For Thomas, my greatest collaborator.

Promotor      Prof. dr. Marysa Demoor  
               Vakgroep Letterkunde
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Decaan        Prof. dr. Marc Boone
Rector        Prof. dr. Paul Van Cauwenberge
No Author Is an Island

Multiple Authorship in Nineteenth-Century Britain
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As popular opinion would have it, the writing of a doctoral treatise is an intrinsically isolated process. However, this view, like the traditional interpretation of authorship as inherently singular, fails to take into account the many individuals that surround the writer of a PhD thesis. Even though these people may not personally have held the pen (or in my case, tapped the keyboard), they all played their part in the process of this dissertation’s conception.

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1.1 Defining Multiple Authorship

To Olive it appeared that this partnership of their two minds – each of them, by itself, lacking an important group of facets – made an organic whole which, for the work in hand, could not fail to be brilliantly effective ... they would be complete, they would have everything, and together they would triumph.

(Henry James, The Bostonians (1886))

Armand haussa les épaules, et sur un ton tout différent:
‘Pour te consoler, veux-tu savoir la composition de notre premier numéro? Il y aura donc mon nocturne; quatre chansons de Cob-Lafleur; un dialogue de Jarry; des poèmes en prose du petit Ghéridanisot, notre pensionnaire; et puis le Fer à repasser, un vaste essai de critique générale, où se préciseraient les tendances de la revue. Nous nous sommes mis à plusieurs pour pondre ce chef-d’oeuvre.’

Olivier, qui ne savait que dire, argut gauchement:
‘Aucun chef-d’oeuvre n’est le résultat d’une collaboration.’

(André Gide, Les faux-monnayeurs (1925))

The two fictional excerpts cited above, both of which address the process of authorial collaboration, combine to lay the finger on the intrinsically opposing views that surround the practice of multiple authorship. Olive, on the one hand, advocates the belief that one and one equals more than two and that together she and Verena (her co-conspirator in the feminist cause) will create a greater ‘organic whole’ that will overcome their respective shortcomings and allow them to ‘triumph’. Olivier, for his part, asserts the lack of confidence that he has in the result of his friend’s collaboration – multiply authored texts, doomed as they are because of the process that generated
them, can never be (allowed to become) masterpieces. Olive and Olivier’s conflicting points of view lay bare the tension between the often optimistic but also arguably naive stance of the partners in a joint venture and the treatment that the products of their co-authorship commonly receive from external observers. At the basis of this dichotomy, as I will argue, lies a fundamental discomfort with a form of writing that was perceived as a threat to the traditional image of single authorship.

My research in this dissertation works against the long-established concept of the author as a ‘solitary genius’, a lone creator of fictional works. Time and again, critics, readers, and even the authors themselves, have proven that the notion of isolated conception is strongly ingrained in literature and literary criticism, especially of the past two centuries. As my study will argue, multiple authorship, or collaboration – in the broadest sense – between two or more authors in nineteenth-century Britain was in fact rather the rule than the exception: no author was (or is) an island. The myth of the author as a solitary genius thrived, as Jack Stillinger observed in his seminal work on multiple authorship, during the Romantic period ‘when the personalities of the poets and the essayists were thought to be central in their works and there was widespread discussion of such topics as inspiration, originality, creativity, and genius’ (7). The veneration that was felt for the historical figure of the writer combined in the course of the nineteenth century with the era’s booming commercialism and the industrialisation of literature to establish a veritable cult of the author, in which books, and by extension their creators, became marketable goods. The allure of the figure of the writer resulted in the proliferation of (auto)biographies and memoirs by authors’ relatives, friends and acquaintances, as well as generating a host of paraphernalia that celebrated the author and his/her literary offspring. A prominent example of such personal lionisation is Charles Dickens, in whose case both the works and the man spawned a mass of commercial products. Tourism equally profited (and continues to do so) from authors’ popularity. Greatly mythologized because of their tragic life story (which was deftly narrated in Elizabeth Gaskell’s *Life of Charlotte Brontë* (1857)), the Brontës’ lives and works caused their little town of Haworth to be swarmed with fans who wished to experience the world that they had read about.

Twentieth-century criticism has for a long time upheld the view of authorship as an intrinsically solitary phenomenon. It did so not only by attributing to the author an omnipotent status as the determiner of a text’s meaning (what Stillinger, in his volume *Multiple Authorship and the Myth of Solitary Genius* (1991), calls a ‘deification’ of the author (v)), but equally through entirely opposing theories that announced the author’s absence or even ‘death’ (cases in point are Roland Barthes’s ‘mort de l’Auteur’, or the New Criticism of Wimsatt and Beardsley, whose ‘intentional phalacy’ theory removed the writer as the centre of significance for a text (Stillinger 8)). Both extremes consider the author, be s/he omnipresent in or totally absent from the text, as the sole originator of the work: they ‘share the concept of an author – singular – as creator of a text’
(Stillinger v). Stillinger countered this tradition of regarding fictional creation as an isolated experience by pointing out that many texts that are considered to be written by one individual, are in fact the product of two, three or more influencing factors. The nature and range of such figures, both in the guise of explicit co-authors and more indirect ‘mediators’ (as I will call them), is varied and wide, as Stillinger states: ‘a work may be the collaborative product of the nominal author and a friend, a spouse, a ghost, an agent, an editor, a translator, a publisher, a censor, a transcriber, a printer, or – what is more often the case – several of these acting together or in succession’ (v). Stillinger’s theory expands on the point that Jerome McGann made in his 1983 volume A Critique of Modern Textual Criticism, in which he favoured ‘a socialized concept of authorship and textual authority,’ while arguing against theoretical traditions that ‘so emphasize the autonomy of the isolated author as to distort our theoretical grasp of “the mode of existence of a literary work of art” (a mode of existence which is fundamentally social rather than personal)’ (8). Stillinger shares McGann’s concern about existing approaches to literature, and more specifically, the author:

Most theories of interpretation and editing are based on the idea of a single author ... as sole controlling intelligence in a work. We routinely refer to a single authorial mind, or personality, or consciousness to validate “meaning” or “authority”; where others besides the normal author have a share in the creation of a text, we usually ignore that share or else call it corruption and try to get rid of it. (vi)

The author as the centre of author-ity (the very word reflects his dominant status) underpins even the most revered or discussed literary theories. Michel Foucault’s ‘author function’ (as explained in his 1969 lecture and essay ‘What is an Author?’) for example, though in effect disembodying the writer (following Nietzsche and Barthes’s claim that the Author is dead), is still based on the idea of an implicit single author operating as an agent that controls and shapes the chaos of possible meanings of a text:

The author allows a limitation of the cancerous and dangerous proliferation of significations within a world where one is thrifty not only with one’s resources and riches, but also with one’s discourses and their significations. The author is the principle of thrift in the proliferation of meaning. (118)

One cannot help but wonder: how does the author function work when applied to a co-authored work? When two or more creators are involved in the production of one text, each party’s name brings with it its own set of implications, and the author function becomes blurred. Seth Whidden agrees: ‘Collaborative texts, like quilted novels, make the reader vulnerable to heterogeneity and indeterminacy, and, by obscuring who wrote what, they prevent the reader from limiting the text’s sense’ (73).
While I follow Stillinger’s view of a wide interpretation of the concept of multiple authorship, my study is not limited to the type of cases that are specifically discussed in his book, the instances that interestingly explore ‘the joint, or composite, or collaborative production of literary works that we usually think of as written by a single author’ (v). Examples of such texts as expounded on by Stillinger, are Wordsworth’s *Prelude*, John Stuart Mill’s *Autobiography* and ‘Pound’s’ (as he boldly re-attributes it) *Waste Land*. In his study, Stillinger re-examines these canonical works by taking into account the far-reaching influence of spouses (Harriet Mill1), friends and fellow writers (Pound and Coleridge). This dissertation includes Stillinger’s approach, but equally aims to extend the scope of the research by looking at a variety of types of collaboration (rather than merely the instances where singular authorship is called into question when external authorial influences on the text are considered): explicit (signed) and anonymous, dual and collective, pseudonymous, and even posthumous.

Since the publication of McGann and Stillinger’s theories, a number of other critics have followed suit. Articles and books on co-authorship have begun to open up a conversation about examples of authorship that give the lie to the myth of solitary genius. For example, Lisa Ede and Andrea A. Lunsford (co-authors themselves) have confirmed the persistence of the solitary view of writing, pointing out that ‘the individualist frame of traditional authorship is almost universally accepted as the only valid choice’ (359). In an attempt to contradict this deep-rooted notion, M. Thomas Inge claimed that ‘[a]ll discourse is constructed’, given that texts

> are the result of any number of discourses that take place among the writer, the political and social environments in which the writing occurs, the aesthetic and economic pressures that encourage the process, the psychological and emotional state of the writer, and the reader who is expected to receive or consume the end product when it reaches print. (623)

Inge moreover points the finger at editors who ‘perpetuate veneration for the myth of the solitary writer and for the effort to rescue that writer from the suspected corruptions of commerce and collaboration’ (628).

Inge here echoes Stillinger’s remark that audiences feel the need to ‘get rid of’ any type of external influence, other than the person who is labelled as the sole author of a work. Products of co-authorship often fell prey to this practice, which Lorraine York has termed an urge to ‘parse the collaboration’ (2006 292). As some of the cases discussed in the following chapters will show, multiple authorship was habitually surrounded by an

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1 In her volume on Victorian literary couples, *Parallel Lives*, Phyllis Rose points to ‘Mill’s insistence that virtually everything published in his name was Harriet’s as much as his,’ reiterating the author’s claim that it was ‘of little consequence which of them h[eld] the pen’ (127-128).
aura of amateurism. Bette London relates the common stance that ‘as instances of authorship, these partnerships could not be taken entirely seriously’ (9). Moreover, she notes, ‘there was a persistent undercurrent that collaborative writing was ultimately apprenticeship for some future apotheosis where the author would be singular’ (London 9). This hypothesis is granted a certain degree of credibility by instances of multiple authorship in which the partnership’s constituent halves discontinue their joint effort in favour of singular publication, as in the case of Emily and Dorothea Gerard. Under the pseudonym of ‘E. D. Gerard’, these sisters co-wrote four novels between 1879 and 1886, before continuing to pursue separate writing careers. Here, as London argues, co-authorship functioned as a ‘stepping-stone’ towards the dominant, accepted form of literary production (94). However, the abundance of authorial partnerships that formed the essence, rather than a sidetrack, of the co-authors’ careers counters the idea that collaboration could only ever be an amateur affair that writers dallied in before maturing towards a serious, singular career.

The concept of authors working together, as Marjorie Stone and Judith Thompson have highlighted in Literary Couplings: Writing Couples, Collaborators, and the Construction of Authorship (2006) ‘blur[s] boundaries of authorship’ (7), thus causing confusion about authorial identity and the relation of the writer to the text. Collaboration entails a threat of fragmentation of the author, as Wayne Koestenbaum observes in Double Talk: The Erotics of Male Literary Collaboration (1989): ‘[b]ecause a collaborative text depicts the author in nervous crisis (breaking down, splitting in two), double writing is a symptom of the monolithic author’s decline’ (8). Multiple authorship therefore upsets critics’ theories of reception and interpretation of the literary work, resulting in the previously mentioned urge to separate out the individual authors in the partnership. Moreover, as Stone and Thompson remark, ‘collaborative authorship has traditionally been marginalized within literary histories’ (4). Resisting immediate categorization in terms of traditional authorship, products of collective creation are pushed to the margins of literary criticism. Where the individual author cannot be retrieved from the tangles of the jointly written text, the co-authored work is often simply ignored, brushed over or discarded as inferior in quality and intrinsically amateuristic. As Ede and Lunsford rightly note, it should not be forgotten that ‘during wartime, “collaboration” was a punishable offense’ (363). The sentiment is echoed by Koestenbaum: ‘Double writers bear the stain of the word’s political meaning: the sense lingers that they, like collaborators in Vichy France, have compromised themselves, have formed new and

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2 Remarkably, like Michael Field (whose case will be discussed in the following chapters), the sisters chose a singular (and if not outrightly masculine, at least gender-neutral) pseudonym under which they published their jointly composed novels, betraying a certain wariness about admitting to the collaborative origin of their work.
unhealthy allegiances, and have betrayed trusts’ (8). Those who engage in the practice of multiple authorship in the literary field may not be put to trial in the manner that wartime collaborators were, but they are, in many cases, ousted from the centre of the literary field (they may even be literally banished from society, as my discussion of Henry James’s short story ‘Collaboration’ in Chapters 3 and 4 will show).

As mentioned above, this long-reigning conviction that ‘one writer’s healthy individual style must be protected from infection by another’s’ (Masten 342) has unvaryingly led critics and readers to attempt to dissect the partnership into its constituent parts. Jeffrey A. Masten, reflecting on the urge to ask ‘the author question’ (343), explains how the aura of amateurism that surrounds co-authorship has resulted in the popular practice of its deconstruction:

Traditionally, criticism has viewed collaboration as a mere subset or aberrant kind of individual authorship, the collusion of two unique authors whom subsequent readers could discern and separate out by examining the traces of individuality and personality (including handwriting, spelling, word-choice, imagery, and syntactic formations) left in the collaborative text’ (341).

To many collaborating authors themselves, of course, the author question formed a cause of frustration. Lorraine York, in Rethinking Women’s Collaborative Writing (2002), cites Edith Somerville, half of the writing duo Somerville and Ross (which she formed together with her cousin Violet Martin), in pointing out the audience’s unremitting desire to disentangle the collaboration: ‘how abhorrent is to me all the senseless curiosity as to “which held the pen”,’ she sighed (2002 89). As I will demonstrate in Chapter 2, Katherine Bradley and Edith Cooper, who wrote together under the pseudonym of Michael Field, felt equally exasperated when pressed by (often well-meaning) readers and friends to divulge who wrote what. However, other authors that engaged in collaborative composition held quite a different stance in the matter. These were writers who, remarkably, joined in the practice, popular with their critics and editors, of parsing or even denying the collaboration. William Wordsworth, for example, ‘was deeply uncomfortable with the idea that partnership or collaboration of any kind should form part of his public identity,’ preferring ‘the projection of a coherent poetic self, which required the absorption, not the acknowledged participation, of others’ (Levy 66). Hence, though Coleridge claimed that the Preface to the Lyrical Ballads was ‘half a child of [his] own Brain’ (qtd. in Hickey 129), Wordsworth failed to avow his debt to him in his published pages. As will become apparent in my argument about Dickens’s role as collaborator in the Christmas numbers of his magazines, Boz equally felt compelled, especially in later years, to cancel out all strange influences on his texts.

This dissertation interacts to a certain extent with the theory that Pierre Bourdieu put forward in his influential Field of Cultural Production (1993). In his theoretical model, Bourdieu distinguishes between various types of ‘capital’, including economic capital,
cultural capital, social capital and – most pertinent to the study of authorship – symbolic capital, which ‘refers to degree of accumulated prestige, celebrity, consecration or honour and is founded on a dialectic of knowledge (connaissance) and recognition (reconnaissance)’ (7). However, the symbolic capital of authors who move in the field of cultural production also intersects with their respective economic capital, and the two may exert a mutual influence on each other. For instance, as my evaluation of Michael Field’s situation in Chapter 4 will show, greater economic capital facilitates the circumstances of writing and consequently creates more chances to increase symbolic capital. Economic capital here disperses the need to ‘devote time and energy to secondary, “bread-and-butter” activities’ (Bourdieu 68). Dickens, on the other hand, exemplifies how growing symbolic capital (‘making a name for oneself’ (Bourdieu 75)) may lead to greater economic capital when readership and popularity increase, resulting in the confluence of prestige with commercial value.

Bourdieu’s theory evokes a concept that will carry significant importance in this dissertation, namely that of ‘mediation’ of the author by external factors. Bourdieu argues that a work is always a product of the entire field, rather than just one individual:

[T]he sociology of art and literature ... has to consider as contributing to production not only the direct producers of the work in its materiality (artist, writer, etc.) but also the producers of the meaning and value of the work – critics, publishers, gallery directors and the whole set of agents whose combined efforts produce consumers capable of knowing and recognizing the work of art as such.

(37)

Such artistic mediators give meaning not only to the work but also to its originator: they engage in a ‘collective invention which results in the post of writer or artist,’ raising the question ‘who is the true producer of the value of the work – the painter or the dealer, the writer or the publisher, the playwright or the theatre manager?’ (Bourdieu 63, 76). All types of artistic creation, including the production of literature, are thus intrinsically social, as Bourdieu states: ‘the “subject” of the production of the art-work – of its value but also of its meaning – is not the producer who actually creates the object in its materiality, but rather the entire set of agents engaged in the field’ (261). Paradoxically, the same mediating agents in the literary field that accumulate to construct the significance of a work through ‘the effect of social alchemy’ (Bourdieu 191) are also the ones that uphold the image of the author as a solitary genius, through repeated sanctification of the individual creator, who is granted ever more symbolic capital.

Bourdieu’s view of symbolic capital as an unevenly distributed commodity in the field of cultural production raises interesting questions when it is applied to the phenomenon of multiple authorship: how is this type of capital divided when the
authorship of a work is shared? What happens when the partners that engage in collaboration carry a significantly different amount of symbolic capital? For example, as the case of Dickens and his contributors to the Christmas numbers will exemplify, a writer with more symbolic capital may attract or seek out one or more co-authors that possess notably less prestige. How then does the collaborative effort affect the position of these authors as agents in the metaphorical field, and consequently their accumulated symbolic capital? As I will discuss in Chapter 2, the effect may be twofold. While ‘weaker’ authors might hope to gain distinction by linking their name to Dickens’s (an expectation that is not always met by reality), the ‘stronger’ author’s reputation could equally be affected, or at least his supporters may fear so. The established writer’s symbolic capital is here threatened by the aura of amateurism that surrounds multiple authorship. As a result, anxiety about such ‘bad influence’ tainting Dickens’s reputation has compelled many editors to attempt to ‘rescue’ the iconic author from the collaboration by parsing out his own share in the text and discarding the work of his contributors.

Bourdieu’s idea that ‘artists and intellectuals depend for their self-image upon the image others, and particularly other writers and artists, have of them’ is reflected in the degree of mediation that authors, including co-authors, undergo (116). Biographies such as Elizabeth Gaskell’s *Life of Charlotte Brontë* try to redeem their subject’s posthumous reputation, but collaborative partners may be equally influential. For example, the same Charlotte Brontë (as I will argue in the following chapter) inserted herself as posthumous co-author in her sister Emily’s work in order to mould the latter’s image into a more acceptable version. Dickens’s framing and reworking of his contributors’ stories (as discussed in Chapters 2 and 3) ensured that they were presented in the manner that best suited the editor’s own interest: once more, the co-authors’ image is mediated through the impact of collaboration. Finally, the circulation of manuscripts in the circle around Leigh Hunt (considered in Chapter 4) shows how a coterie of befriended poets can alter and inspire the contents of its members’ work, and thus help shape poetic identity.

Many – not to say most – of the studies that have been conducted on multiple authorship have examined cases of collaboration between duos or couples, who were often involved in both a professional and a sexual relationship. Feminist and queer studies have discovered in such cases a particularly fertile research topic, since questions related to the nature of multiple authorship often intersect with matters of gender and sexuality (as I will also discuss in depth in the following chapter). Examples of such analyses are, for instance, Phyllis Rose’s *Parallel Lives: Five Victorian Marriages* (1985) and Whitney Chadwick and Isabelle de Courtivron’s *Significant Others: Creativity and Intimate Partnership* (1993). Even more specifically, critics have often focussed on same-sex partnerships. Koestenbaum’s volume on male collaboration, published in 1989, provides an early example of scholarly interest in literary partnerships and their erotic
implications in particular, as the title of *Double Talk: The Erotics of Male Literary Collaboration* makes obvious. In the years that followed Koestenbaum’s publication, attention for female co-authors grew exponentially, resulting in a number of scholarly studies on the subject. York argues in *Rethinking Women’s Collaborative Writing* that one of the principal motivations for female collaboration was to offer ‘a complementary resistance [sic] to Romanticism’s construction of the author as particular male types: Byronic wanderer, possessed visionary, calm meditative gentleman musing amidst nature’ (2002 69). Jill R. Ehnenn, in *Women’s Literary Collaboration, Queerness, and Late-Victorian Culture* (2008), equally interprets female collaboration as a revolutionary move, noting how for the fin-de-siècle female writing partners that she discusses, ‘collaborative life and work functioned as a discursive site of resistance’ in which they ‘redrew the boundaries of ideologies that they all seemed to find troubling: Cartesian definitions of subjectivity and solitary notions of creativity; industrial capitalism and alienated labor; and patriarchy and heterosexism’ (2). Ehnenn especially emphasizes the erotic undertones of female collaboration, which offers the idea of women ‘living and working in an erotic, brainy dance fuelled by the adrenaline of shared intimacy and intellectual *jouissance*’ (2). Both London’s *Writing Double* (1999) and Holly A. Laird’s *Women Coauthors* (2000) continue the trend of feminist and queer appropriation of co-authorship between women, with Laird stressing the role of orality in collaboration: ‘Literary collaborators blur the boundary not only between each other in writing, but between text and speech, between a text and its writerly contexts’ (267). The importance of conversation in creating fictional worlds is applicable not only to female partners, but also to co-authors in general, as my discussion of collaboration in, for example, the Brontë household or the Savile Club, will confirm. London, in turn, extends the interest of her book to include more elusive forms of co-authorship in the guise of ghostwriting and mediumship, the latter of which is illustrated by the case of Somerville and Ross. Edith Somerville’s insistence that, through automatic writing, she carried on writing ‘with’ Violet Martin (the result of which she also continued to publish under their double pseudonym) ‘cast[s] doubt on the partnership’s earlier professionalism and ensur[es] its lasting reputation as a cultural curiosity’, as London points out (117). Once more, collaboration is labelled (arguably by the authors’ own doing) as amateuristic and bizarre.

Moving beyond the hetero- or homosexual couple (though they do include instances of such partnerships in their book), Stone and Thompson’s *Literary Couplings* equally comprises a discussion of family members writing together. Their sketches of the labour done by (often implicit) co-authors such as Dorothy Wordsworth and Sara Coleridge interestingly show how certain forms of collaboration work to foreground explicitly one of the partners, while the impact of (in these cases) the women behind the scenes remains largely unacknowledged. Here, as Stone and Thompson rightly observe, the collaboration in fact serves to enforce the idea of the visible author as a solitary genius,
a phenomenon that leads them to wonder: ‘[i]f individuality is coproduced, how individual is it?’ (126). This particular brand of mediation through and by a co-authoring sibling is further explored by Michelle Levy in her volume on *Family Authorship and Romantic Print Culture*. Levy, stressing ‘the signal role that the family played in the literary field’ argues that ‘many Romantic-era authors simply do not conform to the image of the self-communing poet’ (2, 170). Building on the tradition of coterie manuscript culture, the cases of family authorship that she includes in her discussion evidence how siblings continued to influence each other’s writing in the age of print culture. However, while Levy concludes that ‘the close of the Romantic period’ also meant a ‘limit of the phenomenon’ of family authorship (165), my discussion of the Brontës’ collaboration (which lasted throughout their formative and adult years) provides evidence that sibling writing was still practised even decades later.

Other scholars have extended the scope of their research to contain an analysis of the broader networks of authorial influence. While these studies often include subsets of co-authoring partners, their authors’ view of multiple authorship does reach beyond that of the couple. Examples of such an approach include Daisy Hay’s *Young Romantics: The Shelleys, Byron and Other Tangled Lives* (2010) and Jeffrey N. Cox’s *Poetry and Politics in the Cockney School: Keats, Shelley, Hunt and their Circle* (1998), both of which interestingly deal with the same network of Romantic writers, thus proving that the period in which the myth of the solitary genius gained full force at the same time engendered far-reaching authorial collaboration.

The work published by scholars and critical editors such as Chadwick and de Courtivron, Ehnnenn, Laird and Koestenbaum evidences how research about multiple authorship has often been led by a dominant interest in the sexual aspect of the partnership. For example, in the case of Chadwick and de Courtivron’s *Significant Others*, discussion is limited, as they explicitly state, to couples ‘who have shared a sexual as well as creative partnership,’ such as Auguste Rodin and Camille Claudel or Vanessa Bell and Duncan Grant (9). Though there are ample examples of such collaborations between sexually linked duos, limiting the range of my research to those instances would, in my opinion, do away with the richness and variety of guises that multiple authorship can take on, including but also expanding beyond the romantic couple. Koestenbaum, as already stated, follows Chadwick and de Courtivron’s suit, in choosing to only discuss the homosocial and homosexual implications of literary partnerships, as he explains in his introduction: ‘[l]ooking at a variety of specimens of “double talk,” I apply to each the same paradigm, which is, bluntly stated, that men who collaborate engage in a metaphorical sexual intercourse, and that the text they balance between them is alternately the child of their sexual union, and a shared woman’ (3). Moreover, Koestenbaum gives preference to texts that are explicitly labelled as being double-authored: ‘[a] text is most precisely and satisfyingly collaborative if it is composed by two writers who admit the act by placing both of their names on the title page’ (2). This
assertion betrays the fetish with the author’s name, inherited from decades of literary criticism that placed the author on a pedestal (a trend that was – and still is – reflected in the continuing interest in the historical figure of the writer). Koestenbaum’s approach certainly limits to a great extent the number of cases that can be considered under the heading of multiple authorship. For example, it does not allow for anonymous (or unascribed) or pseudonymous instances of co-authorship. What is more, Koestenbaum also admits to looking for a power imbalance in every case of double writing that he discusses:

I find, however, that one writer in a team captures my sympathies more entirely: I enter the mind of the writer who keenly feels lack or disenfranchisement, and seeks out a partner to attain power and completion. Approaching the text, I ask how this writer’s wish for a partner infused the work eventually composed; I let his sought-after collaborator remain a shadowy, aloof figure, and I inquire less assiduously into this second man’s motives (2).

Here, Koestenbaum assumes that the motivation for collaborative efforts always stems from a weaker author ‘seeking out’ a mentor or stronger figure to enhance his own talent. This interpretation not only presupposes that co-authorship always starts with a one-sided cry for help (discarding the possibility of authors being mutually drawn to a literary union), but also presupposes that co-authorship is unvaryingly the consequence of a deliberate plan, starting with an invitation to write together (which fails to consider the possibility of joint authorship developing organically, as in the case of the Brontës, for example). As Whidden notes, this approach equally forecloses the occurrence of what he terms ‘collaboration in absentia’, which denotes an impulse to react to another author or their work, connecting the new text to its inspiration. More specifically, Whidden cites the opportunity that collaboration offers for the creation of parody (as evidenced by practices of collaborative pastiche in the Savile Club, see Chapter 3): ‘freed from the direct identification with a monolithic author, the collaborative text – be it in praesentia or in absentia – creates enhanced liberties for parody’ (85). I would add another form of collaboration in absentia to those identified by Whidden and equally excluded from Koestenbaum’s definition, namely that of posthumous collaboration, which is exemplified in Somerville and Ross’s ‘ghost partnership’ as well as Charlotte Brontë’s insertion of herself in the work of her deceased sister, which will be discussed in Chapter 2.
1.2 A History of Multiple Authorship

As the abovementioned studies by McGann, Stillinger and the other scholars that took up their views of social and multiple authorship have established, the idea of the author as a solitary genius is easily waylaid upon consideration of the many instances of writers engaging in collective projects. My next aim is to position the nineteenth-century cases of collaboration that will be discussed in the following three chapters in a historical context of co-authorship. As will become apparent, the concept of multiple authorship is not one that can only and exclusively be applied to nineteenth-century examples of shared writing. However, the reason why I have isolated this period as the focal point of my dissertation is well-considered, and moves beyond the obvious lack of space that compels any researcher to select a number of case studies that serve to represent a specific concept or theory. My feeling was (and is) that a study of this scope might be most effective if it selected its objects of research from the era in which the myth that it attempts to deflate reigned supreme. Since Stillinger and others have agreed that the veneration for the singular Author stems largely from the Romantic concept of the writer as genius, I thought it fitting to situate my research during the Romantic period and the era that followed and reflected it (through its implementation of the literary constructions, like that of the solitary genius, that had been established by the Romantics). Moreover, the industrial revolution and its subsequent impact on the press, the distribution of goods and the booming of consumerism ensured that the image of the iconic single author not only survived, but thrived during the Victorian age: never before was the historical figure of the writer awarded such a large amount of attention. This dissertation sheds light on the co-authors that often stood in the shadow of those who were granted a position in the spotlight.

Once the hegemonic view of the author as a lone individual is shed, it becomes apparent that multiple authorship is really a widespread phenomenon that pervades all ages of literature. Martha Woodmansee and Peter Jaszi, in their introduction to The Construction of Authorship: Textual Appropriation in Law and Literature (1994) have asserted, that ‘the author in this modern sense’ (meaning ‘an individual who is the sole creator of unique “works”’) ‘is a relatively recent invention,’ claiming moreover ‘that it does not closely reflect contemporary writing practices. Indeed, on inspection, it is not clear that this notion ever coincided closely with the practice of writing’ (15). Koestenbaum, 3

3 Of course, the list of historical examples of co-authorship that follows is anything but exhaustive. Rather, the cases that are highlighted here are representative of the practice in general, standing for both the instances of multiple authorship that are remembered to this day, and the doubtless many collaborations that have sunk into obscurity over time.
retracing the origins of co-authorship all the way back to antiquity, argues: ‘[i]f I were to write an inclusive history of male double writing, I would begin with Platonic dialogues – implicit collaborations with Socrates’ (12). The term ‘dialogue’ is key in all considerations of collective creation, which should always take into account the oral aspect that precedes the co-authored text. In the case of folkloric tales, their orality even counts as the defining feature. Orally transmitted stories are intrinsically collaborative, changing as they do over time, since each retelling alters the previous version of the story. Thus, every new narrator automatically becomes another co-author in what Jaszi would term a ‘serial’ collaboration (40). Hence, folkloric works have proven to pose a direct challenge to the myth of the solitary genius, since they ‘cannot be reimagined as products of solitary, originary “authorship” on the part of one or more discrete and identifiable “authors”’ (Jaszi 38). The phenomenon of folkloric collaboration indicates that even before the advent of print, instances of multiple authorship can be discerned. Just one such example is the case of the medieval monks who meticulously copied out manuscripts and enhanced them with their illuminations. Once again, the monk, as a new player on the scene of writing, becomes a co-creator of the text as product.

In early modern times, communal writing acquired an ever more prominent role. As Margaret Ezell describes in Social Authorship and the Advent of Print (1999), it became common practice to circulate manuscripts among a coterie of friends and acquaintances, a habit that resulted in the creation of a ‘network of verse exchange’ (31). That the interactive element in this custom of sharing texts was great is exemplified by the many occasional poems that were ‘addressed to friends’ or ‘written in response to reading the poetry of others’ (Ezell 31, 32). The manuscript accordingly acquired the status of ‘a fluid text constantly subject to change’ by the different hands through which it passed and consequently ‘the role of the reader of manuscript text be[ame] conflated with the roles of editing, correcting, or copying the text and extending its circulation of readers’ (Ezell 40). Fiction thus grew to be an enhanced form of correspondence, reflecting on the page the real-life relationships that existed between members of a certain network. Particularly popular were the so-called ‘commonplace books’ which were ‘compiled over a period of time, with changes in ink, handwriting, and presentation, with heterogeneous contents’ (Ezell 25). The habit of gathering contributions for this type of collections, moreover, was still popular in later centuries, as is illustrated by the example of Sarah and Thomasine Leigh, a pair of sisters that collected verses from various Romantic poets in their network (including Leigh
Hunt, John Keats and John Hamilton Reynolds (Cox 68)). Woodmansee further explains how commonplace books ‘were the notebooks, so to speak, in which one both transcribed writings by others which held some special significance and collected compositions of one’s own – usually without a governing plan or arrangement and without attribution. Sometimes even the compiler of these “books” remained anonymous’ (27). Of course, it is not hard to imagine that with a text that scrambles excerpts of which the origin is not credited, the attribution of authority at once becomes obscure. In an age that was not yet familiar with the idea of the Author as the centripetal force of the work, there was little concern about the fact that compositions of various origins would come together in an anonymous jumble of words. Furthermore, as Ezell remarks, the circulation of manuscripts for a coterie public also allowed women to take part in the production of discourse: ‘the manuscript text operates as a medium of social exchange, often between the sexes, neither private nor public in the conventional sense of the terms, and a site at which women could and did comment on public issues concerning social and political matters’ (40).

Nevertheless, even texts of the period that have survived under the name of a specific author evoke, upon closer consideration, a complication of their ownership. Perhaps the most prominent example of the early modern era is that of Shakespeare, who has been the subject of repeated debates on the true authorship of his writings. Renaissance drama in general, moreover, proves an interesting case for the discussion of multiple authorship. As Masten notes:

[The construction of meaning by a theatrical company was polyvocal – often beginning with a collaborative manuscript, which was then revised, cut, rearranged and augmented by prompters, copyists, and other writers, elaborated and improvised by actors in performance, accompanied by music and songs that may or may not have originated in a completely different context. (339)]

McGann quotes Samuel Johnson’s exasperated comment on the ‘mediated texts’ (17) of Shakespeare’s work. Johnson observed that Shakespeare sold his plays

not to be printed, but to be played. They were immediately copied for the actors, and multiplied by transcript after transcript, vitiated by the blunders of the penman, or changed by the affectation of the player; perhaps enlarged to introduce a jest, or mutilated to shorten the representation; and printed at last without the concurrence of the authour [sic], without the consent of the

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4 The habit of keeping a scrapbook or friendship album continues even into the present age, as a highly popular occupation for children (but also for hobbyists and for travellers who want to collect memorabilia of their journey).
Johnson, writing even before the advent of the Romantics and their individualisation of the author, already seemed to be motivated by an urge to protect the original author and his oeuvre from contamination by his mediators’ influences on the text. Collaborative in the stricter sense of the term were the plays of Francis Beaumont and John Fletcher, whose names are so closely interlinked that literary history has almost always mentioned them in one breath. Masten describes how even this early example of collaboration has been subjected to dissection, with critics such as Cyros Hoy attempting to ‘separate out the collaborators’. As Masten notes, ‘there is a repeated conflict in Hoy’s project between his post-Enlightenment assumptions about authorship, textual property, and individuality of style, and the evidence of the period texts he analyzes’ (341). The urge to parse the collaboration, so widespread in the era of the singular author’s hegemony, was thus equally applied, in hindsight, to works that were created prior to the ascent of the writer as solitary genius.

Addison and Steele’s co-authored Spectator (1711-1712) continues the custom of literary partnering into the early eighteenth century. Remarkably, despite its short lifespan, the paper reached a popularity that lasted into the late eighteenth and nineteenth century. Like Beaumont and Fletcher’s, Addison and Steele’s collaboration proved that multiple authorship, before the notion of the singular author became ingrained, could produce great successes, without being automatically associated with amateurism and marginality. By contrast, the final decades of the century produced an interesting case of posthumous authorial mediation that betrays the rise of the author as literary icon, in James Boswell’s Life of Samuel Johnson. Johnson himself, as Woodmansee notes, acted out the ‘corporate … view of writing’ (17), ghostwriting for others and collecting material from various sources for the works that were published under his own name. Woodmansee argues that Lives of the Poets, for example, ‘was the product not of the solitary originary mode of composition whose myth it helped to foster, but of fruitful collaboration between Johnson, the poets he immortalized, the London booksellers – and countless others’ (18). Ironically, Johnson’s work, instrumental in solidifying the iconic status of the poets that he discussed, was itself a result of dispersed authorship. Johnson as ‘author in th[e] modern sense’ is to a great extent ‘Boswell’s making,’ created by the image that the latter chose to paint of his friend in the Life, and for which he did not shy away from adapting or censoring his subject’s words (Woodmansee 23).

The eighteenth century also saw the rise of an institution that would encourage and reflect the socialized nature of authorship. As Peter Quennell notes in the introduction to the essay collection Genius in the Drawing-Room, this era was the ‘Golden Age’ of the salons, many of which were held in the living rooms of Parisian bourgeois homes, where
the presiding ‘Madames’ ‘attracted admirers from all over Europe’ (10). Quennell and his co-essayists trace the custom into the nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, noting how the salons hosted by women such as Lady Blessington (an author herself) and Lady Holland managed to attract a host of literary (as well as political and artistic) men to their meetings, including Bulwer, Dickens and Thackeray. Though informal, these gatherings were anything but frivolous in content, as Prudence Hannay notes: ‘[t]he Blessington salon was accepted almost as a literary club for editors, journalists, and publishers,’ uniting the most critical minds of the age (30). More than just providing an opportunity for authors, artists and other prominent figures of the age to meet and exchange ideas, the salons also resulted in concrete products of literary output. Lady Blessington’s guests ‘repaid their hostess’s kindness with contributions to her annuals’ (Hannay 32). The volumes of the Book of Beauty and The Keepsake that were edited by the socialite thus became collaborative nosegays of fictional texts, many of which were written by the literati that attended Lady Blessington’s salon.

Of course, a crucial turning point in the history of authorship – and by extension in the manner in which collective writing was regarded – was the ‘heroic self-presentation of Romantic poets’ (Woodmansee and Jaszi 3) that arose at the end of the eighteenth century. On the cusp between an age in which family authorship and the private circulation of manuscripts among members of an extended coterie were still prominently present and the era of ‘industrial literature’ (as Charles-Auguste Sainte-Beuve termed it in his 1839 essay) that saw the exponential rise of print, the Romantics played up the notion of the author as a ‘secular prophet with privileged access to experience of the numinous and a unique ability to translate that experience for the masses of less gifted consumers’ (Woodmansee and Jaszi 3). Masten points out how new developments in the eighteenth-century literary field (and culture and society in general) contributed to the growing sense of individuality: ‘the presumed universality of individuated style depends on a network of legal and social technologies specific to a post-Renaissance capitalist culture (for example, intellectual property, copyright, individuated handwriting)’ (342). The cases of multiple authorship that are discussed in the following chapters effectively waylay the privileged position of the author as solitary genius.

Moving beyond the nineteenth century, it becomes apparent that the era that followed the Victorian age continued to spawn ample instances of authors interacting and engaging in literary partnerships (despite and alongside the continuing reign of the singular Author). Against the backdrop of London and Parisian metropolitan life, modernist authors and artists gathered to set up a new kind of ‘family’ or coterie, forming circles of likeminded spirits that met in spaces that have themselves become iconic through their association with the literary factions that peopled them. Certainly one of the most illustrious examples is the group that lived and worked in and around London’s Bloomsbury Square. To a certain extent, the circle continued the trend of
family collaboration (which extended, in the case of the Bloomsbury group, across the arts), since it boasted all of the Stephen children (Virginia Woolf, Vanessa Bell and their two brothers Thoby and Adrian, all of whom had been accustomed to co-creation from childhood, when they worked together to produce the family journal called *Hyde Park Gate News* – a pastime that is reminiscent of the Brontës’ juvenile magazines, which will be discussed in the following chapters), though the family was extended to create an elaborate modernist network that included not only the Stephen siblings, but also their partners and friends. However, perhaps the most discussed instance of authorial collaboration that the modernist era produced was a work that was created by two American expats, though it appeared under only one name: T. S. Eliot’s *The Waste Land* (1922). Famously, Ezra Pound executed a thorough edition (in some places even a re-writing) of Eliot’s manuscript, that greatly impacted on the text as it was published. Eliot, obviously aware of his debt to Pound, acknowledged the fact by scribbling a dedication to Pound in the copy that he presented to his friend: ‘For Ezra Pound / il miglior fabbro’, a quote from Dante’s *Purgatorio* that magnanimously attributes his friend with being ‘the better craftsman’. The dedication was subsequently printed in Eliot’s collection of *Poems 1909-1925*, and henceforth in all later editions of the poem (Stillinger 131). As Stillinger has noted, Pound was instrumental in excising the superfluous text of Eliot’s manuscript: ‘it took one poetic genius to create those 434 lines in the first place, and another to get rid of the several hundred inferior lines surrounding and obscuring them’ (128). F. Scott Fitzgerald rendered a similar service for Ernest Hemingway, when he suggested that he cut the entire first two chapters of *The Sun Also Rises* (1926) in order to strengthen the novel’s argument. Fitzgerald, in turn, had himself benefited from his editor Max Perkins’s influence on the manuscript and title of what would become the epitome of the Great American Novel: *The Great Gatsby* (1925). Fitzgerald, who variously planned on calling his novel *Under the Red, White and Blue* or *Trimalchio in West Egg* before Perkins offered the more eloquent (and more sellable) alternative under which it was eventually published, acknowledged the editor’s impact in a letter: ‘Max, it amuses me when praise comes in on the “structure” of the book – because it was you who fixed up the structure, not me’ (qtd. in Inge 62). Remarkably, despite the fact that many authors, like Eliot and Fitzgerald, openly acknowledged the input of their collaborators, subsequent reception and criticism of these canonical works has always continued to foreground the author whose name was on the masterpiece’s cover, ignoring or at least downplaying the role of their helper.

The twentieth century also heralded the arrival of new forms of media, some of which, like film, were already introduced at the end of the Victorian age, but grew to know their heyday only in the new century. Modern popular culture, indeed, presents an interesting alternative to the habit of deification of the singular author that so affected the literary field. Both the film and music industries generate works that are intrinsically collaborative, and habitually credited as being so. Consequently, a producer
like Phil Spector (famous for his ‘wall of sound’ orchestrations) received equal, if not more acclaim than the actual singers, for the work that he did for, among others, a number of sixties girl groups such as The Ronettes and The Crystals. Popular music in general is mostly the result of a joint artistic effort, and has spawned a number of iconic collaborations, of which Simon and Garfunkel and Lennon and McCartney are only the most famous. In film, a title is the product of an entire team, a fact to which the credit roll testifies time and again: a director (or directors, when the function is doubled, for example in the works of Ethan and Joel Coen) cannot do without the input of his or her screenwriter(s), producer(s), actors, cinematographer, choreographer, set designer, composer and so on. All of these are acknowledged by their peers and presented with awards that once more stress, rather than obscure, the many hands that made one product. In literature, co-authorship is still practiced (think of the popular detectives written by ‘Nicci French’ – actually Nicci Gerrard and Sean French, a partnership between husband and wife), though it is anything but the norm. Modern literary criticism certainly continues to give preference to the solitary author. Perhaps the most successful collaborators in the literary field are the creators of comic books and graphic novels. In this instance, the partnership is often motivated by the fact that the medium demands both an illustrator and a writer to compose the narrative. Alan Moore and Dave Gibbons’s highly acclaimed graphic novel Watchmen, for example, is the result of a shared effort, with Moore acting as author of the narrative and Gibbons stepping in as artist. Both names occupy an equal spot on the graphic novel’s cover, stressing that neither could do without the other’s collaboration. Stan Lee and Steve Ditko’s creation for Marvel Comics, Spider-Man, offers another case of a comic book series that was the result of co-authorship, with both Lee and Ditko acting as writer, while the latter also took on the role of artist of the series. The Spider-Man saga was later continued by a host of other writers and illustrators belonging to the Marvel stall, who all inserted themselves as new (serial) co-authors into Lee and Ditko’s original creation.

Finally, the internet has emerged as perhaps the most elaborate (and hence hardest to delineate) platform against which co-authorship can develop. The internet certainly facilitates collaboration (for example, email can simplify the joint writing of academic articles and books, as well as fictional texts), yet at the same time it also makes it harder to trace who wrote what. Not only are sources for much of the text that is uploaded to the world wide web often lacking or unreliable, the internet is also a space that propagates anonymity. As Ezell has argued, while the web is an intrinsically social format that makes it easier for people to connect, it equally has a big impact on the elimination of some of the classic mediators between the writer and reader of a particular text: ‘[t]he Internet,’ Ezell notes, ‘creates a space for authorship without the intervening presence of editor, bookseller, printer, or advertising agent’ (5). None of these actors, once indispensable in the process of bringing written works to the audience, are essential for most cases of online publication. Moreover, texts on the web
are also much more mouldable, allowing the reader to interact directly with the author, and even change the text – in the process introducing him- or herself as co-author to the virtual work. The internet thus ‘offers a mode of authorship in which the author and reader can freely interact, with the possibility of creating a text that is an ongoing process of exchange rather than a commercial transaction’ (Ezell 5). This way, the reader, connected with the author through the world wide web, becomes a collaborator in a process that re-inserts online writing in the domain of social authorship.
1.3 Methodology and Aims of My Research

As my discussion of the research that has been conducted by previous scholars has indicated, critical writing on multiple authorship has approached the topic in various manners. Both McGann and Stillinger were specifically interested in countering the traditional view of solitary authorship. In the process, they provided illustrations of how canonical texts that have habitually been considered as the creative product of just one individual should be reinterpreted by taking into account the external mediators (other than the author whose name is assigned to the text) that affected or reshaped the work. The critics that followed in McGann and Stillinger’s footsteps have extended the scope of research about multiple authorship beyond the mere examination of texts that had the outward appearance of singular authority. A new strain in the discourse on collaboration developed, which saw especially feminist and queer scholars appropriate cases of explicit co-authorship (where the authors’ oeuvre was a result of a conscious joint venture) with the intention of revealing the implications of these partnerships in terms of gender and sexuality. These are the studies that showed a particular (not to say exclusive) interest in the erotics of communal writing, focussing their attention on the couple, and often more specifically on same-sex unions. Other researchers, as I have indicated, were chiefly concerned with collective creation in a group or family. In my view, the discussion of multiple authorship in the nineteenth century ought not to be restricted to any of the above trends. Rather, I aim to present in this dissertation an interpretation of shared authorship in the very broadest sense. I wish to include not only the seemingly singular texts (that were really the result of several minds) discussed by Stillinger, nor confine myself to a discourse that considers only the couple, or only the group or network of co-authors. Therefore, I have included in my analysis a variety of case studies that each represent different aspects and shapes of collaboration. Of course, I am limited by space constraints, so the instances of co-authorship that are discussed in the following chapters necessarily constitute only a ‘pars pro toto’ of the numerous examples of co-authorship that literary history boasts.

In order to carry out my research for this dissertation, I have combined several approaches with the purpose of sketching an overview of multiple authorship that lays bare not only its place in literary history and critical reception but also highlights the sociological and economic ramifications of the practice. By means of careful examination of primary sources that relate to co-authorship either explicitly or in a more veiled manner, I have traced how collaboration (and the authors’ stance towards it) can be retrieved in the pages of the jointly written text. This however does not entail that I have repeated the method, so popular with many past researchers, of trying to discern the co-authors’ separate share in the composition. Instead, a close reading of these primary works of collaborative fiction allowed for a better understanding of
authorial attitudes towards and motivations for engaging in shared writing. Examples of the type of primary sources that were submitted to scrutiny for this study include the Brontës’ juvenilia (more specifically, Charlotte and Branwell’s satirical magazines and other texts that pertained to the fantastic saga that they co-created), Michael Field’s jointly composed poetry and the Christmas numbers for Household Words and All the Year Round, which were co-written by Charles Dickens and his contributors. Taking into account the sociological facet of my enquiry into the implications of multiple authorship (including the repercussions that it almost inevitably had on the lives of its practitioners), I deemed it appropriate to enhance my analysis by exploring a variety of life writing, where it was extant for the co-authors that I investigate. Such biographical papers allowed me to glimpse not only the possible strategies and motivations for collaboration, but also the authors’ own estimation of their work, their response to the reception of their oeuvre by others, and background information about the circumstances in which the partnership unfolded. For these types of sources, not only those produced by the collaborators themselves, but also by the persons that wrote about them are of interest, since the latter betray how their co-authorship was perceived by the outside world. Concrete instances of the historical documents that were considered in this dissertation are letters (like those written by Dickens, the Fields or Charlotte Brontë), diaries (exemplified by the joint journal that Bradley and Cooper kept, as well as Emily and Anne Brontë’s episodic ‘diary papers’), memoirs (such as Leigh Hunt’s Lord Byron and Some of His Contemporaries and George Augustus Sala’s Things I Have Seen and People I Have Known) and (auto)biographies (like those composed by Harriet Martineau about herself or by Elizabeth Gaskell about Charlotte Brontë).

Furthermore, to build my argument I have made use of secondary sources (books and articles of which a selection has already been referred to earlier in this chapter), both on multiple authorship in general and on the specific authors discussed in my case studies. Additionally, several theoretical texts have served as a means to guide my interpretation of the specific characteristics of collaboration. Bourdieu’s work, as already stated, provides a suitable frame of reference against which to position, at least in part, the topic of my study and thus implicitly informs some of the arguments in my analysis. For example, his notion that a work of fiction is always a product of the entire field of cultural production, rather than only of the lone individual is echoed in the concept of mediation, which inspires much of my reasoning. Collaboration also brings into play the various amounts and different forms of capital that authors are endowed with, since the practice can affect (often in a negative way) a writer’s accumulation of both symbolic and economic capital. Furthermore, Judith Butler’s theory of performativity (which she expounded in her influential volume, Gender Trouble (1990)) has proven especially pertinent when applied to the gender games that Charlotte Brontë played in her collaborative creation with Branwell (and later in her mature works). Finally, McGann’s view of authorship as intrinsically social, combined with
Stillinger’s notion that the singular author was a mythological construct that belied the true nature of writing largely underpin this dissertation, though (as I mentioned before) their idea of what constitutes multiple authorship is here broadened to include a wider variety of cases.

The motivation for the choice of my case studies has already been hinted at in the previous sections of this chapter. In terms of the period that the selected instances of co-authorship span, I have previously confirmed that it was, to quote Bourdieu, ‘the professional ideology of the uncreated ‘creator’ which was developed during the nineteenth century’ (259) that urged me to select this era as the focal point of my dissertation. Of course, authors’ lives (and thus also the period of their literary activity) extend beyond the constraints of periodical denominations like that of the ‘Victorian’ age. Consequently, some of the co-authors that are considered in my dissertation may push the boundaries of the ‘nineteenth-century’ label that I have included in my title.

Bradley and Cooper, for example, continued to add to the oeuvre of Michael Field until their deaths in 1913 and 1914, while many members of the Savile Club, including H. Rider Haggard and Rudyard Kipling, carried on writing well into the twentieth century. The spatial delineation of my research topic is again motivated especially by the confining parameters of thesis writing. Certainly, there are numerous cases of noteworthy collaboration beyond Britain’s borders: a discussion of American co-authorship warrants a study of its own, but I am positive that instances of multiple authorship are universal and may be discovered just as well in foreign language literature of all ages. Once or twice, the spatial limitations of my research moreover become permeable to include an author that is not ‘British’ in the strictest sense, but nonetheless carries strong affiliations with the territory. Accordingly, I have included an analysis of Henry James’s short story ‘Collaboration’ which, though written by an American novelist, was inspired by the London society that the expat James lived and breathed at the time, and where he would have discovered among his literati friends (many of which he met at the Savile Club) ample inspiration for a story about co-authorship. Furthermore, in the process of selecting the case studies that would be considered in this study, I have resolved to reflect a broad spectrum of nineteenth-century literature. I have chosen to examine instances of both male and female co-authors, with some of these working together in same-sex partnerships (as is exemplified by the cases of Michael Field or the members of the Savile Club) and others collaborating across the gender divide (like the young Charlotte and Branwell Brontë or Dickens and his female contributors). The case studies moreover span the entire period, from pre-Victorian Romantic sociability as practiced by the circle around Leigh Hunt over mid-century collaboration by the Brontë siblings and Dickens and his colleagues, to the fin-de-siècle Aestheticism of the Fields and Savilian club sociability. The chosen examples of multiple authorship also reflect how the custom can be traced in various
types of literature, including works of collaborative prose, poetry, drama and journalistic fiction.

By means of the analysis of the selected case studies, this dissertation aims to provide answers to a number of queries surrounding the practice of collective writing. In broad terms, my discussion serves to confirm the debunking of the myth of the author as solitary genius, in favour of a more social view on nineteenth-century authorship. More specifically however, this study enquires into the precise characteristics and implications of the joint literary effort. For example, this thesis attempts to formulate an answer to the question of the possible motivations that urged authors to strike up a partnership (an issue for which it will prove difficult to provide an unequivocal answer, since the initiation of a collaboration may not always have been the result of a conscious decision). My research will furthermore highlight how multiple authorship has often had to battle prejudices that were informed by the aura of amateurism that surrounded collective writing, as well as attempt to lay the finger on the forces, both internal and external to the partnership, that threatened to complicate the collaboration, but also other factors that stimulated joint composition. More precisely, my investigation will reveal how concepts such as authorial rivalry, issues of gender and identity and physical surroundings all combined to impact on the shared production of fiction. Apart from these sociological parameters, this dissertation also engages, somewhat indirectly, with the economic aspect of co-authorship: did these collaborators always benefit from their collaboration? Was the partnership sometimes stimulated by purely practical or financial incentives? Or were there other motivations for writing together that occluded the purely functional? These and other queries will be addressed in the following chapters, and I will return to them in the conclusion of this dissertation.

The first chapter of this thesis already introduces three of the five instances of collaboration that will be considered. Starting with an example of juvenile collaboration that lasted into adulthood, I contemplate the case of family authorship in the Brontë household. The Brontës exemplify both the theme of rivalry and that of authorial reputation which are foregrounded in this chapter: on the one hand, I trace the benevolent competition that developed between Charlotte and Branwell Brontë, who both contributed to their Glass Town and Angria saga. Careful examination of the texts that were composed for their eccentric story cycle shows how the two young siblings created a shared fantasy world to which they added by writing stories whose characters and plotlines interacted with each other in a continuous game of provocation and response. The second part of this section on the Brontës scrutinizes Charlotte’s insertion of herself as a posthumous co-author into the work of her younger sister Emily. Charlotte’s move provides a clear example of mediation of a writer by another author: through her influence as editor and collaborator ‘in absentia’, she consciously attempted to remould her sister’s image and reception. The successive discussion of Michael Field looks at their partnership in life and love as well as in professional labour.
My analysis of the Fields interprets their union in terms of ‘female marriage’, which is traceable also in their literary output. Moreover, as I will indicate, Bradley and Cooper’s struggle (and ultimate failure) to escape the label of amateurism is representative of the fate that many co-authors suffered. The third instance of collective authorship that is investigated in this first chapter, is that of the shared composition of the Christmas numbers that Dickens edited for the weekly *Household Words*, and later *All the Year Round*. These special issues present the case of a famous author who sought the help of a series of (by default lesser known) collaborators for the writing of the various tales that made up the Christmas number. Interestingly, the stories that were assembled were all published anonymously (while the magazines themselves bore only Dickens’s name), which raises questions about the value of co-authorship for the uncredited contributors.

Chapter 3 revisits two of the case studies that were discussed in Chapter 2, and investigates them in the light of their interaction with issues of gender and identity. I first consider how Charlotte Brontë systematically adopted masculine masks and personae in imitation of her brother Branwell and the male-oriented books and journals that inspired their saga. The habit was prominently present in her juvenile writings, but equally permeated some of her mature novels. The second section of this chapter returns to Dickens’s editorship of his journals, focusing more specifically on his dealings with the women writers in his staff. Upon evaluation of his interaction with for example Elizabeth Gaskell and Harriet Martineau, it becomes apparent that Dickens was increasingly troubled by the resistance that these new professional women offered to his often patriarchal views on authority and authorship. In the third section of this chapter, a new topic of research is introduced in the form of the Savile Club, which thrived in fin-de-siècle London (but also beyond that period) and counted a multitude of renowned literary figures among its frequenters. Like most contemporary societies, the Savile was a ‘gentlemen’s club’, exclusively allowing membership to men. The club proved highly conducive to the creation of shared literary ventures, inspiring men like H. Rider Haggard, Andrew Lang and Rudyard Kipling to work together. However, like Bradley and Cooper, who shared both the spatial and temporal context in which the club’s partnerships unfolded, some of the Savilian collaborators would discover that co-authorship was a marginalised practice that, moreover, was commonly supposed to carry homosocial implications (raising suspicion during an era that became increasingly wary about any kind of activity that hinted at the type of ‘gross indecency’ for which it convicted Oscar Wilde).

The final chapter of this dissertation centres attention on the spatial context of collaborative writing. Departing from Virginia Woolf’s notion of the need for female writers to possess a ‘room of one’s own’ (described in her seminal essay on the topic), I investigate how co-authors were equally dependent on their surroundings, which could prove either stimulating or counterproductive for the joint composition of literature. This chapter on collaborative spaces warrants the presentation of a final case study,
namely that of the circle that formed around the figure of Leigh Hunt in the early
decades of the nineteenth century. Hunt, who was imprisoned for two years on charges
of libel against the Prince Regent, transformed his cell in the old prison infirmary into
an impromptu salon, which was frequented by a number of the inmate’s literary
connections (of which Lord Byron was only the most famous). After his release, the
Hunts’ cottage in London’s Hampstead neighbourhood became a gathering place for
likeminded artists and poets (who were collectively granted the dubious label of the
‘Cockney School’ in Blackwood’s Magazine). Like Hunt’s dungeon salon, his home once
more turned into a source of inspiration for the type of social authorship that the
Cockney School carried out. During their meetings at the Hampstead cottage, members
of the circle read and commented on each other’s manuscripts (at times composing new
poetry in response to that of a fellow author), dedicated their work to their befriended
colleagues and engaged in sonnet writing contests on a set topic. The Brontës’
parsonage at Haworth constitutes another domestic setting for collaboration (and one
that has been repeatedly mythologized in Brontë biographies). Of course, the house was
first and foremost constructed as a family home, shared by the Brontës with their
father, aunt and a number of servants and pets. Hence, the nature of these particular
surroundings meant that the scene of writing was necessarily encapsulated by everyday
life at the cottage. Consequently (as the children themselves testify in their writings)
while they were working at the kitchen or dining room table, the daily hustle and bustle
of the household repeatedly infringed on the process of composition. On the other hand,
it was evidently this close proximity to each other as members of a cohabitating unit
that brought forth their juvenile plays and subsequent collaborative writing. The case of
the Fields is interesting in terms of the spatial context of their partnership, since their
eventual situation might be said to exemplify Woolf’s ideal of the ‘room of [their] own’.
Nevertheless, for many years, Bradley and Cooper’s collaboration took place, like that of
the Brontës, in the family home that they shared with Cooper’s father and sister Amy. In
their joint journal, the women repeatedly confess the frustration that they felt, at times
quite keenly, about James Cooper’s imposing attitude (which they tried to escape by
locking themselves in the study during their writing sessions). However, when James
Cooper died and Amy became engaged, the Fields were granted the opportunity
(notably made possible only through the capital that Bradley had inherited from her
father) to set up a home of their own in Richmond. The two women turned their new
house into a writer’s den that became an extension of, as well as an inspiration for the
aestheticism that flourished in their work. Finally, the Savile, despite its very public
function as a gentlemen’s club in the heart of London, managed to create an atmosphere
that appeared highly conducive to the formation of authorial connections. Of
paramount importance was the club founders’ determination that the establishment
should provide a congenial place in which men of various backgrounds, rather than only
those of considerable wealth or class, could meet. Instrumental to the sociable ambience
were the clubs’ lunches, which were characteristically served in a ‘table d’hôte’ fashion that encouraged contact and conversation among the dining partners. For the editors of late-Victorian magazines and newspapers who were members of the Savile Club, the place became a rich harvesting ground for writers that they could add to their journalistic staff, while authors like Haggard, Kipling and Stevenson all found creative inspiration at the club, as well as offering assistance to other members. Henry James, a fellow Savilian, may well have been inspired by the club’s cosseted surroundings when he decided to set his story ‘Collaboration’ in the cocoon-like context of an artist’s studio (which functions as a space of mediation for the co-authorship that ensues between the tale’s protagonists).

Together, the following chapters aim to lay bare the various sociological aspects and implications that the practice of multiple authorship entails. Through my discussion of several cases of authorial collaboration, I hope to chip away another little morsel of the myth of the author as solitary genius that, despite plentiful proof of the contrary, continues to reign supreme in both historical and contemporary analyses of literature.
Chapter 2
Reputations and Rivalry

2.1 Introduction

In order to illustrate some of the main characteristics of multiple authorship, I have selected a number of case studies that reflect how the practice engaged with a variety of sociological issues. The three instances of collective writing that are presented in this chapter all vary in nature, ranging from family authorship over couple writing to collaboration within a group of writers. I examine them in the light of two loosely connected notions, namely that of authorial reputation and literary rivalry, both concepts that inform the dynamics of many instances of multiple authorship. As my analysis in this chapter aims to indicate, benevolent rivalry can stimulate the productivity of a partnership, but in a more humourless form it may also increase friction between the various members of the collaborative unit. The latter is certainly true when the authors that take part in the joint venture hold disparate reputations (or, in Bourdieu’s interpretation, an unequal amount of symbolic capital) or one of them attempts to claim the spotlight for himself, at the cost of his contributors. On the other hand, co-authors who are on an equal footing (between whom the amount of symbolic capital is evenly distributed) may in turn suffer from the lack of prestige that is often conferred by external agents on products of collaboration. As a consequence, these writers have to battle prejudice against the very nature of their authorship.

The first manifestation of collaborative writing that this chapter focuses on, is that which arose between the surviving Brontë siblings (Charlotte, Branwell, Emily and Anne) in their youth. This particular case of multiple authorship illustrates how the practice may develop organically (rather than being the result of a deliberate decision to write together), in this instance out of childhood play. The children’s orally constructed fantasy world soon found an outcome in the episodical sagas that they scribbled down. The siblings ultimately combined to form two pairs of co-authors:
Charlotte and Branwell were the authors of the Glass Town and Angria saga, while Emily and Anne created their own Gondal saga. This section specifically centres on Charlotte and Branwell’s highly productive interaction, which was spurred on by a dialectic process of composition, in which they each in turn jestingly provoked the other into writing a new instalment of the saga, composed in response to the one that their partner had recently created. The second part of my discussion moves the temporal focus to the years after the deaths of Branwell, Emily and Anne. I propose that Charlotte Brontë, when she edited Emily’s Wuthering Heights and Anne’s Agnes Grey for joint publication in 1850, inserted herself as a posthumous co-author into the work of especially the former. She did so in a conscious effort to mediate Emily’s character and identity as an author, which had been labelled by earlier reviewers of Wuthering Heights as ‘coarse’ and ‘disagreeable’. Through Charlotte’s portrayal of Emily in the ‘Biographical Notice’ and the ‘Preface’ to her novel, she attempted to mediate her sister’s reputation, moulding her into the figure of an innocent, naive young woman. Most striking however, was the way in which she not only edited, but in some places even rewrote, some of Emily’s poetry in order to present the author in a more forgiving light.

The second section of this chapter introduces the case of Katherine Bradley and Edith Cooper, who lived and wrote together under the masculine pseudonym of Michael Field. Bradley’s bold statement that she and Cooper were ‘closer married’ than the Brownings forms the basis for a discussion of their partnership in terms of a ‘female marriage’, a union that is reflected, as I will argue, in the pages of their writings. However, Michael Field’s exclusively collaborative output, though extensive, was no guarantee for success. On the contrary, their partnership illustrates the notion, valid for most products of co-authorship, that the jointly written work is always surrounded by an aura of amateurism. As I have established in the previous chapter, critics and readers have time and again attempted to ‘parse’ the collaboration by dissecting the co-authored work into its constituent halves, a treatment that the Fields too failed to escape. This section traces how the women reflected, both in their poetry and life writing, on the lack of literary acclaim that their work received.

The third instance of multiple authorship that is presented in this chapter, is that of Charles Dickens and the contributors that he rallied for the composition of the yearly extra Christmas number of his journals Household Words and All the Year Round. The project of the Christmas numbers corresponded to Dickens’s greater ideological scheme, in which he strove to achieve a form of collective writing that would reflect the type of communal feeling which he wished to carry out in the pages of his magazines. Christmas, with its traditional celebration of the family unit and charitable concern for the poor and downtrodden, offered a chance for the editor to underline his message. Nevertheless, the actual composition of the Christmas numbers more than once failed to live up to its editor’s expectations. Both on Dickens’s part and on that of the
contributors to the special numbers, the partnership caused increasing frustration. While the co-authors’ requisite anonymity clashed with the fact that Dickens’s journals bore the heading ‘Conducted by Charles Dickens’, Dickens himself struggled with the accommodation of the views of the other writers into his own vision for the story. Eventually, he abandoned the project, and later even dissociated the parts of the Christmas numbers written by himself from the texts that surrounded them, a habit that would be copied by later editors who wished to safeguard the iconic author from the taint of collaboration.
2.2 Scribblemania: The Case of the Brontës

2.2.1 Workshop and Playground: The Brontës’ Apprenticeship

Nowadays, the inclusion of the Brontës in the English literary canon, and especially the iconic position held by Charlotte, Emily and Anne, is an established fact. Their status as canonical authors makes it easy to forget that there was a period in their life before they were authors, a time when they were just a group of children at play. This section looks at the origins of the Brontës’ authorship, as initiated in their juvenilia, or better still: in the games that preceded and influenced their apprenticeship as young writers. My research builds on the work of previous scholars (led by Christine Alexander) who have been instrumental in returning attention to an aspect of the Brontës’ authorship that was long neglected. While these critics have mainly focussed on analysing the contents of the saga’s fantastical tales, I specifically inquire into the mechanics of (and motivations for) collaboration that were responsible for the genesis of these tales. Imperative for this discussion is the introduction of the fourth Brontë, the boy Brontë and the one who was pushed from the limelight by his sisters’ greater fame, although he was once the family’s greatest hope for artistic success. Branwell Brontë formed an inherent part of the improvised plays and subsequent literary experiments that the children undertook. Charlotte, being the eldest remaining sibling (after the deaths of Maria and Elizabeth), and Branwell, the only boy in the family, elected themselves as leaders, engaging their younger sisters in their imaginative games. As this section will show, the relationship that developed between these two sibling co-authors was intriguingly ambiguous, and hence highly conducive to the sculpting of their artistic identities. Haworth parsonage became ‘both workshop and playground’ for the children’s developing imagination. The children all collaborated in an abundance of ‘frenetic family activity’, splitting into two couples – Branwell and Charlotte versus Emily and Anne – to produce the Angrian and Gondal sagas that determined most of their juvenile writing.

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5 The term ‘juvenilia’ is an ambiguous term with reference to the Brontës, since the siblings added to the fictional sagas that they created as children well into adulthood. However, for convenience’s sake, it will be used here to refer to all texts pertaining to the Glass Town/Angria and Gondal sagas, regardless of their composition dates.
7 Ibidem, xlv.
To the Brontë siblings, authorship was undoubtedly ‘socialized,’ to use McGann’s term. As Charlotte worded it in a later poem, they ‘wove a web in childhood’ (J 151), establishing a literary collaboration and mutual influence that would last throughout their lives (and beyond, as the next section of this chapter will argue). As Charlotte testifies, the children ‘had very early cherished the dream of one day becoming authors’ (WHAG ix). From their first encounters with the literary field, the written word was presented to them as an intrinsically social form of entertainment. Starting at a very young age, the children would gather and listen to Maria Brontë (the eldest sister) reading the newspapers, a practice which Charlotte would take over after the untimely deaths of Maria and Elizabeth, when she had involuntarily been promoted to the role of eldest child.

Of course, the children were not always authors. Indeed, it appears that the Brontës’ authorship naturally emerged from the physical games that they played. Their shared, imaginary universe was thus primarily oral, before it was brought to the page. As legend has it, pivotal to the genesis of the juvenilia was the arrival in the Brontë household of a box, containing twelve wooden toy soldiers. The box was a gift for Branwell, brought home by Patrick Brontë, along with a set of ninepins for Charlotte, a toy village for Emily and a dancing doll for Anne (Dalsimer 323). Megan Norcia discusses the role of ‘parlour games’, not only in the development of children’s imagination, but as a reflection of their ‘imperial consciousness’ (294). ‘[P]arty games and home theatricals,’ she claims, ‘fostered a culture of Empire in which children rehearsed imperial acts even in moments of unstructured leisure or improvisational recreation’ (295). The case of the Brontës is no different. Similar to many children, the Brontës looked at the adult world for inspiration for their plays. Hence, their toys became pawns in a game that recycled historical figures as their protagonists. These miniature warriors were selected by the children from the pages of contemporary newspapers and adopted as their personal heroes.10 Charlotte, in “The History of the Year”, records how Branwell’s toy soldiers – soon dubbed ‘the Twelves’ – were received in the household:

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8 All references to the juvenilia, unless stated otherwise, will be quoted from Christine Alexander’s edition (abbreviated ‘J’): The Brontës. Tales of Glass Town, Angria, and Gondal. Selected Writings. Ed. Christine Alexander. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2010. Any incorrect or unusual spelling was intentionally preserved by the editor.

9 All references to the 1850 edition of Wuthering Heights and Agnes Grey will be quoted from the original Smith, Elder and Co. edition (abbreviated ‘WHAG’): Ellis and Acton Bell. Wuthering Heights and Agnes Grey. London: Smith, Elder and Co., 1850.

10 Older historical figures were equally represented in the children’s physical plays, probably inspired by Patrick Brontë’s copy of Sir Walter Scott’s Tales of a Grandfather, a favourite of the children: ‘Records survive of Emily Brontë breaking the branch of her father’s favourite cherry tree while pretending to be Prince Charles escaping from the Roundheads’ (Christine Alexander and Margaret Smith, eds. The Oxford Companion to the Brontës. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2006. p. 279. References to the Oxford Companion will henceforth be indicated by the abbreviation ‘OC’).
I snatched up one and exclaimed, ‘This is the Duke of Wellington! It shall be mine!’ When I said this, Emily likewise took one and said it should be hers. When Anne came down she took one also. Mine was the prettiest of the whole and perfect in every part. Emily’s was a grave-looking fellow. We called him Gravey. Anne’s was a queer little thing, very much like herself. He was called Waiting Boy. Branwell chose Bonaparte. (J 4)

Strikingly, the nicknames given by Charlotte and Branwell to their elected soldiers already reflect their nascent rivalry. Over a decade after the Battle of Waterloo, its opposing leaders were embodied in these wooden toys, which would become the focal point of the children’s imagination. Thus the great British Empire, through the children’s appropriation of the adult world, was recreated in miniature version in the parlour of Haworth’s remote parsonage. Charlotte’s set of ninepins came to represent the enemies of the Twelves, the Ashantees. The Brontës’ domestic theatrics were a means for them to take part vicariously in the imperial enterprise by imitating the Empire’s expansion through wars and colonization in their own saga. Norcia points out the educational value of such improvisational plays, which ‘were aestheticized enactments of the process of empire-building in which children learned geography by personating and performing it’ (301).

The ‘Tales of the Islanders’ too, are identified by Charlotte as having emerged from oral play: ‘We were all sitting round the fire and had been silent some time, and at last I said, “Supose we had each an Island of our own.”’ (J 4). It is not hard to imagine how the children, sitting around the fire with the wind blazing outside, might chase away boredom by imagining themselves on a distant island. Since they shared the parsonage with their father Patrick, he was a witness to their games – and sometimes the referee, as he later recalled:

When mere children, as soon as they could read and write, Charlotte and her brother and sisters used to invent and act little plays of their own, in which the Duke of Wellington my daughter Charlotte’s Hero, was sure to come off conqueror; when a dispute would not infrequently arise amongst them regarding the comparative merits of him, Buonaparte, Hannibal, and Caesar. When the argument got warm, and rose to its height, as their mother was then dead, I had sometimes to come in as arbitrator, and settle the dispute according to the best of my judgment. (qtd. in Gaskell 58)

This account helps to call into question the long-standing assumption, largely initiated in Gaskell’s Life of Charlotte Brontë, that Patrick was a distant recluse who was little involved in the lives of his children and their education.

The oral origins of the Brontë juvenilia are important in understanding the resulting written saga. To the external reader, who is not privy to the children’s shared plays, the stories present themselves as a chaotic assortment of fragments, with an often
confusing plethora of characters, who not seldom change names, switch personalities, and die only to be revived again by one of the four ‘Chief Genii’ (also called the ‘Little King and Queens’, the children’s all-powerful alter egos that intervened in the fantasy world as giant *dei ex machina*). For the children however, the stories continued off the page in their discussions of the saga, ensuring a fluent continuum between the oral and the textual. Hence, ‘knowledge was assumed between the four collaborators, who had no need to explain circumstances or background in individual stories’ (OC 215). When Emily and Anne severed themselves from Branwell and Charlotte’s Glass Town saga, they created their own Gondal universe, of which only the poems are now extant. The girls, too, departed from an oral back story, agreeing verbally on the basic course of events. Thus, they created a context which they could use as a ‘springboard for their individual poems and stories, writing them at different times and about different episodes in the Gondal narrative’ (OC 219). There are indications that the Gondal saga, even more than Charlotte and Branwell’s Angrian venture, had a strong oral aspect, with scenes being acted out by the two writers even in adulthood. Emily reports, in her diary paper for 30 July 1845, how during her trip to York with Anne, they ‘were, Ronal Macelgin, Henry Angora, Juliet Angusteena, Rosabelle [?Esmaldan], Ella and Julian Egramon[t] Cathearne Navarre and Cordelia Fitzaphnold escaping from the palaces of Instruction to join the Royalists who are hard driven at present by the victorious Republicans’ (J 490).

It has to be noted though, that the socialized view of literature entertained by the children was limited to the young co-authors alone. Towards the outside world, their activities were shrouded in secrecy. As is common when children are at play, secrecy was an inherent part of the game. 11 Patrick had witnessed their early oral plays, and knew about their later writing, but did not know its content. 12 The miniature volumes in which they wrote down their ‘scribbles’ (as Charlotte called them) are proof of their secret status: the tiny letters (meant to resemble book print) were produced by fine children’s hands, and could supposedly be read only by their young eyes. As a consequence of their invention of ‘minute print writing’ (OC 379) adults wishing to enter their fantasy world would find the papers ‘almost impossible to decipher without the aid of a magnifying glass,’ as Gaskell remarked when she perused the ‘curious packet’ for her biography of Charlotte (50). Of course, the size of these booklets also had the added

11 The secrecy of the children’s imaginary enterprise was also stressed in Charlotte’s reference to the so-called ‘bed plays’ that she and Emily – in a partnership that preceded that of Charlotte and Branwell – created together: ‘Bed plays mean secret plays...All our plays are very strange ones’ (J 3-4).

12 Patrick, somewhat concerned about Charlotte’s new habit of minuscule writing, gave his daughter a notebook inscribed ‘All that is written in this book, must be in a good, plain and legible hand. PB.’ Charlotte, outsmarting her father, copied into it some long heroic poems that were ‘fit for public consumption’, and wholly unrelated to their secret saga (Barker 201).
economic advantage of taking up less precious paper space. Indeed, especially in the early stages of their writing experiments, paper was still a rather expensive commodity; hence, the tiny volumes would sometimes be bound in scraps of leftover paper (such as that of an empty sugar bag) found around the house.

Still, when the genesis and plot of the juvenilia is taken into account, the unconventional nature of these small volumes turns out to be only suitable. After all, the Brontës’ fantasy world was inspired by Branwell’s toy soldiers. These small warriors became characters in the Glass Town universe; they were the ‘authors’ of the juvenilia, so the booklets were cut to size. The real authors, the Brontë children themselves, appeared in the world of their characters in the guise of the four Chief Genii, whose colossal shapes were logically proportioned in relation to the size of the toy soldiers.

This intrusion of the writers themselves in their texts is a telling example of how the fictional universe intermingles with the real world. The children’s approach is evident from Branwell’s view on authorship, as expressed in his ‘History of the Young Men’: ‘And I must now conclude this Introduction already to long with saying, that what is contained in this History is a statement of what Myself Charlotte Emily and Ann realy pretended did happen among the “Young Men” (that being the name we gave them)
The paradox in Branwell’s choice of words typifies the juvenilia: the events ‘realy did happen’ (in the Glass Town universe) yet were also ‘realy pretended’ by the children (in their biographical world). This intermingling of fiction and autobiography is equally reflected in the names with which the juvenilia were signed. The children would sign their texts with their own name, or the name of a fictional author, whose identity they assumed. Frequently, both names appeared together. In the fragment cited above, Branwell refers to himself and his sisters by their real names, but goes on to say that his ‘History’ is written by Captain John Bud, one of the Young Men, a fictional author and inhabitant of Glass Town. Charlotte too, is ambiguous in her use of signatures, signing her work with variations of her own name (Charlotte Brontë, C Brontë Charlotte, CB), with a Glass Town pseudonym (Marquis of Douro, Charles Wellesley, Genius CW) or both (for example in the case of ‘An Interesting Passage in the Lives of Some Eminent Men of the Present Time’, which is signed ‘BY LORD Charles Wellesley ~ JUNE the 18 1830 By CHARLOTTE ~ BRONTE’ (J 31)).

Charlotte’s ‘History of the Year’, dated 12 March 1829, offers a unique insight into the origins of the children’s imaginary world. Her account sums up some of the reading material that was available at Haworth parsonage. Charlotte opens with a reference to her sister Maria, who inscribed an ‘old geography’ lent to her by her father. Charlotte testifies that the book is ‘at this moment lying before me while I write this’ (J 3). This is followed by a description of the ‘kitchin’ in which Charlotte is writing, relating how her sisters and Tabby, the servant, are wrapped up in domestic chores. Once more Maria is referenced in relation to Anne, ‘my youngest sister (Maria was my eldest)’ (J 3). Almost unnoticed, in between brackets, Charlotte records the fact that Maria no longer ‘is’, but ‘was’ her sister. In her fictional texts as well, Charlotte tends to slip into autobiography. Writing in an almost stream-of-consciousness-like manner, she freely associates her tale with accounts of real life at home. In ‘Tales of the Islanders’ for example, obviously excited by the memory, she interrupts the narrative to relate how the Catholic question was eagerly followed in the Haworth household:

I remember the day when the Intelligence Extraordinary came with Mr Peel’s speech in it, containing the terms on which the Catholics were to be let in. With what eagerness Papa tore off the cover, & how we all gathered round him, & with what breathless anxiety we listened, as one by one they were disclosed & explained & argued upon so ably & so well, & then, when it was all out, how Aunt said she thought it was excellent & that the Catholics [could] do no harm with such good security. (J 18-19)

‘Papa’ and ‘Aunt’ are here introduced among the characters of the ‘Tales of the Islanders’, intermingling with them on the page of Charlotte’s story. Still, the young writer suddenly checks herself and breaks off the memory: ‘this is a digression & I must beg my readers to excuse it’ (J 19). This incident raises the question of the implied reader of the juvenilia. Who is the ‘reader’ that the Brontë children keep addressing? As is apparent from the example quoted above, the tone that Charlotte aspires to is too formal for an assumed intimate reader. Not only were the juvenilia not meant for publication (making this ‘reader’ very different from that addressed in Jane Eyre’s ‘Reader, I married him’, for example), their very nature – the secret miniature booklets that were hard to decipher – withstood their being read by anyone but the children themselves. A possible explanation might be that, since they assumed the pseudonyms of Glass Town authors, supposedly prominent literary figures in their fictional world, the intended readers were equally imagined inhabitants of Glass Town. Of course, the professional tone that the siblings aspire to is also an imitation of the newspapers that were read at Haworth parsonage (as I will discuss further on in this dissertation).

Even as Charlotte grew up, her imaginary universe kept intruding on the real world. The fictional world of Angria became an escape route for the homesick, lonely Charlotte when she was a teacher at Roe Head, sitting ‘neath a strange roof-tree’ (J 152). In ‘We Wove a Web in Childhood’ (December 1835), overcome by nostalgia, she enters again the ‘web of sunny air’ that she and her siblings ‘wove ... in infancy’ (J 151). Remarkably, the tone of Charlotte’s Angrian fantasy has matured with its author. With ill-disguised eroticism a nineteen-year-old Charlotte records her ‘bright, darling dream’:

Never shall I, Charlotte Brontë, forget what a voice of wild & wailing music now came thrillingly to my mind’s – almost to my body’s – ear; nor how distinctly I, sitting in the schoolroom at Roe Head, saw the Duke of Zamorna leaning against that obelisk ... I was quite gone. I had really utterly forgot where I was and all the gloom & cheerlessness of my situation. I felt myself breathing quick and short as I beheld the Duke lifting up his sable crest, which undulated as the plume of a hearse waves to the wind, & knew that that music which seems as mournfully triumphant as the scriptural verse
‘Oh Grave where is thy sting;
Oh Death where is thy victory’
was exciting him & quickening his ever rapid pulse. (J 156-57)

The fantasy is then abruptly broken off when one of the pupils claims her attention with ‘a voice that dissipated all the charm’ (J 157).

The same blend of fiction and reality is present in Emily and Anne’s ‘Diary Papers’. Already in the first extant paper – dated 24 November 1834 and signed by both girls but written in Emily’s voice – Gondal is mentioned. In a kind of monologue intérieure, Emily writes: ‘Aunt has come into the kitchen just now and said where are your feet Anne Anne answered On the floor Aunt papa opened the parlour Door and gave Branwell a
Letter saying here Branwell read this and show it to your Aunt and Charlotte – The Gondals are discovering the interior of Gaaldine Sally Mosley is washing in the back kitchin’ (J 485). The brief Gondal report is almost unnoticeably woven into Emily’s account of everyday life. Emily’s paper for 30 July 1841, though slightly more structured, shows the same pattern. It not only relates the status of her own life and that of her family, but also the goings-on in Gondal. She begins by expressing her and her sisters’ excitement about their plan to start up a school of their own (an endeavour that was later abandoned), then continues: ‘The Gondalians are at present in a threatening state but there is no open rupture as yet – all the princes and princesses of the royal royaltys are at the palace of Instruction’ (J 488-489). The reader of this paper gets the impression that Emily’s diary is not only her own, but also that of the characters that inhabit her mind. Their condition is recorded next to that of the Brontë pets and the other members of the household. Emily’s other papers, as well as the corresponding ones written by Anne, also register events in both the biographical and the fictional world.

Once the children began to document their plays on paper, the game became one of imitation. For example, inspired by Goldsmith’s Grammar of General Geography – one of the stock volumes in Patrick Brontë’s library – Branwell drew a detailed map for their imaginary world, from which its similarity to West-African geography is apparent. The map displays the ‘Great Glass Town Confederacy’ with its capital Verdopolis, as well as the boundaries between the different territories (possessed by the children’s various champions), which are embossed with the names ‘Parrys Land’, ‘Wellingtons Land’, ‘Frenchy Land’ etc.

Aside from the inspiration that they drew from books, the siblings delighted most in appropriating the format of the magazines that were consumed in the household. With their accounts of politics and criminal trials, reviews of books, fashion and gossip
columns, the newspapers provided ‘endless material’ for their stories (Barker 112). Complemented by the books that they found in their father’s library, to which they had full access, the children found ample inspiration to construct their imaginary world. They not only imitated the lay-out of a ‘real’ newspaper, as is evident from the great care that was taken in the production of their manuscripts, which strove to simulate book printing in miniature form, but also its tone and use of different narrative voices. The children also added parodic ‘advertisements’ at the end of each issue (‘TO BE SOLD: a rat-trap, by MONSIEUR it can catch nothing FOR it’s BROKEN.’ (J 52)) and provided illustrations for their saga. Charlotte’s portraits of her protagonists show that she perceived them as lusciously dressed, flamboyant society figures.

Charlotte Brontë, King of Angria, Duke of Zamorna (High Life in Verdopolis, ca. 1834).

Popular newspapers in the Brontë household included the Leeds Intelligencer and the Leeds Mercury, two local newspapers to which Patrick Brontë subscribed. The children also convinced their aunt Elizabeth Branwell to subscribe to Fraser’s Magazine. They borrowed the John Bull (described in short by Charlotte as ‘very violent’ (J 3)) from their neighbour Mr Driver. The local newspapers (especially the Halifax Guardian) would later become the first and only place in which Branwell’s work was published. The Yorkshire press printed eighteen of his poems in total – the first one, notably, a full five years before his sisters entered the literary marketplace with their volume of Poems (1846).

However, the newspaper that took up the central position in the Haworth household, as well as in the children’s imagination, was Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine. The monthly Blackwood’s, like the John Bull, was lent to them by Mr Driver, and described by Charlotte in ‘The History of the Year’ as ‘the most able periodical there is’ (J 3). The children also paid tribute to the magazine in the first version of their own journal.
(dated January 1829), which Branwell baptized, somewhat egotistically, Branwell’s Blackwood’s Magazine. When Charlotte took over as editor seven months later, she renamed the paper Blackwood’s Young Men’s Magazine (removing the reference to her brother) and ultimately dropped the reference to Blackwood’s one year later, with the launch of a second series, now called the Young Men’s Magazine (J 508). Blackwood’s, with its miscellany of topics and lively, often satirical tone, provided ample amusement and inspiration for the children. They took from it the names of their heroes, the landscapes in which they set their saga and – most important for Charlotte and Branwell’s development as aspiring writers – the sense of authorship as ‘a career of high-spirited rivalry and aggressive competition’ (OC 47). Blackwood’s even inspired some of the vocabulary and names in the Brontës’ fantasy world. For example, in Charlotte’s tale ‘An Interesting Passage in the Lives of Some Eminent Men of the Present Time’, written in 1830, Captain Tree stays at the ‘Fetish’ Inn, a term she picked up in Blackwood’s review of T.E. Bodwich’s Mission from Cape Coast to Ashantee (J 34). A telling instance of the children’s gusto for appreciative imitation are their ‘Conversations’, which replicated Blackwood’s famous ‘Noctes Ambrosianae’ (1822-35). Collaboratively written by several of the magazine’s staff members taking on pseudonymous identities (including ‘real’ authors such as Byron and De Quincey), the ‘Noctes’ were set at Ambrose’s tavern, where food and drinks were profusely consumed. These pub talks generated a series of humorous debates, mostly on books and politics, that represented the ‘type of verbal pugilism that underlined the Brontës’ early view of journalism as competitive literary play’. Authors such as Blackwood’s ‘Christopher North’ (pseudonym for John Wilson) and James Hogg represented the figure of the ‘great man of letters’ (OC 377), an example for the young siblings, with their dreams of becoming published authors. In the Brontës’ version, the ‘Conversations’ are set in Bracey’s Inn, with prominent members of Glass Town engaging in a discussion, for which Branwell and Charlotte assume a pompous, tongue-in-cheek tone. In Charlotte’s entry for October 1830, for example, she has ‘her’ Lord Wellesley mock Branwell’s alter ego, the poet Young Soult. When the latter suffers a fainting fit, overcome by poetic emotion, Wellesley shouts out ‘Ring,–ring the bell! Be quick! Bring hartshorn, cold water, vinegar, salvolatic, [?salzaikaling] and sal everything else! The poet has fallen into an inspiration dream! Haste, haste, if you mean to save his life!’ (J 47). Wellesley’s exclamation serves as a benevolent stab from Charlotte to her sibling co-author, in imitation of Blackwood’s literary banter.

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15 Marysa Demoor has offered a correction to Alexander’s reading of the manuscript, suggesting ‘sal volatile’ for ‘salvolatic’ and ‘sal alkaline’ for ‘[?salzaikaling]’.
As the abovementioned examples already illustrated, the interaction between Branwell and Charlotte was pivotal to the development of the juvenilia’s characteristic tone. Their joking rivalry sits at the core of the saga, since ‘[t]he young writers carry on a continual verbal battle in editorial notes, prefaces, afterwords, and the actual texts of their stories’ (OC 280). Very often, their writing was a process of action and reaction. One sibling would mock or criticize the other, prompting their partner to write a defence or counterattack. When Charlotte Brontë took over the editorship of the magazine from her brother in August 1829, Branwell was initially supportive. In his ‘Concluding Address to my Readers’, he writes: ‘we recommend our readers to be to the new Editor as they were to me’ (qtd. in Dalsimer 320), but later on he is disappointed in the new, less serious tone that the magazine has taken under Charlotte’s reign:

All soberness is past & gone  
the reign of gravity is done  
frivolity comes in its place  
light smiling sits on every face16

Charlotte responds to this accusation with her poem ‘Lines by One who was Tired of Dullness upon the Same Occasion’, pointing the finger at Branwell. The partnership ensured that Charlotte and Branwell’s texts were always written with each other in mind. Their tales shared a common back story to which each young author added new characters and events. Often, the siblings picked up on each other’s additions, by incorporating or responding to them. For example, in Charlotte’s ‘A Day at Parry’s Palace’ she uses the expression ‘maun and waman,’ which is a clear reference to Branwell’s invented Young Men’s language (J 41).17 This excerpt shows how Charlotte’s prose interacts with the premises – in this case a particular use of language – set by Branwell’s earlier stories. In another example, Mary Percy, a character introduced by Branwell in his ‘Politics of Verdopolis’ (November 1833), is adopted by Charlotte for her story ‘High Life in Verdopolis’ (March 1834), and later becomes the saga’s central heroine.

A telling instance of the children’s benevolent back-and-forth, are the three consecutive texts that Branwell and Charlotte produced in June and July 1830. In the first of these stories, Charlotte’s ‘An Interesting Passage in the Lives of Some Eminent Men of the Present Time’ (18 June 1830), her alter ego Charles Wellesley delivers a scandalous story. In it, Branwell’s Captain Bud is implicated in the theft of books from

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17 As Christine Alexander explains, this language was ‘spoken with fingers “applied to” the nose; an early attempt to reproduce the local Yorkshire dialect’ (J 508).
the public library. Charlotte, anticipating Branwell’s reaction to her slanderous story, boldly states in her introduction:

I am aware (to use a cant phrase) that my disclosures will cause a very considerable sensation among those who are implicated in the various transactions to which I shall allude, but as I care about them, their views & actions just as much as my monkey, all their censure will pass by me with as little effect as the zephyrs in a hot summer’s day fanning a sea-surrounded rock. (J 32)

A mischievous Charlotte here obviously intends to defy Branwell, perhaps even consciously provoking him to write a response to her tale. Branwell, indeed, did not hesitate to answer this invitation to duel. ‘The Liar Detected’, dated just one day after Charlotte’s ‘Passage’ (19 June 1830), provides proof of the speed at which the children’s imagination could churn out new work. In the voice of ‘Captan’ John Bud, Branwell immediately launches a counterattack, setting out to retaliate against the ‘dose of scandal and selfimportance in the shape of an octavo column’ that was ‘vomited forth’ by the ‘little author’ Charles Wellesley. The latter is likened to a ‘puppy dog with its tail cut off’ (J 318) and characterized as an ‘unprincipled wretch’ who ‘having no caracrer of [his] own to support and being too indolent to work, vilely employ[s] [his] days in spitting venom on every author of reputation within [his] reach’ (J 317). Captain Bud then continues by meticulously combing through Wellesley’s story and discussing its ‘errors’ (twelve in total), all the while mocking the writer’s style and apparent self-satisfaction:

Oh how I fancy I can see the yong author, brimfull of himself after having finished this passage, rise up, take the manuscript in his greasy hand, rub his head, stick out his shirt frill, give a few hems, peep into Pope’s Homer to see if there was a passage there equal to it, then sit down, his self esteem no way abated, and fag away like one on a wager. (J 319)

Branwell also sets off Charles Wellesley against ‘Young S−’ (Young Soult, his own alter ego), whose writing ‘show[s] mind, thought and poetry’ (J 321). This claim provides the premise for Charlotte’s response in the two-part drama ‘The Poetaster’ (3-12 July 1830). The title of this work already announces the tone that its writer will take: the term ‘poetaster’ alludes to the inferior quality of the poet’s talents. The play recalls Ben Jonson’s Poetaster or His Arraignment (1601), which itself suffered retaliation from Thomas Dekker in his Satromastix (1602) (Monahan 475). Charlotte’s response to her brother’s text thus echoes a much older case of rivalry between authors. Of course, the protagonist of Charlotte’s drama is another of Branwell’s alter egos: Henry Rhymer is a thinly disguised reference to Young Soult the Rhymer. The drama, written in six acts and issued in two ‘volumes’, paints a dismal picture of Henry Rhymer. The poet is characterized by his pompous pretensions, sycophantic nature, and puffed up language
use. Charlotte’s Charles Wellesley—who doubles as both author and character in this drama—‘exposes Rhymer as a con man intent on impressing others with sham poetics and romantic posturing’ (Monahan 476). The play opens with a soliloquy, which sees the protagonist at work on a composition (fraught with recycled romantic clichés) and quite pleased with himself: ‘Very pretty especially the third line I declare ... Now that’s really beautiful[,] the ideas are quite poetical’. However, when the self-assured poetaster offers his poetry to Charles Wellesley and his brother, the Marquis of Douro, they burst out laughing and entreat him to ‘think no more of blotting white paper with unmeaning hieroglyphics by which a wicked waste of a useful article is incurred & much guilt laid to your account’. Charlotte delivers an extra blow to Branwell’s double, by having the valet announce Rhymer as ‘a little man very thin & pale’ with ‘a whining tone of voice’. The story ends when Rhymer, convicted for the murder of Captain Tree (whom he has killed in jealous rage when the latter scorned his poetry), is pardoned by the Wellesley brothers ‘on condition that you should write no more. but immediately take to some useful employment’. Charles Wellesley, his brother, and Captain Tree (three of Charlotte’s characters often at odds in other tales—like in the ‘Passage’) are pitted together in this drama in order to ridicule the Rhymer/Branwell.

This string of texts, whose production dates spanned less than a month in total, thus makes tangible Charlotte and Branwell’s dialogic writing process. When one of the siblings wrote a story, the other read it and was inspired to compose a response, which in its turn inspired a counterattack, and so forth. However, the siblings’ mockery of each other and their work ought to be taken with a grain of salt. Indeed, the children engaged in self-ridicule as gladly as they aimed their arrows at each other. When Branwell composed his first ‘edition’ of poetry, ‘A COLLECTION OF POEMS by Young Soult the Rhymers’ [sic] (1829), he included a commentary by ‘MONSEIUR DE LA CHATEUBRIAND’, who spits out his criticism of Young Soult’s ‘Ode to Napoleon’: ‘THIS poem is an exceedingly rambling and irregular meter and contains--a great many things for which he ought to be punished’. In true Glass Town tradition, violent measures are not shunned: according to Chateaubriand, the faults of the poet call for ‘punishment’. Thus, in a self-mocking, meta-fictional turn, Branwell allows one of his brainchildren to criticize his own alter ego. The same happens in Charlotte’s previously mentioned ‘An Interesting Passage in the Lives of Some Eminent Men of the Present Time’. In her story,
she not only involves Branwell’s Captain Bud in the theft, but equally incriminates her own ‘Captain T-‘ (Captain Tree), reflecting the existing rivalry among Charlotte’s own alter egos, Charles Wellesley and the Captain. Wellesley treats Tree with little respect, referring to him as ‘a great coward’ (J 35) and casually killing him off at the end of the story (though he is revived after spending a few days in a ‘macerating tub’ – a typical Glass Town invention (J 36)). Perhaps most telling of Charlotte’s self-deflation is Captain Tree’s exclamation in ‘The Poetaster’:

> Alas Alas that those days would come again when no one had even a transitory dream of putting pen to paper except a few choice spirits set apart from & revered by all the rest of the world but it cannot be hoped for it cannot be hoped & some years hence perhaps these eyes will see through the mists of age. every child that walks along the streets. bearing its MSS in its hand. going to the printer’s for publication.23

Since this story was itself written by a fourteen-year-old ‘child’, fabricated with a layout that imitated ‘real’ publications, and bound in a miniature book, Charlotte here mocks her own practice of childhood writing. In later years, the partnership of the eldest Brontë children would be hampered when Charlotte went to school and the siblings were separated for months on end. Eventually, at the age of twenty-three, Charlotte consciously turned away from the juvenilia, as she recorded in her ‘Farewell to Angria’ (see Chapter 3). Branwell, on the other hand, continued to visit their fantasy world even as an adult, until his death at the age of thirty-one.

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2.2.2 Posthumous Co-Authors: Charlotte and Emily

‘It took hours to reconcile [Emily] to the discovery I had made, and days to persuade her that such poems merited publication.’
(Charlotte Brontë, Biographical Notice to Wuthering Heights and Agnes Grey, 1850)

In accordance with McGann and Stillinger’s views on multiple authorship (as laid out in Chapter 1) it can be claimed that all human beings are active agents in the lives of those linked to them in a particular group. Each agent, in fact, acts as an interpreter of the individual’s identity, influencing how he or she is perceived by the outside world. In the case of authors, mediators can be manifold: their identity may be shaped by family members (husbands, wives, siblings, parents, children)\(^\text{24}\) or friends, but also by members of the literary field (editors, publishers, managers, critics). Mediation is not always consciously executed, but members of a network do often have specific motivations for attempting to mould the identity of the individual that sits at the core of the group’s interest. In the case of author’s networks, this is where the concept of ‘reputation’ comes in: a reputation that has to be protected, reshaped or redeemed in the eye of the mediator. It is the impetus behind famous cases of posthumous ‘editing’ by family members or friends – think of Cassandra Austen’s cutting up of her sister’s more controversial correspondence, or by way of contrast, Catherine Dickens ensuring the survival of her side of the story of her marriage by ordering her daughter Kate to take Dickens’s love letters to the British Museum after her death. Earlier examples of posthumous family intervention include Mary Shelley’s editing of her deceased husband’s work and Sara Coleridge’s treatment of her father’s writing, both efforts which ‘sought not only to guide the posthumous reception of their authors but to canonize them within the English literary tradition’ (Levy 144).\(^\text{25}\)

In the case of the Brontës, the subject of reputation constitutes a topic of particular interest. Whereas the first edition of their Poems by Currer, Ellis and Acton Bell (1846) hardly made a stir (selling only two copies), their novels – including the highly successful Jane Eyre – were invariably met with criticism, especially concerning the ‘coarse’ qualities in their work. Even while reviewers were paying Wuthering Heights the half-compliment of possessing ‘a sort of rugged power’, they invariably pronounced the

\(^{24}\) Michelle Levy remarks, in Family Authorship and Romantic Print Culture: ‘Family members were uniquely situated to participate in biographical and editorial work, given their access to unpublished material, ownership of existing copyrights, and unique knowledge of their subjects. Their efforts and strategies shaped conceptions of individual ... authors’ (Basingstoke & New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008, p. 144).

\(^{25}\) As Levy points out, Mary Shelley and Sara Coleridge’s task was not an easy one: male literati felt ‘threatened by a woman’s influence over a male poet’s reception and reputation’. Moreover, Sara Coleridge was burdened with the defence of her father’s reputation against accusations of plagiarism and opium abuse (Levy 154-155).
work to be ‘savage’, ‘disagreeable’ and even ‘sicken[ing]’. Its author was declared to be ‘dogged, brutal, and morose’ (qtd. in Gérin 212-213). The critics’ misjudgements were hurtful to Emily, as Gaskell claims: ‘But Emily – poor Emily – the pangs of disappointment as review after review came out about Wuthering Heights were terrible’. Charlotte, as the eldest of the four remaining siblings, felt responsible for the others, being both ‘motherly friend and guardian’ to her sisters (Gaskell 50). In a vicarious way, she took the reviewers’ criticisms to heart as if they had been aimed at herself, especially when Emily’s work had been slashed. As Winifred Gérin points out in her biography, it is very hard to access Emily’s true identity (only three of her letters and a few diary papers have survived). Apart from her own writings, her image has been largely created by others: Emily is ‘heard through their medium, at second hand, seldom speaking in her own voice’ (Gérin vii). The first and perhaps most vehement agent to speak in Emily’s stead was her eldest sister. As this section will argue, after the death of her sisters Charlotte became not just the first editor of Emily’s poetry. She also pushed mediation to its extreme and took on the role of a true posthumous co-author, consciously adapting her sister’s poetic oeuvre so as to influence its reception.

With the publication of the 1850 edition of Wuthering Heights and Agnes Grey, she was determined to reclaim her sisters’ identity for herself, taking deliberate action to alter Emily’s reputation with the reading public. Charlotte was the one who selected the poems to be included in the volume, as well as writing the famous ‘Biographical Notice’ and ‘Preface’, in an attempt to vindicate her sisters’ reputation. In both of these pieces of paratext, Charlotte sets out to offer an explanation for the supposedly vulgar aspects of Emily’s work. She grants that Wuthering Heights was ‘hewn in a wild workshop, with simple tools, out of homely materials’ (WHAG xxiv), but defends it from the ‘faults’ of which it has been accused, attempting to offer counterexamples to the claims of rudeness and cruelty that have established its reputation. Remarkably, the qualities that Charlotte chooses to highlight (features of the novel which she fears critics have overlooked in their quest for crassness) are predominantly feminine, illustrating the novel’s softer side. She cites Nelly Dean’s ‘true benevolence and homely fidelity’, Edgar Linton’s ‘constancy and tenderness’, Joseph’s ‘saturnine humour’ (rather than his Yorkshire roughness) and she refers to the younger Catherine’s ‘grace and gaiety’ (WHAG xxii). Charlotte Brontë was concerned with Anne’s reputation as well, preferring to reprint the more temperate Agnes Grey (with its familiar female protagonist, the governess), rather than The Tenant of Wildfell Hall. She pronounced the theme of the latter to be ‘an entire mistake’, stressing that ‘nothing less congruous with the writer’s

nature could be conceived’ (WHAG xii). Anne’s second novel, in Charlotte’s view, proved too challenging to contemporary taste. As an addition to the new edition of the novels, Charlotte selected a total of eighteen poems by Emily and nine poems by Anne which had not been published in their 1846 edition of *Poems by Currer, Ellis and Acton Bell*. She carefully selected and edited Emily’s poems in order to present a new version – her version – of Emily to the world. Moreover, Charlotte reframed the poems by providing her own introduction to them, setting her sister’s work in the light in which she wished it to be read.

Interestingly, the process of mediation with regard to the Brontës’ reputation was not confined to Charlotte’s protective nature of Emily. Charlotte herself became an object of bowdlerization by her loved ones. Her husband Arthur Bell Nicholls began his shaping of Charlotte’s identity while his wife was still alive, urging her to be more temperate in her letters to Ellen Nussey (in which Charlotte habitually included frank effusions and opinions about others, which alarmed her husband). From Ellen Nussey herself, Nicholls demanded that she destroy all of Charlotte’s old letters (presumably fearing what they might reveal if they should ever be brought to light). Ellen seemingly agreed to meet his request, but did not keep her promise, thwarting Nicholls’s attempt to safeguard his wife’s reputation as he saw it. Of course the most extensive (and probably most effective) effort to shape Charlotte’s image, was Gaskell’s posthumous biography of her friend, which became a bestseller and which, for a long time, remained the authoritative version of the Brontë myth. Here, Gaskell fell prey to the ‘too frequent vice,’ often perceived in biographers who admired their subject, of ‘mak[ing] a subject conform to the biographer’s ideal’ (Waller 438). In her *Life of Charlotte Brontë* (1857), Gaskell continued Charlotte’s attempt to explain the origin of the coarse quality in the women’s writing. She infused the chapters of her book with anecdotes of the harsh Yorkshire traditions and the unwelcoming attitudes of its inhabitants, explaining how these unavoidably influenced the sisters’ writing.

The scapegoats that emerge from the pages of Gaskell’s *Life* are the Brontë men, with Charlotte’s biographer pointing the finger at Patrick’s peculiar habits such as the claim – refuted in the second edition – that he prohibited his daughters from eating meat, and Branwell’s descent into drunkenness and debauchery. Gaskell’s disclosure of Branwell’s affair with a Mrs Robinson led to a minor scandal when the lady in question protested against the allegations made in

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27 The plot of *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* revolves around Helen Graham’s mysterious arrival at Wildfell Hall, after escaping her alcoholic and abusive husband with her son Arthur. Charlotte obviously felt that the topic of Anne Brontë’s second novel was much more shocking to Victorian sensibilities than that of *Agnes Grey*.  
28 It should be noted that Charlotte also altered and abridged some of Anne’s poetry for the 1850 edition, though the process was less invasive than in Emily’s case.  
29 Gaskell’s comment that the Yorkshire men were ‘a powerful race both in mind and body, both for good and for evil,’ for example, can easily be linked to Heathcliff’s propensity to love and hate with equal passion (8).
Gaskell’s biography. Not surprisingly therefore, Gaskell herself hated the idea of a biography of her own life, begging both her daughter Marianne and her publisher George Smith to destroy her letters rather than preserve them for posterity (GL xi).

The first section of this chapter already showed that the production and consumption of literature was very much a social event in the Brontë household. The socialized nature of their work, moreover, was not limited to the juvenilia. Gaskell’s account of the sisters pacing around the living room and exchanging ideas for their novels is a well-known part of the Brontë legend. The practice was also recorded in Charlotte’s ‘Preface’ to the 1850 edition of *Wuthering Heights* and *Agnes Grey*, in an anecdote that indicates how reluctant Emily was to accept her sister’s criticism of her novel-in-progress:

> If the auditor of her work when read in manuscript, shuddered under the grinding influence of natures so relentless and implacable, of spirits so lost and fallen; if it was complained that the mere hearing of certain vivid and fearful scenes banished sleep by night, and disturbed mental peace by day, Ellis Bell would wonder what was meant, and suspect the complainant of affectation. (*WHAG* xxii–xxiii)

However, the custom of collaborative discussion seems to have applied only to the genesis of the Brontës’ juvenilia and prose writings— the poems, apparently, were a matter of private composition, exempt from the sisters’ habitual candidness. For Emily especially, writing poetry was a thoroughly private process, as is confirmed by Anne, who records her ignorance of the content of Emily’s poetry in her Diary Paper for 31 July 1845. Emily’s secrecy about her poetic output stands in clear contrast with her openness about her prose work on the Gondal saga: ‘Emily is engaged in writing the Emperor Julius’s life she has read some of it and I want very much to hear the rest – she is writing some poetry too I wonder what it is about’ (*J* 492). The notebooks in which Emily copied out her poems were meant for her eyes only (as a form of self-publication), hence her initial fury when Charlotte found one of them. The anecdote of Charlotte’s discovery of Emily’s notebook indicates that the two sisters had a very different idea of authorship. Whereas Charlotte, whose ambition was always to publish (as was apparent from her early imitations of *Blackwood’s Magazine* and her letter to Robert Southey), had a distinctly externalized view of authorship, Emily apparently saw writing as an intimate, internalized activity. This may account for the fact that she paid little attention to the neatness of her handwriting, whereas her siblings, who also made use

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of minuscule type, did so with much more precision. This strengthens the claim that Emily’s recording of her poems was a strictly personal matter. Christine Alexander agrees, pointing out that Emily demonstrated a 'lack of concern for mechanics that is perhaps as significant as her siblings’ concern for neatness and design, suggesting her lack of interest in public performance and the more private nature of her imaginary world' (J xlviii). Emily was, as Janet Gezari puts it, ‘a poet for whom publication was never the horizon in view’ (80).

Striking proof of how Emily conceived of herself as a writer is offered in the sketches that she drew as accompaniment to her and Anne’s diary papers of 1837 and 1845. In their note for 26 June 1837 (when Emily and Anne were eighteen and seventeen, respectively), Emily’s illustration shows the two sisters sitting at the dining-room table, producing the very paper that the sketch is penned on. The two figures in the drawing are marked ‘Emily’ and ‘Anne’, while some ‘papers’ are scattered across the table, accompanied by a mysterious ‘Tin Box’, in which the diary papers are stored. Significant in this mise en abyme, is that Emily is seen from the back, refusing the reader of the paper a view of her face. Anne’s pen counterpart, on the other hand, is portrayed frontally, yet the figure remains faceless. Thus, both young authors are shrouded in mystery, reflecting the sense of secrecy that they – and Emily especially – associated with authorship. Similar to the 1837 illustration, the 1845 drawing equally portrays Emily turned away from the viewer, this time in the company of her favourite dog, Keeper. In both instances, the decision of the sketcher to hide her face from view feels deliberate; this is how the writer wished to present herself to (or hide herself from) the prying eyes of the observer.
When Charlotte decided that ‘the Bells’ needed to go prove their female identity at the offices of Smith, Elder and Co. in London, Emily was the only one who remained at the parsonage, showing no interest in the spotlight that her eldest sister had pushed them into. Charlotte became her eyes, as she later reported in a letter to W. S. Williams: ‘Emily would never go into any sort of society herself, and whenever I went, I could on my return, communicate to her a pleasure that suited her by giving the distinct, faithful impression of each scene I had witnessed. When pressed to go, she would sometimes say, “What is the use? Charlotte will bring it all home to me”’ (CBL II 290). This particular anecdote, albeit reported by Charlotte herself, strengthens the elder sister’s view that ‘[a]n interpreter ought always to have stood between her and the world’ (WHAG xv). Charlotte already adopted this role to a certain extent during Emily’s lifetime; after her sister’s death, she consciously intensified her bond with Emily, becoming her main advocate, mediator and even posthumous co-author. As a matter of fact, she must have known full well that during her lifetime, Emily would never have allowed her to do what she could do when the younger sibling was dead. The question thus raised may be: did Charlotte do this to glorify and immortalise Emily or, considering that these actions would certainly have displeased her sister, did she re-fashion Emily-the-writer in order to promote the immortality of the Brontë name and by the same token her own work?
One of the great issues that Charlotte wished to address had to do with Emily’s reputation in terms of gender. The ‘new’ Emily had to be a decidedly more feminine author, one who adhered more closely to the traditional domestic image of Victorian women writers. If not entirely able to reduce (or in Charlotte’s view, raise) her sister to the status of a proper Angel in the House, Emily’s posthumous editor would at least attempt to dissociate her reputation from the crude Romanticism that was associated with *Wuthering Heights* and its author. Emily’s fierce love of nature and wild temperament testified to a rather masculine frame of mind – a character trait that had repeatedly been ascribed to her, even before the publication of her novel. When she and Charlotte were at the Pensionnat Héger in Brussels, for example, Monsieur Héger remarked that ‘[s]he should have been a man – a great navigator,’ indicating that she had a ‘male’ brain – an unfeminine way of thinking (qtd. in Barker 392). Physically as well, Emily showed masculine traits: she was the tallest of the sisters (especially compared to Charlotte, who described herself as ‘short and dumpy’ (Gaskell 94)) and did not care for feminine embellishments.31 When Gaskell met Emily for the first time, she ‘struck [her] as full of power,’ as opposed to her sisters, whom she characterized in more feminine terms as ‘solicitous’ (Charlotte) and ‘tender’ (Anne) (88). Matthew Arnold, in his poem ‘Haworth Churchyard’ (written on occasion of Charlotte’s death in 1855), compares Emily to Byron, the epitome of Romantic masculinity:

(How shall I sing her?) – whose soul
Knew no fellow for might,
Passion, vehemence, grief,
Daring, since Byron died[.]”

The fact that this poem was written five years after the publication of the ‘Biographical Notice’ indicates that Charlotte’s attempt to feminize her sister’s image was not entirely successful. Yet, Arnold does differ from the earlier critics – whose reviews took a more condescending turn after the ‘Notice’ was published (OC 138) – by playing up Emily’s vehemence as a bold but admirable quality, favourably associating her with one of her own literary heroes. Certainly, Charlotte herself was ambivalent in the representation of her sister. Even though she chose to paint a very feminine picture of Emily in the 1850 edition of *Wuthering Heights* and *Agnes Grey*, *Shirley*, the novel that she finished while mourning the death of her siblings, makes us reconsider the question. As Charlotte herself divulged to Gaskell, it was her younger sister who served as the real-life model for the heroine of the title. Of course, Shirley was exclusively used as a man’s surname,

31 Gaskell, writing about Charlotte’s incessant talk of her sister, noted that ‘Emily must have been a remnant of the Titans, great-granddaughter of the giants who used to inhabit the earth’ (619). The feeling expressed in her remark echoes the sentiment of Emily as a woman of considerable stature and strength.

before Charlotte decided to use it for her female protagonist. As is explained in the novel, the name was given by her parents, meant for the male heir that they desired but did not produce: ‘[S]he had no Christian name but Shirley: her parents, who had wished to have a son, finding that, after eight years of marriage, Providence had granted them only a daughter, bestowed on her the same masculine family cognomen they would have bestowed on a boy, if with a boy they had been blessed’ (151). Shirley is proud to be associated with masculinity: ‘Shirley Keeldar, Esquire, ought to be my style and title. They gave me a man’s name; I hold a man’s position: it is enough to inspire me with a touch of manhood’ (153). She has a habit of whistling – to her former governess Mrs Pryor’s dismay – and loves the company of dogs (echoing both Rochester’s attachment to Pilot and Emily’s bond with the family dogs). Moreover, Mr Helstone gives her the nickname ‘Captain Keeldar’ (155). Her outward appearance is similar to Emily’s: she is rather tall, has a pale complexion and dark hair. Yet she is ‘gracefully made,’ possessing an elegance that was rarely associated with Emily, the rough Yorkshire girl who wore quaint, old-fashioned dresses (151). While preserving some of her sister’s more masculine traits, Charlotte thus also added to these a dose of charm that suited the elevated status of heiress which she granted the heroine of Shirley. Furthermore, Shirley’s outspokenness stands in sharp contrast to the accounts of Emily’s reticence, explaining why Ellen Nussey allegedly failed to see the resemblance between the fictional character and its biographical counterpart (Barker 612). Shirley, being brought up in a more privileged position than the Brontës, seems to be more at ease in the world, and hence has no problem embracing her masculine name. Naturally, as Charlotte admitted to Mrs Gaskell, Shirley was a romanticized version of Emily. In her novel, Charlotte entertained the illusion of what sort of person her sister might have been, ‘had she been placed in health and prosperity’ (Gaskell 277). Here already, like she would as posthumous editor of the 1850 edition of Wuthering Heights and Agnes Grey, she moulded her image of Emily into a more idealized, admirable alternative.

As is apparent from her selection of poems for the 1850 edition, Charlotte preferred to share with the world some of Emily’s more temperate poetry. As she did in her comments on Wuthering Heights, she strove to highlight the softer aspects of her sister’s genius – the ones that would produce less friction when rubbed against the morals of contemporary society. The poem which she entitled ‘Love and Friendship’, for example, deals with the very safe and feminine theme of friendship’s constancy, which is valued over love’s short season. Moreover, its traditional theme and use of the holly tree as a

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33 Sally Minogue points out how, according to the Oxford Dictionary of English Christian Names, Charlotte’s was the first use of ‘Shirley’ as a first name, for either man or woman: ‘Its masculine associations derive from the fact that a family name is invariably passed on through the male line’ (Introduction to Shirley xi). Subsequent to the publication of Charlotte’s novel, the name became popularized and eventually lost its male connotation. Charlotte Brontë. Shirley. Ware: Wordsworth Editions Ltd. 2009. All subsequent references to this edition.
metaphor echoes Southey, the well-respected poet laureate. His 1798 poem ‘The Holly Tree’ equally celebrates the constancy of the holly tree as opposed to the ‘summer blossoms’:

And as, when all the summer trees are seen  
So bright and green,  
The Holly-leaves their fadeless hues display  
Less bright than they;  
But when the bare and wintry woods we see,  
What then so cheerful as the Holly-tree?\(^34\)

One of the most prominent examples of Charlotte inserting herself as a posthumous co-author into her sister’s work, is the poem that she published in 1850 under the title ‘The Visionary’. From the Gondal poem captioned ‘Julian M. and A. G. Rochelle’ Charlotte extracted only the first twelve lines, adding eight more lines (two stanzas) of her own. Remarkably, the same Gondal poem had already served as a source for the 1846 edition of Poems, when Emily selected lines 13-44 and 65-92 and re-titled them ‘The Prisoner: A Fragment’. However, her sister’s revision did not just significantly shorten the original. By choosing to omit most of the poem, Charlotte also deleted the prison context – still central in Emily’s selection – and consequently altered the poem’s theme. Together with the removal of the masculine connotations of war and imprisonment, the stanzas that she added transformed the poem into an avowal of female devotion, as well as achieving a sense of closure for the selected fragment.\(^35\) Since Emily’s original poem has at its centre the defiance of the female prisoner in the face of her male captors, it is especially striking that Charlotte completely reverses these gender roles:

Silent is the house: all are laid asleep:  
One alone looks out o’er the snow-wreaths deep;  
Watching every cloud, dreading every breeze  
That whirls the wildering drift, and bends the groaning trees.

Cheerful is the hearth, soft the matted floor;  
Not one shivering gust creeps through pane or door;  
The little lamp burns straight, its rays shoot strong and far;  
I trim it well, to be the wanderer’s guiding-star.


\(^35\) Typically, where Emily embraced the at times fragmentary nature of her poetry (even admitting so in her title, ‘The Prisoner: A Fragment’), Charlotte always searches for a way to grant the reader a (more traditional) sense of closure.
Frown, my haughty sire! chide my angry dame!
Set your slaves to spy; threaten me with shame:
But neither sire nor dame, nor prying serf shall know,
What angel nightly tracks that waste of frozen snow.

What I love shall come like visitant of air,
Safe in secret power from lurking human snare;
What love’s [sic] me, no word of mine shall e’er betray,
Though for faith unstained my life must forfeit pay.

Burn, then, little lamp; glimmer straight and clear –
Hush! a rustling wing stirs, methinks, the air:
He for whom I wait, thus ever comes to me;
Strange Power! I trust thy might; trust thou my constancy.\(^\text{36}\)

According to Gezari, the new version presents a female speaker who is awaiting a ‘mighty masculine lover’ (138), even willing to die for him (echoing Charlotte’s own Angrian heroines, often quite passive in their submissiveness). Of course this paints a very Victorian picture: the woman waits by the ‘cheerful … hearth’ for the arrival of the man. However, in my view, a new layer of meaning may be added to the interpretation of the poem, in which the speaker’s devotion is of a more pious nature, representing a Christian ‘constancy’ in faith. In this reading, the ‘rustling wing’ (line 18) refers back to the angel in line 12, who is patiently awaited by the devoted believer. This view complies with the trend among Victorian biographers to present their subject as having led, as Philip Waller calls it, the ‘exemplary Christian life’ (438). Both interpretations play into Charlotte’s cards, countering the image of a wild, Romantic Emily (the writer of *Wuthering Heights*) with that of a softer, more fragile poet. In the poem’s form as well, Charlotte’s intervention is evident. Both the rhythm and metre (strikingly different from Emily’s original lines in the first three stanzas), as well as the vocabulary of the final two stanzas are very much the elder sister’s. Charlotte, as an unacknowledged posthumous co-author, puts her words in Emily’s mouth. At the same time, Charlotte adapts Emily’s vocabulary to her own purposes, recycling the image of the ‘little lamp’ in her stanzas, but wrenching it from Emily’s realistic context. Instead, as Gezari has noted, the lamp is personified and addressed by the speaker (‘Burn, then, little lamp; glimmer straight and clear’) becoming a vehicle for Charlotte’s sentimental message (139).

Another strategy that Charlotte used in her effort to ‘reinterpret’ her sister for posterity, was to present Emily as intrinsically immature: a child that never fully grew

\(^{36}\) *WHAG* 487-488.
into an adult. In the ‘Biographical Notice’ she repeatedly defines her sister in terms of immaturity, describing her mind as ‘unripe ... inefficiently cultured and partially expanded’ (WHAG xii). She plays up the fact that her sisters were brought up in protected surroundings, where they apparently received little formal education:

Neither Emily nor Anne were learned; they had no thought of filling their pitchers at the well-spring of other minds; they always wrote from the impulse of nature, the dictates of intuition, and from such stores of observation as their limited experience had enabled them to amass. (WHAG xv)

The conclusion to the ‘Notice’ sums up the goal of Charlotte’s crusade: to convince the reading public that her sisters were ‘genuinely good and truly great’ (WHAG xvi). Charlotte wanted to soften Emily’s intractable temperament, what Gezari calls her ‘refusal to create or subscribe to a system’ (4). By turning her into a child, the elder sister defuses the danger in Emily’s defiance. She presents it as a charming character trait that Emily would certainly have grown out of. Hence, she stresses how Emily, and by extension her writing, would undoubtedly have reached full maturity had it not been for her premature death.

Set against this view of Emily’s childishness is the conviction that Charlotte herself possessed a greater maturity and consequently a better judgement about how Emily’s poems might be altered so as to fit contemporary tastes better. As a posthumous co-author, Charlotte could consequently grant some of her sister’s poems the ripeness that she felt they lacked. On the other hand, it was important to stress the immaturity in some of Emily’s poems, in order to promote the image of Emily as an innocent young poet. Already in the introduction to the first three poems that she includes in the 1850 edition (‘A little while, a little while’, ‘The Bluebell’ and ‘Loud without the wind was roaring’), Charlotte presents the poems as the work of a schoolgirl, overcome with homesickness during the ‘evening play-hour’: ‘The following pieces were composed at twilight, in the schoolroom, when the leisure of the evening play-hour brought back in full tide the thoughts of home’ (WHAG 473). Though the poems were written at the age of twenty, when Emily was a teacher at Law Hill, situating them earlier in Emily’s life (when she was a pupil at Roe Head) enhances the image of an undeveloped poet. Charlotte’s revision of the second verse in ‘A little while, a little while’ corroborates her view of the writer as a schoolgirl, rather than a teacher. She replaces the second line (‘The noisy crowd are barred away’ in Emily’s manuscript) with a line that presents the speaker as a pupil – one of the ‘noisy crowd’ – rather than the teacher who is overseeing this crowd:
A little while, a little while,
The weary task is put away,
And I can sing and I can smile,
Alike, while I have holiday.37

Charlotte’s deep grief over the early deaths of her sisters, already expressed in the ‘Biographical Notice’ and ‘Preface’, may also account for some of the editorial changes that she made to Emily’s poems. For example, in the final stanza of ‘The night wind’, Charlotte exchanges Emily’s ‘churcheyard’ for ‘church-aisle’:

“And when thy heart is resting,
“Beneath the church-aisle stone,
“I shall have time for mourning,
“And thou for being alone.”38

Thus, she subtly reminds the reader of the fact that Emily was buried in Haworth church itself, rather than in the churchyard. This way, the poem is appropriated by Charlotte so that it acquires an autobiographical connotation, reflecting back on her own relationship with her sister: she now ‘ha[s] time for mourning’ while Emily lies in the church-aisle. The bond between the two sisters – and their separation through death – is further stressed by Charlotte’s decision to italicize the contrasting pronouns ‘I’ and ‘thou’. This type of revision could only have been made by a posthumous co-author. A similar effort to make one of Emily’s poems reflect more directly on the biographical facts of the Brontë family is made by Charlotte in ‘I do not weep, I would not weep’, which she gave the title ‘Encouragement’ in the 1850 edition. The poem, clearly set in a Gondal context by Emily, as is apparent from the heading ‘A S to G S’ (Emily’s custom to indicate that the poem was addressed by one Gondal character to another), deals with the death of the speaker and addressee’s mother. Charlotte, as was her habit, stripped the poem of the Gondal heading, as well as removing the Gondal name ‘Gerald’ (line 14). Notably, she replaced the male name with the female ‘sister’:

Remember still, she is not dead;
She sees us, sister, now;
Laid, where her angel spirit fled,
‘Mid heath and frozen snow.39

The alteration again opens the poem up to autobiographical interpretation: the deceased mother who is being mourned could be Mrs Brontë, and the words of

37 WHAG 474, l. 1-4.
38 WHAG 480, l. 33-36.
39 WHAG 488, l. 13-16.
encouragement may be spoken to one of the Brontë sisters. Such biographical allusions may have helped Charlotte in her mourning process, but they also softened Emily’s coarse image by presenting her in a more pitiful light.

Charlotte’s false attribution of ‘No coward soul is mine’ as ‘the last lines my sister Emily ever wrote’ (WHAG 489), even though the poem was followed in Emily’s Gondal Poems notebook by at least one poem of a later date (‘Why ask to know the date – the clime’), again serves her interests as mediator. The poem became pivotal in the representation of Emily as a devoted believer, pious in her faith until the end. Relying once more on the reader’s knowledge of her sister’s untimely death, Charlotte drew a link with the author’s biography to achieve a sense of closure for her selection of poems that would equally symbolize her sister’s final illness and death. Charlotte’s revisions to the poem also replace Emily’s calmer lines with a much less subtle declaration of faith. As Gezari has remarked, by capitalizing and repeating Emily’s pronoun ‘thou’ in the final two lines, the poem acquires ‘the sort of moral lesson with which Charlotte frequently closes her own poems’ (134):

\[
\text{There is not room for Death,} \\
\text{Nor atom that his might could render void:} \\
\text{Thou – THOU art Being and Breath,} \\
\text{And what THOU art may never be destroyed.}\]

By exaggerating Emily’s piety, Charlotte once more tries to convince the contemporary reader that her sister was a ‘genuinely good’ girl, undeserving of the allegations that had been made against her.

Gezari further argues that Charlotte even went so far as to write an entirely original poem (rather than merely adding newly composed stanzas to an existing poem by Emily, as was the case with, for example, ‘The Visionary’) and ascribe it to her sister. Of course there is no hard proof that ‘Often rebuked, yet always back returning’ (titled ‘Stanzas’ in the 1850 edition) was indeed written by the elder, rather than the younger Brontë, since no original manuscript has been discovered for the poem. Yet, Charlotte’s thorough and unscrupulous editing of Emily’s other poems does give credence to Gezari’s theory. In this case, the posthumous co-author entirely displaces the original poet: Charlotte no longer supplements Emily, but supplants her. The poem presents the speaker as a headstrong yet essentially harmless girl, one who led a quiet but simple life, always in tune with nature:

\[40 \text{WHAG 490, l. 25-28.}\]
I’ll walk where my own nature would be leading:
   It vexes me to choose another guide:
   Where the grey flocks in ferny glens are feeding;
   Where the wild wind blows on the mountain side.\textsuperscript{41}

If Charlotte did write the poem, and consequently decided to ascribe its authorship to her sister, ‘Often rebuked, yet always back returning’ marks the ultimate act of mediation by Charlotte of ‘one who was [her] other self’.\textsuperscript{42}

Returning once more to the sketch in which Emily portrayed herself at work, we may now imagine a different picture. In this altered illustration, a third sister could be seen to enter the drawing, taking up a pencil and leaning over the shoulder of her younger sibling to make amendments to what she is writing – and in the process adding herself to the ‘papers’. The result of Charlotte’s posthumous mediation, as I argued in this section, is a different Emily. Instead of the mysterious, reticent writer who stubbornly refuses to show the viewer her face, Charlotte presents us with an author who is at once normalized and idealized – an innocent, feminine ‘poetess’ who could never consciously have intended to shock the reading public with her writing.

\textsuperscript{41} \textit{WHAG} 489, l. 13-16.
\textsuperscript{42} W. S. Williams in a letter to Charlotte after Emily’s death, dated 21 December 1848 (\textit{CBL I} I 156).
2.3 ‘Against the World’: Michael Field, Female Marriage and the Aura of Amateurism

Half a century after the emergence of the Brontës on the literary scene, two women entered into an entirely different brand of co-authorship. Katherine Bradley (1846-1914) and Edith Cooper (1862-1913), an aunt and niece, both Aestheticists, formed the writing duo that would become known under the purposely chosen masculine pseudonym of ‘Michael Field’. This section discusses the women’s private and professional ‘marriage’, as well as the expression of it on the page. I investigate how ‘the Fields’ (as their friends dubbed them) interacted with the concept of fame and reputation in late-Victorian England. How did their collaborative relationship influence the reception of their work? And was that the only factor at play in guiding readers’ and critics’ responses?

The case of Michael Field is different from those illustrated in other sections of this dissertation. Contrary to, for instance, Dickens or the Brontës, their co-authored fiction was the primary focus of their productivity, and their only attempt at a claim to fame. Katherine Bradley did publish one collection of poetry (1875’s The New Minnesinger) on her own, but once she and her niece had struck up their partnership, publication was always shared. Edith too, had written alone as a young adult. Her early poems were collected by Katherine in a posthumous edition, entitled Dedicated (1914). Remarkably, she chose to publish these poems equally under their shared pseudonym, presenting it as an ‘Early Work of Michael Field’. In a move reminiscent of Charlotte Brontë’s, Katherine thus posthumously inscribes herself as collaborator in a work that was originally Edith’s alone. Strikingly, Katherine’s first, solitary publication already shows her taste for the ‘game of literary androgyny’ (Donaghue 22). She issued the volume under the male pseudonym of ‘Arran Leigh’ (a clear echo of Elizabeth Barrett Browning’s Aurora Leigh, with its female poet protagonist). When Edith joined her in their communal literary effort, she assumed the role of pseudonymous wife: the first published fruit of their collaboration, Bellerophôn, was issued in 1881 under the names ‘Arran and Isla Leigh’. Finally, with the publication of Callirrhoë and Fair Rosamund in 1884, the women decided to merge their separate identities, and two became one in the persona of Michael Field.
2.3.1 Michael Field’s ‘Female Marriage’

The seeds of affection between the aunt and niece were sown early on, when Katherine lived with the Coopers to help her sister Lissie (an invalid after the birth of her second daughter Amy) with the household and the care for the children. When Edith grew up, she and Katherine attended University College Bristol together, and eventually – after many years of living with Edith’s widower father, James Cooper – even shared a house of their own. Their relationship developed against the ambiguous backdrop of late-Victorian England. On the one hand, their love for each other could be interpreted as an example of Victorian ‘romantic friendship’, a concept which allowed for superfluous affection between women without arousing any sexual implications. Moreover, family ties at the time allowed for profuse expressions of attachment in letters and diaries – some of which might nowadays be considered inappropriate. This explains, as Donaghue states, why ‘none of their family seem to have looked askance at Katherine and Edith’s growing passion, woven as it was into the family web of “darlings” and “dearests”’ (28). Yet, the two women were also entering the fin-de-siècle era, when new theories and legislation would work together to burst the bubble of innocence, and the concept of

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43 According to Carolyn Oulton, the common view saw romantic friendship as a phenomenon that took place mainly in youth (also between men, for example among school friends), but should ultimately give way to something with a broader social base (most often marriage, for example to the brother or sister of the object of friendship) (10). In literature, examples of romantic friendship abound (e.g. in Jane Austen’s pairs of sisters and friends). See also Lilian Faderman. Surpassing the Love of Men: Romantic Friendship and Love Between Women from the Renaissance to the Present (1981).
‘romantic friendship’ would undergo severe scrutiny for its possible sexual nature. Suspicion towards same-sex unions arose when, as Sharon Marcus has argued in *Between Women*, ‘medical writers and social thinkers in the 1880s began to equate inversion with the infantile, the primitive, and the undoing of a civilization premised on monogamous, heterosexual marriage’ (194). Of paramount influence in heightening anxiety about homosexuality (and among homosexuals) was the so-called ‘Labouchere Amendment’

44 Officially called Section 11 of the Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1885, the Labouchere Amendment made it possible to prosecute upon charges of ‘gross indecency’ – most commonly used to put male homosexuals on trial when actual sodomy (which was punishable by death) could not be proven.

45 As Emma Donaghue points out, ‘[t]hese silly nicknames had a serious point; the four of them [the Fields and the Painters] were devising a vocabulary to celebrate the non-marital but complementary roles they all played. Instead of husband and wife, they could be apple and pear’ (87).

Still, same-sex couples abounded in late-Victorian times. The Fields themselves were very close friends with a couple of artists and fellow aesthetes, Charles Ricketts and Charles Shannon, whom they affectionately called ‘the Painters’, ‘the Brothers’ or even ‘the Apple and the Pear’.

44 Like Bradley and Cooper, these two men shared their home, lives and work, but made sure to hide the extent of their intimacy from the public. Unlike the more explicit Wilde or John Addington Symonds, they feared society’s increasing suspicion of homosexuality. Another prominent example was Frances Power Cobbe, who lived together with her lover, the sculptor Mary Lloyd, for decades. In her correspondence with friends Cobbe explicitly referred to Lloyd in marital terms, calling her both her ‘husband’ and her ‘old woman’ or ‘wife’ (Marcus 52). Remarkably, in this instance, a woman could take on either or both gender roles within the so-called ‘female marriage’.

The Fields too, thought of their union in terms of heterosexual marriage, though they were careful not to refer to each other publicly as husband and/or wife. Allusions to their ‘marriage’ and the sexual nature of their relationship were mainly confined to the pages of their letters (in which they exchanged terms of endearment such as ‘Sweet Wife’ and ‘my own husband’ (Thain 45)) and their joint journal, *Works and Days* (published posthumously in 1933). Yet, their ‘female marriage’ differs significantly from traditional matrimony, precisely because it was a voluntary, fictitious construction, rather than a legal contract. Their union was socially accepted by friends and family, and therefore enforced, but it did not put a binding constraint on the women. To quote Marcus, ‘[t]heir legal status as unmarried women allowed them to have a socially
recognized spouse and to keep the economic autonomy that legally married wives relinquished under the doctrine of coverture’ (194). Katherine was aware of the constraint that traditional marriage sometimes put on women. She observed: ‘The wife has to mould her whole nature to her husband’s’ (qtd. in Donaghue 15). In a female marriage (ideally) this would not be the case. In contemporary discussions about marital reform, some progressive thinkers even believed that same-sex unions presented a model that traditional heterosexual marriage could benefit from, characterized as they were by ‘dissolubility, relative egalitarianism, and greater freedom for both spouses’ (Marcus 206). The Fields, moreover, had the added advantage of Katherine’s inheritance from her father. Charles Bradley had made his fortune in the tobacco industry, which allowed his daughter and her niece to live and write independently even when their writings were anything but lucrative, providing them with Woolf’s beloved ‘room of their own’.

In their private journal, Katherine compared her union with Edith to that of the Brownings. Robert Browning was a great friend and advocate of the Fields, and by the time of their acquaintance already an elderly poet of established fame46 (hence they nicknamed him ‘the old dear’, ‘the old poet’, as well as their ‘father poet’ (WAD 10-11)). Katherine wrote: ‘Oh! love. I give thanks for my Persian [Edith]: those two poets [Robert and Elizabeth Barrett Browning], man and wife, wrote alone; each wrote, but did not bless or quicken one another at their work; we are closer married’ (WAD 16). This was quite an ambitious claim to make, since the Brownings were often seen as the quintessential example of marital passion. Katherine here implies that even though she and Edith do not hold the seemingly inseparable epithet ‘man and wife’, their bond is even stronger: they not only share their life, but also the pages of their work. In a letter to Browning, Edith quoted some lines that Katherine wrote for her, in which the latter addresses her as her ‘poet-bride’, stressing once more their union as both poets and lovers (qtd. in Thain 97). Katherine did have a tendency to glorify her authorial partnership. Even though it is by now well-known that the two poets wrote separately and then corrected and edited each other’s work afterwards,47 overall she insisted on the indissolubility of their writing. In a letter to Havelock Ellis, author of Sexual Inversion and himself married

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46 The women’s reverence for Browning and his poetic judgement was extensive, as Katherine testified in their diary: ‘we never wrote a song, without thinking how he would react to it’ (Michael Field. Works and Days. Eds. T. & D. C. Sturge Moore. London: John Murray, 1933: p. 33. Henceforth referred to as ‘WAD’). Browning’s death in 1889 was a severe blow, as Edith wrote: ‘It will half-kill our poetry’ (WAD 34).

47 As Bradley admitted in a letter to J.M. Gray: ‘I weed Edith’s garden she mine; then examining each other’s withering heaps we exclaim – “Well, you might have spared that” – or, “that weak twining thing had yet a grace” – but the presiding horticulturalist is ruthless, & it is borne away to the barrow’ (Michael Field. Binary Star: Leaves from the Journal and Letters of Michael Field, 1846-1914. Ed. Ivor C. Treby. Bury St Edwards: De Blackland Press, 2006: p. 50. Henceforth referred to as ‘Letters’).
to a lesbian,\(^48\) Katherine described their labour: ‘The work is a perfect mosaic. We cross and interlace like a company of dancing summer flies; if one begins a character, his companion seizes and possesses it; if one conceives a scene or situation, the other corrects, completes, or murderously cuts away ... Let no man think he can put asunder what God has joined’ (Letters 50). Again, Katherine’s description of the collaboration acquires the status of a marital bond, as she invokes the words spoken by a priest at a marriage ceremony. On a private level, her quote from the Marriage Service can also be interpreted as a defence of her and Edith’s female marriage, which they will not allow any ‘man’ to ‘put asunder’.\(^49\) And yet, as Koestenbaum points out, while celebrating their inseparable union, Bradley also describes the partnership as ‘a murderous contest for possession’ (53). Interestingly, her assertion shows a refusal to confess to the gender of the co-authors, consciously using a male possessive pronoun to qualify the ‘companion’. This playful attitude towards gender was also reflected in the nicknames that the two women used to address each other. In language reminiscent of upper-class Etonians, they alternately called each other ‘my fellow’, ‘friend’, ‘comrade’ or ‘my boy’, and sometimes referred to each other as ‘he’. The use of their pseudonym was extended from the page to real life: their friends called them ‘the Michaels’ or ‘the Fields’ or ‘the Michael Fields’. Their alter ego was also split up to provide each partner with an individual nickname: Katherine was ‘Michael’ or ‘Mick’, while Edith was ‘Henry’ or ‘Field’. Only in their diary did they talk of each other in terms of ‘my love’, ‘lover’ or ‘Beloved’.

\(^48\) In Sexual Inversion (1897), Ellis offered his definition of the lesbian ‘invert’. The Fields did not correspond to this type however, lacking as they did ‘unconscious masculine qualities which define the invert’, evident from their ‘feminine wiles and aesthetic feminine dress’. Moreover, the adoption of a male pseudonym, since it was deliberate and not innate, did not fit Ellis’s definition (Thain 47).

\(^49\) Besides being unconventional spouses, the Fields also acted as untraditional mothers towards their surrogate child: their dog Whym Chow. Upon his death in 1906, they wrote an entire book of poems in his honour, which was sentimentally titled Whym Chow: Flame of Love. The book unites the dog with that other surrogate offspring of theirs: their poetry. Edith felt that women had to ‘create’ in one way or another: ‘They must be mothers in body or brain ... The child or the Poem!’ (qtd. in Donaghue 58).
Of course, *Works and Days* was not the only place in which the women could give free rein to their passionate feelings. Their work, and the special licence with which a poet can write in verse what may be not be said aloud (‘the love that dare not speak its name’), provided ample space to pour out their inner selves. Hiding behind the mask of the male Michael addressing his female beloved, they could pose as a heterosexual poet writing in the age-old tradition of amatory poetry. In the guise of their masculine alter ego, the Fields did not have qualms about including erotic imagery in their poetry. Desire for women, both of the heart and the body, was a recurring theme in their work, as for example in the Fields’ most celebrated volume of poetry, *Underneath the Bough* (1893). The poem titled ‘A Girl’ aptly illustrates this:

A girl,
Her soul a deep-wave pearl
Dim, lucent of all love mysteries;
A face flowered for heart’s ease,
A brow’s grace soft as seas
Seen through faint forest-trees:
A mouth, the lips apart,
Like aspen-leaflets trembling in the breeze
From her tempestuous heart.
Such: and our souls so knit,
I leave a page half-writ –
The work begun
The poem describes how the speaker (presumed to be male by the reader of Michael Field’s volume), unseen in his hiding spot, observes the object of his desire ‘through faint forest trees,’ as though looking is forbidden. The sensuality of the lines is evident; the girl’s lips are parted, and compared to ‘aspen-leaves trembling in the breeze’. Of course, since Michael Field is but a pseudonym for Bradley and Cooper, one can argue that the voyeuristic gaze is actually female – the woman’s eyes hidden behind a man’s mask. Laura Mulvey’s concept of the ‘scopophilic gaze’, which she described in ‘Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema’ as ‘pleasure in using another person as an object of sexual stimulation through sight’ (10), is applicable here. However, whereas in Mulvey’s view the scopophilic gaze indicated the commodification of the woman-object by a male subject (‘active/male’ versus ‘passive/female’ (11)), the notion can be extended here to describe an instance of gazing in which both the observer and the observed are female. In this poem, the female poets thus appropriate the male gaze for themselves, asserting their desire and right to admire, instead of merely being the object of admiration. Moreover, the poem offers an interesting turn in its final five lines. Suddenly, the viewer and his (her) object are united, as the solitary ‘girl’ in the first verse makes way for ‘our souls,’ which are ‘knit,’ united, intertwined: the lovers are together now. In the final lines, the lovers turn out to be poets, in what can be interpreted as a direct reference to the Fields’ co-authorship. The speaker ‘leaves a page half-writ,’ waiting for the other to complete the work that she has begun. The poem, with its desire for dual authorship, thus defies the traditional premises of amatory poetry. By insisting that the poem requires a second poet to finish it, it ‘offer[s] a radical challenge to the solitary voice of the Romantic lyric’ (Thain 100).

The eroticism of ‘A Girl’ is even stronger in the imagery of another Underneath the Bough poem, called ‘Unbosoming’:

The love that breeds
In my heart for thee!
As the iris is full, brimful of seeds,
And all that it flowered for among the reeds
Is packed in a thousand vermilion-beads
That push, and riot, and squeeze, and clip,
Till they burst the sides of the silver scrip,

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And at last we see
What the bloom, with its tremulous, bowery
fold
Of zephyr-petal at heart did hold:
So my breast is rent
With the burthen and strain of its great
content;
For the summer of fragrance and sighs is dead,
The harvest-secret is burning red,
And I would give thee, after my kind,
The final issues of heart and mind.

Reminiscent of Rossetti’s eroticizing of nature in *Goblin Market’s* description of the ‘luscious’ fruit\(^{52}\) (sweetly ‘sucked’ by Laura\(^{53}\)), the Fields use the image of flowers to enrobe their message.\(^{54}\) The title already hints at the theme of the poem: the speaker has a secret to ‘unbosom’. The Fields here use the iris as a powerful metaphor for the secret that is bursting to get out. In Victorian floriography (or the ‘language of flowers’\(^{55}\)), the iris was said to stand for ‘eloquence’, which can be related to the poem’s theme of ‘unbosoming’: voicing the secret about which the speaker has been silent before. The flower is ‘brimful of seeds / That push, and riot, and squeeze, and clip’ until the iris – inevitably, so the reader feels – ‘burst[s]’ open to reveal its core. The language is almost orgasmic, with its references to the bursting and trembling of the flower (the latter echoes the ‘trembling’ aspen-leaflets in ‘A Girl’). The second part of the poem relates the metaphor to the speaker. The secret is out: ‘the love that breeds / In my heart for thee’ is ‘at last’ free for all to see. However, the speaker feels ambiguous about this unbosoming: the secret was a ‘burthen and strain’ and, once out in the open, is ‘burning red’. Why was the secret so hard to bear, and why should this ‘love’ burn red once it has been made public? Unless of course the love is blushing for its own existence – perhaps it ‘dare not speak its name’. In this interpretation, Michael Field’s poem again becomes

\(^{51}\) UTB 77-78.
\(^{54}\) Marcus points out how *Goblin Market* too, hints at lesbian tension, with Lizzie urging her sister: ‘Hug me, kiss me, suck my juices.../ Eat me, drink me, love me’ (*Norton* p. 1476, v. 468-471), yet ‘[t]he fact that the speaker of these lines is a woman addressing her sister did not faze Victorian readers,’ who even included the poem in an anthology for schoolgirls (15). As in romantic friendships between women, excessive affection between sisters was rarely perceived as abnormal or extraordinary.
\(^{55}\) Floriography provided Victorians with a means (e.g. for lovers) of indirectly communicating clandestine messages through the choice of a particular flower. Each flower carried a specific hidden meaning (some of which still endure to this day): red roses stood for passion, yellow roses for friendship etc.
an indirect testimony to the love of a woman, for a woman, and the reader can glimpse once more the double female behind the man’s mask.

A different strategy to write about same-sex affection was to speak ‘through’ another woman, albeit in a safely distant past. In 1889, Michael Field published Long Ago, a book of poems inspired by Sappho, that moved a praising Browning to call them his ‘two dear Greek women’ (WAD 20). Though speaking through Sappho, who is praised in the book’s Preface as ‘the one woman who has dared to speak unfalteringly of the fearful mastery of love’, Bradley and Cooper were not entering a ready-made female homoerotic discourse. Although more and more women were being educated in Latin and Greek, the classics were still very much a male territory. Moreover, at the end of the nineteenth century, Sappho was not yet read in a lesbian context, since she was known mainly through Ovid’s ‘Sappho to Phaon’, which had ‘construed [her] as the heterosexual abandoned woman, lamenting the loss of her man’ (Thain 52). Hence, the Fields were not making an obviously ‘lesbian’ statement by writing ‘as’ Sappho in their book of poetry. What is more, they still included poems in which Sappho asserts her love for Phaon, alongside others that describe same-sex attraction, populating the volume with what Thain calls ‘a veritable orgy of loves’ (53). The verses in Long Ago are at times transparently homoerotic, as in ‘Poem XXVII’:

But when Mnasidica doth raise
Her arm to feed the lamp I gaze
Glad at the lovely curve;
And when her pitcher at the spring
She fills, I watch her tresses swerve
And drip, then pause to see her wring
Her hair, and back the bright drops fling.

As in ‘A Girl’, this excerpt again shows the speaker (Sappho) in the role of voyeur. She ‘gaze[s] glad[ly]’ at Mnasidica’s body, at her ‘curve[s]’ and ‘drip[ping] tresses’. This time however, she is a woman (yet, positioned as she is ‘[a] great while since, a long, long time ago’, far removed from the actual women holding the pen). The gaze is female and pointedly scopophilic: the viewer experiences obvious erotic pleasure from her observation of Mnasidica. Again, nature, eroticized, plays a part in this scene, as it is the

57 For further discussion of Michael Field’s adoption of Sappho, see Yopie Prins’s chapter on Long Ago in her book Victorian Sappho (1999). In her discussion, Prins argues how Bradley and Cooper used the Sapphic fragments ‘in order to develop a model of lyric authorship in which voice is the effect of an eroticized textual mediation between the two of them rather than the representation of an unmediated solitary utterance’ (76).
58 Long Ago 44-45.
59 Epigraph to Long Ago.
spring (and its dripping water) that takes a central role in bringing about Mnasidica’s arousing actions.

Frontispiece to Long Ago (1889).
2.3.2  The Aura of Amateurism

When Michael Field entered the literary scene in 1884 with the publication of the double verse dramas Callirrhoe and Fair Rosamund, reactions were initially favourable. Their work was received well by the critics: The Spectator announced ‘the ring of a new voice which is likely to be heard far among the English-speaking peoples’ (Sturgeon 27). Several of the great minds of the age wrote to praise the women, including of course Browning (marking the beginning of their enduring friendship), but also George Meredith and Oscar Wilde. The women took pride in the attention they received, saving all the clippings and including the critics’ praise in the paratext of their next collection of plays (Donaghue 39). However, the couple’s initial literary success did not last. Attention for their work dwindled, and Michael Field was increasingly neglected. The premiere of A Question of Memory in 1893, the only one of their plays ever to be staged, was a decided flop. Against the women’s own expectations, their poetry was received more favourably than their drama (Thain 43). Still, their poetry collections had limited, often expensive print runs, and were thus read primarily by their own circle of intimates and fellow Aesthetes. Shortly after their deaths in 1913 and 1914, The Cambridge History of English Literature, in its 1916 instalment on the nineteenth century, placed Michael Field under the section titled ‘Lesser Poets of the Middle and Later Nineteenth Century,’ reflecting the poets’ feeble reputation at the time. Moreover, the volume, which devoted no more than three sentences to Michael Field, explicitly stated that the early acclaim that Bradley and Cooper received from the critics was a case of ‘over-estimation,’ justified by the fact that ‘[o]thers have failed to discover much in the joint work which goes beyond the standard’. Ultimately, the women’s collaboration is dismissed as little more than a ‘curious fancy’.

Bradley and Cooper themselves held an ambiguous stance towards fame. On the one hand, the co-authors did not appear to be bent on literary success. Their adherence to aesthetic doctrine, famously coined in Walter Pater’s phrase ‘art for art’s sake,’ may account for the fact that the Fields continued to publish their texts, despite critical

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60  For example, only a hundred copies were printed of Long Ago, although the edition was high quality, sporting a vellum cover embellished with an ancient image of Sappho and embossed with gold lettering. Underneath the Bough too, was ‘limited to 150 copies,’ as the volume explicitly states in its cover pages. Yet, again the material aspect of the book is remarkable: the title, as well as the Fields’ symbol, which merges Christian and pagan icons, are stamped in gold lettering on the cover. The icon consists of two intertwined rings (reminiscent once more of their female marriage) which are crossed with a thyrsus, a ‘staff or spear tipped with an ornament like a pine-cone, and sometimes wreathed with ivy or vine branches’ (OED) traditionally carried by Bacchic maenads (symbolizing fertility and hedonism, pointing to the fruit of the Fields’ Aesthetic labour). The symbol was used again later, for the cover of the posthumous edition of Works and Days in 1933. Moreover, the volume is lined on the inside with rich green silk, and the poems are printed on thick paper of a heavy quality.

neglect. With the exception of *A Question of Memory*, all their plays were closet plays. They were not written to be performed on stage, but rather to exist as works of art per se, without a direct commercial function. Their work was circulated and admired among a coterie of friends and family, who responded to it in letters that showed their appreciation, while enjoying the game of playing around with their pseudonym. Moreover, the Fields’ apparent indifference to literary fame transpires in their poem ‘It was deep April, and the morn’:

It was deep April, and the morn
Shakspere was born;
The world was on us, pressing sore;
My love and I took hands and swore,
Against the world, to be
Poets and lovers evermore,
To laugh and dream on Lethe's shore,
To sing to Charon in his boat,
Heartening the timid souls afloat;
Of judgement never to take heed,
But to those fast-locked souls to speed,
Who never from Apollo fled,
Who spent no hour among the dead;
Continually
With them to dwell,
Indifferent to heaven and hell.

The speaker and her beloved here ‘swear’ (a term that again recalls the solemnity of a wedding vow) to be ‘poets and lovers’ ‘against the world’, which is ‘pressing sore’, claiming that what matters is their union in life as well as in poetry, not society’s opinion of them. The thought returns further on in the poem, when the poets vow ‘of judgement never to take heed’, which may conveniently be interpreted as a reference to the Fields being slighted by the critics. ‘It was deep April, and the morn’ was included in *Underneath the Bough*, published in 1893, by which time the neglect by the literary market had certainly become obvious to the poets. With their invocation of Shakespeare, born in ‘deep’ (23rd) April of the year 1564, the women inscribe themselves in the tradition of the amatory sonnet. Shakespeare is thus appealed to as a kind of witness to the legitimacy of both their poetry and their love. A striking difference to classic love poetry is the assertion that ‘my love and I’ are both ‘poets and lovers’, a

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62 For instance, Katherine’s cousin, Francis Brooks, addressed them as the ‘Dear Sacred Ones’ and signed himself ‘Michaelian’, ‘as if Katherine and Edith were the twin deities of a cult he had joined’ (Donaghue 45).
63 UTB 79.
claim which upends the roles (traditionally assigned in the amatory sonnet) of speaker-lover and addressee-beloved, or as Angela Leighton observes: ‘this is a love poem not split into a subject within and an object observed without’ (209). Since both women are the poet-lovers, both are also the object of affection, standing on an equal footing. This reinforces the idea, expressed above, of female marriage as being more evenly balanced than its heterosexual counterpart. Several factors also point to the poets’ belief in immortality through poetry, a notion which again serves as a way to minimize critical neglect. The invocation of Shakespeare of course strengthens this view, alluding to his Sonnet 18 (‘So long as men can breathe or eyes can see, / So long lives this and this gives life to thee’). Moreover, the word ‘evermore’ certainly defies the temporality of literary success during the poets’ lifetime. The poet-lovers also swear to ‘laugh and dream on Lethe’s shore, / To sing to Charon in his boat’, denying any fear of death by mocking the underworld and its iconic ferryman. This is reiterated in the final verse, where Michael Field claims to be ‘[i]ndifferent to heaven and hell’, showing that Christian aspects of death inspire as little fear as those of classical mythology.

Nevertheless, there are other indications that Bradley and Cooper’s lack of acclaim did preoccupy them. When the critics’ neglect became obvious, Katherine wrote to Havelock Ellis, somewhat in despair: ‘Want of due recognition is beginning its embittering, disintegrating work, and we will have in the end a cynic such as only a disillusioned Bacchant can become’ (qtd. in Sturgeon 30). Leo Braudy, in The Frenzy of Renown, explains the need for appreciation felt by many authors: ‘[T]he urge for fame mingles one’s acceptance of oneself with the desire for others ... to recognize that one is special. It is the most immediate effort individuals make to reach beyond themselves, their families, and their place in a traditional order to claim a more general approval of their behavior and nature’ (585). However, it became apparent that Michael Field, initially hailed by the critics as a new literary talent, would find a wholly different response once it became known that ‘he’ was not a male, single author, but a double, female one. The Fields’ authorship, it turned out, was doomed by a dual aura of amateurism: both their gender and their co-authorship threatened their chance of a serious reception.

Central to the co-authors’ perception of their own identity is, of course, their sobriquet. The fact that the two women chose to be known to the world only under the name of ‘Michael Field’ is equally telling of their awareness of the mechanics of the literary market and of their concern about their reputation. The adoption of a masculine mask of course reiterates that of nineteenth-century predecessors such as George Eliot, George Sand and the Brontë sisters. Virginia Woolf, in her seminal essay A Room of One’s Own, interpreted this habit of concealment as the consequence of ingrained patriarchal values:
It was the relic of the sense of chastity that dictated anonymity to women even so late as the nineteenth century. Currer Bell, George Eliot, George Sand, all the victims of inner strife as their writings prove, sought ineffectively to veil themselves by using the name of a man. Thus they did homage to the convention, which if not implanted by the other sex was liberally encouraged by them (the chief glory of a woman is not to be talked of, said Pericles, himself a much-talked-of man) that publicity in women is detestable. Anonymity runs in their blood. (65)

However, the case of the Fields is even more complicated, since the male pseudonym in this instance concealed not only their gender, but also their co-authorship. As Bette London points out, this doubly veiled status enhanced the risk of the women and their work being pushed to the margins: [I]n the case of women, literary collaborators suffered from a double invisibility – the invisibility of collaboration and the invisibility of women’s writing. Even where such collaborations were openly recognized, they tended to be represented in ways guaranteed to ensure their marginalization’ (9).

The Fields’ secret soon got out, when a well-meaning Browning accidentally betrayed the female identity of ‘Michael Field’, believing the women only wanted to keep hidden the fact that the work was a result of collaboration. When the Athenaæum, in an 1884 review, referred to the playwright as ‘she’, the women knew that only Browning, in whom they had confided, could have let slip the secret. An agitated Katherine wrote a reproachful letter, stating that they needed the male disguise to be allowed to write freely: ‘the report of lady authorship will dwarf and enfeeble our work at every turn … we have many things to say the world will not tolerate from a woman’s lips’ (WAD 6). The women, as she further explained, feared to be ‘stifled’ by the ‘drawing-room conventionalities’ that were usually reserved for female writers. Indeed, as Virginia Blain notes, ‘[T]ragedy, as a dramatic genre, was strongly coded “Male” in the nineteenth century’ (246). The Fields’ brand of tragic drama was daringly passionate in tone and theme, and would be deemed intolerable by many if they knew it had flown from a woman’s pen. Moreover, as Bradley explained to Browning, he was ‘robbing [them] of real criticism, such as a man gives a man’ (WAD 7). Like the other female authors writing under a male pseudonym that preceded them, Bradley and Cooper hoped that adopting a man’s name would guarantee them a man’s reception. The Fields’ frustration may have been motivated less by a longing for fame, than by a desire to be taken seriously despite their unconventional brand of authorship, or as Holly A. Laird puts it: a ‘struggle for authority amid a nagging sense of marginality’ (82). The women had put on a man’s mask to have a fighting chance of making a place for themselves in serious literature. Nevertheless, the truth about their authorship soon spread, and

eventually became a kind of open secret among literati, despite the women’s stubborn reluctance to admit to it. That they were right to fear exposure, became painfully clear at the premiere of their only play ever to be performed on stage. When *A Question of Memory* opened on 11 November 1893, according to the reviewer of *Winters Weekly Magazine*, ‘the mixture of hisses and applause died away to pure applause when “two graceful young ladies” stood up, revealing themselves as Michael Field’ (York 295). The anecdote is a typical example of the hypocritical condescension towards female writers that the Fields had so hoped to avoid.

Their gender, of course, was not the only factor that complicated the reception of the Michael Fields. Perhaps an even harder factor for their readers and reviewers to come to grips with, was their double authorship. Mary Sturgeon, writing in 1922, claimed that their collaboration was ‘obscurely repellent’ to the late-Victorian reader (29). In an age in which the myth of the solitary genius reigned strongly, authors who deviated from the norm were rapidly pushed to the margins and given the label of amateurism. As Leighton puts it, the practice of double writing threatened ‘some notional sanctity of authorship,’ persistently present in late-nineteenth-century culture (203). Walter Besant, though himself a collaborator, largely corroborated this view in his 1892 essay ‘On Literary Collaboration’, published in the *New Review*. He pointed to the audience’s discomfort with any form of writing that did not at least resemble single authorship, concluding: ‘We must hear – or think we hear – one voice’. The *Athenaeum*, though it printed a lengthy and appreciative review of *Underneath the Bough*, also mused on the ‘strange poetic unison of two,’ labelling Michael Field’s origins as ‘peculiar’. According to Lorraine York, the Fields’ case was problematic because of their ‘occupation by two authorial presences of a conventionally unitary authorial space’ (288). Consequently, critics, but also literary friends writing to the couple, tried to force their dual authorship back into ‘a single-author model,’ a process that York (as I have previously discussed) calls ‘parsing the collaboration’ (292). Browning was one of the first to inquire after Michael Field’s true authorship. Edith, perhaps impressed by his reputation, wrote him an honest answer in which she explained how she and her aunt worked together ‘after the fashion of Beaumont and Fletcher’ (*WAD* 3). In this earliest stage of their acquaintance, Browning wondered ‘how much of the book ... [was] indeed [her] own part’ (*WAD* 2). Others who discovered the truth of their co-authorship sent the Fields similar prying inquiries, bent on learning the exact share of each partner in the production of their work. George Moore wanted to know ‘who [did] the love scenes’

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65 Besant struck up a writing partnership with James Rice, which resulted in over a dozen co-written novels. The collaboration ended with Rice’s early death in 1882.
67 9 September 1893, p. 346.
(WAD 201), while George Meredith, even more specifically, was curious as to ‘which of [them] “did the Males?”’ (WAD 82). Bradley’s letter to Havelock Ellis, cited above, was the co-author’s exasperated answer to the umpteenth inquiry after the women’s separate roles in the partnership: they would not be ‘put asunder’.

Possibly, the women’s refusal to allow their collaboration to be dissected into its constituent halves, was partly responsible for the increasing neglect by the critics. The aura of amateurism, in their case, was hard to shake off. As Laird remarks, by clinging obstinately to a brand of authorship that posed a ‘threat … to literary and social norms’ (83), Bradley and Cooper ‘risked becoming merely a mild joke in the literary world’ (89). An optimistic Browning was convinced that the timing of the ‘binary star’ was simply wrong,\(^68\) telling his friends to ‘wait fifty years’ for fame to come (WAD 20). The sentiment was later repeated by Katherine, who confidently claimed in 1900: ‘Michael will be discovered in the 20\(^{th}\) Century’ (Letters 38). Yet, despite efforts by their friends (Charles Ricketts even erected a monument for the Michaels), the poets soon sank into obscurity after their deaths in 1913 and 1914. It quickly appeared as though ‘a tacit, mutual agreement had been made by the literary world to bury them’ (Laird 83). The modernists, in their effort to ‘make [everything] new,’ were not interested in their Aesthetic sentiments and classic references, and to subsequent generations they were long forgotten. Ironically, when the Fields were ‘rediscovered’ by feminist scholars in the 1970s, it was exactly their quirky, marginal position that raised critical curiosity among their novel audience. Still, like the poets’ contemporary reviewers, many of these new readers were bent on dissecting the partnership. Clinging to the ingrained notion of solitary authorship, until recently, puzzled academics still tried to find out who wrote what. And yet, as Foucault pointed out, in words that echo Samuel Beckett but could just as well have been uttered by the Fields themselves: ‘[w]hat difference does it make who is speaking?’ (120).

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\(^{68}\) Robert Browning in a letter to Michael Field, dated 13 May 1886 (Letters 4).
2.4 Delionizing Dickens: Collaboration in the Christmas Numbers

One of the many popular anecdotes that have helped to fan Charles Dickens’s iconicity, is that of the London barrow-girl that heard of his death on 9 June 1870, and wondered: ‘Dickens dead? Then will Father Christmas die too?’ 69 The tale testifies not only to the way in which Dickens’s fame had pervaded the many layers of Victorian society, reaching even the simple, presumably illiterate, barrow-girl, but also implies that his name had become inextricably linked to the Christian holiday. This section is especially concerned with Dickens’s Christmas Numbers project, for which the ‘Inimitable’ engaged a host of writers in an ambitious collaboration. My analysis of Dickens’s shared venture aims to challenge the long-established image of Dickens as a solitary icon. The special issues ran from 1851 in Household Words, the journal edited by Dickens. 70 The first three numbers simply consisted of a series of apparently loosely collected accounts of Christmas in various places or different strata of society. From 1854 onwards, Dickens devised a Chaucer-like framework within which each separate contribution was enclosed. 71 Except for the first extra Christmas number which, with its twenty-four pages, amounted to the size of a regular issue, all Household Words holiday issues contained thirty-six pages and cost three pence (making it affordable for a wide audience, including even lower-class readers). When Dickens broke up with Bradbury and Evans and founded All the Year Round in 1859, he continued the tradition of the Christmas numbers, until 1867’s No Thoroughfare. The seasonal publications were extended to double the size of a regular number, now counting forty-eight pages in total (Slater 478). In his Christmas writings, Dickens clearly wished to advocate a specific ‘brand’ of Christmas, which was corroborated by other writers and magazines, but at times also called into question, for example in the pages of Punch (though the magazines did share some common ideological ground, as I will point out). The second part of this section will address the inevitably ambiguous relationship that any collaborator of Dickens entered into, as pupil to the ‘Master’. At the same time, the latter’s increasing frustration with the production of the Christmas Numbers shows that the discontent generated by the project was mutual.

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70 Actually, the first number dealing with Christmas was published a year earlier, on 21 December 1850. However, this was not an extra number or special issue, but was part of the regular weekly publication.
71 This frame-tale structure was certainly not unfamiliar to Dickens, a fervent admirer, from childhood onwards, of Scheherazade’s tales in the Arabian Nights story cycle (Slater 11).
2.4.1 The Christmas Numbers and the Spirit of ‘Fellow Feeling’

Of course, Dickens’s interest in Christmas predates the extra numbers that he published in his periodicals. References to the holiday were already included in *The Pickwick Papers* (1836-1837). The title of chapter XXVIII announces a ‘GOOD-HUMOURED CHRISTMAS CHAPTER,’ in which Christmas is hailed as ‘the season of hospitality, merriment, and open-heartedness’. Indeed, Mr Pickwick’s Christmas celebration is one of happy companionship, a gathering of friends that includes all the required seasonal ingredients in abundant measure: there is a ‘substantial’ supper, a ‘mighty’ bowl of wassail, dancing, kisses under the mistletoe and storytelling around the fire (*PP* 393). The celebration is complete when Mr Wardle treats his friends to a rendition of his own ‘Christmas Carol’, a song that glorifies the holiday:

But my song I troll out, for CHRISTMAS Stout,  
The hearty, the true, and the bold;  
A bumper I drain, and with might and main  
Give three cheers for this Christmas old! (*PP* 394)

Writing in 1836, the topic of Christmas already bears such fascination to the young Dickens, that the chapter runs rather longer than planned, as the narrator admits: ‘But bless our editorial heart, what a long chapter we have been betrayed into! We had quite forgotten all such petty restrictions as chapters, we solemnly declare’ (*PP* 395).

The real ‘breakthrough’ of Christmas in Boz’s writing, however, came with the publication of *A Christmas Carol*. First published a week before Christmas Eve, on 19 December 1843, the story, as Michael Slater puts it, ‘has become as much part of the furniture of the Anglo-American Christmas as holly, mistletoe, Christmas trees and Christmas crackers’. The *Carol*, which chronicles the reformation of Scrooge in the course of one Christmas Eve, was the embodiment of Christian charity, showing that the holiday could move even the greatest miser to feel compassion for his fellow men. Dickens had realised ‘the power of the Christmas factor as regards appeals on behalf of the poor’ (Slater 213). Certainly, many other voices (in sermons, newspaper articles etc) were spreading the same message. Yet, none of these had the impact that the *Carol* did: after publication, it was immediately pirated and adapted for the stage, reaching an ever larger audience, including the illiterate. Dickens soon felt the necessity to produce other Christmas books, as did other authors, such as W. M. Thackeray (published under the pseudonym of Mr. M. A. Titmarsh, 1847-1855) and Elizabeth Gaskell (*The Moorland*...)

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Cottage, 1850). As an article in Punch remarked in 1846: ‘Every little author is preparing a five-shilling volume in imitation of the Christmas Carol’.75 Accordingly, a genuine Christmas print market was gradually taking shape, diffusing its preferred Christian values among the British readers. Consequently, the periodical press and literary market increasingly became a site of identity formation for the nation, spreading the popularity of Christmas traditions. For example, as Tara Moore remarks in her book Victorian Christmas in Print, it was the illustration of Queen Victoria’s Christmas tree, printed in The Illustrated London News in December 1848, that helped to spread the originally German custom of decorating a tree for the holidays in England (2009 1). The yearly publication of Christmas literature grew to be a much anticipated and commercialized event, sometimes resulting in ‘amazing first-day sales’ (Moore 2009 7).

The Royal Family Christmas Tree, Illustrated London News, 23 December 1848.

Dickens became convinced that there was a ‘gap at Christmas firesides which [he] ought to fill’ (L5 165).76 The hugely popular Carol set the tone for the three Christmas

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76 In referring to the Pilgrim edition of Dickens’s letters, I use the abbreviation L, followed by the number of the respective volume (1 to 12).
books that followed, as well as for the Christmas numbers, the first of which appeared in *Household Words* on 21 December 1850. The number was headed by Dickens’s famous leader, ‘A Christmas Tree’. Written in the form of a memoir, the tale already announces one of the great recurring themes in the Christmas numbers: that of memory, combined with nostalgia. The sudden and imaginary appearance of a decorated Christmas tree – like a Ghost of Christmas Past – launches the adult Dickens into a reminiscence of Christmas in his childhood:

> Straight, in the middle of the room, cramped in the freedom of its growth by no encircling walls or soon-reaching ceiling, a shadowy tree arises; and, looking up into the dreamy brightness of its top — for I observe, in this tree, the singular property that it appears to grow downward towards the earth — I look into my youngest Christmas recollections.

Also heralded in Dickens’s piece of writing, is the suitability of the ghost story for seasonal tales, which were deemed ‘particularly appropriate “round the Christmas fire”’ (*HW*, 21 December 1850, p. 293). While Dickens often glorified both the moral and the material aspects of the holiday, advocating Christmas charity and providing elaborate descriptions of seasonal celebrations (cf. infra), he nonetheless liked to play up its uncanny qualities. Of course, the Carol, subtitled *Being a Ghost Story of Christmas*, was an early herald of ghostly Christmas fiction. Yet the supernatural is also given a prominent role in several Christmas numbers, such as Elizabeth Gaskell’s ‘Old Nurse’s Story’ in *A Round of Stories by the Christmas Fire* (1852) and John Oxenford’s ‘His Umbrella’ in *Somebody’s Luggage* (1862). Dickens already testifies to the sinister side of the holiday in ‘A Christmas Tree’. Amid the plentiful parade of delightful Christmas gifts, he recalls several toys that inspire fear and even cause nightmares for the young child on which they are bestowed. Dickens remembers an ‘infernal snuff-box, out of which there sprang a demoniacal Counsellor ... who was not to be endured on any terms, but could not be put away either; for he used suddenly, in a highly magnified state, to fly out of Mammoth Snuff-boxes in dreams, when least expected’ (*HW*, 21 December 1850, p. 289). Even worse was the toy-mask, whose ‘fixed face ... was sufficient to awake [him] in the night all perspiration and horror, with “O I know it's coming! O the mask!”’ (290).

Furthermore, in the latter part of his imaginative essay, Dickens includes a series of second-hand ghost stories, supposedly told by friends and family around the Christmas fire. Hurriedly related one after the other, introduced by polysyndetic phrases that

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77 *Household Words*, 21 December 1850, p. 289. Consulted via *Dickens Journals Online* on 15 October 2012. References to *Household Words* will henceforth be indicated by the abbreviation ‘HW’, pagination follows that of the volumes.

78 All references to *Household Words* will be indicated by the abbreviation ‘HW’, those to *All the Year Round* by ‘AYR’.
vaguely attribute the story to its original narrator (‘Or, a friend of somebody’s... ’, ‘Or, the uncle of my brother’s wife... ’, ‘Or, it was a certain sensible old maiden lady... ’ (294)), these brief tales could easily be drafts for possible stories to be included in some of the later Christmas numbers.

Still, Dickens was equally eager to undercut the gravity of the supernatural in his tales. More and more, the ghost stories lost their horrific tone, and instead became for Dickens a means of laying bare the human mind, a feat especially achieved through the recurrence of memories. In a letter to Gaskell in 1851, Dickens argued that ghost stories were exceptionally appropriate for ‘illustrating particular states of mind and processes of the imagination’ (L6 546). Remarkably, though several of the Christmas Numbers were given a ghostly title, the stories themselves tell tales of memory, rather than of the supernatural. For example, in The Haunted House (1859), the presumed presence of ‘ghosts’ in the house is really nothing more than an excuse for the occupants to gather and tell stories. The ‘ghosts’ that are supposedly haunting the narrators, are in fact mere memories from their past. As it turns out, the two inhabitants of the house that are ‘haunted’ the most, are Mr. Governor and the narrator’s sister, who have been haunted by each other: they are in love. The Haunted House promises a chilling tale of mystery in its title, but ends traditionally, with a marriage. Dickens, who was at the time very much concerned with voicing his skepticism towards spiritualism, here uses the Christmas number to deny the existence of ghosts by explaining them as figments of memory. The idea of gathering round the fire to hear a story being read out stresses the oral nature of storytelling, nostalgically recalling the olden days, when print was less widespread. This oral tradition was continued, of course, in Dickens’s famous public readings of his work, both at Christmas and in other seasons. As Slater notes, Dickens conceived of these readings as family entertainments, casting himself in the role of father or host: he ‘urged the members of his audience of three thousand seven hundred to think of themselves as “a small social party assembled to hear a tale told round the Christmas fire”’ (382-383).

The custom of reading around the Christmas fire certainly fits in with the project of marketing the holiday as a family occasion, a notion which finds resonance in the tales of family reunion in the Christmas numbers (cf. infra). The hearth becomes a type of synecdoche, a pars pro toto for the close-knitted family home, with its implied values of mutual affection, trust and safety. The trope is especially appropriate at Christmas,

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79 As is apparent from the disagreement in his correspondence with William Howitt, a former contributor to Household Words and spiritualist fanatic ‘whom Dickens, alluding to the contemporary craze for communicating with spirits by table-rapping, called “a kind of arch-rapper among the rappers”’ (Slater 478). The Haunted House satirizes Howitt’s belief in spectral appearances by exposing them as mere memories, or as Rosemarie Bodenheimer puts it, Dickens aimed ‘to demonstrate that there were no haunted houses, only minds haunted by human fears and memories’ (167).
when the wintry streets of London, glimpsed through the drawing-room window of the middle-class home, offered a stark contrast to the heat inside – a warmth that is both literal (provided by the burning grate) and figurative (generated by family affection). One of the requisites of holiday literature was that it should bring about a sentimental reaction in its readers. Dickens himself stressed the importance of literature that inspired great emotion, admitting that, while writing the Carol, he ‘wept and laughed and wept again, and excited [him]self in a most exhilarating manner’ (qtd. in Moore 2009 44). The themes that were favoured in the Christmas numbers are all more or less reducible to what Deborah A. Thomas has termed ‘fellow feeling’ (66). This sense of community and social concern supposedly functions as a leitmotif for all of Household Words, as Dickens explained in a letter to Gaskell in 1850: ‘all [articles] will seem to express the general mind and purpose of the Journal, which is, the raising up of those that are down, and the general improvement of our social condition’ (L6 22). The Christmas numbers held up a mirror to Victorian families, promoting the ideal Christian values. By setting an example of kind-heartedness and compassion both within the middle-class home and outside it, the journal hoped to arouse among its readers an appropriate sense of charity and love of kin. The sentiment of ‘fellow feeling’ enters the narrative under various guises. For example, in the Christmas Number for 1854, Seven Poor Travellers, the impoverished characters from the title are granted free lodging and a meal on Christmas Eve. In return, they assemble around the fire and tell their tales. In this story, an unorthodox ‘family’ is formed, for the duration of one night, out of the seven strangers. The travellers are given a temporary ‘home’, a ‘snug interior’ that the protagonist contrasts to ‘the bleak outside’. After dinner, the travellers ‘form [a circle] round the fire’ and the narrator proposes to ‘beguile the time by telling stories,’ a proposal to which the others happily consent (HW, 25 December 1854, p. 4). The hearth, drawing the travellers around itself by its warmth, here becomes a unifying factor for the characters. On a structural level, the image of the fireside also provides Dickens with a convenient premise around which he can organize the tales of his various contributors.

Other Christmas numbers relate stories of ailing and dying children (reminiscent, of course, of the Carol’s Tiny Tim). For example, in The Wreck of the Golden Mary (1856), a little girl, nicknamed the ‘Golden Lucy’, dies in one of the sloops after the titular boat has suffered a shipwreck. Another case, this time in verse, is the ‘Angel’s Story’ (part of the 1853 Another Round of Stories by the Christmas Fire), written by Adelaide Anne Procter. In this poem, Christmas cheer is contrasted with the tale of a dead angel child that comes to visit a dying boy, in a scene of great pathos:

Rich and poor felt the same blessing  
From the gracious season fall;  
Joy and plenty in the cottage;  
Peace and feasting in the hall;
And the voices of the children
Ringing clear above it all!

Yet one house was dim and darkened;
Gloom, and sickness, and despair
Abiding in the gilded chamber,
Climbing up the marble stair,
Stilling even the voice of mourning –
For a child lay dying there.
...
While, with tender love, the angel
Leaning o’er the little nest.
In his arms the sick child folding
Laid him gently on his breast.
Sobs and wails from the mother,
And her darling was at rest.\(^{80}\)

In these lines of verse, Procter stresses the contrast between the careless celebrants and the ‘one house’ where ‘[g]loom, and sickness, and despair’ dispels all seasonal merriment. Striking is Procter’s inclusion of both ‘[r]ich and poor’ in the celebrations: both the cottage and the hall, in their own ways, organize Christmas festivities. The ailing child is not poor, like Tiny Tim: its sick room is a ‘gilded chamber’ at the top of ‘marble stair[s]’. Death makes no distinction; it cancels out class divisions, Procter seems to say. Stories like these were obviously devised as moral guides, meant to inspire in the readers of Dickens’s magazines compassion for all inhabitants of London that shared the lot of these fictional characters, whatever their station in life might be. By having a child, in all its innocence, be the spokesperson of the ill, the message supposedly hit home even harder.

Another prominent theme of the Christmas Numbers, and one that helped to strengthen the sense of fellow feeling that Dickens hoped to evoke, is that of family, and more specifically, family reunions. Taking their cue from Scrooge’s reconciliation with his nephew at the end of the Carol, the Christmas Numbers include several instances of family members meeting again after a long separation. In A Message from the Sea (1860), for example, a husband, brother and son, thought to have died in a shipwreck, returns home after years of separation. Likewise, in Tom Tiddler’s Ground (1861), one of the framed stories relates how a father and son, who once fell out over the latter’s choice of bride, find each other again, to the great joy of all parties involved. Once more, Dickens

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\(^{80}\) HW, 25 December 1853, p. 17-18.
and his contributors stress the association of the holiday with the revered notions of home and family.

In addition to these social concerns, the Christmas Numbers also function as a vehicle for patriotic love. The celebration of England, the mother country, becomes apparent in the stories that testify to Christmas festivities in foreign territories. The expats living in these far-flung regions hope to be closer to home in spirit, by transporting the components of a true English feast to their exotic surroundings. As Moore states, these men and women ‘hope[d] to sustain their ethnic identity ... [by] feed[ing] upon the rituals of a constructed Englishness’ (2008 489). Christmas food becomes a symbol for the holiday, and by extension for the mother country, as in the 1850 story ‘Christmas in India’: ‘the roast beef and the plum-pudding, and the mince pies, the port wine and the champagne, attest the attachment of the English to old home-honoured usages’ (HW, 21 December 1850, p. 306). Even when the right elements cannot be obtained, efforts are made to imitate the customs of home as closely as possible, as is described in ‘Christmas in Australia’: ‘Green boughs and flowers adorned the walls and roof, in brilliant yet imperfect imitation of holly-boughs and mistletoe [sic]’ (HW, 21 December 1850, p. 310).

Though the holiday is being celebrated far away from home, in climates and conditions very different from those in England, the food, beverages and decorations seem in themselves to possess the power of evoking, like Proust’s madeleine, the sense of a true English Christmas. At the same time, the text (like Scrooge’s turkey sent to the Cratchits at the end of the Carol) imprints on the reader the commodities that are indispensable to Christmas festivities. Moreover, the tales that are set in prisons, at sea or in far-off places enhance, by contrast, the sense of well-being, as well as the love for friends and family that the Victorian families feel, while reading these tales safely at home, around the Christmas fire.

A counterweight to the sentimental, almost saccharine seasonal literature in Dickens’s magazines was offered by Punch, or ‘the London Charivari’. A ‘charivari’ was a folk custom in which critique or disapproval was expressed by way of a mock serenade, used by a group or community to express its disgruntlement by producing a chaotic noise. Likewise, Punch was a periodical that meant to denounce certain contemporary habits or events by ‘making some noise’ in its pages. The specific reference to the capital in its title indicates that the main focus of its satire was London life and its customs.

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81 Equally iconic is the Christmas display in Scrooge’s room when he meets the Ghost of Christmas Present: ‘Heaped upon the floor, to form a kind of throne, were turkeys, geese, game, poultry, brawn, great joints of meat, sucking-pigs, long wreaths of sausages, mince-pies, plum-puddings, barrels of oysters, red-hot chestnuts, cherry-cheeked apples, juicy oranges, luscious pears, immense twelfth-cakes, and seething bowls of punch, that made the chamber dim with their delicious steam.’ (Charles Dickens. A Christmas Carol. London: Oxford University Press, 1966, p. 39). The food described – most items accompanied by intensifying adjectives – is typically English and deemed essential to a Christmas celebration.
With the rise in popularity of seasonal writings, helmed by Dickens and his Christmas books and numbers, *Punch* could not resist the urge to take a stab at the sentimental and commercial Christmas customs that were growing ever more popular in the streets and homes of the metropolis. At just a glance, one can tell that *Punch*, as a magazine, was quite different from Dickens’s journals, the most obvious difference being, of course, that the former included illustrations in its pages. By presenting its satire to the reader not only in its text, but also through visual images, it could spread its commentary even to children, or appeal to the illiterate folk that crowded the streets of London. In an 1846 piece titled ‘Flood of Christmas Books’, *Punch* responds to the increasing popularity of Christmas volumes, written by Dickens and his imitators. The article sums up a series of titles of seasonal literature, yet these are obviously fictional and entirely absurd. Titles such as ‘The Plum Pudding; a Tale in Five Slices’ or ‘Spicy Stuff for Mince Pies’ are clearly invented to subvert the more serious themes of existing Christmas publications like the *Carol* or *The Chimes* (Saturday 21 November 1846, p. 210).

Yet, when it comes to defending the fate of the poor, both Dickens’s magazines and *Punch* hold essentially the same stance. Both magazines prove that ‘periodicals can emblematically connect politics to the domestic scene’ (Moore 2008 7), bringing urgent matters that deserve social and political attention into the drawing room. Moreover, because of their weekly publication, they could do so in a swift, ad rem fashion, offering immediate commentary on the city’s problems. However, the manner in which they draw attention to the city’s underbelly is quite different. While *Household Words* and *All the Year Round* aim to engage the reader’s feelings by overloading them with sentiment, *Punch* has a more aggressive approach, often taking on a blatantly cynical tone. For example, in a fictional letter to *Punch*, one Barnabas Bonecrush laments the so-called celebrations of Christmas in the workhouse, concluding ‘I dooan‘t belave there’s no sitch day now as crismus day, at laste there aint no sitch day vor sitch as we’ (*Punch*, Saturday 15 January 1848, p. 22). In another article, called ‘A Faggot Case’, *Punch* denounces the behaviour of a certain John Page, who has had an impoverished woman and her baby committed to gaol for stealing a faggot of wood. The article fulminates: ‘What a very pleasant Christmas this JOHN PAGE must have passed! What a remarkably nice man to spend a Christmas with! ... [W]ith what extreme self-contentment he must have looked upon his children ... thinking of the felonious JANE ALLEN’s babe in Oxford gaol’ (*Punch*, Saturday 11 January 1845, p. 21). The writer of this article takes his sarcastic tone to such an extreme, that the effect is one of anger, rather than comedy or irony.

While *Punch* does agree with the basic moral message that the Christmas numbers wished to promote, other features of the holiday are granted little respect in its pages. The consumerist aspects of Christmas are celebrated in Dickens’s tales – think of the Christmas dinner at the end of *A Christmas Carol*, made out to be the epitome of seasonal celebration. *Punch*, on the other hand, is set on de-romanticizing this cult of Christmas
food. Instead its writers produce satirical articles that present the flipside of Christmas meals. For example, in a piece called ‘The Christmas Pie’, in which an anthropomorphic pie is given a voice, the pastry in question experiences a dreary train journey, goes mouldy and is eventually rejected by the buyer, who of course does not want to dampen Christmas festivities by putting a spoilt pie on the table (Punch, [Date Unknown], p. 263). A similar tale relating the ‘Adventures of a Christmas Goose’ again stresses the unromantic process that food undergoes before it is so prettily presented on the dining table. In this particular case, the goose even arrives too late for Christmas (Punch, [Date Unknown]; p. 2). Another Christmas tradition, that of the Christmas waits is satirically translated to Punch’s pages, by interpreting the waits in a different, more literal, manner. Though the illustration that accompanies the article shows a (caricatured) group of musicians resembling the traditional waits, the text itself talks about ‘the Pedestal in Trafalgar Square waiting for a statue,’ ‘England waiting for justice from Ireland’ or, in a self-mocking mood, ‘the greatest Wait of all – the printer’s devil waiting for copy’.

CHRISTMAS WAITS.

Numerous tradesmen waiting for their accounts, as they have all a “little bill” waiting to be taken up.
Numerous persons waiting several days in the Post-Office at Manchester, to get a small money-order cashed.
The Pedestal in Trafalgar Square waiting for a statue.
The Spanish Bondholders waiting for a dividend.
The Irish waiting for John O’Connell to die on the floor of the House of Commons.
The Monster House at the Albert Gate waiting for a tenant.
The Subscribers to the Art-Union waiting for their engravings.
The Marble Arch at Buckingham Palace waiting for a situation.
Lecofard waiting for his wife’s dowry from Louis-Philippe.
England waiting for justice from Ireland.
And—the greatest Wait of all—the printer’s devil waiting for copy.


However, despite its critique of seasonal consumerism, Punch still wishes to get a piece of the Christmas pudding, by marketing its products especially for holiday consumption. The illustrated Punch Almanack for 1845, for example, is advertised with the words ‘This arrangement will ensure merriment to everybody’s Christmas, for something less than the cost of an ordinary mince-pie’ (Punch, [Date Unknown], p. 269). Bound volumes of Punch, completed in December, bore a gold stamp and were presented
as appropriate gifts for the season. Of course, this custom echoes Dickens’s habit of releasing his Christmas books in time to be available as Christmas presents that would appeal both to children and adults.\footnote{Dickens sung his delight in books as Christmas commodities in ‘A Christmas Tree’, imagining the tree hung with delightful gift volumes: ‘Upon the next branches of the tree, lower down, hard by the green roller and miniature gardening-tools, how thick the books begin to hang. Thin books, in themselves, at first, but many of them, and with deliciously smooth covers of bright red or green’ (HW, 21 December 1850, p. 290).} So Punch was at once condemning and participating in the quickly multiplying commercial practices of the season. Moreover, as Moore remarks, ‘away from the mahogany table many of the comic wits and illustrators [of Punch] joined Thackeray in filling bookstalls with Christmas volumes’ (2009 5). This means that, once they left the offices of Punch, some of its creators could just as easily shed their sarcastic masks to create commercially attractive Christmas literature.

Turning again to Dickens’s Christmas numbers, it should be noted that, despite their moral messages, they do include many instances of comedy and even satire. ‘Going Into Society’, the story that Dickens wrote for the 1858 number, A House to Let, with its parade of cockney-tongued showmen, spotted babies and lovesick dwarves, even verges on the absurd, and hence might just as well have been published in Punch. As discussed above, one year later, The Haunted House was a vehicle for public mockery of the growing obsession with spiritualism. The 1862 number, Somebody’s Luggage, shows how the conductor of All the Year Round reflects ironically on his own practice as an editor. The stories are presented as manuscripts, written by a struggling author who had always been rejected for publication until Christopher, a waiter in a London inn, finds the texts stuffed in the luggage left behind by the writer. In a meta-fictional turn, the waiter submits the tales to a magazine (that turns out to be All the Year Round itself) in which they are published. A self-mocking Dickens also inserts himself in the pages of the number, as the unnamed editor who censoriously cuts out parts of Christopher’s sentences, adding a note to the bottom of the page explaining ‘the remainder of this … parenthesis editorially struck out’ (HW, 4 December 1862, p. 45). Thus, Dickens’s editorial practice becomes part of the fictional narrative of Somebody’s Luggage. When the nameless author – the titular Somebody – returns and discovers that his work has been printed, he is overjoyed: ‘Gracious Heavens! … What’s this! Print!’ (HW, 4 December 1862, p. 47). However, as was the case for Dickens’s contributors, the publication is anonymous, and it remains to be determined whether the struggling writer, like Dickens’s own contributors, will actually benefit from being published at last.
2.4.2 Collaborative Complications

The second part of this section explores the Christmas numbers to call into question Dickens’s long-established status as a solitary genius. Working against this received notion of Boz, I wish to ‘deconstruct’ Dickens-the-icon and go in search of the ‘other’ Dickens: the one that was necessarily part of a whole, rather than existing as a separate entity.

Important to note is that Dickens was not only an author. He was also a journalist, editor, actor, director, and shrewd businessman. None knew better than Dickens how to play an audience. The publication of his novels in serial instalments generated weekly reader comments, allowing Dickens to cater to audience expectations. Thus, the public itself signalled what type of stories would guarantee success for the author. It was a win-win situation. Clever businessman as he was, Dickens soon understood that, in the commercialized literary climate of the mid-nineteenth century, ‘the people had the power to decide who should rule the literary landscape’ (Rodensky 584). He also realised that the cultivation of his iconicity would benefit both sales and popularity. Therefore, he not only allowed the ever-increasing cult around his person, but even encouraged the practice, not in the least through his public readings, which he compared to ‘writ[ing] a book in company’ (Slater 466). On his visit to America, he was hailed by his fans like a superstar: admiring crowds followed him around and ladies begged for a lock of his hair (Slater 180). The dandy-esque appearance of the young Dickens also betrayed a certain vanity, a revelling in the attention that he received. Gerard Curtis has described the Victorian ‘portrait marketplace’, in which not only his books, but also images of Dickens became a commodity that is bought and sold, and consciously exploited by the author to sell his work (235-236). By physically placing himself among his readership, Dickens gave the audience the face and the man behind the words. Whereas many authors before him remained intangible units whose character could only be distilled from the texts that they published, Dickens’s personal exposure granted him the status of a nineteenth-century celebrity, making him the prime example of Victorian lionisation. A consequence of Dickens’s star shining ever more brightly, was that others circulating around him were increasingly pushed into the shadows. In the mind of the public, Dickens soon fulfilled the Romantic ideal of the author as solitary genius. As Lillian Nayder points out, this sense of the individualistic author, while it belies the concrete practices and interaction taking place in the booming literary market, ties in with the increased association of authorship with

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83 John Forster, arguably his closest friend and confidant, and Dickens’s first biographer, would later describe him as a ‘man of action and business in the world,’ stressing his commercial power as a characteristic quality (84).
private property, as is evident in the contemporary fight for copyright, for which Dickens was a major advocate (2002 7). For a very long time, critics and publishers reinforced this popular image, continuing the view of Dickens as a lone icon. As I will argue in this section, this trend has only recently begun to be contested. 

Household Words boasted over 380 contributors (about 90 of them women) (Lohrli 21), yet the majority of the articles were written by a small group of “regulars”, dubbed Dickens’s “Young Men”, whom Dickens trained to write in a recognisably “Dickensy” manner – though they often did not manage to do so to the editor’s satisfaction.84 The conductor of Household Words thus had his pick of possible contributors for his Christmas number project. Moreover, he looked for authors who shared his interest in the social issues that he wished to address in his journal, such as Adelaide Anne Procter and Elizabeth Gaskell, whose novels Cranford and North and South were also serialized in the magazine. As already mentioned, the general procedure that was followed in the creation of the special issues from 1854’s Seven Poor Travellers onwards, started with Dickens’s conception of a Chaucerian framework. He wrote an introductory tale that provided a setting in which various narrators would emerge to tell their stories. These speakers were impersonated by a number of authors selected by the editor.

While economic factors85 certainly ought not to be discarded as causes for the discontinuation of the Christmas numbers in 1868, Dickens may equally have felt uneasy about the enterprise for more personal reasons. It should not be overlooked that Dickens was a man who was very much concerned with his reputation. This is attested by the way he handled his marriage crisis in 1858. Convinced that his so-called ‘Violated Letter’, in which he depicted Catherine Dickens as a bad mother who sometimes suffered from ‘mental disorder’ (L8 740)86, was of paramount importance in saving his reputation, he resolutely broke with those who did not find it appropriate to publish or support it. Bradbury & Evans’s reluctant stance in the matter famously resulted in the end of Household Words and the birth of All the Year Round. George Augustus Sala, on the other hand, defended Dickens in a leader for the Daily Telegraph. Promptly, though their ways had separated the year before, Dickens decided to renew their acquaintance and invited him to contribute to his new magazine (Blake 36-37). His friends’ and colleagues’

85 The numbers simply did not bring in enough profit compared to individual author fiction, and other magazines ‘flooded the market’ with their own Christmas numbers (Drew, DNCJ 293).
86 By contrast, both Georgina Hogarth (Catherine’s sister) and Ellen Ternan (the young actress he had fallen in love with) are praised, respectively, for their devotion and innocence. Georgina, characterized as a perfect Angel in the house, is presented as Catherine’s antipode: ‘the peculiarity of [Mrs Dickens’s] character has thrown all the children on some one else. I do not know – I cannot by any stretch of fancy imagine – what would have become of them, but for this aunt, who has grown up with them, to whom they are devoted, and who has sacrificed the best part of her youth and life to them’ (L8 740).
compliance to a request which he felt would save his reputation from the gossip that was already starting to be spread about him thus became a *sine qua non* for Dickens’s continued friendship.

Dickens’s anxiety to safeguard his reputation was equally obvious in the policy he followed while running the two journals that he edited from 1850 to 1870. As Lillian Nayder remarks, his position was twofold: ‘the Christmas Numbers highlight Dickens’s desire to be part of a creative community. Yet they also demonstrated his need to wield the authority within any such community and set himself apart from and above his collaborators’ (2002 27). Noteworthy is the fact that all contributions to *Household Words*, including those for the Christmas Numbers, were published anonymously. As he explained in his letter to Gaskell (cited above) in January 1850: all articles would be published ‘without any signature’. As John Drew notes, Dickens ‘promote[d] the concept of anonymity as a form of solidarity when soliciting contributions for his ... journal’ (183). Recalling once more Thomas’s concept of ‘fellow feeling’, it seems plausible that Dickens aimed to achieve this sense of solidarity not only in the stories’ content and moral message, but also in their creation. Hence, one could imagine Dickens’s motivation for anonymous publication (at least how he initially described it to Gaskell and others) was his endeavour to present the stories as the result of a unified, likeminded amalgam of writers. Yet, from the very beginning, *Household Words* sported the heading ‘CONDUCTED BY CHARLES DICKENS’, so the credit for the contributors’ essays and stories could only be attributed to the one name that was exempt from the magazine’s rule of anonymity: his own. Slater’s observation that Dickens ‘enjoyed literary collaboration at all levels provided always that he was *primus inter pares*’(128) corroborates this feeling, though one might wonder how ‘pares’ these collaborators actually were, when one of them so obviously elevated himself above the rest. Dickens was obviously protective of his status, taking care not to let others usurp his place of prominence: his pedestal could hold only one.

![Heading for the 1850 Christmas number of Household Words.](image)

Even so, the knife cut both ways. The fact that his was (virtually) the only name that appeared in the magazine meant that Dickens also bore full responsibility for the quality of the work that he published, which, if insufficient, could threaten his reputation. As
Lohrli remarks, *Household Words* was ‘Dickens’s mouthpiece,’ an extension of his persona into the world (12). All articles contained in the journal were necessarily linked up with the name that was embossed on its cover. Hence, he was often keen to point out to his friends which parts were written by him, and which by others. Upon sending the 1857 Christmas Number, *The Perils of Certain English Prisoners*, to his friends before its official publication, Dickens was adamant in emphasising his own merit in the composition of the story. For example, he wrote to Frank Stone on 30 November 1857: ‘Here you are – a week ahead of the Public. Second chapter by Collins, all the rest by me’ (*L8* 483). While Collins is mentioned as his co-author, Dickens does establish a hierarchy in their roles as narrators, as he stresses in his letter to Angela Burdett Coutts, with which he enclosed the 1856 Christmas Number *The Wreck of the Golden Mary*: ‘I am the Captain of the Golden Mary; Mr. Collins is the Mate’ (*L8* 231). When sales figures for *Household Words* were dwindling in late 1853 (Slater 366), Dickens explicitly signed his name under his new serial, *Hard Times*, ‘By Charles Dickens’. By contrast, Gaskell’s *North and South*, which followed *Hard Times* in the serial slot (though it was pushed back from the front page, which was reserved for Dickens’s leading articles) in September 1854, was again published anonymously. In the end, Collins was the only author other than Dickens to have his name published in *Household Words*, in an advertisement for his novel *The Dead Secret*.

However, not only Dickens, but also the contributors themselves occupied an ambiguous position in the collaborative enterprise. Lesser-known authors were drawn to the spotlight that Dickens’s fame provided, yet at the same time felt the constraint that he laid on them. Some forty years after his work for Dickens’s magazines, Sala wrote about the editor’s interventions in his texts:

> These thoroughly Dickensian touches, added purely by his own autocratic will, did, I am convinced, a great deal of good to the productions of his young men; but, at the same time, the frequency of Dickensian tropes, illustrations, and metaphors, interpolated in the articles of his disciples, led to their being taunted with being slavish imitators of their leader.

Though Sala has been credited as perhaps the best imitator of the ‘Inimitable’ (Blake 28), this comment proves that he did feel constrained by Dickens’s absolute rule. Moreover, the recognition due for their writing was not always awarded to the nameless contributors, precisely because Dickens’s name headed each of their article pages. To quote Anne Lohrli:

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87 However, *North and South*’s instalments were credited as being written ‘by the author of *Mary Barton,*’ a byline that was presumably due to the success of Gaskell’s debut novel.

By the general public, however, articles and stories not by Dickens were often taken to be his writing. The ‘best productions’ of Mr. Dickens’s ‘young men,’ wrote Hollingshead, were ‘always credited’ to Dickens – indeed, ‘all the good things in Household Words’ were so credited. Sala made the same comment. When an attractive article appeared in a number, he wrote, people used to say that ‘Dickens was at his best that week,’ whereas in many cases in that particular number he had not written a single line except the weekly instalment of the ‘Child’s History’ [see George Augustus Sala, Things I Have Seen and People I Have Known 80]. (14)

Indeed, Sala’s article ‘Twenty Miles’ (1854), for example, was praised by Mrs. Richard Watson, who assumed it came from Dickens’s pen. Peter Blake correctly sums up the contributors’ predicament: ‘If they failed to imitate his style their work would be subject to revision, if they copied him then their contributions would be passed off as the editor’s own’ (32). Wilkie Collins too, felt anxious about Dickens’s influence on his reputation. Writing to his mother in April 1856, he confesses his apprehension: ‘if my good natured friends knew that I had been reading my idea to Dickens – they would be sure to say when the book was published, that I had got all the good things in it from him’. In another letter, Gaskell expresses her fear of being pulled back into Dickens’s orbit, even though she ‘so hope[s] to escape’ publication in what she calls ‘this new Dickensy periodical,’ All the Year Round. Some contributors also voiced their discontent about the requisite anonymity, complaining that ‘Dickens had created a class system in which contributors were the servants or hands and Dickens himself was the master’ (Nayder 2002 9). Douglas Jerrold, when asked by Dickens to contribute, declined his friend’s invitation, observing that ‘with Dickens’s name on every page, the journal would in fact be “mononymous”’ (Drew 118).

Such apparent disgruntlement raises the question why so many authors continued to write for the magazine. One reason might be the considerable fee that was paid for their work: a guinea for a two-column page of prose, double or more for poetry, and by arrangement for serial fiction. As she confessed in a letter to Eliza Fox, Mrs Gaskell ‘stared’ in amazement at the £20 that she received for ‘Lizzie Leigh’ and ‘wondered if [she were] swindling them’ (GL 113). Lohrli, in her record of the rate of payment for contributions to Household Words, further notes that ‘[c]ontributions to the Christmas numbers were paid for at a higher rate than were those to regular numbers’ (21). It is unsurprising, therefore, that Dickens yearly received a great stack of stories (sent in response to the call for Christmas stories that was circulated via his loyal sub-editor,

W.H. Wills) by writers vying for a spot in the seasonal numbers. Of course, another obvious explanation for the authors’ attraction to the magazine ought not to be overlooked, namely the figure of Dickens himself. The unprecedented popularity and magnetic influence that the ‘master’ exerted over Victorian audiences cannot have failed to inspire in the young authors a desire to be close to the source of all this celebrity. However, as they soon found out, Dickens’s fame was not something that simply rubbed off on those who were in his proximity. Indeed, few authors gathered fame through their contributions for the magazine; many of them remained unknown after their collaboration with Dickens, or were only deemed interesting for their personal accounts of him. A good example of this phenomenon is the series of Boz-related texts and memoirs published by Percy Fitzgerald in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Remarkably, for the serial publication of novels (and later also the Christmas numbers) in *All the Year Round*, Dickens dropped the requisite anonymity. Especially in the case of the few authors who had already made a name for themselves, such as Wilkie Collins, attaching their names to the instalments was a clever move to boost the sales of the magazine. The serialization of Collins’s *The Woman in White* in *All the Year Round* (between November 1859 and August 1860), for example, was a roaring success.

Dickens’s relationship with Collins was arguably one of the most important in his literary career, albeit an ambiguous one. As the Christmas numbers project progressed and evolved over the years, Collins gradually assumed the role of Dickens’s right hand in their composition. While they were working on the 1861 Christmas issue, *Tom Tiddler’s Ground*, Dickens presented the collaboration as highly satisfactory: ‘for to hold consultation on the quiet pursuits in which we have had so much in common interest for a long time now – is a delightful and wholesome thing in the midst of this kind of life – in the midst of any kind of life’ (*L9* 489). Five years earlier, Dickens was already surprised by Collins’s ability to understand his plan for *The Wreck of the Golden Mary*: ‘the way in which [he] has got over the great difficulty of falling into my idea, naturally, is very meritorious indeed’ (*L8* 234). Collins’s insight into Dickens’s wishes, in this case, set him apart from many other collaborators, who often failed to meet expectations (cf. infra). However, as with other contributors, Dickens was also vigilant about Collins’s articles. Distrustful of the latter’s political satire, he often stepped in to tone down Collins’s argument: ‘Don’t go to press with Wilkie’s paper … without my seeing it;’ he wrote to Wills on 10 November 1858 (*L8* 702). Clearly, Dickens liked to see himself as a

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In 1857, they also partnered up for the writing of a humorous travel diary, *The Lazy Tour of Two Idle Apprentices*, appearing in instalments in *Household Words*. Their thinly disguised bachelor alter egos, Goodchild and Idle, relate the adventures that the co-authors had while on a joint trip to Cumberland.
master to the younger Collins, as is apparent from another letter to Wills written in July 1856:

He and I ... have talked so much within the last 3 or 4 years about Fiction-Writing, and I see him so ready to catch at what I have tried to prove right, and to avoid what I thought wrong, and altogether go at it in the spirit I have fired him with, that the notion takes some shape with me. (L8 159)

However, as Collins matured, he ‘was to learn ... that Dickens’s influence was constraining as well as inspiring’ (Nayder 2002 3). It became apparent that Wilkie’s views on writing were not the same as Dickens’s after all. Once Collins began to build a reputation for himself, by establishing his own brand of distinctly un-‘Dickensy’, plot-driven writing, more and more instances arose in which the pupil ‘talked back’ to the master. His increased popularity offered him extra weight to throw in the balance, pushing the scales towards a more equal footing. Though their personal relationship remained intact, Dickens had to accept their literary differences. As Collins’s letter to his mother, cited above, indicates, while the younger writer respected the ‘Great Man’, he was also conscious of the risks associated with his being taken under Dickens’s wing. Aware of the divergence in their literary tastes, Collins knew he had to assert his independence. He did not hesitate to reject all of Dickens’s twenty-six title suggestions for the novel that he would call No Name, and resigned from the staff of All the Year Round when he felt that his ambition lay elsewhere (Slater 508).

Moreover, Collins turned the tables by offering his former master advice for improvement of his own novels. Though he praised A Tale of Two Cities in his preface for The Woman in White, he privately sent his criticism about the plot’s construction to Dickens. The latter, of course, disagreed with his friend’s remarks. The incident, according to Slater, illustrates ‘the great gulf existing between [Dickens’s] genius and Collins’s’ (477). Despite Collins’s talent to understand Dickens’s ideas for the Christmas numbers, the two authors obviously operated under a very different aesthetic. Though Dickens stressed the difference in their method in his correspondence with his former protégé, Sue Lonoff has argued that proof of Collins’s influence on the Inimitable may be glimpsed in Dickens’s final, unfinished novel, The Mystery of Edwin Drood.92 She points out that Drood ‘contained a number of recognizably Collinsian elements’: echoes of The Woman in White, No Name and The Moonstone can be traced in the unfinished manuscript (163). Still, Collins was not impressed by Dickens’s final creation, labelling it (in the notes that he scribbled in the margins of his copy of Forster’s biography) ‘Dickens’s last

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92 Collins was not the only contributor who had an impact on the editor. For example, Sala’s writing became a source of inspiration to Dickens as well. Sala’s so-called ‘Tattyboys articles’, written for Household Words in 1854, offered settings and character types that Dickens recycled in his own Little Dorrit (Blake 32).
laboured effort, the melancholy work of a worn-out brain’.

Perhaps their most intense Christmas collaboration was Dickens and Collins’s work on the final Christmas number, 1867’s *No Thoroughfare*. Possibly discouraged by the difficulties that he faced in conducting the various contributors of previous numbers, Dickens decided to make this issue a two-man job, involving only Collins in its writing. The authors each wrote alternating parts for the story, which was conceived like a play consisting of four acts (with a view on the planned dramatisation of the tale). Dickens wrote the Overture and first two sections of Act I, Collins then thickened the plot in ‘The Housekeeper Speaks’, while Dickens again stepped in to introduce new characters, etc. Act II was written by Collins, Act III by Dickens. Yet, as Collins later admitted to Frederic Chapman, he and Dickens ‘purposely wrote so as to make discoveries of this [of who had written which bits of Acts 1 and 4] difficult,’ by inserting passages into each other’s sections. However, as Slater duly remarks, the different writing styles (with Dickens’s focus on detail contrasting against Collins’s obsession with plot) of the authors do betray their separate share in the composition (570). As it turns out, co-authorship was not always as seamless as its practitioners hoped.

Despite his intention of reflecting a sense of ‘fellow feeling’ in the Christmas Numbers, Dickens would come to realize that communicating his vision for the stories to the other contributors was no mean feat. The editor’s personal design for the narrative was often so fixed, that it was difficult to accommodate the views of the other

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authors. As Ruth Glancy remarks, ‘the only story which wholly illustrated the theme of the framework and was enhanced itself by it was Dickens’s story’ (66). The difficulties that the editor experienced in composing his collaborative tales suggests an unnaturalness in the process, imbuing the Christmas stories with an almost uncanny quality. To quote John Bowen: ‘The impurity and grafting of voices evident in Dickens’s collaborative works are indeed unnerving to many critical norms and the conceptions of the uniqueness and coherence of the self that they often assume’ (266). Increasingly, the Christmas numbers became a burden to Dickens, who pejoratively described them, in a letter to Forster of 30 August 1863, as ‘the Christmas stone’ that had to be ‘clear[ed] out of the road’ (L10 283). As Margaret Lane concludes in her introduction to the Oxford Illustrated Edition of the Christmas Stories, their co-authored composition was ‘a practical arrangement but not a happy one, for Dickens was not the man to run well in double harness’ (vii). Dickens repeatedly commented on his frustration with the composition of the collaborative numbers in his letters. In November 1859, he wrote to G. H. Lewes on the subject, describing how he was ‘in a state of temporary insanity ... with the Xmas No.’ (L9 168). According to Anthea Trodd, in 1855 already, Dickens ‘had complained that he found contributors to that year’s Christmas number, The Holly-Tree Inn, unresponsive and recalcitrant’ (202). He wrote: ‘[T]he way in which they don’t fit into that elaborately described plan, so simple in itself, amazes me’ (L7 753). The conductor was disappointed with all contributions – except for Wilkie Collins’s. He even labeled one of them as ‘unmitigated, bawdy Rot’ (L7 753). As a consequence, Dickens attempted to devise an ‘all-permissive’ framework that could contain a variety of stories, loosely ‘collected’ by a framed narrator, as in the case of, for instance, 1862’s Somebody’s Luggage or 1863’s Mrs Lirriper’s Lodgings.

The strain of the seasonal issues in due course became almost horrific to Dickens. Dreading the stress of another Christmas number in 1868, he wrote: ‘after I have rested – don’t laugh – it is a grim reality – I shall have to turn my mind to ... the CHRISTMAS NUMBER!!! ... I feel as if I had murdered a Christmas number years ago (perhaps I did) and its ghost perpetually haunted me’ (L12 67). Eventually, with the beginning of the ‘New Series’ of All the Year Round, Dickens announced his decision to cease the production of Christmas numbers, though he cites external causes, beyond his control. ‘The Extra Christmas Number,’ he wrote, ‘has now been so extensively, and regularly, and often imitated, that it is in very great danger of becoming tiresome. I have therefore resolved (though I cannot add, willingly) to abolish it, at the highest tide of its success.’

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94 The editor desperately tried to achieve the ‘Dickensy’ style in offerings by contributors, also for the magazine’s regular numbers and non-fiction articles, famously exclaiming in a letter to Wills: ‘Brighten it, brighten it, brighten it!’ (L7 126). Typically, his editorial intervention was intensive, ‘hacking and hewing a contributor’s story into acceptable shape for publication, making a “dreadful spectacle” of the proofs “which look like an inky fishing-net”’ (Slater 408).
(AYR, 28 November 1868, 596). Reading his frustrated correspondence about the seasonal issues, one cannot help feeling that he did – at least in part – willingly give up on the project.

Important to point out is how the collaborative nature of the Christmas stories complicates the received accounts of Dickens’s iconicity. It is unsettling to rethink the position of a celebrity author who has stood alone in the minds of the public for over 150 years, and conceive of him as part of a network that supported, influenced and defied him. In the past, many editors of Dickens’s work have experienced difficulties in accepting the contributions of other writers to the Christmas numbers. Instead, they chose to ignore these other writers, publishing only the parts of the stories that were written by Dickens. The 1956 Oxford Illustrated Dickens edition, for example, omits the parts of the Christmas Numbers ‘known to be by other hands,’ a choice motivated by the claim that it is ‘[f]ollowing the 1871 edition’ of the Christmas Stories (iv). Sometimes this reluctance to publish contributions by other writers had a drastic impact on the plot, as in the case of The Wreck of the Golden Mary, in which Dickens’s part only relates the shipwreck. By cancelling out the other parts of the story, the passengers of the Golden Mary are no longer saved. The reader can only assume that they have perished at sea. Strikingly, the later editors were supported in their sleight of the other contributors by Dickens himself. When he republished the 1862 story, Somebody’s Luggage, in 1867, he omitted all tales that were written by others, claiming in the preface that ‘his contributions to the Christmas numbers “were originally so constructed as that they might express and explain themselves when republished alone”’ (Valiska Gregory and Klimaszewski xiv). In an advertisement for the 1866 Christmas issue, Mugby Junction, Dickens identified which stories were written by himself, putting his name next to them (AYR, 3 November 1866). In the issue for 24 November, the other stories and their respective contributors were also announced, thus entirely doing away with the principle of anonymity:

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95 This was not the first time that Dickens ‘rewrote’ the conception of one of his works in hindsight. In the preface for The Old Curiosity Shop’s Cheap Edition (1848), for example, he claimed that it ‘was constructed from the beginning ... with a view to separate publication when completed’ (qtd. in Slater 279). Actually, the volume emerged, rather by accident, from his writings for Master Humphrey’s Clock (1840-1841).
Slater, echoing Dickens’s view of his own superiority, infers that the editor probably wished ‘to counteract that “swamping” effect of which he later complained whereby his own writing tended to be overwhelmed in the Christmas numbers by the (mostly) very inferior work of his contributors’ (552). Editors like those of the 1956 Oxford Illustrated Edition, while apparently catering to Dickens’s wishes, have inadvertently helped to uphold and strengthen the notion of Dickens as a solitary genius. Critical and popular accounts of Dickens alike have, for decades, fed into this myth by presenting Dickens as a lone icon, taking up a spot in the literary canon that provided room for only one person. The fact that Dickens’s novels, rather than his collaborative efforts in the holiday issues and elsewhere, have been the main focus, not only of studies, but also of adaptation and commercial by-products has intensified this view of Dickens. Only in recent years has the renewed attention for Dickens’s journalism shed a new light on Boz. The Christmas numbers too, are gradually being restored to their former glory, with publications like those of the Hesperus Press discarding Dickens’s anxiety about the influence of the texts by other contributors on his own work. Dickens, rather than occupying a separate and lonely position, is resituated in a web of writers. While he still sits at the centre of the web, by examining his collaborative work on projects like the Christmas numbers, we can now see a number of threads appearing – threads that, however fine, connect the writer at the centre of the web to the contributors that surround him. This connection, once established, opens up a channel for mutual interchange, encouraging a back-and-forth movement that reshapes identities and influences reputations.

96 In its Hesperus Classics series, Hesperus publishes ‘neglected classics’, including the Christmas numbers. The latter are published in their entirety, and all contributors are credited by name.

97 On the other hand, popular publications such as 2012’s Dickens at Christmas (Vintage Classics) continue the practice of earlier editors by selecting only the parts of the Christmas Numbers that were written by Dickens himself for their volume. In the year of Dickens’s bicentenary, it appears, figures who might cloud his solitary fame were once again expelled from the spotlight.
2.5 Conclusion

My analysis in this chapter has shed light on the various ways in which multiple authorship intersects with issues of authorial reputation and literary rivalry. In order to strengthen my argument, I have introduced three instances of co-authorship that each engage with these topics in a different manner. That a belligerent attitude among co-authors may prove fertile for the production of their texts is evidenced by the case of Charlotte and Branwell Brontë, whose sibling rivalry inspired the partners to continue to create new additions to their Glass Town and Angria saga. In their tales, which were often written in quick succession, as a response to each other, the young co-authors continuously attempted to reverse or ridicule the assertions and plot changes that their opponent had made in the previous instalment of the saga. Hence the amicable literary warfare between Charlotte and Branwell resulted in an increased productivity for both parties involved. On the other hand, the second part of this chapter’s section on the Brontës interacts with the concept of authorial reputation. In her 1850 edition of *Wuthering Heights* and *Agnes Grey*, Charlotte inserted herself into her sister’s writing, adopting the part of ‘interpreter’, this time not of the world for Emily, but rather of Emily for the world. By taking on the role of posthumous co-author of Emily’s poetry, the elder sister both hoped to mediate her sibling’s status and to influence the reception of her work.

Bradley and Cooper’s partnership represents an instance of co-authorship in which the writers attempted to counteract the tendency of critical reviewers to marginalize fiction that was written by a double female author by hiding their identity behind the mask of ‘Michael Field’. Their fear was well-founded, since the revelation of their true sex, as well as their dual authorship, resulted in the increasing neglect with which their publications were received. Though the Fields followed Pater’s aesthetic doctrine of ‘art for art’s sake,’ and despite the fact that some of their poetry might be interpreted as voicing a refutation of worldly fame, they equally confessed in their private correspondence to feeling exasperated by the lack of recognition that they accumulated. Moreover, their frustration was augmented when both friends and acquaintances continued to inquire into the separate share of each partner in the work. Having chosen to present themselves to the world as an authorial whole, united under a singular sobriquet, the women struggled against those who wished to disentangle the two halves of the union by trying to discern who wrote what.

In the case of Dickens’s collaboration with a group of other authors for the special Christmas numbers of *Household Words* and *All the Year Round*, the concept of rivalry among co-authors has a double effect. On the one hand, some of Dickens’s contributors were displeased with the lack of credit that they received for their involvement in the number, exemplified by the fact that some of their tales were ascribed by readers to
Dickens, rather than themselves (a logical consequence of the requisite anonymity of the journals). Writers like Sala and Collins felt the threat of losing their individuality as authors in favour of Dickens’s greater acclaim. Dickens, for his part, discovered, in the process of attempting to reconcile the divergent points of view of his contributors with his own, that the ideal of ‘fellow feeling’ that he wished his magazines to embody was not always put into practice easily. Despite the high sale figures of the seasonal numbers, they were not a financial success, and the collaboration became an increasing burden on the editor. Moreover, the established author began to sense a danger in the association of his name with those of his lesser-known colleagues. Remarkably, he himself initiated the practice of parsing the collaboration (continued by subsequent editors of his oeuvre), when he asserted in later years that the tales that he wrote for the Christmas numbers were really written in such a manner that they might be lifted from their original context to stand alone as individual works of fiction.
Chapter 3
Gender and Identity in Collaboration

3.1 Introduction

This chapter will investigate the gender-related issues that multiple authorship entails, as well as the impact that such matters may have on the identity formation of individuals that engage in collaboration. Various gender-related points come into play when a literary partnership is struck up, both in alliances between men and women and in same-sex joint enterprises. The first type of co-authorship inevitably inscribes itself in a nineteenth-century context where patriarchy still held sway. Hence, the male partner often feels a natural right to supremacy in the partnership, a perception that is conveniently vindicated by the predominance of masculine literary forerunners. As a consequence these models, produced as they are by men, are very often also male-oriented in their tastes, themes and writing style. The impact of such a gender bias on a mixed-sex partnership is considerable. However, while close collaboration between men and women can induce a distortion of traditional gender boundaries, it may also cause rebellion in the female partner who feels threatened by the attempt at masculine dominance. In same-sex collaboration, on the other hand, gender-related issues that arise are much less connected to the male-female contrast, since both partners in the cases discussed in this chapter, are men (or both are women, in the instance of Michael Field, discussed in the previous chapter). Rather, the questions raised by this type of co-authorship have to do with the homoerotic implications of such a union, strengthened as they are by the content of the co-authored texts, which is sometimes open to ambiguous interpretations. Hence, the joint venture risks bringing society’s scorn upon itself, precisely because of its untraditional sexual partnering.

For the first part of this chapter, I take up the case of the Brontës again and consider the matter of their co-authorship in the light of this chapter’s focus. In particular, I investigate how Charlotte’s collaborative effort with Branwell in the juvenilia, in
addition to the literary examples that provided inspiration for their joint creations, shaped not only the child author, but also continued to influence her well into adulthood (even though she made conscious efforts to shake off the very masculine yoke of the literary models that she followed in her youth so as to become a more norm-conforming novelist). To explore Charlotte’s adoption of masculine ‘masks’ (or performed masculinity) further in her juvenile writings, I adopt Judith Butler’s theory of ‘performativity’, as expounded in her influential volume, *Gender Trouble* (1990). This way, I aim to render tangible how the eldest Brontë inscribed herself into a male-dominated brand of literature by repeatedly affecting and imitating the style of her masculine predecessors.

In a second sub-chapter, I revisit Dickens’s run as the editor (or conductor, as he preferred to be known) of *Household Words and All the Year Round*. This time, I look at how the magazine editor dealt with the female contributors to his journals. As will become apparent, Dickens often attempted to transpose the generally patriarchal, overbearing views that also coloured his domestic relationships to the work floor, especially in his contact with women writers. However, the course of interaction between the conductor and some of his female contributors did not always run smoothly. As the cases of Adelaide Anne Procter, Elizabeth Gaskell and Harriet Martineau will show, some of the magazine’s women authors, aware of Dickens’s domineering views on gender, learned to sidestep his patriarchal behaviour, or even outrightly rebel against it.

The final section of this chapter deals with the phenomenon of the Savile Club. Focussing on the goings on at this long-living gentleman’s club in fin-de-siècle London, I wish to indicate how the club’s convivial atmosphere (as coined in its motto, ‘Sodalitas Convivium’) contributed to the genesis of several literary connections and authorial partnerships. At the same time, however, the establishment also hosted the professional tensions that arose among its members. This section ties in with some of the issues discussed in the previous chapter, since matters of reputation and rivalry frequently surfaced in the club, which housed a number of rising and risen authors who were all vying for a spot in the limelight of London’s literary scene. However, I have chosen to include my discussion of the Savile Club in this chapter in view of the club’s exclusively male membership. This feature, as I will point out, is reflected not only in the partnerships that were formed within the club’s rooms, but also in the works that its members produced, ranging from H. Rider Haggard’s romance novels to Henry James’s appropriately titled short story ‘Collaboration’.

By regarding the various cases of co-authorship in the light of their sexual make-up, this chapter thus aims to exhibit how gender-related issues played a significant part in the production and reception of jointly written literary works.
3.2 Charlotte and Branwell Brontë: Male Models & Masks in the Juvenilia

To readers who are only acquainted with Charlotte Brontë’s mature work, her juvenilia may prove quite an unexpected revelation. Whereas all of her published novels (save for The Professor, which was written first, yet published last, two years after her death in 1855) build the plot around a strong female protagonist, the voice that the eldest Brontë assumed in her early Glass Town and Angrian tales was decidedly masculine. This section looks into Charlotte Brontë’s continuously ambiguous attitude towards gender definitions, and argues that her collaboration with Branwell influenced her views on sexual standards. Moreover, despite efforts to reach a more conventional style of female writing, the ambivalent stance that Charlotte adopted in youth continued to determine the author in her adult life and works.

It is telling that Charlotte, out of her three remaining siblings, was most drawn to Branwell (the only boy in the family) to share her imaginary world with. Of course, she and Branwell were closest in age, so it may have been obvious for two children that were more or less in the same stage of their development to huddle together. Still, other factors were at play. In Charlotte’s account (which I have previously mentioned) of the gifts that Patrick Brontë brought back for his children, it is striking how Charlotte’s focus lies not on her own gift of ninepins, but on her brother’s set of twelve toy soldiers. The manner in which she boldly grabs one of the soldiers, claiming it for herself, suggests a certain jealousy of her brother’s boyish toys. They certainly hold more interest for the young girl than her own ninepins or Anne’s dancing doll. Today still, toy soldiers are gender-coded as decidedly masculine. Yet Charlotte, in her act of taking possession of the tiny wooden warrior, does away with all sex-related prescriptions. At the same time, however, she approaches the toy soldier from a girl’s viewpoint, applying her developing female gaze to the puppet: ‘Mine was the prettiest of the whole and perfect in every part,’ she claims, stressing the toy soldier’s aesthetically pleasing appearance, rather than its potential for masculine vigour (J 4). Still, she names her soldier the Duke of Wellington, thus inscribing him into the heroic discourse of the nation’s battle against Napoleon (impersonated in Branwell’s rivalling toy soldier, ‘Bonaparte’). This ambiguous attitude towards gender would continue to influence Charlotte throughout her life and literary career.

As Megan Norcia argues in her article on imperial play, children’s parlour games and home theatricals absorbed the Empire’s political climate of wars and exploration. They provided a means for children not only to learn geography, but also to solidify their identities as British citizens who might later take an active part in the nation’s expansion. Plays like these, in other words, became a way for the young to internalize
the notion of Empire. In these forms of amusement, England always occupied the centre or standard, while deviations from the patriotic norm were perceived as ‘amusing, wicked, or threatening’ (Norcia 297). In the Brontës’ juvenilia too, characters are markedly white; some of its protagonists (Charles and Arthur Wellesley, the supposed sons of the Duke of Wellington) even descending from warfare ‘royalty’, the nation’s most celebrated hero. Their enemies, on the other hand, are the indigenous population of their imaginary kingdom. These original inhabitants are given exotic-sounding names, such as the ‘Ashantees’, that immediately define them as distinctly Other. The Brontës’ fantasy land, situated roughly on Africa’s western flank, is a white colony in the middle of a coloured continent, reminiscent of the Empire’s real-life overseas territories. The children have absorbed imperialism to such an extent that even in their own improvised stories, its driving principles of conquest and superior feeling are implemented.

Through these games of Empire, young boys especially were being prepared for the various roles that they might assume on the imperial stage when they grew up. Norcia remarks how ‘the games ... instill[ed] specific habits of mind. Young boys could follow the trajectory of these games as missionaries, civil servants, military leaders, or as merchants seeking commercial gain abroad’ (295). Of course, it is obvious that these professions are almost exclusively male-gendered. A woman, generally, could enter the imperial stage only as an auxiliary to men (as is exemplified in St. John Rivers’s rejected plan to make Jane Eyre a missionary’s wife). Children’s games here differed from adult reality, since ‘the games rarely gendered the play’ (Norcia 295). Confined as they were within the huis-clos universe of Victorian parlours – extending, in the case of the Brontës, to the hills and crevices of the Yorkshire moors – the imperial games gave special licence to their players, regardless of their gender.

Moreover, the Brontës, by imagining, staging and acting in their own plays – tellingly called the Young Men’s plays – inscribed themselves in the theatrical tradition. This also entailed the specific liberty granted to women who acted in a production for the stage. As Lynn M. Voskuil points out in her article on Victorian actresses, ‘theatricality’ has a special ‘potential to upset traditional gender categories’. She stresses ‘women’s capacities to elude naturalized sexual and gender roles in the theatre and to construct their own identities on stage’ (409). Charlotte and her sisters thus entered into a game that evaded traditional gender prescriptions. The relative liberty of professional actresses, of course, stood in sharp contrast to the ideal of the Angel in the House. Women in the acting profession were often derided for their subversive natures, and their work was not seldomly associated with that of prostitutes, women who were equally putting on an act by ‘falsely playing at love’ (Voskuil 417). In Villette, Lucy Snowe even attributes to the famous actress Vashti demonic qualities, describing how she ‘found upon her something neither of woman nor of man: in each of her eyes sat a devil’ (240). Consequently, it was only because of the decidedly amateur nature of their
private home theatricals that the young female Brontës could carelessly act out their imperial fantasies, and embody emblematic masculine types such as the Duke of Wellington (Charlotte) or Charles II (Emily). As long as their play remained exactly that – a play and nothing more serious – the innocence of their amusement licensed most gender transgressions.⁹⁸

Charlotte’s assumption of male pseudonyms and masculine narrators in the juvenilia could be interpreted in accordance with Judith Butler’s theory of gender as performance. As an epigraph to the first chapter of *Gender Trouble* (1990), Butler quotes Simone de Beauvoir’s seminal statement that ‘[o]ne is not born a woman, but rather becomes one’ (1). De Beauvoir’s view ties in with Butler’s own claim, laid out in her book, that gender is ‘constructed’, is ‘an effect’ (45). Consequently, the ‘gendered body’ is the result of ‘a decidedly public and social discourse ... acts and gestures, articulated and enacted desires create the illusion of an interior and organizing gender core’ (185-186). The term ‘woman’, seen in this light, thus becomes ‘an ongoing discursive practice, ... open to intervention and resignification’ (Butler 45). Not confining her discussion to the – already artificial, as she perceives it – concept of womanhood alone, Butler states that gender in general is ‘a kind of persistent impersonation that passes as the real’ (xxx). In a nutshell, she perceives gender not as a fixed, biologically inherent concept, but rather as an arbitrary construction that has been established through ‘iterativity’, the ‘stylized repetition’ of acts that are coded specifically ‘masculine’ or ‘feminine’ through history and socialization. ‘This repetition,’ Butler writes, ‘is at once a re-enactment and reexperiencing of a set of meanings already socially established’ (191). Consequently, gender categories are not static, but can be ‘troubled’ through the subject’s behaviour. Butler’s discussion of drag as an example of the fact that all gender is really a cultural performance (‘Is drag the imitation of gender, or does it dramatize the signifying gestures through which gender itself is established?’; she rhetorically wonders (xxx)) finds resonance with Charlotte Brontë’s own behaviour. Like the cross-dressing actresses who put on men’s clothes in order to become – at least for the duration of a play – a member of the opposite sex, Charlotte figuratively put on the costumes – and entered the minds – of her heroes. Thus, Charlotte’s gender identification is not innate and unchangeable, but rather a concept that can be moulded by means of her specific actions. She ‘troubles’ the female-coded habits that she has been taught from birth through the process of socialization by juxtaposing – and even superimposing – them with social identity markers that are characteristic of masculine gender codification.

⁹⁸ Brontë’s tendency to play around with gender would later recur in her mature novels, as I will discuss further on in this section.
Charlotte and Branwell’s male-dominated world is contrasted by the one created by Emily and Anne, insofar as can be derived from the extant poetic fragments of the Gondal saga. In the imaginary kingdom thought up by the two youngest Brontë girls, the role assigned to women differs quite strongly from that of the Angrian ladies. In contrast to the latter, who are largely conceived as passive pawns in the male protagonists’ game of rivalries, Gondal women are allotted a much more active part in the narrative. Most tellingly, Gondal is ruled over not by men, but by a rather ruthless queen, Augusta Geraldine Almeda (generally referred to in the poems as A.G.A.). Quite plausibly, Gondal’s queen was inspired by her real-life counterpart, Queen Victoria (who also appears as a character in the saga). Only ten months younger than Emily, Victoria acceded to the throne in 1837, at the age of eighteen. This event was important enough for Emily and Anne to record it in their Diary Paper of 26 June, where it is mentioned alongside the fictional coronation of Gondal’s queen: ‘the Emperors [sic] and Empresses of Gondal and Gaalddine preparing to depart from Gaaldine to Gondal to prepare for the coronation [sic] which will be on the 12th of July Queen Victoria ascended the throne this month’ (J 487). It is not hard to imagine how, to the teenage Emily and Anne who were reading about their new young queen in the newspapers, this rare, yet strong example of female empowerment became a source of inspiration. Naturally, the type of the fierce female protagonist would later return, in Emily’s only novel, in the guise of Catherine Earnshaw.

Barker argues that, like Emily who took the lead in her collaborative effort with Anne, Branwell was ‘the dominant member of the partnership’ between the two eldest siblings (273). When they grew older, both Anne and Charlotte were away from home for long stretches of time, necessarily shifting their focus from their imaginary worlds to the reality of having to earn a living as a teacher or governess. Branwell and Emily, on the other hand, occupied a privileged position; staying at home in Haworth for long periods of time while their sisters went away to work, they were able to indulge freely in the construction of their fantasy sagas. Concerns for her health (threatened by extreme homesickness) and her sisters’ professional diligence allowed Emily to remain at the parsonage. Branwell did hold several jobs (at the newly opened railway stations of Sowerby Bridge and Luddenden Foot, and later as a tutor in the Robinson household where Anne worked as a governess99) but his creative path was evened much earlier, precisely because of his sex. From a very early age, Branwell was considered to be the poet in the family, and the one who could earn artistic merit. He briefly attempted a career as a professional portrait painter, receiving private instruction (paid for by Patrick), but the venture was soon abandoned. In any case, as Barker argues, he had...

99 Here Branwell infamously engaged in a love affair with Mrs Robinson, a tragic experience that certainly influenced his ultimate descent into self-destruction (see Barker p. 456 etc.).
plenty of free time to devote to his writing (248). His many (unanswered) letters of application to become a staff writer at Blackwood’s Magazine testify to his ambition to make a career out of his childhood hobby. Charlotte, by contrast, was repeatedly discouraged to continue her pursuit of a literary career – most famously by Southey, who told her that, though she possessed the ‘faculty of Verse,’ ‘literature could not be the business of a woman’s life: & it ought not to be’ (CBL 166-167). This was a popular opinion in Victorian society, and similar gender expectations would be imposed on Charlotte throughout her life. When it became necessary for her and Anne to start earning a living, a career in the arts or in literature was not considered an option; instead, they could teach or become governesses. Arguably, Branwell and Emily’s undisturbed immersion in their alternative worlds, also accounts for the fact that they were both most persistent in their adherence to their respective imaginary kingdoms. As opposed to their partners, both Branwell and Emily continued to add to their sagas until shortly before they died. As Winifred Gérin and other scholars have pointed out, moreover, traces of Gondal can be glimpsed in the pages of Wuthering Heights. The novel’s revelling in wild romance is far more consistent with the themes imagined in the girls’ juvenilia than Agnes Grey’s placid realism, for example. The fragility of the young Brontës’ imaginary world (symbolized, from its inception, by the fact that its capital Town was made of Glass), as well as their partnerships, may be what Charlotte referred to when she wrote that they ‘wove a web in childhood’ (J 151, my italics). The web’s thin threads, when stretched too far, could easily break, once the players that it connected drifted apart, and childhood had to give way to maturity.

However, Branwell’s dominance in his literary partnership with Charlotte cannot be explained merely by the fact that he had more time to devote to the creation of their chronicles. From the very earliest stages of their joint composition, before duty limited Charlotte’s freedom, he seems to have taken the lead. After all, it was Branwell who initiated the written version of the children’s tales (the beginning of the saga as it is known today) in January 1829, with the foundation of Branwell’s Blackwood’s Magazine. The tone of this new journal, of which he was the first editor (though he passed the torch to Charlotte after a mere six months), was set by the literature that the young Brontës had access to. Unsurprisingly, Charlotte and Branwell’s literary examples were predominantly masculine and male-oriented. The Brontës took frequent trips to the nearby town of Keighley to borrow books from the circulating library (an indispensable institution for families of moderate income). They were avid admirers of Sir Walter Scott (Charlotte famously declared, in an 1834 letter to Ellen Nussey, that ‘all novels after his [were] worthless’ (CBL I 130)), as well as Milton and Byron. As discussed in Chapter 2, Fraser’s and Blackwood’s Magazine were great favourites in Haworth parsonage – both journals did not exactly target the supposed tastes of a female audience. Equally crude was the conservative John Bull, recorded by Charlotte for its ‘very violent’ content (J 3). One notable exception was the Lady’s Magazine. This monthly, which ran from 1770
to 1847, claimed to be written ‘by ladies for ladies’ and provided some counterweight to its male-dominated competitors in the Brontë household. Its subtitle, describing the magazine as an *Entertaining Companion for the Fair Sex, Appropriated Solely to their Use and Amusement* stressed its didactic and formative function, reminiscent of the highly popular conduct manuals.\(^\text{100}\) The periodical’s contents catered to the perceived interests and accomplishments of upper-class and upper-middle class women, providing a heterogeneous mix of fiction, music, illustrated biographies and fashion.\(^\text{101}\) The *Lady’s Magazine* was a particular favourite of Maria and Elizabeth Branwell.\(^\text{102}\) Since the magazine was not cheap, the children relied on the old numbers that they inherited from their mother and aunt. Charlotte wrote to Hartley Coleridge in 1840 about perusing issues of the *Lady’s Magazine* as a sort of guilty pleasure as a child, much to Patrick Brontë’s disapproval: ‘I read them as a treat on holiday afternoons or by stealth when I should have been minding my lessons – I shall never see anything which will interest me so much again – One black day my father burnt them because they contained foolish love-stories’ (CBL I 240). Presumably, Patrick wanted to prevent his daughter’s impressionable mind from being imprinted with tales of irrational romance. Still, the monthly was not easily forgotten by Charlotte, who later included it in *Shirley* as part of the reading material available to Caroline Helstone: her uncle’s library holds ‘some venerable Lady’s Magazines, that had once performed a sea-voyage with their owner, and undergone a storm, and whose pages were stained with salt water’ (292).\(^\text{103}\)

After Patrick banished the *Lady’s Magazine* from the house, his own favourite *Blackwood’s Magazine* took centre stage as the go-to magazine for the Brontë siblings. As previously noted, one of its most infamous – and thus most appealing – features were the ‘Noctes Ambrosianae’, which related pub discussions in Ambrose’s Tavern. *Maga’s*\(^\text{104}\) debaucherous bar was hardly a suitable place for a young girl, yet Patrick appears to have preferred their content to the ‘foolish love-stories’ that might fill his daughter’s head with unrealistic hopes. *Maga’s* Ambrosian talks may account for the sizeable amount of references to drunkenness in Charlotte’s and especially Branwell’s tales. In

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\(^{100}\) Conduct manuals or conduct books, a highly popular genre in the eighteenth century, endeavoured to educate their – predominantly female – readers on proper social manners. See for example Chapter 1 on ‘Conduct’ in *Women in the Eighteenth Century: Constructions of Feminity*. Ed. by Vivien Jones. London and New York: Routledge, 1990.


\(^{102}\) In 1812, Maria wrote to Patrick – then her fiancé – lamenting the loss of her treasured copies of the *The Lady’s Magazine* in a shipwreck, though some of them were apparently retrieved afterwards, as Charlotte’s letter to Hartley Coleridge indicates (Alexander 1993 411).

\(^{103}\) The mention in *Shirley* clearly paraphrases Charlotte’s description of the volumes in her letter to Hartley Coleridge: ‘they had crossed the Sea, had suffered ship-wreck and were discoloured with brine’ (CBL I 240).

\(^{104}\) *Blackwood’s Magazine* often referred to itself under the abbreviation of *Maga*, a habit that was soon also copied by its readers.
the latter’s ‘The Pirate A Tale’, for example, his hero and alter ego Rougue (later Northangerland, which was also the pseudonym under which Branwell would publish his poetry in the local press) is described as ‘sipping incessantly from a bottle of the most fiery liquers [sic]’ (J 329). ‘The Politics of Verdopolis’ includes a scene in which the effects of alcohol on the flow of conversation are demonstrated: ‘Eyes looked brighter, and with glass upon glass, tumbler over tumbler, bottle on bottle, there came out the full tide of Glass Town language’ (J 363). Spirits were hence also perceived as a means of invoking the poetic muse, bringing inspiration to the Angrian literary men. The young Charlotte, meanwhile, gladly transported herself imaginatively to this mannish world of loose morals. In the *Young Men’s Magazine* for October 1830, which she edited, she includes in the Advertisements section a challenge to a duel by her own Charles Wellesley:

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LORD CHARLES WELLESley
hereby challenges that impudent
bragadocio, who boasted of being
able to manage forty such as
the above whom he denominated
‘a slender weed that ought
to be rooted up’.
The Advertiser
was then incognito, at a small
tavern, named The Flame of Fire,
& he requests his insulter to
meet him in the great croft
behind Corporal Rare-lad’s barn,
 thirty miles east of the Glass
Town, with seconds, &c., to try
a match at fisty-cuffs. LCW (J 52-53)
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Charlotte was presumably influenced by her brother when writing the challenge, since it was Branwell who (after the example of Byron) was particularly fond of playing at ‘fisty-cuffs’, joining the Haworth boxing club as a boy (OC 414). Fiction allowed Charlotte, posing as her Glass Town hero, to take up the glove herself. She not only described Charles Wellesley, but also his brother Arthur, the Duke of Zamorna, as showing a particular interest in pugilism (as in ‘Corner Dishes’, where he becomes patron to the Glass Town pugilist Maurice Flannagan so he can practise sparring with him (OC 415)).

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105 The title of Branwell’s tale echoes that of an 1812 novel by Sir Walter Scott, equally titled The Pirate.
Earlier in the same number, ‘Charles Wellesley’ gives an account of his visit to Parry’s Palace (which was originally Emily’s world). The story opens with a derogatory description of the inhabitants and landscape of this land: ‘Instead of tall, strong muscular men going about seeking whom they may devour, with guns on their shoulders or in their hands, I saw none but shiftless milk-and-water-beings, in clean blue linen jackets & white aprons ... Rivers rushed not with foam & thunder through meads & mountains, but glided canal-like along, walled on each side that no sportive child might therein find a watery grave’ (J 40). Charlotte’s narrator obviously finds the placid world across the border lacking, praising by contrast the brutish force of his own world, and the vigorous thugs that inhabit it. He is irritated by the lack of masculinity in the ‘milk-and-water’ appearances of the properly dressed Parry men and the sensible constructions of the town and canals. Wellesley’s apparent disappointment that no thrilling misfortunes could befall the children of Parry’s land foreshadows the scene that later takes place in the Palace itself. Left alone for a while with the Parrys’ young child, he soon becomes excessively irritated with the boy:

He stood for more than half an hour on the rug before me with his finger in his mouth, staring idiot like full in my face, uttering every now & then an odd grumbling noise, which I suppose denoted the creature’s surprise. I ordered him to sit down. He laughed but did not obey. This incensed me, and heaving the poker I struck him to the ground. The scream that he set up was tremendous, but it only increased my anger. I kicked him several times & dashed his head against the floor, hoping to stun him. (J 41-42)

The vocabulary that Charlotte/Charles uses in this excerpt is quite strong, perhaps explicitly so to stress the harshness of Wellesley’s character: ‘incensed’ by his anger, he ‘struck’, ‘kicked’ and ‘dashed’ at the ‘idiot ... creature’, as if it were a rival that he had to eliminate. Of course, the violence portrayed in Charlotte’s tale has a tongue-in-cheek quality to it. Yet, the anecdote also explicitly profiles the Branwell-Charlotte vision of a literary world very different from, and far more brutal than that of Emily and Anne. In this early stage of the partnership, the two eldest Brontë children obviously still shared their admiration for stories told in the vein of their masculine examples.
Angria’s noblemen and their political quarrels are reminiscent of Scott’s male protagonists, portrayed in novels such as *Ivanhoe* or *Rob Roy*. However, even these specimens of masculinity were often flanked by female characters. Yet, like the women who populated Charlotte and Branwell’s fictional world, many of Scott’s ladies are introduced mainly as plot-thickening accessories to the male protagonists. Barker interprets the juvenilia’s plethora of ‘battles, rebellions and politics’ as further proof of Branwell’s ‘dominant role’ in the partnership (152). However, especially in the early stages of the juvenilia, Charlotte happily joins her brother in writing tales of masculine virility, making the battles and rebellions just as much a product of her own mind as of Branwell’s. The central figure in her imagination is the flamboyant Duke of Zamorna, also called the Marquis of Douro or Arthur Wellesley, the focal point of his brother Charles’s stories. Time and again, Zamorna confirms the patriarchal strain of the Glass town and Angria stories, committing adultery and polygamy (throughout the saga, he

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106 *Rob Roy*’s narrator, Frank Osbaldistone, falls in love with Diana Vernon, while Ivanhoe has feelings for his father’s ward, the Lady Rowena. *The Heart of Midlothian*’s heroine, Jeanie Deans, contrasts Scott’s leading men, even though she is depicted as the epitome of religious and moral righteousness, thus still adhering to patriarchal norms for women.
has three wives and at least one mistress) and proving himself a vicious political and military leader (Zamorna eventually becomes King of Angria, though Branwell’s character Northangerland later drives him into exile). Tellingly, despite suffering from Zamorna’s treatment of them, the women in Charlotte and Branwell’s saga remain loyal to him, as Christine Alexander repeatedly stresses. However, Alexander’s judgement of these women ought to be nuanced. In ‘The Spell’ (dated 21 July 1834), particularly, Charlotte sheds doubt on the blind submission of the Duchess of Zamorna to her husband. Remarkably, like the heroines of her mature work, the betrayed Mary Percy’s rebellion is especially confined to her inner life. She confesses to her spouse’s physician, Dr Alford, that she has fantasized about Zamorna’s demise:

one evening as I was returning from [Douro-Villa, home of the Zamornas] ... a dream came into my head. It haunted me all the way down the valley, that my hand might, with the thought, with proper meditation on the loveliness of Mary Stuart, & on the fidelity of her sweet miniatures, have obtained the requisite degree of steadiness to direct either a poniard to the heart of the omnipotent, or a bowl of poison to his lips. (J 106)

Though the Duchess is quick to dispel her musings as a fleeting dream, Charlotte, in this brief scene of inner rebellion, lets her speak in a voice that counters Zamorna’s scathing attitude towards her. At the same time, this incident continues the gothic strain that informs much of the cruelty in the products of her and Branwell’s literary partnership. Though in this rare instance the perpetrator is a woman, her murderous musings do echo the typical masculine ruthlessness of Angria’s main players, evidencing in the process that violence is not entirely a male prerogative in the Brontës’ fantasy land.

As Charlotte matured, however, the reader perceives in her writing a definite pull away from the brutal masculinity of the saga’s early days. When the scene of the juvenilia moved from the more fantastical world of Glass Town to the more temperate, ‘English’ setting of Angria, the stories acquired at least some sense of realism. She gradually introduced a female strain into their Angrian narrative, involving Branwell’s characters in romances, a move that the latter tried to resist by undercutting, time and again, the love stories that Charlotte set up in her Angrian episodes. For example, Charlotte adopted the character of Mary Percy (first introduced by Branwell) and made her into a romantic heroine for herself. Of course, Branwell, as her rebellious rival, would not allow Charlotte to simply redefine the tone of their stories, so he retorted with a story that relates Mary’s death in exile – a tale that Charlotte in turn dismissed as a mere rumour. In the very last of her Angrian novelettes (untitled, but now commonly known as ‘Caroline Vernon’, after its protagonist), the old familiar elements of the saga are subdued in favour of greater realism. Zamorna is no longer the flamboyant swashbuckling ruler, but a middle-aged farmer living in Yorkshire-like surroundings. The story allows Zamorna one last seduction, that of Caroline Vernon, Northangerland’s
illegitimate daughter. The latter is highly reminiscent of Austen’s heroine in *Northanger Abbey*, Catherine Morland, who was characteristically prone to be carried away by the ideas she formed through her reading of gothic novels. Similarly, Caroline is an impressionable teenager with a head full of the Byronic romances that she read in childhood (reflecting Charlotte’s own formative reading), and hence an easy prey for the aged seducer. Interestingly, the tale opens with a self-ironizing introduction, indicative of Charlotte’s development, that ridicules the excesses of the saga’s earlier instalments. The narrator rhymes: ‘[t]here’s not always / A Death & a Marriage – a Hearse & a Carriage, / A Bigamy cause – A King versus laws’ (*J* 222). He observes that ‘miracles are no longer wrought in the world ... [b]attlefields ... are now growing corn ... blood has ceased to flow’. The amoral players of days past have settled down into a ‘business-like calm’ (*J* 222-223). Both the Angrians and their author, it seems, are entering a more tranquil era.

As was apparent in Charlotte’s conscious performance of masculinity in the juvenilia, Charlotte engaged with societal prescriptions regarding the role of the separate sexes already as a young girl. However, while her awareness of gender boundaries induced her to deliberately transgress them in the juvenilia, she became less bold as she moved into a more mature form of writing. As she grew older, she came to regard the licentiousness of her Angrian world as immature and possibly dangerous, making repeated efforts to repress this ‘world below’ (qtd. in Alexander & McMaster 75). Hence, her later juvenile writings, though still originating around Angrian characters and events, become less and less sensational. At the same time, the tales grew in length, assuming the shape of miniature novelettes. In 1838, Charlotte admits that she cannot keep up with Branwell’s lofty narration, confessing that she ‘grew weary of heroics and longed for some chat with men of common clay’.107 The most dramatic suppression of her imaginary universe occurred in September 1839, when Charlotte, by then a young woman, wrote her ‘Farewell to Angria’. At the age of twenty-three, Charlotte (possibly with an eye on publication) decided to close the book on the juvenilia and their themes of war and debauchery, and to adopt more temperate settings for her stories:

I long to quit for a while that burning clime where we have sojourned too long. Its skies flame – the glow of sunset is always upon it. The mind would cease from excitement & turn now to a cooler region, where the dawn breaks grey and sober & the coming day for a time at least is subdued in clouds. (*J* 314)

The metaphor shows how Charlotte experienced Angria as a place of passionate, unlimited imagination (produced in heat), whereas her turn to novel writing implies a cooling down of her ‘fancy’. These domestic settings would be more suitable to young

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The women who, according to Southey’s letter, should even refrain from entering the literary profession altogether. It was the same perceived prejudice against female authors that Charlotte, in the ‘Biographical Notice’, cites as the motivation for adopting male (or at least ambiguous) pseudonyms: ‘we had noticed how critics sometimes use for their chastisement the weapon of personality, and for their reward, a flattery, which is not true praise’ (WHAG ix). The shift from a fantasy world that was now decidedly consigned to childhood towards the mature realism of daily life was one that was consciously effected by Charlotte. By comparison, in Emily’s case, her novel seems to have organically emerged from the themes that were dominant in the Gondal poems. As Gérin puts it: ‘Wuthering Heights was the direct product of Emily’s poetic experience, the child of Gondal, the repository of her philosophic thought’ (190-191). Still, Charlotte feels that the transition will not be easy. Her characters have become her friends and family, the world that she created for them to move in a second home:

[I]t is no easy thing to dismiss from my imagination the images which have filled it so long. They were my friends & my intimate acquaintance & I could with little labour describe to you the faces, the voices, the actions, of those who peopled my thoughts by day & not seldom stole strangely even into my dreams by night. When I depart from these I feel almost as if I stood on the threshold of a home & were bidding farewell to its inmates. (J 314)

Even as she is saying goodbye to her brainchildren, their faces swim before her eyes, making Charlotte’s ‘Farewell’ all the more poignant: the reader can sense the author’s difficulty in saying goodbye to her imaginary universe.

The ‘Farewell’ was of course privately scribbled down, yet it relates to the very public performance of gender that Butler theorised, and which Charlotte, as a player in the larger Victorian context, engaged in. Sexual standards have been ingrained in society to such an extent that the subject – in this case, Charlotte – cannot easily deflect them. In a sense, the self is ‘being performed’ by external pressure (from Patrick or Southey, for example, but also from Victorian culture in general). As long as the Brontës’ fantasy was confined within the walls of Haworth parsonage and the almost indecipherable manuscript pages of their juvenilia, the authors’ cross-dressing personae were allowed to exist and thrive freely. However, and this Charlotte felt keenly (as is evidenced by the ‘Farewell’), once the young authors aspired to a career in the very public literary field of the mid-nineteenth century they would be subjected to the scrutiny of Victorian society and its moral dictates. In line with what Michel Foucault states in the first volume of his History of Sexuality, Charlotte and her sisters were already defying Victorian expectations for women by not replenishing the state (which had lost a considerable part of its male population of working age in the wars of the previous decades) through procreation:

[The woman’s body] was placed in organic communication with the social body (whose regulated fecundity it was supposed to ensure), the family space (of which
it had to be a substantial and functional element), and the life of children (which it produced and had to guarantee, by virtue of a biologico-moral responsibility lasting through the entire period of the children’s education) (104)

Seen in this light, by mothering novels rather than children, the Brontës were shunning their female ‘duty’. Attempting to continue the fantastic strain of writing in the juvenilia, Charlotte realized, would mean an entire disregard for Victorian norms. While she decided that a female author she must be, she felt that she had to make certain adjustments to her aesthetic in order to find an audience that would be willing to read her work. Just as she would mediate Emily’s legacy after her death in order to mould her into a female author more befitting Victorian gender codes, Charlotte felt the strain of propriety. The world of her ‘fancy’ did not fit that picture, and she arguably undertook deliberate attempts to repress it.

Yet, as the reader of her novels will realize, her mature work proves that her efforts were not always successful. Charlotte too shared the aura of ‘coarseness’ that was attributed to the work of her sisters, stirring Victorian sensibilities with her account of Rochester’s bigamy in Jane Eyre, and creating occasions for its young protagonist to spend a great deal of time with a man in his thirties who made no secret of his previous sexual adventures. Gilbert and Gubar, and others after them, have convincingly argued the case of Bertha Mason as an ‘avatar of Jane’ (359), a double to the governess protagonist. Shirley, as I discussed in the previous chapter, certainly defied traditional views of womanhood, something for which Charlotte was berated by G. H. Lewes in his 1850 assessment of the novel.108 And finally, Villette’s heroine, like Jane Eyre, struggles to suppress a deeper, hidden identity: a fire like the one described in Charlotte’s ‘Farewell’ that Lucy Snowe tries to conceal beneath her cool exterior: ‘I seemed to hold two lives – the life of thought, and that of reality; and, provided the former was nourished with a sufficiency of the strange necromantic joys of fancy, the privileges of the latter might remain limited to daily bread, hourly work, and a roof of shelter’ (68). The protagonist repeatedly refers to this ‘inner life’ (420), which is highly evocative of Charlotte’s own experience of creative inspiration bursting in on her everyday life (as recorded in her ‘Roe Head Journal’, 109 or her vision of Zamorna, described in ‘We Wove a Web in

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108 Published in the Edinburgh Review in January 1850, Lewes’s long essay about Shirley lists many faults, not in the least the lack of femininity in the characters of its two female protagonists, Shirley Keeldar and Caroline Helstone. He criticizes ‘Currer Bell’ for ascribing to her heroines behaviour that ‘we cannot reconcile with any thing we have ever seen, heard, or read of about the sex,’ claiming that she had ‘saturat[ed] her writings with such rudeness and offensive harshness, ... such vulgarities as would be inexcusable — even in a man’ (Edinburgh Review 91 (January 1850), 153–173).

109 In the ‘Roe Head Journal’, Charlotte’s erotic and exotic reverie about Quamina, ‘the swarth and sinewy moor,’ is bluntly interrupted by everyday life in Miss Wooler’s school: ‘he was full before my eyes ... his parted lips, his brown complexion flushed with wine & his broad chest heaving wildly ... while I watched the flutterings of his white shirt ruffles starting through the more than half-unbuttoned waistcoat & beheld the
Childhood’ (quoted in Chapter 2)). Lucy describes her inner double as a master or devil that is almost impossible to control:

Creative Impulse ... the most maddening of masters ... suddenly, at some turn, some sound, some long-trembling sob of the wind, at some rushing past of an unseen stream of electricity, the irrational demon would wake unsolicited, would stir strangely alive, would rush from its pedestal like a perturbed Dagon, calling to its votary for a sacrifice, whatever the hour. (334)

Clearly, Lucy’s other half cannot be held back indefinitely, ultimately resulting in the heroine’s breakdown in the second half of the novel.

Furthermore, in a curious scene reminiscent of Charlotte’s adoption of male masks in the juvenilia, Villette’s protagonist is cajoled by Paul Emanuel (‘M. Paul’) into taking part in the school’s vaudeville performance. Remarkable is the role in which Lucy is cast: she is to take on the ‘half-male role of a fop’ (Voskuil 428). Notably, she is assigned the part by M. Paul. Hinting, from early on in the novel, that he can see right through Lucy’s placid exterior, he imposes on her the ambi-gendered role of the fop. Interestingly, Lucy accepts this double identity, perhaps sensing its reflection of her own troubled persona. Most telling is Lucy’s creation of her costume. She consciously combines elements of both male and female dress: ‘Retaining my woman’s garb without the slightest retrenchement, I merely assumed in addition, a little vest, a collar, and cravat, and a paletôt’ (Villette 127). The result is convincing enough for M. Paul, who, joining the game of sexual confusion, explicitly addresses her as ‘M. Lucien’. Lucy’s act recalls Butler’s theory of gender as performance; only, by putting on clothes that individually signal both sexes, she refuses to conform to either gender, but instead fuses both sexes into a double-gendered incarnation.110 The scene is reminiscent of Charlotte’s own acts of gender blurring in the juvenilia, written over two decades earlier. Lucy Snowe’s attitude calls to mind the young author’s indulgence in the double signature (ascribing her text at once to herself and to her male pseudonym: ‘BY LORD Charles Wellesley ~ JUNE the 18 1830 BY CHARLOTTE ~ BRONTE’ (J 31)). Once Lucy has created her new costume, she appears fully to become the persona that she has invented by means of her disguise, directing her male-masked female gaze to a female object. During her performance in the vaudeville, her admiration for Ginevra Fanshawe (who stars opposite her as the play’s love interest) is genuine, and Lucy fully commits to her role of wooing lover, imagining herself a rival to Dr John (alias Graham Bretton, Ginevra’s suitor and a

expression of his Arabian countenance savagely exulting even in sleep ... – while his apparition was before me, the dining-room door opened and Miss W[ooler] came in with a plate of butter in her hand’ (J 160).

110 This gender blurring is of course also a reverse repetition of Rochester’s cross-dressed gypsy in Jane Eyre. There too, the costume was incomplete, only ‘a red cloak and a black bonnet’ – easily shed at the end of the chapter, when the gypsy reveals her (his) true identity to Jane – cover Rochester’s masculinity (221).
member of the audience): ‘I hardened my heart, rivalled and out-rivalled him. I knew myself but a fop, but where he was outcast I could please ... I acted as if wishful and resolute to win and conquer’ (Villette 129). Assuming the part of the parading lover and rival, her performance is quite different from that of Ginevra, who embodies traditional womanhood in her ‘tender’, coquettish performance as the object of affection. What is more, traditional gender roles are fully reversed at the lottery drawing for which Lucy and Dr John have both bought tickets: ‘It so fell out, that Dr John and I each gained [a prize]: mine was a cigar-case, his a lady’s head-dress – a most airy sort of blue and silver turban, with a streamer of plumage on one side, like a light snowy cloud. He was excessively anxious to make an exchange; but I could not be brought to hear reason, and to this day I keep my cigar-case’ (Villette 207). The ‘reasonable’ thing to do would be to exchange their prizes, as Dr John insists, but Lucy, defying sexual prescriptions, feels she has no use for the excessively adorned turban (which lies more in the taste of Ginevra Fanshawe), and much prefers to keep the masculine cigar case for herself.

Despite Charlotte’s intention, voiced in the ‘Farewell’ over a decade earlier, to write more norm-conforming fiction, even her last heroine showcases a refusal to yield entirely to gender prescriptions. The eldest Brontë appears to have been more concerned with clearing Emily’s name (as I discussed in the previous chapter) than adhering to the principles of appropriate femininity herself. While she tried to force her sister into a more ‘womanly’ corset, she failed to make the same heavy demands on her own work. Charlotte’s unwillingness to be pushed into the role of the normative female writer shows from her refusal to have her work be estimated in relation to her sex. This is apparent in the sharp reply that she wrote to Lewes’s dismissive review of Shirley. Lewes not only blatantly revealed her true sex by constantly referring to the author as ‘she’, but also judged the work almost entirely in light of the author’s gender. Charlotte retorted:

I wish you did not think me a woman: I wish all reviewers believed ‘Currer Bell’ to be a man – they would be more just to him. You will – I know – keep measuring me by some standard of what you deem becoming to my sex – where I am not what you consider graceful – you will condemn me ... Come what will – I cannot when I write think always of myself – and of what is elegant and charming in feminity [sic] – it is not on those terms or with such ideas that I ever took pen in hand[.]’

(CBL II 275)

For an author who, from childhood, aspired to a position among the – predominantly masculine – literary forerunners that she drew inspiration from, it seemed only logical that her work be measured by the same standard as theirs. Charlotte Brontë refused to settle for reading Maga’s ‘Noctes Ambrosianae’ in the parlour at Haworth parsonage. Rather, she wanted to earn the right be allowed to participate in the discussion herself.
3.3 Dickens & Women: Gender Tension in *Household Words*

My discussion of Dickens in the previous chapter indicated that the relationship between the editor of *Household Words* and *All the Year Round* and his various contributors did not always run smoothly, as testimonies by Wilkie Collins, George Augustus Sala and others confirmed. However, perhaps even more complicated were Boz’s dealings with his female contributors, whose number amounted, according to Lohrli, to about ninety out of the 390 regular or occasional staff members. The Victorian literary market grew exponentially, and the periodical press in particular took on a central role in ensuring quick or, for regular staff members, steady remuneration for writers’ work. The importance of the periodical press for the professionalization of authorship was noted by G. H. Lewes in his famous article on ‘The Condition of Authors in England, Germany and France’, published in *Fraser’s Magazine* in 1847. He wrote:

> The real cause [for the success of the professional author] we take to be the excellence and abundance of periodical literature. It is by our reviews, magazines, and journals, that the vast majority of professional authors earn their bread; and the astonishing mass of talent and energy which is thus thrown into periodical literature is not only quite unexampled abroad, but is, of course, owing to the certainty of moderate yet, on the whole, sufficient income.\(^{111}\)

More and more women were also taking up the pen to earn a living of their own, or in the case of those who were comfortable enough without the proceedings of their writing, to make their voices heard among those of their male colleagues. As Linda Peterson indicates, the Victorian press allowed literary women to create new, professional identities for themselves, since they could expand their area of expertise from fiction to a host of new textual forms (the essay, review, column, travelogue etc.):

> ‘[w]ith these new periodical genres emerged the modern woman of letters and her new self-constructions’ (4).

Dickens’s propensity to apply a double sexual standard in his dealings with contributors is also reflected in the way in which he ‘conducted’ his household, and more specifically in his treatment of his wife Catherine. Like all Victorian wives, Catherine, by entering into marriage with Dickens, was placed under his coverture. However, as many Victorian wives would experience, the institution, while it offered them a home and relative financial security, also meant a restriction of their personal liberty. When she became Mrs Dickens, Catherine Hogarth passed from the care of her

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father to that of her new husband, and he had a distinct idea of how she should perform her role in their marital play. During their engagement, he already prepared her for the part by sending her ‘gifts’ that were meant to imprint on her the proper behaviour expected from her as a wife. He gave her books in which he had highlighted passages that he deemed appropriate to educate her about how to be a suitable wife. Nayder justly notes that ‘Catherine’s domestic training under Dickens’s tutelage shows how fully the sexual double standard informed their relationship,’ as is also evident from his automatic assumption that ‘she rather than he needed to be trained for marriage’ (2011 60). Somewhat reminiscent of Charlotte Brontë’s reshaping of her sister’s identity, Catherine, to a large extent, became Dickens’s ‘construct’; only, while Emily’s reconfiguration was posthumous, Mrs Dickens was very much alive. Yet in both instances, the objective of reshaping the women’s identity was to render them more stereotypically feminine, more conforming to the heterosexual ideal of a woman or wife.

Moreover, there is ample and recurring evidence that Dickens indeed perceived Catherine as an entity that was almost entirely defined in relation to himself. Proof of this view can be found in the nicknames that he so gladly doled out. For example, while he liked to call himself ‘the Inimitable’, stressing his individuality and originality, Catherine was referred to as ‘the Beloved’. As Nayder remarks, her value comes from ‘a source outside herself’ (2011 103) – from Dickens – and hence could be withdrawn at any time by her husband (as indeed happened in 1858). Catherine’s sister Georgina, who lived with the family and who would later take Dickens’s side during his separation from his wife, did not escape a similar treatment when the master of the house spoke about the sisters. Both Catherine and Georgina are described in relation to Dickens, rather than in their own right. He refers to them as ‘my pair of petticoats’ (L3 440), ‘my Venuses’ (L3 387), ‘my womankind’ (L3 580), ‘my two ladies’ (L6 773): time and again, he uses a possessive pronoun that qualifies them as his. Again, their value is a derivative of their connection with Dickens. Of course, the reality was that these women did live in his house, were dependent on his income for their daily needs, and subjected to his decisions about the running of his household. At least in his own perception, Dickens was the centre of their world, the planet around which ‘his’ two moons orbited.

A significant episode in the Dickenses’ marriage was the publication of Catherine’s book of recipes, What Shall We Have For Dinner?.112 Issued under the pseudonym of Lady Maria Clutterbuck, and provided with a comic introduction by Dickens (posing as Maria), the project in effect made the spouses co-authors, implying mutual sessions of deliberation and editing. And yet, Catherine’s publication venture was still very much

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112 The exact date of the volume’s first edition is unknown, but a second edition was published by Bradbury and Evans in October 1851, and four more editions followed before 1860.
controlled by her husband. Yes, she was producing work in her own right, perhaps briefly tasting the thrill of composition that was so familiar to her other half. But her book was different from that of contemporary female authors and their sometimes subversive novels and treatises. While the latter left the private, domestic sphere to place themselves and their heroines ‘out there’ in the world (think of Margaret Hale wandering alone through Milton’s dusty streets in North and South, or Lucy Snowe travelling overseas by herself in Villette), Mrs Dickens’s project confirmed her place at the heart (and hearth) of the home. Her husband’s introduction locates her in a decidedly heteronormative framework, providing her with a ‘conventionally feminine reason for writing’: she is a wife cooking to satisfy her husband (Nayder 2011 189). The book is meant to help Victorian wives in their efforts to create an appealing domestic atmosphere for their husbands, and thus avoid – as the introduction states – ‘making the Club more attractive than the Home’.

Once Dickens’s separation from Catherine was a fact, he moved on from refashioning his wife into a desirable shape to cancelling her out entirely from his life. Building on the aversion of his former ‘Beloved’ that he had already voiced, quite publicly, in the ‘Violated Letter’, he exclaimed in a letter to Angela Burdett-Coutts: ‘That figure is out of my life for evermore (except to darken it), and my desire is, Never to see it again’ (L9 230). Not even allowing Catherine the courtesy of mentioning her by name, Dickens reduces her to an ‘it’. In his view, she acquires the status of a mere ghost, all but erased from his past and present. Reflecting back on over twenty years of marriage, he writes: ‘[A] page in my life which once had writing on it, has become absolutely blank, and ... it is not in my power to pretend that it has a solitary word upon it’ (L10 356). Perhaps the largest tome that he produced during his life – the book of his marriage – is here consciously blotted out by one of its two co-authors. Accordingly, there is little wonder in the fact that the slighted Catherine wished to safeguard Dickens’s love letters, instructing her daughter Kate to take them to the British Museum after her death (Nayder 2011 334). They were proof of the bond that once existed between them, and which Dickens was now so vigorously attempting to deny.

Catherine was thus cast as a mouldable player in Dickens’s domestic theatricals, while his perception of marriage, like that of so many Victorian husbands, was that of an unequal partnership, in which he himself ought always to wield the upper hand. In this

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113 An interesting counterexample to the Dickenses’ relationship is the case of Samuel and Isabella Beeton, who worked side by side on the composition of the Englishwoman’s Domestic Magazine and the Queen (until Mrs Beeton’s early death at the age of 28 in 1865). The spouses evenly distributed the tasks of editing, writing articles and corresponding with contributors for the journals. Mrs Beeton’s popular Book of Household Management (1861) shared the domestic interest of Catherine’s publication, but was much wider in scope.

114 Lady Maria Clutterbuck. What Shall We Have for Dinner? Satisfactorily Answered by Numerous Bills of Fare for from Two to Eighteen Persons. London: Bradbury & Evans, 1852.
sense, his concept of domestic union did not differ greatly from his professional dealings: there too, the editor insisted on having the final say. Dickens’s feelings about female writers were ambiguous. As authors, they could provide him with appropriate articles or stories to include in his magazine. He realized their potential to produce work that fit his requirements, not least the strain of social awareness and philanthropy that he wished to promote in the journals. However, as working women, the female contributors defied the ideal – enforced at his own home in the figure of Catherine – of the Victorian Angel in the House. Society’s expectations, imprinted through centuries of patriarchal custom (perpetually repeated in a Butlerian iterative pattern that confirms the essentially performative nature of patriarchism and its implied gender patterns), were suddenly defied by these new professional women. Single women, but also married ones, discovered that the recent boom of the Victorian literary market and press provided an opening for them to breach the public sphere, often combining their literary efforts with their duties as wives and mothers. Moreover, in many cases they developed a nose for business that could match that of their male colleagues, as Peterson states, ‘[t]hese women were professional in a modern sense: they show an interest in making money, dealing with publishers in a business-like way, actively pursuing a literary career, and achieving both profit and popularity in the literary marketplace’ (1). For Dickens, the relative liberty of such female authors, claiming a place among the male writers of their time, was confusing. They were not under his coverture. He did not have the same right of say over them as he had over Catherine, and consequently his female staff was not always as easily dictated or controlled as his wife might be.

Many of the women who wrote or wished to write for Dickens’s magazines were keenly aware of the editor’s patriarchal, and at times patronizing, tendencies. Women such as Adelaide Anne Procter, Elizabeth Gaskell and Harriet Martineau each responded to the editor’s treatment of them in their own manner. Though she is nowadays unknown to the general public, Adelaide Anne Procter’s popularity among the Victorians soared. As Gill Gregory points out in her volume on the author’s life and work, it is widely believed that ‘in her day she outsold most poets bar Tennyson’ (xi). The combination of ‘simple and direct language and strongly affective rhetoric’ with an outspoken concern for social injustice elicited widespread approval, and resulted in her being the most published poet in Household Words in general, and very often the only lyricist whose work was selected for inclusion in the Christmas numbers (Gregory 3). Procter’s interaction with Dickens in fact long predated her association with Household Words and All the Year Round. She was the daughter of Bryan Procter (himself a poet) and Anne Skepper, who hosted a busily attended literary salon at their home, which the Dickenses regularly graced with their presence. Consequently, from a very young age, the developing poet became well acquainted with the later editor and his character. When, in 1853, she wished to venture into publication, she was hesitant to send her
lyrics to *Household Words*’s conductor undisguised. She therefore decided to submit her work under the pseudonym of ‘Miss Berwick’, a camouflage that she managed to uphold until the end of 1854, when an unwitting Dickens praised ‘Miss Berwick’s’ submission for that year’s Christmas number, *The Seven Poor Travellers*, at a dinner with Bryan Procter and his wife and daughter, and Procter’s mask was lifted (Gregory 2). As Dickens himself divulges in his introduction to a posthumous edition of Procter’s works,115 titled *Legends and Lyrics* (1866), Procter ‘was worried that he might print her poems even if he did not like them, “for papa’s sake, and not for their own”, and that she preferred to take her chance “fairly with the unknown volunteers”’ (Gregory 2). Like the Brontës before her, or Michael Field later in the century, Procter consciously adopted her pseudonym in the hope of having her work judged without the prejudice or condescension that she obviously felt Dickens might reserve for the daughter of his dear friend. By means of her disguise, Procter thus escaped a double risk of patriarchal bias: she eliminated the influence of her father’s name, as well as that of her personal acquaintance with Dickens, the family friend. Remarkably though, as opposed to so many of her fellow female authors, she chose not to hide her sex, but clearly defined herself as a ‘Miss’. Presumably, the fact that Dickens, without knowing her true name, not only repeatedly selected her lyrics for publication in his magazine, but openly sung their praise, eventually convinced her to drop the veil concealing her real identity.

The relationship between Dickens and Procter (as opposed to his rapport with Gaskell and Martineau, cf. infra), though affected by gender tension, was always amicable. However, Procter’s social consciousness also entailed her concern for the fate of women, and more specifically, their employability. In light of Dickens’s more conservative views on the role of women in the professional world, it seems inevitable that the two would not be entirely able to see eye to eye on the matter. Consequently, in his frame tale for the 1859 Christmas Number, *The Haunted House*, Dickens did not forego the opportunity to paint a satirical portrait of Procter and her proto-feminist ambitions. This time it is Dickens who gives Procter her pseudonym, dubbing her ‘Belinda Bates’, who will tell the story of ‘The Ghost in the Picture Room’ further on in the number. In a sense, Procter is here ‘performed’ by Dickens, as she becomes one of his fictional creations. Her character is at first admiringly portrayed as ‘a most intellectual, amiable, and delightful girl’ with a ‘fine genius for poetry, combined with real business earnestness’. But then Dickens continues his description by divulging that she “‘goes in” ... for Woman’s mission, Woman’s rights, Woman’s wrongs, and everything that is Woman’s with a capital W, or is not and ought to be, or is and ought not to be’ – already, he is mocking the women’s movements of his day. He continues, deliberately ‘digress[ing]’ to make his point,

115 Procter died of tuberculosis at the age of 38, on 3 February 1864.
adopting a thinly veiled tone of condescension: ‘in respect of the great necessity there is, my darling, for more employments being within the reach of Woman than our civilisation has as yet assigned to her, don’t fly at the unfortunate men ... as if they were the natural oppressors of your sex’ (AYR, 13 December 1859, p. 7). Deftly turning the tables by casting the men in the role of the ‘unfortunate[s],’ Dickens here undercuts the seriousness with which ‘Women’ took up their cause. Moreover, he did so in a very public and widespread format (the Christmas numbers generated extraordinary sales figures), conceivably also influencing in this way the opinions of All the Year Round’s numerous readers.

In Gaskell’s case, discomfort about Dickens’s methods grew only gradually. Initially, her rapport with Household Words’ conductor was innocent and light-hearted enough. Dickens wrote an extremely flattering letter (though this was his custom with all the writers that he invited to contribute to the magazine) begging Gaskell to join his troupe of authors: ‘there is no living English writer,’ he wrote, ‘whose aid I would desire to enlist, in preference to the authoress of Mary Barton (a book that most profoundly affected and impressed me)’ (L6 22). Gaskell agreed and was thanked with a prime spot for her story ‘Lizzie Leigh’ in Household Words’ first issue (dated 30 March 1850), coming second only (and inevitably) to Dickens’s own ‘Preliminary Word’. Yet, from the very start there was cause for confusion: many readers assumed that the story, since it followed Dickens’s editorial leader, had flown from the same pen, and it even appeared under his name in the American Harper’s in June 1850 (Uglow 251). Already Gaskell got a hint of the uneasy frustration that would mark her later dealings with the journal. However, Dickens and Gaskell’s ‘friendly, even flirtatious relationship’ continued, at least for a while, in a congenial manner, and letter after letter of deferential praise found its way to the Gaskell home (Uglow 255). To his friend, John Forster, he wrote in 1852: ‘Don’t you think Mrs Gaskell charming?’ (L6 623). The adjective is one that has stuck to Gaskell’s reputation even after her death, and is to be traced mostly to the reputation that she acquired through Cranford’s idiosyncratic story cycle (which was remembered mostly for its humorous ‘charm’ and less for its more serious social undertones). For Dickens, the epithet worked as a means of describing the female novelist in a safely traditional, homely term, pushing her into the role of a cosy ‘Mrs’ who wrote amusing little tales, and was easily managed by her editor (of course he would learn in his later dealings with her that there was more spirit to her than he allowed for in his description to Forster).

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116 Harper’s would repeat the mistake later on, when it reprinted Martineau’s ‘The Deaf Playmate’s Story’ (written for the 1852 Christmas number, A Round of Stories by the Christmas Fire) and again falsely attributed it to Dickens (Lohrli 360).
Perhaps because of his perception of her as an affable wife writing charming stories, Dickens developed a particular way of treating Gaskell, sugar-coating his views in a tone that sometimes verged on condescension, in order to mollify his contributor, as he did when he explained how modesty had compelled him to substitute her reference to his own *Pickwick Papers* (read by Captain Brown when he was killed by a train) in the first instalment of *Cranford* with Thomas Hood’s *Poems*: ‘with my name on every page of Household Words there would be – or at least I should feel – an impropriety in so mentioning myself’ (L6 549).

Moreover, Dickens had resorted to arguably devious tricks to ensure that he got his editorial way. He wrote on 4 December 1851 to tell her that he had previously sent a letter to propose the alteration, but had dispatched the number to the printer when he had not heard from her ‘by return of Post’ (L6 549). In effect, he had not allowed Gaskell the time to respond. Gaskell, initially irritated by the change, had asked to withdraw her tale, but Dickens replied that printing was already well underway and hence it was too late to take the story out of the number. She allowed herself to be placated by Dickens, but still restored the original reference for the one-volume edition in 1853. However, Dickens did more than just substitute one title for another. As Thomas Recchio remarks, ‘Dickens also had to change some descriptive language, and in so doing, he injected
details and even a tone of voice that does some violence to the subtle indirectness of Gaskell’s text’ (46).

Echoing his treatment of the Hogarth sisters, Gaskell too was assigned her own nickname, inevitably preceded by the possessive pronoun that binds her to Dickens, who calls her ‘My Dear Scheherazade’ (L6 545). Again, the implication is ambiguous. In one respect, by consigning the sobriquet to Gaskell, Dickens pays her a compliment – after all, Scheherazade possessed the power of storytelling to such an extent that she could fill a thousand and one nights with her tales. However, at the same time she was also an imprisoned woman, subjected to the whim of a man, the King (or Sultan). Notably, her reward at the end of the 1001 nights cycle is that the King makes her his Queen. Rather than regaining her freedom entirely, Scheherazade is thus absorbed in a traditionally patriarchal institution.

Still, the congenial nature of the interaction between the conductor and his contributor did not endure. To Dickens’s dismay,117 Gaskell at times proved just as stubborn as himself in her beliefs. Moreover, as she grew more experienced as an author, she also developed a keen business sense of her own. Quite opposite to her naive reaction to the £20 note that she received as payment for ‘Lizzie Leigh’ in 1850 (she wondered if [she were] swindling them’ (GL 113)) is her bold letter to Chapman of 1857, in which she confidently asks for the money that is her due: ‘[a]nxiously expecting your answer & 100£ note’ (GL 407).118 An emancipated Gaskell here tries her best to defy the double sexual standard under which editors like Dickens (but also others, like George Smith of Smith, Elder & Co.) tended to operate. As Nayder states, women who attempted to negotiate the terms of their employment might ‘compromise their status as proper ladies’ and become associated with the image of a ‘public’ or ‘fallen woman’ (2011 22): they were not to concern themselves with common concepts such as greed or profit. Not even Gaskell could avoid that men like Bulwer-Lytton or Wilkie Collins obtained much higher salaries than their female contemporaries, even though they produced similar work. In 1865, for example, Collins was paid £5,000 for Armadale, while Gaskell had received only £2,000 for her Wives and Daughters, though both were published by Smith, Elder & Co. in the Cornhill (Uglow 572).119

117 Dickens was supported in his view of women authors by his male colleagues. For example, Percy Fitzgerald wondered at Gaskell’s nerve to communicate openly her wishes and disagreement to the editor. His indignation is evident from his word choice: ‘She ... haughtily dealt with him as equal to equal, and would not “stand any nonsense” where she fancied her rights were concerned’ (268, my italics).

118 Gaskell would never shy away from taking matters into her own hands. Ultimate proof of this was her secret purchase, in June 1865 and without William Gaskell’s knowledge, of a house in Hampshire, called The Lawn. It was here that, only months later, on 12 November, during her first visit to the new house, she suddenly died of a heart attack.

119 A striking exception was George Eliot, whose Romola raised a whopping £7,000 from Smith, Elder & Co. in 1862. However, this sum was negotiated not by herself but by G. H. Lewes (Uglow 572).
The ending of Gaskell’s ‘Old Nurse’s Story’, submitted for the 1852 Christmas Number A Round of Stories by the Christmas Fire, was a cause of heated debate between Scheherazade and her Sultan. The tale, suitably Gothic for Christmas, revolves around a young girl, called Rosamond, who repeatedly sees the ghost of another little girl. The spectre, which serves as the symbol of guilt for past crimes committed by the girl’s aunt Grace, became an apple of discord for Dickens and Gaskell. While the latter insisted that Grace too should see the ghost at the end of the story, so she would be confronted with her culpability, Dickens – who even offered to write the alternative ending himself (L8 800) – was adamant that only Rosamond should witness the little girl. This way, the supernatural sighting could be dismissed as mere childish fancy. Of course, this approach defeated Gaskell’s object for the conclusion of her tale. Gaskell kept her ground, and Dickens eventually gave in, but not without making a last stab at Gaskell’s supposed inferior knowledge of the ‘principle[s] of art,’ claiming that she ‘weaken[ed] the terror of the story’ with the ending. ‘Nous verrons,’ he concluded sourly, two words that clearly expressed his conviction that he would be proven right in the end (L6 815).

Over the years, the two quarrelled repeatedly about the content, length and endings of Gaskell’s stories. Initially, when Dickens was still striving to coax Gaskell into submitting a story for his journal, he was quite generous in his allowances, telling her ‘not to put the least constraint upon yourself as to space ... Your design as to [the story’s] progress and conclusion are undoubtedly the best’ (L6 55). However, Gaskell had a propensity to produce a lot of text, resulting in tales and novel chapters that were at times longer than the conductor of Household Words had bargained for. In such instances, Dickens’s intractability as an editor would rise to the surface. A long-drawn source of frustration on both sides of the editorial table was the serialization of Gaskell’s industrial novel North and South in Household Words, from September 1854 to January 1855.\footnote{As a kind of sign-of-the-times work, the genre of the industrial novel became a recurring feature in the high-Victorian literary market. Gaskell’s Mary Barton offers another example, but also Dickens’s own Hard Times (which preceded North and South in Household Words’ serial slot) or Charlotte Brontë’s Shirley qualify as products of the industrial trend in literature.}

Even before its publication had started, Dickens stepped in as editor by deciding on a title for the work. Whereas Gaskell had thought of her story simply as ‘Margaret’ (GL 281) or ‘M. Hale’ (GL 282), it was Dickens who came up with its final title.\footnote{That Gaskell was no great fan of Dickens’s new title, is apparent from her comment in a letter to him: ‘I think a better title than N. & S. would have been “Death & Variations”. There are 5 deaths, each beautifully suited to the character of the individual’ (GL 324).} As was the case for many of her works (‘Lizzie Leigh’, Mary Barton, Ruth, Sylvia’s Lovers, Cousin Phillis), Gaskell tended to name her stories, straightforwardly, after their female protagonists. By assigning the new title, Dickens, on the other hand, shifted the focus...
from Margaret Hale’s psychological experience to the grander scale of the socio-political undercurrent of the novel: *North* and (or rather versus) *South.*

More friction followed as the novel’s serialization progressed. Though he attempted to keep up appearances in his correspondence with Gaskell – telling her, about the first chapters that she sent in for publication in the magazine: ‘If I had had more to read, I certainly could not have stopped, but must have read on’ (L7 355) – as the publication of the novel’s instalments wore on (and sales dropped) he privately vented his frustration to his sub-editor W. H. Wills, writing to him that the tale was ‘wearisome in the last degree ... it is a dreary business’ (L7 439). Gaskell, for her part, increasingly felt the pressure of writing against a weekly deadline. As the story’s run in the magazine approached its conclusion, she writes that she was ‘nearly dazed and crazed’ and became ‘sick of writing and everything connected with literature and the improvement of the mind’ (GL 325). Moreover, Dickens forced her to ‘desperate compression’ of the final chapters (‘[e]very page was grudged [her]’), rather than letting the story run its natural course (GL 328-329). As Jerome Meckier puts it, Dickens ‘was trying not just to change the way she wrote, but also to alter the way she saw the world’ (226). Gaskell, who had been pained by Dickens’ editorial interference especially during the writing of the novel’s finale, later expanded the narrative for its publication in volume form, adding two completely new chapters. *North and South*’s stressful serialization – its composition had ‘drained her,’ as Uglow notes (389) – is a case in point of how fundamental poetic differences generated feelings of frustration in both the editor and the author. No doubt, both parties felt at least partly relieved when the last instalment rolled off the *Household Words* presses.

Dickens had by now certainly abandoned his view of Gaskell as a simple, ‘charming’ woman and inevitably, the next year, they were once again at loggerheads, this time over the short story ‘Half a Lifetime Ago’. Gaskell’s tenacity about the story’s length and editorial corrections prompted an exasperated Dickens to exclaim to his sub-editor W. H. Wills: ‘Mrs Gaskell – fearful – fearful – fearful! If I were Mr G. O Heaven how I would beat her!’ (L7 700). For a moment, the dichotomy between Dickens the editor and Dickens the husband is lifted, and he imagines how he might discipline Gaskell if he was married to her. While Gaskell continued to write short fiction for Dickens’s magazines, it is telling that she entrusted the publication of her later full-length novels (including *Sylvia’s Lovers* and *Wives and Daughters*, which was left unfinished at her sudden death in 1865), as well as that of her biography of Charlotte Brontë to the latter’s own publisher, George Smith and his *Cornhill Magazine*, one of Dickens’s main competitors.

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122 Gaskell had had a similar experience with Chapman in 1850, when he changed the title of the story that she had named ‘Rosemary’ to *The Moorland Cottage* (Uglow 251-252).
Another female contributor who came to oppose Dickens, perhaps even more vehemently than Gaskell did, was Harriet Martineau. She resented Dickens’s articles ‘in which he ignored the fact that nineteen-twentieths of the women of England earn their bread, and in which he prescribes the function of Women; viz., to dress well and look pretty, as an adornment to the homes of men’ (Martineau 419). Dickens’s patriarchal views were obviously not confined to the double standards that he lived by in his professional dealings with his female staff members, nor were they limited to the running of his own household. On the contrary, despite his incessant campaign against various forms of social injustice, Dickens had little qualms about voicing (what are now considered) questionable opinions about the role of women in society. In the 1851 essay ‘Sucking Pigs’, the editor takes on a decidedly patronizing tone, prompting women to stay at home:

Apple of our eye, we freely admit your inalienable right to step out of your domestic path into a phase of public appearance that pleases you best, but we doubt the wisdom of the sally. Should we love our Julia ... better, if she were a Member of Parliament, a Parochial Guardian, a High Sheriff, a Grand Juror, or a woman distinguished for her able conduct in the chair? Do we not on the contrary, rather seek in the society of our Julia a haven of refuge from [such men]? Is not the home-voice of our Julia as the song of a bird, after considerable bow-wowing out of doors?123

Adopting the plural ‘we’, Dickens apparently speaks for all men, addressing their ‘apple of our eye’, and maintaining that their wives ought not to entertain any ambitions, since that would prevent these women from performing their duty as ‘haven[s] of refuge’ from the society in which their husbands were allowed to move freely.

Undoubtedly, the essay is also aimed at that most threatening of female professionals, the woman author – though she is not explicitly listed alongside the ‘High Sheriff’ or ‘Grand Juror’. Notably, the professions that are listed, were not available to women at the time, whereas that of a writer, increasingly, was accessible to the ‘Julias’ of the mid-nineteenth century. Dickens also voiced his views about female authorship in private, for instance in a letter to Collins that openly ridiculed the pains that Dinah Mulock went through in attempting to safeguard her version of her tale ‘A Ghost Story’. As in Gaskell’s case, Dickens was again convinced that his version of the story was the better one, referring to Mulock’s writing as being laced with ‘convulsions ... weakening and damagings’ (L7 576). Collins proved a willing conspirator: in a leader for Household Words entitled ‘A Petition to the Novel-Writers’ he too reacted against the ‘impudent young woman’ who threatens the male writers’ place in the literary marketplace. This

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123 HW, 8 November 1851, p. 145.
new type of female stands in stark contrast to ‘our soft, feminine, loveable, sensitive darling of former days’ – note how Collins, like Dickens, uses the plural possessive pronoun to indicate an entire group of men now confronted with this wayward woman (HW, 6 December 1856, p. 484). Even half a century later, in his Memories of Charles Dickens (1913), Percy Fitzgerald still described the female contributors to Dickens’s magazines as ‘aggressive and short tempered,’ endowing Gaskell, Martineau and Eliza Lynn Linton with the questionable honour of being the editor’s ‘three nagging ladies’ (267).

Articles such as those by Dickens and Collins help to explain why Martineau turned so strongly against her former editor. In her Autobiography she further clarifies her qualms about the views held by Household Words’ conductor and reflected in some of the magazine’s articles, citing her ‘disapproval of the principles, or want of principles on which the Magazine is carried on’ as the ‘grounds of [her] secession’. She continues by stating that she ‘think[s] the proprietors of “Household Words” grievously inadequate to their function, philosophically and morally’ (Martineau 418). Remarkably, she insists that ‘on all other ground’ she, Dickens and Wills ‘are friends’. This statement shows how Martineau viewed her professional and personal lives as two spheres that could exist separately (a claim that can hardly be made about Dickens, considering the consequences of his very public separation from Catherine for his professional path, which resulted in the break with Bradbury and Evans and the birth of All the Year Round). The ‘principles’ that Martineau refers to not only pertain to the position of women in Victorian society. She also clashed with the editor over the lot of contemporary factory workers and their masters, and held opposing views about Roman Catholicism. Especially in matters of political economy, on which she had written extensively herself, she finds Dickens lacking, and does not spare him in her criticism: ‘Nobody wants to make Mr. Dickens a Political economist; but there are many who wish that he would abstain from a set of difficult subjects, on which all true sentiment must be underlain by a sort of knowledge which he has not’ (Martineau 378). The accusation is audacious: while she grants that Dickens is a master of sentiment, she maintains that he has little real understanding of the socio-economical matters that underpin the misery depicted in his novels. As Martineau notes in her autobiography, it was his stance against Catholicism that motivated Dickens to reject the story that she had submitted for the Christmas Number for 1853 (later issued as ‘The Missionary’ in her own volume Sketches.

Martineau’s Autobiography was written, somewhat prematurely, in the 1850s, but published by Smith, Elder and Co. only after her death, in 1877. As Linda Peterson points out, the Autobiography was a clever means of sidestepping the fate undergone by most other nineteenth-century women writers, who had their lives written by others (think of Charlotte Brontë’s mediation of Emily’s persona, discussed in Chapter 2). Not only did Martineau pre-empt possible distortion of her identity in other biographies by making sure that her own version was first, she even wrote a third-person obituary that appeared in the Daily News, two days after her death on 27 June 1876 (Harriet Martineau. Autobiography. Ed. by Linda Peterson. Ontario: Broadview Press, 2007: 7).
from Life (1856)): he ‘mourned the impossibility of publishing it ... because the public would say that Mr. Dickens was turning Catholic’ (420). K. J. Fielding and Anne Smith have remarked that it is ‘surprising that she should have agreed to become [a contributor]’ in the first place since it was obvious from their differing views on these matters that they ‘were bound to be in fundamental disagreement’ (415).

However, as Martineau admits in her self-penned life account, like many other contributors, she too was attracted to the scope of Dickens’s project: ‘I have observed above that Magazine writing is quite out of my way: and that I accepted Mr. Dickens’s invitation to write for his, simply because its wide circulation went far to compensate for the ordinary objections to that mode of authorship’ (418). For a writer as engaged in socio-economical politics as Martineau was, Household Words presented a sizeable platform from which to disseminate her ideas. Ultimately, it was the publication of Collins’s anti-catholic story ‘The Yellow Mask’ (tracing ‘the despicable course of “Father Rocco”’) in Household Words that caused Martineau’s final secession from the magazine, as she makes clear in a fulminating letter to Wills: ‘Another paper from me? you ask. No — not if I were to live twenty years’ (422). According to Wills, she was ‘the only contributor who ever deserted the H.W. ranks’ (Lohrli 358). The account of her break with Dickens and his magazine is introduced in the narrative of her autobiography as a digression from her account of her dealings with Frederick Knight Hunt, the then editor of the Daily News (for which he was once engaged as assistant editor by Dickens, and himself a contributor for Household Words during its first two years (ODNB)). Martineau’s relationship with Hunt is presented as very amicable, as well as professionally satisfying: Hunt was so pleased with the leaders that she produced for his paper that he insisted time and again that she write more of them. The contrast between him and the disparaging Dickens could not be more explicit, and one cannot help suspecting that Martineau deliberately organised her tale to this effect. Even though Fielding and Smith claim that the credibility of Martineau’s complaints is undermined by the incorrectness of certain dates and names, these oversights do not eliminate the essential differences between Dickens and Martineau that formed the basis for their quarrel – differences that ultimately proved to be insurmountable. Dickens privately vented his irritation in a letter to Wills in 1856 ‘I do suppose that there never was such a wrong-headed woman born – such a vain one – or such a Humbug’ (L8 9). While the Autobiography would not be published until after the death of both protagonists in the argument, Martineau’s testimony does enable her to have the final say, thus opposing one more time Dickens’s ideal of the complying, domesticated ‘Julia’.
3.4 A Fin-de-siècle Circle of Men: Collaboration at the Savile Club

‘Oh, to the club, the scene of savage joys,
the school of coarse good fellowship and noise’
(William Cowper, ‘Conversation’ (1782))

After the union of Michael Field, discussed in Chapter 2, the second fin-de-siècle case that this dissertation investigates is that of the Savile Club. More specifically, this section will focus on the early days of the club, which was founded in 1868 but continued its existence into the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Originally, the name of the society was simply the New Club, but when the club moved to 15 Savile Row in 1871, the new location elicited the name change (and the new appellation stuck even though the club moved again in 1882, this time to 107 Piccadilly). Like other London clubs (such as the Garrick or the Athenaeum) the Savile Club was an exclusively male club. One important feature that distinguished the Savile from other so-called ‘gentlemen’s clubs’ was the founders’ insistence that neither rank nor wealth would play a part in the selection of its members, so that, as Garrett Anderson puts it, the club could ‘provide a suitable meeting place for congenial young men of promise but of slender means’ (13). Hence, the entrance fee and yearly subscription were kept deliberately low, and members could enjoy a hearty meal at a democratic price. Enforcing the Savile’s motto of ‘Sodalitas Convivium’, which conveniently echoes the society’s initials and stands for the club’s idea of convivial companionship, meals were not served at individual tables, as was the custom in most other gentlemen’s establishments. Instead, the concept of a ‘table d’hôte’, where one large table was shared by all diners, was introduced. As a result, through the sharing of food, greater cohesion among the dining Savilians was encouraged. The cordial atmosphere was also alluded to in Rudyard Kipling’s nickname for the society, ‘the little Savile’, evoking a sense of the club as a place of intimate familiarity (qtd. in Cohen 10). Moreover, despite the fact that many eminent authors would find their way to the Savile’s doors, club policy insisted that upon entering the premises members should leave all pretensions behind and thus, as one of its frequenters once formulated it, ‘[h]ang [their] haloes in the [h]all’ (qtd. in Anderson 3). Compton Mackenzie later provided his own interpretation of the Savilian motto: ‘although all men may not be equal, all Savilians are equal’ (qtd. in Anderson 27). As Marysa Demoor has pointed out, the club was an invaluable tool for aspiring writers. For the ‘upwardly mobile author,’ she writes, ‘[t]he club ... seems to have been as essential ... as was his pen, or the ink stand’ (Demoor 1989 25). I want to amplify this claim by arguing that the club not only encouraged creative production, but moreover facilitated the inception of double writing, or the formation
of authorial alliances. The Savile Club, indeed, housed several collaborative partnerships, some of which I wish to highlight in this section of my dissertation.

As Anderson remarks, ‘it is inevitable that men who have been drawn to [the Club] through sharing similar tastes should occasionally recognize in one or other of their fellow members inside the Club some skill or talent which can be exploited to mutual benefit outside of it’ (56). Hence, the club was a perfect hotbed for the recruitment of staff members (in the case of the many magazines whose editors were members of the club) or the budding of literary friendships that sometimes lasted for decades. The Savile, despite counting among its members representatives of various branches in society, including men of science, public or political figures, musicians, painters and sculptors, is now most famous for the large number of literary luminaries that joined its ranks. Though the club encouraged its members to ‘hang their haloes in the hall,’ the egos of the Savilian authors were not always that easily dispensed with. Interestingly, the club housed not only writers, but also a number of editors and journalists (sometimes fellow authors) of the various magazines and reviews that were tasked with offering their readers an assessment of new works of fiction in their pages. As Morton Cohen writes:

Virtually every important journal was represented at one time or another, and everyone who held an important post on the Saturday Review was reputed to be a member. A number of weeklies were, in fact, born at the Savile and were staffed almost exclusively by Savilians ... Representing English publishing at the Savile were C. E. Appleton (Academy), Frederick Greenwood (Pall Mall Gazette), W. E. Henley (Scots Observer), R. H. Hutton (Spectator), Sidney James Low (St. James Gazette), Norman MacColl (Athenaeum), William Minto (Examiner), John Morley (Fortnightly Review), John Murray, Kegan Paul, W. H. Pollock (Saturday Review), Owen Seaman (Punch), J. K. Stephen (Reflector), Leslie Stephen (Cornhill) and H. E. Watts (Melbourne Argus). (10-11)

The very personal investment of the writers in their work meant that they could not always manage to leave their ego ‘in the hall’ when their pride was hurt by an unfavourable assessment of their writing. Consequently, the club also laid the scene for episodes of professional friction, which are perhaps as interesting as the instances of literary friendship at the Savile. In such cases, the criticism that the club’s reviewers expressed in the pages of their journals was juxtaposed to the companionship that they offered the object of their censure within the club’s walls, as Stevenson rightly observed: ‘They are old friends, though they may slate each other in anonymous prints’.125 However, though the Savile encouraged cordiality among its members, there

were some instances in which authors were unable to disregard their sense of self and take in stride the critical disapproval expressed by one of their comrades. For example, when Andrew Lang published an unfavourable evaluation of Thomas Hardy’s *Tess of the D’Urbervilles* in the *New Review* in 1891, the author was so stricken that he ‘considered resigning from the Savile and making his London base at the Athenaeum’ instead. It took several praising responses from other club members to convince him to stay. However, four years later, with the publication of *Jude the Obscure*, Hardy found that almost all his companions were averse to the novel, which was soon dubbed ‘Jude the Obscene’: ‘Almost with one voice the critics condemned it, most of them either members of the Savile or writing for newspapers which were edited or owned by Savilians’ (Anderson 53). Not surprisingly, *Jude* was the last novel that Hardy wrote.

The Savile Club’s literary men not only responded to each other’s output through (non-fictional) reviews, but also expressed their opinions by means of more exaggerated, tongue-in-cheek forms of parody. Other Savilians and their work were often the object of benevolent banter. For example, few of the establishment’s illustrious visitors escaped the attention of Max Beerbohm, who delighted in letting his satirical eye dwell on his friends at the club, capturing them in his famous caricatures. Kipling, one of Beerbohm’s most pestered subjects (the caricaturist absolutely abhorred his jingoism (Anderson 67)), was also one of the two protagonists in a satirical poem by J. K. Stephen. The latter expresses how the infinite success that Kipling and Haggard had with their novels of empire and adventure could lead to feelings of exasperation in other toiling authors (many of whom also attended the club):

```plaintext
Will there never come a season
Which shall rid us from the curse
Of a prose which knows no reason
And an unmelodious verse:
When the world shall cease to wonder
At the genius of an Ass,
And a boy’s eccentric blunder
Shall not bring success to pass:

When mankind shall be delivered
From the clash of magazines,
And the inkstand shall be shivered
Into countless smithereens:
When there stands a muzzled stripling,
Mute, beside a muzzled bore:
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When the Rudyards cease from kipling
And the Haggards Ride no more.\textsuperscript{126}

Though the poem is disdainful of the state of literature in general, sighing at the poor quality of many contemporary publications and the competition between periodicals, only Kipling and Haggard are referred to by name. The lines, allegedly scribbled down one afternoon at the Savile, are addressed ‘To R. K.’, leaving no doubt that Kipling is the main addressee. Despite being pitted against each other by fellow Savilians who feared that Kipling, whose star was rapidly rising in 1889, might push Haggard from the limelight (Cohen 17), the two in fact became great friends. Morton Cohen, who traces their friendship through their correspondence, notes how they worked together on the plot outlines of three of Haggard’s novels. For instance, the 1922 manuscript for the plot outline of *Allan and the Ice Gods* clearly shows how Kipling and Haggard alternately added parts of the plot, complementing each other’s suggestions on the page. Kipling, moreover, scribbled down suggested character names and sometimes personality traits (for example, he wrote ‘MOANANGA = avaricious’) for Haggard’s novel (Cohen 186). By deciding on certain plot twists or the make-up of a character, Kipling certainly had a decisive influence on the development of Haggard’s novel, much to the appreciation of the latter. Haggard commends Kipling’s intellect in his diary, observing how well he complements himself in the conception of the stories: ‘He has a marvellously fertile mind and I never knew anyone quite so quick at seizing and developing an idea’ (Cohen 117).

\textsuperscript{126} Qtd. in Cohen 18.
In another instance of sympathetic satire, the same Andrew Lang who so upset Hardy with his review of Tess produced, together with fellow Savilian W. H. Pollock (who also collaborated with Walter Besant on a series of plays (ODNB)), a parody of his good friend H. Rider Haggard’s She. Simply re-titled He, the work pays homage to Haggard while at the same time satirizing it by inverting the sex of the novel’s characters. Even Queen Victoria, perhaps the most prominent example of female empowerment in the nineteenth century, is turned into a man. Interestingly, the scene of Haggard’s novel, originally set in a lost African kingdom called Kôr, is moved to the parodists’ own London, more specifically ‘Grub Street’. This way, Lang and Pollock eliminate all feminine elements by situating the action in the enclosed universe of the male clubs.\(^{127}\) The authors’ approach, according to Koestenbaum, also serves as a means of dealing

\(^{127}\) Moreover, by setting their scene in ‘Grub Street’, the novelists also selected a location that was typically associated with the multitude of hack writers and aspiring poets that swarmed the capital’s literary scene (even though the historical street had been renamed Milton Street in 1830).
with the threat of the New Woman and her invasion of the literary market: ‘The writers in Lang and Haggard’s circle indulged in parodic gender inversion, using jokes to disguise a fear that male authority had been fatally weakened’ (155).

Of course, since the Savile Club welcomed only men into its fold, the partners in the collaborative enterprises that it encouraged were always male. The exclusion of women from the club was certainly not exceptional in nineteenth-century London. In reality, the phenomenon of the club per se appeared to have been almost entirely the prerogative of men. George Augustus Sala, for example, described the Garrick Club as ‘a weapon used by savages to keep the white woman at a distance’ (qtd. in Demoor 2000 22). Towards the end of the century, when the New Woman materialized to claim a place among the men in London society, a few clubs, such as the Pioneer Club, were founded specifically for women (and others admitted members of both sexes), but their number never rose to meet that of the flourishing gentlemen’s clubs. In general, women who wished to entertain or gather with friends were encouraged to do so, not in an independent club, but rather in their own houses, where they had their salons or ‘at homes’ (which were held especially by women of status). Notably, women thus socialized in their own domestic surroundings, without leaving the private sphere of the Victorian home of which they were such a fixed part. For men, on the other hand, the club offered a home away from home (realizing Lady Clutterbuck’s greatest fear in Mrs Dickens’s book of dinners), a private enclave within the very public sphere of London’s streets. Comments like the one made by Sala were echoed in the views expressed by other visitors of the various gentlemen’s societies in London. Towards the end of the century, these club-goers apparently felt an increasing urge to establish a decidedly masculine huis-clos that shut the door to the other sex. One cannot help but wonder: with the arrival of the New Woman, and all the threats – real or imagined – to traditional masculinity that she embodied, did it become ‘fashionable’ to ban women from the world of men, or at least from the micro-universes that they created in these establishments? The intrusion of women into the male sphere was thus resisted either by actively ignoring them, or by explicitly speaking out against them, as the efforts of eminent Savilians such as Stevenson and Haggard exemplify.

As a consequence, acts of female exclusion from the world of men can be surmised in the works of fiction that were produced by the Savilians. Many of the texts written by the club’s literary men, including the one by Lang and Pollock already discussed above,

129 Virginia Woolf, in A Room of One’s Own, further notes how the suffragettes’ campaign for women’s votes compelled men to stress their masculinity in their writings: ‘The Suffrage campaign was no doubt to blame. It must have roused in men an extraordinary desire for self-assertion; it must have made them lay an emphasis upon their own sex and its characteristics which they would not have troubled to think about had they not been challenged’ (129).
at least marginalized, and sometimes removed women entirely from the pages of their novels. As it turned out, a genre that was especially convenient for the celebration of all that was masculine was that of the romance novel. Romance authors wished to distance themselves from the ‘heterosexual romance of Victorian fiction,’ frequently a focal point in the marriage-driven plots of novels written by contemporary (and often female) authors. Instead, these male authors strove to achieve a ‘world of “pure romance”’ that offered an alternative to an – in their perception – ‘feminized’ Victorian England (Koestenbaum 153). The romance genre was made popular through the stories of H. Rider Haggard. A member of the Savile from 1887 onwards (Cohen 9), Haggard was revered by his fellow members for the content of his novels. Lang was a fervent admirer of his work, and was especially appreciative of the romance genre’s masculine bias. He admired the same trait in the work of Robert Louis Stevenson, claiming in his assessment of *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (written for the Saturday Review) that the author ‘always d[id] himself most justice in novels without a heroine’.130 Lang and Haggard developed a deep friendship, nurtured by their common attendance of the club. Mutual respect was expressed in the dedication pages of their solo work. Eventually, their personal relationship also acquired a professional aspect when the two authors sealed their admiration for each other by embarking on the composition of a joint novel, titled *The World’s Desire*. The work was first published by *The New Review* in serial form in 1889 and takes up the story of Odysseus after he arrives back home in Ithaca, sending him away again on a new quest. Once more, Haggard and Lang’s text exalts male union, inspired as it was by ‘a fear of female authority – both literary and political – and a desire to confirm male bonds’ (Koestenbaum 144). This dread of female supremacy incidentally reiterates Haggard’s notion, impersonated by *She*’s fearsome queen Ayesha, of woman as ‘She-who-must-be-obeyed’ (reflecting contemporary fears of the New Woman). Noteworthy with respect to his and Lang’s shared novel is the fact that both authors’ names appeared on the cover of the first edition, suggesting that the writers took pride in the double origin of the text. However, critical response shows that reviewers did not share their enthusiasm for collaboration. For example, *The National Observer* exclaimed: ‘Mr. Lang we know and Mr. Haggard we know: but of whom (or what?) is this “tortuous and ungodly” jumble of anarchy and culture? ... This cryptic was moved to curse his literary gods and die at the thought of the most complete artistic suicide it has ever been his lot to chronicle’.131 A remarkable detail in Lang and Haggard’s history, yet indicative of the strength of the bond between the two men, is the ring that the former bequeathed to his friend upon his death. The ring – an obvious

130 Andrew Lang. ‘Stevenson’s New Story’, *Saturday Review*, 9 January 1886: 55. Henry James shared Lang’s opinion: ‘Mr. Stevenson does not need, we may say, a petticoat to inflame him’ (qtd. in Koestenbaum 145).

symbol of love and loyalty – was henceforth always worn by Haggard in memory of Lang (Koestenbaum 154).

The first edition of *The World’s Desire*, ‘By H. Rider Haggard & Andrew Lang’ (Longmans, 1890).

The response to Haggard and Lang’s collaborative effort illustrates that co-authorship in the fin-de-siècle was generally frowned upon. As was the case with Michael Field, products of double composition were frequently marginalized, ridiculed or satirized. Moreover, the idea of two men writing together in close proximity (both physically and mentally) became a cause for suspicion in the nervous late-nineteenth-century climate of rising homophobia. The supremacy of what Butler terms ‘compulsory heterosexuality’ was all-encompassing in fin-de-siècle London and its literary world (xxxiii). As Foucault puts it in the first volume of his *History of Sexuality*: ‘[t]he legitimate and procreative couple laid down the law. The couple imposed itself as a model, [and] enforced the norm’ (3). Though by no means inherently sexual – as well as professional and spiritual – in nature, authorial unions must, it seems, equally obey to the heterosexual ideal. Or rather, authors should give no reason to suppose that they might deviate from this norm. The repressive, hetero-normative climate that was consequently created explains why even writers who engaged in co-authorship themselves warned against making the collaborative genesis of a story too obvious for the reader. Walter Besant (another Savilian), in an 1892 article on literary collaboration, advises authors who do embark on a shared project to hide all evidence of their
partnership: ‘The presentment of the story,’ he writes, ‘must seem to be one man. No one would listen to two men telling it together. We must hear – or think we hear – one voice’. Though Besant makes no mention of it in his discussion, he was himself an expert through experience: between 1872 and 1881 he produced and published nine co-written novels and a number of short fiction with his friend, fellow club member and author James Rice. Besant, already a staff member for *Once a Week* (of which Rice was the editor at the time), was approached by Rice when the latter had trouble with the novel that would become *Ready-Money Mortiboy*, their first joint effort. Contrary to Haggard and Lang’s *World’s Desire* (issued almost two decades later) this novel was published anonymously, corroborating the stance, expressed by Besant in his text on collaboration (and also apparent in the negative response to Haggard and Lang’s work), that co-authorship was somehow illicit, its origins best hidden from view. Rice had already devised a plot and written a few chapters for the story, but he needed Besant’s help to continue and complete the book. The tale was first serialized in *Once a Week*, before being published as a three-decker novel in July 1872 (a method of publication that would be repeated for all their co-authored novels). The partnership between the two men certainly extended beyond their joint writing. Until his death in 1882, Rice acted as Besant’s literary agent. Moreover, he honoured his friend in his son’s name, Fabian Arthur Besant Rice. The ‘double’ surname that he had thus created carried a special implication: it united the names of the two co-authors in an inextricable bond that literally placed them side by side, and was moreover registered by law.

Remarkably, exactly this double name would recur in a related, yet entirely different context, when it was introduced by Robert Louis Stevenson in one of his satirical scribbles. Stevenson, himself a famous member of the Savile Club since 1874 (Anderson 15), was no stranger to double writing. He had teamed up with fellow Savilian W. E. Henley to write several plays, in an effort that Koestenbaum describes somewhat suspiciously as highly ‘stimulating’ for the author (145). Better known is the subsequent collaboration with his stepson Lloyd Osborne that apparently developed naturally out of the games of warfare that they played with the boy’s toy soldiers. Allegedly, it was Osborne’s treasure map that inspired his stepfather to start writing *Treasure Island*. Koestenbaum has discussed the possibly homoerotic implications of the bond between Stevenson and his stepson, pointing out the central role of the former’s bed in the writing of these stories (146). The bed, in which Stevenson by habit wrote most of his stories, developed into a shared space when he summoned Osborne to consult him about his stories. Thus the scene of writing at once also becomes the *locus amoenus* for

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the development of the highly affectionate bond between the father-and-son writing duo. Henley, incidentally, was commemorated by his former collaborator in *Treasure Island*, since he provided the inspiration for Long John Silver in Stevenson’s popular novel (Anderson 49). This instance once again points to the interwovenness of the Savilians in the life and work of other club members, even outside the society’s walls.

Yet, though Stevenson was himself a fervent practitioner of co-authorship, he did not pass up on the chance to satirize the habit in his fellow Savilians. Most striking is his portrayal of the partnership between Besant and Rice, as alluded to in his short satirical fragment *Diogenes at the Savile Club*, published posthumously in 1921. Stevenson’s short excerpt (meant as part of a series of sketches telling the adventures of the fictional Diogenes in London) opens with a portrayal of the club itself, allowing the reader a view of what the establishment must have looked (and felt) like for a member like Stevenson, frequenting it at the end of the nineteenth century, when the Savile’s role in the literary world was in its heyday: ‘It was green. It was tastefully decorated with playbills and umbrellas; and the coats and hats of many rising authors depended at regular intervals upon the walls’. Accordingly, in the opening pages of his sketch, Stevenson immediately draws attention to the fact that the Savile Club provided a (second) home to a host of upwardly-mobile fin-de-siècle authors. Diogenes has been told by his guide before entering the Savile’s premises that he should ‘ask for [his] friend, Besant-and-Rice’. Stevenson here pokes fun at the very concept of collaboration by conflating its two constituent authors into one newly formed, inseparable entity: by means of their new name, the co-authors are joined together like Siamese twins. When the protagonist of the sketch is presented to ‘Mr. Besant-and-Rice’, the conversation that ensues only increases his confusion:

‘But are you Besant or Rice?’ inquired the sage [Diogenes].
‘I am both,’ said Besant.
Diogenes was cowed; without another word he followed the famous novelists into the Smoking Room of the Savile Club.

Notably, the narrator (at first) indicates that the character described as ‘Besant-and-Rice’ is indeed just Besant, though he himself identifies with both names at once. The exact composition date is unclear, but presumably Rice was already dead by the time that Stevenson scribbled down this fragment. Since Rice’s productivity as an author was almost entirely restricted to the tomes that he published collaboratively (and prolifically, considering the fact that the partnership resulted in the appearance of

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136 *Ibidem.*
137 Rice died on 26 April 1882.
about one novel each year over a period of a decade, as well as a series of shorter works) with Besant, Stevenson may have decided to conflate his persona entirely with that of Besant. A ‘cowed’ Diogenes has difficulty wrapping his head around the concept of two writers merged in one body, and consequently is struck with silence. Though the narrator at first designates Besant as a single author, after the latter’s own assumption of the double identity the narrator equally accepts the notion and proceeds by describing how Diogenes follows the ‘famous novelists’ (plural) into the Smoking Room. Stevenson’s implication is ambiguous: while the conflation of Besant and Rice could be interpreted as a tribute to the authors’ common output, it equally limits them by defining them exclusively in terms of their relationship to each other. The sketch’s homoerotic implications are not lost on the reader, who is presented with a couple whose constituent halves are entirely engrossed in each other, two partners that remain inseparable (possibly) even after the death of one of them.

Stevenson’s sketch also draws attention to an implied competition between the Savile Club and another of London’s greatest clubs, the Athenaeum. Though several Savilians, including Lang, James, Hardy and Kipling, simultaneously, or at least at different times in their lives, attended both establishments, various accounts suggest that the clubs were each perceived in contrasting ways. The fictional Besant lays bare the view that the Savile Club, with its plethora of young literary men, offered a refreshing alternative to the Athenaeum, where the average age was higher: ‘Here gather daily those young eaglets of glory, the swordsmen of the pen, who are the pride and wonder of the world, and the tenor and envy of the effete pensionaires of the Athenaeum. They are all young; and youth is a great gift ... And they are all Rising’. Stevenson’s character here applauds not only the relative youth of the Savilians, but also their vigour – their ambition to ‘Rise’ in their profession. H. G. Wells conveyed a similar sentiment when he exclaimed: ‘thank God for the Savile – The Athenaeum for the living!’ (qtd. in Anderson 67).

Another text that actively pursues the idea of co-authorship and its dubious implications, once again written by a Savilian, is Henry James’s ‘Collaboration’, first published in the English Illustrated Magazine in 1892. As Koestenbaum notes, James himself was attracted to the concept of double writing, and even proposed a partnership to H. G. Wells, whose work he greatly admired, in 1902. However Wells, wary of the implied intimacy of the project, declined the offer (143). This did not prevent James from observing the habit in many of his club friends, who certainly provided him with enough inspiration for his short story. ‘Collaboration’ tells the tale of Félix Vendemer

139 James acquired a temporary membership to the club in 1877, and became a full member in 1884 (Anderson 47).
and Herman Heidenmauer, who meet at an impromptu salon in Paris, organized at the studio of a struggling painter who doubles as the narrator of the short story. The two men are historically burdened by their opposing nationalities: Vendemer is French and engaged to Paule de Brindes, a young woman whose father has been killed in ‘the battlefields of 1870’ (913), while Heidenmauer is German and perceived by Vendemer’s fiancée and her mother as ‘an enemy of our country,’ responsible for the crimes of his fellow countrymen (916). Still, the artists soon develop a deep interest for each other’s work. Vendemer is a poet, Heidenmauer a composer, and both become enthralled by the other’s art. Their mutual admiration, as mediated through the painter and his home, which serves as a meeting ground for the conspiring artists, grows exponentially (Heidenmauer’s composition begins to ‘haunt’ Vendemer’s ‘memory’ (916)), and eventually takes on such proportions that the poet decides to abandon his betrothed in favour of his new companion and their joint artistic project. As in the romance novels produced by Haggard and Stevenson, or indeed, as in the Savile Club itself, the woman is here again pushed out in favour of the male collaborator, suggesting that a partnership between men is preferred to a heterosexual union in marriage. The terms that James selects to describe Vendemer and Heidenmauer’s joint authorship endow the venture with an aura of danger and illicitness. Although initially the main objection to the men’s union seems to be their politically opposing backgrounds (Heidenmauer is, as another visitor of the salon observes, ‘a brutal German’ (915)), the tale intimates to the reader a deeper rejection of the very concept of collaboration itself and its power to corrupt the minds of its practitioners. The painter, who at first supports the partnership and answers each party’s curious questions about the other, gradually grows suspicious and warns Vendemer not to be ‘deliberately perverse’ (916). The word choice in this instance cannot but call to mind the homoerotic associations that presumably have begun to take shape in the narrator’s imagination.

Even the very product of the men’s co-authorship bears an aura of illicit mystery: it is ‘strange and obscure, yet irresistibly beautiful’ (917). Vendemer himself, when Heidenmauer sounds out some of his words set to music, alternately ‘blushes red’ and ‘turn[s] ... pale,’ ‘turn[s] his back to [them]’ and sits down with ‘his elbows on his knees and his head in his hands’ (917). He seems ashamed or afraid, perhaps sensing for a moment the danger in their union. His bodily behaviour may be interpreted then, as a struggle against collaboration. A confused Vendemer is fighting his attraction to the German composer and his work. Heidenmauer, on the other hand, has less difficulty in accepting the idea of their union, and has taken up the plan of composing an opera together. Eventually, not long after the German asks Vendemer, with an ambiguously laden phrase, ‘Will you do it with me?’, the Frenchman is won over. Vendemer breaks the news to the painter, who has left the pair alone at his studio: ‘We’ve sworn a tremendous oath – we’ve taken a sacred engagement’ (918). Reminiscent of Michael Field’s conception of their private and professional union in terms of marriage, these
men too have sworn their commitment to each other, in vows that actively eclipse those anticipated by Vendemer in his betrothal to Paule. The aftermath of their decision stresses the aura of illegitimacy that surrounds the perception of their partnership, a fact of which the artists themselves are fully aware. Heidenmauer predicts the reaction of their friends and readers: ‘they’ll say it’s immoral and horrible. And they’ll say I’m immoral and horrible for having worked with you’ (918). ‘Horror’, indeed, is the term that is repeatedly used to refer to the collaboration between Vendemer and Heidenmauer. An exasperated Madame de Brindes blames the painter, wondering ‘how [he] could ... have permitted such a horror’ (919). Vendemer’s ‘perversity’ is ‘monstrous’, she continues, and it would signify for him ‘a whole future compromised, a whole public alienated’, a comment that once again alludes to the marginalizing effect of co-authorship (920).

Furthermore, the narrator, channelling public opinion, labels the collaboration in terms that recollect those used by contemporaries to condemn homosexuality: the two men had engaged in an ‘unnatural alliance’ and an ‘unholy union’, conveying the common view that their project goes against Christian doctrine. Their disgrace, it is stated, can only be undone by ‘the destruction by flame of all the manuscript’: only when all proof of their union is destroyed, might they be rehabilitated (921). The collaborators themselves however, are unshaken in their conviction, and the text continues to describe them in language that stresses their unity as a couple: recurring terms are ‘he and I’, ‘we’, ‘you two’, ‘the pair’, ‘the two together’ (918, 921). Ultimately, the men’s choice to embark on their shared project entails a seemingly inevitable banishment to Italy where they live together and work only ‘for themselves and for each other’ (921). Accordingly, co-authorship instigates a process of alienation from the practitioner’s lover (Paule), from London society (public opinion), and ultimately even from the mother country itself.
3.5 Conclusion

As I have aimed to explain in this chapter, co-authorship, in various guises, often proves sensitive where issues of gender definition and identity formation are concerned. Gender matters have turned out to be a factor that can affect both the conception and reception of joint literary works. The products of collaboration, as well as their creators are shaped by the interaction between the different players in the venture, both in male-female and same-sex couplings.

In the case of Branwell and Charlotte Brontë’s childhood collaboration in the juvenilia, for example, it has become apparent that the younger sibling’s masculine-gendered tastes and games, at least in the early years of the composition of their Glass Town and Angria saga, dominated the themes and writing style of the children’s oeuvre. Apparently, in this instance, gender trumped age, and the younger boy dictated – at least in part – the imagination of his elder sister. Of no mean importance in this matter were the sources available to the young Brontës: significantly more works by male authors were selected for their personal reading, and the journals that the family subscribed to equally betrayed a preference for traditionally masculine themes in their pages. Interestingly though, as Charlotte matured, she started to develop a style that intentionally moved towards a more feminine method of writing. Increasingly aware of the bias that she met as an aspiring female novelist, she attempted to tone down the more masculine, less refined strain in her fiction. Nonetheless, she never entirely managed to subdue these so-called ‘coarse’ qualities, and continued to include passages in her fiction that betray a deliberate crossing of traditional gender lines.

The second section of this chapter showed how Dickens’s inherent view on male-female relationships was one that he attempted to transpose to his dealings with the women that contributed to Household Words and All the Year Round. However, as I have indicated by means of the discussion of three cases of interaction between the editor and his female staff members, the women developed strategies of their own to negotiate or counteract his authority. While Adelaide Anne Procter’s benevolent dodging of the conductor’s patriarchal bias was innocent enough in its intentions, Dickens’s increasingly strained dealings with Elizabeth Gaskell at times steered their bond towards less cordial territory, causing frustration on both sides. However, the most professional animosity was generated in the dispute that arose between the editor and Harriet Martineau. Their inherently opposing views eventually resulted in the latter’s total refusal to write anything more for Dickens’s journals.

Finally, the Savile Club sheds another light on the role of gender in authorial partnerships. In the last section of this chapter, I have explored how the gentlemen’s establishment engendered and facilitated collaboration between several of its members. As a noteworthy consequence of the club’s ‘men only’-policy, these partnerships were of
course all same-sex affairs. Remarkable in the Savilians’ jointly produced fiction, but also in some of their individually written texts (such as Rider Haggard’s romances), is the conscious exclusion of women, not only from the club, but also from the pages of their writing, a fact that is plausibly explained by the rise of the female author, who was perceived as a threat to the place of men in the literary profession. Moreover, reminiscent of the case of Michael Field is the fact that the public tended to look askance at same-sex collaborations, as is evidenced by Lang and Haggard’s co-written *World’s Desire*, or by James’s fictionalized account of the destruction of a poet’s reputation because of his decision to embark on a co-authored venture. This demonstrates once more that fin-de-siècle same-sex collaborators could but seldom prevent their partnerships from being attributed with homoerotic qualities.

140 In the case of Lang, however, the Savilian rejection of female influence (equally asserted in his co-authored work with fellow members of the club) is countered by evidence of his collaboration on other projects with women – including his wife, whose assistance was instrumental in the compilation of his popular *Fairy Books*. 
Chapter 4
A Room of Their Own: Collaborative Spaces

4.1 Introduction

In this final chapter, I deviate slightly from the overall emphasis that I have placed (in the previous parts of my dissertation) on the manifold sociological implications that multiple authorship entails. Instead I aim to contemplate an inanimate factor of co-authorship, namely the part played by the settings in which collective composition takes place. How did the surroundings of author couples and literary circles encourage the various players to embark on a shared enterprise? How did they facilitate the process of writing? Adding to the interpretation of the literary field in a strictly metaphorical sense, as developed by Bourdieu in his seminal theory, my aim is to position co-authorship in its concrete, real-world context. Thus the ‘field of cultural production’, in this chapter, becomes an actual landscape (or in some cases a cityscape) populated with the houses and establishments that inspired and fed collaboration between nineteenth-century writers.

In the interest of this discussion, I find it suitable to refer to Virginia Woolf’s demand for a specific space for authorial creation, a concept that she expounded on in her celebrated treatise A Room of One’s Own (1929). In this narrative essay, Woolf considers the disadvantage that is traditionally experienced by aspiring female authors. The narrator of Woolf’s text traces the fate of such women writers through different eras, focussing on her direct predecessors in the nineteenth century (a mere three decades away at the time of Woolf’s writing), and argues that the system of patriarchy has systematically thwarted women’s ambitions. What is more, she posits that many women who might have become authors never ventured to put pen to paper, since their circumstances and societal expectations prevented their doing so. As A Room of One’s Own’s critical voice points out, such restrictions were very much gender-related: ‘The world did not say to her as it said to [men], Write if you choose; it makes no difference
to me. The world said with a guffaw, Write? What's the good of your writing?" (68). Woolf then makes her thesis more concrete by stating that the crucial factor in checking the development of female talent is really a matter of property. Typically barred from private ownership, and dependent in most cases on their male family connections (be it a husband, father or brother), the nineteenth-century woman was often also deterred from creative production. Women who did attempt a literary career, despite these obstacles, were compelled to do so not in a private room (or house) of their own, but in the shared spaces of the family home (Woolf cites the famous example of Jane Austen, who ‘was glad that a hinge creaked, so that she might hide her manuscript before anyone came in’ (87)). Accordingly, in the final pages of her treatise, she concludes that ‘it is necessary to have five hundred a year and a room with a lock on the door if you are to write fiction or poetry’ (137). Further explaining the significance of such material independence, the narrator claims: ‘five hundred a year stands for the power to contemplate ... a lock on the door means the power to think for oneself’ (139). In other words, writers’ worldly circumstances can be of paramount significance for the ripening of their abilities. Though Woolf explicitly stipulated that it was the female author who should have ‘a room of her own and five hundred a year’ (123) for the development of her talents, I will argue that such spaces (and the financial independence by which the possession of these rooms is often enabled, as in the case of the Fields) can equally serve as a stimulating factor for the practice of multiple authorship. Material ownership thus comes into play during the process of double writing, when we see collaborators carving out a private space, big or small, for the shared production of texts. In other instances, the locations themselves are constructed in such a manner that they create a context that is conducive to co-authored production.

This section will be concerned with several domestic places that encouraged multiple authorship. Examples of such spaces comprise Leigh Hunt’s Hampstead cottage, as well as his cell at Surrey County Gaol in which he arguably created a sort of second home, the Brontës’ parsonage at Haworth and the Fields’ residences in Reigate (which differed greatly from their previous home in Richmond). In order to demonstrate that non-domestic spaces could equally inspire and feed authorial interaction, the final section of this chapter offers a discussion of the rooms at the Savile Club. Though planted at the centre of public life, this establishment proved highly suitable for the fruition of literary partnerships. In short, this chapter aims to indicate that multiple authors, like the women in Virginia Woolf’s treatise, could benefit equally well from having ‘a room of

141 A striking example of how a male Victorian writer was allowed more spatial freedom than his female colleagues can be found in the case of Dickens, who went so far as to erect a two-level Swiss chalet (gifted to him by French actor Charles Fechter) opposite the grounds of his Gads Hill residence. The cottage was constructed for exclusive use as his writer’s studio (Slater 533).
their own’ – be it a whole house, a separate space carved out amidst shared surroundings, or in some cases even just a table.
4.2 Inspirational Dwelling Places of the ‘Cockney School’

‘The web of our Life is of mingled Yarn’. This observation – a quotation from Shakespeare’s *All’s Well that Ends Well* (IV, iii, 68) – was made by John Keats in a letter of 8 October 1817 to Benjamin Bailey. The short reflection, placed in its new context, perfectly captures the interwoven relationships between the host of literary and artistic figures that Leigh Hunt gathered around his person in the early decades of the nineteenth century. Hunt’s circle included all of the bright young things whose reputation would rise to reach a canonical status, albeit in some cases only after their deaths. John Keats, Percy and Mary Shelley and Lord Byron were part of his coterie, but lesser-known names such as John Hamilton Reynolds, Benjamin Haydon, Horace Smith and Cornelius Webb also connected their lives to Hunt’s. Hunt himself tried his hand at writing poetry as well, publishing works like *The Story of Rimini* (1816) and *Foliage* (1818), but he was first and foremost a journalist, co-editing with his brother John the critical journal *The Examiner*. In 1813, the brothers’ inquisitive frankness resulted in a two-year imprisonment on charges of libel against the Prince Regent (a punishment that they characteristically refused to trade for the promise of future silence (Hay 15)). John Hunt was sent to Coldbath Fields, while Leigh Hunt served his sentence at Surrey Gaol in London.

Hunt’s time in prison was alleviated by the fairly lenient treatment he received there. Though he lived at first in rather dismal circumstances, his fortune changed, ironically, when his health began to suffer and he was given rooms in the old infirmary, where he was joined by his wife and children. A team of decorators transformed the old haunts into a lavishly adorned gentleman’s apartment. Hunt inhabited his aesthetic den like ‘a fairy-tale king holding court in a bower of his own creation’ (Hay 5). He was obviously proud of his new prison life, describing in detail the improvements that he made to the infirmary:

I papered the walls with a trellis of roses; I had the ceiling coloured with clouds and sky; the barred windows were screened with Venetian blinds; and when my

143 Written six months after he and his brothers moved to the Hampstead neighbourhood (where they took lodgings on the ground floor of the house of the Bentley family), Keats’s letter describes the busy interaction between himself, Leigh Hunt and their literary friends, including Shelley, Charles Brown, Benjamin Haydon and John Reynolds.
bookcases were set up with their busts, and flowers and a piano-forte made their appearance, perhaps there was not a handsomer room on that side of the water.\textsuperscript{144}

By surrounding himself with paper roses climbing the walls and a trompe l’oeil ceiling of open skies as well as by covering the prison bars with attractive blinds, Hunt effectively blotted out all elements that testified to his incarceration. Instead, the gaol acquired more and more domestic characteristics, creating for the family a legitimate ‘home away from home’. Hunt’s books, the piano and other embellishments that pleased the senses ensured that even though he was shut off from the outer world, the journalist could continue to find ample stimulation for his mind, as he later recorded in his memoir: ‘I read verses without end, and wrote almost as many’.\textsuperscript{145}

Moreover, Hunt had the advantage of being imprisoned at the heart of the capital, which facilitated the flow of visitors that he received during his time in gaol. His cell became ‘an unlikely literary salon’ (Hay 5) – an At Home in a rather unconventional setting – where the prisoner was called upon by fellow authors and artists like William Hazlitt, Lord Byron, Thomas Moore and Charles Lamb. Byron, anticipating his meeting with Hunt in a letter sent to Thomas Moore on the eve of their joint visit (19 May 1813), clearly expected the interview to be highly stimulating to the mind:

\begin{quote}
To-morrow be with me, as soon as you can, sir,
All ready and dress’d for proceeding to spunge on
(According to compact) the wit in the dungeon –
Pray Phoebus at length our political malice
May not get us lodgings with the same palace!\textsuperscript{146}
\end{quote}

Three days after his first visit to Hunt, Byron would return with books that might help the inmate in his process of writing The Story of Rimini, initiating his influence on the manuscript of Hunt’s book, which was continued even after his release, with Byron suggesting cuts and improvements. In return for his help, Hunt dedicated the book to him (Hay 60). Indeed, both Hunt brothers, supported by their friends outside the prison walls, continued to write and publish their journal. Perhaps inspired by Hunt’s congenial attitude in gaol, many of the visitors at Hunt’s impromptu literary salon, including Hazlitt, Lamb and Benjamin Haydon, contributed articles for the Examiner in these days, thus ensuring the survival of the paper. It was Lamb who initiated the

\textsuperscript{144} Hunt obviously took pride in his new abode and the reactions that it elicited from his visitors, further observing that ‘Charles Lamb declared there was no other such room except in a fairy tale’. Leigh Hunt. Lord Byron and Some of His Contemporaries. With Recollections of the Author’s Life and of His Visit to Italy. Vol. 2. London: Henry Colburn, 1828: 256.

\textsuperscript{145} Ibidem 259.

Examiner’s collaborative ‘Table Talk’ column, which offered commentary on society and its morals. For Hunt’s part, the conversations he had with his visitors inspired his creative output, resulting in the publication of *The Descent of Liberty* (1814). This poetic volume, conceived in the midst of the ongoing Napoleonic wars, re-worked the talks about European politics that he had with his friends in the Surrey Gaol salon. The book, together with the continuation of the Hunts’ journal, is an early exponent of the intricate relations and mutual influence that typified the circle that formed itself around Hunt’s person. The group cultivated the ideological principle of ‘sociability’ (established by their leader in his cell), a theory of unforced interaction and stimulation that was reflected in the literary output of the group. Daisy Hay describes how everyday life in the homely dungeon stimulated collective writing:

[In Hunt’s rooms in the old infirmary, [the rituals of friendship] took on a co-operative, oppositional significance. In *The Examiner*, such activities were given a public outlet, as conversations over dinner were rewritten in the collaborative ‘Table Talk’ columns, letters from friends were published and discussed in editorials, and as different members of Hunt’s circle contributed theatrical and literary reviews which reflected the group’s diversity as well as its coherence. (41)]

Keats, though not yet personally acquainted with Hunt at the time of the latter’s imprisonment, was intrigued by the accounts describing him. Consequently, he was inspired to compose a poem on the occasion of his release in February 1815. ‘Written on the Day that Mr Leigh Hunt Left Prison’ reflects the image of Hunt stoically bearing his sentence. Notably, Keats’s poem stresses the continued involvement in literature that ensured Hunt’s spiritual ‘freedom’, despite his being physically contained. By portraying the journalist’s jailors as short-sighted philistines, Keats expressly sides with Hunt, and paves the way for their ensuing friendship:

What though, for showing truth to flatter’d state,
   Kind Hunt was shut in prison, yet has he,
   In his immortal spirit, been as free
As the sky-searching lark, and as elate.
Minion of grandeur! think you he did wait?
   Think you he naught but prison walls did see,
Till, so unwilling, thou unturn’dst the key?
Ah, no! far happier, nobler was his fate!
In Spenser’s halls he stray’d, and bowers fair,
   Culling enchanted flowers; and he flew
With daring Milton through the fields of air:
   To regions of his own his genius true
Took happy flights. Who shall his fame impair
When thou art dead, and all thy wretched crew?"147

Keats’s verses reiterate the traditional idea of immortality through poetry. Praising the prisoner’s poetic genius, the speaker claims that ‘Kind Hunt’s literary efforts will ensure his fame beyond the lifetime of all his adversaries.

Remarkably, the magnetic attraction that Hunt exuded from inside his inspirational dungeon was duplicated when he and his family later took up residence in a cottage in London’s Hampstead Heath, a neighbourhood that was highly popular as a residence for literary men at the time (both Benjamin Haydon and Charles Brown also had a house in the vicinity, and Keats came to live there with his brothers in 1817, so the members of Hunt’s circle were always close by). It was here that Hunt’s friendship with Keats blossomed. The young poet, having found an encouraging mentor in the more experienced Hunt, became a frequent visitor to the latter’s home, sometimes staying for the night and sleeping on the sofa in the parlour (Hay 93). In his memoir Lord Byron and Some of His Contemporaries (published in 1828), Hunt reflects on their closeness at the time, living, reading and writing in unison: ‘We read and walked together, and used to write verses of an evening upon a given subject. No imaginative pleasure was left unnoticed by us, or unenjoyed; from the recollection of the bards and patriots of old, to the luxury of a summer rain at our window, or the clicking of the coal in winter-time’.148

The authors stimulated each other by engaging in writing challenges that resulted in poems such as both Keats’s and Hunt’s ‘On the Grasshopper and Cricket’, the theme of which had been set by Hunt. The poets were obviously quite convinced of the other’s talent; on one occasion, they symbolically crowned each other with laurel (or in Hunt’s case, ivy) wreaths (the classic prize awarded to a worthy poet), an event that was reflected in their twin poems ‘On Receiving a Laurel Crown from Leigh Hunt’ and ‘On Receiving a Crown of Ivy from the Same’.149

Keats’s opening lines ‘Minutes are flying swiftly, and as yet / Nothing unearthly has enticed my brain’ suggests that the laurel crown was again the instigator of a writing contest, which was typically to be completed within a set time. Further proof that Hunt’s study (which he had decorated with the busts and furniture that adorned his cell at Surrey Gaol, thus recreating the stimulating cocoon of his dungeon salon) was a source of inspiration to his visitors can be found in Keats’s ‘Sleep and Poetry’. In the poem, Keats describes how a slumber on the settee in

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149 The sonnet follows Hunt’s other poem ‘To Keats’ in the first edition of Foliage, so ‘the Same’ obviously refers to his fellow laureled poet in this instance. See Leigh Hunt. Foliage; or Poems Original and Translated. London: C. and J. Ollier, 1818: cxxv-cxxvi.
Hunt’s study after a day spent in the company of the cottage’s inhabitants triggered his poetic mode:

and thus, the chimes
Of friendly voices had just given place
To as sweet a silence, when I ’gan retrace
The pleasant day, upon a couch at ease.
It was a poet’s house who keeps the keys
Of pleasure’s temple. Round about were hung
The glorious features of the bards who sung
In other ages – cold and sacred busts
Smiled at each other. Happy he who trusts
To clear Futurity his darling fame!151

‘Sleep and Poetry’ was published in Keats’s 1817 volume of Poems, which opened with a ‘Dedication’ to ‘Leigh Hunt Esq.’, whom the poet hoped to ‘please’ with his ‘poor offerings’.152

Moreover, at Hunt’s ‘poet’s house’, Keats met many likeminded spirits, visitors that like him were drawn to the place by Hunt’s central presence. The coterie nature of the group impacted on its members’ work as they engaged with each other through sonnet writing contests, reviews, dedications and responses to each others’ poems. Location is certainly a key factor in determining the nature of the Hunt circle. Both Hunt’s prison studio and the continuation of his literary salon in the ‘Vale of Health’ (a small enclave

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152 Ibidem, p. 2.
of cottages that was part of London’s Hampstead neighbourhood) place the group in a decidedly urban setting. The metropolitan context undoubtedly played a formative role not just for the creation of Hunt’s coterie, but the city also affected the style of writing of the poets in his circle, as Jeffrey N. Cox points out: ‘The Cockney style is witty, allusive, intelligent, and it also possesses an urban and at its best urbane arrogance. With its diction shifts, its “new-fangled” feel, its odd juxtapositions, it was an attempt to capture the pulse of modern city life’ (28). The urban setting within which the circle of young poets developed itself stood in stark contrast to the typically rural background of the established Lake School of first-generation Romantics (mainly represented by Wordsworth, Coleridge and Southey). Precisely this modern, down-to-earth strain in the work of Hunt and his circle was what elicited disparagement in contemporary journals. It was the influential series of attacks published in Blackwood’s Magazine by John Gibson Lockhart, writing under the pseudonym of ‘Z’, that first pejoratively labelled the group of poets as the ‘Cockney School’. In his personal attack on Hunt, ‘Z’ scorned the central figure of the group for daring to dedicate his Story of Rimini to Lord Byron (thus suggesting that he and Byron shared not only a mutual friendship but also their poetic ideas), evidencing in the process how conservative critics attempted to sever the ties between the aristocratic Byron and Shelley and the other members of the Cockney School:

We dare say Mr Hunt has some fine dreams about the true nobility being the nobility of talent, and flatters himself, that with those who acknowledge only that sort of rank, he himself passes for being the peer of Byron. He is sadly mistaken. He is as completely a Plebeian in his mind as he is in his rank and station in society.\(^{153}\)

By awarding Hunt and his fellow poets the ‘Cockney’ sobriquet, ‘Z’ wished to stress their contemptible ‘Plebeian’ character, undeserving of being associated with ‘true nobility’.

However, the circle did thrive in its urban ‘Cockney’ context, as is evidenced by the scores of poems that resulted from their shared sessions at the Hunt home. Contrary to the popular image of the Romantic author as a solitary genius, much of the work produced during the Cockney School’s most cohesive years was written in response to others’ products. Many of the poems by members of the Hunt circle were conceived against an ‘interpersonal background’ and formed ‘part of a social interaction which included not just attempts to clothe immortal ideas in deathless verse but also efforts to win admiration, to best a rival, perhaps to seduce’ (Cox 64-65). What ensued was a dialectic back-and-forth between several of the circle’s members, resulting in occasional poetry that reflected their everyday lives and was scribbled down on the blank pages of

personal copies of books or sent to the addressee in a private letter, without expressly being intended for publication. During get-togethers at Hunt’s cottage, sonnet writing became a form of entertainment, with contests resulting in twin poems on set subjects such as the ones already mentioned by Keats and Hunt, or even triplet sonnets on the Nile by Hunt, Keats and Shelley (written in February 1818). As Cox observes, ‘the sonnets were written together, read together, and often published together’ (66), stressing the essentially social nature of their composition.

Nevertheless, relationships within the circle were at times quite strained. Friendships between the group’s members varied in intensity, and at times discordance over personal or professional matters caused a rupture in the network’s threads. In the letter that Keats wrote to Bailey (cited above), for example, the author, though stressing the intermingled nature of the group’s correlations, also testifies to a growing sense of annoyance (encouraged by their mutual friend Benjamin Haydon) about Hunt’s influence over his own reputation: ‘Haydon says to me Keats dont show your Lines to Hunt on any account or he will have done half for you – so it appears Hunt wishes it to be thought’. Hunt indeed tried to dissuade his friend from writing the long poem *Endymion*, advice that a defiant Keats refused to follow (and consequently Hunt disapproved of the book): ‘You see Bailey how independent my writing has been – Hunts dissuasion was of no avail – I refused to visit Shelley that I might have my own unfetterd scope – and after all I shall have the Reputation of Hunt’s elevé. His corrections and amputations will by the knowing ones be trased in the Poem’.

Certainly, the treatment that Hunt had received in *Blackwood Magazine*’s series of attacks on him would not encourage Keats to welcome the association, which he himself had nonetheless instigated by dedicating his *Poems* to his friend. When in August 1818 Keats’s own poetry became the subject of scorn in Z’s fourth essay on the Cockney School, Keats certainly felt the threat to his reputation. After a period of intense friendship in 1816 and 1817, the connection between the two men weakened as a consequence of Keats’s wish, which already transpired in his letter to Bailey, to assert his independence. However, the fact that he moved in with the Hunts during his last illness evidences that their bond was never entirely severed. The Hunts’ cottage at Hampstead was still considered to be a

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154 At the same time, the circle’s dynamics shifted and separate but linked formations were established. The centre of productivity was relocated to new inspirational places. Most famous among these is of course the mythological status that Byron’s Villa Diodati by Lake Geneva acquired. This was the scene where according to her own account, Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* was born out of the inspiring conversation, over the summer of 1816, with the other members of the company (including Byron himself, and Percy Shelley, who later edited his wife’s manuscript), making *Frankenstein* another prominent example of a collaboratively conceived text.


safe haven for the ailing poet, and once more became an encouraging backdrop for the unfolding of their personal and literary friendship.
4.3 The Brontës’ Parsonage: Writing and Everyday Life

Like Hunt’s Hampstead cottage, the scene in which the Brontë siblings conceived of their juvenile sagas, their poetry and eventually the novels by which they would achieve universal fame was first and foremost a domestic one. Different from Hunt’s home, the parsonage at Haworth did not develop into a locale for the celebration of literature. It never became a salon where aspiring authors could gather to discuss ideas and exchange comments, though Haworth and the Brontës’ house later acquired the status of a literary shrine that admiring readers flocked to en masse. The parsonage always retained its function as a family residence: its purpose was to provide a home for the reverend, his four remaining children, their servants and pets. It was never constructed to be a writer’s studio, though all remaining members of the family were or would become authors. Consequently, there was no separate space where the creation of literature could unfold, and the Brontës were forced to write in the midst of all domestic activity.

Ambrotype of Haworth parsonage (taken before 1861 (OC 239)).

Even though he is now mainly remembered as the father of the famous Brontë sisters, Patrick Brontë was an author himself. Several decades before his children entered the literary scene, he had published both poetry (among which were his Cottage Poems (1811)) and prose (including The Rural Minstrel (1814) and The Maid of Killarney (1818)), and in later life continued to voice his opinions on matters of social and religious importance in pamphlets and articles written for the local press.
The correlation of everyday life at the Brontë parsonage and the development of its inhabitants' authorial talents was evident from the very start. Considering the genesis of the children's juvenile writings, which grew out of their improvisational play (as already discussed in Chapter 2), it is obvious that the backdrop against which their games played out was paramount in feeding the stories that they created, at first orally, and later in their scribbled-down instalments. Living together in such close proximity in the family home, the Brontës were dependent on their sisters or brother for their daily entertainment. As a consequence, they were naturally drawn to each other when their interest in writing started to surface. Hence, the beginning of their collaboration was the logical result of their cohabitation, organically developing out of their plays. Without a doubt, the parsonage's relatively isolated position (standing at the top of Church Lane, it 'literally was the last house in town'\textsuperscript{158}) helped to encourage the children to create a world of adventures for themselves. Additionally, the expansive moor that formed their extended playground, provided direct inspiration for their tales, both during the composition of their juvenilia and for the writing of their more mature poetry and novels (the latter is especially true, of course, of Emily's creations, which were unfailingly in tune with the nature by which she was surrounded).

Starting with the very earliest writings about their lives and authorship, the Brontës have been linked to their surroundings time and again. Charlotte already mentioned the 'wild workshop' in which Emily's stories were 'hewn' in her Preface to the 1850 edition of \textit{Wuthering Heights} (\textit{WHAG} xxiv), but it was Elizabeth Gaskell who consolidated the trend with the publication of the \textit{Life of Charlotte Brontë} (1857), the first extensive Brontean biography, and one that would prove highly influential in the shaping of the siblings' image for many decades afterwards. Rather than starting her narrative with the birth of her subject, Gaskell dedicated the first two chapters of her book to a description of the town of Haworth and its inhabitants (the 'wild rough population', as she dubs them (12)), as well as the quaint customs of rural Yorkshire. Of course, Gaskell's motives for doing so were clear: by representing the Brontës' context in this way, she wished to counter the allegations of coarseness made against the sisters in contemporary reviews of their novels. After relating several anecdotes to illustrate her point, Charlotte's biographer explicitly associates the town's more salient stories with the content of the Brontës' novels. Drawing an obvious comparison to the rough traits that typify characters like Heathcliff and Arthur Huntingdon, Gaskell refers to 'the tales of positive violence and crime that have occurred in these isolated dwellings, which still linger in the memories of the old people of the district, and some of which were doubtless familiar to the authors of “Wuthering Heights” and “The Tenant of Wildfell

However, as Juliet Barker and others have shown, Gaskell’s image of Haworth as an almost barbaric, backward town was highly exaggerated and in some respects even plainly incorrect. The industrial revolution that held sway over the entire nation in the course of the nineteenth century, had not failed to reach this small Yorkshire town, which boasted a number of mills and tradesmen. The Brontë children had ample opportunities to go out and interact with their neighbours and acquaintances. Moreover, through their reading of regional and national newspapers, they kept track of the goings on in the rest of the country (and empire), and found in these journals (as I already discussed in the previous chapters) abundant inspiration to furnish their own fictional sagas.

At any rate, most important for the development of their abilities as young authors were the Brontë siblings’ immediate circumstances. The creation of the children’s imaginary tales was inevitably enveloped by daily life at Haworth parsonage. Whereas privacy for writing was often a hard-fought commodity for adult aspiring writers like Michael Field (as I will discuss in the next section of this chapter), for children it was even less evident. Had the young siblings attempted to demand an unsupervised space of their own for their literary invention, this would conceivably have been denied them. As a consequence, the Brontës resorted to other strategies that would help to safeguard at least the precise contents of their joint writing. The very products of the children’s writing testify to their domestic origins. The juvenilia were not only composed in the midst of the commotion of an early-nineteenth-century home, their authors also made use of household elements for their fabrication. The children’s tales were typically written on scraps of paper found around the house, their covers wrapped in leftover bits and pieces, such as an empty sugar bag. Moreover, the lay-out of their scribbles, as mentioned before, betrays the need for concealment that the young authors ostensibly felt. By adopting their quintessential style of miniature handwriting crammed onto tiny handmade folios, all prying eyes (except for their own) were effectively shut out. Equally keeping in mind how cramped they were in their privacy, being constantly surrounded by their father, siblings, servants and even a few pets, it is little wonder that the Brontës thought up an entirely new imaginary world in which they could roam uninhibitedly, fleeing the tumult of everyday life at Haworth parsonage. Both the form and content of the saga’s instalments were thus influenced by the circumstances in which they were composed.

A telling example of the interweaving of the siblings’ process of composition and the household around them (which doubled as the scene of their writing) can be found in Emily’s diary papers. In them, she habitually records a status quo of the household,
including the age and whereabouts of its inhabitants and the wellbeing of its pets. The papers also provide a testimony of the confluence of Emily’s domestic tasks and her writing efforts, both of which she labels as ‘business’ in her Diary Paper of 31 July 1845: ‘I must hurry off now to my turning and ironing I have plenty of work on hands and writing and am altogether full of buis[ness]’ (J 491). The Diary Paper for 1834, signed by both Emily and Anne, though rambling in its stream-of-consciousness style and riddled with faulty spelling, interestingly betrays how Emily (in whose voice the paper is written) is stopped in her writing by an intervening Tabby, who demands that she help with the cooking chores: ‘Taby said on my putting a pen in her face Ya pitter pottering there instead of pilling a potate I answered O Dear, O Dear, O Dear I will directly with that I get up, take a knife and begin pilling’ (J 487). This excerpt makes plain the direct consequence of having a kitchen table for a writing desk: the domestic inevitably invades the author’s creative space. In this instance, the young Emily, perhaps not as concerned with keeping her writing a secret as she would later be during the composition of her poetry, is writing openly at the kitchen table, while everyday life around her continues its course. What is more, the kitchen and its main occupant Tabby Aykroyd, while indispensable for their practical use in the Haworth household, also proved influential for the shaping of the children’s budding imagination. With the warmth of the fire drawing the Brontë children to the kitchen during their nighttime leisure hours, the siblings would gather and listen to Tabby. The maid entertained them with ghost stories about Yorkshire in olden times, relating to the impressionable young minds her belief that the fairies that lived in the stream were driven away from the ‘becks’ by the advent of modern factories (Gaskell 81). Tabby’s tales, narrated in her broad Yorkshire accent (of which snippets were recorded for posterity in Emily’s diary papers, as shown above), were bound to ignite the imagination of her listeners, whose own fantastical stories provide ample proof of their delight in all things supernatural. Though the domestic sphere might have been counterproductive to the Brontës’ authorship in other respects, in this case it indirectly helped to fuel their ‘fancy’ (to use Charlotte’s term).

As Emily was to learn, the close-knit nature of the Brontë household entailed that attempting to keep their work a secret from each other was to prove even more difficult than guarding their scribbles from adult eyes. My discussion in the second chapter of this dissertation already showed that Emily’s attitude towards the composition of her poetry differed from that towards the writing of her prose. Though Charlotte reported her sister’s unwillingness to accept suggested changes to her novel manuscript, Emily did share the process of its creation with her sisters by discussing the plot and reading

160 Tabitha (‘Tabby’) Aykroyd served the Brontë family for thirty years, ruling over the household and the children in a strict but affectionate manner. She died in February 1855, only weeks before Charlotte (OC 27).
passages aloud to them. Her poetry, on the other hand, was evidently a private affair. Charlotte, at least, was unaware of its existence until Emily accidentally left her notebook on the dining room table. Emily’s wish to safeguard her privacy in this one instance was evidenced by her initially cross reaction to her sister’s discovery, as well as her refusal to allow Charlotte to include her poetry in a shared collection destined for print. However, a tenacious Charlotte managed to persuade her more reserved sister, and thus initiated the collaborative process that resulted in the joint publication of the sisters’ poetry (a connection that was later enhanced by her posthumous editing of Emily’s other poems and reputation).

An object that has become a legitimate part of the Brontë myth not least by means of the string of biographies that perpetuated its significance was the family’s dining room table. The function that was assigned to this particular piece of furniture at Haworth parsonage turned it from a regular object into a symbol for the Brontës’ creative genius. In light of a discussion about co-authorship in the Brontë family, the drawing-room table is fittingly emblematic. Again, Charlotte’s testimony (along with that of one of the Brontës’ most loyal servants) played a definite part in amplifying the symbolic significance of the table. In a letter written during her stay with Charlotte and her father at Haworth in 1853, Gaskell copied out the conversation she had with the servant Martha Brown, who told her: ‘For as long as I can remember – Tabby says since they were little bairns Miss Brontë & Miss Emily & Miss Anne used to put away their sewing after prayers, & walk all three one after the other round the table in the parlour till near eleven o’clock’. It was during these walks that, as Charlotte confided in Gaskell, ‘she & her sisters talked over the plans & projects of their whole lives’.

These late-night discussions included, of course, the shared evaluation of the sisters’ work and their schemes for its publication.

161 The table at Haworth parsonage is certainly not the only iconic table in literary history. For instance, a similar example was the mahogany table, now stored in the recesses of the British Library, that played a central role at the Punch offices. Its rounded oval shape, reflecting the metaphorical ‘Round table’ talks printed in the magazine, was remarkable. Reminiscent of that most legendary of tables, King Arthur’s Round Table, the shape of the table implied that Punch’s contributors, holding their meetings at the oval table, strove for equality in the composition of their magazine. The surface of the table is ‘scored all around the edge with initials carved into the wood with penknives’ by Punch’s most prominent authors, so that it has become a symbol for the shared authorship of the journal (Leary 1). Moreover, as a habit sumptuous meals were also served during the conferrals that were held at the oval table, showing how conviviality could enhance collaboration (see also 4.5): ‘in the midst of this conversational melee the content for the next issue of Punch was decided upon (Leary 1). Like Haworth’s dining table, Punch’s table thus also held a double function, merging the informal and the professional. For an extensive discussion of collaboration in Punch, see: Patrick Leary. The Punch Brotherhood. Table Talk and Print Culture in Mid-Victorian London. London: The British Library, 2010.

In any household (both modern and Victorian) the dining table, along with the hearth (so important for its warming function in the cold Yorkshire climate) literally stood at the centre of daily life. It was the place where meals were taken and where company was entertained. Yet, most important for the case of the Brontës, the dining table could be transformed into a large desk that provided enough room for not just one, but two or even three authors to write in unison. This is best illustrated in the drawing with which Emily embellished her diary paper for 26 June 1837 (see Chapter 2). The image shows Emily and Anne, engorged in their work, while the whole expanse of the table’s surface is scattered with their ‘papers’ and the ‘tin box’ in which they are preserved. In this instance, the sisters effectively eked out a space for their co-authorship in the midst of the household by turning (part of) the drawing-room into a writer’s study, at least for the duration of their writing session. Emily moreover specifies that she and Anne are the only occupants of the room (their father has gone out, their Aunt, Branwell and Charlotte are busy in other rooms of the house, and Tabby is in the ‘kitchin’ (J 487)), which explains why the girls have few qualms in leaving the papers of their Gondal saga – to which they are in the process of adding new poems – lying out in the open.

The mythological status of the Haworth dining table was certainly reinforced by Gaskell’s account of her visit to the parsonage in 1853, in which she reports how Charlotte continued, even after the deaths of Emily and Anne, the habit that she and her
sisters had developed of walking in circles around the table while reciting and discussing the manuscripts of their novels. Coming to the close of her description of a day spent in Charlotte’s company, she writes: ‘We sit up together till ten, or past; and after I go I hear Miss Brontë come down and walk up and down the room for an hour or so’ (Gaskell 620). Gaskell here echoes the description of the Brontës’ custom included in an earlier chapter of her biography:

The sister retained the old habit, which was begun in their aunt’s lifetime, of putting away their work at nine o’clock, and commencing their study, pacing up and down the sitting-room. At this time they talked over the stories they were engaged upon, and described their plots. Once or twice a week each read to the others what she had written, and heard what they had to say about it (Gaskell 316-317)

The image of Charlotte circling the table on her own, and in silence, drives home for Gaskell’s readers the sense of loneliness of the last remaining sister. The biographer certainly does not shun pathos in her description of Charlotte completing *Shirley*, a novel that she had begun when Emily and Anne were still alive, after the deaths of both sisters:

She went on with her work steadily. But it was dreary to write without any one to listen to the progress of her tale – to find fault or sympathise – while pacing the length of the parlour in the evenings, as in the days that were no more. Three sisters had done this – then two, the other sister dropping off from the walk – and now one was left desolate, to listen for echoing steps that never came, and to hear the wind sobbing at the windows, with an almost articulate sound. (416)

Moreover, given that the biography was written and issued only after Charlotte’s death, the tragedy of her own passing strengthens the sense of foreboding inherent in the scene that Gaskell describes. Once more, the biographer plays the heartstrings of her readers, in the process garnering sympathy for her subject and thus effectively mollifying Charlotte’s posthumous reputation.
4.4 Michael Field’s Aesthetic Writing Spaces

Like the Brontë siblings, Katherine Bradley and Edith Cooper were living together even before they discovered in each other their respective writing partners. Katherine, who was already accustomed to spending long periods at the Cooper home prior to Edith’s birth, came to live with the family permanently when Lissie – Edith’s mother and her sister – became an invalid and could no longer manage the household by herself. At the time, Edith was only a toddler, but as she grew older the bond with her aunt became increasingly more intimate. Once more, the domestic context thus preceded and facilitated the budding of co-authorship. By sharing a house, the lives of Katherine and Edith became intertwined to such an extent that the step towards a professional partnership was easily taken.

As Edith grew up and her age gradually allowed for the rapport with her aunt to shift from a relationship based on care and play to a connection that was fed by mutual discussion and joint interests, the two women became inseparable. They attended lectures together at Bristol University and after the family’s move to Reigate continued to share friends and acquaintances and shape their views on life and art in concord with each other. However, since their home was one they shared, for the larger part of their lives, with other family members, finding a suitable place to write was no mean feat. Life in Edith’s parental home was not always a blessing to the Fields, who at times keenly felt the constraint placed on them by living in such close quarters with Lissie (until her death in 1889) and James (‘the Old Couple’, as they nicknamed Edith’s parents) and Edith’s younger sister Amy, as well as several servants who added to the daily commotion of an already busy Victorian household. Katherine’s impatience with the sounds of everyday family life transpires in her journal entries: ‘cooks & their infinitely vile gossip, whereas we demand silent service,’ she sighed (Letters 140). Surrounded as they were by such an assembly of people, with each of them naturally claiming a portion of their attention, privacy for the two women was often quite scarce.

Of course, essential to the operation of a Victorian family like that of the Coopers was the home that served as the backdrop against which its inhabitants attempted to develop a symbiotic coexistence. Moreover, this particular residence had to double as workspace for the two-headed author that it housed. Central in the lives of the Fields, for many years, was ‘Durdans’, the house in Reigate that James Cooper moved his family into in 1891 (two years after the death of his wife). Many years before (when the family was still living in Bristol) Katherine, who was then still writing alone as ‘Arran Leigh’, already experienced the challenge of poetic composition amidst the noise of a shared home. Quite restricted in her personal space, she wrote ‘in her little blue bedroom, trying to shut her ears to her brother-in-law James reading the newspaper aloud in the next room’ (Donaghue 34).
Though Durdans was shared with a host of other people and presided over by James Cooper, the Fields did try their best to carve out a space that suited them in this new Reigate residence. On 22 January 1891, shortly after the family had moved in, Edith made a note about the decorations they were planning in their shared journal ‘The gay Morris papers unpacked at “Durdans” – jocund designs, with which a poet must be gay’ (Letters 125). In her comment, Edith explicitly draws a link between the place of writing and the mindset of the poet itself: aesthetically pleasing surroundings can inspire the writer, or at least lift her spirits. Gay papers produce gay poets. The choice of wallpaper, designed by William Morris, naturally reflects the women’s aesthetic preferences. With their intricate designs and foregrounding of botanical elements, Morris’s papers could be said to form a visual counterpart of the ornate language and floral metaphors used by the Fields in their professional as well as their private writing (displayed in their poetry, plays and journal). Katherine too recorded her delight in finding the appropriate adornments for their rooms: ‘I drive down to Durdans in a cab full to the brim of treasures. With one hand I clutch an Etruscan pot, with the other I hug my terrier ... We stick candles into the stoppers of bottles; every ornament with a long neck is pressed into service’ (Letters 125). Evidently, every single object that can help to enhance Durdans’ appeal to the eye is hauled in by the poets.

Study at Durdans, probably adorned with the ‘gay Morris papers’ (photo taken before the Fields’ move to Richmond, March 1899).

However, even though Bradley and Cooper did their best to embellish their surroundings so that they would help to fuel poetic imagination, they could not
eliminate the other inhabitants of Durdans. Forced to share the house with James and Amy Cooper (not to mention the family servants), the Fields worked ‘locked in the dining-room late at night’ so as not to be disturbed (qtd. in Donaghue 80). Thus, while living in the paternal home the poets attempted to claim a part of it as theirs – at least for the duration of their writing session. The key to the door of the dining-room is of paramount importance here: it enabled them to actively create a space of their own within the house, a ‘locus scribendi’ that envelops the scene of collaboration, while forcibly shutting out all possible interruption.

Though Katherine and Edith defied patriarchal tradition by existing as a unit outside the institution of marriage (consciously sidestepping the role of both wife and mother in the traditional sense163), they were still not entirely free to do as they pleased. Edith had to fulfil the role of daughter, and Katherine that of sister-in-law, to James Cooper. After the death of his wife Lissie in 1889, the pater familias had come to rely on the women as constant companions. Claiming a primary spot in their attention, he was obviously jealous of the women’s male friends and visitors, perhaps discerning in them a potential threat to the domestic cocoon that he had created by surrounding himself with a triad of women (which also included his younger daughter Amy). Edith described her father’s overprotective nature in the Fields’ private journal:

Round Michael [Katherine] whom he loved with passion, round me whom he loved with devotion, round mother whom he loved with veneration he simply created a wilderness – There must be his love & a desert. He nearly killed me with nervous fear & anxiety ... I dreaded some violent scene, I had a sense of doom growing with the years; no man could be received by us with comfort or dignity, every friendship was blighted as it rose to growing vigour by his hatred ... He created a desert round us & built an altar in our hearts’ (Letters 138)

Notably, the main focal point of James’s jealousy, as Edith specifically points out, are the women’s male visitors, evidencing once again how the deep intimacy with her aunt aroused little suspicion. Only men were perceived as a threat to James Cooper’s carefully cosseted coterie. Time and again, James Cooper’s overbearing idées fixes caused tensions to run high at the family home, leading to heated discussions and in one instance even a threat on the part of the Fields to leave Durdans altogether (Donaghue 77).

Furthermore, James Cooper was not the only factor that caused frustration in the hearts of the double poet. As the Fields’ circle of artistic acquaintances grew, and visits

163 In their relationship as a couple, it could be argued that they did perform as ‘wives’ or ‘mothers’ to each other. The claim is valid especially for Katherine, who not only doubled as a surrogate mother to the young Edith, but also nursed her during her final illness, until her death in December 1913.
to London increasingly pressed on them the relative boredom of Reigate compared to the bustling literary scene of the capital, the women felt the constraint of life at Durdans. Edith recorded her frustration in their diary: ‘Here in this hateful Reigate ... we have no friends & we cannot bind them to us far away in town’ (qtd. in Donaghue 84). Moreover, Bradley and Cooper had been travelling extensively through Europe, admiring the landscapes of France and the art of Italy (to which they devoted an entire volume of poetry, titled *Sight and Song* (1892), that reflected in verse the aesthetic pleasure derived from gazing at the works of the masters). Remarkably, James and Amy took several trips to Europe themselves, yet the two duos mostly travelled apart, a habit that hints at a definite schism in the family ties. After a trip to Yorkshire with Katherine in the autumn of 1896, Durdans’ domestic routine and relative isolation strikes Edith as especially dull: ‘no friends, no letters.. garrulous complaint & inept speech all day when in poor father’s company’ (*Letters* 136). Edith finds it difficult to slip back into her daughterly role after her adventures abroad, keenly feeling the lack of stimulating surroundings and conversation partners, instead of which she is confronted time and again with her elderly father’s ongoing nagging.

The summer of 1897 brought about a significant shift in the lives of the Michael Fields. James Cooper, at 79, lost his balance during a hike in the Swiss Alps, and fell off a cliff. His body was found only months later. At first Katherine and Edith, in deep mourning for the loss of their brother-in-law and father, were faced with the daunting awareness that ‘[t]he old home-life [is] gone’ for good (*Letters* 140). Yet the event of his death also signalled a period of change. Soon Amy Cooper, perhaps equally sensing that the weight of her father’s judgement was lifted, announced her engagement to the Irish Catholic John Ryan. With the last member of the family departed for a new life, the Fields could now for the first time re-evaluate their situation and make decisions about how they wanted to live, without the need to worry about James’s reaction, or Amy’s wellbeing. They no longer had any obligations that could tie them to anyone but each other. Since their home doubled up as the scene of writing for Michael Field, the changes in their personal life necessarily affected their professional activity in equal measure. With the announcement of Amy’s engagement, the women felt that their ‘Past’ was somehow ‘close[d],’ and Edith could barely hide her excitement at the promise of a new beginning: ‘there is a happy promise that the dream of our lives may be fulfilled & we may really live the wedded life’ (*Letters* 142). This diary entry betrays a sense that as long as they were but a part of the Cooper household their ‘wedded life’ was never entirely complete, not ‘really lived’. They too, along with Amy’s new start in marriage, would begin a fresh chapter: one that was shared only among themselves.

Finally, the lack of fulfilment and isolation felt by the women at Durdans could be allowed to fully raise its head, and the wish to move closer to the hub of literary London (where the bulk of their aestheticist friends already resided) urged them to relocate to Richmond. Not coincidentally, their friends and masculine counterparts, Charles
Ricketts and Charles Shannon (‘The Artists’) had already made a home for themselves there at 8 Spring Terrace. Upon a previous visit to Ricketts and Shannon’s artists’ den, the Fields had had a taste of what a home of their own might be like, decorated with objects that please the senses. Edith expressed her delight while describing the quaint habits of the Ricketts-Shannon household: ‘The little house is delicious ... Lunch in the willow-green parlour (fowl, chocolate & custard pudding & banana-fritters – food for gods and a picnic in a pine-forest) ... They have forks with pistol-handles (both green ones and silver)’ (Letters 142). The residence of Ricketts and Shannon indicated how the adornment of a house might feed the imagination, like the parlour painted or papered green that transports Edith to a pine-forest and turns the food that is served into the stuff of a picnic.

Unsurprisingly, 1 The Paragon, the place in Richmond that was elected to become their new home, was found for Katherine and Edith by the Artists, who showered them with advice on the proper décor of their new home by the Thames. The care that was lavished on the decoration of the house echoes the artistic taste that the Fields expressed in their work, both in its contents and in the material form of their volumes (which were luxuriously produced, as discussed in Chapter two). The old oakwood furniture that had served them for years at Durdans was replaced with trendy satinwood equipment, the outdated Chesterfield must make way for a new settee (a ‘deep, orange thing, burnt deep with the sun like the coloured races’ (Letters 149)) and the house was ornamented with the requisite aesthetic artefacts. Many of these objects were designed and gifted to the women by Ricketts and Shannon themselves. They were complemented with exquisite flower arrangements, exotic birds, a series of Japanese prints and even a bed designed by William Morris. The poets themselves, adopting the look of Preraphaelite women and adorning themselves with jewels bearing names of their own (such as ‘L’oiseau bleu’, a brooch designed by Ricketts which Edith described as ‘Byzantine [and] wonderful’ (Letters 149)) fit perfectly in their new palace of sensual pleasures. Characteristically for the Fields, the various chambers of their aesthetic stronghold were all given names: there was a Gold Room, a Silver Room and a Sun Room: even the labels of these different spaces reflected their taste for all things that could provide visual stimuli.

Not only did a place of their own grant them privacy from prying eyes (a commodity that was much sought-after in the hustle and bustle of Durdans), but it also allowed them to turn the house into an extension of their aesthetic imagination. A long move away from having to lock the door of the family drawing-room, they could now openly discuss the execution of their collaborative projects. Still, the women kept their habit of writing in separate rooms and subsequently swapping manuscripts for notes and revision. Katherine wrote during the whole morning in the tiny ‘sulking room’ overlooking the garden, while Edith was in the Silver Room (Donaghue 106-107). This way, the Fields worked in different, yet connected spaces, separated only by a flight of
stairs. At the Paragon, there no longer was any need for locked doors or secret
conferrals: like a buzzing beehive constructed out of interlinked compartments, the
whole house was their aesthetic cocoon, a world that they had created to reflect and
inspire their imagination.

Contemporary photograph of The Paragon, taken for the Fields’ Christmas cards (1900).

An essential factor of the Fields’ shared life as co-authors, which certainly ought not
to be overlooked in the discussion of their setting up a home for their sole use as writers
and lovers, was the couple’s financial situation. To have at one’s disposal a place like the
Paragon, with its plethora of rooms, including a garden and view over the Thames, was
an obvious luxury for two writers who were anything but economically successful in
their trade. The women themselves were certainly aware of their privilege, as Katherine
records in the journal, in an entry that alludes to the expenses they have made for the
embellishment of their home: ‘our little, river-side house ... grows daily dearer to us, &,
as we can afford it, more beautiful’ (Letters 152). Katherine’s inheritance from her father
Charles Bradley proved instrumental in allowing the women to make these decisions
with such ease. The origins of the women’s poetic freedom as it was displayed at The
Paragon, it should not be forgotten, were quite prosaic. Only through the commercial efforts of Katherine’s father was their material independence enabled, as Donaghue rightly remarks: ‘Like many other devotees of Art for Art’s Sake, the Michael Fields came from solid bourgeois stock; they preferred not to remember that their exquisite reveries were funded by cigars’ (13). Indeed, it was Charles Bradley’s tobacco factory, and his capitalist business sense, that later allowed his daughter and niece, ironically, to discard all commercial interest and live for the beauty of art (a beauty, however, that came with its own pricetag, since their taste was not a cheap one). Thain cites Jonathan Freedman in remarking that Bradley and Cooper’s situation was not unique, but common to many of their circle, including John Ruskin (the son of a sherry merchant) and William Morris (whose father was a successful stockbroker). These writers, she concludes, ‘were not born into the literary scene but ... infiltrated it from the prosperous middle class’ (2). While rightly stressing that aesthetes tended to come from a more comfortable background, Thain does not offer in her remark a possible explanation for this phenomenon. Still, one cannot help but wonder if their very origins might not be the factor that helped to foster their aesthetic interests. Could it be that precisely because these authors and artists had been brought up in a relatively comfortable lifestyle that they had the luxury to demand that objects were beautiful, as well as – or even preferable to – being functional (a question that might not rise so quickly in the mind of one who necessarily used these items primarily for their function in everyday life)?

When objects are acquired more easily, and more money can be spent on them, surely the choice in fabrication of the object automatically becomes more varied, and can include the more laboured (and thus expensive) varieties. This argument of course extends not only to objects, but also to clothing, art, home decoration and even book editions (of which the less affluent consumer will by default buy the cheap edition, while their richer counterpart has the luxury of taking into account the volume’s appearance as well as its content).

Consequently, the Fields were lucky to be able to develop their aesthetic tastes to the extent that they did, and the life that they created for themselves at The Paragon was proof of that. As a result, Edith refused to move when she was dying of cancer, spending most of her time in the Sun Room of their beloved home (Donaghue 106). Katherine, who died under a year later, did move to a cottage in Staffordshire, which she nicknamed ‘Paragon Cottage’ (WAD 332). Nevertheless, even in those final months she was still preoccupied with the aesthetics of her surroundings, complaining: ‘I am suddenly asked to die in a stuffy drawing room with a grand piano, & lusters & every

164 Thain’s claim may be disputable, in her assumption that the literary scene is automatically a lower-class world, a statement that may be waylaid by a host of examples of writers whose origins were equally more privileged (such as Gaskell, Trollope or Tennyson).
form of vulgar & horrible details’. Thus, according to this ailing aesthete, not only life, but even death ought to be wrapped in beauty.
4.5 The Savile Club: a Setting for Collaboration

In the final decades of the nineteenth century, at the centre of the daily hustle and bustle of London life, the Savile Club flourished. From its inception, the society’s physical place influenced its ideological content: it was the club’s temporary residence at 15 Savile Row that inspired the name of the establishment (even though the club later moved to a larger house on Piccadilly). The Savile Club distinguishes itself from the other ‘collaborative spaces’ that have been discussed in this chapter, in that it was not a private residence. Hunt’s Hampstead cottage, the Brontës’ parsonage in Haworth and the Fields’ residence at Durdans (and later The Paragon) were all first and foremost family homes, which housed two or more authors writing together or influencing and amending each other’s work. While these previous instances thus all exemplified co-authorship as it unfolded in a domestic context, the Savile was situated in the public sphere, at the heart of the busy capital. However, the establishment was organized in such a way that its various customs and amenities proved particularly conducive to the production of literature, and what is more, to the formation of authorial partnerships. This way for many of its members, the club became something of a home away from home, where they could find a space not just for creation, but also for mutual contact and inspiration.

107 Piccadilly, residence of the Savile Club from 1882 until 1927.
As testified to by several of its members over the years of the club’s existence, the Savile’s main attraction was the congenial atmosphere that it engendered. The founders wanted their friends of various walks of life to feel at ease at the establishment, as was reflected in the club’s motto, ‘Sodalitas Convivium’. The Savile offered a refuge from hectic London life, where club members could enjoy each other’s company in a convivial setting. Hence, Kipling affectionately referred to the house at 107 Piccadilly as the ‘little Savile’, stressing the sense of intimacy that the place conveyed. George Saintsbury echoed the sentiment in his memoirs, in which he wrote: ‘I doubt whether any club ... has ever been regarded with such personal affection’ (qtd. in Cohen 11). As Saintsbury’s remark indicates, it was unusual for an essentially public place of entertainment to acquire in the hearts of the men that frequented it a status that would in general be more readily ascribed to for instance the warm feeling associated with the family home, or the nostalgic fondness felt for a childhood residence.

Indispensable for the creation of such a safe haven was the consumption of recreational goods: food, drinks and smokes were key requisites at the club. As Cohen states, this ‘casual [way of] life at the Savile’ helped to encourage an informal attitude among the Savilians which in turn facilitated fruitful conversation. Thus the club was turned into a site ‘where, over pipes of tobacco and glasses of sherry, a handful of men casually, even haphazardly, helped steer the ship of English letters’ and where ‘[a] chance conversation sometimes gave birth to a major literary enterprise’ (11). Written collaboration, as a consequence, often originated in the distinctly oral culture of club life and its habits. The structure and organization of the club certainly encouraged all epicurean activities. Quite essential to the Savile’s social atmosphere were the characteristic lunches, which were especially well-frequented on Saturdays. Meals at the Savile distinguished themselves from those at many other clubs because of the typical ‘table d’hôte’ formula that was upheld: on the ground floor of the Piccadilly house for example, the dining-room was organized around two long tables at which all members gathered for a shared meal and animated talk. In the Piccadilly days, a standard table d’hôte lunch cost half a crown and comprised ‘a few alternative Savile specialities such as home-made potted meat, cold apple pie, fruit cake and mille-feuilles’. Dinners would be enhanced by the inclusion of two decanters of port as well as a box of snuff that were placed on the tables for the members to enjoy (Anderson 19). Typically, new people were never formally introduced at the Savile, so they might find themselves sitting next to a stranger at one of the club’s lunches or dinners, forced to enter into impromptu conversations with members from various backgrounds. Obviously this strategy worked not only to establish manifold social contacts, it also meant that Savilian meals became events where views were often broadened or adjusted, or new ideas conceived as a result of interaction with others. Moreover, since the Savile counted a host of authors among its members, literary projects were at times conceived or discussed at the table. It was at one of these lunches, for example, that Haggard told
fellow member Martin Conway where he got his inspiration for his successful novel *King Solomon’s Mines*, showing him the golden ring that once belonged to the skipper (a resident of Haggard’s hometown) who provided the inspiration for the story (Cohen 20-21).

Like many other Savilians, Stevenson too took obvious delight in the society’s customs. In 1874, shortly after he was elected to the club (which then still resided at the Savile Row address), he wrote to his mother expressing his delight: ‘I like my Club very much; the table d’hôte dinner is very good: it costs three bobs (sic): two soups, two fish, two entrées, two joints, two puddings; so it is not dear; and one meets agreeable people’ (qtd. in Anderson 49). Among these ‘agreeable’ fellow club members was also Leslie Stephen, with whom Stevenson struck up a congenial bond that resulted in his becoming a contributor to *The Cornhill Magazine*, of which Stephen was the editor at the time (Anderson 49). Stephen, incidentally, discovered that the Savile was a fruitful harvest ground for new contributors: not only Stevenson, but also Henry Morley, Edmund Gosse, Hardy and James published some of their work in *The Cornhill*. The ease with which such literary connections were established and upheld, of course, was the direct consequence of the club’s customary informality.

However, the busy club dinners were not the only factor that contributed to the characteristically laid-back atmosphere of the Savile club. Spaces were created at the establishment, destined for other forms of entertainment that proved equally conducive to the conviviality of the society’s setting. The club boasted a Cards Room, a Billiards Room and a Smoking Room. The latter is featured prominently in Stevenson’s satirical sketch on the Savile Club. Looking for ‘Mr. Besant-and-Rice’, his protagonist Diogenes is guided to the Smoking Room. When its doors are opened, the place is said to ‘omit strains of choral minstrelsy,’ implying that any type of conversation in the Savile Club could not but produce the very essence of poeticism. Stevenson, though adopting a tongue-in-cheek tone, thus intimates that even a banal activity like smoking a pipe in the company of a fellow club member might engender inspiring conversation at the Savile.

The Billiards Room moreover offered a setting for a private interview, as Compton Mackenzie recalls: ‘[The space] had a comfortable settee two steps up along one side of the recess; there was no room for any seating accommodation opposite. The frequenters of that settee were a sodality within a sodality’ (26). Hence, at the very centre of Savilian life, a temporary club-within-a-club could be created, presenting an opportunity for intimate talk. The Billiards Room also highlights once more the opposition between the more youthful Savile and the comparatively conservative Athenaeum, since the game could not be played on a Sunday at the latter (while at the

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former it was available at any time) – which was reportedly reason enough for Herbert Spencer to join the Savile club (Cohen 13).

Haggard and Kipling, who had met shortly after Kipling arrived in London (probably through Andrew Lang, who also introduced Kipling as a candidate for membership of the Savile Club), developed a deep and lasting friendship. The first extant letter written by the younger Kipling to Haggard, whose fame was by that time an established fact,\textsuperscript{166} sets the tone for the dynamic of mutual suggestion and deliberation that would develop between the two authors. Kipling, not yet having acquired the status that he would gain with the publication of successes such as \textit{The Jungle Book} and \textit{Kim}, begs Haggard to ‘[f]orgive a junior’s impertinence,’ adding to his letter an idea for a story ‘picked up the other day across some drinks’ involving the discovery of a mummy bearing a curse that supposedly causes the subsequent death of the Englishman that discovered it (qtd. in Cohen 28). The stub is Kipling’s way of acknowledging his deference to Haggard’s greater talent for writing in this particular genre, as he explicitly states at the end of his letter: ‘Were the mummy not in it I could and would take the thing and play with it. But there is a King in Egypt already and so I bring the body to his feet’ (qtd. in Cohen 28-29). Though a busy Haggard did not take up Kipling’s suggestion at this time, a bond was struck, and his new friend would come to have a significant influence over his later work. Aside from frequent visits to their respective homes, when the two men were in London ‘their favourite gathering place’ was the Savile (Cohen 29), where they could evaluate each other’s projects (and provide suggestions for their plots and characters) in the unforced atmosphere of the club’s rooms. Moreover, even when their schedules did not allow them to set up a meeting, the club functioned as a mediator for their friendship. For example, in 1891, Kipling wrote to Haggard to express his ‘[v]ery many thanks for Eric [Haggard’s \textit{Eric Brighteyes} was published on 13 May of that year] which the Club waiter man handed to me only a day or two ago’ (qtd. in Cohen 30). Sharing the club and its ‘waiter man’, the men thus had a means of upholding their connection, and bestowing gifts on each other despite their inability to meet in person.

Kipling was praised by Haggard for his rapidly functioning imagination, a trait that is also apparent in another scene that played out at the Savile Club. Charles H. E. Brookfield recalls how he was working on the proofs of a story in the club’s card room when Kipling walked in. An admiring Brookfield relates how the established writer’s intervention played out:

\begin{quote}
He spoke most kindly of the tale, but had many suggestions to make with regard to the telling. ‘Don’t you see how much stronger that would be?’ he asked after suggesting an excision and a transposition. ‘D’you mind if I alter it?’ And, so
\end{quote}

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\textsuperscript{166} The letter is undated, but Cohen situates it in late 1889, shortly after Kipling’s arrival in London (28).
saying, he whipped out a pencil and set to work; and having once put his hand to
the plough, so to speak, he persevered, and in a few minutes the whole virgin
expanse of proof was furrowed and hoed and harrowed and manured and top-
dressed by the master. I packed up and despatched the corrected sheet there and
then. (qtd. in Cohen 21)

This anecdote presents the Savile as the scene of spontaneous collaboration: through
the accidental convergence of Brookfield and Kipling in the card room, the former’s text
is transformed into a product of co-authorship. Brookfield represents the event in
almost erotic terms, attributing to his original writing a ‘virginal’ status. Contrastingly,
Kipling’s intervention is worded in rather aggressive terms: he ‘furrow[s] and hoe[s] and
harrow[s]’: the untouched expanse of the text is ravished. Kipling, in Brookfield’s
description, becomes the new ‘master’ of the virginal text, which is being fertilized
(‘manured’) with his genius.

The premises of the Savile Club thus became a stimulating factor for the confluence
of the various authors that held a membership there. The establishment literally offered
a common ground where likeminded individuals could meet and strike up a connection.
The same is true for the fictional artist’s studio in James’s short story ‘Collaboration’,
where the entire plot of the tale unravels. That the setting of James’s tale takes a
prominent part in the unfolding of events is apparent from the very start. The whole
first paragraph of ‘Collaboration’ is dedicated to the portrayal of the painter’s studio.
The narrator describes his apartment as a sheltered artistic bubble, a salon for all those
who ‘fancy they are doing something bohemian’ (911). The cosseted atmosphere of the
studio is enhanced by decorative elements that ‘appeal to one’s highest feelings’, such as
‘old heraldic cushions on the divans, embossed with rusty gold,’ ‘Italian brocade on the
walls’ and a ‘distant Tiepolo’ that makes up the ‘almost palatial ceiling’ (911). The Italian
elements that add to the ambience of the artist’s apartment foreshadow the
introduction of a second place of interest for the narrative’s plot at the end of the story,
when Vendemer and Heidenmauer elope to Italy to consume their newly-established
collaborative bond. Thus, as Adeline R. Tintner notes: ‘Italy is to be the umbrella for the
rapprochement. First, the ceiling by the Italian painter Tiepolo in the artist-narrator’s
studio is presented to us in the opening paragraph as a protective shelter for his salon
and, last, the Italian town on the "Genoese Riviera" offers a cheap haven for the two
collaborators in art in their “unnatural alliance”’ (142).167 What Tintner does not stress,
however, is the role that the narrator’s studio plays in facilitating the budding

167 Tintner makes an interesting argument about the possible inspiration for James’s short story, referring to
Kipling’s intimate friendship and collaboration on the novel The Naulakha (1891) with Wolcott Balestier
(James’s literary agent and brother of Caroline Balestier, who Kipling married after his friend’s untimely
death). See Adeline R. Tintner, ‘Rudyard Kipling and Wolcott Balestier’s Literary Collaboration: A Possible
partnership between the German composer and the French poet. The apartment, already functioning as a salon for likeminded artistic spirits, acquires a second, more specific function as a place of mediation for the genesis of Heidenmauer and Vendemer’s collaboration. The artist is certainly aware of the importance of his salon, which he describes as ‘the theatre of an incessant international drama’: without the backdrop of the studio, the acts in this play could not unfold (911). The salon, organized by the narrator and attended by both Heidenmauer and Vendemer, is the trigger for their mutual interest. The apartment provides a neutral middle ground, out of reach from the anti-German sentiments that reign in the household of Vendemer’s fiancée Paule and her resentful mother, Madame de Brindes.

Moreover, it is one of the central features of the artist’s space that first inspires admiration in Vendemer. When the piano is played by the German composer, the process of mutual attraction that will eventually result in their ‘ unholy union’ is set into motion (921). Once their curiosity is triggered, both Vendemer and Heidenmauer are inevitably drawn back to the studio. Though the place is now empty, not being in its guise of busy salon, it carries meaning as the site where the men’s interest in each other was first piqued. Hence, both feel compelled to return there to continue the development of their acquaintance and later partnership. When he sounds out the composition that he has thought up as accompaniment to Vendemer’s poems, Heidenmauer mesmerizes the writer. The piano that is played by the German, the fireplace before which the infatuated Frenchman paces while listening to his composition, and the chair that he drops into when he is overwhelmed by his emotions all play a part in the unfolding of the men’s drama. The studio and its owner thus provide them with a setting in which they can give free rein to their fascination with each other’s talent, keeping out the historical obstacles that Madame de Brindes and her daughter might put in their way. The apartment acquires the aura of a space without inhibitions, which allows the men’s collaboration to materialise. The narrator’s role in providing the setting for their conspiracy is instrumental for its success, as Madame de Brindes is fully aware: ‘ how could you have permitted such a horror – how could you have given it the countenance of your roof …?’ , she wonders in indignation (919).

In the concluding paragraphs of ‘Collaboration’, the narrator relates how Vendemer and Heidenmauer, after the former has broken off his betrothal in favour of their new alliance, have been forced to emigrate to the more tolerant climate of Italy. The ‘ little place on the Genoese Riviera’ that is now their shared home allows them to be fully ‘ immersed in their monstrous collaboration’ (921, 920). Whereas the painted roof of the artist’s studio, symbolically, provided shelter for the clandestine initiation of their joint venture, once its existence becomes common knowledge and Vendemer’s engagement is brought to an end, the co-authors are evidently compelled to leave Paris society and move to a more tolerant climate ‘ on alien soil’ (921). In the coastal Italian town, the two men carve out a private space for their writing, where they can imaginably carry out
their shared project in anonymity. Banished but united, at the end of James’s story the two protagonists ‘work for themselves and for each other’ (921), choosing the greater good of their collaboration over the friendship of their critics.
4.6 Conclusion

‘What conditions are necessary for the creation of works of art?’ (32). This is the central question that Virginia Woolf asked in A Room of One’s Own. Woolf concluded that a (female) author’s creative output might be greatly increased, or at least encouraged by having at her disposal ‘five hundred a year and a room with a lock on the door if you are to write fiction or poetry’ (137). For the scope of my research in this chapter, I have taken the liberty to qualify Woolf’s question and wonder how material surroundings contribute to the formation of literary partnerships, or how such localities influence and enhance the products of authorial collaboration. In most cases, the joint ventures that authors undertake play out against a typically domestic setting, though the Savile Club, situated as it was in the midst of the thriving metropolis, offers a counterexample of a collaborative space that was located in the public sphere.

The subject of this chapter warranted the introduction of a new case of interauthorial exchange. The literary circle that gathered around Leigh Hunt exemplifies how the convergence of likeminded thinkers in an accommodating setting may produce interesting partnerships. A case in point was Hunt’s prison cell at Surrey County Gaol. There, an old infirmary was transformed into an impromptu literary salon by means of a host of adornments that served to fuel the imagination of the visitors in attendance. The ‘wit in the dungeon’, as Byron dubbed the incarcerated Hunt, became a martyr for authorial freedom, a status that certainly helped in drawing his literati friends to his cell for a visit. The productive interaction that was initiated at these meetings (and which resulted not only in the continued publication, with the help of his supporters, of Hunt’s Examiner but also in their poetry) was continued after his release, when members of the network that had formed (and which continued to expand) around Hunt flocked to his Hampstead cottage. The house, which recreated the inspirational cocoon of the former inmate’s dungeon, laid the scene for open-minded authorial exchange through discussions, sonnet writing competitions, responses to each other’s work and dedicatory poems.

The Brontës’ parsonage at Haworth accurately demonstrates the problematic addressed in Woolf’s critical essay. Being constructed first and foremost as a family home, this function remained predominant throughout the lives of the authors that it housed. As a consequence, the Brontës’ works were all produced amidst the commotion of a busy Victorian household. Moreover, as I have discussed in previous chapters, the children felt compelled to develop production techniques for their manuscripts that would help them to safeguard their scribbles from prying eyes, evidenced by the miniature size and handwriting of the juvenilia. The dining room table, central to the daily habits of any family, became a symbol for the Brontës’ authorship. Already perpetuated in Emily’s sketch for her and Anne’s Diary Paper of 1837, it acquired a
mythological status especially through Charlotte’s relation of its function as a focal point that the sisters circled while discussing their work with each other.

The case of Katherine Bradley and Edith Cooper could be interpreted as an example of the solution that Woolf envisioned when she wrote her essay. The Fields' surroundings presented both the problem of attempting to carve out a space for collaboration within a house that was shared with family members who were outsiders to their creative effort, and the eventual discovery of full material, and consequently also creative, freedom. The women at first countered the challenges of writing together as members of the greater Cooper household at Durdans by locking themselves in the dining room – thus effectively creating a closed-off space for literary production. However, when the family had disintegrated (after James Cooper’s death and the marriage of Edith’s only sister Amy), the women’s financial independence was crucial in allowing them to move to a new house in Richmond for their exclusive use. Of quintessential impact was the fact that the Fields could now create an aesthetic den entirely to their wishes, and so The Paragon became a shared writers’ space that fuelled their imagination in every aspect of its materiality.

The fin de siècle equally saw the thriving of the Savile Club, which accommodated a variety of authors, both established and aspiring. The establishment’s make-up proved highly stimulating for the discussion and conception of the manifold joint projects that authors such as Haggard, Lang, Kipling and ‘Besant-and-Rice’ engaged in. As the anecdote recorded by the young Brookfield indicates, the congenial atmosphere of the club invited spontaneous collaboration even between members that had not yet established a friendship, indiscriminate of the amount of symbolic capital that such authors had acquired. Finally, my discussion of James’s fictional account of double authorship in his short story ‘Collaboration’ highlights the role played by physical spaces in encouraging a budding partnership. Thus the studio of the tale’s artist-narrator becomes a place of mediation for the rapprochement between Vendemer and Heidenmauer, an enclave that separates the men from their worldly duties or affiliations. The Genoese coast, on the other hand, offers a locality that is at once private and anonymous, an environment in which the banned co-authors can quietly complete their denounced project.
Conclusion

In *Multiple Authorship and the Myth of Solitary Genius* (1991), Jack Stillinger wondered ‘whether “pure” authorship is possible under any circumstances – single authorship without any influence, intervention, alteration, or distortion whatsoever by someone other than the nominal author’ (183). After considering in his volume a number of instances of collaborative authorship, Stillinger comes to the conclusion that ‘pure’ authorship is virtually impossible to achieve, except perhaps, as he claims, ‘when a writer’s holograph manuscript is locked up unread in a library or an attic’ (185). The author here echoes Jerome McGann’s statement, put forward eight years earlier in *A Critique of Modern Textual Criticism*, that ‘an author’s work possesses autonomy only when it remains an unheard melody’ (51). Woodmansee and Jaszi agree, observing that ‘the Romantic notion of “author” handed down to us from the eighteenth century never has been particularly apt to the realities of the writing process’ (31). As these theorists of the concepts of social and multiple authorship ascertained, a text or work of fiction is always the creation, not just of the lone author figure (the one who first held the pen), but also of a number of influential ‘mediators’ (as I have called them in this dissertation) that affect both the eventual work and its reception.

Nevertheless, the history of literature and its critical reception have since long foregrounded the singular status of the iconic Author. Book covers, biographies, canonical lists and theoretical studies continuously celebrate the author as an isolated concept, standing on a pedestal that has room for only one occupant. This veneration for the author as solitary genius was never greater than during the nineteenth century, when technological innovations and a booming commercial market enabled the mass production and consumption of literature, not only in book form but certainly also through the periodical press, which played a pervasive role in the distribution of fictional texts. With an ever-expanding readership also came an increased demand for information about the author behind the text, a trend that resulted in the proliferation of (auto)biographies, memoirs and other depictions of authors’ lives. Precisely because of the period’s interest in the individual writer, it has proved rewarding to re-examine this era in light of the authorial partnerships that it spawned. This dissertation
therefore offered an analysis of five concrete nineteenth-century examples of multiple authorship, which were evaluated in relation to a number of sociological principles. In contrast to most of the previous studies on shared writing, I have opted not to limit my research to for instance the exclusive discussion of couple’s collaboration (which as a rule has been scrutinised mainly for the erotic implications of the unison), nor have I elected only examples of family authorship or the communal creation of texts in literary groups. Instead, the chosen case studies were selected to reflect the wide variety of guises under which collaboration manifests itself, ranging from dual authorship by a couple (Michael Field) over shared composition by siblings (the Brontës), to the impromptu Romantic salon (as frequented by the members of the Hunt circle), the gentleman’s society (the Savile Club) and the network of authors that collectively produce a periodical publication (Dickens and his contributors to the Christmas numbers). Careful examination of these instances of collective authorship has helped to formulate an answer to a number of questions that may be raised in relation to shared writing. In the first chapter of this treatise, I have investigated how co-authorship interacts with notions of reputation and rivalry. The second section focused on the intersection between collaboration and matters of gender and identity formation. Finally, I looked at the physical surroundings that both stimulated and encumbered the joint production of literature. Together, the different parts of this dissertation have enabled me to draw a series of conclusions about the workings of multiple authorship.

One of the most pressing concerns that readers and critics of collaborative texts have brought up is the matter of motivation: why do authors engage in shared writing? My investigation into the case studies that make up this thesis has led me to conclude that no unequivocal answer exists to this question. First of all, despite the romantic associations that collaboration habitually inspires, some of these joint ventures might be initiated or proposed for purely practical reasons. For example, Cohen notes how Rider Haggard asked his fellow Savilian Brander Matthews ‘if he might publish She over their combined names,’ hoping ‘to secure an American copyright if a citizen of the United States could claim to be its joint author’ (20). Haggard’s proposal to present his novel as the result of a cooperation with Matthews is entirely functional. The pretence of double authorship, in this case, is only a means to an end, i.e., to get the name of an American author on the cover of the book and this way protect its ownership. The initiation of the partnership between Walter Besant and James Rice was similarly purposeful. Rice had come up with a plot for a story (the one that would eventually result in Besant and Rice’s first joint publication, Ready-Money Mortiboy), but could not muster the inspiration to turn his idea into a novel. In Besant, he discovered a partner who could write out and complete his outline, in a move that showcases the efficiency of collaboration where singular authorship was inadequate. Without doubt, Dickens too had considered the convenience of engaging a number of other writers to contribute to the yearly Christmas numbers of his magazines. Though the editor, in the letters of
invitation that he sent to his co-authors, stressed the idea of communal feeling that he wished his journal to carry out, he must have realised that the aid of these writers would equally serve to lighten his own, already heavy, workload as hands-on editor and prolific novelist. In short, the collaborative Christmas numbers combined the practical division of labour with a sense of ideological unity.

Quite opposite to the custom of actively seeking out a writing partner for mainly unemotional reasons, is the development of multiple authorship in what I would term an ‘organic’ manner. This type of collaborative initiation, as I have argued, may be traced in the history of the Brontë siblings’ authorship. In their case, the creation of written fiction naturally evolved out of their childhood games. Through play they constructed an oral fantasy world that was recorded and continued only afterwards in the pages of their miniature booklets. On the other hand, the inspiration for Charlotte’s insertion of herself as posthumous co-author in her sister Emily’s poetry could be interpreted as almost hagiographic. The eldest Brontë’s intervention as editor and co-composer was a deliberate effort to mediate her unwitting collaborator’s reputation by presenting her as an innocent, undereducated young woman whose work was a reflection of her surroundings, rather than of her own personality. However, perhaps the most common motivation for striking up a literary partnership may prove to be of a more spiritual nature, stemming from the discovery of a similarity in taste or a likeminded view on fiction. For example, it was a mutual interest in Aestheticism (mirrored both in their lifestyle and in their creative production) and a corresponding poetic vision that raised the already affectionate family bond between Bradley and Cooper to the level of a fruitful literary collaboration as Michael Field. Of course, the fact that the women lived in such close proximity to each other certainly facilitated the budding of their authorial association. Some of the authors that met and interacted in the convivial setting of the Savile Club, in turn, recognized a shared attraction to a particular style of writing, more specifically the form of the romance novel. While Rider Haggard initiated the popularity of the genre, a number of his Savilian friends were inspired to collaborate not only on jointly produced parodies of the style (exemplified by Andrew Lang and W. H. Pollock’s *He*, a pastiche on Haggard’s own much-loved novel *She*) but also to engage Haggard himself in the mutual discussion and creation of the type of fiction that they were both drawn to (as is evidenced in the stimulating friendship and correspondence between Haggard and Kipling, as well as in the former’s collaborative novel with Lang, *The World’s Desire*). By means of their mutual poetic sessions (both in the impromptu literary salon in his prison cell and later in his cottage in London’s Hampstead neighbourhood) Leigh Hunt and his literary and artistic friends advocated a specific type of sociability, as well as a new style of poetry that tied in with their concrete spatial surroundings. Though *Blackwood’s Magazine* intended to offend the circle by labelling its members under the shared dysphemistic sobriquet of the ‘Cockney School’, the name also stressed their unison and common interests as a group.
Clearly related to the subject of the collaborators’ motivation to strike up a partnership, is the question of what they might gain by engaging in the practice. Does co-authorship, in short, contribute to the success of a literary venture? Once again, the answer to this query is ambiguous. In light of concrete literary output per se, a confluence of authors may prove fruitful in terms of providing stimulation for the writer. For example, the meeting of befriended poets at Hunt’s household resulted in sessions of reciprocal inspiration that spawned an abundance of (often interrelated) poetry. However, when the authors’ shared effort is evaluated with regard to its economic success, it becomes clear that the association of collaboration with amateurism is often reflected in the co-authored work’s (lack of) commercial value. This is especially true for the cases in which the double nature of the text is public knowledge. For instance, Haggard and Lang’s *The World’s Desire* (the cover of which was embossed with the names of both co-authors) failed to meet the success of their individual publications. As I have pointed out, critics were obviously puzzled by their collective authorship. Their contemporary female counterparts, Bradley and Cooper, were quietly neglected by literary society once the true nature of Michael Field’s authorship became common knowledge: the performance of *A Question of Memory* was an outright flop, while their published work sold but little. By contrast, sales figures for Dickens’s Christmas numbers soared to unprecedented heights, raising the idea that collaboration might in fact be highly successful. However, these stories were published in the periodical press, which was by default a patchwork of different texts. Consequently, the practice of communal composition automatically raised less eyebrows in this format than it might when the work was released in book form.

Moreover, the Christmas numbers, like all other issues of Dickens’s magazines, were printed without attribution of the separate tales to their respective authors. All stories collectively appeared under the journal’s heading (recurring on every double page of a number) which repeated, over and over again, only Dickens’s own name. Consequently, when the phenomenon of multiple authorship is examined in relation to Bourdieu’s concept of symbolic capital, as proposed in his *Field of Cultural Production*, it becomes apparent that collaboration does not seem to add much to the prestige of the author. Hence, contributors who may have hoped to share a spot in Dickens’s limelight (or at least have it reflect back on themselves, so that they might begin to emerge from the shadows of anonymity) would learn that their reputation was more likely to become usurped by Dickens’s greater fame. In effect, it was the editor’s name, rather than the collaborative nature of the Christmas numbers, that sold copies. Ample proof of the lack of symbolic capital that the contributors managed to acquire, is the fact that later editors of the Christmas tales explicitly sought to remove the co-authors’ share in the stories. Only Dickens’s name held enough prestige to merit their attention and consequently, the preservation of his work for posterity. Even in the case of authors who did accumulate a considerable amount of symbolic capital, collaboration did not
appear to be the factor that engendered it. The Brontës became famous on account of the individual novels that they published, while their juvenilia (though briefly discussed for their ‘curious’ nature by Gaskell in her Life of Charlotte Brontë) sank into oblivion, and were neglected by critical studies until only recently.

The lack of symbolic capital that was as a rule accumulated by collaborative projects is closely connected to the aura of amateurism that typically became associated with multiple authorship. Whatever the authors’ own motivations for communal writing might have been, they could do little to influence the reception that the products of their cooperation received once they were made public. As Bette London and other scholars have observed: ‘no matter how conventional its literary products – and many of these partnerships produced perfectly conventional writing – as a process, collaborative authorship continued to be perceived as resolutely outside the mainstream. Indeed, as a process, collaboration was more open to scrutiny than solitary authorship’ (7). Intrinsically defiant of the established view of solitary authorship, collaboration unsettled the traditional methods of interpretation of a text, which looked to the author as the central determinant of the text’s meaning (a concept that, for instance, underpinned Foucault’s theory of the ‘author function’, which continued to conceive of authorship as essentially singular, despite its acceptance of the ‘death’ of the author in the historic sense). As a consequence, both readers and critics have repeatedly felt the urge to restore the partnership’s constituent authors by dissecting the collaborative text. The relentless attempts to find out who wrote which parts of the shared composition were a regular source of frustration for many literary partners, as the exasperated comments of Somerville and Ross and Michael Field confirmed. On the other hand, as I have indicated, some authors (such as Dickens) themselves encouraged the practice of retrieving the individual writers in the shared production, while others (like Sala or Collins) felt the threat of being eclipsed by their more famous collaborator.

Moreover, James’s ‘Collaboration’ highlights the potential for erotic connotations that is implicit in some cases of multiple authorship. The air of illicitness inherent in same-sex cooperation was especially tangible in late-Victorian society, when the Labouchère Amendment caused the attraction between members of the same sex (specifically men), habitually accepted in earlier days as expressions of affectionate camaraderie or ‘romantic friendship’, to be a punishable offence.

Through the assessment of the selected case studies in the previous chapters, this dissertation has established that authorial collaboration is modified by a set of divergent parameters which at times complicated the alliance, but in other instances stimulated joint production. Gender opposition, for example, persistently troubled the relation between Dickens and his female contributors, whereas the boyish influence of Branwell, together with the male-oriented content of the family’s reading material, gave an impetus to the young Charlotte Brontë’s fictional creativity. The sibling collaborators benefited from the benevolent brand of rivalry that originated between them, while
competition between Dickens and his co-authors in the Christmas numbers was prematurely defused due to the journals’ requisite anonymity (though this did not prevent the occasionally rebellious sentiments expressed by the contributors in their private correspondence). Finally, the surroundings within which multiple authors conceived of their work could prove either inspiring or confining. This is best exemplified by the case of Bradley and Cooper, who both felt the constraints of having to eke out a space for collaboration within the family home, as well as the advantage, in the latter years of their lives, of having a home of their own in which they could give free rein to their imagination. The Brontës, in turn, provided proof in their juvenilia of how strongly their joint composition was intertwined with everyday life in the household of which they were a part, while the Savile Club demonstrated that even non-domestic settings (belonging to the public sphere) may act as a conducive backdrop for the development of co-authorship.

While I have attempted to provide in my analysis a thorough overview of the many guises that multiple authorship can take on, as well as the plurality of sociological implications that the practice engendered, there do remain a number of areas that would certainly benefit from future research. Due to constraints of space, some aspects of social literature, such as copywriting or shared authorship through mediumship, were only mentioned in passing in these pages. Nevertheless, I am confident that an analysis of these less obvious instances of multiple authorship would add a fertile new dimension to the research that has already been conducted on the collective composition of discourse. Still other scholars could expand or resituate the era or space within which the phenomenon of multiple authorship is evaluated. A study of collaboration across national boundaries, for example, could help to lay bare the workings of international literary networks. More specifically, my investigation into the Brontës’ childhood compositions has indicated that the practice of juvenile authorship, specifically that which is collectively produced, warrants an entire analysis of itself. Such an investigation might enquire into, for example, the composition of the family journal in the Stephen household of the 1890s. The handwritten newspaper, which was named *Hyde Park Gate News* (recently edited for publication by the Hesperus Press (2006)), was the result of a collaboration between the young Virginia Stephen (later Woolf), her sister Vanessa (Bell) and their brother Thoby. In the papers, the children reflected on the daily happenings in their parental home (much like Emily and Anne did in their diary papers), and enhanced their episodic narratives with appropriate illustrations. In the process, like Branwell and Charlotte in their *Young Men’s Magazine*, the Stephen children mimicked the lay-out of the contemporary periodical press. The convergence of text and illustration (which was again also characteristic of the Brontës’ manuscripts) introduces an extra dimension that may prove particularly fruitful for an examination of the shared imagination of childhood. Another example, taken from the other end of the long nineteenth century, is the confluence of Jane Austen’s juvenile
writings with the illustrations that her sister Cassandra produced to accompany them (as was the case, for instance, in Austen’s satirical *History of England*, which was also dedicated to Cassandra (1791)).

These examples of artistic partnership between young authors and illustrators breach another, broader field of possible research for the future, namely that of collaboration across the arts. The case of Dickens could once more be taken into consideration here, since the author’s cooperation with the illustrators of his works was prolific and intense. Dickens had a strong rapport with artists such as Robert Seymour, George Cruikshank, and especially Hablot K. Browne, who signed his work for the *Pickwick Papers* ‘Phiz’ in accordance with Dickens’s own nickname, ‘Boz’. Browne and Dickens developed a close partnership, and took several trips together to find inspiration for the novels’ illustrations. Other instances of cross-medial collaboration may be found in the illustrated periodical press (*Punch*’s interdependence of the text and its accompanying sketches provides just one such example) or in circles that united likeminded authors, philosophers and artists (most famous may be the example of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood). With regard to the spatial demarcation of multiple authorship, I have already discussed in detail the immediate domestic surroundings of specific literary partnerships. However, in my view, a more expansive delineation of the geographics of collaboration in the larger literary field may offer an interesting topic for further discussion. A representative case study in this respect could be the network of lanes around Fleet street, which formed the backdrop for the tangled relationships between the many authors, editors and publishers who captained the various rivalling newspapers and magazines that together made up the highly influential Victorian periodical press, the offices of which were often only a stone’s throw removed from each other. Together with the cases that have been discussed in this dissertation, these possible topics for future research do away with the traditional view of authorship as intrinsically singular. Instead, the proliferation of multiple authorship in Britain in the nineteenth century provides incontestable proof that – to paraphrase John Donne – no author is an island.
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