicule, calumny' in order to join her twin soul, Santoris, who has achieved eternal youth — evidence, we are told, of 'the truth of the Soul's absolute command over all spiritual, material and elemental forces'.[102] The importance of this stance to Corelli's understanding of her uplifting contribution to the literary marketplace cannot be overemphasized. In *Ardath,* when Theos falls in love with 'a dazzling creature of my own imagination', the angel Edris, 'an exquisite ideal whom I will one day immortalize' in verse, the concepts of love, divinity, and literary imagination become indistinguishable.[103] The constant references to the 'ideal' in Corelli's texts suggest an attempt to connect with a Platonic world of spiritual forms. Even more than that, Corelli strove after a fiction that could create the 'ideal', its own reality, through the power of the imagination. In the 1901 lecture, 'The Vanishing Gift', Corelli argued that when civilisation 'emerged from barbarism', it developed 'a poetic soul, — full of ideals, and richly endowed with that gift of the gods — Imagination'. The ability to conceive of 'the beauty of life at its highest, and the perfection of ideals at their best' is owing to 'Imagination, — that wonderful spiritual faculty which is the source of all great creative work in Art and Literature'.[104] The capacity of fiction to foster readers' creative and emotionally and morally sustaining imagination was key. Corelli saw her fiction as a protest 'against mere materialism', expressing the soul's desire for 'a glimpse of God's light', the 'grand ideals of life and love and immortality'.[105] Nickianne Moody has plausibly argued that Corelli's popularity was in part due to

[102] Marie Corelli, *The Life Everlasting* (London: Methuen, 1911), pp.411, 435.
[103] Corelli, *Ardath,* p.83.
[104] Marie Corelli, 'The Vanishing Gift', in *Free Opinions,* pp.273–91 (pp.276, 273).
[105] Ibid, pp.276, 280.

the assurance she gave about the existence of an afterlife.[106] Perhaps even more so, as we shall see in chapter five, was its attempted embodiment of sublime imagination — a transcendent alternative to contemporary culture which Rita Felski terms the 'popular sublime', and whose non-rational metaphysical yearning Julia Kuehn considers a 'feminine sublime' — but whose vision was targeted at both men and women.[107]

The Life Everlasting arguably undermined its own uplifting offer, however, in typical fashion. Hence, the Reverend R.J. Campbell argued that its 'gospel of fullness of life through fullness of love' was marred by a 'strain' of 'hard, bitter, intolerant, unsympathetic insistence on human depravity and culpability'.[108] The mingling of harsh and uplifting voices is deemed incompatible. The same accusation could be made of *Temporal Power*'s combination of the 'burning of the rubbish' and idealisation of Lotys. Here, too, the challenge of the juxtaposition of genres is evident as the ending abdicates entirely from the previous political agenda. A coruscating political satire turns into a tragic love story in which the King, trapped in a cold and loveless marriage, finds inspiration in Lotys. He embraces a love which can never be fulfilled as superior to all forms of earthly power. When Lotys is murdered by a jealous rival, the King ties himself to her burial ship and goes down with her coffin into the depths. As he does so, the narrator tells us: 'The glory of Empire, — the splendour of Sovereignty, — the pride and panoply of Temporal Power! How infinitely trivial seemed all these compared with the mighty force of a resistless love!'[109] Sublimity usurps diurnal politics here. The paradoxical implication is that an imagined realm of (often frustrated) love is superior to the creation of a democratic public sphere, whose current dysfunctional nature has occupied most of the book. Corelli's fiction theory held that 'empires, thrones, commerce, war, politics, society — these things last but their brief hour — the Power of the Pen takes note of them as they pass — but outlives them all!'.[110] Hence, whereas 'fallen dynasties', 'forgotten civilisations', and 'kings and queens and heroes once famous' now lie beneath the sea, *Temporal Power* deems a literature of spiritual love indestructible:

> of things temporal there shall be no duration, — neither Sovereignty nor Supremacy, nor Power; only Love, which makes weak the strongest, and governs the proudest; — and of things eternal we know naught save that Love, always Love, is still the centre of the Universe.[111]

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[106] Nickianne Moody, 'Moral Uncertainty and the Afterlife: Explaining the Popularity of Marie Corelli's Early Novels', *Women's Writing,* 13 (June 2006), 188–205.
[107] Felski, p.119; Julia Kuehn, *Glorious Vulgarity: Marie Corelli's Feminine Sublime in a Popular Context* (Berlin: Logos Verlag, 2004), p.10.
[108] Sermon in the City Temple quoted by Masters, p.244.
[109] Corelli, *Temporal Power*, pp.581–82.
[110] Corelli, 'The Power of the Pen', p.294.
[111] Corelli, *Temporal Power,* p.585.

The novel therefore replaces the 'temporal' with the claims of the 'eternal' in literature, an alternative universe of 'Love' accessible through the imagination. 'No king, — no statesman, can do for a country what its romancists and poets can, — for the sovereignty of the truly inspired and imaginative soul is supreme, and as far above all other earthly dominion.'[112] The bond of sympathy was therefore offering an other-worldly, egalitarian cultural enfranchisement alongside its contrasting class and constitutional critique.

The difficulty was, however, that a paradoxical (and arguably self-contradictory) fiction asked readers to hold two different analyses in mind at the same time, and to see them as complementary. On the one hand, Corelli's novels acted as fierce denunciation of the wickedness of society and articulation of the people's voice. On the other hand, temporal power was of lesser importance than romance art's imaginative inspiration and freedom from realism's oppressive concentration on materiality. The hope was that an artistic credo which deemed Kings and common people to be equal in death would be attractive in both tonal registers. However, the markedly contrasting voices —abusive and ecstatic — risked giving mixed messages which implicitly challenged readers to choose which one to concentrate on.

Even greater ambiguity was to be found in a highly didactic fiction's condemnation of vice and decadence that allowed for their copiously detailed depiction. *Wormwood* (1890), for example, is a parody of Zola's supposedly depraved naturalism but it portrays at length the evildoing of promiscuous priests, of decadent artists who sink to suicide, and of a degenerate narrator suffering from absinthe-induced hallucinations. Episodes depict how the vengeful jilted narrator, having murdered the priest who absconded with his fiancé, then drives her to commit suicide in the Seine, and gloats over her naked dead body in the morgue. Such descriptions left nothing to the prurient imagination. Likewise, in *The Sorrows of Satan,* the obsessive sexual desires of Tempest's wife, Sybil, aroused by reading New Woman novels, are dwelt on in a scene where, scantily and revealingly clad, she lusts after the Devil's kiss. The use of an unreliable narrator in both novels is such that readers are immersed in the very attractions of physical desire and materiality from which the author ostensibly wants to protect them. Here the superiority of a pure 'romance' literature over modern, realist literature involves the fulsome pastiche of (what it perceives as) the very styles condemned.

The purpose of such passages can be illustrated by turning to *Ardath*. Here, the path to the spiritual union finally achieved by Theos and the angel Edris is a tortuous one, with the longest section of the novel dealing with Theos's adventures in the decadent but alluring ancient

[112] Corelli, 'The Vanishing Gift', p.287.

civilisation of Al- Kyris. Throughout the reader is enveloped by the sensual as Theos is tempted by the sexually alluring Priestess, Lysia. He gazes at her body with 'enraptured bewilderment' and 'wild longing' after 'she loosened her veil' and is 'aroused' by 'such dark desires, such retrospective evil, such wild weakness as shamed the betterness of his nature'. The challenge is compounded by arguably unnecessary explicitness: 'her beautiful limbs, rounded and smooth as pearl, could be plainly discerned through the filmy garb of silvery tissue that cling like a pale mist around the voluptuous curves of her figure'.[113] The evocation of the sight and touch of see-through clothing is provocatively 'voluptuous' and leads to further sexual graphicness. 'Ravishing' temple maidens in revealing 'gauzy attire' dance with young men in 'flushed ecstasy' and 'unrestrained excitement' who 'whirled them off into the inviting pleasance beyond'.[114] Lysia then proposes at the orgy's climax that Theos kill the court poet, to take his place in his erstwhile lover's bed. Both the reader and Theos are implicated in being drawn to 'wild longing' in fiction which seems to licence the voyeuristic and prurient.

The extent of the licence accorded is considerable. Lysia ventures into sexual innuendo provocatively comparing Theos, as 'a man of strongly repressed and concentrated passions', to volcanoes that 'wear crowns of ice on their summits' but 'at a touch the flames would leap forth uncontrolled'.[115] The explicitness of a text that believes literature should provide 'a check to vice' is startling. Sex is seen here as alarming but exciting — dangerous loss of control and unrestrainable, natural force. Priapic imagery continues as the toppling of a 'huge white granite Obelisk' occupying a 'prominent' position in the city is luridly described:

> For the Obelisk was now plainly seen to be lurching forward at an angle of several degrees, — strange, muffled, roaring sounds were heard at its base as though demons were digging up its foundations, — then, seemingly shaken by underground tremors, it began to oscillate violently, — a terrific explosion was heard as of the bursting of a giant bomb, — and immediately afterwards the majestic monolith toppled over and fell![116]

Judgment of this as a phallic metaphor designed to subvert degenerate masculinity is convincing; but the pillar's shaking, explosion and collapse carries further disturbing associations.[117] An image which hints at sexual climax and detumescence is also part of the novel's strategy of simultaneous graphic evocation and condemnation of titillation. Whatever the level of its self-awareness concerning the extent of its titillating allure, Corelli's strategy leads Theos, when Lysia attempts to

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[113] Corelli, *Ardath,* pp.199, 209.
[114] Ibid, p.240.
[115] Ibid, pp.234, 240, 218.
[116] Ibid, pp.325, 345.
[117] Gareth Hadyk-De-Lodder, 'Muscular Christianity Unbound: Masculinity in *Ardath*', in *Reinventing Marie Corelli for the Twenty-First Century,* ed. by Brenda Ayres and Sarah E. Maier (London: Anthem Press, 2019), pp.119–135 (pp.130–32).

seduce him, to repeat from the Lord's Prayer: "LEAD US NOT INTO TEMPTATION!'[118] The capitalisation and added exclamation mark, so typical of Corelli's style, underlines the (perhaps intended) function of the text – to act as temptation to readers which they can then rise above. Simon James has helpfully suggested that the appeal of Corelli's fiction derived from the licence given to readers to both enjoy excess and paradox and feel vindicated by the texts' didactic rejection of immorality.[119] Such an assessment highlights the possibilities of either very discriminating reading experiences among Corelli's supporters, or self-deceived and morally dangerous ones — that is certainly what Corelli's opponents believed.

The controversy aroused by Corelli's fiction of temptation will be analysed in the following chapter through new empirical evidence of readers' reactions. Chapter five explores the diverse range of reading experiences provoked by Corelli's vehement class politics, contentious moral didacticism, and elevation of the imagination. It examines how Corelli's voice did articulate some readers' moral concerns about society and views on reading methods in the way her literary model of sympathy envisaged; but it also reveals how many perceived that voice as too strident or immoral. Although the class and gender of those making their own voices heard is often hard to determine, their varied, appropriative reading strategies and judgments are revealing. In short, the next chapter examines the contribution to the literary marketplace of a would-be didactic, authoritative fiction that fostered cultural debate about the helpful influence (or otherwise) of popular fiction through the very controversy it aroused.

[118] Corelli, *Ardath,* p.237.
[119] Simon J. James, 'Marie Corelli and the Value of Literary Self-Consciousness: *The Sorrows of Satan*, Popular Fiction, and the Fin-de-Siècle Canon', *Journal of Victorian Culture*, 18 (2013), 134–151 (p.139).

Chapter 5 Corelli's Controversial Fiction — Reading Experiences and Debate

Introduction

The last chapter examined Marie Corelli's idiosyncratic, but potentially powerful, alternative literary model emanating from her envisaged bond of sympathy with readers and the interpretative challenges her fiction posed. As we have seen, Corelli proposed the benefits of sympathetic reading experiences in unison with the author's vision alongside her claim for her fiction's ability to provide a voice for the voiceless. This chapter now turns to the responses of Corelli's readers and analyses how and why they took her fiction seriously and how they made their own voices heard. Whereas those advocating active, thoughtful reading, or compiling canons of recommended reading, feared that 'the expansion of the reading public', and the growth of desultory reading encouraged by fiction would lead to a 'the growth of a class imagined as passive recipients rather than responsible participants', the evidence from Corelli's readers, both supporters and opponents, shows the opposite.[1] This was fiction whose controversial nature demanded that readers establish their position in relation to it and that therefore sparked fierce public debate. My analysis will show that some readers hailed the novels' political critique, and others responded to authorial claims for authoritativeness in the way that her bond of sympathy conceived, while yet others were vociferously critical. Even some of those who overlooked Corelli's class and literary politics and read for pleasure rather than for moral instruction, responding rather to Corelli's imaginative world of divine love, rose to the challenge to propriety of potentially titillating texts. In the process many were driven to correspond with the author. Whether loved or hated, this was influential popular fiction that, despite its didacticism, provoked a dialogical, and even enfranchising cultural debate in which readers made their voices heard. As fan culture emerged, a would-be prescriptive literary model stimulated many impassioned and self-aware reading experiences, which were then expressed publicly in new ways. This chapter will show that a press that Corelli condemned as corrupt was, at the local level, influenced by New Journalism's stress on personal interest stories and driven by commercial self-interest to focus on local reportage and hence to give space for readers' opinions to be heard.

[1] Leah Price, 'Victorian Reading', in *The Cambridge History of Victorian Literature*, ed. by Kate Flint (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp.34–55 (p.36).

In adapting a classic reading history tradition that has analysed Victorian readers demonstration of their own agency — as explored profitably by Kate Flint and Jonathan Rose among many others — I will show how readers established their position in relation to cultural anxieties about popular fiction and Corelli's self-contradictory moral challenge to contemporary literary and political norms. Matthew Bradley and Juliet John argue that 'writing is a developed and externalized performance, something the act of reading can never be, thus putting readers at a perpetual disadvantage'.[2] However, the new empirical evidence analysed in the pages that follow shows readers beginning to deploy their voices lucidly in a changing fin-de-siècle cultural context. Hence, my interpretation of late-Victorian and early-Edwardian reading strategies is put into dialogue with scholarly understandings of the methods and benefits of active reading experiences, then and now. I will also analyse the democratising effects of such reading responses in the light of Habermas's public sphere theory — as I did with Mary Ward in previous chapters. Corelli's critique of the literary marketplace is therefore examined in relation to Habermas's analysis of the malfunctioning nature of the nineteenth-century public sphere and of how democratic fora should function. In short, the spectrum of reading experiences analysed below will illustrate the democratic contribution of Corelli's literary politics of sympathy, despite its prescriptive intent, in stimulating more participative cultural and political debate about fiction's role and influence. Novels that attempted to establish a direct bond of sympathy with readers did provoke, in Bradley and John's terms, 'participation in the continuing conversation' with the author (indirectly as well as directly), and, importantly, with other readers.

This can be seen in the debates about Corelli's work on local newspapers' letters' pages as well as in a diverse range of secular and religious local groups, reports of whose exchanges also filled the pages of local newspapers for at least fifteen years from 1893 to 1908. In addition, Corelli's fame meant that she was besieged with fan-mail. Although this included 'endless requests for autographs', 'hundreds of love letters', and impertinent requests for memorabilia, it also comprised 'beautiful, helpful, gracious letters I receive from people who are good enough to say that they have derived comfort from what I write'.[3] Although her correspondents were not always uniformly supportive, novels such as *Ardath* (1889) and *A Romance of Two Worlds* (1886), reportedly 'drew letters from all sorts and conditions of men — letters discussing the theories

[2] Matthew Bradley and Juliet John, 'Introduction', in *Reading and the Victorians*, ed. by Matthew Bradley and Juliet John (Farnham: Ashgate, 2015), pp.1–11 (p.3).
[3] Marie Corelli, 'The Happy Life', in *Free Opinions Freely Expressed on Certain Phases of Modern Social Life and Conduct* (London: Archibald Constable & Co, 1905), pp.326–39 (p.336); Kent Carr, *Miss Marie Corelli* (London: Henry J. Drane, 1901), p.58.

propounded in her writings, and asking for information and advice of encyclopaedic character'.[4] The reference to the title of Besant's successful novel by Corelli's apologists, Coates and Bell, is significant in that it highlights the consequences of the commercial success both he and they equated with an influential cultural status for fiction. Indeed, even though Corelli objected to authorial celebrity and New Journalism's use of writer profiles and interviews, she figured prominently in press coverage and became a desirable and trusted confidante for some of her readers. Some of this correspondence, as well as memoirs and a representative sample of press reports and letters to editors are analysed below to demonstrate the nature of the widespread, lively debate her fiction created.

The Reader's Voice and Corelli's Class Politics

It is clear that Corelli's condemnation of society's excesses and corrupt power structures resonated strongly with some readers from the working classes, or from those identifying themselves politically with their concerns. Here we can see that Corelli's model of the bond of sympathy between writer and reader, between author and the common people, did work in the way intended in some cases. Crucially, we can discern a welcome given to the concept of Corelli taking on the role of articulating what she believed were her readers' views and those of the common people. *The Sorrows of Satan* (1895), for example, was evidently seen by some self-identifying working people and politically motivated religious leaders as voicing lower classes' political protest. When the Rev. James Nield preached on the novel in the Methodist Free Church, Grantham in February 1896, he emphasized the book's class critique:

> The book indicated the spirit of unrest at work in the world, and pointed to a time when the poor, badly-fed and ill-paid, would enter their emphatic protest against the disparities in society, caste distinctions, &c. […] one day the democracy of this country would speak, with no uncertain sound.[5]

When his sermon was repeated in April, 'by special request', the *Grantham Journal* recorded that a crowded chapel 'frequently and heartily applauded'.[6] Nield's analysis of the novel's evocation of a 'spirit of unrest' was clearly appreciated by his audience. By associating 'democracy' with 'emphatic protest' against class 'disparities' and poverty he was characterising the book as prefiguring the ability of 'democracy' to 'speak' at some future point. He was not alone in saluting

[4] T.F.G. Coates and R.S. Warren Bell, *Marie Corelli: The Writer and the Woman* (Philadelphia: George W Jacobs, [1903]), p.80.
[5] '"*The Sorrows of Satan*" — Sermon by the Rev. J.W. Nield', *The Grantham Journal,* 8 February 1896, p.3.
[6] *The Grantham Journal*, 11 April 1896, p.4.

the novel's ability to speak for the lower classes in the present. A member of his congregation explicitly commended the book's ability to provide guidance and articulate working-class grievances. 'A Working Man Who Heard the Address' wrote to the *Grantham Journal* arguing that 'in our day, literature is one of the chief factors contributing to the admonition, counsel, &c., of the life of the age', being the source of 'illustrations to enforce laws for the regulation of conduct and life'. He went on to say:

> if every working-man's home were to speak, what a sad and pitiful tale would be told of hardship and need! God help the toiling classes […]. I for one am thankful there is a spirit of unrest and discontent abroad. The working-classes will no longer have it said they are the Lazarus lying at the gate of Dives waiting for his crumbs of sympathy and gifts of charity.[7]

'A Working Man' accordingly ascribes to popular fiction serious political intent and influence, claiming that it could inform 'the regulation of conduct and life'. Corelli's novel is seen as having the role of widening awareness of class injustices and of articulating the viewpoint of the 'working-man's home'. The reference to the parable of the rich man and the beggar Lazarus in the gospel of Luke suggests that the book supports opposition to traditional, patrician 'charity' with its 'crumbs' from the rich man's table. In effect, the fiction is seen as providing a sanctified public forum where a message of 'unrest and discontent' already 'abroad' can be effectively proclaimed.

We can identify here concentration on the underlying class critique of the novel, rather than on its more prominent themes. The plot concerns a writer, Geoffrey Tempest, entering a Faustian pact with a repentant, sorrowing devil — forced eternally to tempt an ever-fallible humankind — and is much concerned with the morality and mission of fiction and those writing it. Those parts, such as the 'tableaux vivants' arranged by the devil to entertain Tempest's society guests which ironically parody and condemn the evils of 'swagger society', however, were what most spoke to both Nield and 'A Working Man'.[8] A class critique that the *Daily Telegraph* dismissed as 'an extremely fierce and violent diatribe', and which W.T. Stead's review criticised as 'the shrewish spitefulness' and 'malice of a disappointed snob', the exaggeration of 'a very unpleasant imagination', the work of a 'little woman', could be taken seriously as political analysis.[9] Here, popular fiction is accorded respectable status and authority — in contrast to the often gendered abusiveness of the national press — and both speaks for readers in condemning

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[7] 'A Working Man Who Heard the Address', Letter to the Editor, *The Grantham Journal,* 22 February 1896, p.8.

[8] Marie Corelli, *The Sorrows of Satan, or, The Strange Experiences of One Geoffrey Tempest, Millionaire: A Romance*, ed. with an introduction and notes by Julia Kuehn (Kansas City: Valancourt Books, 2008 [1895]), pp.199–208 — scenes entitled 'The Autocrat', 'A Corner of Hell', 'Seeds of Corruption', 'His Latest Purchase', 'Faith and Materialism' etc.

[9] *The Daily Telegraph,* 25 October 1895, p.6, in Corelli, *The Sorrows of Satan*, p.382; '"*The Sorrows of Satan*" — and of Marie Corelli', *Review of Reviews,* 12 (October 1895), 453–64 (p.454).

the greed and mendacity of the society of the day and provides them with the opportunity to echo the same perceptions.

We can helpfully compare such reactions with the impact of another popular, and culturally higher regarded novelist, Dickens, on upwardly mobile working-class autodidacts. Jonathan Rose identifies how Dickens was venerated by many Victorians and Edwardian autobiographers as 'the man who got it right' in recording the life of the people, and hence was hailed for his role in 'making them articulate.'[10] There is less confidence in Corelli's own writing that those without 'intellectual endowment' would become articulate themselves, but for some readers Corelli's class critique 'got it right'. It did also help the voice of some recent entrants to the literary marketplace, following the advent of universal elementary education, to begin to make itself heard. For example, a domestic servant wrote a letter to the *Liverpool Echo* in September 1897 to support the complaint of a cook working 15 hours a day at being called an 'idle creature' by her employers if she was found reading. Cymraes, the domestic servant, asserts the importance of having sufficient leisure time to read, declaring: 'I do appreciate some spare moments to have a look at Marie Corelli's works, who seems to understand the character of the upper ten so well'.[11] The reference to the upper ten thousand, or ruling classes, which Corelli is deemed to understand 'so well', shows that this popular fiction reflected (and perhaps even influenced) her understanding of politics and class — and underpinned her antipathy towards uncaring employers. In any case, the fiction had prompted the expression of her own voice.

For many commentators, however, whose social class is hard to determine, confidence in the power of readers to develop their own voices was less strong than that in the potency of Corelli's voice to become a national political force. For example, Fred Allen's response to the prominent class critique of *Temporal Power* (1902) in an *Eastbourne Gazette* article focusses on a particular passage in which the 'people' are stirred into action. There, the noble bard Paul Zouche identifies a growing worldwide 'rebellion against Falsehood' in which 'people are growing strong on their legs, and clear in their brains […] gradually developing into full growth, and awaking to intelligent action.[12] So moved was he that Fred Allen's commentary turned into a personal appeal to the author:

> Yes, Miss Corelli, this is true, and we claim your help. […] We claim your pen for progress, for better government, and for expressing the panting cry of England's poor. But we claim your gifted pen more absolutely to put new faith in men.[13]

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[10] Jonathan Rose, *The Intellectual Life of the British Working Classes,* 3rd edn (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2021 [2001]), pp.112, 114.
[11] 'Cymraes', Letter to the Editor, *Liverpool Echo,* 28 September 1897, p.3.
[12] Marie Corelli, *Temporal Power: A Study in Supremacy* (London: Methuen, 1902), p.146.
[13] Fred Allen, '"*Temporal Power*" — Miss Corelli's New Book', *Eastbourne Gazette,* 24 September 1902, p.2.

His almost revivalist response to the need for 'new faith' (the piece appears to have first appeared in *The Methodist Recorder*) is notable. Equally so is his belief that Corelli's pen is vital to the moral fibre of the nation, to inspire 'better government' and to help alleviate problems of poverty. Crucially, the author's 'help' stems from her ability of 'expressing' the people's 'panting cry' which Allen implies might otherwise be inarticulate. The practical outcome of Paul Zouche's aspirations (as with Lotys's exhortations to the people to exert their latent power, examined in the last chapter) is not stated. What 'new faith in men' will achieve remains unclear.

The question of the reader's self-confidence was also central to the response of 'X' in *The Buchan Observer* — and here the writer's class status, gender, education, and religious affiliation are even less possible to determine. 'X's contribution, 'an appreciation' of *Temporal Power,* considers 'in spite of all that carping critics may write' that it is worthy of reading:

> by those who hunger after the establishment of a saner social order than we have at present, but to whom the avenues of expression are closed because they have not the intellectual endowment necessary to give shape and body to their thoughts.

In warmly welcoming its 'pulverising of all sham and seeming in social life' 'X' concluded:

> the best advice that can be tendered regarding it is this, that the reader pay no attention to anything the critics have written, but go to the book with an open mind, and if he or she does not rise from its perusal a better and braver person, the writer of this note is a poor judge of human discernment.[14]

This claims an educative role for Corelli's popular fiction in that it helps readers to both form their political views and also feel confident in holding them. As well as providing 'expression' for the 'thoughts' of the hitherto voiceless, the novel's morally transformative power is seen as making readers 'braver'. 'X' does not make any comparisons with other contemporary popular writers whose work touched on moral and political concerns, Hall Caine or Ward for example, so we cannot be sure whether Corelli is seen as unusual or exceptional. It is however clear in the reference to the 'sanctification' of the 'primitive instincts' that lie behind 'any movement that ever stirred the world' that it was the strength and probity of Corelli's voice, and its ability to forge an emotional connection with readers, that was crucial. The desired outcome is for readers to be unapologetic for their appreciation of the novel's insights, to stand in solidarity with the author's call for a morally upright 'social order', and to assert their own independent judgment in defiance of critics. Even more so than with Allen, readers' inarticulacy is offset by the echoing of Corelli's views.

[14] '"*Temporal Power*" (by Marie Corelli) — An Appreciation', *The Buchan Observer,* 11 November 1902, p.6.

Of course, the key aim of Corelli's model of sympathy, to voice a single, unified stance of the people, was impossible since working-class opinion was unsurprisingly divided. For example, another member of Rev. Nield's audience wrote to the editor of the *Grantham Journal* under the nom de plume of 'A Working Woman'. She objected to sermons on anything other than the Bible, saying that 'the different wheels, i.e. classes, would fit in better and run smoother, if it were not for the mischievous voices that are always whispering that the poor are badly treated by the rich'.[15] For her, popular literature usurped the role of scripture and engaged in class-based mischief-making; it was therefore not the source of 'counsel' on 'regulation of conduct' that 'A Working Man' had proposed. Indeed, the very stridency of Corelli's voice and its class critique was too much for some. Hence the starting point of Mr. Smillie's 1906 lecture to the Bearsden Current Topics Club was the need to counter Corelli's reputation as a 'shrieker' among parish library borrowers. In this, he reports having been harangued on the train by an elderly gentleman for holding a Corelli novel, when 'all the adjectives in his vocabulary were used in denouncing her writings and the lady herself'.[16] If therefore Corelli's vehemence was never likely to achieve the cultural currency of Dickens, despite the potential balm of her bond of sympathy with readers, the strength of the voices reacting to the tone and authority of her voice (favourably and unfavourably) is striking. When a contestant in a Belfast competition to identify 'The First English Novelist of Today and Why?' chose Corelli for the way her work 'tears the veil from society's shams, showing forcibly the decaying hollowness which lies behind,' one senses the way Corelli's rhetoric permeated some of her readers' vocabulary.[17] Despite the reservations evident elsewhere readers' strong opinions were beginning to be heard. Indeed, Corelli's work, as this chapter demonstrates, was seen by some as a stimulating political irritant, part of a process of growing disrespect for, and discontent with, traditional power structures, and therefore licensing voices with an increasing lack of deference.

Reading Sympathy and Corelli's Secular Scripture

How another section of Corelli's readership reacted positively to the moral authority Corelli claimed for her fiction (as discussed in the last chapter) demonstrates not just how persuasive her conception of the bond of sympathy proved to be but also the way it stimulated readers to

[15] 'A Working Woman', Letter to the Editor, *The Grantham Journal,* 15 February 1896, p.8.
[16] 'Marie Corelli as a Novelist', *The Milngavie and Bearsden Herald*, 26 October 1906, p.6 [W.F. Smillie].
[17] 'The First English Novelist of Today and Why?', Prize Competition No. 491, *The Belfast Weekly News*, 14 March 1896, p.4 [Selected 100 word answers; entry from 'La Chouette'].

express and sometimes interrogate deeply felt reading experiences. Such responses ran counter to many contemporary critics' assumptions about readers' discrimination and judgment and the level of intellectual engagement popular fiction prompted. Ruskin in *Sesame and Lilies* (1865) had separated close critical reading required by canonical material from the shallower attention paid to 'books of the hour'.[18] Tellingly Arnold Haultain, citing Ruskin's methodology in 1896, argued that the 'devourer of the ephemeral novel' was engaged in 'discursive and indiscriminate reading.' A 'vapid reading' experience, he claimed, left no more mental impression than 'shadows cast upon the earth by passing clouds.'[19] In our own time, it is intriguing to note Jonathan Rose's recycling of some of the same prejudices. He argues that nineteenth-century popular fiction was '(mostly) harmless entertainment', with, at best, 'a certain educational value' in encouraging people to read and read more widely, but that 'only canonical literature could produce epiphanies in common readers', could 'transform the lives of readers.'[20] Many responses to Corelli's fiction contradict this. *The Treasure of Heaven*'s (1906) sermonising concerning a radically different, spiritual universe where money was unimportant certainly took on canonical authority for some. For example, a contributor to the *Methodist Recorder* at the time of the author's death, remarked that 'few books have made me thank God so deeply and so spontaneously'. Indeed, he asserts that 'its doctrine of pure disinterested love' was like 'inhaling the sweet odours of the Sermon on the Mount'. That he was inspired to read 'the story over and over again' as if it were scripture that must be mined for the last grains of truth underlines its perceived authoritative status.[21] The book's ambiguities and lack of pragmatism about money are less important than the belief that 'thousands live to bless God for her spiritual contributions'. The ability of Corelli's fiction to help readers to work out and then voice their beliefs, often stimulating dialogue with the author herself, is the subject of this section.

First, we must examine the nature of these kind of reading experiences. Perhaps the estimate of the 'thousands' accepting Corelli's 'doctrine' was not inaccurate since this kind of response evidently had a long afterlife. For example, Enid Scott, the wife of William Stuart Scott whose youthful enthusiasm for Corelli will be considered later, came into contact with what she terms a 'fanatical' band of followers as a result of her association with *The Corelli Papers* fanzine in the 1960s and, perhaps, through observation of the audiences at her husband's lectures. His

[18] John Ruskin, *Sesame and Lilies: Two Lectures*, ed. by Robert Kilburn Root (New York: Henry Holt, 1901), p.9.
[19] Arnold Haultain, 'How to Read', *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* (February 1896), 249–65 (pp.250–51).
[20] Rose, *Intellectual Life*, pp.392, 8, 368, 370–71.
[21] 'Marie Corelli: A Brief Appreciation', *Methodist Recorder*, 24 April 1924, in 'Album of Newspaper Cuttings with Obituaries compiled by "Marie's Maid"'; Marie Corelli Archives, (DR 637), Shakespeare Birthplace Trust, Stratford [hereafter referenced as SBT).

reworking of 1917 lectures into the presentation 'I Knew Marie Corelli' packed 200 people into a Scarborough hall as late as 1950.[22] Enid Scott, unlike her husband no youthful fan of style that she found 'indefinably unpleasing', still became 'intrigued by all things "Corellian"'. She commented in her 1972 memoir:

> I know of no other writer good or bad, to collect a band of 'worshippers', of people who even today, years after her death, still regard her as an almost Supreme Being — a leader in spiritual truth, a near goddess.[23]

Indeed, she remembered one 'very sweet', 'impoverished' old lady who 'in times of stress […] would ask herself, "Now what would dear Marie do?"' Perhaps the idea of 'worshippers' of a 'leader' providing 'spiritual truth' even surpasses the expectations of Corelli's literary model.

However hasty judgments about the unsophisticated nature of such reactions should be avoided. We need to understand and acknowledge how and why, for some readers, the relationship established through the text was a thoughtful and potentially transformative one. This can be explored more fully by turning to the appendix of letters added to later editions of Corelli's first novel, *A Romance of Two Worlds* (1886), where readers' deep engagement with the issues raised are evident. That novel describes the adventures of a musician whose nervous ailments are treated by the 'scientist' Heliobas, whose knowledge of the personal electricity that is the soul enables him to send her into a trance in which her soul floats to other spheres. Electricity is seen as the force that connects human souls with the divine world, with Christ as 'God's cable' linking us to divine love. The work, in its theological aspects, reinterprets Christianity, firmly rejecting many dogmas including the atonement — Christ being not a 'bleeding victim' but the 'means of close communication' with a higher universe of creative 'Love and Beauty'.[24] The heterodox mixture of sacred and human love includes a sub-plot concerning Heliobas's daughter Zara, whose immortal soul is re-united with her divine lover after death. One review described the book as 'pure bosh', but some readers disagreed.[25]

The ten letters in the appendix were examples, Corelli's introductory remarks indicated, of those she received 'daily' from 'utter strangers' exhibiting 'a sympathy of which I never dreamed'. The author's self-justification strategy here is not without grounds for claiming 'the consolation and hope' the book provided — evidence of the psychological counsel provided by a bond of

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[22] *The Belfast Newsletter,* 13 October 1917, p.1 [Advert for a Lecture by Rev. W.S. Scott, 'Marie Corelli, Romancist and Thinker' at Cliftonpark Congregational Church on Monday 15 October 1917]; Scott, p.207.
[23] Enid K.F. Stuart Scott, *The Magnificent Marie: Marie Corelli, Romantic Novelist (1855–1924)* [Unpublished typed MS, July 1972], pp.5, 6, 125, SBT, (DR 270).
[24] Marie Corelli, *A Romance of Two Worlds*, 37th edn (London: Methuen, 1921 [1886]), pp.xvii, xxiv.
[25] Review in *The World,* quoted in Eileen Bigland, *Marie Corelli: the Woman and the Legend, a Biography* (London: Jarrolds, 1953), p.78; reprinted in *The Irish Times,* 17 April 1888, p.4.

sympathy established by the text, therefore.[26] One letter from a clergyman (L.E.F.) thanked Corelli for the book which 'has stopped me on the brink of what is doubtless a crime […] of impending madness. I speak of self-destruction—suicide.' Hope given by the description of a universe of eternal love transformed his anxiety about this world's imperfection ('mockery and failure—and afterwards annihilation!') so that now 'Life smiled again upon me in consoling colours.' Other anonymised correspondents also praised the novel's inspiring capacity to provide meaning and solace. Letter I from M.S., for example, expresses 'sincere gratitude' for the book having filled 'a want in my life' and for having 'deepened and strengthened my belief in and love to God, and […] made the New Testament a new book to me'. Somewhat similarly, the problem that it solved for H.B. (Letter VIII) was that it provided the 'explanation' without which Scripture was 'impossible to accept blindly'. Sight is apparently restored by the novel's exposition of what the Bible perhaps should have communicated more clearly. Other readers go further, claiming for the novel transformative psychological powers. For example, the preacher T.M. felt he 'had, like a leper of old, touched the robe of Christ and been healed of a long-standing infirmity' while R.H. 'felt a better woman for the reading of it twice'. That such sentiments were both typical and long-lasting features of some Corelli reading experiences is demonstrated by a letter from an aggrieved lady, 'A Lover of Justice', writing to the *East Kent Times* in 1908. She objected to a lecture slaughtering 'The Doctrines of Marie Corelli' in terms very similar to those used by R.H., claiming that 'the truths contained in Marie Corelli's books would make me a better woman than all the new theology put together.'[27] Emotional and psychological wellbeing as well as intellectual and moral self-assurance appear to have been common benefits derived from this mode of reading.

These responses also support Rose's understanding that nineteenth-century readers often approached fiction with the same openness to its potential authority as they did scripture. Hence his conclusion that 'the Bible and Bunyan, then, were both read through the same set of inter-changeable frames', whether literal or allegorical, and 'ripping yarns' were read as 'gospel truth'.[28] The acceptance of Corelli's fiction as secular scripture should therefore not be regarded by us as unexpected, even though at the time critics such as David Christie Murray disparaged it as 'unthinking'. He regarded it as 'little more than the long-established truth that the unthinking portion of the public is not only longing for a moral guide, but is ready to accept anybody who is conscious of authority.'[29] However, the internal logic and attractions of such a reading approach are illuminated by George Steiner's conception of the obverse of critical reading. Close reading

[26] Corelli, *A Romance of Two Worlds,* p.xv; ibid — the 'Appendix' of letters I – X, pp. 326–38. For fuller extracts of the texts of these 10 letters, see Appendix B, section 3).
[27] 'A Lover of Justice', Letter to the Editor, *East Kent Times,* 18 November 1908.
[28] Rose*, Intellectual Life*, pp.106, 95.
[29] David Christie Murray, *My Contemporaries in Fiction* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1897), pp.153–54.

was advocated, as we saw above, by Ruskin, but it included, for Steiner, the reader's approach 'as if the text was the housing of forces and meanings'. The perception of '"a real presence" irreducible to analytic summation and resistant to judgment in the sense in which the critic can and must judge' becomes 'a contract with transcendence'. Here 'the reader's contiguities to the text are ontological rather than epistemological, as are the critic's'; for while 'the critic keeps his distance […] the reader attempts to negate the space between the text and himself.'[30] Steiner argues that this often involves repeated readings — as we have seen with R.H. and in the Methodist obituary above. Indeed, Steiner's characterisation of the reading experience is both theological (referring to the presence of Christ in the eucharist) and secular (ontological connection with the text). As such, it sounds not dissimilar to Corelli's idea of 'giving one's self up to one's author, sans prejudice, sans criticism, sans everything that could possibly break or mar the spell and being carried on the wings of gentle romance' to the comfort and inspiration it brings.[31] Yet this involved an element of choice. Steiner's conception is also consonant with a contemporary riposte to David Christie Murray. When Murray's article on Corelli was printed in *The Inverness Courier* in March 1897, Munro Mackenzie wrote a letter to the editor to argue that 'there are two ways of reading an author with a view to understanding him, critically and sympathetically, and the way of sympathy is by far the better.' His argument was that the latter allowed the reader to 'associate with the mind of the writer, penetrate, as it were, behind the scenes, and find out his meaning from within outwards.' A bond of sympathy could connect author and reader via the text, which, in the case of *The Sorrows of Satan*, then engaged the 'unlearned' with the 'new life' it was possible to extract from 'old theological theories and thread-bare themes'.[32]

Such texts could both stimulate readers to work through their conundrums and to articulate them, through a dialogue with the author herself. Fascinatingly, some stood on the verge of surrender to the text, but the final step depended either on the reader's emotional encounter with it or an assurance that the text was the result of the author's own authentic experience. Apparent here is the prompting of readers' voices that self-aware reading experiences encouraged. For example, A.W.L.'s letter (X) to Corelli about *A Romance of Two Worlds*, begs assurance about the author's emotional and intellectual conviction:

> I desire, I *long* to believe. *You* seem so certain of your Creed—a Creed so noble, reasonable and humane—the God you depict so worthy of the adoration of a Universe. I *beg* you to tell me – *do* you feel sure of this beneficent all-pervading

[30] George Steiner, '"Critic"/"Reader,"' in *Real Voices on Readin*g, ed. by Philip Davis (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1997 [1979]), pp.3–37 **(**pp.22,33, 25).
[31] Marie Corelli, 'A Vital Point of Education', in *Free Opinions*, pp.1–13 (pp.5–6).
[32] Munro Mackenzie, Letter to the Editor, *The Inverness Courier,* 23 March 1897, p.3. For fuller extracts see Appendix B section 4 a).

> Love concerning which you write so eloquently? […] I want to believe that *you* believe—and if I felt this, the tenor of my whole life might change.

The longing to believe in the text's affirmation of a universe of 'all-pervading Love' is urgent but the emotional authenticity and efficacy of her 'noble' creed relies on assurance of the author's self-belief. The hope is that if she 'feel[s] sure' then the reader might feel sure too. Then the prospect of a life-changing reading experience would be in prospect. Other letter writers too consider the author's personal spiritual experience a potential proof of the message's validity. B.D. (letter VI) is concerned that present-day religious thinking is 'often a mere mixture of dogma and superstition' and wants to be able to exclude Corelli's novel from this category. Since it would be 'such a relief to have […] vague longings and beliefs confirmed' he asks whether she has 'words of comfort and assurance out of your own experience to give me?' Evidence from Corelli's 'own experience' would provide 'relief' to any doubts and allow erstwhile 'vague longings' to be indulged. Likewise, in letter VII from C.M.E.:

> My excuse [in writing] must be that I so much want to believe in the Great Spirit that 'makes for righteousness' and I cannot! Your book puts it all so clearly that if I can only know it to be a true experience of your own, it will go a long way in dispersing the fog that modern writings surround one with.

Here the likelihood of eventual belief seems less — 'I cannot' sounds almost final — but the question of whether the book describes 'a true experience of your own' is still crucial. The hope is that vicarious experience will be able to communicate the feeling of truth. Clarification will go 'a long way', if not all the way, to disperse the 'fog' the reader is immersed in. Sensing a link between the author's experience and their own, ironically in concert with the age's increasing cultivation of authorial celebrity that Corelli so distrusted, these readers felt impelled to write to ask for explanation and reassurance. The would-be authoritative nature of the text has helped to create the figure of a confidante that readers can relate to and ask for advice — and whose authentic personal experience might be trusted.

One factor as to why readers felt the need for this emotional reassurance can be found in an essay by Cardinal Newman In which he talks about the nature of belief. He argues that certainty requires consciousness of a 'specific feeling […] a feeling of satisfaction […] arising out of a sense of success, attainment, possession, finality, as regards the matter which has been in question.'[33] Or, as Rachel Ablow glosses it, 'by "certitude", Newman designates a belief that […] we can know to be true because of what it feels like to hold it' and which is made possible by 'making the consciousness of certitude in matters of faith seem identical to the consciousness of

[33] John Henry Newman, *An Essay in aid of a Grammar of Assent,* 3rd edn (London: Burns, Oates & Co., 1870), pp.196–97.

certitude in everything else.'[34] Once again, the sacred and secular are approached in the same manner, and in the case of Corelli's bond of sympathy it was a feeling of rightness that could provide access to what Steiner terms 'the housing of forces and meanings'. If this is combined with openness to the validation by vicarious experience evident above, then a related present-day comparison, although it must be stressed not a parallel, might be the kind of reading experience encouraged in reading group therapy and the active interrogation encouraged of what feels right. As Patricia Canning concludes from her work with prison reading groups, 'stories provide a means of narrative imagining' and 'the tools we need to conceptualise experience', so that through 'their personal connections to the literature', readers negotiate with the framing of fictional invention 'to make the fictional stories – and their own narratives – "make sense"'.[35] The communal discussion and mutual support available within such reading groups are of course very different from the distance of the author/reader relationship for Corelli's readers. However, in related fashion, Corelli's readers could 'make sense' of the confusing and troubling world they lived in if her secular scripture felt right. Here the emotional connection from writer's to reader's heart, that Corelli's bond of sympathy imagined, did indeed become key to potentially transformative reading experiences. The internal dialogue generated required expression, for some in dialogue with the author.

Entertaining Reading Experiences

In some of the above letters to Corelli, we can see the beginnings of a questioning, dialogical relationship with her work that I will shortly analyse in more detail since this influenced the public debate her work generated. Before that, I want to consider the ways in which some readers prioritised reading pleasure above the spiritual uplift and moral instruction Corelli's fiction intended. This reveals how their complex reading experiences marked some readers' increasing confidence in their interpretative abilities and galvanised them to express their opinions on the relevance of their reading to the public sphere. To a greater extent than envisaged by 'X' earlier, the fiction could facilitate a measure of creative empowerment which encouraged readers to assert their views.

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[34] Rachel Ablow, 'Reading and Re-reading: Wilde, Newman, and the Fiction of Belief', in *The Feeling of Reading: Affective Experience & Victorian Literature,* ed. by Rachel Ablow (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2010), pp.157–78 (p.159).

[35] Patricia Canning, '"I loved the stories – they weren't boring": Narrative Gaps, the "Disnarrated" and the Significance of Style in Prison Reading Groups', in *The Edinburgh History of Reading: Subversive Readers*, ed. by Jonathan Rose (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2020), pp.333–50 (pp.333, 344).

The last chapter noted the marked disjunction between Corelli's abusive rhetoric about political and literary elites and her romance mode elevating an idealised universe of spiritual, platonic love. Corelli's bond of sympathy assumed the reader's capacity to hold two very different visions and tones of voice in tension, to see them as complementary rather than in conflict. In practice, however, readers often sanctioned one style and set of values and either overlooked or paid less attention to the other. Even more so than the class-conscious interpretations of *The Sorrows of Satan* cited above, which paid little attention to its critique of the literary marketplace, some readers' approaches to Corelli's novels concentrated on those aspects that particularly spoke to them. For example, when an anonymous solicitor 'aroused by this craze' for Corelli's work, read *Temporal Power,* he found it confirmed his view that 'novels were as silly as ever', and that, like 'women often are', the author is 'too wildly ignorant of the world'. His gendered prejudice is deemed to be proved by the fact 'my wife and daughter have both devoured the volume and informed me that it is "beautiful"'.[36] The term 'devoured', suggests that voracious entertainment had been the prime element of his family's reading experience. We do not know if they ignored the political plot or whether they agreed with its class critique, but the word 'beautiful' would appear to endorse the book's culminating rejection of realism and its celebration of a romance world of idealised love. Of course, one must be wary of drawing too many conclusions from a gendered judgment reflecting the typical pleasures women were supposed to derive from reading.

We can be surer of the nature of the reading pleasure experienced and recalled in some detail in William Stuart Scott's memoir of his relationship with Corelli and her work. Scott, the son of a Belfast shipyard worker, vividly recalls his stimulating and uplifting encounter with Corelli's novels in the early years of the twentieth century. *The Mighty Atom* (1896) especially spoke to his 'boyish yearnings and aspirations […] the longing for assurance of the permanence of beauty'.[37] Here it is clear that the fiction provided an aesthetic alternative to the harshness of a strict protestant upbringing. Once again, we can identify the combination of sacred and secular in a mode of reading comprising religiously sanctified creative inspiration. For, the novels chimed with his own thwarted imaginative desire that life should be 'an apprehension of "The Kingdom of God", a never-ending adventure in wonderland for all who will, here and now, by faith enter into it'.[38] By 1904, having read much of Corelli's oeuvre by using the family ticket at the Free Library in Royal Avenue, Scott became 'simply drunk with admiration for Miss Corelli's imaginative mind' which 'spoke to me with the authentic voice of the evangelist'. For him, Corelli's inventiveness

[36] 'Miss Corelli's Latest. By An Ordinary Man', *The Academy and Literature,* 63 (6 September 1902), 239–40.
[37] William Stuart Scott, *Marie Corelli: The Story of a Friendship* (London: Hutchinson, 1953), pp.47, 45.
[38] Scott, p.43.

proffered spiritual and creative empowerment, an escape from the constrictions of a harsh family life in which he was beaten by his father if he failed to bring home healthy, masculine adventure books from the library. This is a reminder of just how contentious the choice of reading material was at the time, an issue which so concerned public libraries that Ealing in 1892 refused to lend certain Corelli titles, Acton banned Corelli, Ouida and Zola altogether and Newcastle in 1889 excluded fiction entirely.[39] It took negotiation with his father over the moral probity of *The Mighty Atom*'s advice against lying before Scott was allowed to use the family ticket to borrow Corelli's novels on Tuesdays and Wednesdays (on the rare occasions when they were in) — provided he supplied 'good books' on other days. It is therefore apposite to note that Scott in his reliance on the public library stood outside the Corellian literary model of book purchase in exchange for spiritual insight. Despite this, his early reading of Corelli's pamphlet, 'What Life Means to Me' (with its 'promise of a Higher Life' of 'spiritual progress' lived 'joyously, devoutly, hopefully, and lovingly') had formed a kind of bond of sympathy with the author's religiously-tinged cultural values.[40] Therefore, looking back somewhat ironically in his 1955 memoir, with changed literary taste and religious opinions, Scott is still grateful for the vision provided by his early reading experience which offset 'the appalling loneliness of spirit which can afflict an imaginative child'.[41] The cultural and imaginative empowerment it had offered was one which helped him lead an active adult life in England as a congregationalist minister. It caused him to voice publicly the significance of Corelli's work, lecturing on it throughout his life, and to befriend a prickly, combative, and lonely author in her difficult post-war years of decline. His memoir puts flesh on the bones of David Vincent's contention that the 'all-consuming enjoyment of fiction had played a crucial role in translating the barely literate schoolchild into the fully fledged reader' and that 'of all the possible functions of literacy in this period, the development and feeding of the imagination was much the most intensive'.[42]

Crucially, Scott reports that he had taken what was 'wholesomely religious' and 'skimped or ignored the rest', extracting those elements of the texts that fed his own escape from the cultural poverty of his childhood.[43] He describes therefore how he was largely unconscious of the more opinionated and questionable aspects of a morally didactic fiction that the last chapter identified. Scott's appropriation of his texts was therefore not that of Roger Chartier's classic conception of

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[39] Mary Hammond, *Reading, Publishing and the Formation of Literary Taste in England, 1880–1914* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), p.47; Kate Flint, *The Woman Reader, 1837–1914* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), p.179.
[40] An early 1900s insert in *Pearson's Weekly,* quoted by Scott, pp.40–42.
[41] Scott, p.46.
[42] David Vincent, *Literacy and Popular Culture: England 1750–1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p.196.
[43] Scott, p.47.

readers' independence from 'less than totally efficacious and radically acculturating' texts, nor Kate Flint's idea of readers' 'resistance' in reading 'across the grain' of nineteenth-century cultural 'expectations' and stereotypes.[44] It would seem, rather, to reflect Jonathan Rose's understanding of how readers chose or intuitively used 'frames' through which to read — in the sense of 'admitting some kinds of information while screening out others'.[45] He sees this as having made it possible for working-class socialist readers to enjoy the public-school fiction of Frank Richards through filtering out conservative, imperialist values. However, some of the examples Rose gives elsewhere suggests an idiosyncratic 'screening out' — reading *Pilgrim's Progress* as a heroic adventure story or even a horror comic, for example. A more instinctive and aesthetic kind of filtering seems to have happened for the youthful Scott, on which the mature writer looks back quizzically. He recounts trying to 'convert' his chums to Corelli by 'outlining to them her plots', especially the lurid revenge drama of *Vendetta* (1886) which elicited 'a murmured "Oooooh . . .! of awe and horror'. This could hardly be said to be 'wholesomely religious' but it was reading a shocking plot for pleasure without worrying about any of its moral and gender implications. For Scott at the time, the thrill of entertainment felt intuitively inspiring. He describes a companion making fun of his retelling of *Vendetta*'s finale, where the faithless Countess is crushed to death by a boulder while one helpless hand pats the earth. 'For the first time in my life I was realising that there might be people in the world who did *not* take Marie Corelli seriously. That hurt.'[46] Appreciation of Corelli's entertainment value was, for the young fan, intrinsically important and had to be communicated to others — and still important enough in later life to be saluted publicly in his memoir.

The public and political implications of reading pleasure, and the, perhaps more sophisticated, reader responses it could generate, are evident in the screening practised by a group of American readers. They wrote to Corelli after *Ardath* was featured in the New Orleans Mardi Gras carnival in 1901. The titillating aspects of the novel's strategy of temptation that its protagonist, Theos, and the reader have to overcome were set out in the last chapter. *Ardath* proved controversial enough to be one of the novels the Ealing Public Library Committee decided to remove from the lending library in June 1892. During the deliberations, Mr Hunt affirmed that 'exposing depravity […] only added to it' while Mr Adamson accused Corelli's books of being 'pernicious and immoral'.[47] The reason for its exclusion along with *Wormwood* (1890), a parody of the Parisian decadence of Zola's school of realism, was, typically for the time, because of their

[44] Roger Chartier, *The Cultural Uses of Print in Early Modern France*, trans. by Lydia G. Cochrane (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), pp.3–8; Flint, *Woman Reader*, pp.40, 326.
[45] Rose, *Intellectual Life*, pp.106, 333.
[46] Scott, pp.47, 49.
[47] 'Ealing Free Public Library Committee', *The Middlesex County Times*, 4 June 1892, p.7.

dangers to sensitive, impressionable young minds. Hence Mr Adamson's declared the extracts read aloud to the committee from *Ardath* 'violated the rules of propriety and described acts of infidelity in the coldest and most cynical manner'. Their explicitness was such that he 'appealed to the committee whether the meaning of the extract he had read could be mistaken by any boy or girl of 16'.[48] Yet just as the young Scott was not corrupted by *Vendetta,* just as the nineteenth-century girls studied by Kate Flint by-passed, or coped with sexual content, so the potential sexual impropriety of *Ardath* was not necessarily the frame through which readers viewed the novel.

For example, Louise Meyer 'takes the liberty' to write, following the apparent cultural validation of the carnival, because 'my admiration of your books is so ardent'. This devotion was because she was:

> making my living in a dry goods store and as the pleasures of life in general are not so plentiful to one in my position. I devote most of my spare time to reading and of all the books that have given me pleasure yours are the favoured and many happy hours I have enjoyed therefrom.[49]

Reading 'pleasure' and the opportunity to escape into a fictional world were an outlet for this reader from the drudgery of routine work. The clear message is that an alternative fictional world of the imagination, accessible during her non-working hours, was a preferable world for this reader to live in. Her 'ardent' admiration and gratitude for reading that was one of the few 'pleasures of life' available had led her to feel at one with, and correspond with, the author responsible. This may sound not too dissimilar from Scott's response, but it does also demonstrate how reading for pleasure had potential political implications — reaction to the suppression of a perceived lowly station in life. It should, therefore, not be dismissed as mere escapism. Deidre Lynch argues that receptiveness to the pleasures of the text was understood in the eighteenth century as relating to readers' capacity for reflection and imaginative creativity. Hence, 'valued as "reverie," the private castle-in-the-air building that the language of a text prompted in the reader was regarded as a defining component of aesthetic experience.'[50] Indeed, aesthetic creativity was crucial to Meyer. Of *Ardath* she says, 'credit is due to you for writing a book which has contributed so much towards making our Carnival a success,' and acclaims 'the gorgeous spectacle' it had created in following 'faithfully the illustrations' from the book. This must refer to a particular American version of the book containing illustrations of the glories of the ancient civilisation of Al-Kyris. Here, then, Meyer salutes the novel's potential for aesthetic 'spectacle', one where the carnival in being 'faithful' to the text could provide inspiring and

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[48] 'Ealing Free Public Library Committee', *The Middlesex County Times,* 1 October 1892, p.6
[49] Letter from Louise M. Meyer to Marie Corelli, 20 February 1901; SBT, (DR 1176/1/1).
[50] Deidre Shauna Lynch, *Loving Literature: A Cultural History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015), pp.166–67.

stimulating entertainment. Tellingly, there is no concern here for either the propriety of the text or its translation into carnival parade.

The reasoning behind Meyer's confidence in *Ardath's* propriety and suitability for public performance is not made plain. However, letters from fellow carnival-goers exhibit greater acknowledgment of the risks involved. There, we can discern awareness of the contentious issues the novel raised and discriminating judgments being made about how it had been staged. It was not only Louise Meyer who saluted the 'gorgeous spectacle' inspired by Corelli's dazzling world of Al-Kyris the Magnificent. Mary May Blanc told Corelli that thousands had 'gazed with delight at the beautiful tableaux' illustrating the book in the Krewe of Proteus parade, while Laura Quintero reported that it had 'formed the subject of our most beautiful and interesting pageant'.[51] The terms used by Olive Freret are revealing. She tells Corelli that everything had been properly done with 'men only' on floats and that they had been 'completely masked'.[52] Although no photos or costume illustrations seem to remain in the extensive New Orleans Public Library Archive from as early as 1901, it does contain costume designs that Bror Anders Wikstrom provided for Proteus parades from 1906 which featured men and women in various historical and fantasy costumes. In addition, it contains designs by Léda Plauché from 1916 which are more obviously orientalist in tone, and in which, like Wikstrom's designs, few participants are masked.[53] Olive Freret's intention then seems to be to assure Corelli that everything had been done to ensure that a fictional world of ritual sacrifice and orgy had been tastefully transferred into theatrical tableaux. With no temple maidens on display and a greater impersonality enabled by the wearing of masks, the concentration had been on the figures' symbolic meaning. Hence Mary Blanc emphasizes 'the thoughts embodied in that glorious spectacle' while Olive Freret says that observers were 'absorbed' as well as 'entertained' by the sight. Since Laura Quintero also highlights that the scene selections had been made by 'one of our leading citizens', the implication is that they had been above reproach. This may have been necessary reassurance because the Krewe of Proteus had introduced the tradition of call-outs in 1893, when costumed participants invited ladies present to step on to the dance floor with them.[54] These letters therefore seem to be fully aware of the contentious material in the book itself as well as the potentially disreputable way it could have been staged.

[51] Letter from Mary May Blanc and 5 Other Ladies to Marie Corelli, February 1901, SBT, (DR 1176/1/3); Letter from Laura C. Quintero to Marie Corelli, 2 March 1901, SBT, (DR 1176/1/4).
[52] Letter from Olive Freret to Marie Corelli, 21 February 1901, SBT, (DR 1176/1/2).
[53] <http://archives.nolalibrary.org/~nopl/plauche/lhpinv.htm> [accessed 11 February 2022].
[54] <http://www.kreweofproteus.com> [accessed 11 February 2022].

That the New Orleans letters should still remain is perhaps significant because Corelli's companion, Bertha Vyver, informs us that Corelli 'preserved few letters' of the thousands that she received.[55] Perhaps it was partly because it was life imitating art — the staging of theatrical tableaux illustrating sinfulness having formed a central episode of *The Sorrows of Satan.* Perhaps it was also Louise Meyer's reassurance that 'character was so well represented and easily recognized by all familiar with the book' — the sense that the book's message had been properly conveyed. In any case, these letters indicate a group of readers, who may not have been known to each other, implicitly acknowledging the pitfalls of turning the book into a spectacle, showing that they at least could negotiate the book's allegedly equivocal attitude to 'the 'pernicious and immoral', and feeling impelled to send reassurance to the author. Moreover, this reaction sprang from *Ardath*'s bursting out of the confines of the text into other media, subject to the trans-national 'commodification' that Kate Flint observes happened with Du Maurier's *Trilby* (1894).[56] The original had been controlled or redirected into a different form (here in a different geographical and cultural context) in order to prolong the pleasure of the text. Hence, for these readers it was a judicious and sophisticated appropriation of the text in order to concentrate on the thought-provoking and aesthetically uplifting side of the novel — whose carnival version demonstrated its relevance to the public arena. Perhaps it is not too far-fetched to see this as, in part, a precursor to twenty-first-century fan culture in which, as Jennifer Burek Pierce puts it, readers 'entwine their own stories with fictional characters and 'extend and even rewrite the arc of' their reading material, as they 'carry it into their world'.[57] The dialogue with the author the novel stimulated showed readers' understanding and opinions beginning to move from the private act of reading into the public sphere.

Controversy and Debate — the Morality of Corelli's Literary Marketplace

So far, I have largely concentrated on positive reactions to Corelli's work, and the way readers negotiated with her bond of sympathy and literary politics, albeit hints of self-questioning and position-taking in relation to a hostile cultural climate have become evident. However, it is now time to stress that by far the largest proportion of the record of readers' responses to Corelli's

[55] Bertha Vyver, *Memoirs of Marie Corelli* (London: Alston Rivers, 1930), p.7.
[56] Kate Flint, 'The Victorian Novel and its Readers', in *The Cambridge Companion to The Victorian Novel*, ed. Deidre David (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp.17–36 (pp.31–32).
[57] Jennifer Burek Pierce, 'Making the Story Real: Readers, Fans and the Novels of John Green,' in *The Edinburgh History of Reading: Common Readers*, ed. by Jonathan Rose (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2020), pp.299–318 (p.311).

work took the form of an acrimonious debate. This concerned whether her fiction deserved its popularity, whether it was uplifting and inspiring, or whether its ethical critique of society was undermined by fulsome, detailed depiction of vice. The questions of what could be embraced and what must be rejected led to widespread vigorous and unresolved public debate across the land for many years in literary societies, self-improvement groups, churches, lectures, sermons, newspaper letters to the editor pages and in public library committees — much of which was given prominence through the increasingly locally focussed reporting of local newspapers. This passionate argument lasted throughout the years of Corelli's greatest commercial success. It constituted a public debate that demanded sides for or against should be taken and which stimulated readers' articulation of their own literary judgments. In turning my attention to both negative and sometimes conflicted, more dialogical responses to Corelli's fiction, it becomes clear that many readers took Corelli's popular fiction very seriously — even those most opposed to it. The prevailing feeling in this period was that her work could and should not be dismissed out of hand but be fiercely interrogated since questions about the role and influence of her novels were too important to ignore. Following examination of the evidence for this conclusion, the significance of Corelli's fiction's capacity to provoke or encourage readers' voices to be heard in public cultural debate will be considered in the final section of this chapter in relation to Habermas's theory of the public sphere.

First, it is necessary to demonstrate the fiction's powerful impact on public discourse. Sometimes this took the form of formal debates whose very format encouraged speakers to take entrenched positions for or against Corelli's work. For example, in the February 1897 debate at the Guildhall Club, Newbury, Orlando M. Doy spoke for the proposition 'Miss Marie Corelli is worthy of her great reputation as an authoress, and that her works make for righteousness'. Mr T. Hunt spoke against, arguing for 'the flashy, inconsistent, and spiteful nature of her works'.[58] Mr Doy maintained that Corelli's idealistic respectability was proven by her stance that 'the true end of literature was the attainment of power, not the piling up of cash' and by her works' influence towards 'higher levels of thought and aspiration'. However, in response Mr Hunt deployed his literary critical skills as he 'criticised her style', quoting passages from the novels to identify inconsistencies (as did my last chapter) and contrast their tone to Charles Kingsley's wholesomeness. Which passages they were we are not told but his argument was that they did not 'elevate our standard of righteousness or morality'. Crucially, he 'did not believe any good purpose was served by exposing depravity, as it only added to it'. This echoes Mr Hunt's argument

[58] 'Marie Corelli and her Works: Lecture and Debate at the Guildhall Club', *The Newbury Weekly News,* 25 February 1897, p.6.

in the Ealing Library Committee five years previously. So, Corelli could be characterised as both 'righteous' and unaffected by commercial considerations and also as adding to 'depravity'. The *Newbury Weekly News* reports that 'the subsequent discussion was animated, and there was no lack of speakers' and that 37 (including 'younger members') voted with Mr Hunt, while 35 ('including many of the ladies') supported Mr Doy — showing how much opinions were divided.

That strong, divergent arguments could be made illustrates the divisiveness of Corelli's market intervention. That most women present were in favour of Corelli was also a factor which often told against the author. Her biographers and apologists frequently had to resort to the argument that hers was not a gendered fiction for women only but appealed equally to 'men eminent in literature and art', as well as to fighting men and statesmen such as Gladstone.[59] Of course, popular fiction was under the microscope, too. Kate Flint has speculated that:

> to read and discuss those works of fiction which were runaway bestsellers […] went beyond the demonstration that one possessed what Pierre Bourdieu has termed "cultural capital," […]. Rather, becoming excited by these fictions was a means of asserting one's claim to be modern, to be in the know.[60]

However, this seems insufficient to explain the 'controversy' surrounding Corelli. To be 'in the know' probably was one of the factors at play, but what sort of 'cultural capital' Corelli had as a popular and woman writer and whether she deserved it was in question. As Mary Hammond notes, contemporary reviews 'not only militated against the woman writer' but used gendered terminology to 'militate against the *popular* writer'.[61] It is telling that when Sydney Hodges of the Ealing Public Library Committee wrote an open letter to Corelli published in the local newspaper to explain the committee's ban, he complained that passages from *Ardath*, 'would be startling coming from a man, but which, emanating from the pen of a woman, are simply amazing'.[62] My point here is not merely to underline the point that has often been made about the gendered prejudices that Corelli had to combat but to stress the strength of feeling Corelli aroused among both men and women, supporters and critics of a patriarchal cultural climate. As the Newbury journalist noted, 'the works of Miss Marie Corelli have ever been a fruitful source of controversy, and as there has been a rush among the members to read her books, there was little doubt that the debate would be lively and animated'.

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[59] A. St John Adcock, 'Marie Corelli: A Record and An Appreciation', *The Bookman*, 36 (May 1909), 59–78 (p.64); T.F.G. Coates and R.S. Warren Bell, *Marie Corelli: The Writer and the Woman* (Philadelphia: George W Jacobs, [1903]), pp.346, 352.
[60] Flint, 'The Victorian Novel', p.31.
[61] Hammond, *Reading, Publishing*, p.143.
[62] Open letter from Sydney Hodges to Marie Corelli, 21 September 1892, *The Middlesex County Times*, 24 September 1892, p.6.

To understand the stakes involved for both sides, one can turn to the more informal networks of forceful debate that can be found in the fora of local newspapers' letters to the editor. The *Hull Daily Mail* debate in September 1902 was particularly lively. The claims of 'One who has been helped' for the 'lasting good' he had received from reading Corelli's fiction were prompted by irritation at the dismissive comments of 'An Ordinary Man' in a letter to the *Academy.* He sought to distinguish work such as *A Romance of Two Worlds* from the 'sensual trash' currently being published and accused 'An Ordinary Man' of being 'prejudiced'. If he 'had read the works of this gifted authoress', he would have appreciated that 'the human race would be blessed and lifted to a higher level' by her work.[63] This was work that he perceived as morally wholesome and spiritually uplifting — and subject to unjust and uncomprehending criticism. Two days later his claims were promptly rubbished by 'Scotus' who criticised 'this much-puffed lady's views' and the way they were expressed via 'pranks' played with 'truth and experience'. When his letter prompted a further furious exchange of letters, 'Scotus' added the clarification that Corelli's inauthenticity and untrustworthiness derived from a stridency and tunnel vision that could not be said to be the 'pious suavity and charity that thinketh not evil'. In other words, her work did not exhibit the morality it sought to uphold.[64] Others joined in with the indignant exchange of starkly opposed opinions. 'Poignard' amplified 'Scotus's' objection, arguing that the works of the 'splenetic goddess' 'move from one debauch to another of the bitter, the intolerant, the cheaply "cutting"'. Corelli's voice could not be trusted because its 'hatred of sin rather than love of good' corrosively undermined her own politics — a 'religio-revolution' whose 'Socialistic ethic nine Socialists out of ten would repudiate'. Her anti-materialist philosophy and her self-contradictory, anti-establishment politics were incompatible and undermined by their reprehensible fury and intolerance of opposition.[65] In contrast, A Man Who Thinks' found Corelli's philosophy entirely wholesome and empowering arguing that 'so long as soul-aspirations and imaginations are more than "normal" in the sense that "Scotus" uses the word, such books as "*A Romance of Two Worlds*" will be necessarily more attractive to thoughtful people'.[66] 'A Woman who has been Helped' then joined the debate to praise the 'lasting benefit' she had derived from the political and moral stance of *A Romance of Two Worlds.* She pointed out that she started reading it 'disgusted with the insincerity and sham of this world' but ended the first chapter 'breath[ing] in a fresh world'.[67]

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[63] Letter from 'One who has been Helped' to the Editor, *Hull Daily Mail,* 9 September 1902, p.6. For fuller texts of the Hull letters debating how Corelli's fiction should be read, see Appendix B, section 4).
[64] Letters from 'Scotus' to the Editor, *Hull Daily Mail,* 11 September 1902, p.5, 17 September, p.6.
[65] Letter from 'Poignard' to the Editor, *Hull Daily Mail,* 11 September 1902, p.5.
[66] Letter from 'A Man who Thinks' to the Editor, *Hull Daily Mail,* 15 September 1902, p.5.
[67] Letter from 'A Woman who has been Helped' to the Editor, *Hull Daily Mail,* 16 September 1902, p.6.

Such debates centred on three crucial issues — the first two of which (where Corelli's literary politics determined the form of the debate) started to become evident in my earlier analysis of readers' responses. First, supporters and opponents debated reading methodology and the making of literary judgments. 'A Woman who has been Helped' wrote: 'I wish people would read her books for themselves, and form their own judgment', suggesting that 'some men are jealous of women's advancement', ignoring that they can act as man's 'guardian angel, pointing him upwards and onwards by the finer forces of her mind and spiritual insight'. This echoes, albeit in similar gendered terms to Coventry Patmore's concept of the angel in the house, Corelli's own model of the bond sympathy with its purified literary marketplace, antipathy to critics, and need for readers to trust their own opinions. The starting point to reading must be an unprejudiced willingness to consider the author's message and only then to 'form their own judgment' — echoing Munro Mackenzie's argument referred to earlier. When 'One who has been Helped' wrote to the newspaper again to refute 'Scotus' and 'Poignard', he amplified his earlier claim that 'if' critics 'had read' the work, their views would be different. He then adds 'I would advise "Poignard" to read not scan her works before talking such rubbish' — thereby reflecting Corelli's own opinions on the perils of 'skimming'.[68] For Scotus and Poignard, however, such reading experiences risked becoming uncritical admiration of the 'jejeune' or 'turgid oceans of the banal'. Those who 'cheerfully paid 5s each' for a Corelli novel needed to develop greater discrimination in order 'to pronounce judgment upon literature', Scotus thundered in response.[69] He was questioning the cultural status of reading material where price and 'immense circulation' figures were factors. How readers should interact with texts whose status in the literary marketplace derived from commercial success was therefore at the heart of the debate. The perceived failure of aesthetic judgment Scotus feared in popular reading consumption was not however phrased in the same extreme terms as those of the cultural critics of the time. If he reflected Gosse's fear of the degradation of culture, the metaphors identified by Kelly May in critical writing about the dangers of reading were absent — 'animalistic entrapment in bodily impulses' and evocation of destabilising threats to boundaries between civilised and primitive peoples, people and animals, male and female, and between classes.[70] Rather, this was a matter of readers asserting their right to debate what Scotus called 'feeble literary alertness' and the 'pranks' or otherwise of a romance

[68] Letter from 'One who has been Helped' to the Editor, *Hull Daily Mail,* 15 September 1902, p.5; Corelli, 'A Vital Point of Education', in *Free Opinions*, pp.1–13 (p.5).
[69] Letter from 'Scotus' to the Editor, *Hull Daily Mail,* 17 September, p.6.
[70] Kelly J. Mays, 'The Disease of Reading and Victorian Periodicals', in *Literature in the Marketplace: Nineteenth-century British publishing and reading practices,* ed. by John O. Jordan and Robert L. Patten (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 165–94 (pp.172, 180).

form that, as we saw in the last chapter, rejected realism for what it saw as the 'ideal' or the 'real'.

The second key question dividing debaters was whether or not Corelli was successfully imposing a higher morality on society. Corelli's term 'sham' is deployed again by both "A Woman who has been Helped' and by 'One who has been helped' to support the force and rectitude of Corelli's moral critique. However, while the latter letter-writer is sure that 'the authoress is no sham', Scotus believed she was no more than a prankster playing tricks for a band of credulous worshippers, even if it is not clear whether his charge was one of fraud or self-deception. His second letter argues that her claim in *The Mighty Atom* 'that the advocates of secular education "are guilty of a worse crime than murder"' is impossible to 'reconcile' with 'the creed of love so often mouthed by Miss Corelli and her admirers'. The implication is that Corelli's literary contract with readers is a self-contradictory one in which an overstated case against 'evil' is muddled by unthinking and inconsistent attachment to the seeming balm of 'love'. Such concerns prompted not only the Ealing Library ban but variations of the Hull debate in many other places, from exchanges in *The Dundee Courier* and *The Aberdeen Weekly Journal* in 1896, to discussion at the Presbyterian Literary Society', Jersey, in February 1901, and the St Albans Debating Society in November 1906 — among many other instances that could be given.[71]

Third, the debate in the pages of the *Middlesex County Times* following the 1892 Ealing Public Library ban staged a particularly lively exploration of the rights and wrongs of censorship and of the potential vulnerability of the young to inappropriate reading material. Both E. Maxwell Drapes and G. Castell wrote letters to the editor to point out the absurdity of banning Corelli while Boccaccio sat on the shelves, the editor of *The Minstrel* labelled the decision-makers 'blockheads' who were 'as stupid as they are ignorant', and 'Reader' demanded that ratepayers should have a say 'in the question as to what is or is not fit for them to read'.[72] The committee itself was internally divided, with the son of a committee member, Percy L. Marks criticising its 'British-matron-like performance' and arguing that only *Vendetta* and *Wormwood* should be

[71] 'Literary Leisure Hour' by 'Onlooker', *The Aberdeen Weekly Journal*, 11 November 1896, p.2, 18 November 1896, p.2, 16 December 1896, p.2; Letters from 'Cynthia' and S.F.H. to the Editor, *The Dundee* Courier, 21 April 1896, p.4, 22 April 1896, p.6, 23 April 1896, p.4; Presbyterian Literary Society', *Jersey Evening Post*, 22 February 1901, p.3; 'Marie Corelli's Works — Do they deserve their popularity?', *The Reporter* [Luton], 30 November 1906, p.9.

[72] Letter from E. Maxwell Drapes to the Editor, *The Middlesex County Times,* 3 September 1892, p.2; Letter from G. Castell to the Editor, *The Middlesex County Times,* 8 October 1892, p.2; Letter from the Editor of '*The Minstrel*' to the Editor, *The Middlesex County Times,* 24 September 1892, p.6; Letter from 'Reader' to the Editor, *The Middlesex County Times,* 10 September 1892, p.3. For fuller texts of letters in this newspaper debating the Ealing Public Library Controversy and the moral status of Corelli's fiction, see Appendix B, section 5).

considered for removal from the shelves, while 'marvellous' works like the 'lyrical' and 'charming' *Thelma* should be exempt.[73] The debate was still continuing three years later when Mr Jordan moved a motion to the Library Committee that Corelli's books should be returned to the lending department on the grounds that it should be 'left to the discretion of the fathers and mothers to allow their children to read what they liked'.[74] Although the motion was carried, Mr St John still argued that they were not acting as censors but 'in the position of parents', on behalf of borrowers. Corelli's novels had therefore stimulated a debate about what constituted censorship, the purpose and role of the public library service, what its stock policies should be, who should control them, and whether children were at risk. If the debate was unresolved, Corelli's fiction had clarified the issues at stake and given a wide range of participants an opportunity to express their views.

Needless to say, the author herself intervened in the debate — on no less than three occasions. One of her key contributions countered the Library Committee's concerns about vulnerability of the young to their reading. She argued that her writing was for mature adults who could make their own reading decisions. She remarked tartly: 'I do not write for the 'Young Person' whom dear Charles Dickens so abhorred, nor shall I ever do so. The 'Young Person' would bring all art down to the level of the purest commonplace'. She acknowledged that the plots of *Wormwood* and *Vendetta* were 'rather alarming' but commented sarcastically that 'human passions have frequently an alarming tendency, and might possibly disturb the superhuman and altogether heavenly calm of Ealing'. Of course, this avoided the question of whether her own treatment of 'human passions' was as pernicious as Mr Adamson and Sydney Hodges feared. More tellingly, she argued that to preserve the 'innocence and ignorance in the 'Young Person', it would be necessary to exclude Shakespeare, Sterne, Swift, Shelley and Byron from Free Libraries and to smother up the existence of the "music-dramas" of Wagner.' Her work, she implied, possessed the same high cultural status and, in any case, protection of the young was both impossible and inappropriate. She further abrasively asserted her own literary model in provocatively claiming to be 'entirely delighted' with the 'veto' because 'people who cannot procure my books on loan buy them, which is a much more agreeable course of procedure, both to my publisher and myself!'[75] On one level she proved to be right. Somewhat despairingly, Rev, Charles Hughes wrote to the newspaper in March 1895 to argue that 'the interests of morality' were best served by silence on controversial books, in the light of claims that 'never before were

[73] [Letter from Percy L. Marks to the Editor], 'Ealing Free Public Library Committee and Marie Corelli', *The Middlesex County Times*, 11 June 1892, p.7.
[74] 'Ealing Public Lib Committee', *The Middlesex County Times*, 18 June 1898, p.7.
[75] Letter from Marie Corelli to the Editor, *The Middlesex County Times,* 1 October 1892, p.6 ('Marie Corelli answers Mr Hodges').

so many of her works sold in Ealing as after' the ban.[76] However, Corelli's prickly public persona, at odds with the lofty calm of her fictional model of the writer, such as Mavis Clare, was a provocative one that prompted readers to voice their own opinions about a combative model of sympathy pulling in different directions.

Moreover, as with the New Orleans readers quoted earlier, the inconsistencies and provocations of Corelli's fiction encouraged some readers to hone their literary critical skills. This often involved a dialogical relationship with texts, either trying to distinguish between the beneficial and distasteful aspects of the novels or to identify the merits of the process involved in identifying their faults. For example, in 1908 the Reverend Gregory Harris attempted to explain the allure, and the drawbacks, of a 'somewhat too melodramatic style' and its 'decided lack of restraint': 'There is a certain exhilaration when everybody, or almost everybody, comes in for a thorough good slating from competent hands'.[77] The term 'exhilaration' is striking here — the appeal lay in the very excess of Corelli's oratorical language. The paradoxical yoking of competence with a 'thorough good slating' is seen as key to the moral vision of texts with internally conflicting tendencies. The implication here is that its satire could be enjoyed as exuberant, invigorating entertainment — the pleasure of occupying the moral high ground while watching the political and literary establishments squirm. Yet, Harris also questions the sense and validity of the author speaking in 'the stern tone and temper of the Hebrew prophets of old' since we do not find 'anything like a fair picture of the sane, sensible, and religious life which obtains in thousands and tens of thousands of well-ordered homes'. That Corelli's voice could not speak to readers' respectability and sense of fair play was a lacuna to offset the enjoyment of 'almost everybody' being 'slated'.

The problems of interpretation were wittily summed up in the *Woman's Weekly's* interview with Dr Parker. He reported that his reaction to *The Sorrows of Satan* had alternated between two impulses:

> when I was half through the book my fingers itched to tear it up, and I went downstairs and said to my wife: "You must not read this book—it is horrible!" But I read on, and when retribution came I went back and said: "You must read it —it is grand!" Her opinion and feeling were the same as mine. The middle was nauseous, but it was strong.[78]

This was fiction that could be both persuasive and irritating, exaggerated but insightful, invigorating but one-sided, constricting but also inspiring. The series of adjectives that Dr Parker

[76] Letter from Rev. Charles J. Hughes to the Editor*, The Middlesex County Times*, 9 March 1895, p.6.
[77] Rev. W. Gregory Harris, 'Marie Corelli and Social Problems', *Torquay Times,* 2 October 1908, p.2.
[78] Quoted in *The Witney Gazette*, 30 September 1899, p.6.

used — 'horrible' and grand', 'nauseous' but 'strong' — therefore united opposites. Every merit in the writing seemingly had the corollary of a fault. The style was sometimes 'hysterical' but also 'fluent' and, crucially, 'wonderfully strong'. Therefore, it was possible for readers to be in two minds, to be intrigued, partly admiring, but also questioning and open-minded as a result of a complex reading experience. Indeed, Dr Parker considered that Corelli's place in the literary marketplace was that of a 'Ouida of England'. Hers was work that was also, in her own fashion, racy and swashbuckling, and determined to use its popularity to comment on contemporary society. Corelli's own article on Ouida celebrated the lack of 'faltering feminine weakness' in a style that 'a Man might have written'.[79] Corelli's equally, if not greater, 'strong' voice that Dr Parker both admired and shrank from was a voice that demanded to be heard and was therefore impossible to ignore. Its provocativeness roused readers to become judicious readers, their own literary critics, and to voice their opinions about class politics, morality, popular culture and how to read.

Overall, therefore, Corelli's opinionated fiction generated vigorous responses because of the importance of the issues it raised. This was precisely Rev. James Forrest's position in his Kilmarnock lecture in 1900. He adjudged Corelli's 'spirit and method […] provocative in an almost extreme degree', both 'hopelessly flippant and intolerably self-confident', indeed fired by 'intolerant dogmatism'.[80] Significantly, he acknowledged: 'it might be asked why he troubled with her books at all'. The reason, he stated, was that 'most of them treat of questions that are of paramount importance in their relation to intellectual and moral progress — questions that are even now demanding effective and rational settlement'. A didactic but awareness-raising fiction demanded a corrective response — for Forrest, as for so many others, Corelli's popular fiction had to be taken seriously as the stimulus for public debate. Jesse Cordes Selbin notes of nineteenth-century reading practices: 'far from a solitary enterprise, reading was meant to be discussed among members of a community'.[81] However, through Corelli's career we can see community (or rather communities') discussion moving from extended family units into local societies and on into the wider public arena that the local press facilitated. Individuals unknown to each other, women as well as men, made their literary opinions heard. In the process, perhaps some of the cultural values of nineteenth-century literary debate that Lauren Weiss has identified in the mid-century Islington manuscript literary magazine *Aemulus,* went with them. This combined an 'dynamic, interactive' culture that 'valued personal intimacy, sociality and participation' with

[79] Marie Corelli, 'A Word About "Ouida,"' *Belgravia: A London Magazine* (April 1890), 362–71 (p.368).
[80] *The Ardrossan and Saltcoats Herald*, 28 September 1900, p.2.
[81] Jesse Cordes Selbin, 'Reading', in 'Definitions Issue', *Victorian Literature and Culture*, 46 (Fall/Winter 2018), 826–31 (p.828).

'coarseness' and 'bitterness'.[82] Corelli's contribution to democratic debate was therefore a stimulating, if divisive, one that demanded readers think for themselves and articulate publicly the reasons for their position-taking.

The Significance of Corelli's Fiction of Debate

It is now time to take stock and consider the significance of readers' reactions to Corelli's fiction — in the light of the last chapter's outline of the challenges it set them and of the purified literary marketplace her bond of sympathy with readers envisaged. First, both supporters and opponents who made their voices heard were engaging in active reading experiences. They were often following the very advice that those fearful of the dangers of reading thought popular fiction consumers were *not* following. Corelli's readers' methodology does not markedly diverge from the admonition given in contemporary sources as diverse as *The Habits of Good Society: A Handbook of Etiquette for Ladies and* Gentlemen (1890) and M.C. Mondy, *Reading as a Means of Education* (1891). Both commended rigorous reading which involved making judgments and being able to publicly defend them — just the sort of strenuous 'muscular' instrumental reading that Leah Price identifies cultural arbiters as widely advocating.[83] Of course, there will have been some, perhaps many, of Corelli's readers who consumed her fiction without thinking, but the evidence of active reading is too plentiful — greater than the space available to me here allows me to demonstrate — for it not to have been significantly widespread. This conclusion certainly cannot be dismissed as misleading on the grounds of the self-selecting nature of remaining evidence. Moreover, we have seen the vital importance of such fiction reading to so many. The responses analysed above show reading applied or related to readers' own lives in just the way that Lucy Soulsby advised her Oxford school-girls — that is to say 'rules' of reflective reading which involved summarising 'either verbally or in writing […] what you have learned'.[84] Here we can identify the stirrings of sophisticated, interactive reading experiences comparable with modern ones where readers develop their own voice in discussion to 'make sense' of the world around them. The emerging fan culture that I have identified has some affinities with Clare Ellis's study of the Merseyside social outreach group, 'Get Into Reading'. There, individuals' responses to

[82] Lauren Weiss, '"Although ambitious we did not aspire to such dizzy heights": Manuscript Magazines and Communal Reading Practices of London Literary Societies in the Long Nineteenth Century', in *The Edinburgh History of Reading: Common Readers*, ed. by Jonathan Rose (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2020), pp.75–95 (pp.77, 89, 81–82).
[83] Price, p.36.
[84] Lucy H.M. Soulsby, *Stray Thoughts on Reading* (London: Longmans, Green, 1904), pp.5–7.

Dickens illustrate people 'turning to books as a life resource, intuitively pulling out the bits which have some personal resonance with their own lives, feelings and thoughts and which they can, in some way, take away with them and use to help them'. In the case of this reading group, encounters with other peoples' difficulties could often offer an 'anchor' or point of comparison 'to make better sense of their own lives as well as other people's'.[85] Once again, I must stress there is no exact parallel here but there is at least a family resemblance. This may not always be transformation understood in the sense that it has been used in the past by reading historians but reading as the means to 'make sense', as both Patricia Canning and Clare Ellis understand it, is a vital psychological contribution.

For those less well-disposed to Corelli, her work still prompted an essential public debate involving issues of cultural inclusion, aesthetic value, and moral influence. And here, Habermas's theory about the constriction of the nineteenth-century democratic public sphere provides a useful theoretical background, as it did with Mary Ward in chapter three, to evaluate the contribution of Corelli's popular fiction to the literary marketplace. On one hand, Corelli's fiction offered a powerful anti-establishment critique. As such, one of Corelli's foremost modern critics, Julia Kuehn, considers that it constituted a significant contribution to the question of literature's public role. She judges that Corelli's critique of press and publishing practices 'reveals precisely' what Habermas argued concerning the transformation, or debasement, of the public sphere.[86] Kuehn highlights the ways that Corelli's views prefigured Habermas's theory concerning the nineteenth-century's 'mass-oriented press […] dependent on the market and thus forced to advertise, promote and publicize in a new manipulative way'.[87] The literary sphere became according to Habermas 'a pseudo-public or sham-private world of culture consumption' so the effect on the private sphere was to challenge the traditional morality upheld in the realm of the family.[88] As we have seen, in books like *The Sorrows of Satan* and *Temporal Power*, the strength of the voice that Corelli used to expose the 'shams' of the rich and powerful and the greed at the heart of the 'pseudo-public' world of the literary marketplace was reflected in the language used by many readers, including the Belfast competition entrant. On the other hand, not all readers were persuaded by the moral vision of a commercially successful fiction's challenge to an allegedly dysfunctional free market. Indeed, readers such as Scotus were only too well aware of

[85] Clare Ellis, 'The Sharing of Stories, in Company with Mr Charles Dickens', in *Reading and the Victorians*, ed. by Matthew Bradley and Juliet John (Farnham: Ashgate, 2015), pp.143–57, (pp.145, 156).
[86] Julia Kuehn, 'Marie Corelli, The Public Sphere and Public Opinion', in *Reinventing Marie Corelli for the Twenty-First Century,* ed. by Brenda Ayres and Sarah E. Maier (London: Anthem Press, 2019), pp.61–79 (p.61).
[87] Kuehn, 'Marie Corelli', p.64.
[88] Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, trans. by T. Burger (Cambridge: Polity, 1989 [1962]), p.160.

the vulnerability of the argument for sales figures to justify a potentially self-undermining treatment of sexual impropriety and an intolerance of others' views. Here, then, Habermas's repeated use of the phrase 'rational-critical debate' reveals how far Corelli departed from the Habermasian model. Although many aspects of Corelli's critique of consumption could be described as 'a truly Habermasian assessment of the contemporary situation', as Kuehn puts it, her work cannot be said to have set out to contribute to rational-critical debate — certainly not in the way that Mary Ward's did.[89] It was the stridency of the voice that disturbed people like Gregory Harris and James Forrest. It was the mixed message of both copying and excoriating the tone of realist novels, of opposing vice and seeming to indulge it that worried the Ealing Library Committee. Indeed, it was here that the bond of sympathy and the alternative literary model of the inspired writer and grateful follower broke down and the didactic intent of the fiction became contentious. Unlike Ward's aspiration for popular fiction to play a pragmatic part in providing a public forum of democratic discourse, Corelli's model ultimately rejected the public world of *Temporal Power* for a romance universe of platonic love. The concept of the author as moral and spiritual arbiter involved ran the risk of closing down debate. As Kuehn admits, 'a public sphere and public opinion are a dialogic process while Corelli's written contributions […] constitute only one voice'.[90]

However, here readers once again exercised their own agency as active readers — responding to the provocative nature of Corelli's voice by making their own judgments and making their voices heard in fierce debate. Corelli's influence was therefore more divisive than Ward's in its discussion of contemporary political, ethical, and religious questions. Yet, the debate her work aroused underline the powerful and positive contribution of her popular fiction to broader democratic cultural developments. Critics in the national press who opposed Corelli's cultural intervention acknowledged that it was too powerful with the 'half-educated' to be ignored.[91] Moreover, it was fiction that could not easily be dismissed as the domain of women only, despite the claims of the solicitor rejecting *Temporal Power*, nor convincingly rejected by critics as brainless. In its own way, it created despite itself a dialogue with readers about morality, culture, and class. Indeed, the extreme nature of the claims Corelli's literary model made to educate and represent readers proved, when accepted, contested, or modified, a spur to readers' independent thinking in the context of their own needs and backgrounds As Philp Davis puts it, readers have always been 'the translators between writing and living […] the personal testers of the troublesome relation between the thoughts and feelings they get from books and the lives

[89] Kuehn, 'Marie Corelli', pp.64, 68.
[90] Ibid, p.66.
[91] [Review of *Temporal Power*], *The Speaker*, 27 September 1902, pp.682–83 (p.683).

they lead even so'.[92] Although in Corelli's case the process operated differently from the more classic Habermasian dialogical model for which Ward strove, it managed to attain some of the same ends, even if these were never acknowledged or intended. Encouraging a lack of deference, prompting readers to make their own voice heard in the public realm had its own democratic usefulness.

My final observation must be to stress the importance of the local press in providing a public forum for that democratic debate to take place. Much of the evidence referred to in this chapter comes from contemporary local newspapers. Mark Hampton has spoken of the nineteenth-century press as aiming at (if not reaching) the Habermasian idea of the public sphere made concrete – 'an ideal of politics by public discussion'.[93] If this was not possible in the national press with its growing concentration of ownership and argument over whether it merely reflected rather than stimulated national debate, New Journalism changed the focus of the press toward 'personal journalism', a focus on individual personalities, and a desire to turn print technology into 'a vehicle of (apparently) unmediated speech'.[94] For W.T. Stead, this conversational style took the form of editor speaking directly to readers, and subsequently enrolling them in feeding information back to him as editor of the *Review of Reviews* — audience participation even extending to the creation of an 'Association of Helpers'.[95] Such national developments then influenced the local press. Rachel Matthews acknowledges the influence of the New Journalism, as well as of commercial self-interest, in the development of the local press's distinctive focus on their respective local communities and the move away from political partisanship. Hence 'content and presentation were increasingly refined for a local audience', and the focus on 'its relationship with the reader', led to the prominence of local content — including readers' letters columns. Accordingly, readers and writers to the paper were seen as 'as a "community" against which the paper itself is defined as a supportive champion'.[96] The result was that the local press provided one of the most accessible ways for readers' voices to be recorded and heard in the public arena. It is therefore highly ironic that the personal focus and intrusiveness of New Journalism, which

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[92] Philip Davis, 'Micro and Macro', in *Real Voices on Reading*, ed. by Philip Davis (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1997), pp.137–64 (p.142).
[93] Mark Hampton, *Visions of the Press in Britain, 1850–1950* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2004), p.8.
[94] Richard Salmon, '"A Simulacrum of Power": Intimacy and Abstraction in the Rhetoric of the New Journalism', in *Nineteenth-Century Media and the Construction of Identities* ed. by Laurel Brake, Bill Bell, and David Finkelstein (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000), pp.27–39 (pp.27, 30).
[95] 'A Word to Those who are Willing to Help', *Review of Reviews,* 1 (January 1890), 53; for the 'Association of Helpers', see the March and April 1890 issues; Roger Luckhurst, *The Invention of Telepathy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p.132 notes that the *Review of Reviews*'s supplement, *Help*, first appeared in February 1891.
[96] Rachel Matthews, *The History of the Provincial Press in England* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017), pp.85, 86, 102, 108.

Corelli so hated, and which was contrary to her literary model of sympathetic communication through her texts alone, should also allow readers' responses to be heard.

Hence, a literary model which risked being mainly one-way communication from author to reader facilitated two-way communication instead — if not in the same dialogical fashion as Mary Ward's work, then in a way that provoked inevitable dialogue with, and among, readers. First, a press culture of authorial celebrity, and the desire of Corelli's literary model for authoritative status and for heart-to-heart communication, were factors which encouraged readers to view Corelli as a mentor or confidante to whom they could write. Second, the fiction's capacity to deliver either reading pleasure or political analysis *and* provoke opposition on moral grounds (in equal measure), prompted arguments and discussion that were then reported in the local press. Local newspapers were therefore key accomplices in spreading and heightening the tone of the debates about the reading experiences roused by Corelli's fiction. Chapter three noted how this did not apply to the less controversial figure of Ward. The concluding chapter to my thesis will therefore include discussion of where future newspaper research into readers' responses is likely to prove profitable.

Conclusion

> Reading above all things widened their world for them; it took them to new scenes and gave them new friends. Perhaps this was especially so in regard to fiction. […] Perhaps, too, this brought us nearer to that time sung by the poet when he was thinking of […] a great wave of common feeling passing through the world. The poet's wish was that there should come again one common wave of hope and belief lifting the world again, and she thought through books, through reading, through the sympathy and the effort which reading induced in us, we should each do our little part in that common movement, and march towards the Kingdom of God.[1]

So spoke Mary Ward in October 1895, as she distributed book prizes for the Mansfield House university settlement to deserving members of the public at Canning Town Public Hall. Nothing could more tellingly sum up the author's belief in the transformative spiritual power and political consequences of the sympathetic reading experience. Ward's estimation of books acting as guides and providing friends was starkly at odds, as another newspaper report of the event emphasizes, with the previous decade's fear of the degenerative effect of unguided reading and the current fear that 'novels were supposed to augur a softening of the brain'.[2] In contrast, Ward's aspiration for shared values across social classes and universal access to reading as a means of personal advancement and societal progress is underpinned by an ambitious belief in the power of literature, implicitly including her own popular fiction, to be able to evoke 'a great wave of common feeling'. The poetic inspiration for Ward's speech, Arnold's 'Obermann Once More', had saluted '*One common wave of thought and joy/ Lifting mankind again!*'; there the artist's duty and voice was no longer oppressed by a world powerless to be born but could now 'tell/ Hope to a world new-made!'[3] The compact between the writer aware of their public responsibilities and attentive readers can re-make the world, Ward implies, although the stress here is less on the artist's role and more on what art can achieve in and through others. Hence, the uplifting power of reading, including the 'sympathy' which is 'induced' by communing with the written word, is seen as crucial. Reading requires intellectual 'effort' but in its inextricable link with sympathy that effort, Ward argues, becomes a 'common movement' constituting a march towards a vision of heaven on earth. However grandiloquently expressed, the belief is that through the impact of

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[1] 'Mrs Humphry Ward on Books and Reading', *St James's Gazette*, 18 October 1895, p.14.
[2] *Eastern Evening News,* 21 October 1895, p.3; for the debate about the dangers of idle reading, see: Kelly J. Mays, 'The Disease of Reading and Victorian Periodicals', in *Literature in the Marketplace: Nineteenth-century British Publishing and Reading Practices,* ed. by John O. Jordan and Robert L. Patten (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp.165–94.
[3] Matthew Arnold, 'Obermann Once More', in *Poems,* new and complete edn in one vol, (New York: Macmillan, 1890), pp.348–59 (p.358).

engaged and sympathetic reading experiences, a more democratic and just society could be brought about. That they can create a movement that is 'common' and that can 'widen' the world, is fundamental to Ward's optimistic recontextualising of her uncle's poem. This quotation therefore underlines the significance of what this thesis has set out to achieve – to explore the hitherto unrecognised contribution sympathy made to the democratic role and impact of *fin-de-siècle* popular fiction.

Moreover, as previous chapters have demonstrated, that intellectual 'effort' at the heart of sympathetic reading experiences was intended to galvanise readers into dialogue and debate with popular novels' ideas. Even Marie Corelli's model of the literary bond of sympathy between author and reader occasionally inadvertently acknowledged this. As the narrator's wife, Sibyl, in *The Sorrows of Satan*, testifies:

> You wonder at my fanaticism for Mavis Clare, — it is only because for a time her books give me back my self-respect, and make me see humanity in a nobler light, — because she restores to me, if only for an hour, a kind of glimmering belief in God […].
>
> Her theories of life are strange, poetic, ideal and beautiful; — though I have not been able to accept them or work them out in my own case, I have always felt soothed and comforted for a while in the very act of wishing they were true.[4]

Sibyl is depicted here as standing for those readers exposed to the attractions of the 'prurient literature of my day' but also drawn to the ideas of Mavis Clare's archetypal romance and, by extension, those of Corelli's own fiction. Although reading such fiction did foster in Sybil a sense of 'self-respect' and religious affiliation, as it did for some of Corelli's readers through its voicing of their political, ethical, and spiritual views, for her this was only 'for a time' or 'for an hour'. Moreover, she is conscious of her reading experience as a kind of temporary wish fulfilment. Therefore, afterwards she is not fully 'able to accept' her 'strange' if sometimes 'beautiful' ideas — which, once again, was a frequent strain of response among Corelli's readers, stimulated to enter public debate about the role and effect of popular fiction on national discourse. The impulse to 'work out' what was convincing and appropriate to apply to the public world outside the novel was a task that they, like Sibyl, felt forced to accommodate. The importance of the issues raised by such popular fiction was not in question.

[4] Marie Corelli, *The Sorrows of Satan, or, The Strange Experiences of One Geoffrey Tempest, Millionaire: A Romance*, ed. with and introduction and notes by Julia Kuehn (Kansas City: Valancourt Books, 2008 [1895]), pp.146, 300.

If argument about fiction's cultural and political implications was more public and vigorous in Corelli's case than Ward's, then in both cases the spiky implications of provoking what Ward termed 'assents' and 'denials' were in evidence. As Ward put it in her memoirs:

> The thoughts and opinions of one human being, if they are sincere, must always have an interest for some other human beings. The world is there to think about; and if we have lived, or are living, with any sort of energy, we must have thought about it, and about ourselves in relation to it — thought 'furiously' often. And it is out of the many ' thinkings' of many folk, strong or weak, dull or far-ranging, that thought itself grows. For progress surely, whether in men or nations, means only a richer knowledge […].[5]

The ability of her work, as with Corelli's, to provoke 'the many "thinkings" of many folk', and to do so 'furiously', was key to their purpose and success. It was only through transmitting ideas with emotion and 'energy' and thereby generating a lively, engaged response that Ward thought fiction could prove effective. If this active response could stir the 'dull' and include the less gifted as well as the intellectually erudite, then she thought knowledge itself would grow and 'progress' be made in both individual readers and the nation as a whole. Wider more inclusive debate emanating from the circles of the great and good that Ward was writing about and for to the wider 'public' that Corelli addressed with such vigour was ultimately, she hoped, both possible and productive.

Vociferous reactions to Corelli's work in particular reflect what Habermas identifies as ideal for public discourse and decision making in democratic political systems. This he expresses in terms of a 'context of discovery' where 'unregulated' dissenting voices can emerge, and of a public sphere 'in which equal rights of citizenship become socially effective'.[6] Of course, a direct parallel cannot be made between political discourse, and the path it pursues to reach rational solutions to social problems, and literary language. However, there is kinship between Habermas's and Ward's and Corelli's aims and the impact their work had on readers, and, to a lesser extent, critics too. Indeed, the stridency of the voices of assent and dissent to Corelli's work could be said to be 'unregulated'. If this was less so for Ward, then readers' openness to debating opposed solutions for what 'equal rights' required in public policy was still crucial. As Conan Doyle put it when praising *Helbeck of* Bannisdale's clash of the uneducated and therefore vulnerable freethinking humanist, Laura, with the more secure but inflexible religious motivation of Helbeck:

> the reader understands the point of view of each, sympathises with each, and has a respect and affection for each, although their ideals appear to be contradictory.

[5] Mrs Humphry Ward, *A Writer's Recollections* (London: Collins, 1918), p.2.
[6] Jürgen Habermas, *Between Facts and Norms: Contributions to a Discourse Theory of Law and Democracy* (Cambridge, Mass: The MIT Press, 1996), pp.307–08.

> Now that seems to me to be a crowning achievement, not only of literature […] but also good philosophy.[7]

This was literature that was also a contribution to philosophy, underpinned by thinking about thinking itself and determined to draw readers into its intellectual processes through the sympathy they felt for fictional characters. The enticing representation of contradictions, deliberate and nuanced — or otherwise — along with an emotional connection with the text was key to Ward's and Corelli's impact on political and cultural discourse. Such was the high ambition of their *fin-de-siècle* popular fiction, underpinned by sympathy with its various ethical and political associations and implications for reading and culture in the context of an increasingly commercialised literary marketplace.

Yet, Sibyl's allusion in the quotation above, to her 'fanaticism' for her favourite author and the link of much *fin-de-siècle* popular fiction with a burgeoning fan culture requires further comment. Her active appropriation of the text when being 'comforted' by ideas that she was 'wishing they were true' (even if, in this case, she is not fully able to 'accept' them) is close to many of the reading experiences inspired by Corelli's world of the imagination analysed in chapter five. I have already argued that we can see Corelli, partly unwillingly, as having contributed to the birth of fan culture in elevating an idealised figure of the authoritative moralising author and in stimulating dialogue with the actual writer herself. Such responses were arguably not greatly different in kind from fan practices of today. Those posing questions to Corelli in letters sent to her via her publishers were not dissimilar in kind to present-day readers exerting their influence, 'empowered to communicate online with authors, publishers and one another in ways that are influenced by the technological affordances and commercial imperatives of new digital mediators.'[8] Moreover, it is also possible to argue that those using an uplifting 'frame' of creative imagination as the filter through which to enjoy Corelli's work were looking forward to modern fan culture's more obvious interrogation and active reinvention of the text. As Lesley Goodman maintains, 'readerly agency' sometimes 'completes' the 'fictional universe' which becomes 'a site of contestation due to the unreliability and vulnerability of individual texts and the fallibility of authors and producers.' This can lead to both 'fan complaints' and 'fanworks' attempting to improve on the original or prolong those aspects of it that were most satisfying.[9] The would-be normative but unstable nature of the original work (or unresolved debate In Ward's case) helps to explain both the power of popular fiction in the *fin-de siècle* period and the time-limited nature of

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[7] 'Mrs Humphry Ward at the Authors' Club', *Queen*, 109 (25 May 1901), 827.
[8] Beth Driscoll, 'Readers of Popular Fiction and Emotion Online', in *New Directions in Popular Fiction*, ed. by Ken Gelder (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), pp.425–49 (p.428).
[9] Lesley Goodman, 'Disappointing Fans: Fandom, Fictional Theory, and the Death of the Author', *The Journal of Popular Culture*, 48 (2015), 662–76 (p.667).

its appeal. That work no longer speaks to later ages is not an argument against its significance in its own time. What links past and present is the related pleasure, insight, and stimulation that reading popular fiction can supply when it appears most relevant and engaging. What Scott McCracken has to say is certainly of relevance to many nineteenth-century reading experiences of Corelli, and perhaps also to those critics who found reading Ward's alleged 'fiction with a purpose' so frustrating:

> [The pleasures of popular fiction] lie not in giving us what we want, but in providing a space, a time, a condition within the everyday in which we can consider what we might want, even if we then decide that what occurs is, after all, a disappointment. This is not emancipation itself, but such spaces might be the precondition for emancipation.[10]

The term 'emancipation' is certainly too strong and inappropriate to apply to a previous era; in Corelli's case cultural enfranchisement is a better phrase to use. However, the idea of a challenging, sometimes frustrating, and inadequate fictional universe is certainly a helpful one to explain the pleasure and the provocation that Corelli's novels roused. If in Ward's case the 'disappointment' in those misunderstanding what she was trying to achieve was much less, the sense that fiction could point to larger possibilities outside the text was still key.

Of course, a greater sense of 'the formation of community around narrative' is evident today. This is discernible in Jennifer Burek Pierce's analysis of the digital networks used by readers responding to the young adult fiction of John Green and the way that books have become 'transmedia properties' – filmed, discussed in author videoblogs and interviews, evaluated in online polls and so on. However, despite the increased creativity and authority to assign meaning that is more evident in present-day fandom — which creates its own 'paratexts' including social media commentaries — the seeds as well as the initial flowering of these are apparent in Ward's and Corelli's impact on the *fin-de-siècle* era.[11] Ward could not entirely escape the media 'celebrity' profile, being interviewed and photographed in 1904 stroking a cat — in order to prove that she was a human being with hobbies to whom readers might relate. The text itself protested otherwise as Ward sternly maintained that she could not 'waste her time in idle amusement when there is so much work to do in the world.'[12] Yet, whether she would have it or not, her reputation as 'the modern George Eliot' sparked by the fervour and controversy initiated by *Robert Elsmere*

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[10] Scott McCracken, 'Reading Time: Popular Fiction and the Everyday' in *The Cambridge Companion to Popular Fiction* ed. by David Glover and Scott McCracken (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp.103–21 (p.118).
[11] Jennifer Burek Pierce, 'Making the Story Real: Readers, Fans and the Novels of John Green' in *The Edinburgh History of Reading: Common Readers*, ed. by Jonathan Rose (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2020), pp.299–318 (p.302).
[12] W.B. Northrop, *With Pen and Camera: Interviews with Celebrities* (London: R.A. Everett, 1904), p.176.

was in some media quarters inescapable.[13] Then, letters to the editor supporting or condemning Corelli in newspaper columns could be said to be not dissimilar in intent to Green's readers' commentaries on Facebook, Twitter and Reddit. Moreover, the literary tourism analysed by Pierce that was sparked by the use of an Amsterdam canal-side bench as a meeting-place in Green's *The Fault in Our Stars* (2012) is perfectly recognisable in the response to Corelli's rare use in *The Mighty Atom* (1896) of a real-life setting she had actually visited.[14] This prompted many trips to be paid to Coombe Martin Church in North Devon where villagers would 'point out with pride to tourists the old pulpit where Lionel and Jessamine are supposed to have fallen asleep.' Devotees of the book also sought out the sexton, James Norman, who had served as the model for the novel's portrait of Reuben Dale. He had to secure his autographed copy of the novel 'in a wall casing to prevent her less scrupulous fans from making off with it'.[15] The point that can be argued is that, in the context of their own era, Ward's and Corelli's work was, to a comparable extent to Green's or other currently popular authors' novels, the stimulant of readers' sense of freedom and creative engagement with the borderline between fiction and their daily lives. This was enfranchising readers at the time both politically and culturally in emboldening them to 'consider what [they] might want'.

Yet, what is certainly different now is the range and ephemerality of online sources that scholars (and the institutions they rely on) need to identify, preserve and study in order to keep pace with diverse and shifting readers' opinions — as Pierce makes plain.[16] This brings me to consider the wider relevance of my own research methods which have brought to light much new information from local newspapers about readers' reactions to their fiction-reading and their attitudes towards the process of reading itself. As chapter five has demonstrated, the wealth of new evidence of responses to Corelli's popular fiction available to be found via a painstaking search of the ever-growing British Newspaper Archive is considerable. On the other hand, the relative absence of the voice of the common reader commenting on Ward's fiction also needs to be considered when evaluating this archive's potential usefulness for exploring reactions to other *fine-de-siècle* popular writers. It might prove to be the case that authors perceived to be more controversial, or creators of a fictional character that caught the public imagination, the boomster Hall Caine or the inventor of Sherlock Holmes, for example, might have generated a greater intervention from readers in the local press than some of their contemporaries. That possibility I

[13] Northrop, p.167.
[14] Pierce, p.308.
[15] Philip J. Waller, *Writers, Readers and Reputations: literary life in Britain 1870–1918* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp.376–77; Brian Masters, *Now Barabbas was a Rotter: The Extraordinary Life of Marie Corelli* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1978), p.151.
[16] Pierce, pp.312–13.

must leave others to investigate. Likewise, it would be worth investigating how far sympathy was a significant factor in other late-nineteenth-century fiction — the social reform fiction mentioned in chapter one, for example. Intriguingly, the re-emergence in late-nineteenth-century American fiction of Gaskell-influenced figures intervening with sympathy in social reform matters has recently been identified.[17] Moreover, book history scholars could make use of the wealth of information in the British Library's newspaper archive concerning media coverage of writers, publishing, and authorial celebrity — and retrieve easily overlooked book reviews and commentaries appearing in the local rather than the national press. Through my exhaustive examination of newspaper and journal entries mentioning Ward and Corelli, I have uncovered an immense amount of interest in and references to matters such as: sales figures and bookshop reports; authors' income; the wider merchandising popular fiction generated; favourite authors among library borrowers; authors' personal appearance and private lives; writers' health and houses; the motivation for writers' themes in short career profiles; literary gatherings attended and addressed; society and literary gossip; and tittle-tattle about authors' holiday arrangements. In the cases of my two novelists, these entries range from the 'handsome portrait of Mrs Humphry Ward' advertised in the *Waterford Chronicle,* and the cigarette card photo of her (alongside those of Hall Caine, J.K. Jerome and Ouida among others) advertised in *The Sphere,* to reports of Corelli's grouse-shooting trip to Scotland and extensive comment on her attack in *The Idler* on press reviews of *Barabbas.*[18] Such material could be an invaluable resource for the understanding of the cultural practices of the literary marketplace, the pressures and opportunities afforded by *fin-de-siecle* celebrity culture, and journalism's contribution to and comment upon it.

Although these matters have been touched upon in this thesis, they have not been central to it. I should perhaps acknowledge here that my analysis of Ward's and Corelli's social politics has necessarily, for reasons of focus, excluded consideration of those aspects which are not clearly germane to *fin-de-siècle* moral and other associations of sympathy. A further evaluation of the nature and influence of their social politics could investigate the significance or otherwise of their support for British imperialism as well as Corelli's racist stereotyping of Jews as financially greedy

[17] Rebecca Styler, 'Margaret Hale's Daughters: Elizabeth Gaskell's Transatlantic Legacies in Late-Nineteenth Fiction' [with reference to Frances Hodgson Burnett, *That Lass O' Lowrie's* (1877) and Helen M. Winslow, *Salome Shepard, Reformer* (1893)], paper given at the Victorian Popular Fiction Association Annual Conference, 13 July 2023.

[18] *Waterford Chronicle*, 9 September 1891, p.3; *The Sphere,* 13 July 1901, p.x; *The Graphic*, 29 August 1896, p.279; Marie Corelli, '*Barabbas* — and After', *The Idler*, 7 (February 1895), 120–34; *Glasgow Evening News,* 8 February 1895, p.2; *The Herts Advertiser and St. Alban's Times*, 9 February 1895, p.3; *Gloucester Journal,* 9 February 1895, p.5; *Glasgow Evening News*, 14 February 1895, p.2; *The Torquay Times and South Devon Advertiser*, 15 February 1895, p.2; *The Weekly Irish Times*, 16 February 1895, p.4; *St James's Gazette*, 16 February 1895, p.12; *Forbes, Elgin and Nairn Gazette,* 20 February 1895, p.2.

corrupters of the state. For example, in *Temporal Power*, the powerful newspaper proprietor is variously described as 'Jost the Jew', 'this fat, unscrupulous turncoat of a Jew', 'one of the most flagrant money-exhibitors', a 'fat Jew-spider', and 'that knavish Jew-speculator in false news', while the King eventually purges the realm of 'Jew-sharks' and other 'riff-raff'.[19] Such prejudices also suffuse novels such as *Barabbas*, where Christ's executioner maintains his prisoner 'was never a Jew', and *Holy Orders* (1908) whose hero, the Rev. Richard Everton, is appalled at the young Jacynth being married to 'this old shrunken, wicked-eyed Jew' and learns that 'the grabbing Jew' proves that 'racial differences are inextinguishable'.[20] At the same time, Corelli turned to Jewish folklore and the figure of Lilith, Adam's rebellious first wife whose sexual attractiveness caused men to be led astray, for the title and some of the subject-matter of *The Soul of Lilith* (1892). There, a lustful and sceptical scientist keeps Lilith's body alive rather than free her immortal soul as he tries to prove the existence of the afterlife. What the implications and influence of such contradictions and bigotry might have been, when they seem to have aroused relatively little comment among critics or readers, I must leave to others to consider. Similarly, I have not investigated the extent to which Ward's work exhibits the impression of 'her faith in British imperialism' that Martin Hipsky assumes it does.[21] Clearly, later non-fiction reportage such as *England's Effort* (1916) that was explicitly soliciting the approval of Americans to intervene in the First World War on the British side, and which is usually analysed by critics as propaganda, was hardly going to be critical of Britain's geo-politics. I note in passing however that the naïve jingoism of the heroine of *Diana Mallory* (1908), perhaps does not signify 'how thoroughly nationalism and imperialism had replaced religion as her main cause' by then as John Sutherland states.[22] Rather, the protagonist's imperialist assumptions could be said to be the starting point of a journey to political and moral maturity of someone whom Ward described as an 'instinctive Conservative' and by implication an uneducated and unthinking one.[23] Diana's glib views emerge from a childhood abroad visiting colonial outposts which inflamed 'all her starved devotion for the England she had never known'. Hence her abandon when she 'discoursed of India' is met 'uneasily' by her widowed companion who 'had lived in it' during her husband's time in the Indian Civil Service. She was 'more keenly alive to the depreciation of the rupee than to ideas of

[19] Marie Corelli, *Temporal Power: A Study in Supremacy* (London: Methuen, 1902), pp.420, 367, 192, 298, 469, 420.
[20] Marie Corelli, *Barabbas* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott, 1894), p.89; Marie Corelli, *Holy Orders: The Tragedy of a Quiet Life* (London: Methuen, 1908), pp.357, 361.
[21] Martin Hipsky, *Modernism and the Women's Popular Romance in Britain, 1885–1925* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2011), p.57.
[22] John Sutherland, *Mrs Humphry Ward, Eminent Victorian, Pre-Eminent Edwardian* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), p.279.
[23] *The Writings of Mrs Humphry Ward*, with introductions by the author, vol XIV: *The Testing of Diana Mallory* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1910), p.ix.

England's imperial mission' and the Indian names Diana mentioned were for her 'symbols of heartbreak and death'.[24] The extent to which Ward's 'criticism of life' is still evident in the later fiction to a greater extent than usually acknowledged would therefore benefit from further investigation.

Another fruitful future avenue of enquiry that the scope of this thesis has not allowed, but which I intend to pursue separately in due course, is to explore the fluctuation in Ward's and Corelli's popularity and commercial success towards the end of their career. Ward's output has been considered by most critics as one of inevitable decline, with the fact that Smith, Elder incurred a significant loss when facilitating the publication by Ward Lock in the UK of the women's suffrage novel, *Delia Blanchflower* (1914–15), cited as key evidence. However, the picture, like Ward's later fiction, is more uneven than that would suggest, with novels like *Missing* (1917) selling well and later being made into a film, along with some of her earlier novels.[25] If her views on divorce in *Daphne* (1909) — serialised in America as *Marriage à la Mode* — had irretrievably destroyed her transatlantic audience then it is unlikely that former President Theodore Roosevelt would have written to her in December 1915 to ask her to better present the English side of the war story for an American audience — or that the resulting work such as *Towards the Goal* (1917), syndicated in US newspapers, should have been perceived as a big success.[26]

In Corelli's case, an arguable factor in her relative loss of popularity that has not been sufficiently considered by critics is her rejection of her former idealistic philosophy of spiritual love following the end of her imagined and asexual 'love affair' with the painter Arthur Severn. The self-acknowledged culmination of her belief in a partly religious, partly artistic universe of overwhelming and imaginatively empowering love in *The Life Everlasting* (1911) is followed by a sequence of novels which undermine the earlier works' idealism and vision of the potentially blissful afterlife of the soul. In *Innocent* (1914), the eponymous romance writer jilted by a faithless artist dies as the love that had powered her work is rejected; something that the author rejects herself in the posthumous *Open Confession* (1925) which arguably can best be described as a howl of despair (though the extent of this has been contested).[27] Certainly love is definitely replaced by hate and a sterile eternal half-life in *The Young Diana* (1918) as the heroine takes

[24] Mrs Humphry Ward, *Diana Mallory* [Colonial edition] (London: Macmillan, 1908), pp.10, 11.
[25] The Internet Movie Database lists *Missing* (1918), *Lady Rose's Daughter* (1820), and 2 versions of *The Marriage of William Ashe* (1916 and 1921). <https://www.imdb.com/name/nm0911752/?ref_=tt_ov_wr> [accessed 20 March 2022].
[26] See: Sutherland, pp.360–61.
[27] Contested, for example, by: Annette R. Federico, *Idol of Suburbia: Marie Corelli and Late-Victorian Literary Culture* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2000), pp.146–58; Julia Kuehn, *Glorious Vulgarity: Marie Corelli's Feminine Sublime in a Popular Context* (Berlin: Logos Verlag, 2004), pp.143–54.

revenge on her father and all the men that had blighted her life. Then, *The Secret Power* (1921) which has attracted relatively little critical analysis, and which has been considered as 'fragmented and confusing', a marker of Corelli's waning powers, is, to this modern reader, one of the most interesting of her books.[28] Here we find not only the foretelling of the invention of the atom bomb, but also a new gender politics which envisaged a feminised science in harmony with the divine forces of nature defeating its aggressive masculine rival, and associated with a new order of spiritual beings which are destined to replace the human race. These are described as 'progenitors of the world TO BE' who live 'indifferent to worldly loves, pleasures and opinions, and only bent on the attainment of immortal life' where 'Beauty is common to all'.[29] It seems highly likely that the attractions of such a vision, owing something to the New Heaven and a New Earth of Revelation chapter 21, but perhaps closer to nirvana in its liberation from suffering, was of less appeal than the uplifting power of lost love in *Temporal Power*, which as we have seen some readers found 'beautiful'.

Although the very marked change in thinking driving Corelli's later fiction was inherently less seductive than her earlier beliefs explored in this thesis, one must once again acknowledge that Corelli's popularity fluctuated. Not only was *Open Confession* serialised in the *Daily Express,* and its later book form described as a 'bestseller', but Corelli's work, even more than Ward's, took on a new life in and through silent cinema.[30] Teresa Ransom notes that *Vendetta* was shown in Stratford Picture House as early as 1915, while in 1924, after Corelli's death, at least six other books were under negotiation to film companies.[31] Significantly, the tone of Corelli's press coverage changed markedly at this time, with the filming of *Temporal Power*, for example, being described as 'a very happy idea' and the screen premiere in Newcastle of 'this famous work' declared 'an unqualified success' — one which 'places on a distinctly high level this class of entertainment'.[32] This would suggest that the very popularity and technically impressive status of a new form of entertainment and artistic expression fed through to some extent to the status and cultural perception of the fiction which provided it with melodramatic plots. Indeed, the first cheap edition (2s 6d) of *Temporal Power* advertised in 1917, was published to tie in with the recently issued film of the novel.[33] Corelli's and Ward's popular afterlife, therefore, will merit my further attention elsewhere.

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[28] Teresa Ransom, *Miss Marie Corelli: Queen of Victorian Bestsellers* (Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 1999), p.199.
[29] Marie Corelli, *The Secret Power: A Romance of the Time* (London: Methuen, 1926 [1921]), pp.324, 249, 224 — capitalisation as per the original.
[30] Kuehn, *Glorious Vulgarity,* p.146.
[31] Ransom, pp.155–56.
[32] *The Newcastle Daily Journal,* 4 October 1916, p.4.
[33] *The Westminster Gazette,* 10 February 1917, p.1.

Finally, let me return to my starting point of the importance of sympathy for Mary Ward and Marie Corelli in provoking emotionally engaging and intellectual, dialogical reading experiences. I began this conclusion by quoting the authors, let me finish by citing two contemporary responses from their readers. First, an anonymous lady from Greenock in 1896 explained Corelli's appeal to her supporters:

> And why this [popularity]? There must be something in her books which touches a sympathetic chord in the human heart. It is that she always makes for truth. […] We must admire her brilliance, her wealth of imagination, her fearlessness, and also the unerring instinct with which she lays her finger on each unclean and unholy spot, and says to society, "Thou ailest here and here". […] and lashes them with the stinging whip of satire.[34]

Second, an anonymous early profile of Ward in *The Cardiff Times* put its finger on why reading Ward is satisfying even though her thinking was controversial and therefore contestable:

> There is style in her writings, a cultured and pleasing method, but what is of more importance there is her sympathy and friendliness, amounting to enthusiasm, for humanity, which are instinct with life-interest in her most imaginative characters and many portions of her work. […] they have succeeded in the case of Mrs Ward, as they ever will, in attracting public notice and securing hosts of admirers. We may quarrel with her theology and her social opinions, but her style and sympathy remain for our admiration and enchain our attention.[35]

These tributes chime with many of the themes of this thesis: the justifiability (or otherwise) of popularity; the nature and importance of the emotional connection the reader perceives the writer has effected; the ethical implications of sympathy associated with 'enthusiasm for humanity' (and its obverse link to savage chastisement and 'satire' in Corelli's case); readers' gratitude for an alternative fictional world, the outcome of a 'wealth of imagination'; the public, political relevance of popular fiction's vision of what 'society' should be; the stimulation provided by both engaging and combative 'style[s]' of writing; readers' meaningful relationships with the seeming 'life-interest' of fictional characters; and the discrimination many readers brought to texts with whose ideas they felt impelled to 'quarrel'. Here sympathy was seen as no meek and mild complement to moralising outlooks but as integral to the differing fictional offerings of two popular novelists — vital to the pleasure, instruction and challenge that reading them involved. As chapters three and five have demonstrated, the reading experiences Corelli's and Ward's work stimulated were often active and self-aware — and in the latter's case sympathy with the plight of fictional characters often involved highly sophisticated ethical and political judgment. Such readers were not alone in acknowledging the wider benefits of reading novels. As Commissioner

[34] 'Marie Corelli from a Woman's Point of View (by a Greenock Lady)', *The Greenock Telegraph and Clyde Shipping Gazette,* 26 September 1896, p.2.
[35] 'Progressive Women — 2. Mrs Humphry Ward, Novelist and Social Reformer', *The Cardiff Times*, 14 July 1894, p.1.

Somerville put it to the Kirkintilloch Magazine Club in 1897, the importance of fiction lay in its educative and transformative potential. It could be experienced as both a means of escape from, and reflection on, life around them — which readers could then return to with a greater 'feeling of self-dependence' and thoughtful discrimination:

> Whether we are old or young, novels may serve a most important purpose in our self-education. […] Good novels should surely greatly increase our insight into character and that power of discriminating motives. […] The main use of novel reading, therefore, should be to let fresh air into our lives […] to send us back to our lives with fresh vigour, with nobler aims and hopes than before.[36]

[36] 'Miscellaneous Reading', *Kirkintilloch Herald*, 24 November 1897, p.2.

Appendix A: Reviews, Articles and Letters — Mary Ward

The reasons for, and relevance of, the content of this appendix are indicated in the signposting in the thesis's footnotes. It is hoped that the inclusion of new or not easily found archival material and journal articles and reviews will be of future use to other scholars. Material included from newspapers and periodicals accords with copyright guidelines ie that where the article is unsigned, copyright expires 70 years after publication; and where the article is signed, copyright expires 70 years after the death of the author: (https://libguides.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/newspapers/copyright — accessed 1 September 2023).

Considerable thanks are due to the Special Collections staff at Claremont Colleges who made available to me during the time of Covid-19 copies of items in their Mrs Humphry Ward Papers archive. Some of these are included in this appendix since the Special Collections Public Services Librarian has informed me that these unpublished works are no longer under copyright and are in the public domain. Permission obtained from other University Archives is as shown below.

1) Reviews of *The History of David Grieve*

a) *The Edinburgh Review*, 175 (April 1892), 518–40 (pp. 518, 519, 521, 536–37)

In *Robert Elsmere*, Mrs Ward showed little aptitude for narrating a story or constructing a novel. […] She gave utterance — however hesitating and uncertain the voice — to some indeterminate, inarticulate, but widespread feeling that needed expression.

But as a work of art the book seemed to be so clumsy, as a source of entertainment so wearisome, as a theological treatise so unsatisfactory and inconclusive, that it required no special notice at our hands. In *David Grieve*, Mrs Ward returns to the same field in which she won her former fame, and she returns to it with the same defects and the same merits, but under somewhat different circumstances. […] The didactic purpose not only colours the author's view of life, and permeates the characters and their actions. It is also insisted upon with a persistency that subordinates art to the intellectual aim, the story to the teaching. It diverts the author from what is the true business of the novelist — the evolution of natural results from a natural plot by natural characters. It jumbles up the sacred and the profane in a form of literature which scarcely admits of reverence. […] Such a hybrid is an outrage upon art, which could only have originated among utilitarian Philistines. […] Against such an artistic travesty it might be enough to protest in the name of art, if it had not become necessary to protest in the name of common sense. Mrs Ward makes her puppets move and squeak as she directs. […] So long as the voices and motives of the various members of the troupe are attributed to the strings in Mrs Ward's hands, the fractious mixture of religion and fiction may be bad art, but it can do no intellectual harm. There are, however, persons who are either so stupid or so lazy as to take the play seriously, and to suppose that the fate of the actors is evidence on theological problems.

There are, apparently, the same ends in view, the same colourless beliefs, the same innuendoes, assumptions, and assertions, the same unsatisfactory disheartening results—unsatisfactory because intangible,— disheartening because no further point is reached than was attained by *Robert Elsmere*. There is also the same invitation to mental anarchy, without any plan for the reconstitution of beliefs; the same preaching of iconoclasm, without any provision of reconstruction; the same attempted destruction of the old religion, without any preparations for the new.

A time of trial is coming upon this country as a dangerous crisis. A half-educated democracy is, for the first time, not only alive to its wants, but awake to its powers, and determined to use them. […] If the coming democracy is not to be a Christian democracy, what is it to be? […] Will the British, workman be content with the *Ni Dieu ni maitre* of the French artisan? Will he place his Utopia in an open, instead of a restricted, scramble for the good things of this life? Will his highest goal consist in exchanging for the sovereignty of the utilitarian few the sovereignty of the utilitarian millions? Will he enthrone appetites in the place of ideals, pursue his pleasure under the specious mask of some more or less resounding phrase, or varnish the grosser passions of the human animal with an aesthetic veneer? Will he build his commonwealth on the shifting basis of a majority in the House of Commons, and, if so, will such a state endure a storm? Such are, as we think, some of the questions which most reflecting men and women are anxiously considering. They recognise the imperative need of ideals when an untrained, half-educated democracy is rising to power among the solitudes which utilitarian ethics, experimental science, and mechanical secularism have produced. They see the danger, they ask anxiously for the remedy.

b) 'Culture and Anarchy', *The Quarterly Review,* 174 (April 1892), 317–44 (pp. 328, 330, 331–32, 340, 341, 342, 343)

It is notorious that *Robert Elsmere* was admired rather as a theological treatise than a novel […]. It was necessary, therefore, while retaining enough of the old leaven to please the old tastes, to devise some means of attracting those which had hitherto remained cold. Obviously the way to do this was to reduce the proportion of theology to fiction; to make the new work more of a novel and less of a treatise. We find the result in *The History of David Grieve*.

It is not a satisfactory result. If we may venture to apply flippant illustration to a work evidently designed and composed in the utmost seriousness, we should say that the author had fallen between two stools. The theology and the fiction do not coalesce. David Grieve is not, as was Robert Elsmere, a wanderer betwixt two worlds. He has, on the contrary, an overweening confidence in his capacity for settling the affairs of the heavens above and the earth beneath, and a sovereign contempt for everybody who would settle them on a different basis. The perusal (in translations) of a few of the French infidel writers of the last century, is quite enough for him: henceforth he has no need to think; he knows. But Mrs. Ward, like Frankenstein, has been the victim of her own creation. Irresistible as the majesty of buried Denmark, the phantom of the buried Elsmere beckoned her to the misty platform of religious controversy, and she could not choose but follow.

It is said that Matthew Arnold, being once asked why he had never tried his hand at a novel, gave the characteristic answer that the genius of the Arnolds did not lie in the way of fiction, or he had written one long ago. It almost begins to look as though the genius of his accomplished niece did not lie in that way. Certainly it is rare to find a writer of Mrs, Ward's quality to whom practice has brought so little profit. About *Robert Elsmere*, with all its faults, there was a certain sense of proportion, of completeness. It was very long, somewhat disconnected and incoherent; yet it was possible to detect in it a beginning, a middle, and an end. One saw that the author was inexperienced in the art of story-telling, and had not that instinct for it which is often more than all experience. But it was also clear that she understood what is meant by literature, that she had some power of expression and sense for style; and it seemed as though time and practice might supply what else is needed to make a work of fiction. These expectations have not yet been verified.

The technical faults of the old book are multiplied tenfold in the new one. *The History of David Grieve* is yet more inordinately long than *Robert Elsmere*; it is more inconsequent, more loosely constructed; it is more deficient in the sense of proportion, in the essential art of reserve, of knowing when to stop; to its author the half is never greater than the whole, and yet the whole is vague, inchoate, unreal; when all has been said, nothing has been done. […] But, after all, the

signal fault of the book lies in its failure to convince us. For all the care lavished upon it,— and on this side at least the author has surely deserved success — it wants reality. Through all these twelve hundred pages there runs no current of life. The characters are not moulded out of human flesh and blood, but cut out of paper […]. And over all broods the depressing sense of a great work to be accomplished, a message to be delivered to us frail and feeble children of dust. Characters and scenes they come and go, as on the slides of a magic lantern used to illustrate the author's lecture on human existence.

[Arnold's] prophecy has the peculiar distinction among modern prophecies of having been proved true. The New Intellectual Democracy has triumphed; our struggle after culture has developed into anarchy. He has quoted with approval an observation of M. Renan's on the intellectual condition of the American people:— 'The sound instruction of the people is an effect of the high culture of certain classes. The countries which, like the United States, have created a considerable popular instruction without any serious higher instruction, will long have to expiate this fault by their intellectual mediocrity, their vulgarity of manners, their superficial spirit, their lack of general intelligence.' That is very much our condition at the present moment. […] But what both writers designed to show was that in neither country, for various reasons, was the serious higher instruction strong enough to give the necessary tone to the popular instruction; the element of culture was not sufficient to leaven the whole mass. Instead of proving the master, therefore, it has been made the slave; and now bound to the car of Demos is led in the popular triumph, a spectacle and a show. The times of faith and ardour that Arnold thought he saw bringing the hour for culture played him false.

The demand for more education, and especially for what is so ludicrously miscalled the higher education among women, itself a part of that foolish misconception of woman's true place in the world which goes by the name of Woman's Rights, the general array for party purposes of the Masses against the classes,— all these things, aided by the extraordinary increase of cheap literature, and especially by the translations, handbooks, primers, and other multifarious short cuts to learning, have combined to defeat Mr. Arnold's plan and to turn the teal sweetness and the real light which he advocated into what he most dreaded,— into sweetness which is mere vulgar affectation, and into light which is blank darkness.

The Jacquerie of the New Culture is quite as earnest in its way, would be quite as mischievous if it knew how to be, and is assuredly not less grotesque. Its earnestness is, indeed, its most characteristic and comical feature. Were not the most convincing proofs daily offered to our senses it would be impossible to conceive how seriously these poor people take themselves. It is something so tremendous that, were the subject less preposterous and the result less pitiful, it would really go far to constitute a title to one's respect. Having read that true culture will not be content with the mere selfish enjoyment of sweetness and light, but will endeavour to make the passion for them prevail, they assume the office of teacher, and endeavour to make their notions of sweetness and light prevail. And they have selected the medium of fiction, partly because, after the newspaper, it is the most popular form of literature, and partly because it is the most convenient. […] In what it does need, in imagination and invention, in the play of wit and fancy, of humour and pathos, in knowledge of life and manners, and of the arts of literary composition, it is true they are also somewhat deficient. But this deficiency they hope to conceal by affecting to change the purpose of fiction. Instead of the sweet influences it has exercised over so many generations of men worn with the common lot, whose hearts ache with sorrow or are heavy with toil, they would claim for it now the stern offices of the preacher, the law-giver, and the judge.

Mrs. Ward has indeed no such great career behind her as Mr. Hardy. Her production is as yet scanty but it has been sufficient to mark her as an accomplished woman, as one who, if she would have consented to give her powers fair play, might have proved an agreeable and graceful worker in those lighter forms of composition in which her sex has so often succeeded. But she too has been inoculated by the Spirit of the Time; she too has accepted a mission to reform the world

through fiction. […] And look at the result — talents wasted, energies misapplied on a work, of which the verdict can only be that it is tiresome as a novel and ineffectual as a sermon.

c) 'Theology and Morality in Modern Fiction', *The Church Quarterly Review*, 34 (April 1892), 82–95 (pp. 85, 89–90, 91)

The History of David Grieve is a singularly powerful and interesting tale, much superior, in our opinion, to its predecessor which made the accomplished authoress's reputation. Mrs Humphry Ward has also wisely avoided the personal element which in one character at any rate was painfully conspicuous to those who could read between the lines in *Robert Elsmere*.

There is something very touching, as well as amusing, in the story of the poor child-wife's gradual perception of the fact that she is not her husband's equal. The pathos reaches its climax in the account of her death, which really rivals the death-scene of Helen Pendennis or Colonel Newcome, and rises far above that of 'little Nell.' It would have been far better if Mrs. Humphry Ward had written more in this vein, instead of giving us long and dreary analyses of the progressive attitude of David towards religion. Such discussions are out of place in a novel, even when the novelist is a profound theologian. But Mrs. Humphry Ward is not a theologian, and she gets sadly out of her depth.

Now, if [David's] vague hopes have any definite meaning at all, they must mean that he hopes to keep the moral, while he rejects the supernatural, side of Christianity. But the supernatural is so inextricably bound up with the moral element that it is impossible with any logical consistency to refuse the one and accept the other. Nay, the rejection of the supernatural involves *ipso facto* the rejection of the moral; for, is it not distinctly immoral for a man to claim supernatural powers for himself or others when he knows it to be a false claim? And if he does not know it to be so, his moral teaching is vitiated by his ignorance. As a teacher an unconscious impostor is as futile as a conscious impostor. But it is a wearisome and profitless task to follow Mrs. Humphry Ward or David Grieve through the mazes of his or her theology.

2) Critics and Ward's 'Fiction with a Purpose'

a) *The Church Quarterly Review* [review of *Marcella*], 38 (July 1894), 457–60 (pp. 457, 458–59)

If a 'novel with a purpose' is to be convincing, it must be so through a process of careful and cumulative observation, and in these the field of study is often singularly narrow and confined.

If a shade of weariness comes over us at times it may be because the canvas is somewhat too crowded, and because a certain air of unreality pervades much of the discussion of socialistic theories, with which the book is replete. As we close Mrs. Ward's novel a sense of incompleteness comes over us, and we are perplexed to determine in what category we should place it. If it is to be reckoned as a mere tale, the socialistic portion of it is too long; if as a contribution to the solution of deep and difficult problems, it is too scrappy and discursive. Yet perhaps we hardly do Mrs. Ward justice in such a judgment. Her tone throughout is scrupulously and intellectually fair. If she sympathizes — as who must not? — with the aspirations even of those extremists whose sense of the terrible inequalities of modern life leads them to regard property almost as a crime, she exposes the impracticability of their theories, and the resultant of her teaching is that for the present there is more to be hoped from individual action than from legislative remedies.
It is a special charm of Mrs. Humphry Ward's heroine that she maintains throughout her varied and trying experiences a maidenliness of spirit entirely pure and unsullied. […] How the fineness of her inner nature detects the hollowness alike of Wharton's pretensions and of the passion

which he avows and which she had been strongly disposed to return; how the mournful disappointment of high and cherished hopes discipline her character and correct her earlier hasty judgment, and how she learns — when they are hopelessly severed — to return to the love she so sadly and so nobly forfeited, is powerfully described by Mrs Ward's able pen. Amidst the mistakes inevitable to one in her position and with her imperfect training, not one unworthy thought stains the soul of Marcella Boyce, and when all misunderstanding is cleared away the reader feels that she is worthy of the prize she finally obtains. With all our heart we thank Mrs Ward for presenting us with not a faultless, but a spotless, English girl in Marcella, and with a chivalrous modest English gentleman in her lover.

b) W.J., Dawson, 'Half-Hours in the Library' [review of *Marcella*], *The Young Woman*, 1 June 1894, 311–12

If Mrs Ward's popularity is significant of anything, it is that the novel with a purpose never had so wide a vogue as at present. We live in a strenuous age, and we expect fiction to reflect and express the thoughts and hopes that move us most deeply. Among those who read novels must now be included the more serious people who twenty years ago utterly ignored them. These form a very large constituency, and for these the novel that is based on serious ideals of life is the only species of novel which commands praise or attention. […] By a happy instinct she has touched a new order of readers who care little for the ordinary novel, and are insensible to the defects of Mrs Ward's books as works of fiction, because they are deeply sensitive to the sincerity of moral purpose which permeates them. […] As novels, Mrs Ward's books are relative failures. She is unable to impart the true breath of life to her figures. Robert Elsmere wearies us, David Grieve bores us intolerably. She paints upon too large a canvas, and on a scale altogether beyond her resources. [… *Marcella*] is a novel dealing with social problems, and as such ought to be read by all who are alive to the intense social spirit of our day. I should allege against it all the faults which I have already enumerated: it is too long, it is too didactic, it is too burdened with the obvious idea of propaganda. […] Even as a message it fails, because it teaches nothing. It leaves us just where we were. […] From the political point of view the book is obviously the manifesto of that strange person, the Tory-democrat.

[If Mrs Ward is to write a great book] it will only be done by developing the dramatic passion which moves us so keenly in the second volume of *Marcella* and by suppressing the didactic and uncompromising tendencies which make the last volume tedious. A true story tells itself; we do not want endless explications.

c) [Review of *Marcella*], *Overland Monthly,* 24 (October 1894), 446–47 (p.466)

Marcella is no whit less offensive to the readers for pleasure than *Robert Elsmere* or *David Grieve* though in this book not theology but sociology is the theme. Marcella is as much impressed as Hamlet that the times are out of joint, and that she is born to set them right. So this beautiful English girl, daughter of a good family under a cloud, sets herself with passionate earnestness to remake society. […] And not only she, but every other character in the story, is oppressed with this same overwhelming sense of responsibility for all earthly wrongs and is striving each in his own way and by his individual exertion to apply what seems to him to be the remedy. […] And each of these persons is striving alone for this object, and in a hopeless, unaided sort of a way. They try to help each other, but each one knows that none of the others can really see the need as he sees it, nor appreciate the value of the remedy that he would apply. The only thing he can do is to go one with the vain struggle till health and strength are exhausted, and nothing is really accomplished by the sacrifice. […]

It may seem to the reader who does not know Mrs Ward in this her latest work, that this is an exaggerated statement of the hopeless, helpless, depressed frame of mind the book inspires,

but it is hardly possible to overstate it. There are redeeming gleams, it is true. There is still left the lofty spirit that is content to make a losing fight in a great cause, ‘‘in scorn of consequence,” and there are certain sweet communings possible between soul and soul, even though each but half comprehends the other. But the chief comfort the ordinary reader will get is when he reaches the end of the book, where the heroine seems to arrive at a glimmer of sense, and concludes that it is better to marry the rich nobleman that she loves and who loves her, and grasp the human happiness that is within her reach, even though she must seem to countenance much that is abhorrent to her socialistic convictions. Just how she brings herself to do this is a bit obscure, but the reader that has grown interested in her in spite of her egotism and idiocy, likes her better for the fact that human weakness has got the better of pitiless logic.

d) Frederick Greenwood, ‘Mrs Humphry Ward’s New Book’, *Pall Mall Gazette*, 3 April 1894, 1–2

Marcella, Mrs Humphry Ward’s new book, will be called ‘a novel with a purpose’. That, however, it is not in the opprobrious sense of being designed to attack an institution or support a cause. All good novels are not merely presentations of life and the human creature under certain conditions, and beset by certain fatalities and emotions; they are also criticisms. Informally, unostentatiously, the characters and the conditions they describe are presented under the play of an observing and critical judgment […] so that the truth in them may be developed, and their meanings and mutual bearings be displayed. [… Stories] cannot be ‘merely amusing’ without being revealing, enlightening, and critical in some measure. But to be dogmatic, to be controversial or propagandist, is quite a different thing […]. That is not Mrs Ward’s way here. In *Marcella* she enters into the field of Socialism. Nearly the whole of the personages of the story are brought into it; and their […] aspirations, temptations, weaknesses, errors and sufferings are all more or less related to “the social problem”. […] But in all the novelist’s aim is not to preach, neither to declaim; but to *reveal*, and to reveal on all sides. Is it supposed, then, that the book must be written in coldness of spirit — without heart, without sympathy? That would be a great mistake. It would be difficult to find in all the books of all the philanthropists a deeper or more tender commiseration for the miseries of the poor than is to be found here. And it is none the less humane, but more, because it is an understanding compassion, perceptive and comprehensive of the fact there are other privations besides those of hunger and cold.

If there was anything in any of George Eliot’s novels, other than the love-making, that took [the reader’s] fancy; any portraiture that pleased him; any scene of pathos or humour that touched his sympathies, enlarged his knowledge of human nature, or brought him nearer to his kind, let him try for the same in this story of Mrs Humphry Ward’s. He will not be disappointed. If, besides, he obtains a clearer view of social questions which most of us chatter about [...] so much the better for him mentally and as a citizen. If the clearer view is also more generous and humane, so much the better for him morally; and at least he will find himself in the way of obtaining both these advantages. But if he is only concerned with the literary and emotional uses of a novel, here he is provided with both, of the best and in abundance. Not one, but nearly all the characters that figure in the story are drawn with an ease, a masterly completion, of which there are few examples in English. […] Not but that it has its faults — one at least: it is too long. […] But it is (or seems to me) the best book that Mrs Ward has yet written: admirable in point of style, abounding in knowledge of her theme, finely dramatic in many places, exhibiting everywhere a deep and kindly acquaintance with human nature.

e) H.D. Traill, ‘*Sir George Tressady* and the Political Novel’, *Fortnightly Review*, 60 (1 November 1896), 703–14 (pp. 706–07, 711, 712-13)

Sir George Tressady is a serious — a very serious effort in a department of fiction in which to be too serious — or at any rate to be nothing besides serious — is inevitably to miss complete

success; and the first and most potent cause of Mrs. Ward's comparative failure as a political novelist is to be found in her lack of humour. […] and the result, to those of her readers who have had a near vision of the politics and seen most of the leading political actors off the stage, is to give an idealized air to scenes and portraits which are nothing if not realistic, and which were obviously meant for examples of the most conscientious realism. […] Such is the deadly earnestness of her 'views,' that she must find mouthpieces for them — and, of course, for the opposite views too — who will do them justice; and if appropriate spokesmen and spokeswomen are not to be found in characters realistically sketched from life, so much the worse for life and realism. The characters must be idealized, that is all: and idealized they have been with a vengeance in *Sir George Tressady*.

Mrs. Ward can survey her minor characters from the outside. In some of their aspects or attitudes she can contemplate even the central figures of her story in the same way. But where they are giving utterance to her own long pondered thoughts, where they are personifying her own passionately cherished ideals, where, in other words, they are speaking, feeling, or acting as she would have men speak, feel, and act, she is wholly unable to detach herself from them, and view them as the painter views his unfinished picture, or the sculptor his half-modelled clay. They are herself, and the ability to detach herself from them would imply just that power of self-detachment which her writings so abundantly show that she does not possess. […]

On the other hand, her attempt to interweave serious romance-interest with the realities of serious contemporary politics, has as completely missed the mark as [Disraeli's]. […] And from the exigencies of this *conte fantastique* the realistic, or what are meant to be the realistic, scenes and incidents of the story are continually suffering. […] The varying fortunes of the Maxwell Bill, and their culmination in the great debate in which the hero deserts his party, are handled throughout by Mrs. Ward in a manner which has been justly praised. Critics, who perhaps know more about novels than about the proceedings of the House of Commons, or the agitations of its lobby, have been much moved by the pages in which these things are described. Some of them, apparently, have been made to realise, with a wholly unfamiliar intensity, the excitement of a great political struggle as it is felt by the combatants themselves; and I do not for a moment deny that the history of these events is related by this vigorous writer with no little dramatic power.

It is possible to conceive a politician changing his opinion as to a Bill in the course of its passage through the House, and both speaking and voting against his party on a vital clause in its provisions. But it is not possible to imagine him keeping this change in his opinions a dead secret from his leader and his colleagues till he announced it in his place in the House; and, it is a thousand times impossible — unless he deliberately intended to play the game of a traitorous wrecker of his party, and Sir George Tressady is represented as a man of scrupulous honour — that he should delay the announcement until the very eve of the division, and then spring it upon his party in the manner best calculated, not merely to insure their defeat, but to hurry them into utter rout and collapse. […] It is true he has a certain artistic appreciation of Marcella's physical beauty; but his feeling for her consists far more largely of respect for her intellectual powers, admiration of her nobility of character, and sympathy with her social ideals. These motives, least of all the last, which seems ultimately to have determined his action, are none of them potent enough to make an honourable man break loose from all the restraints of honour. […] there is only one way of explaining the appearance of adequacy which it must have presented to Mrs. Ward. She is a good deal more in love with Marcella than is her hero himself.

It is, in fact, the idealisation of Marcella which has converted what might have been a powerful novel into a 'fairy tale of the New Socialism.'

f) [Review of *Sir George Tressady*], *The Critic*, 26 (17 October 1896), 229–30

Sir George Tressady denotes the high-water mark of Mrs. Humphry Ward's literary achievement. *David Grieve*, which previously represented the best thought and richest art of its author, is distinctly outranked by the new masterpiece. This fine and serious work, so intelligent and sympathetic in spirit and purpose, so stimulating and wholesome in effect, affords a new and signal proof, if proof be still demanded, of the poetic power and creative genius of the gentler sex. […] With a sublime pity and self-forgetfulness, Marcella seeks [Letty] out and lavishes all the tenderness, all the loveliness of her being upon the wretched woman, whose cold, hard heart softens at last under the glow of a pure and generous nature which makes itself felt in looks, tones, movements — the mute and genuine language of character — more than in words. One cannot read with unmoist eyes this touching and powerful scene — the finest in the book, the strongest in its appeal to one's sense of moral perfection, of ideal beauty, — nor without mentally comparing it with the famous scene in *Middlemarch* between Rosamond and Dorothea — a comparison it well sustains. A reconciliation between husband and wife is silently effected; Tressady takes up the broken thread of his life with a new and serious purpose, but meets an untimely death in a brave effort to rescue a band of miners from a living tomb. The latent heroism of the man reveals itself strongly in this last scene, the fitting close to a noble book. […]

It is truthful, sincere work, but the soft glow of refined feeling is over it all. The political predicament she describes is of course imaginary, but is far from fantastic, the supposed party combinations and plans of legislation being wholly conceivable and indeed probable. Mrs. Ward's interest in social reform and its problems displays itself anew in the program of the Maxwell Bill, which presents a scheme for the protection of the degraded workers of East London. Whether the plans outlined are entirely feasible or adequate may perhaps be doubted, without impugning the sincerity or humanity of the author's purpose. Indeed, Mrs. Ward would readily admit that all such reforms are and must be merely tentative and partial remedies, sharing the imperfection they seek to remove. […]

The influence of a noble character is the real theme of the book. Marcella Maxwell is Mrs. Ward's loveliest creation, a creation, we say, and yet, however idealised it may appear at first sight, we believe it to be essentially a portrait of some person known to the author. It is too instinct with vital humanity to be the product of the unaided imagination. […] Marcella's is no cut-and-dried philanthropy; still less does she resemble the familiar type of Lady Bountiful, unconsciously offensive in its tactless patronage. She is the impulsive, high-souled Marcella of yore, but with a character mellowed and matured, a character developed and chastened by a wise self-restraint, by the intelligent altruism of a fond wife and mother, The result is a 'miracle of noble womanhood.'

The book is admirably written. The softly touched, exquisite landscapes; the rude pathos of Mary Batchelor's grief; the revelation of tender womanhood in Marcella's heart talk with Letty — with what delicacy and power all these are given! The large humanity and gentle wisdom of the author, her insight into the springs of character, proclaim her a true Arnold, not less than her literary tact. Hers is the secret of the finest art — the interpretation of life by the intuition of sympathy. She is touched with the feeling of our infirmity. Not only the hardships of a class, but individual griefs appeal to her; not merely physical suffering, squalor and deprivation, but the hunger of the heart, the sores and aches of the soul. Hers is the religion of Matthew Arnold, enriched by a woman's idealism, a woman's sympathy. Our literature, we are told, is becoming feminized, to its manifest loss. If this be true, it merely proves that the excess of masculine influence in the past has met its counterpoise. […] for such feminizing influence as Mrs. Humphry Ward contributes, the Muse be praised!

g) [Review of *Sir George Tressady*], *The Atlantic Monthly*, 78 (December 1896), 841–43 (pp. 841, 843)

She is not a novelist by nature and scarcely one by grace, but she goes on her brilliant way, adding one person after another to her world of imaginary beings, bringing them into existence not so much by a creative fiat as by the exercise of an intellectual industry which works after good patterns. Why is it that the more perfectly a wax figure simulates life the more objectionable it becomes, the farthest removed from genuine life? [….] But after all is over, especially after he has been constrained to listen to the tickings of Sir George Tressady's life in a damp and dark underground passage, the reader who looks at books as works of art turns back upon this highly intellectual and rational performance, and, with a puzzled sense of having been almost deceived, comes nevertheless to the conviction that he has been at a most ingenious and interesting show, a species of museum of humanity, the objects being chiefly English men and women of the upper order, with a few specimens of the peasant class for effective contrast.

Mrs. Ward is a victim of the Zeitgeist, that scourge or that stimulant of literature, as one may choose to take it. Social reform, woman, politics, the relation of man and woman in the apparent readjustment of society, here is double, double, toil and trouble, and Mrs. Ward puts her fagots on the fire and watches the caldron bubble. […] For her interest is not primarily in the men and women whom she creates; it is in the people of the actual world in which she lives, and whom she tries to transfer to her novel. In doing this she is all the while preoccupied with the circumstances and the inner life of the prototypes of her fictitious characters so that when finally she takes leave of her hero, it occurs to her to sit down and look at him in his death struggles and try to explain him to herself and her friends. What artist who had gone out of herself through six or seven hundred pages in the disclosure of her hero would find it necessary at the end to bring in a sort of heavenly candle and go searching round in the poor man's heart and brain? […] Mrs. Ward has not yet, we suspect, made the artist's discovery, but she is so brilliant a writer, she knows so well the world she aims to reproduce, and she is so good a pathologist in social health and disease, that one reads her novel with great pleasure.[…] yet with the unreasonableness of one who has caught a glimpse of what art in fiction may be, he sighs for a world made anew by a great literary creator.

h) Haldane Macfall, 'Mrs Humphry Ward: A Pen and Ink Portrait', *The Leeds Mercury,* 7 May 1904, p.9

Mrs Humphry Ward sees life through academic eyes – spaces it out, weighs it, calculates it, classifies it; frets that it evades her schemes, that it never quite adjusts itself to her theories. […] She, in consequence, rides the purpose of her novel to death, as a schoolmaster whips an original boy; and the result, as a solution of that purpose, is as splendidly futile. The making of a novel to prove a theory is like a parson in a pulpit laying down the moral law — there is no opposition, no debate, no cross-examination.

[… *Robert Elsmere* is] all a juggle of words – academic and hair-splitting. For a healthy man or woman, the problems that Mrs Humphry Ward thrashes along the whole path of her story have been settled and bedded down in youth. […] It is in her peasants and country folk, and in the healthy fresh air of country places, where theories are of small avail and life is lived simply, that Mrs Humphry Ward reaches the nearest to genius. […] The fact is that to write a novel in order to prove a philanthropic theory is to mistake the whole meaning of art. Art is the transference of emotion, not of reason or logic. […] Matthew Arnold looked upon Art as the criticism of life — which is just exactly what Art is not. Art is the statement of the emotion of living. An academic statement of life can never be a wholly true statement of life, for Reason alone cannot state life. […] Emotion is a far more mystic thing, a subtler, a deeper, more significant thing than reason. […] When she is writing of populous cities, she approaches the humanity of the cities as though she would reduce it to statistics, as Mr Booth would approach it.

[….] Mrs Humphry Ward is at her best in landscape; yet how one wishes the elaborate statement less elaborately builded, and the emotions allowed to do their own master-work! For, given all her fine qualities of head and heart, her academic eyes see the world somewhat bookishly. […] Emotional purpose there must be in a great work of art. To create a work of art one must throw an emotional problem — love, jealousy, or what not — amongst a group of human beings, and work out the result in a series of episodes that lead to a catastrophe, either comic or tragic, in the unravelling. But religion is man's logical system of the universe, it is set up and it passes away, and his brain renews or recreates it or replaces it; but human nature persists. […]

The academies have never been able to solve the problem of life; they never will.

i) Letter from Mary Ward to George Smith [publisher], 6 October 1896 — concerning critical misunderstanding of *Sir George Tressady*

I see that hostile reviews of which I have seen a few are all taking the line that the book is a pamphlet & not a story. It seems to me the same would be said of any novel which introduced political & social matters at all, & it delights me to see that the book is being discussed as no mere pamphlet could be discussed. As for me I can truly say that the persons of the story were everything to me, & the framework — comparatively — nothing. I tried to do it well, & I placed my people in the milieu that I understood best. But to suppose that I chose my people to illustrate anything, & carried them through with this cold intellectual motive, seems to me quite absurd, when I look back on the process of the book. There are so many things in Marcella that I have seen and known — I wonder whether you remember my aunt Forster? — there are all sorts of impressions from her, as a younger woman, in Marcella. The fact is that I was brought up with people in whom the strongest emotions of life were generally combined with some intellectual end, & I suppose this reflects itself in the books.

(Mrs. Humphry Ward Papers 1857–1935 (H-Mss-0927), 2.1 (box 2, folder 1), Special Collections, The Claremont Colleges Library, Claremont, California — [henceforth referenced as MHWP]

j) 'Mrs Humphry Ward at the Authors' Club', *Queen*, 109 (25 May 1901), 827

As to 'novels with a purpose', I am inclined to think that if a novelist imagines that he or she is going to conquer art by much preaching, that the novel is merely the pamphlet or sermon writ long, […] then in the words of Goldsmith 'nothing can exceed the vanity of his existence and the folly of his pursuits.' […] Nothing has any power in the world of art but the things of feeling and the things of beauty. On that we all agree. What is sincere — what touches the artist before it is offered to the public, that we all agree is the first, almost the only, condition of good work. But that condition includes much that the critics are often ready to deny us. If the play of religious opinion, or social reform, or political power, as they affect human life is what interests the writer, and if that writer is drawn towards the form of the novel, what authority bars the way? […] The only point to be considered is — can he touch other minds, can he throw what he has to say into shapes that move and live? […] interpreted through the forms of human life, and interfused with beauty, or with terror? If he can, let the critic say what he will. […]

Are you going to glorify the book, and denounce the purpose? Perfectly true that the purpose is nothing without the art; but humanity, the reader, the true and ultimate public, will take care of that. […] Meanwhile, though, I will always maintain that art knows no limitations but those that spring out of itself, though all genres (save the hideous and inhuman) have their own burgher rights. […] All that we ought to ask, it sems to me, one of another is that each of us should be true to his or her own vision and instinct — should write what we love to write — should strive for the perfection of what we write — within the bounds of beauty, within the bounds of social service.

3) Ward's Correspondence with Mandell Creighton

a) Letter from Mandell Creighton to Mrs Ward, 9 December 1884

My dear Mrs Ward,
I have read '*Miss Bretherton*' with much interest. It was hardly fair on the book to know the plot beforehand, but I found myself carried away by the delicate feeling with which the development of character was traced. The Nuneham scene, the death-bed & the final reconciliation were really touching and powerfully worked out.

At the same time it is not a novel of my sort. I demand that I should have given me an entire slice of life, and that I should see the mutual interaction of a number of characters. Your interest centres entirely on one character; your characters all move in the same region of ideas & that a narrow one. Your book is dainty, but it does not touch the great springs of life. Of course, you didn't mean it to do so; but I am putting before what I conceive to be the novelist's ideal. It seems to me that a novelist must have seen much, must lay himself out to be conversant with many sides of life, must have no line of his own, but must lend himself to the life of those around him. This is the direct opposite of the critic. I wonder if the two trades can be combined. Have you ever read Sainte Beuve's solitary novel '*Volupté*'? It is instructive reading. You are a critic in your novel — your object is really to show how criticism can affect a nature capable of receiving it. It is a lesson of the desirability of cultivating a teachable disposition to which all things are possible. It is the intellectual convictions of Miss Bretherton rather than her emotional capacity which attracts us. How is this properly a subject of art? Is it not too didactic? It is not for me, for I am an old-fashioned moralist: but the mass of people do not care for intellectual teaching in novels. They want an emotional thrill. Remember that you have deliberately put this aside. Kendal's love is not made to affect his life, his character, his work. Miss Bretherton only feels so far attracted to him as to listen to what he says. She develops intellectually, not from any passionate desire to justify himself in his eyes. I myself should not have described the process in letters from an outside critic, but would have traced it from within. I only say this to show you what the book made me think, that you write as a critic not as a creator. You threw into the form of a story many critical judgments, & gave an excellent sketch of the possible worth of criticism in an unregenerate world. This was worth doing once: but if you are going on with novels you must throw criticism to the winds & let yourself go as a partner of common joys, common sorrows & common perplexities. There I have told you what I think just as I think it. I would not have done so to anyone else save you,
to whom I am always your most affectionate,
M. Creighton
(MHWP, 30.14)

b) Letter from Mary A. Ward to Mandell Creighton, 13 March 1888

My dear Max,
I have been deeply interested by your letter & am very grateful to you for the fairness & candour of it. Perhaps it is an affectation to say always that one likes candour! — but I certainly like it from you and I should be aggrieved if you did not give it me.

I entirely agree that Elsmere's change, though I think the nature & elements of it are typical, is not as a story typical of the present day. The pressure now is distributed from so many sides, & the alternatives offered are on the whole so much more attractive & inspiring than they were, that a man may often pass through the whole process without much sense of painful giving up. And certainly Elsmere's story is true to the experience of a past generation, the generation of John Sterling, of the *Nemesis of Faith,* of Blanco White. […] But painful giving up there still is; the words of Mr Grey 'the parting with the Xtian mythology is to many the rending asunder of bones & marrow' were words of Mr Green's to me; & I have known the same wrench in other cases. […]

I think you only evade the whole issue raised by the book when you say that Elsmere was never a Xtian. Of course in the case of everyone who goes through such a change, it is easy to say this; it is extremely difficult to prove it; & all probability is against its being true in every case. What do you really fall back upon when you say that if Elsmere has been a Xtian he could not have been influenced as he was? Surely in the 'inward witness'. But the 'inward witness', or as you call it 'the supernatural life' belongs to every religion that exists. […] And if the critical observer maintains that this 'supernatural life' is in all cases really an intense life of the imagination, differently peopled & conditioned, what answer have you? None, unless you appeal to the facts & fruits of Xtianity. The Church has always done so. Only the Quaker or the Quietist can stand mainly on the 'inward witness'.

The fruits we are not now concerned with. But it is as to the facts that Elsmere, & as I conceive, our whole modern time is really troubled. […] Why is he to be called 'very ill-trained', and his impressions 'accidental' because he undergoes it? I meant to suggest in him the pressure of one set of considerations only, the historical & critical considerations, a pressure, which I believe, & I could quote a hundred admissions on the orthodox side in support of the view, to be the pressure of the present day. […] What convinced *me* finally & irrevocably was two years of close & constant occupation with the materials of history in those centuries which lie near to the birth of Xtianity & were the critical centuries of its development. I then saw that to adopt the witness of those centuries to matters of fact, without translating it at every step, into the historical language of our own day — a language which the long education of time has brought closer to the realities of things — would be to end by knowing nothing, actually and truly, about their life. […] I don't think you have ever felt this pressure, though within the limits of your own work I notice that you are always so translating the language of the past.

Then as to Catherine – I meant to leave her possessed by two forces, the force of faith & the force of memory. Faith would take her to church, memory, which with her would be all love, would take her to those scenes where Elsmere had spent his life blood & where his presence would seem to be still lingering. She would be silent, she would take no part, but if she had been a true wife she would go. So at least I conceive it.
(William S. Peterson, 'Mrs Humphrey Ward on *Robert Elsmere*: Six New Letters', *Bulletin of the New York Public Library*, 74 (1970), 587–97 (pp.590–91, 592))

c) Letter From Mandell Creighton to Mrs T.H. Ward, 3 February 1892

I have been reading '*David Grieve*' with the greatest interest, and congratulate you most cordially on it. It is thoroughly human throughout and sends down many shafts deep into the recesses of human nature. It has convinced me that you are quite right in writing novels, and that you are enriching English Literature with a new mode of expressing profound truths in a simple and attractive form. You have given an imaginative expression of many of the great problems of modern life with great subtlety and refined analysis. I think that '*David Grieve*' will never be forgotten, but will have a place in literature as a typical book of all that is best in the endeavours and feelings of our day.

My interest in you will allow me to say that I think the advance on '*Robert Elsmere*' is enormous. That is the thing which strikes me at every page. I say this not because I depreciate the former book, but because there is no testimony which can more rejoice the true artist than the testimony to artistic growth. The characters are much stronger, the realisation is much more complete. All the people in '*David*' are real people, not types but realities. One feels that one has no right to criticise their actions: they did so, and in so doing acted up to the law of their being. All the subsidiary scenes are profoundly true, none more touching than old Margaret Dawson in her dotage. Then there is such a sense of reserved power about the book, that one surrenders oneself at once. The conception of the book is noble; the development is natural and truthful; the results are inevitable. What can I say more? Criticism of minor points is disarmed; it is not worth while.

Two things only I wish to say, though with great deference. The reason why I set David above Robert is because the intellectual side of things is subordinate to the purely human. *Tendency* is a foe to art; and the exact form of repose which David found for his soul is his own concern. I am glad that it was such a good one. But there are passages in his 'diary' which were written by Mrs Ward and not by himself and diaries are very dangerous things in novels.
Then David's power of assimilating knowledge is really too rapid. Men can rapidly develop capacities and display a power of mastering ideas. But they cannot in the midst of a practical life rapidly become acquainted with the literary form of ideas. The conception of the historical growth of ideas is the last that a self-made man would arrive at. I think David is too educated. In the constructive part of the book you have kept your own literary knowledge well in the background: but here and there it breaks out, and finds expression in the language of definite criticism. You are quite strong enough to do without it. I only wish to point out a temptation which you will be greater if you resist.

But I feel that I have no right even to do this. The book fills me with nothing but admiration, and it will be of great service to all the best interests of humanity,
Yours always affectionately,
M. Petriburg [Creighton was then Bishop of Peterborough]
(Louise Creighton, *Life and Letters of Mandell Creighton*, *D.D. Oxon and Cam., sometime Bishop of London, by his Wife*, two volumes in one (London: Longmans, Green, 1913 [1904]), II, pp. 101–02)

d) Letter from Mary Ward to Mandell Creighton, 5 February 1892

My dear Max,
I have read your contribution to the 'higher criticism' in the matter of *David Grieve* with mingled dismay & gratitude. What it is to have the historian's eye! Off I posted at once to Smith & Elder to enquire when corrections could be inserted. Not till the sixth edition, alas! The fourth & fifth are now printed & when they are done I will see whether these tangles can be put straight. Though if the story has to be re-written in the process you will admit I shall have to leave it alone! Seriously, I am most grateful to you, and shall be still more for any further corrections you are able to send me. And as for your letter & Louise's, they have been indeed welcome & delightful and will lie always among my treasures. Yours brought the tears into my eyes, for there has been much to hurt & wound me in the last fortnight and the joy of being understood is great. David Grieve's journal will probably be the last piece of *controversial* religion I shall ever put into a novel. You are quite right in thinking the form of it too academical. The expression is wrong in the more literary part. But those were his thoughts — I am sure of that! […]
(MHWP, 29.13)

e) Letter from Mandell Creighton to Mary Ward, 6 February 1892

My dear Mary,
If I continue my remarks in the same strain it is not because I wish to maintain a ponderous pleasantry; but because criticism of that sort works naturally in that form, & can work equally well on any material, being like all other products of the human mind, partly wise and partly foolish. You cannot reckon my admiration of the book too high; the oftener I turn it over the more I find in it, & the more I appreciate the truth of its analysis of the formative influences in the production of character.

But I am very sorry to hear that some criticism has been ungenerous. As I never read any newspaper, except 5 minutes of Times daily, I know nothing of what has been said. The only person I have come across, who was at work on the book, was a good lady in a country house, who was pining for vol.3. & said she had been more moved by the pathos of David's collapse into drunkenness than by anything she ever read. By the way, the maid-servant at the inn is a real stroke of genius: your subsidiary characters are all real.

But I think that we all have to learn the responsibility attached to understanding the function of a teacher, and the inevitable antagonism which the claim arouses. It has been so always. No amount of rectitude or good intentions avail. It is well that we should learn humility, & the culmination of intellectual humility is to endure misunderstanding and misrepresentation.

It is very nice of you to promise us a visit. […] Love to Humphry and Janet.
Always your affectionate,
M. Petriburg
(MHWP, 30.16)

f) Extract from letter from Mandell Creighton to Mary Ward, [December 1893?]

I am greatly interested in the book and pine for its denouement. So far Marcella, though I know her quite well, does not in the least awaken my sympathy. She is an intolerable girl — but there are many of them. […] I only hope that she may be made to pay for it. Mr and Mrs Boyce are good and original, so is Wharton. I hope that condign vengeance awaits him. He is the modern politician entirely. . . . I really hope Marcella may be converted. It would serve her right to marry her to Wharton.
(Quoted in Appendix C of Mary Augusta Ward, *Marcella,* ed. by Beth Sutton-Ramspeck and Nicole B. Mellor (Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview Press, 2002), p.559 [formerly in the Pusey House Oxford, Ward Archive]

g) Letter from Mary Ward to Mandell Creighton, 20 December 1893

My dear Bishop,
I was very grateful for your Kritik and it shall receive the author's best attention! Somehow or other however I must keep that crinoline:— yet how it is to be done in a book which in part III describes a debate on a Compulsory Eight Hour Day for all trades, I don't quite see!

As for Marcella you hurt me a little with regard to her, though I admit she is a 'chit' in the first part. Still secretly all through I have been fond of her & I shall be positively unhappy if you are not too, by the end. After all there are ugly ducklings in the moral as well as in the physical world, & M. up to her breach with Aldous is an ugly duckling. The problem of course is how to reveal the swan. Well I have been taking her through penances in Part III. In the first place she was taught her place in hospital, & kept under by a sister, a stupid person, whom as she says, she would never have spoken to at Mellor. Then she quietly & I think naturally falls in love with Aldous Raeburn, when she is able to see him in & for himself & not as a pawn in her game; but she has to put aside all pride before she can finally win him — and there are interludes with Wharton by the way which are illuminating. Then her nursing brings her home to realities, & shews her how small after all is her own saving power compared to that of other & commoner people. No — my poor Marcella! — she doesn't deserve all your hard words. Is it not something to be somebody with a will & a character at all? And may not almost anything be hoped, except from the nonentities?

But — many thanks! Will Louise please send me the proofs tomorrow? They are the only full set I have. If she would send them tomorrow to Stocks I should find them on my arrival. I wonder if I might ask her to register them.
It was nice to have you both.
Ever yours affectionately,
Mary A. Ward.
(MHWP, 29.13)

h) Letter from Mary Ward to Mandell Creighton, 2 July 1896

My dear Bishop,

Do you remember saying in your good news last year, that you would like to see the proofs of '*George Tressady'*? I have always wished to shew them to you, & now you would be doing me a very great kindness, if you could possibly read the book — rapidly — before my final revision, & let me have your impression? I feel very loth, horribly loth to ask it, for of course you are full of work. But you have been the best of friends to me about my books, and I really want your opinion. I begin to foresee that the story will probably be a good deal attacked from two sides,— the side of those who think that the "situation à trois" is always better left severely alone, & the other side of those who will think this particular treatment of it milk & water. You will see that I have tried to describe a moral & emotional crisis occurring as though by surprise in the life of a man whose *parti pris* it is to give sentiment as little hold as possible. Yet sentiment overtakes him, first in the matter of Marcella, & then through her influence, in his relation to the poor & the working-class. Yet on this second point his nature wavers to the end, & his death is the more tragic because the heroism of it as it were comes by accident. That he should die for the people could never have seemed to be his destiny. Yet he does it, & in closing the book the reader is meant of course to carry his mind back to young fellow of the opening chapters with all his light-hearted belief in power & intelligence, his contempt for most of the popular cries. The political framework makes me rather anxious. It is absolutely necessary but I think there is too much of it, and I am now seeing what can be done to shorten some of the middle chapters. But to my horror instead of six weeks as I supposed I have only 3 weeks left to revise in. I had forgotten the American publication, & the book is already being set up for stereotyping in the States. Then the scenes with Marcella and Maxwell after the crisis. Here your impression will be very valuable. A few phrases even might change much, if I thought it right to add them or take away. [encloses 'the book in proof', and wonders if they can talk over it in person next week]. […]
Ever yours affectionately,
Mary A. Ward
Of course I should be most glad of Louise's views, too.
(MHWP, 29.13)

i) Letter from Mandell Creighton to Mrs T.H. Ward, 24 October 1896

My dear Mary,
Louise showed me your touching letter, which is just like all you think and write — so penetratingly and sympathetically true. [….]
I have been very busy or would have written to you before about '*Sir George'*. I am delighted that it has been so successful. I hear on many sides testimony to the interest which it has excited. Just the point on which I doubted — its political motive — has proved to be the most attractive. You were right and I was wrong. I did not know that the personal side of politics would appeal to the public mind; but it has. I find that one is no judge of one's friends' books: one is not sufficiently detached from the source from which they spring, and follows too much the process of their genesis to judge of their cumulative effect. In fact, I read your books with my primary interest in you, and so lose the dramatic effect of movement in the personages. Your books may be good, but you are so much better that you dissolve them for me into modes of yourself.
After that, it is time to leave off. Much love to you all.
(*Life and Letters of Mandell Creighton,* II, p.200)

j) Letter from Mandell Creighton to Mrs T.H. Ward, 5 August 1898

My dear Mary,
The month of August enables one to discharge duties long neglected because impossible. I have just had time read through '*Helbeck*' with the attention which it deserved. Everybody else has done so ages ago, and my remarks will be flat and stale. The book interested me greatly. I think you have got hold of a very real tragedy, and have worked it out with admirable precision. The

war of the intellect and the feelings is perhaps the deepest form which the tragic motive takes in our time. You have displayed the conflict in itself — Romanism and indifference are not to you things in themselves. But are merely two modes of looking at life, each to some degree accidental, but embodying positions from which it is hard to move merely on receiving notice from the feelings. Moreover you have raised another question, the need of discipline for character, and the source whence such discipline is to be obtained. It is not so much that Helbeck is a Roman, and Laura is indifferent: but Helbeck is a character formed by a system which especially aims at forming character. Laura has never been formed at all. The excellent impulses of the free spirit dash and are broken against the power of character even when formed upon an exaggerated and unintelligent basis. Of course if Laura had possessed any system of her own, she could have dealt with another system: she could have measured distances and determined points of agreement. But no system will not do.

I think this is a great truth for our generation to learn. There must be some system for everybody. The attitude of superior critical capacity for valuing the defects of all systems will not do. Every life has to be built upon something. If not, the clash against a life that has a foundation is fatal.

But I am wandering into a sermon of my own *à propos* of your book, which is not fair. […] (*Life and Letters of Mandell Creighton,* II, pp. 344–45)

k) Letter from Mandell Creighton to Mary Ward, 10 August 1898:

Dear Mary,
It is a rainy day; one enjoys a rainy day, because it curbs one's external energies and gives space for letters. I said nothing about the love story in '*Helbeck*,' which I thought was admirably done, and with very delicate touches. But then its beauty and grace were overshadowed by the main situation — I see no way out of that difficulty. One feels that they had to fall in love, and this interferes with the sense of inevitableness which is necessary for the enjoyment of a love story. I know you will say that it need not: but every branch of art rests on preconceptions, and the perception of an end takes off from the spontaneity of the process. But all the same the development of the love-story was excellent, and you had obviously gone with it . . .
I am interested in your question. You know that I have almost a craze for liberty. But liberty must be claimed and used by the individual amid the systems by which he is surrounded. His claim is that the systems of the majority should be also adapted to the small minority. But that minority rests upon culture and intelligence. These are not the possessions of the multitude. It always seems to me that the intelligent person must frame his own life, and use what he finds outside for his own purposes. He listens unmoved to all sorts of opinions because he has his own. He cannot be more than an influence, a spirit which rises above the inevitable differences of one-sided expressions of opinions. But he transgresses his role if he wishes to make everything new to fit himself. Knowledge silently transforms systems. I do not know that it can wisely create its own. If it does so, it only creates an ideal for which it is useless to strive by actual conflict. It is powerful within, as expanding and deepening, comprehending. Its own creations are unsatisfying, for it neglects the broad foundations to emphasize points of detail.

The tendency in England has been for all systems to grow more definite lately. This is due to the greater interest in the lower classes. All elementary teaching has to be definite. Simple minds do not appreciate fine shades. Systems are useful in proportion to their strength.

Religious bodies are now striving to hold the working classes. The consequence is a general recrudescence of unintelligence, an interest in externals. Intelligence will revive doubtless; it always does. But it must make its own way and bring its influence to bear by using what it can and teaching external systems to recognise their inward meaning.
(*Life and Letters of Mandell Creighton,* II, pp. 345–46)

l) Letter from Mary Ward to Mandell Creighton, 9 August 1898

My dear Bishop,
It was *very* good of you to find time to write to me on your hard-earned holiday, and your letter was a great pleasure to me. Of course you have seen the point of *Helbec*k, which so many people have missed. Life cannot be lived safely without guiding ideas, — and education, in any lesser sense is nought without them. That, on the side of thought, was what Laura meant to me. But I confess the story took so much hold upon me as a love-story, that I never was less concerned to point a moral or uphold an 'ism'. There *is* a moral — but I think & hope it grew, as it does in life, out of situation and character. [….]
Well, dear Bishop, following[?] out the train of your letter, I have opened my mind. With all my heart I agree that system & order are necessary, that the assembly of ourselves together is a large part of the Christian life. But it is the pouring of the new wine into the old bottles that is the perpetual difficulty and suffering for Ritualist and Rationalist alike. […]
Ever your affectionate,
Mary A. Ward
(MHWP, 29.13)

m) Letter from Mary Ward to Mandell Creighton, [c. July 1900]

My dear Bishop,
Many thanks for the book & the letter. I will look into all the criticisms with care. It troubles me that you were not drawn to Eleanor. She is weak, but it is the weakness surely of so many tender & charming women that have left traces behind them in history & biography that still speak to our hearts. I cannot believe that there will be no sympathy for her. In fact I know that so far as criticisms on the story have reached me you stand alone as to this. It is on Eleanor that the book depends, & those who can feel for & with her will find it interesting I trust & hope. But they may not be many! Still by the same post came a letter from the editors of Harper's so different that I was cheered,— as well as by one quite unsought from the Rudyard Kipling's as to the American girl. When one has felt a book very intensely in writing it, it is a blow that a friend should not feel it at all. But these are the ups and downs of literature & part of the discipline of the task. It was very good of you to give me some of your time in these hot tiring days.
Ever dear Bishop, yours affectly.,
Mary A. Ward
(MHWP, 29.13)

n) Letter from Mandell Creighton to Mary Ward, 26 July 1900

Dear Mary,
I did not mean to say that I was not drawn to '*Eleanor*;' but I wondered if the general public would feel a great interest in her. They would enjoy the Italian life, and the clerical side, but I wonder if they will feel the supreme interest of the *denouement* as you have worked it out. But I dare say I am quite wrong. I have left off attempting to gauge the possibilities of public appreciation of anything. I frankly confess that it is beyond me.

I admit that the world is full of predestined failures: and that failures in the life of the affections are among the most common, and at the same time the saddest. You have worked this out, and have shown the way of self-abnegation. But I wonder if the general mind will grasp it in the sense in which you meant it. I hope they may. I think Americans would be more perceptive than English on such a point, but again I do not know. You know so much better than I do. I should never have ventured to work out such a problem with so many accessories. But then I am deficient in audacity. I personally feel that Manisty was not worth it, and that Eleanor was worth a regiment of American girls; and I feel a burning desire to explain to them that they are all wrong

— that Lucy will bore Manisty after marriage, that there is no real companionship between them, and that Eleanor had better write his book for him, and be happy in so doing. You see that I am interested to the point of personal feeling on the matter.
(*Life and Letters of Mandell Creighton,* II, pp. 474–45)

o) Letter from Mary Ward to Mandell Creighton, 29 July 1900

My dear Bishop,
Thank you very much. I am comforted. Eleanor is really Pauline de Beaumont. It was from the history of Pauline's love for Chateaubriand, their work together on the '*Génie du Christianisme'*, his desertion of her for Madame de Custine, & her pathetic death in Rome, that I took the original idea of the story. […] I need not say that in working it out Eleanor became only Pauline's spiritual sister, a totally distinct being; & that much feeling & observation of my own have gone into her little as I may have been able to make them tell. The tragedy of Pauline's life was accomplished in her failure to hold Chateaubriand after the book was done; & of that failure she died. There was the germ of Eleanor & Manisty. Eleanor must be supplanted. But the problem to me was to make the supplanter innocent, & equally attractive with Eleanor to the spectator. It is in this as I gather from your letter that you think the book fails; and there is still time for me to consider whether anything can be done to strengthen it in this respect in the final revision. Last year I had under my eyes a case almost exactly similar to this story. The 'Lucy' when 'Eleanor' threw herself on her mercy broke off all connection with the man with whom she was deeply in love, believing that her friend, who pleaded health & misery, had a prior claim, & went to live with her friend. The sacrifice was a fine one. Ultimately it was discovered that the friend who was much older than the girl had given totally false accounts of the man's behaviour. The girl broke with her, after violent scenes, & married the man. But for a time the situation was extraordinarily like that of '*Eleanor*', except that the elder woman was a serpent & I think, not quite sane.

The Rudyard Kiplings say that Lucy is 'the first real American girl in English fiction' & Mrs Kipling who comes from Vermont seems to know this sterner, simpler type that I have endeavoured to draw, well. I have had other touching letters from American women to the same effect. 'The American girl is constantly caricatured; this does her justice' — and so forth. But I the final impression is dull, there will be a reaction! I must think what can be done.

I have only a very few days before the sheets go to America alas! Don't send me more than half a sheet. I feel such a wretch for adding to your burdens at all — but it gives me such pleasure to shew you anything! […] And thank you again for your letter. I did not think at all of the 'public', that is to say of the big buying public in writing this story — which does not mean that I shall be indifferent to its success or failure,— quite the contrary. But I have thought often of the sympathy & understanding of those to whom these subtler & more cosmopolitan types of life are familiar through experience or literature; and this is why your first letter hurt me rather, not because of any criticism of the book — my own criticism of it is very sharp! — but because what I had written with tears, alone here week after week, could be apparently read without feeling. That is of course a blow to the artist. But as I said before, it is only part of the discipline of the craft, & a call to finer work.
Yours affectionately,
Mary A. Ward
(MHWP, 29.13)

p) Letter from Mary Ward to Mandell Creighton, 9 August 1900

My dear Bishop,
You are a dear kind friend,— and I ought to have written before to tell you that I thought so. Your first letter really did great good. It sent me to look at certain portions of the book again & I think

to good effect. I hope that when you see it in its final form you will find Lucy more attractive and Manisty more intelligible. [….]
Much love to Louise.
Ever your affectionate,
Mary A. Ward
(MHWP, 29, 13)

4) Letters from Ward's Readers

a) Letter from Brooke Herford to Mary Ward [TSU extract], 24 March 1892

Ever since, 3 weeks ago, I read '*David Grieve*', I have felt that I *must* tell you how very deeply it has stirred and touched me. Apart from, and above its wonderfully graphic sketches of the Peak country and folk […] — and of the Manchester life in which I grew up — I have felt, more than I can put into any adequate words, its religious constructiveness and its white-hot moral power. With, I imagine, many others, I read the 2nd volume with an almost shuddering holding of the breath, wondering what could make such terrible pictures *worthwhile.* But I rose up at the end feeling they were an integral necessity for bringing out the full force of the lesson:— of the rubbish and nonsense (I want a stronger word) of the modern talk against marriage. The way in which, with absolute absence of the most didactic element, you have in *wonderful life-development* brought out this lesson, seems to me specially valuable and helpful. It is a terribly difficult subject to touch at all deep down — we preachers feel it to our sorrow and perplexity — and you have touched it at the very core, but with a word and picture-drawing as pure and searching as the lightning of God. And, just as beautiful and helpful, on the positive side, is your bringing out, how, even in a very commonplace marriage, even if one of the two do honestly and lovingly make the best of it, all the tender beauty of true marriage may come! The only thing that I finally grudge in the book is the breaking off of that touching result in Lucy's death. I must own to an old-fashioned liking for those life stories *ending* happily. Of course they constantly *don't* in real life! […] But — these personalities whom *some* writers make such living friends and acquaintances, have no resurrection — no future life! They lie in one's mind 'fixed in one eternal state', and the effect on my mind is like a sort of Calvinism, leaving one stunned and hopeless. Forgive the freedom of *this* criticism. It is because you have made these characters *so* living to me — you their *Creator,* as it were,— that I feel it all this way.

(Quoted with the kind permission of Balliol College Archives and Manuscripts; Mrs Humphry Ward Collection III, Correspondence No. 22, Balliol College Archives and Manuscripts, Oxford)

b) Letter from George Gunton to Mrs Humphry Ward, 27 July 1894

Mrs Humphry Ward, Dear Madam,
I have just finished reading '*Marcella*' and am very much impressed with the development of her mind towards the social problem. I would give a good deal to have the history of the next twenty-five years of her life. I have seen nothing that so clearly indicated a correct insight into the mistaken enthusiasm of socialism with, at the same time, such real inborn zeal for social improvement as is revealed in '*Marcella*'. But what Marcella will do with the peasants of the Mellor estate is the problem. In other words, if socialism will not do it, the story needs to be told what will; how this improvement is to be accomplished which if it is to come at all must come through the evolution of character, and the capacity for the labourers to take, and keep, and use for themselves, and so become a permanently increasing part of the consumers of the products of civilisation without violence or charity, and at the same time without losing individuality and personal independence.

Being an entire stranger to you except through your books I may be pardoned for explaining who I am, and why I write to you. I was born in Cambridgeshire in a village not unlike Mellor. My father was an agricultural labourer. […]. This [trades union and factory] experience has been the background of sixteen years exclusive study of the social question, with special reference to the labour problem. After editing a labour paper for a number of years I devoted myself exclusively to a comprehensive investigation and study of the subject with a view to its philosophic treatment, and have since published two books — one '*Wealth and Progress*' and '*The Principles of Social Economics'*. I state this to justify what might otherwise seem bold in thus writing to you, and to ask the favour of an interview before I return to America. […] I hope you will pardon whatever of rashness you may observe in this writing, but having read '*Marcell*a', and having had my own experience, and having arrived at more or less definite conclusions as to what Marcella should do, I could not do less.
(MHWP, 30.17]

c) Letter from Harold Spender to Mrs Humphry Ward, 27 July 1894

Dear Mrs Humphry Ward,
Owing to absorption in political & other work for my paper [*Westminster Gazette*], I have only just been able to read '*Marcella*'; but I hope that you will not despise a belated tribute of gratitude. The literary movement is so quick nowadays that I find myself, of course, unable to give any public expression to my feelings. I rather doubt whether the present rapidity of reviewing conduces to good judgment […]. […] it is a book that deserves and calls for very slow & careful reading, & I am rather doubtful whether, even then, it would not be lost except on a very few. It appeals to me because I have grappled with Marcella's problem of trying to solve a moral problem by material weapons, & have, I fear, scarcely yet emerged from her first-volume conclusion. I am also, of course, acquainted with the originals of the different pieces of your various characters. But how about the vast multitude of readers here and in America who still split up the moral & the material & rigidly relegate politics & the social problem to the latter? And how about those who, not knowing the Fabians as you & I do, will say: 'such people can never be — such a mixture of sentiment in action & realism in talk is impossible'? […]

I have to thank you for a most valuable, lucid, & really profitable criticism of the life into the midst of which I am thrown as a journalist. Living here in the midst of the facts themselves, & then journeying every day up to Westminster to the great talking-shop about the facts or the shadows of the shadows of the facts, my life is one eternal dialectical conflict between the material & moral sides of the social problem. I have been taught by the Barnetts & others to think the moral side — 'character' — everything; but I have been driven by experience to admit in politics & literature the large part — not always a bad part — played by intellect without character. W.M. of the *Daily Chronicle* said to me the other day, 'You think it is necessary to be good in order to reform things — you are wrong. The two have nothing to do with one another'. Of course, I know that that is untrue — your picture of Wharton is his answer as far as it relates to intellect attached to bad character. But, on the other hand, character is not everything. I have some good friends at Toynbee who are almost saints; & yet they mess everything they touch. Don't you think you are too kindly towards Raeburn's intellectual shortcomings — his talk to Marcella about the possible wrong to posterity by depriving them of money which ex. hypothesis they ought not to have etc? Don't you think you rather under-rate the value of the somewhat irritating brusquerie of the Fabians — as a reaction from cant, as a self-preservative against the danger of letting all their force evaporate in words? I have spent of late much time with Graham Wallas, collaborating an attack on the London Schoolboard. I was often annoyed & offended — but at the end I find myself infinitely better for the work. I find that he has given me a new sense of the value of statements & the danger of generalising.

I am inclined to think that if we are suffering at present from a somewhat dangerous reaction from morality & spirituality in public affairs, & a tendency to rely on material remedies, it is very largely the fault of the moralists themselves. If the masses of our people can get no help

from the moralists, they will seek it elsewhere. There is nothing for which men at large pay a higher penalty than the lack of insight & sympathy on the part of those who inherit the spiritual traditions. The best example I can give is the superficial hatred of parsons in the poorer districts of London — 'parson' is a name of reproach. This is a calamity, I admit. But have not the parsons done something to deserve it?
(MHWP, 30.17)

d) Letter from Alice N. Lincoln to Mrs Humphry Ward, 5 August 1894

Mrs Humphry Ward, Dear Madam,
I do not ask your pardon for writing to you, although I am a stranger to you, because I believe an author must always be glad to know that she has spoken truth; the truth which reaches others' hearts — and it seems to me almost a duty to bear my testimony to the truth of '*Marcella'*. It is a great book. There you speak of the sufferings of the poor *because* they are poor. You touch a chord to which every worker among the poor must respond. How many times have I sat in burning indignation in hospital anti-rooms, waiting at leisure myself — but knowing that precious time, which meant money, was being needlessly condemned for my poorer neighbours! Fifteen years ago, shocked by the conditions of a large old tenement house, I hired it, with a friend, and since then my life has been thrown into just such lines as Marcella sought.

In describing the death of the poor little Hurd boy, I could almost have thought you had been present at the death of a child in one of my own tenement houses, where I had to break it to the mother that the end was near. In telling the story of the careless doctor who endangered his patient's life *because* she was poor, you have touched another of my experiences. I must tell it to you […] This was [the doctor's] answer 'I grant you, Madam, that it would have been better [for] humanity, but *humanity don't pay*!' […] So I am sure you will forgive me for telling you how I have read and re-read '*Marcella*', wondering how you found time not only to write the book but to live the life also.

Even such struggles as Marcella had with public matters are real. I have been fighting the municipal government of Boston for three years past because of the way it treats its defective and dependent classes — and we have learned thoroughly to know the dangers of such specious promises as […]. I felt impelled to thank you for the great pleasure you have given all English-speaking people; a pleasure which is a benefit as well. […] I do not ask nor expect a reply, as indeed anything but your forgiveness for taking up so much of your time in an attempt to express my gratitude.
(MHWP, Box 30.17)

e) Letter from Mary J. Eastman to Mrs Humphry Ward, 15 October 1894

Mrs Ward, Dear Madam,
I can readily imagine that letters like mine have become an impertinence to you, and so shall not be surprised if this one never gets beyond whatever secretary or amanuensis may act as a buffer between your personality and the intrusiveness of too enthusiastic readers. But since finishing a week ago (you see I do not make haste) your last book, I do not feel so much as if I had read a novel, as that I have made the acquaintance of a set of most interesting people of all sorts and conditions — and especially in the heroine have watched the development of a rich and generous character. Not I believe unique, or so rare as might at first appear, but one not often presented in fiction. Since those women who, like Marcella, mature earlier on the side of the intellect and of general human sympathies than in the capacity for passion are often born or doomed to a certain aloofness and reticence that keeps their typical traits hidden except from the few whose great love finds a key to such intimate privileges as demand the veil of sacred confidence, I especially rejoice in the name of all advancing womanhood that someone has at last drawn the line between that progress which is a vital growth and the kangaroo leaps that take one out of oneself perhaps,

but also out of all the belongings of domestic and social status that it seems to me should be used as leverage, rather than thrown away as impediments. In emphasizing the difficulty of rendering direct and effective personal service to those far below one's own social and intellectual standing— service, I mean, that involves living in constant and familiar contact — I think you have struck the vital and vulnerable point of much of our so-called charitable work, and have recalled us to the truth that in very many cases, all we can do for those less fortunate or less developed, is for each to help another to make the best of life as he has it — Jones helping Smith on the step just below or beside him, and even ready to give a prop to Brown on the step above, who in his turn reaches out a friendly hand to Jones. The procession so marching up with no great or sudden leaps, but a steady rise that leaves few gaps. […] when one finds that the opinions hammered out by hard living and much solitary thinking […] are endorsed by another and abler mind — and that the voice crying out in the wilderness is reinforced by one heard from the housetops, one feels like sending across the ocean a God speed and God bless you!
(MHWP, 30.17)

f) Letter from Beatrice Webb to Mrs Humphry Ward, undated 1896

My Dear Mrs Ward,
It was very good of you to think of sending me your book. Last evening I finished reading it. The story is very touching and you have an indescribable power of making your readers sympathise with all your characters, even with Letty and her unlovely mother-in-law. Of course, as a strict utilitarian, I am inclined to estimate the book more in its character of treatise than as a novel. From this point of view it is the most useful bit of work that has been done for many a long day. You have managed to give the arguments for and against factory legislation and a fixed standard of life with admirable lucidity and picturesqueness — in a way that will make them comprehensible to the ordinary person without any technical knowledge. I especially admire your real intellectual impartiality and capacity to give the best arguments on both sides, though naturally I am glad to see that your sympathy is on the whole with us on these questions. And though some of my co-thinkers will object, I am myself glad to see the whole argument for factory legislation clearly disentangled & separated from the arguments in favour of Socialism proper. Clear-thinking is always, in the end, the best policy for an individual & a nation!

Pray accept my thanks from a public as well as a personal point of view for the gift of the book to the world and to myself.
(MHWP, 31.1)

g) Letter from Sarah Orne Jewett to Mary Ward, 7 July 1896

My Dear Mrs Ward,
I have had such a pleasure tonight. Mr Johnson of the Century Magazine is my neighbour in this seaside place and he has lent me the August and September numbers of *Sir George Tressady* — this I shall long bless him for. I had been saying everything that was in my heart about the number for July and he told me what treasures were in his keeping. […] I have been sitting late here reading and blessing you! I wonder if readers who are only readers can know what a noble story it is! I believe that one must have tried to be a writer — who can have the reward of really knowing what a great work you have done. How new it is, how true and fine and held in hand; how distinctly you have made that greatest character that an artist can make: a person who may be loved! Marcella will always look me straight in the eyes. I cannot help loving her more and more and holding her very real and helpful. I can hardly say how I feel about her in this poor letter, nor how full of rejoicing my heart is to think that now, in this very day, so great a story has been written, so *beautiful* a story; high as your work has gone before, this seems to me high above it all: it moves on like life itself with steady growth and change from level to level, one can add nothing or wish to take away. It has the inevitable feeling of the best art of all to which I can but

reach with all my heart — and thank you here with deepest gratitude. Beside the trivial things such a story comes to take its place like something from another world.
(Quoted with the kind permission of the Harry Ransom Center; Thomas Humphry Ward Collection (MS-4409), 2.4, Harry Ransom Center, The University of Texas at Austin)

h) Letter from Sarah Orne Jewett to Mary Ward, 18 April 1905

My dear friend,
If I am to thank you for remembering me, and sending this fine large-paper copy of *William Ashe*, I do indeed thank you with all my heart. […] the books you have given me belong in a much closer way, yet nothing could very well give me any closer possession of this great story. You can hardly think what it has been to me to follow it through what I must call a hard and disappointing year of my own. One always lived along its pages gathering new friends and foes all the way. 'Real life' is a good bit above realism. I have often thought of a sentence of Stevenson's about realism's being always a means and never an end — this is what you do — and for a difference one has the method applied to people of large intelligence and their habits and conditions of life. Sometimes people fall into a belief that 'realism' can only depict the commonplace and squalid! These last chapters seemed to me to lift themselves into a beautiful transfiguration — a glory of shining truth; the words of the Dean, the bringing of the whole thing up to the simplicity of Christian faith – I cannot say how wonderfully you did all these! It reaches a great height – it is all a great story. […] and you and I know that books bring us closer than letters ever can, when they reveal a writer's heart like this. It has made one reader, this friend, feel nearer you than ever before.
(MHWP, 31.3)

Appendix B: Reviews, Articles and Letters — Marie Corelli

The reasons for, and relevance of, the content of this appendix are indicated in the signposting in the thesis's footnotes. It is hoped that the inclusion of new or not easily found archival material and newspaper articles and letters will be of future use to other scholars. Material from newspapers and periodicals included accords with copyright guidelines ie that where the article is unsigned, copyright expires 70 years after publication; and where the article is signed, copyright expires 70 years after the death of the author:
(https://libguides.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/newspapers/copyright - accessed 1 September 2023).
Similarly, the British Newspaper Archive guidance for use of transcriptions of texts on their website is that unsigned newspaper text goes out of copyright 70 calendar years after the year of publication, and signed newspaper text goes out of copyright 70 calendar years after the death of the author(s):
(https://help-and-advice.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/knowledgebase/articles/1863805-what-if-i-am-creating-my-own-transcriptions-from-n — accessed 1 September 2023)

1) Reviews of Corelli's Barabbas

a) 'The Real Mackay' [review of *Barabbas*], *The National Observer, A Record and Review*, 10 (21 October 1893), 591

In at least one passage of *Barabbas*, Miss Corelli seems to indicate a passionate attachment to the truth. We propose to gratify this laudable appetite for what she calls simple plain speaking, and to speak very plainly indeed about this foolish and offensive book. That it possesses in a very high degree the qualities which distinguished her previous performances no one will be surprised to hear. It is written in atrocious English; the characters are absurd; and the dialogue contemptible. The style is a strange mixture of the transpontine, the historical conventional, and the familiar. Thou's and ye's bristle on every page; an' (with an apostrophe) is employed instead of if; split infinitives abound; and the personages speak the dialect of Ivanhoe. 'Sir priest' is a common form of address; the bystanders are apostrophised as 'gentle sirs;' and Roman soldiers mutter 'i' faith.' 'Each wretched unit would deem himself our equals' is a gem from the conversation of the high-priest. The sun appears as the 'glorious orb of day.' Why not as 'old Sol'? Barabbas views the Trial before Pilate from a 'coign of vantage'; and you almost expect to read next about Pilate's 'pride of place,' or that the 'way was now paved' for something or other. In short Archdeacon Farrar himself is simple, unadorned, self-restrained, beside Miss Corelli pompous; beside Miss Corelli colloquial an up-to-date reporter is classical, dignified and severe.

Such characteristics as we have indicated would assuredly damn any other book, but in this one they almost appear to be virtues. For Miss Corelli has not scrupled to take as her subject the Trial of Christ before Pilate, the Crucifixion, and the Resurrection. Her qualifications for the task in point of knowledge may be inferred from the fact that she believes the raising of Lazarus to have taken place eighteen months before her story opens on the night of the Betrayal, and that she describes the splendid Temple of Solomon as glistering in the blaze of the sunshine in or about the year 30 A.D. She has not, then, taken the trouble to master facts which every Sunday-school child could have told her. But it is her treatment of the subject which we condemn. To Miss Corelli's mind, it should seem, the devout and significant reticence of the Evangelists conveys no lesson. The lacuna must be filled up by the efforts of a vulgar and sordid imagination. Hence she has chosen to describe the various steps towards the catastrophe in the same language in which *The Evening Gallowglass* reports the proceedings of Parliament. We have Caiaphas with his bland smile, his satirical smile, and his disdainful smile; with his thin, pale lips and his severely intellectual countenance—Mr. Chamberlain, in fact, imagined by T. P. O'Connor. We have his portly colleague Annas, craning his thin (*sic*) neck, rubbing his fat hands together, and then rolling

up his small treacherous eyes, with their pale eyelashes, convulsed by a paroxysm of silent mirth. We have Mary Magdalen, looking like a meditative angel, and Pontius Pilate uttering smothered exclamations and muttering, 'Strange!' abstractedly. A hundred more instances of Miss Corelli's method might be adduced; but we have no time and less inclination (as herself says) to dwell upon it.

And yet these strokes, in turn objectionable and nauseous as they are, seem excellences compared to the manner in which she has dared to handle the central figure in the drama. Were some ignorant and pretentious woman to write in Miss Corelli's fashion of the death of Socrates, or of the career of Mahomet, we should have no hesitation in denouncing so heinous a violation of the canons of good taste; and we are satisfied that no man of religious feeling, whatever his theological opinions may chance to be, will be slow to denounce this work in the strongest manner. But to express the feelings of contempt and distaste which the present work must inspire in the breast of such as hold the Christian faith is no easy matter. For the studied blasphemies of the most bitter infidel are reverence itself in comparison to the sickening unctuousness with which Miss Corelli has performed her self-appointed task. An orthodox man or woman would do extremely ill not to boil with indignation on reading of the slight dreamy smile on the beautifully' curved lips, the mighty muscular force that would have befitted a Hercules, the deep lustrous eyes, the sublime gestures, the mellow accents, the beauteously arched delicate feet, the erect majesty of bearing, and the aerial pride of step, which this presumptuous and indecent writer has seen fit so glibly to attribute to Jesus Christ. If anything could make her offence more rank it would be the silly and childish apparatus of fiery halos, unearthly glories, mystic lights, pulsating splendours, rays of celestial gold, winged whitenesses, keen dazzling flashes, and double fan-shaped diamond shining radiances, in which she has involved her narrative. But we must decline to pursue this distasteful subject any further. The delicacy which should have restrained the pen of the author checks that of the critic.

It is not likely that Miss Corelli will surpass *Barabbas.* In her former works she has been wonderfully silly and wonderfully dull. But here she has been silly, dull, ignorant, and profane to a degree that she has never before attained. She has nothing more to live for; her masterpiece has been given to the world; she has at last succeeded in giving adequate expression to her peculiar genius. Here, in short, is the Real Mackay at last.

b) 'The Gospel According to Miss Marie Corelli' [Review of *Barabbas*], *Westminster Gazette*, 26 December 1893, p.3

[Old Testament prophecy about Jesus's indignities] did not reach so far as the year 1893, for which the last, the crowning indignity has been reserved. He has been made the hero of a novel by Miss Marie Corelli, bedizened with Corellian rhetoric, bedaubed with Corellian sentiment, beplastered with Corellian adulation. It is to be presumed that a certain class of readers finds satisfaction in this grotesque vulgarisation of a world-historic theme; but one can only ask in amazement who they can possibly be. […] We observe that Miss Corelli is stated to have gone about her task with the most exemplary 'reverence', and indeed there is no reason to lay intentional irreverence to her charge. The great secret of Miss Corelli's reverence lies in the prodigality of capital letters. [….]

No doubt the reader has by this time had quite enough of the gospel according to Miss Corelli. If he has any appetite for more, he will find the same sort of Reverent Imagination and Supernal and Singularly Unique Luminance of Prismatic Style spread out over hundreds of pages in these three volumes. Miss Corelli's notions of the sublime and the tragic seem to be gleaned entirely from the modern theatre, where the actor-manager is for ever posing in the centre of the stage in an aureole of limelight. […] Poor foolish Evangelists! How they neglected their opportunities for fine writing […] They tell us nothing of his 'supernal brows', his 'Herculean muscles' or the 'azure branches of his veins'. […] Christianity would have been a very superior affair if Miss Corelli had helped at the making of it. Those portions of "*Barabbas*" which are not

given up to this Ecstatic and Supernatural Snobbery tell a childish tale of the love of Barabbas for Judith.

2) Contemporary Critics on Corelli's Popular Fiction

a) Simplicissimus', 'Marie Corelli's New Book, "*Temporal Power: A Study in Supremacy*" – A Remarkable Tract of the Times', *The Lancashire Daily Post*, 28 August 1902, p.2

Marie Corelli is to be complemented on having secured the secret of her peculiar kind of literary fame. She is to be congratulated on her knowledge of the popular taste, which enables her, in a time of decadent literature, to judge the popular demand to a nicety and supply it according to the exact specification, so that the mere stamp of the author's name shall be sufficient to sell the article in thousands. […] her vigorous colouring, applied with no sparing hand, though it may not be sound literature, is all that seems to be required in these superficial days. Unsuccessful authors and unread critics may deplore the fantastic misrepresentation of human nature, the distorted picture of life, which the modern novelist supplies to a public eager to be entertained and careless of what it reads so long as the matter is sufficiently thrilling and intoxicating. No deformation of types and absurdity of incident jars nowadays on the susceptibilities of a public indifferent to reality and probability. In Marie Corelli we have a writer to whom nothing is too preposterous if it only be sufficiently highly flavoured and sensational to be attractive to the voracious literary opium-eaters of the day, and if we condemn her highly-coloured extravagances we censure not her alone, but the whole of that vast reading public with whom she is so much in sympathy. With a journalistic appreciation of the topic of the hour, she is impetuous, emphatic, and militantly aggressive in the treatment of her subject, and at least in her strong decision she is pre-eminent among all the popular writers of the day, sharing her pedestal only with Hall Caine. […] The popular imagination has been so filled with the clash of policies, the poetry and prose, the picturesqueness and the pathos and tragedy of government and state craft, that it might have been confidently predicted that, just as the arch-priest of sensationalism in this country selected the papal jubilee for his subject […] Marie Corelli would seize inspiration from the Coronation of King Edward VII, so lately accomplished after extraordinary difficulties had been overcome. [….] It is obviously impossible, but weaves together apropos of the prominence which has lately been given to the Monarchy an ingenious set of scenes in which the Socialism of the day is advocated, and the sins of Ministers and Governments are set forth. The love element is better done than the political. Marie Corelli may understand men's love, though some dispute that; but she certainly does not understand men's politics. She is in that respect, below Hall Caine even.

b) 'A Note Upon Marie Corelli: By Another Writer of Less Repute' [J.M. Stuart-Young], Westminster Review, 166 (December 1906), 680–92 (pp.680, 681, 682, 683, 684, 685, 688, 689, 690–92)

She is the ruler of a public that buys her books by the hundred thousand. […] She is, with the possible exception of Mr. Hall Caine, the greatest genius of self-advertisement produced by our century. That she should claim to have called forth the praises of Gladstone and Tennyson is of itself of a title to consideration. For many years she has arrogated to herself the right to sit in judgment upon all classes, all institutions and all professions. She has had, and will continue to have, bitter detractors; and these critics are found in the ranks of thoughtful people; but she has procured a popularity in her life-time which is in its way unique, and her works are worthy of serious consideration on that account. There is a Corelli cult – a public that condones anything she says or does, to which she is an impeccable writer and an inspired teacher. When our late Queen ordered all her books to be sent to her this was held of crowning proof of Miss Corelli's skill; yet we cannot hold that the critical abilities of the people by whom *Barabbas* is held to have a demoralising effect upon its readers, are altogether wrong. In Literature there is the supreme test

of style by which all good books may be recognised […]. When Mrs Oliphant and Mrs Henry Wood destroyed the tradition of Jane Austen and George Eliot they founded a school which has been fatal to every disciple since then. They became the mothers of the Family Herald and kindred periodicals. We have innumerable lady writers who might exchange title pages without the fraud being discovered by even their most enthusiastic admirers.

Now the invocation of fiction must always chiefly be to the unthinking classes, for in no generation have there been enough critical people to make what is called a 'great public'. People are now beginning to read George Meredith, and some are even buying library editions of Henry James and Thomas Hardy; but it is because they have been told what to read by people whose opinions really matter, and whose judgments only wait for the confirmation of the years. But the popular writer of a generation, of a given number of years, is never chosen because of his genius. The masses are not logical enough or discriminating enough to choose the best. […]

Miss Corelli published her first novel before she had reached her twenties, and sprang at once into popularity. The Press gave her the discriminating reception which her claims merited. Her first book was jeered at by reviewers – and justly! For her second book was praised very honestly. But the young writer assumed the pose of an injured being whom malevolent critics had conspired to depreciate and to 'rob of my readers.' It is questionable whether any youthful author has received fairer treatment. […] But Miss Corelli has carried her campaign of abuse from novel to novel, and is never weary of proclaiming her animosity. I have recently completed the perusal of '*The Treasure of Heaven';* this is Miss Corelli's contribution to Literature for the year 1906, and to the best of my knowledge the twelfth romance from her pen. Having followed Miss Corelli's career with great interest, I have found myself marvelling at the egotism of the lady whose face appears here 'for the second time only' before an admiring public. The questions which I have asked myself with marked insistence have been, 'Who are chiefly Marie Corelli's admirers?' 'Why is she so popular?' and 'What relation does the popularity of an author bear to the quality of the writer's books?'

In fiction, it is generally the most hackneyed of writers who receive a good reception, while true originality does but serve to disconcert the reader who has come to love familiar situations. […] Corelli is the symbol of superficial generation. Now the merit by which this lady had conquered the reading world is not the merit of originality. […] When I was younger and sillier the colouring of Miss Corelli's canvases amazed and charmed me; now I can only wonder at the colour-blindness of those who have not emancipated themselves from her thraldom and learned to see that she uses a whitewash brush and the commonest of distempers. […] a page of prose from Miss Corelli's books, with its disjointed punctuation, its insistent emphasis, its unnecessary marks of exclamation, has always disturbed me and now leaves me cold or annoys me by its turgid style.

What I reproach Miss Corelli with is that her grammar is so faulty. There is nothing you cannot find in her pages, from the most flowery periods of Lytton to the commonest of journalese. She seeks immortality in the heaping of epithet upon epithet, adjective upon adjective. She does not discriminate. [….]

Miss Corelli is the most emotional writer among us today, and in that fact lies the secret of her appeal to the unthinking classes. She is sentimental, pathetic, mawkish, bitter, tender and sensuous by turn. The majority of the readers of her books are undoubtedly taken from the members of her own sex, in middle-class society, and from the working classes — shop-girls and young men of the large towns. […] She has the courage of her hysteria and is not afraid to scream.

Their own lives are commonplace. But they read Corelli — and here they find stupendous events in plenty — devils and angels, his Satanic majesty himself, adventurers and criminals, poets and mystics. […] it is because her critics have read, and read with insight, that they have been induced to see the evil effect which hysteria can work upon the masses. […] It is difficult to criticise such work as this. It is really as admirably fitted to the disturbed appetites of modern men

and women as the adulterated bread and the artificially-freshened meat which we eat. I do not for a moment believe that such literature is to be found in any other European country.

According to all the laws of psychology, it is inevitable that the individual who cannot by his own observation correct an author's errors, or justify the assertions made in its pages, should take them as positive communications — should believe them without the slightest degree of mistrust, and should make his or her judgements his preferences, the novelist's aversions his own. […] it is only the imperfectly developed individual who falls under her charm — those beings who are made after set patterns, who are tied to a routine — young women, domesticated matrons, youths, and those who are hysterical or weak in nerve and brain.

I repeat that Miss Corelli's influence is a baleful one. […] It is not the literature of the gutter, the 'Deadwood Dick' and 'Buffalo Bill' class which is at fault. That is generally as harmless as it is faulty in style and construction. It is the popular modern literature of the libraries which is responsible for loose morality, irresponsible action.

What Miss Corelli has lacked has been proportion, without which there can be no literature. One is not honest by wishing to be so, any more than one is wise or prudent. The frenzied diatribes against vice in which this writer indulges are more pernicious than the vices themselves. What young people — either girl or impressionable youth — could read '*The Sorrows of Satan'*, or '*Ziska',* and come through the ordeal as pure as they were before they handled the book? There are scenes in these novels which should never have been written.

She is an erotic degenerate of the subtlest type. Had she been domesticated she might have been as harmless as her foreign contemporaries. As it is she stands alone, and the woman who has lost her womanliness is diseased. We may have in her case the body, methods and talents of a woman but there are unmistakeably demonstrated also the arrogances and intense prejudices of a man. […] the only term which can be honestly applied to Marie Corelli is a 'man-woman'. So soon as a woman begins to concern herself passionately and discontentedly with problems which are not within the normal sphere of experience she loses the most charming asset of her sex. […] A strong healthy man looks for a woman who is above all things else womanly and kind. Miss Corelli's celibacy is a fact of wonderful psychological value. It is absolutely essential that the reading world, especially the impressionable natures of young people, should be warned of the dangers which lurk like some subtle poison within the pages of insidious novels. Thinking minds should be constantly at work in teaching the differences between genuine feeling and simulated emotion. […] But the danger to the public lies in the generally depraved taste which prevails, the result of twenty or thirty years of this cloying sentimentalism. […] The suggestive power of Literature is incalculable. A writer of the calibre which I have tried to portray trains up a nation of criminals and weaklings. […] I declare emphatically that Miss Corelli is a social menace. I believe that with all my soul, and I would rejoice to see her books banned by the libraries as insidious and harmful to public morality.

c) 'Our Lady of Pars', *The Saturday Review*, 82 (26 September 1896), 337

It might be argued that Miss Marie Corelli is not quite a fit topic for discussion in a literary journal. Time was when the lady came to us regularly, in all her radiance, and we waved her courteously aside. Now she comes to us no longer. She is even as a coy mountain and we go not to her. Indeed, to review books that one cannot read were both foolish and unfair. At the same time, only the veriest pedant could pretend not to be interested in the existence of one whose books, more popular than any in the market, do both soothe our cotters' evenings and grace the bedside tables of our princes. […]

She represents very perfectly a new and interesting type. She is the prime product of the 'Democracy of Letters'. We are not quite sure what those three words, dear to the '*Daily*

Chronicle,' exactly signify, but we take them as referring to certain new conditions imposed on literature by the spread of popular education. Formerly the illiterate could not read. But lately we (a national 'we') have taught them to do so. In our simplicity, we had thought that English Literature would be enough for them to go on with and with English Literature we stocked our public libraries. We were quite astonished when recent statistics showed us that the thing was a failure, for we had supposed that ability to spell out pages of type must surely create good taste. 'What, then', we cried, '*do* the illiterate read?' Other statistics make answer. In the sale-lists of the booksellers we read the names of Hocking, Caine, Du Maurier, Maclaren, Crockett, and Corelli; after each name certain appalling numerals. As we read them, we bow our heads.

The owners of all these names are good types of the 'Democracy of Letters' but none may be mentioned in the same breath as Miss Corelli. None of them, but she, has quite forsworn allegiance to the old oligarchy of criticism. They still like their books to be reviewed. Not so she! She knows that the public needs no exhortation to read her. But she knows, also, that great masses are fickle to their favourites. She knows it to be essential that she should be always there, in person, before their eyes, whenever their eyes are not intent upon her printed pages. She rushes into their midst, a hunted thing, the uncowed quarry of Press-men. She turns and faces her invisible pursuers. In wild accents she denounces them. With strong, small hands she rends them, and spurns them with an arched foot. Thus, and otherwise, does she keep her memory green. How crude, in comparison, are the other authors' bids for continued notoriety! […]

Quick, feminine intuition has helped Miss Corelli to avoid the mistakes made by these male demagogues. With far less exertion she can accomplish quite as much as, and even more than, they. Her effects in public life are gained with an economy of means that is astounding in so prolific a writer. She does not get herself reviewed. She does not lecture. She has never been a minister of the Presbyterian Church. And yet she is the subject of more paragraphs than any other living writer. By one simple and superb stroke of business she did more to advertise her books than she could have done by the diffusion of thousands of copies 'for review'. What man, woman, or child does not know that H.R.H. the Prince of Wales (future President, no doubt, of the Republic of Letters) 'anticipated reading' one of Miss Corelli's books 'with great pleasure'? When poor Mr. Caine and his kind are not on the stump, their houses are positively infested with interviewers. 'My door', says Miss Corelli, in a letter to the '*Westminster Gazette*', 'is rigorously closed to the paragraphist and the interviewer'. A few words of scorn, hissed through the keyhole, are as much as these men are to expect. The very privacy of Miss Corelli's home becomes better copy than all the well-known details of Mr Crockett's den. […] In the infinite publicity of her seclusion, the very negativeness of Miss Corelli's tastes becomes stimulating to the world. She does 'NOT shoot' nor has she 'rented Killiecrankie Cottage for the "shooting", as there is none to speak of. It is a beautiful and idyllic little place, with exquisite grounds in which to rest or ramble, and where the birds have so little cause to be alarmed that the very robins fly in and out of the windows to be fed from my hand.' Robins flying in and out of the windows and journalists battering vainly at the doors! What a lesson to the other Demagogues! We expect daily to hear from them that 'they have NO robins flying in and out of their windows.' Indeed, we would recommend those gentlemen to adopt the negative form of advertisement suggested by Miss Corelli. It has infinite possibilities. Moreover, it would save them some trouble.

Miss Corelli concludes her letter to the '*Westminster*' with the usual hit at her critics and with another at Mr. Max Beerbohm, who, also intent on advertisement, replied to her in the next issue. So is the ball kept rolling. Meanwhile, Miss Corelli is 'still misguided enough to prefer "Poet's Ideals" to blatant feminine vulgarities.' And so are we.

3) Readers' Letters to Corelli about *A Romance of Two Worlds*

Appendix to Marie Corelli, *A Romance of Two Worlds,* 37th edn (London: Methuen, 1921 [1886]), pp. 326–38

Appendix B

In publishing these selections from letters received concerning the '*Romance*,' I am in honour bound not to disclose the names of my correspondents, and this necessary reticence will no doubt induce the incredulous to declare that they are not genuine epistles, but mere invention so my own. I am quite prepared for such a possible aspersion, and in reply, I can but say that I hold the originals in my possession. I may add that my correspondents are all strangers to me personally—not one have I ever met. […] Author.

Letter 1:
Dear Madam,
You must receive so many letters that I feel it is almost a shame to add to the number, but I cannot resist writing to tell you how very much your book '*The* [sic] *Romance of Two Worlds*' has helped me My dear friend Miss F—, who has written to you lately I believe, first read it to me, and I cannot tell you what a want in my life it seemed to fill up. I have always been interested in the so-called Supernatural, feeling very conscious of depths in my own self and in others that are usually ignored . . . I have been reading as many books as I could obtain upon Theosophy, but though thankful for the high thoughts I found in them, I still felt a great want – that of combining this occult knowledge with my own firm belief in the Christian religion. Your book seemed to give me just what I wanted – *it has deepened and strengthened my belief in and love to God, and has made the New Testament a new book to me*. Things which I could not understand before seem clear in the light which your 'Vision' has thrown upon them and I cannot remain satisfied without expressing to you my sincere gratitude. May your book be read by all who are ready to receive the high truths that it contains! With thanks, I remain, dear Madam,
Yours sincerely,
M.S. [NB italics emphases as per the published version]

Letter II:
Madam,
I am afraid you think it very presumptuous of a stranger to address you, but I have lately read your book, '*A Romance of Two Worlds*,' and have been much struck with it. It has opened my mind to such new impressions, and seems to be so much what I have been groping for so long that I thought if you would be kind enough to answer this, I might get a firmer hold on those higher things and be at anchor at last. . . .
I never thought of or read of the electric force (or spirit) in every human being before, but I do believe in it after reading your book, and *you have made the next world a living thing to me,* and raised my feelings above the disappointments and trials of this life. . . . Your book was put into my hands at a time when I was deeply distressed and in trouble about my future; but you have shown me how small a thing this future of *our* life is. . . . Would it be asking too much of you to name any books you think might help me in this new vein of thought you have given me?
Apologizing for having written, believe me yours sincerely,
B.W.L.
[He later wrote again]:
I cannot say the wonderful change your book has wrought in my life, and though very likely you are hearing constantly of the good it has done, yet it cannot but be the sweetest thing you can hear — that the seed you have planted is bringing forth so much fruit. . . . The Bible is a new book to me since your work came into my hands.

Letter III:
[The following terribly pathetic avowal is from a clergyman of the Church of England:]
Madam,
Your book, the '*Romance of Two Worlds*', has stopped me on the brink of what is doubtless a crime, and yet I had come to think it the only way out of impending madness. I speak of self-destruction — suicide. And while writing the word, I beg of you to accept my gratitude for the timely rescue of my soul. Once I believed in the goodness of God — but of late years the cry of modem scientific atheism, 'There is no God,' has rung in my ears till my brain has reeled at the

desolation and nothingness of the Universe. No good, no hope, no satisfaction in anything — this world only with all its mockery and failure — and afterwards annihilation! Could a God design and create so poor and cruel a jest? [...] I had resolved to make an end. No one knew, no one guessed my intent, till one Sunday afternoon a friend lent me your book. I began to read, and never left it till I had finished the last page — then I knew I was saved. Life smiled again upon me in consoling colours, and I write to tell you that whatever other good your work may do and is no doubt doing, you have saved both the life and reason of one grateful human being. If you will write to me a few lines 1 shall be still more grateful, for I feel you can help me. I seem to have read Christ's mission wrong — but with patience and prayer it is possible to redeem my error. Once more thanking you, I am,
Yours with more thankfulness than I can write,
L.E.F.

Letter IV:
Dear Madam,
I daresay you have had many letters, but I must add mine to the number to thank you for your book, the '*Romance of Two Worlds*'. I am deeply interested in the wonderful force we possess, all in greater or lesser degree — call it influence, electricity, or what you will. I have thought much on Theosophy and Psychical Research — but what struck me in your book was the glorious selflessness inculcated and the perfect Majesty of the Divinity clear throughout — no sweeping away of the Crucified One. I felt a better woman for the reading of it twice; and I know others, too, who are higher and better women for such noble thoughts and teachings. . . . People for the most part dream away their lives; one meets so few who really believe in electrical affinity, and I have felt it so often and for so long. Forgive my troubling you with this letter, but I am grateful for your labour of love towards raising men and women.
Sincerely yours,
R.H.

Letter V:
I should like to know if Marie Corelli honestly believes the theory which she enunciates in her book, '*The Romance of Two Worlds*;' and also if she has any proof on which to found the same theory? — if so, the authoress will greatly oblige an earnest reader after Truth if she will give the information sought to.
A.S.

Letter VI:
Dear Madam,
I have lately been reading with intense pleasure your '*Romance of Two Worlds*', and I must crave your forbearance towards me when I tell you that it has filled me with envy and wonder. I feel sure that many people must have plied you with questions on the subject already, but I am certain that you are too earnest and too sympathetic to feel bored by what is in no sense idle curiosity, but rather a deep and genuine longing to know the truth. . . . To some minds it would prove such a comfort and such a relief to have their vague longings and beliefs confirmed and made tangible, and as you know, at the present day so-called Religion, which is often a mere mixture of dogma and superstition, is scarcely able to do this. . . . I might say a great deal moreand weary your patience, which has already been tried, I fear. But may I venture to hope that you have some words of comfort and assurance out of your own experience to give me? With your expressed belief in the good influence which each may exert over the other, not to speak of a higher and holier incentive in the example of One (in whom you also believe) who bids us for His sake to 'Bear one another's burdens,' you cannot, I think, turn away in impatience from the seeking of a very earnest soul.
"Yours sincerely,
B.D.

Letter VII:
Madam,
I hope you will not think it great presumption my writing to you. My excuse must be that I so much want to believe in the Great Spirit that 'makes for righteousness' and I cannot! Your book puts it all so clearly that if I can only know it to be a true experience of your own, it will go a long way in dispersing the fog that modern writings surround one with. . . . Apologising for troubling you, I am, faithfully yours,
C.M.E.

Letter: VIII:
Madam,
I trust you will pardon the liberty I take in writing to you. My excuse must be the very deep interest your book, '*A Romance of Two Worlds*,' has excited in me. I, of course, understand that the *story* itself is a romance, but in reading it carefully it seems to me that it is a book written with a Purpose. . . . The Electric Creed respecting Religion seems to explain so much in Scripture which has always seemed to me impossible to accept blindly without explanation of some kind; and the theory that Christ came to die and to suffer for us as an Example and a means of communication with God, and not as a *Sacrifice*, clears up a point which has always been to me personally a stumbling-block. I cannot say how grateful I shall be if you can tell me any means of studying this subject further; and trusting you will excuse me for troubling you, I am, Madam,
Yours truly,
H.B.

Letter IX:
Dear Madam,
I have lately been reading your remarkable book, '*A Romance of Two Worlds*,' and I feel that I must write to you about it. I have never viewed Christianity in the broadly transfigured light you throw upon it, and I have since been studying carefully the four gospels and comparing them with the theories in your book. The result has been a complete and happy change in my ideas of religion, and I feel now as if I had, like a leper of old, touched the robe of Christ and been healed of a long-standing infirmity. Will you permit me to ask if you have evolved this new and beneficent lustre from the Gospel yourself? or whether some experienced student in mystic matters has been your instructor? I hear from persons who have seen you that you are quite young, and I cannot understand how one of your sex and age seems able so easily to throw light on what to many has been, and is still, impenetrable darkness. I have been a preacher for some years, and I thought the Testament was old and familiar to me, but you have made it a new and marvellous book full of the most precious meanings, and I hope I may be able to impart to those whom it is my duty to instruct, something of the great consolation and hope your writing has filled me with,
Believe me,
Gratefully yours,
T.M.

Letter X:
Madam,
Will you tell me what ground you have for the foundation of the religious theory contained in your book, '*A Romance of Two Worlds*'? Is it a part of your own belief? I am *most* anxious to know this, and I am sure you will be kind enough to answer me. Till I read your book I thought myself an Agnostic, but now I am not quite so sure of this. I do not believe in the Deity as depicted by the Churches. I *cannot.* Over and over again I have asked myself — if there is a God, why should He be angry? It would surely be easy for Him to destroy this world entirely as one would blow away an offending speck of dust, and it would be much better and *braver* for Him to do this than torture His creation. For I call life a torture, and certainly a useless and cruel torture if it is to end in annihilation. I know I seem to be blasphemous in these remarks, yet if you only knew what I suffer

sometimes! I desire, I *long* to believe. *You* seem so certain of your Creed — a Creed so noble, reasonable and humane — the God you depict so worthy of the adoration of a Universe. I *beg* you to tell me — *do* you feel sure of this beneficent all-pervading Love concerning which you write so eloquently? I do not wish to seem an intruder on your most secret thought. I want to believe that *you* believe—and if I felt this, the tenor of my whole life might change. Help me if you can — I stand in real need of help. You may judge I am very deeply in earnest, or I should not have written to you.
Yours faithfully,
A.W.L.

Of such letters as these I have received enough to make a volume of themselves; but I think the ten I have selected are sufficient to show how ardent and inextinguishable is the desire or straining upward like a flower to the light, of the human Soul for those divine things which nourish it. Scarcely a day passes without my receiving more of these earnest and often pathetic appeals for a little help, a little comfort, a little guidance, enough to make one's heart ache at the thought of so much doubt and desolation looming cloud-like over the troubled minds of many who would otherwise lead not only happy but noble and useful lives. When will the preachers learn to preach Christ simply—Christ without human dogmas or differences? [….]

4) Readers' Letters Debating How to Read Corelli's work

a) Letter from Munro Mackenzie to the Editor, *The Inverness Courier*, 23 March 1897, p.3

Sir,
In your issue of March the 12th I have read with much interest and some regret a paper on Marie Corelli by Mr David Christie Murray. […] I also say with some regret […] that he has failed to do that justice which might have been expected from him to a writer who, despite her faults, be they many or few, has been a potent and purifying influence on the thoughts and in the lives of many readers of fiction. […] a certain appreciation of, and sympathy with, a writer's ideas and distinctive qualities and powers are almost indispensable towards giving a full and just estimate of that writer's place and influence in the domain of literature. It has been said 'there are two ways of reading an author with a view to understanding him, critically and sympathetically, and the way of sympathy is by far the better. Thereby we associate with the mind of the writer, penetrate, as it were, behind the scenes, and find out his meaning from within outwards. The critical reader, however, who may lack sympathy, approaches his author from the outside, and it is ten to one that he never arrives at the core of the question.' […] I would say, given two alternative estimates — the one generous, the other severe — Mr Christie Murray is inclined towards the latter. [….]

But is there not another, and on the whole a more just and generous view that might be taken of Marie Corelli's relation to her Mavis Clare? May not the latter be her ideal of a writer of fiction rather than a copy of herself — an ideal after which she had earnestly striven, and to which she had in some measure attained? To have divorced herself entirely from her ideal would have been in the circumstances a psychological impossibility. […] Self-evolution is not inconsistent with self-effacement on the one hand, and self-projection on the other. […]

The distinction which Mr Murray draws between the emotions and the intellect is far too pronounced, and is barely consistent with the doctrine of the unity of human nature. The emotions and the intellect meet and harmonize in the one Ego. There are not two geniuses — one 'on the emotional side' and one 'on the intellectual side'. […]

In other words, the great teacher is one who is possessed of a great personality, who has a message to deliver, and into that message can throw the combined forces of emotion and of intellect. […] It is only a great soul that is capable of developing a great passion, a passion which George Eliot describes as capable of moving men and women as the trees in the forest are moved by the wind. […] But, unfortunately for Marie Corelli, the strength of her intellect is not, according

to Mr Murray, coordinate with the sense of power with which her emotions inspire her. In other words, I suppose her emotions are a sort of wild 'spiritual wind', which in its uncontrolled fury sweeps away all the bounds of reason and common-sense. But is there anything wonderful in that, seeing that according to Marie Corelli's critic, 'In the very loftiest flight of genius we discern a sort of glorious dementia?' […] There is a kind of madness which only a genius can display. There is such a thing as the madness of reason. It is surely a compliment which Mr Christie Murray pays to Marie Corelli as well as to her readers when he gives her credit for 'inward conviction of the authority of her own message and her own power to deliver it'. And what higher compliment can be paid to her genius than that she can take up old theological theories and thread-bare themes, put new life into them, exhibit them under new and startling forms, so that they appeal to the minds of her readers with all the freshness and charm of a new revelation. Therefore it is that 'the common (unlearned) people hear her gladly'.

b) Letter from "One Who Has Been Helped" to the Editor, *The Hull Daily Mail*, 9 September 1902, p.6

Sir,
In the '*Hull Times*' on Saturday last I noticed a copy of a letter written to the '*Academy*', signed 'An Ordinary Man', and I should like, if you will permit me space in your valuable papers, to protest against such a prejudiced letter. If 'An Ordinary Man' had read the works of this gifted authoress, and received a tithe of the lasting good from so doing which I and many others I know have received, he would not be able to make the assertion in his own words that Miss Marie Corelli 'does not know enough'. 'An Ordinary Man' it is very evident, considers himself posted on some lofty pinnacle, from which (in his opinion only) he can look upon women and their work with scorn and can see nothing but his own superior (?) intellect. […] Anyone who has read '*A Romance of Two Worlds*' and has not been profoundly impressed and helped on the journey of life is to be classed with 'An Ordinary Man' who thinks he can in a few cold sentences so dismiss the works of Miss Marie Corelli from his mind. Would to heaven there were more writers of Miss Corelli's stamp, and less of the sensual trash which is so prevalent (and for which I am reluctantly compelled to say there is a greater demand), and I am sure the human race would be blessed and lifted to a higher level, have greater faith in the Creator, and thus hasten the time when Our Lord shall again come and find His people ready to receive him.

c) Letter from 'Scotus' to the Editor, *The Hull Daily Mail*, 11 September 1902, p.5

Sir,
[…] It is infinitely more simple to write about '*The Sorrows of Satan'* […] than it is to delineate in faithful colours the character of an average human being. [...] Storytellers of the imaginative and creative order, who draw life as it is not, are not hampered by selection, form, and colour; and the more pranks they play with truth and experience, the more are their works admired by the listless thousands. […] For such a public Miss Marie Corelli admirably caters; and it is to this same public that your correspondent 'One who has been Helped' evidently belongs. How on earth anything that Miss Corelli has ever written could help anyone with the slightest discernment or literary taste passes my comprehension. '*The Sorrows of Satan',* that preposterous, school-girl paraphrase of Milton's great epic, could, in my opinion, only help to further atrophy the already feeble literary alertness of the Corellian cult. […] Sorrier stuff than [*The Mighty Atom*] I have never read, and I quite agree with the contributor to the '*Academy*' whom you quoted in Saturday's '*Times*', that this much-puffed lady's views on almost everything she writes about are of the most *jejeune* description.

d) Letter from 'POIGNARD' to the Editor, *The Hull Daily Mail*, 11 September 1902, p.5

Sir,
After reading the letter in Tuesday's '*Daily Mai*l' concerning Miss Corelli one hardly knows what to say. […] Nothing could be more inane than the allegation of jealousy on the part of Miss Corelli's critics. [… nor, considering past relationships of literary friendship] find the slightest foundation for the wild charges of your correspondent and his splenetic goddess? And when we examine the records of these pleasing relations of the past and of the present, need we go further than Miss Corelli's own works to find the reason why similarly agreeable relations have never existed between herself and her contemporaries? In her books themselves we shall find the answer. Beyond the arid deserts of the commonplace, the turgid oceans of the banal, we shall continually move from one debauch to another of the bitter, the intolerant, the cheaply 'cutting' […]. The world, instead of being permitted to work out its own evolution through the deliberate and scientific procedure of cosmism is to take a sudden stride in the direction of religio-revolution as indicated by a 'writer' whose Socialistic ethic nine Socialists out of ten would repudiate.

e) Letter from 'One Who Has Been Helped' to the Editor, *The Hull Daily Mail*, 15 September 1902, p.5

Sir,
Will you kindly allow me space to reply to your correspondents 'Scotus' and 'Poignard' re the works of Marie Corelli. Replying first to 'Scotus' your correspondent must have had a very limited experience, and less sympathy with his fellowmen or he would not describe them as 'minds clad in gross and common clay'. […] He also states 'it is infinitely more simple to write about *The Sorrows of Satan* than to delineate the character of an average human being.' This statement I repudiate entirely. […] We want something to lift us to a higher level, and to strengthen our weakening faith, and I maintain that chronicles of the average human being required by Scotus would be of no benefit, and that what we want today are writers of the 'Corellian style' to help the human race to find that faith and to lift them nearer to God. [….]

From every page almost [of *The Master-Christian*] one can see that the authoress is no sham, and that she possesses in no small degree that love for the good and beautiful which is sadly lacking at the present day. […and describes] the rotten state of society. By society, I mean the 'upper ten' who, so long as they are clothed in purple and fine linen have no thought for their poorer fellow creatures. […]

Replying to ['Poignard's'] first objection that Miss Corelli's style is fifth rate, I deny this absolutely, and am sure her style will compare very favourably with the average author. The second objection, that she writes with only superficial information is utterly ridiculous, and I would advise 'Poignard' to read not scan her works before talking such rubbish. [….]

Respecting her modesty I maintain that this cannot be called into question when one remembers the delicate subjects of which she treats, and my contention is that she could not have treated them with more reverence or with less danger of arousing evil passions in her readers.

f) Letter from 'A Man who Thinks' to the Editor, *The Hull Daily Mail*, 15 September 1902, p.5

Sir,
I take great pleasure in ranking myself as a warm admirer of this lady's genius; and (with a modest appreciation of 30 years' study of mankind and books) I think it possible that — in common with thousands who readily paid five shillings each for a copy of her '*Master-Christian'*, which book had the largest circulation of any novel ever published — I may be as capable of literary judgment as either 'Scotus' or 'Poignard'. […]

May I recommend those who would like to judge for themselves whether or not Gladstone's high opinion of Miss Corelli's genius was well-founded to read '*A Romance of Two World*s', '*Ardath*', '*The Soul of Lilith*', and '*The Master-Christian*'. Many more of her thought-stimulating books are well worth reading. [….]
I may say that so long as soul-aspirations and imaginations are more than 'normal' in the sense that 'Scotus' uses the word, such books as '*A Romance of Two Worlds*' will be necessarily more attractive to thoughtful people (whose earthly experience has neither beginning nor end in knowledge) than description of 'normal' conditions which do not require the master pen of a Corelli.

g) Letter from 'A Woman who has been Helped' to the Editor, *The Hull Daily Mail,* 16 September 1902, p.6

Sir,
I should like to say that I fully agree with every remark made by your correspondent, 'One who has been Helped', in regard to Miss Marie Corelli. I also have read '*A Romance of Two Worlds'* and have derived lasting benefit from the reading. I read the book when I was in a very desponding mood, feeling disgusted with the insincerity and sham of this world, but before I had finished the first chapter, I seemed to breathe in a fresh world. It is quite true that some men are jealous of women's advancement, and I think this is a mistake on their part as women's talents and abilities and abilities lie in a different direction to those of men. [….]
I look upon Miss Marie Corelli as a wonderful and gifted woman, far removed from common mankind, and what is more, although she has genius, I understand that she is considered to be very pretty. I wish people would read her books for themselves, and form their own judgment; instead of doing this, however, a few are prejudiced against her (through jealousy perhaps) and then of course a great many more, like sheep, take their opinions for their own.

h) Letter from 'Scotus' to the Editor, *The Hull Daily Mail*, 17 September 1902, p.6

Sir,
[…] I shall once more crave space to reply to your correspondents 'A Man who Thinks' and 'One who has been Helped'. The former advances the infantile plea that immense circulation of Miss Corelli's books prove their literary value — a curious plea for one possessed of infinite knowledge. […] In writing such books as '*The Sorrows of Satan*' and '*A Romance of Two Worlds*', Miss Corelli has supplied a long felt want for thousands who are utterly unfitted to pronounce judgment upon literature. And if any proof of public gratitude is demanded, let it be known that thousands (including 'A Man who Thinks') cheerfully paid 5s each for a copy of '*The Master-Christian*' and that the first edition of her latest book has reached record figures! 'One who has been Helped' seems to think that a religious exhortation will pass for argument. […]
But I have a question or two for this correspondent before I close. Does he consider that Miss Corelli's attitude towards those of her own sex who discredit knowledge outside of phenomena is an example of that pious suavity and charity that thinketh not evil? [… In *The Mighty Atom*] we are calmly assured that the advocates of secular education 'are guilty of a worse crime than murder'. How can 'One who has been Helped' reconcile banalities such as these with the creed of love so often mouthed by Miss Corelli and her admirers?

5) The Ealing Public Library Controversy in *The Middlesex County Times*

a) 'Ealing Free Public Library Committee', *The Middlesex County Times*, 4 June 1892, p.7

Mr Adamson called attention to the character of the works of Marie Corelli, which he urged should be placed in the reference and not the lending department.
Mr Hodges observed that it was remarkable that the writer was the favourite author of the Queen, and that it was proposed that the committee should reject the works. He had been asked by the publishers to dramatise one, but had replied that if he did so the theatre in which the play was produced would speedily be emptied.
Mr Adamson remarked that the works were pernicious and immoral. There was not a redeeming feature in them.
Mr Hodges: Except that they are powerful. They are worth reading to see the depth to which horrors can be carried.
It was resolved that the works in question should be placed in the reference department.

b) Letter from Percy L. Marks to the Editor: 'Ealing Free Public Library Committee and Marie Corelli', *The Middlesex County Times*, 11 June 1892, p.7

Sir,
I was greatly surprised, and as much provoked, when I read yesterday of the latest action of the Library Committee. As my father, who is a member of that committee, happened to be absent from the meeting of the 28th ult, I can express my sentiments on regard to the British-matron-like performance that took place thereat with the greater freedom. To stigmatise Marie Corelli's works as 'pernicious and immoral' is as absurd as it is misleading. What one or two may be I cannot vouch for, but her best works are as free from 'pernicious and immoral' effects as are any of Charles Dickens'. And because there may be one or two of the character assigned to them by Mr Adamson (I do not for a moment suggest that there are), that is surely no reason why such marvellous works as '*A Romance of Two Worlds*', '*Ardath*', and '*Thelma*' should be removed from circulation. If '*Vendetta'* and '*Wormwood*' (which I have not read) be objectionable (that is 'pernicious' or 'immoral', for either character should suffice to blackball a book), they should at once be removed, not only from circulation, but also from the Ealing Free Public Library premises; but it is an altogether mistake idea to make the innocent suffer for the faults (if faults there be) of the last mentioned works. Mr Hodges stated his opinion that a 'theatre would be speedily emptied' were he to dramatize one of Marie Corelli's works. I, however, doubt whether such would be the case with '*Thelma*', which is almost lyrical in style, and which, to my mind, is one of the most charming specimens of 19th century light literature. Modesty is well, but prudery is highly objectionable. The best answer the committee could make to this would be to rescind their absurd motion. This however, is an improbable finale.

c) Letter from 'ONE WHO LIKS JUSTICE' to the Editor, 'Marie Corelli's works at the Ealing Free Library', *The Middlesex County Times,* 9 July 1892, p.7

Sir,
[…] Mr Marks' point of objection was not the removal of certain works, but the removal of all Marie Corelli's works from the shelves for the sake of one or two, which may possibly be better away. Mr Marks has read three, at least, of the authoress's works which he mentions, viz '*A Romance of Two Worlds*', '*Ardath*', and '*Thelma*', and which he truly describes as marvellous, and it is in defence of these that he wrote. If a testimony to the fitness for public reading of Marie

Corelli's works be wanted, surely it is a sufficient one that our most gracious Queen, a universally acknowledged example of all that is right, after reading one or two of the works in question, sent for a complete set of them for her private use.

d) Letter from E. Maxwell Drapes to the Editor, 'The Ealing Public Free Library Committee and Marie Corelli', *The Middlesex County Times*, 3 September 1892, p.2

Sir,
Great was my surprise on learning the other day that books by Miss Marie Corelli were excluded from the Ealing Free Public Library by order of the committee. […] There are only two ways of accounting for this extraordinary action — either those gentlemen who voted for the measure have not read a book by Miss Corelli at all (in which case it was most unjust to the author and unfair to the public) or the moral sense of the committee is the reverse of that of most people, as I notice they leave in the '*Decameron*' of Boccaccio, which is perhaps a book best left unread. But Marie Corelli's works! Why, she is one of the staunchest advocates of Christianity in her books among modern novel writers, and they are pervaded throughout with a 'high moral tone' (to borrow a phrase from the history books). The committee are doubtless unaware that Her Majesty the Queen was so interested by the '*Romance of Two Worlds*' that she was pleased to accept a copy of the author's latest work. Perhaps we shall next see George Macdonald's or Edna Lyall's books taken out of the Library, for fear they should corrupt the public morals of Ealing!

e) Letter from 'Reader' to the Editor, 'The Ealing Free Library Committee and Marie Corelli', *The Middlesex County Times*, 10 September 1892, p.3

Sir,
[…] I do not wish to discuss the great question of morals, but would suggest that considering the ratepayers of Ealing have to pay the rate for the maintenance of the said library, it would only be fair that they should also have a voice in the question as to what is or is not fit for them to read. If the gentlemen forming the present committee object to certain works, let the titles of such works be posted on the noticeboard and the vote of reader taken. […] The wishes of those most interested could then be ascertained. I do not consider it asking too much that those who pay the piper should call the tune.

f) Letter from the Editor of 'The Minstrel' to the Editor, 'Marie Corelli and the Ealing Free Library Committee', *The Middlesex County Times*, 17 September 1892, p.2

Sir,
In the July number of '*The Minstrel'*, among the Notes of the Month, I wrote […] 'I hear that the Free Public Library Committee have excluded the works of Marie Corelli as "pernicious and immoral", and have withdrawn from circulation "*A Romance of Two Worlds"*, "*Ardath*", "*Thelma*", &c. And yet these grandmotherly censors, who wish to take care of our morals, were they to put some of their blockheads together, could not write a single page of prose!' I sincerely hope that something may be done to remedy this shame cast on Ealing by people who are as stupid as they are ignorant. The remedy suggested by '*Reader*' in your issue of today is rather too mild. I suggest that the whole fussy crew be turned out as the next election, and intelligent men nominated in their stead. Thank you for permitting the discussion of this grievance in your widely-circulated and interesting paper.

g) Letter from Marie Corelli to Percy L. Marks, 17 June 1892, *The Middlesex County Times*, 17 September 1892, p.2

Dear Sir,
Among a number of press cuttings, I have just received a copy of your letter in *The Middlesex County Times* which is the first I hear of any condemnation by the 'Ealing Free Public Library'. Let me thank you for your defence of me — it is most gallant and kindly! I cannot say, however, that I am much depressed by the library's action, because it is so unjust. […] I know in my own heart that I have done my utmost best to inculcate faith in God, love to one's fellow-creatures, and the satisfying happiness of a pure life, and that I do my best to practise what I preach. As for '*Wormwood*', it is a true picture of the terrible absinthe mania in Paris, which is helping to destroy the moral fibre of the French nation, and against which I have lifted an appealing word. '*Vendetta*' is an Italian story of revenge, which is written to prove that a wife's infidelity deserves no pity, and that even a just vengeance brings more wretchedness than peace, wherefore both infidelity and revenge are evil passions. […] For, knowing that my works have been translated into several languages, and that all through Great Britain, the Continent, Australia, and America my books have a large and ever-increasing circulation, it is impossible to resist a smile at their stern rejection by Ealing! Never mind! I do not mind in the very least, but I thank you heartily, sincerely, and gratefully for your generous words and your chivalrous and just spirit.

In a subsequent letter to me, Miss Corelli writes as follows:— 'Do you not think that it would be well to let the Ealing (committee) know that by condemning my books they are casting aspersion on the Queen of England, who not only admires all my works intensely, but has a set of them specially bound (at her own request) for her use? I think Her Majesty has never been known to encourage anything "immoral and pernicious"'.

h) Letter from 'Wormwood' to the Editor, 'Marie Corelli and the Ealing Free Public Library Committee', *The Middlesex County Times*, 24 September 1892, p.6

Sir,
I see in your issue of 17 September a letter from a person describing himself as the editor of '*The Minstrel',* a publication not to be obtained at Smith's bookstall, and apparently unknown to most people, the Ealing committee included. It is true that some of the books of Marie Corelli, including '*Two Worlds*', '*Ardath*', and '*Thelma*' have been excluded through an error, which will be rectified; but it appears that the committee have determined to finally exclude '*Vendetta*' and '*Wormwood*'. Most people will agree with the committee in their action, at any rate with regard to the latter, which is not a book likely to improve the minds or morals of the young ladies and children who read the books of Ealing Public Library. '*Wormwood*' is a powerful work of the realistic school, and it may be a true picture of the terrible absinthe mania in Paris. In order to accomplish its end, however, it was not necessary that the incidents of the story should turn on the base and heartless seduction of a young girl, just from school, by a young man about to enter the Roman Catholic priesthood. It was not stated in '*Wormwood*' that either the girl or the priest was addicted to the use of absinthe, and consequently there was no necessity for building up the story on such dirty foundations. At any rate, it is not to be supposed that the members of the Ealing Committee, who are sensible men, will be deterred from doing what they consider their duty by the rabid abuse showered on them by the Editor of an obscure publication; and Marie Corelli seems most unfortunate in the advocate she has chosen. If she rests her case on such advocacy as that of the editor of *The Minstrel*, she seems to be in a bad case. That person describes the members of the Ealing Committee as 'blockheads'— 'stupid' — 'ignorant' — 'a funny crew', and so on. When the gifted authoress describes such language as 'generous words' and 'chivalrous just spirit' and effusively thanks *The Minstrel* for the same, perhaps it indicates the same obliquity of thought which prompted the introduction into '*Wormwood*' of the nasty incident alluded to above. […] The readers of the correspondence will notice that Her Majesty

admires the works in question intensely. That is a brave word! After that, what need to seek the support of Mr Percy L. Marks? Finally, I am not a member of the committee, and do not know any of them, but I am a subscriber to the Ealing Public Library, and I have two young daughters.

i) Letter from Sydney Hodges to Marie Corelli, 21 September 1892, *The Middlesex County Times,* 24 September 1892, p.6

The following letter has, we understand, been addressed to Miss Marie Corelli by Mr Sydney Hodges, one of the Ealing Public Library Committee.
Dear Madam,
In your letter to my young friend Mr Percy Marks, published in this week's *Middlesex County Times,* you have done me the honour to refer to me individually as apart from my colleagues on the Free Library Committee. I infer from this that you think me primarily responsible for the motion to exclude your works from our Library, or rather to restrict them to the reference department. In this however, you are mistaken. […] I was asked to read [*Wormwood*] and report to the committee. I did so, and, although I entertain the widest and most liberal views with regard to literature generally, I am bound to say that I felt obliged to report on '*Wormwood*' as an undesirable book to retain in the lending department. […] when I tell you that I have the highest appreciation of the extraordinary power of your works, and of your unusually vivid imagination, you may, perhaps, be induced to read what is at least an honest opinion. You yourself cannot surely consider that the plot of '*Wormwood*', apart from the extreme horrors of the descriptions, is one that should be accessible to the numbers of young people who frequent our Free Library. […] You may urge that they are the ravings of a man under the influence of absinthe, but I find similar passages in all the books of yours which I have read. Even in '*Ardath*', which is held up by your admirers as a model of refinement and beauty, I find passages which would be startling coming from a man, but which, emanating from the pen of a woman, are simply amazing. You say that your object has always been to inculcate purity and virtue, but you will find it difficult to make people believe this, if you continue to flood the world with such repulsive pictures of passion run mad as '*Vendetta*' and '*Wormwood*' and parts of '*Ardath*'. [The ending of *Ardath*] is supposed to be a sufficient marriage ceremony, and the poet and his angel bride live together ever after on a mountain side. Now such a story as this might be pardonable coming from the pen of a highly romantic schoolgirl of sixteen; but as the work of a woman of your power, intelligence, and culture, to say nothing the very considerable amount of philosophy and psychological acumen you display, it is simply indefensible, and as an argument inculcating Christianity, ludicrous. I can hardly venture to hope that any words of mine can influence you, but nevertheless, I do hope that in future works you will turn the great powers you undoubtedly possess into a more healthy channel; when you may rest assured that the critics, whom you appear to regard at present with such deadly enmity, will accord you the praise which it is in your power to command whenever you wish to do so.

j) 'Ealing Free Public Library Committee', *The Middlesex County Times,* 1 October 1892, p.6

It was then decided to withhold the whole of the works from circulation until members of the committee had read and reported on them. — Mr St. John asked what were the other works of the authoress in question. — Mr Adamson replied, '*Ardath*', '*Thelma*', and '*A Romance of Two Worlds*'. — Mr St. John asked if Mr Adamson had read all the works he had enumerated. — Mr Adamson said he had not. He thought any woman who wrote some portions of '*Ardath*' was a disgrace to her sex. — Mr St. John observed that some of the works were very powerful, but in some places they went beyond what young ladies could read. He read some extracts which he thought would have been much better left out of the works. — Mr Marks thought the committee ought not to have gone so far as they had in this matter. They had, he considered, made a great mistake in their action. […] They had, he thought, made themselves rather silly. If they were so

very particular, they would have to discard five out of every six of the books on the library shelves. Shakespeare and many other works which were considered classical ought to be excluded if they insisted on the exclusion of Marie Corelli's works. […] They were called nincompoops, and he maintained that in excluding these works they would be taking up a position they could not maintain. [… Mr St John]: He did not approve of '*Ardath*'. The other two works of this authoress he had not read. Girls came to the lending department and took out books and the committee had no control over them, and they should therefore be careful. […] Mr Adamson read another extract from *Arda*th and described it as disgusting. That a woman should write such stuff was, he contended, deplorable. Mr Marks quite agreed with Mr Adamson, but urged that if the works of Marie Corelli were removed from the lending department on account of such passages as had been read, they must banish Shakespeare's and many other works. […] Mr Lovely observed that if he found one of the books of this authoress in his house he would put it on fire. [….]
Mr Adamson appealed to the committee whether the meaning of the extract he had read could be mistaken by any boy or girl of 16. […] Mr Lovely reminded the committee that they were responsible to those who elected them, and they must exercise care in what they put into the hands of young people. […] Mr Lovely, referring to the remark that many would not be contaminated, observed that in the extract read there was sufficient to awaken curiosity in the minds of the young, and lead them to ask questions which would have an undesirable effect. […] Mr Adamson observed that they had an authoress who violated the rules of propriety and described acts of infidelity in the coldest and most cynical manner. […] 'Such writing was most immoral'. […] Mr Lovely pointed out that the result of the discussion would be to create curiosity to read the works complained of. On the motion of the Chairman, seconded by Mr Adamson, it was resolved to return '*Thelma*' and '*A Romance of Two Worlds*' to the lending department. No resolution was passed as to '*Ardath*'.

k) Letter from Marie Corelli to the Editor, 'Marie Corelli answers Mr Hodges', ***The Middlesex County Times,*** **1 October 1892, p.6**

Miss Marie Corelli has sent us the following reply to Mr Hodges' recent attack upon her works: 'to Mr Hodges, of the Ealing Free Library Committee'.
Dear Sir,
I have received your letter, and am entirely delighted with it, as also with the action of the Ealing Free Library Committee. And why? Because people who cannot procure my books on loan buy them, which is a much more agreeable course of procedure, both to my publisher and myself! I own that the plots of '*Wormwood*' and '*Vendetta*' are rather alarming; human passions have frequently an alarming tendency, and might possibly disturb the superhuman and altogether heavenly calm of Ealing morality. […] In response to your criticism, however, allow me to state that I do not write for the 'Young Person' whom dear Charles Dickens so abhorred, nor shall I ever do so. The 'Young Person' would bring all art down to the level of the purest commonplace. For the preservation of innocence and ignorance in the 'Young Person', it would be necessary to exclude Shakespeare, Sterne, Swift, Shelley and Byron from Free Libraries and to smother up the existence of the 'music-dramas' of Wagner. [….]
For myself, I take it as a great compliment that my novels should have secured the 'veto' of the Ealing Free Library judges. I feel that when Ealing condemns, and critics wield the flail, I am on the high road to fame indeed! And when I think of Ealing, and compare its action with the words of the great Canon Wilberforce, who told me a few days ago at Homburg, that he 'wished all intending clergymen would read "*The Soul of Lilith*" before they were ordained', I am both proud and happy!

l) Letter from Marie Corelli to the Editor, 'The Rejection of Ealing', ***The Middlesex County Times,*** **1 October 1892, p.6**

Sir,
In the same issue of your paper which contains Mr Hodges' attack on me (to which I have replied as above) I see a singularly absurd letter from somebody who signs himself by the name of the novel which so pricks his moral sense, namely, 'Wormwood'. This gentleman says he has 'two young daughters', and while everyone is charmed to learn so interesting a fact, it seems that the possession of these treasures fails to make him careful as to the truth of his statements. He alludes to a paper called '*The Minstrel*', which appears to have championed me in some way or other […]. Permit me, through your columns, to inform the 'Wormwood' gentleman 'with two young daughters' that I am totally ignorant the *Minstrel*'s 'advocacy', that I do not know its editor, and that I never see the paper. I have no idea who my 'advocate' is in that journal […] and I have not 'thanked the Minstrel', nor used the terms 'generous words', or 'chivalrous and just spirit' to anyone but to Mr Percy Marks […] in a letter to himself, written some three months ago, and which I gave him permission to publish if he chose. This letter, which lately appeared in your columns, the bitter 'Wormwood' has, in his temper, confounded with the observations of *The Minstrel* in a very ill-judged and hasty way. As for 'resting my case' on any advocacy at all. I should entirely spurn to 'rest a case' or plead a case with Ealing! […]
If Her Majesty knew the spiteful abuse and rancorous sneers that have been freely poured upon me by her 'loyal' subjects because she expressed a little liking for my books, she would, in the kindness and true womanliness of her noble nature, be, I think, both surprised and sorry. As for 'pushing business', I have no need to do that. Both financially and socially, the rewards of my work are constantly increasing without effort of mine. […]
I have no desire to intrude upon their 'holy ground' and that I hope the moral-minded committee will remain firm in their resolve, and exclude my works for ever from their Free Library. I do not wish to be admitted into so sacred a temple of learning. I am glad to be out of it. The 'rejection of Ealing' is a sort of metaphorical laurel-wreath which I accept and wear with pride!

m) Letter from G. Castell to the Editor, ***The Middlesex County Times*****, 8 October 1892, p.2**

Sir,
I have read the recent discussion on the works of Marie Corelli. I imagine the powers that be consider Boccaccio's '*Decameron*' a strictly moral work, and one fit to be retained in the Ealing Free Library. […] I have read the works of Marie Corelli which have been excluded, and have not discovered one atom of immorality in the same. I have also read Boccaccio's '*Decameron*', and why it should be allowed to remain in such an exclusive and highly moral abode as the Ealing Free Library is to me a perfect anomaly.

n) Letter from 'A Resident of Ealing' to the Editor, ***The Middlesex County Times*****, 8 October 1892, p.2**

Sir,
One of the two books proposed for re-admission to the Ealing Free Library on Saturday last is objectionable in what seems to me a more serious matter than the license allowable in works of fiction. [… the Committee] have apparently failed to see the harm done through such works [as '*A Romance of Two Worlds'*] to the ignorant and credulous, by attempts to make the truths of religion dependent on crude theories of electricity, or even on possible scientific discoveries. The weak nonsense in the volume referred to is taken seriously by careless readers; the more so when, as in this book, an utterly false contention is supported by the most reckless assertions.

o) Letter from 'Reader' to the Editor, *The Middlesex County Times*, 8 October 1892, p.2

The recent decision of the committee of the Free Library, as reported in your columns, induces me to ask the following question: For whose benefit was the Free Library established? Was it solely for the benefit of the young daughters of a few residents, or was it for the benefit of the whole body of residents? If for the former, by all means exclude Marie Corelli's novels. But be consistent — exclude also the novels of Le Sage, Cervantes, Richardson, Fielding and Smollett; exclude the plays of Shakespeare, Marlowe, Dryden. […] If however, the library was established for the benefit of all the ratepayers, there should be no talk of exclusion. It appears to me somewhat ludicrous that half-a-dozen gentlemen (however good their intentions may be) should decide what Ealing may and may not read. The works of many of our greatest authors contain passages obviously unsuited for a young girl's reading, but it would surely be better for every father to instruct his daughters what they may read.

p) 'Ealing Literary and Debating Society: A Review of the Works of Marie Corelli', *The Middlesex County Times,* 15 October 1892, p.7

The first literary meeting of the Ealing Literary and Debating Society was held in the Municipal Buildings on Wednesday evening, when a large company assembled to hear a 'Review of the Works of Marie Corelli', by Mr John Allen Brown. Mr G.F. Nixon occupied the chair, and in introducing Mr Allen Brown, observed that there had been much discussion in reference to the works of Marie Corelli. As chairman of that meeting, he did not intend to offer an opinion upon these works, except to say that he did not think they were immoral. Their tendency was not, perhaps, what he should appreciate, but they were undoubtedly clever, and he thought anybody who took up one of them would not put it down until he had finished it. […]

Mr J. Allen Brown, at the outset, observed that he had read five of the works of Marie Corelli with the view of obtaining what he believed to be a fair outline of them, and writing a fair and impartial review of them (applause). With reference to the recent controversy on the action of the Free Public Library Committee, he felt that, as one whose name was associated with the birth of the Free Library, he was precluded from taking part in that controversy. Turning to his review, and dealing first with '*A Romance of Two Worlds*', Mr Allen Brown observed that this work was an attempt to pierce in imagination the veil which hid from us the realisation of those hopes and aspirations to which we all cling as the great outcome of our lives. […] The authoress's wonderful power of imagination and wealth of language enabled her to surmount difficulties which would be insuperable to a less gifted composer; the work would be read by many, not only for its originality of conception, but in some case, perhaps, because it touched a chord whose vibrations all had felt — the attempt to unravel the mysteries of a future existence. [….]

It was evident to the reader that '*Wormwood*' had been written, not with the morbid desire of piling up the horrible incidents of a sensational novel, but for the purpose of showing to what depths of abnormal moral degradation an originally good and intelligent man might fall who had completely fall who had completely abandoned himself to the soul-destroying demon of absinthe. There were, at the same time, in the work defects which an impartial critic could not pass over in silence; there were passages, probably two or three pages, in which the authoress, by the mere force of her powerful imagination, was led into the description of scenes of horror and malignant passion which appeared to be unnecessary, and which certainly verged on the limits of what very young ladies should read. In certain passages in this work the authoress seemed to have descended from the high position in which her great powers placed her in order to become sensational at the expense of good taste. These, however, were but small blemishes in what was really a very powerful work. [….]

Reviewing '*Ardath*', Mr Allen Brown observed that the mysticism shown in '*A Romance of Two Worlds'* was more fully developed in this work. With the faculty of forming images in the mind, a poetic inspiration and fearlessness which could not be denied, Miss Corelli entered into the regions of the unknowable, and challenged alike the philosopher and the narrow-minded,

over-religious person. The authoress, however, showed […] that her object was to sustain the cardinal doctrines of Christianity [… but] with an excess of zeal she attacked the Agnostic whom she appeared to condemn to the realms of darkness and suffering for ever. It was, perhaps, unfortunate that the authoress had carried her description of some of the scenes in this work as far as she had done. [… However] They were not more ardent than some passages from many contemporary novelists whose writings had a wide circulation. […] Mr Allen Brown's review of these works was attentively listened to, and the reviewer heartily applauded at the close of his observations.

Mr J.H. Young, in a discussion that followed, said that, speaking as a schoolmaster, he did not think Marie Corelli's works were just the volumes for a school library. The wild and lurid imaginations to be found in them were not quite healthy. Beyond that he did not think the authoress could be blamed or criticised more severely than the writers of half the ephemeral literature of the day. He was opposed to the action of the Free Library Committee in regard to these works, considering it was the duty of parents, and not of the Free Library Committee, to decide what books their children should read.

Mr Dennis said he had read '*Wormwood*' but derived little edification from the perusal. He doubted whether, if the two were balanced, there was not more evil than good in the work.

q) Letter from 'A READER' to the Editor, *The Middlesex County Times,* 22 October 1892, p.3

Sir,
If Mr Allen Brown is correctly reported in your paper, he fairly gave himself away at the Ealing Debating Society in his remarks on the novels of this authoress. He read a long paper, which was highly eulogistic of the works of Miss Marie Corelli and ended the discussion by stating that he wished to it to be distinctly understood that he did not advocate the reading of her works. If this is his feeling, why did he bring them into such prominence by his paper? This attitude is as consistent as the action of Mr B.S. Marks, who, I am told, moved the rejection of the works of 'Ouida', and afterwards implied that his colleagues were 'silly' because they refused to circulate Marie Corelli's!

r) Letter from 'A Friend of Progress' to the Editor, *The Middlesex County Times,* 12 November 1892, p.7

Sir,
I attended the lecture delivered by Mr Allen Brown on this subject. It seemed to me that Mr Allen Brown did not object to the refusal of the Free Library Committee to admit the books in question into the lending department, but he regretted there was not a clearly defined rule by which books might be justly rejected. Some members of the committee might, on a principle similar to that under which these books were excluded from the lending library, object to books which were in opposition to a specific religious teaching, but such objection could not be justified because a Free Public Library ought to contain books written in all forms of religion, and books written in all forms of opposition to religious teaching, to enable readers to understand all sides. Public libraries should have for their objects the enlargement of our understanding, not merely mental amusement

s) Letter from Rev. Charles J. Hughes to the Editor, *The Middlesex County Times*, 9 March 1895, p.6

Surely if an objectionable book is in the Library, the best course in the interests of morality is to say nothing about it, and not to publicly advertise it. I have seen a letter from Marie Corelli, written after the proceedings taken with regard to her works, and she states that never before

were so many of her works sold in Ealing as after the action of the Free Library Committee in respect to them.

t) 'Ealing Public Lib Committee', *The Middlesex County Times*, 18 June 1898, p.7

Mr Jordan gave notice that at the next meeting of the committee he would move that the works of Marie Corelli not already obtained be purchased for the lending department, and that any books of Hall Caine and Marie Corelli in the reference department be transferred to the lending department.

u) 'Ealing Public Lib Committee', *The Middlesex County Times*, 2 July 1898, p.7

Mr Jordan, before proposing the resolution which stood in his name, said he had been led to believe that if he could propose this resolution without saying anything about it, several people would prefer it. This was not agreed to, and his offer to amend the resolution was not accepted. […] He said he moved the resolution more as a matter of principle than anything else, for he did not think that they, as a public body, should act as the censors of the inhabitants or the ratepayers of Ealing, […] He did not wish to cast any blame or slur upon the old committee in refusing to allow these books to be read, as he believed it had acted from very good motives. But they were not so bigoted in the present age as they had been in the past. He thought it should have been left to the discretion of the fathers and mothers to allow their children to read what they liked.

[….] Mr J.E. Muddock, in seconding the resolution [….] happened to know that there was a very great demand amongst the people of Ealing that these books should be in the library. He had heard incidentally people say that they were surprised they could not get Ouida's or Marie Corelli's works. Mr Hall Caine was certainly a prominent literary man, and though he was not quite sure he agreed with everything that Hall Caine had written, he had written some very fine literature, and this class should be in the lending library. […] If they excluded books of this class from the library, then he took it that they must go a step further and exclude newspapers (hear hear). […]

Then Mr Wright said they did not require novels. He submitted that the Free Library was not intended for people who could afford to give a guinea to Mudie's and get what books they liked, but it was intended for the poorer classes, who had not the money to throw away in that manner, and who wished to come there to read what papers and books they liked. [….]

The resolution was then put and carried, the Chairman and Mr Wright voting against.

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Archives and Databases — Ward

1) Mary Ward Settlement collection (LMA/4524), London Metropolitan Archives, London

This collection comprises records of the Mary Ward Centre, formerly known as the Mary Ward Settlement and the Passmore Edwards Settlement, plus some records of predecessor institutions University Hall Settlement and Marchmont Hall. It includes: papers relating to the foundation of the Settlement, Mary Ward's correspondence with supporters and benefactors; minutes of the Council, the Finance and General Purposes Committee and other Committees; administrative and financial files relating to the daily running of the Settlement; papers of the Chairman and

Wardens; fund-raising appeals; prospectuses and syllabi outlining adult education courses; papers of youth clubs, vacation schools, evening play centres, clubs for the elderly and clubs for women; papers relating to the School for Invalid Children; papers relating to the provision of financial and legal advice; and some personal papers of Mary Ward (e.g. speeches on settlements) and her daughter Dorothy Ward.

2) Ward Family Papers (MS ADD202/120), University College London Special Collections, UCL Archives, London

The collection contains family diaries and appointment books of Thomas Humphry Ward and Mary Augusta Ward, 1871–1926; personal diaries of Dorothy Ward, 1889–1955; family letters of Arnold Ward, 1890–1915; and newspaper cuttings, 1891–1920.

3) British Library, London

The primary archives are:
Macmillan Archive, vol. CXLIII, Correspondence with Mary A. Ward, 1874-1917 (Add MS 54928)
Society of Authors Archive, vol. CCLXVI ff. 90–157 Mrs Humphry Ward, 1909-1918 (Add MS 56840)
Correspondence and papers of the Arnold-Forster family (Add MS 88953/3)
Collection of Letters of Mrs Humphry Ward (RP 8974) [photocopies made of Ward's family correspondence prior to export]
Miscellaneous Letters and Papers, 1738–1937, A-J (Add MS 71581), ff. 19–27: letters between Reverend Richard Acland Armstrong and Mary Augusta Ward

4) Mrs. Humphry Ward Papers 1857–1935 (H-Mss-0927), Special Collections, The Claremont Colleges Library, Claremont, California

The collection consists of letters between Mary Ward and her publishers, family and friends, photographs, miscellaneous documents, and notebooks that hold drafts of her novels and articles.

5) Thomas Humphry Ward Collection (MS-4409), Harry Ransom Center, The University of Texas at Austin

The collection consists of correspondence to Mary Ward and her husband as well as handwritten and typed manuscripts.

6) Mrs Humphry Ward Collection I-IV, Balliol College Archives and Manuscripts, Oxford

Collection III includes typed copies made of letters originally sent to Mary Ward about her work.

7) Diaries of William Lyon Mackenzie King, Library and Archives Canada, <http://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/politics-government/prime-ministers/william-lyon-mackenzie-king> [accessed 19 February 2019]

Includes entries for his stay at, and input into, the Passmore Edwards settlement.

8) UK RED, the Reading Experience database:
https://www.open.ac.uk/Arts/reading/UK/search_basic_results.php?keyword=Humphry+Ward

9) British Newspaper Archive

The British Library's digitised historical newspapers – searched for references to Ward 1888–1920
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Archives and Databases — Corelli

1) Marie Corelli Archives, Shakespeare Birthplace Trust, Stratford

A collection of Marie Corelli's autograph manuscripts, letters, author's proofs, photographs, speeches, and other miscellanea relating to Marie Corelli, Bertha Vyver and their families

Stratford Oral History Project, Archive DR730
Includes memories of Marie Corelli by Stratford residents

2) UK RED, the Reading Experience Database:
https://www.open.ac.uk/Arts/reading/UK/search_basic_results.php?keyword=corelli

3) British Newspaper Archive
The British Library's digitised historical newspapers – searched for references to Corelli 1886–1924
Accessed online July to December 2021

4) British Library, London

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vol LXIV: 14 June 1888 – 10 Oct 1890 (Add MS 46623)
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