

**The Sensational Katherine Cecil Thurston:
An investigation into the life and publishing history of a 'New
Woman' author**

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Abstract

This thesis investigates the publishing history of a significant New Woman author of the Edwardian period, Katherine Cecil Thurston (1875-1911). Until now Thurston's literary career has been the subject of little academic investigation. It is the aim of this thesis to contextualise her life and work within that of a New Woman writer and explore her relationship with those involved in the publishing process. By examining the narrative of Thurston's work and her interaction with Edwardian society we see how such New Woman authors contributed to the development of women's writing. The focal argument of the thesis is that Thurston used her femininity to generate an audience of female readers while at the same time creating alternate visions for women's lives, thus championing the cause of feminism. Thurston challenges many of the traditional, established views of the late Victorian period; however she was keenly aware of the need to operate within the bounds of traditional gender roles in order to ensure the publication of her work and the support of her conservative readership. Through her relationships with her publishers and readers we see how the opening decade of the twentieth century was fraught with unease and doubt about women's role within it. This thesis builds on recent studies by feminist critics in terms of rehabilitating women writers who have been omitted or lost from literary and publishing history. This research adds another author to that body of work and broadens our level of understanding of the position of woman authors of the period. By establishing the details of Thurston's life and work, this thesis aims to open new channels of investigation and as such amounts to a significant contribution to our awareness and understanding of New Women authors.

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Introduction

This thesis aims to contextualise the work of the little-known Irish novelist Katherine Cecil Thurston. Between 1901 and 1911, Thurston was a bestselling novelist whose work centred on The New Woman character. In her short writing career she published six novels and numerous short stories. She is best remembered for the publication of *John Chilcote M.P.* (1904), a novel which catapulted her to fame in Britain and the United States. From the time of the publication of this novel Thurston was rarely out of the press. Her personal relationships, opinions, and mode of dress were frequently commented and speculated upon. Despite her popularity her name soon disappeared from public consciousness following her premature death in 1911: with the exception of a few scholarly articles there has been little investigation of her life or work.

While Thurston can certainly be viewed in contemporary terms as a feminist she does not conform to our idea of a campaigning suffragist of the Edwardian era. Instead, Thurston's feminism belonged to what Margaret Forster viewed as "a kind of philosophy, a way of looking at and thinking of life for all women" (1986, p. 2).

Through her writing we see her commenting on the sexual politics of her time and constantly striving to envisage new ways for women to conduct their lives. She was a writer who acknowledged her literary limitations, yet at the same time constantly strove to improve her work. In addition to her professional approach to writing we see Thurston operating in the increasingly complex literary world of the opening decade of the twentieth century. This was a time in which authorship enjoyed a new professionalism and authors of all genres benefited from the creation of a number of organisations and developments as publishing became part of an emerging entertainment industry. Thurston's personal relationships are also explored within this thesis. Her marriage to Ernest Temple Thurston was a tempestuous one, and through it we see a rare view of an Edwardian literary marriage and the struggle between declining

Victorian mores and ascending modernity. Following their very public divorce we see Thurston embarking on a new “individualistic” relationship which appeared to be one of equals.

The majority of the research carried out for this thesis has taken place in the Thurston archive at the National Library of Scotland. From the time of its deposit there in 1997 by the executors of the estate of her late fiancé Alfred Bulkeley Gavin, the archive has remained unexplored. Its discovery provides researchers with a rich source of untapped information which casts light on a prominent New Woman novelist of the Edwardian age. In addition to offering this fresh perspective on a literary life, the archive also provides researchers with a snapshot of the development of publishing history at the beginning of the twentieth century. The originality of this thesis lies in the fact that it is an exploration of an unexplored archive which represents unknown territory for the researcher.

The un-catalogued state of the archive has made research a slow and laborious task. The archive itself consists of some twelve boxes of loose papers, cuttings, photographs, manuscripts and letters. With the exception of letter books, very few of the papers were in any sort of order. A further contribution of this thesis has been to make sense of these loose papers and place them in the context of the period in which Thurston lived and worked. As the investigation progressed it became clear that little research concerning Thurston had taken place and she seemed simply to have disappeared from literary history. This thesis will therefore create an accurate picture of the life and work of a prominent female novelist of the Edwardian period and as such will go some way to re-establishing her importance in the development of women’s writing throughout the twentieth century.

Chapter One focuses on the enormous social and political changes which swept across Britain in the closing decades of the nineteenth century. Through the expansion of the franchise, improvements in education, the emergence of efficient business practices and the creation and consolidation of modern cities we see the emergence of many of the facets of modern-day society. Despite this surge towards modernisation and improvement, this chapter also highlights the limited scope of the lives of women and the debate which surrounded their position within that society. The importance of Britain's Empire as a means of expanding trading routes and employment is also highlighted with reference to its growing importance to the publishing industry.

Chapter Two considers the increase in publishing activity throughout the nineteenth century as publishing companies took advantage of new trading practices and an increasingly literate population. We see evidence of the way in which literary culture changed to accommodate the needs and wants of the new reader. This in turn led to the emergence of a more commercially aware author and the establishment of new entrepreneurial publishers willing to cater for these new markets. The emergence of the "bestseller" phenomenon of the 1890s and the rise of Modernism as a reaction to such popular writing is also discussed. The position of the woman author in terms of her lack of education or experience is also discussed, as is the emergence of protest literature by women as a means of expressing their desire for change.

The establishment of a number of societies and conventions such as The Society of Authors, the Net Book Agreement, the introduction of the literary agent and improvements in copyright ensured that a growing professionalism surrounded the work of writing: practices which in turn enabled and encouraged a new breed of author to enter the profession. This chapter situates the publishing firm of William Blackwood and Sons in the context of this changing climate and highlights the way in which they

operated within it. In exposing the patriarchal nature of this company, the markets in which it operated and the type of publication it specialised in, we see evidence of its affiliation with traditional Victorian values. Yet, despite this adherence to traditionalism, the prevailing changes in society ensured that even Blackwood's was willing to publish popular women authors, such as Thurston.

Chapter Three situates Thurston within the established culture of the period. We see evidence of her strong relationship with her father and how her early upbringing in an upper-middle-class political household equipped her with the attributes which would help ensure her success within the world of writing and publishing. We see evidence of how her Irish background would frequently inform her narratives. Despite Thurston's lack of involvement in Irish politics in adult life, her interaction with it from an early age is clearly demonstrated in her engagement with sexual politics in her writing.

Thurston's membership of several clubs ensured her access to a number of cultural "gatekeepers" and is further evidence of her membership of upper middle class society. However, her membership of such liberal establishments as the Sesame Club situates her as a woman of independent mind.

The difficulties experienced by the Thurstons in their own marriage can be seen as a reflection of the debate surrounding gender roles in wider society. Ernest was unable to deal with the changes brought about by his wife's successful participation in his own profession: Thurston herself encountered difficulties in resolving her position as both wife and successful author. Both were caught between the restrictions of the Victorian era and the widening scope of the Edwardian period. It is in this chapter that we see Thurston's emergence as a New Woman author and how her particular brand of feminism set her apart from many of the campaigning feminists of the day and ensured that her work appealed to more conservative members of society.

Chapter Four highlights Thurston's continuing success as a New Woman novelist as she negotiated her way around the complex world of the emerging modern publishing industry. Comparisons are made between Thurston and a variety of authors of the period in question. The relationships between these authors and their publishers are examined and compared with Thurston's relationship with her publisher. The expanding literary market of the period is also highlighted as is the manner in which this enabled authors to sell the rights of their work in a broad range of publications. The expansion in the reading public and the increasingly diverse formats in which novels would appear enabled many bestselling authors to earn large amounts of money from their writing.

This chapter offers evidence of the increasing complexity of the publishing world and the role of the literary agent in the sale of rights. The dramatic adaptation of Thurston's second novel, *John Chilcote M.P.* offers evidence of her growing popularity and is a further indication of the increasingly complex economics of publishing. While the growing literary market offered opportunities for both author and publisher, this chapter explores the difficulties experienced by some traditional publishers, such as William Blackwood, in adapting to the changing business practices of the day. Increasing competition from a new breed of publishers and the rise of marketing and advertising in the creation of a bestselling title ensured that the literary marketplace was a difficult one for more traditional publishers. The success of *Chilcote* is investigated in this chapter and Thurston's emerging professional and systematic approach to writing is also in evidence. Thurston's involvement in a suspected plagiarism case is explored providing further evidence of the growing complexity of the literary marketplace and the need for the intervention of such bodies as The Society of Authors, and literary agents. Through her involvement in this legal case we see Thurston's growing confidence in dealing with her literary affairs.

Chapter Five explores the impact of an increasing number of publications of the period, created to satisfy the demands of the new mass-market readership. The growing importance of the bestseller and the debate surrounding its status is investigated, as is Thurston's position within the category of bestselling author. It is through the creation of these bestselling personalities that we see the rise of the present day cult of celebrity in the entertainment industry. Thurston's compliance in supplying personal information and photographs to these "celebrity" magazines is investigated and through this involvement we see her operating as a commercially astute writer. This chapter offers evidence of Thurston's own view of her writing, her limitations as an author and how she was constantly striving to hone her craft. Thurston's opinion of the importance of the act of writing is also evidenced throughout. Chapter Five engages with the assertion that the history of women authors has been lost, due in part to the success of their bestselling status. The chapter posits that the fashionable and contemporary subject matter of these works has been the very thing which has rendered them obsolete. The bestsellers produced by Thurston reflected the cultural concerns of the moment and as these concerns passed, so too did the desire to read the novels which reflected them.

Chapter Six details the increasingly important part played by the literary agent and in particular the role played by Thurston's agents Perris and Cazenove of The Literary Agency of London. Through her interaction with them we see evidence of her understanding of the market and her own market worth. This chapter highlights the difficulties caused by Ernest's insistence on managing his wife's work and how his lack of understanding of the complexities of the new literary marketplace damaged her potential income. We see further evidence of how the expansion in the market of published products created the potential for new methods of income for commercial authors. Building on the work of David Finkelstein, this chapter investigates the manner in which the publishing firm of William Blackwood created and built their distinctive

house identity. The publication of Thurston's third and fourth novels, *The Gambler* (1906) and *The Mystics* (1907) is investigated, as is the critical reception of both works. After what had been a promising literary start, the publication of these two novels points to some of the confusion surrounding Thurston's personal life from 1905-07, and how this impacted on her writing.

Chapter Seven asserts Thurston's position among her contemporary New Women writers, but more specifically among fellow Irish authors such as Sarah Grand and George Egerton. Throughout the chapter evidence is given to support the claim that although virtually unheard of today, at the time of her publication, Thurston was viewed as "the most decadent, sensational and successful of the three" (Gerardine Meaney ed., 2002). Despite Thurston's reluctance to comment openly on issues of women's rights, through the development of this chapter we see evidence of the radical nature of the sexual politics explored in her writing. In the face of continuing marital and literary difficulties, this chapter highlights Thurston's successful return to popularity with the publication of *The Fly on the Wheel* (1908). This novel, with its setting in provincial Ireland, is widely believed to be the closest to Thurston's heart. Through this work Thurston makes a stunning attack on the lack of opportunity facing women in her homeland. Thurston's development of more experimental forms of fiction are explored, as is her use of traditional themes of courtship and marriage as a vehicle to explore women's other aspirations and to create alternate visions for their lives. Through this less strident form of feminism evidence is given to support the claim that Thurston was able to seduce many mainstream readers to the feminist cause.

Throughout Chapter Eight we see evidence of Thurston's determination to establish a new life following her divorce from Ernest. Despite Thurston's confidence in pursuing Alfred Bulkeley Gavin we see tensions caused by her allegiance to the Catholic Church

and her Victorian upbringing. Her determination to live an independent life is clear from her desire to maintain her writing schedule even after she embarked on her secret relationship with Gavin. Thurston's relationship with Gavin was very different to her marriage to Ernest. The pair were openly supportive of each others work, even although Thurston's writing commitments often meant long periods apart. Chapter Eight also provides evidence of Thurston's own management of her literary work following her divorce from Ernest. However, despite her capabilities we see her recognition of the complex literary market and her acceptance of the need for the use of a literary agent in order to successfully negotiate that market. This chapter details the publication and reception of *Max* (1910), her final novel, which again explores the limited opportunities available to women. The chapter closes with the sudden death of Thurston and the speculation surrounding that death.

Cultural and political developments and changes in literary fashion have contributed to the disappearance of Katherine Cecil Thurston from the wider literary canon. However, her work remains significant in that it provides us with yet another missing link in the development of women's writing and authorship. The importance of reclaiming lost female literary history has been well documented by Elaine Showalter, Lynn Pykett, Ann Ardis and others who recognise that by re-establishing these lost women writers, contemporary and future female authors can find inspiration and strength to continue to produce work which has relevance to the lives of their readers. As Showalter posits: "Feminist criticism and women's literary history do not depend on the discovery of a great unique genius, but on the establishment of the continuity and legitimacy of women's writing as a form of art" (Showalter, 1999, p. xxxiii). This thesis aims to fill a part of that gap in the continuity and legitimacy of women's writing.

Chapter One

Social Conditions and the New Woman

The period between 1890 and the outbreak of the Great War in 1914 was a time of enormous change in Great Britain, much of which was reflected in the printed word. The end of the nineteenth century saw a radical transformation in Britain's social make-up and huge scientific advances which brought about a new optimism for the future. However, with these changes came fear and uncertainty in peoples understanding of the world and their position within it, leading to a questioning of long-held beliefs. Late-Victorian society developed a new kind of pessimism about the state of the nation. New views were formed on what was morally acceptable in society, on the poor physical health of many of its poorest members, the way in which women were viewed and their increasingly public lifestyles, and not least, Britain's imperial role. The rise of socialism, interest in psychology and scientific naturalism, alongside the enormous scientific and technological advances caused many to question the way they lived and what had previously been perceived as true: "The late Victorians themselves were intensely conscious of their transitory state . . . It was a realisation that could provoke uncertainty, confusion, pessimism, even apocalyptic gloom" (Keating, 1989, p. 2). Such doubts and uncertainty about the future frequently found their way into the pages of the novels, magazines and newspapers of the time.

A French phrase, *fin de siècle*, or end of the century, first appeared in the *Daily News* on 29 December 1890, and came into common use in Britain to describe characteristics thought to be advanced, modern or decadent (Walder ed., 2001, p. 189). The attitudes that we associate with the Victorian period, that of sexual repression, middle-class respectability and a limited and restricted way of life for women, were strongly debated during the *fin de siècle*. Some were keen to maintain the status quo, while others

rejected traditional values and this was particularly true of attitudes towards women.

For Holbrook Jackson, unlike the earlier Victorian period of industrialisation and commerce, the 1890s

was not a period of achievement, but rather of effort: suggestive, tentative . . . Its relics are moods, attitudes, experiments; fantastic attenuations of weariness, fantastic anticipations of a new vitality; an old civilisation a little too conscious of itself and the present, and a little too much concerned for its future.

(Jackson, 1950, p. 8)

In other words, the end of the nineteenth century was a time when the prevailing mood of Victorianism was cast aside. People were searching for new ideals and new beliefs but were still uncertain as to what those should be and where they could lead them.

1.1 Political and social transformation

From the early nineteenth century onwards large modern cities with their conglomerations of housing and factories created new markets for manufacturers, resulting in specialist retail and wholesale outlets. More efficient business practices were developed, and technical innovations and methods of transport affected all sectors of society. Britain was the proud possessor of a world-wide empire and banking system, a stable political and economic system, a dominant economy and a strong manufacturing base. State control of the economy in the form of the erosion of inequitable taxation and the repeal of the Corn Laws took effect between 1814 and the 1840s. This was a period in which government control of the economy was contested and economic policies “defined as . . . being beyond politics” were adopted (Matthew, 2000, pp. 50-1): a belief in the theory and practice of free trade represented a change in the organisation of the economy and the trading practices which took place within it

Feather, 1988, p. 134-5).¹

However, this was also a time in British history where social reform and improvements were spread across all sectors of society. As Elaine Showalter argues: “The making of vast industrial fortunes was balanced by the organization of trade unions and the founding of the British Labour Party” (Showalter, 2001a, p. 4). The poorest in society saw huge improvements in their standard of living as government investment in public health and education took effect. By the end of the 1870s however, “England and Western Europe . . . were hit by an economic depression, and in the 1880s the term ‘unemployment’ first came into use” (Showalter, 2001a, p. 5).

The passage of the 1868 Reform Act had more than doubled the electoral base and while not all of the reforms were related to the extension of the franchise, many were responses to the “demands posed by the new kind of society created by the extension of the franchise” (Keating, 1989, p. 136). Such reforms gave a fresh urgency to the creation of schools for the masses. The Education Acts passed between 1870 and 1891 “gradually led to free, universal and compulsory elementary education,” and “created a new culturally aspiring ‘mass’ readership” (McDonald, 1997, p. 7). Educational reforms ensured that all children were entitled to a state-provided elementary education. By “1880 education was made compulsory for children between the ages of five and ten, in 1891 the school leaving age was raised to eleven . . . By 1900 there were nearly five million children in elementary school” (Keating, 1989, p. 141). This legislation affected

¹ The theory of Free Trade was introduced to British political thinking by the Scottish economist Adam Smith. In *The Wealth of Nations* (1776) he argued that for countries to flourish economically they had to be free of government interference. Free trade was therefore concerned with the removal of taxes on goods produced within the country and also with ensuring that no taxes were paid on goods crossing national borders. Anything that impeded this free movement of goods would result in a reduction in profit. The Victorian philosopher and politician, John Stuart Mill was also an exponent of Free Trade and the belief that governments should not interfere in the life of the individual.

every aspect of the printed word: “For the first time, a huge literate public had come into being, and consequently every aspect of the production and dissemination of the printed text became subject to revolution” (Carey, 1992, p. 5). In 1896 the social psychologist Gustave Le Bon wrote of significant changes: “the modern age represents a period of transition and anarchy.” For the first time in human history “the divine rights of the masses is about to replace the divine right of Kings” (in Keating, 1989, p. 3). This expansion in the reading public would have a dramatic impact on the numbers and type of publications produced.

The autodidactic culture which had characterised the working class since the seventeenth century experienced significant growth during the late nineteenth century.² The demand for education resulted in the creation of mutual improvement societies. Books and periodicals became more than a source of entertainment or instruction: “books . . . became symbols of social revolution . . . because they allowed working people to control their own minds” (Rose, 2002, p. 51). It is thus understandable that “educated people commonly . . . found something profoundly menacing in the efforts of working people to educate themselves and write for themselves” (Rose, p. 20).

1.2 Population growth and the rise of the cities

Britain’s population expanded from 8.9 million in the first half of the nineteenth century to 32.5 million by 1901 (Altick, 1957, p. 81).³ Class structure and the occupational and

² Autodidactic culture or self-education began in the middle ages and reached its peak in the late nineteenth century. Increasing literacy levels opened up new possibilities for the working classes to partake in a culture which had until this point been associated with those who had been highly educated. Activities associated with autodidactic culture include reading, theatre and concert attendance, and self-education. (Rose, 2002)

³ While Britain’s population rose constantly throughout the majority of the nineteenth century, by the 1880s it had started to decline. Newspaper and magazine articles began to urge married women to have more children in order to protect the vitality of the country. Motherhood was portrayed in the popular press as being the desired state for all married women. Even the progressive novelist, Grant Allen commented that “all must

geographical distribution of the population also underwent huge changes. People began to leave the countryside and agricultural life to seek new opportunities in the great Victorian cities which had sprung up as a result of industrialisation (David ed., 2001, p. 5). The large centres of population situated within the cities provided Victorian industrialists with the workforce they needed to produce commercial goods, and a concentration of easily reached, eager consumers.

The great Victorian railway expansion of the 1830s and early 1840s not only aided the expansion of urban centres and ensured a more mobile population, but was the “catalyst for the development of the telegraph, the postal service, printing, travel and leisure, all of which had fundamental implications for the character of public life” (Matthew, 2000, p. 85). As the population grew and improvements in public transport were made, “these improvements encouraged a major building boom around the turn of the century . . .” (Carey, 1992, p. 46). The aspiring middle class thus searched for housing which reflected their growing status.⁴

This expansion and industrialisation created a crisis in the living conditions of the poor. Increasing levels of mortality in these new cities resulted in the creation of the Public Health Acts of 1848 and 1875 which brought about improvements for some of the

become wives and mothers, and . . . must bear at least four or five children. In our existing state six are the very fewest that our country can do with . . .” (Allen, G., ‘Plain Words on the Woman Question’, *Fortnightly Review*, 1889, p. 7)

⁴ The Industrial Revolution had resulted in large numbers of people moving to the towns and cities. The housing which they occupied had been, on the most part, unplanned and deficient in sanitation. The industrial expansion of the Victorian period exacerbated the crisis in living conditions for the very poorest in society. The middle-classes began to use their newly found wealth to distance themselves from the poor, and began to move out of the cities to the new suburban housing on the periphery of cities. The creation of these green and leafy suburbs was hastened by the construction of the railways from the mid 1830s, the underground railways of the 1860s and the introduction of trams in the 1880s. Each of these developments made possible the ability of the middle classes to commute to their place of work from the newly created suburbs.

population.⁵ The 1875 act resulted in investment in drains, water supply, better street cleaning, better housing and improvements in hospitals. While the new cities provided work for many, their rise and increase in size had been for the most part unplanned, resulting in poor and unsanitary living conditions:

Water-borne diseases such as cholera and typhoid threatened rich and poor alike. Crowded housing encouraged the spread of tuberculosis and infectious diseases such as measles. The lack of adequate sanitation meant that human and animal wastes fouled the environment . . . The great cities of Britain were desperately unhealthy . . . One of the great changes in the second half of the nineteenth century was to make the great cities as healthy as the countryside.

(Daunton in Matthew, 2000, pp. 62-3)

Investment in the infrastructure of the towns and cities made them sources of “civic pride, the centre of new patterns of consumption and a symbol of modernity, of fractured identities and endless possibilities” (Daunton in Matthew, 2000, p. 65).⁶

⁵ Showalter believes that the dramatic rise in numbers of a new urban poor added to public concerns on the subject of degeneration of the populace. The inner city slums were breeding grounds of disease, ignorance and crime which led to eugenicists believing that the poor should not be allowed to reproduce. (Showalter, 1990, p. 5) It is at this time that metaphors of race began to be made to highlight the distinction between the upper and lower classes. In 1890, the founder of the Salvation Army, William Booth asserted that: “As there is a darkest Africa, is there not also a darkest England? Civilisation, which can breed its own barbarians, does it not breed its own pygmies? May we not find a parallel at our own doors, and discover within a stone’s throw of our cathedrals and palaces similar horrors to those which Stanley has found existing in the great Equatorial forest?. . . As in Africa it is all trees . . . here it is all vice and poverty and crime” (Showalter, 1992, pp. 5-6). Such arguments were used to strengthen the demand that middle class married women needed to have large families in order to counteract the degenerate effects of the poor. The New Woman who was emerging towards the end of the nineteenth century posed a threat to this perceived need.

⁶ The new towns and cities described by Daunton provided an impetus and infrastructure which would hasten change in people’s everyday lives. As living and working conditions began to improve, so did peoples aspirations. The introduction of cheap public transport into towns and cities and the creation of public lavatories, tea rooms and department stores provided new environments where people were able to socialise and be exposed to new ideas. These new urban landscapes offered opportunities never before available. Women felt comfortable in these new public spaces and began to enjoy the freedoms which the cities and towns offered (Dryden, 2003, pp. 61-2).

1.3 Empire and publishing

One of the major features of nineteenth century Britain was the growth of its Empire.

The British Empire had begun from what in 1815 had been

a small number of settled colonies, some strategic bases for the navy and those areas of India in which the East India Company ruled as a chartered company, had by the end of it become . . . a vast area ruled for the most part autocratically.

(Matthew, 2000 p. 30)

The Empire's expansion was dramatic: "between the Battle of Waterloo and the end of the American Civil War in 1865, the British Empire grew by an average of 100,000 square miles per year" (Herman, 2003, p. 330). This growth included the white colonies which in themselves characterised the spirit of free trade in Victorian Britain – creating new trade routes, migration patterns, and a means of cultural exchange and investment.

Most British families had relatives who had settled in some part of the Empire. The British navy and army, colonial service and commercial traders sent huge numbers of British citizens throughout these settled territories. British culture was diffused throughout its Empire: religion, education, and a "British way of life," were exported throughout these foreign lands. As the Empire continued to expand so too did Britain's knowledge of other languages, peoples, cultures and the landscapes which they had colonised. A growth in physical exploration and surveys coupled with the development of anthropology increased this knowledge further, and this information was disseminated by means of books and periodicals aimed at both the home and imperial market.

In the second half of the nineteenth century, the Edinburgh publisher William

Blackwood and Sons were strongly identified with the production of “military-oriented texts” (Finkelstein, 2002, p. 47). Identification with the military market would lead the company to concentrate on essays and stories which focused on “Britain’s overseas possessions and activities” (Finkelstein, 2002, p. 101).⁷ By focusing on the desires of the colonial and military audience Blackwood created and maintained a loyal following of readers.

Britain’s empire was regarded as a source of considerable wealth and world power, both at home and abroad. Many were “impressed by both the uncoordinated expansiveness of trade, settlement, investment, and culture” (Porter, 2001, p. 141). Yet by the end of the nineteenth century the Empire was causing concern at home and throughout the colonies: “In the 1890s the extent to which Britain’s future was to depend on the structure of her empire had emerged as one of the great questions of the age” (Porter, 2001, p. 160). For, even though the Imperialist Age was at its height and great hopes for the Empire persisted, “there were also fears of degeneration and collapse . . . fears not only of colonial rebellion but also of racial mingling, crossbreeding, and intermarriage” (Showalter, 2001a, pp. 5-6). Thus the fears surrounding the Empire were translated to problems within Britain: “Parallels between the problems of the African jungle and the urban jungle where homelessness, poverty, hunger, drunkenness, and sexual barbarity could be seen every day” (Showalter 2001a, p. 5). But perhaps the biggest crisis of the end of the nineteenth century was the crisis in gender roles: “That both women and natives simultaneously began to manifest frightening drives towards independence just as England’s great century of empire drew to its uneasy close” (Showalter, 2001a p. 6) caused great consternation. This preoccupation with gender roles and attributes can be seen as part of a larger social crisis, the latest “phase of longer term changes in social

⁷ Identification with this market continued into the twentieth century. In 1911, *The Bookman* noted that “Messrs Blackwood seem to have rather specialised in the novel of Anglo-Indian life” (Kemp et al, 1997, p. 327).

and familial roles, particularly those of women, and in relations between men and women” (Pykett, 1995, p. 14-15). The end of the nineteenth century was thus a time tormented by issues of gender and where traditional beliefs were in doubt.

1.4 The Woman Question

The development of the “woman question” in the early years of Queen Victoria’s reign and the place of women’s issues on the agenda of social reform began to take on a new momentum in the middle years of the nineteenth century. The Victorian middle class ideal of woman was characterized by the poet Coventry Patmore as the “perfect lady, and Angel in the house, contentedly submissive to men . . . queen in her realm of the home” (Patmore, 1854, pp. 64-5). Patmore associated women with what were regarded as the traditional feminine values of love, beauty and virtue. Yet the changes created by Britain’s growing industrialisation and urbanisation meant that middle-class women could no longer afford to remain in the home. Despite the fact that nineteenth century women were portrayed as financially reliant on their male relatives, the reality for many women was very different. Kathryn Gleadle argues that not all middle and upper class “women could take financial security for granted. Family bereavement or financial disasters ensured a continual pool of needy, genteel women” (Gleadle, 2001, p. 53).

A rise in the number of single women also created a dilemma, as women were forced to leave their traditional roles to find suitable work outside the home: “The number of single women between the ages of fifteen and forty-five rose from 2,765,000 in 1851 to 3,228,700 in 1871, with a rise in the surplus of single women to single men of 72,000 to 125,200 (a 72.7% rise in twenty years)” (Vicinus, 1977, p. xvi). Janet Howarth states that a few married middle class women contributed to the family income and that some single women and widows also had to earn their own living (in Matthew, 2000, p. 172).

Campaigns began to improve job opportunities and earnings for middle-class women; however the options for impoverished, genteel women were limited. Gleadle states that nursing became an emergent profession from the 1830s onwards and drew recruits from the upper classes. By far the most popular of professions for middle-class women was that of a governess. Several gifted women were able to derive an income from artistic endeavours and women writers thrived during the Victorian period (Gleadle, pp. 53-6).

In 1865 John Ruskin echoed Patmore's view of the natural order when he wrote that man is "active, progressive, defensive":

[E]minently the doer, the creator, the discoverer, the defender. His intellect is for speculation and invention; his energy for adventure, for war, and for conquest But the woman's power is for rule, not for battle, - and her intellect is not for invention or creation, but for sweet ordering, arrangement, and decision. . . . she enters into no contest . . . By her office, and place, she is protected from all danger and temptation . . .

(Ruskin, n.d., *Sesame and Lilies*, pp. 117-8)

Women had suffered a particularly low status in nineteenth century Britain: "the major outstanding electoral reform was the enfranchisement of women . . . Throughout the second half of the nineteenth century the anomaly of women not having the vote was challenged in the courts [and] raised repeatedly in parliament" (Keating, 1989, p. 138).

They were specifically excluded from the 1832 and 1868 Reform Acts, and while the Compulsory Education Act of 1872 increased the basic education provision for all, girls still remained on the periphery. As early as the 1860s

more than one-third of the country's workers, principally among lower classes, consisted of women . . . As more middle-class women joined the work force . . . as teachers and governesses, increasingly as civil servants, and in the nineties as professionals, reforms were progressively instituted as a result of extensive petitioning by feminist organizations.

(Beckson, 1992, p. 133)⁸

⁸ The debate over women's suffrage had been introduced by John Stuart Mill in 1866. However, this issue would not be resolved until 1928 when women over the age of 21

Secondary education remained a middle-class and mainly male preserve and women were still on the whole denied access to higher education. Yet substantial advances in higher education with the founding of the new women's colleges offered increasing educational and occupational opportunities. Women's rights campaigners agitated across the political spectrum and the issue was hotly debated in the popular press. Campaigners were rewarded with the establishment of women's colleges at Cambridge and Oxford in the 1870s. Changes to the constitution of London University in 1878 and Victoria University in 1880 gradually enabled women to sit examinations and take degree courses. This had a profound effect on the type of work women were able to undertake. Magazines such as *The Girls Own Paper* regularly gave advice to young women seeking employment such as "nursing, teaching, typewriting, shorthand, journalism, photography, midwifery and clerical work" positions open to women seeking employment (Keating, p. 181):

In 1861 there were already nearly 80,000 women employed as teachers in England and Wales: by 1911 that figure had more than doubled to 183,000. Over the same period the number of clerical workers increased from over 279 to more than 124,000. The rapid growth in numbers of middle-class working women especially in public services and commerce was one of the most notable features of late Victorian social life.

(Keating, p. 181)

were granted the vote. Several women's suffrage societies were formed during this period, including the National Society for Women's Suffrage in 1866, and the Women Writers' Suffrage League, amongst whose members could be found two prominent New Women authors, Sarah Grand and Olive Schreiner. Not all women, however, were in favour of votes for women. In 1889, Novelist Mary Ward published "An Appeal Against Women's Suffrage" (*Nineteenth Century*, 1889, n.p. in Heilmann 2004). Another novelist, Eliza Lynn Linton was perhaps the most outspoken nineteenth century critic of the modern woman. In an article entitled "The Girl of the Period", Linton wrote: "Time was when the phrase, 'a fair young English girl,' meant the ideal of womanhood . . . a girl who . . . because of her innate purity and dignity of her nature . . . when she married she would be her husband's friend and companion, but never his rival . . . who would make his house his true home and place of rest . . . a tender mother, an industrious housekeeper . . . [unlike the modern woman who] lives to please herself, [and who] does not care if she displeases everyone else" (Linton, (1868), 'The Girl of the Period', *The Saturday Review*, p. 340 in Heilmann, 2004).

The Married Women's Property Acts of 1877 and 1881 also began to free women from traditional restraints giving them rights and protection in the law. Women began to question their traditional role, as detailed in Ruskin's *Sesame and Lilies*, of being "incorruptibly good; . . . wise, not for self-development, . . . not that she may set herself above her husband, but that she may never fail from his side" (Ruskin, n.d. p.119), and moves towards opening up education began to have some impact (Gifford, ed., 1988, p. 264 and Howarth 2000, pp. 182-5). Perhaps the most influential thinker on women's role at the time, John Stuart Mill, commented on the limitations of women's lives in his *The Subjection of Women* (1869):

All women are brought up from the very earliest years in the belief that their ideal character is the very opposite to that of men; not self-will and government by self-control, but submission, and yielding to the control of others. All the moralities tell them that it is the duty of women, and all the current sentimentalities, that it is their nature, to live for others; to make complete abnegation of themselves, and to have no life but in their affections.

(in Beckson, 1992, p. 132)⁹

Many historians regard the idealisation of women and women's role as a reaction to the religious and economic crisis of the Victorian period.¹⁰ Traditional religious and moral values which had defined the Victorian period were being threatened by the competitive business environment created by the dominance of the marketplace. These religious and moral values were then

⁹ John Stuart Mill was an English philosopher and an influential liberal thinker of the nineteenth century. He served as the Member of Parliament for the City of Westminster from 1865-68, and became the first person in parliament to call for women to be given the vote. His *The Subjection of Women* (1869) bitterly opposed the inequalities imposed upon women by patriarchal culture.

¹⁰ As women began to enjoy an increasingly public role in society, scientists such as Sigmund Freud began to link advances in women's education and careers with psychological illnesses such as hysteria. Showalter notes that both Freud and Joseph Breuer stated in 1895 that hysterical girls were likely to be "lively, gifted, and full of intellectual interests" (Showalter, 1990, pp. 40-1). Opinions such as these were used to good effect to limit advances in women's position, and to serve as a warning to other women keen to pursue less traditional pursuits.

relocated . . . in the home and in the woman who was at its center. [sic] It was she who could create a sanctuary both from the anxieties of modern life and for those values no longer confirmed by religious faith or relevant to modern business.

(Christ in Vicinus, 1977, p. 146)

The term “New Woman” emerged in May 1894 when it was coined by Sarah Grand and Ouida in the *North American Review* (Showalter, 1999, pp. xxix). The New Woman insisted on alternatives to the traditional roles of women. She saw herself as a principled woman determined to oppose “restrictions and injustices in the political, educational, economic, and sexual realms in order to achieve equality with men” (Beckson, p. 133). From the 1870s, women began to enter the service economy and pushed for entry into universities and for financial independence.

The identity of the New Woman has been a notoriously difficult concept to locate due to the varied definitions applied to that character. Ledger and Luckhurst state that the New Woman grew out of the “burgeoning women’s movement of the late Victorian years” (Ledger and Luckhurst, 2000, p. 75). Heilmann and Beetham see the New Woman as being “radical and politicized” (Heilmann and Beetham, 2004, p. 146). The rise of the Women’s movement resulted in the creation of a number of women who chose not to pursue traditional Victorian pathways of marriage and motherhood. During this period many middle-class women began to make a conscious decision not to marry, but instead to make efforts to ensure their economic independence (Gleadle, p. 184). A number of these women began to publicly campaign for “educational opportunities and . . . the right of professional recognition and sexual freedom” (Glendinning in Gardiner, 1993, p. 4). The desire to be free from marriage, motherhood and economic dependence did not meet with the approval of the majority of the population. Many saw the New Woman as a “mannish, overeducated bore . . . a bad mother (if not an embittered

spinster), and as lacking in all the attributes usually associated with ideal Victorian womanhood” (Ledger and Luckhurst, p. 75).

The New Woman was in turn, associated with and blamed for many of the problems of her day. The *Westminster Review* openly condemned her for most of society’s ills. Her desire for an independent life was

Intimately connected with the stirrings and rumblings now perceivable in the social and industrial world, the ‘bitter cries’ of the disinherited classes, the ‘Social Wreckage’ which is becoming able to make itself unpleasantly prominent in the ‘Problems of Great Cities,’ the spread of Socialism and Nihilism.

(‘The Apple and the Ego of Woman’ *Westminster Review*, 131 (1889), pp. 374-382, quoted in Ardis, 1990, p. 1)

Ledger expands on this point when she states that the New Woman was viewed as a threat to “women’s role as the mothers of the British Empire” and “generally regarded as a threat to the economic supremacy of bourgeois man in Britain” (Ledger, 1997, p. 19).

Victorian women were also constrained in their mode of dress. Some New Women were advocates of a more rational way of dressing. Heilmann and Beetham, and Glendinning, among others, state that the uniform of the New Woman appeared decidedly masculine to the Victorian eye. This “rational” tailored dress of pantaloons and shirt-wasters symbolised a freedom from constraint and ability to move around in the world free of restrictions.¹¹

¹¹ It is important to realise that while images of the New Woman in rational dress would frequently appear in newspapers and periodicals of the day, women who adopted this form of dress were still in the minority: “Even prominent militant suffragists . . . dressed in clothes which were conventionally feminine” (Heilmann and Beetham, eds., 2004, p. 146).

The fiction produced during the *fin de siècle* years also contributed substantially to the New Woman discussion. Novels such as Grant Allen's *The Woman Who Did* (1895), Sarah Grand's *The Heavenly Twins* (1893), George Gissing's *The Odd Women* (1893) and Henrik Ibsen's radical play *A Doll's House* (1879) all reflected women's changing position.¹² *A Doll's House* scandalised nineteenth century audiences with its portrayal of hypocrisy and struggle within a seemingly happy marriage and "ignited a debate in which 'Ibsenism' was alternatively touted as the liberation of the theatre from the delusions of romantic idealism and denounced as a degenerate attack upon traditional family values" (Forward to Ibsen, 1992, p. iii). The first London production of *A Doll's House* in 1889 was therefore so shocking that it left the women in the audience "breathless with excitement . . . we were restive and impetuous and almost savage in our arguments. This was either the end of the world or the beginning of a new world for women . . ." (in Showalter, 2000, p vii).¹³

New Woman novels featured characters with the desire to discover different ways of living "quite different from the bourgeois patriarchy in which unmarried women are deemed odd and superfluous" (Ardis, 1990, p. 3). They regularly featured women "as writers of feminist fiction" (Glendinning, 1993, p. 27), and a recurring theme throughout New Woman fiction is an association between writing novels and being active in feminist politics (Glendinning, 1993, p. 27; Ardis, 1990, p. 3, pp. 160-1).

¹² The fiction created by the New Woman authors of the late nineteenth century tended to focus on two main issues: higher education and marriage. The bulk of material produced by these women stemmed from what they believed could be a new kind of freedom for women – within or outside of marriage, this led many New Women authors to be characterised as part of an "anti-marriage league". The phrase "anti-marriage league" was coined by Margaret Oliphant in 1896 when she characterised New Women authors as such (Coghill ed., 1899). Oliphant was published throughout her literary career by William Blackwood and Sons.

¹³ What we see emerging here is the debate over women's place in society being played out through fictional literary and dramatic works. The "natural" role of women was at odds with the widening opportunities available to them. Through their portrayal of fictional New Women, authors and dramatists brought the debate to a wider audience and encouraged men and women to engage with it.

New Women authors themselves could not agree on what constituted a New Woman:

Sarah Grand championed sexual purity and motherhood . . . Mona Caird attack[ed] motherhood . . . Grant Allen . . . champion[ed] free love. . . . The elusive quality of the New Woman . . . clearly marks her as a problem, as a challenge to the apparently homogenous culture of Victorianism.

(Ledger, 1997, p. 10-11)

The term “New Woman” along with the final decade of the nineteenth century brought high expectations for many women. While dominant members of society were concerned that from the *fin de siècle* onwards “sexuality and sex roles might no longer be contained within the neat and permanent borderlines of gender categories” (Showalter, 2001b, p. 9), this was a period in which many young women believed that the future was filled with limitless possibilities and opportunities. The British Suffragist, Emmeline Pethwick-Lawrence wrote:

It was a wonderful thing at that period to be among young comrades, for the ninth decade of the last century was a time of expansion and vision . . . We read, discussed, debated, and experimented and felt that all life lay before us to be changed and moulded by our vision and desire.

(Showalter, 1999, pp xxvii-xxviii)

As Martha Vicinus states: “Nineteenth-century women were not always the passive submissive and pure creatures of popular idealizations, but neither were they ever completely free from this stereotype” (Vicinus, 1977, p. xix). It should be noted however that the tensions between the traditional concept of women and the emerging “New Woman” were confined in the main to the middle and wealthy classes. Traditionally, working-class women had always worked and emancipation meant something quite different for them.

The late-Victorian era witnessed the creation and expansion of an increasing number of bourgeois women, fired by the recognition of shared frustrations and desires. For many of these women the fulfilment of their potential was problematic: they were not expected to work, and therefore the type of education and employment open to them was limited. The provision of education in Britain was based on the assumption that men were the primary target of education. Victorian attitudes restricted the social practices open to the female population: "Better education meant, in theory, financial independence and wider career choice, but as with similar legal reforms, women found that the end results of their agitation, were often less than the promise" (Vicinus, 1977, p. xvii). Even Queen Victoria, who appeared to epitomise the traditional role, struggled with her own feelings concerning woman's function as wife and mother. In a letter to her recently married eldest daughter, she wrote:

There is great happiness and great blessedness in devoting oneself to another who is worthy of one's affection; still, men are very selfish and the woman's devotion is always one of submission which makes our poor sex so unenviable. This you will feel hereafter – I know, though it cannot be otherwise as God has willed it so.

(in Beckson, 1992, p. 132)

The nature of women's work, its value, remuneration and authority, both within the household and beyond were subjects of great controversy among a wide range of the population.

An article in *The Lancet* in 1894, entitled "The 'Can' and 'Shall' of Woman-Culture," reflected the establishment position. It gives some indication of the perceived threat the "New Woman" posed and the struggle women faced in attempting to live a different kind of life than the one prescribed for them:

The female is undoubtedly from a developmental point of view an animal in which

the evolutionary process has been arrested or . . . diverted . . . for special reproductive purposes, before the culminating process could be reached . . . We do not doubt that in a certain number of generations women, if cultured as men are cultured, might be developed in all respects to the same proportion as men in respect of brain or muscle or both; but we contend that if this were accomplished they would be monstrous . . .

(Jay and Neve, 1999, p. 238)

Statements such as these illustrate the anxiety felt by many men – and some women – over changing gender roles.¹⁴

Rhoda Nunn in Gissing's *The Odd Women* (1980) sums up the confusion felt by women at this time. Torn between the old Victorian ways and the world of the "New Woman", the "odd women" are seen as failures and misfits, neither fitting into one world nor the other. They are social outcasts, and yet they have it within them to create a better future if they only dare. Mr Widdowson regarded women as

simply incapable of attaining maturity . . . ever liable to be misled by childish misconceptions. Of course he was right; he himself represented the guardian male, the wife proprietor, who from the dawn of civilisation has taken abundant care that women shall not outgrow her nonage.

(Gissing, 1893, pp. 196-7)

This patriarchal attitude held sway at the end of the nineteenth century and was applied to women and to colonised peoples throughout Britain's empire, as previously discussed in this chapter. The fear engendered by the New Woman can therefore be seen as only one element in the multitude of changes and instability sweeping across Britain and her empire.

¹⁴ In addition to being portrayed as the weaker sex, New Women were often portrayed as being psychologically precarious and prone to suffering from depression and hysteria. By representing women who questioned the traditional boundaries of gender, as mentally unstable, Doctors and scientists were attempting to maintain the status quo.

Some critics have seen the “New Woman” as a fantasy created by late nineteenth century journalists as a way for women to embrace new gender roles at a time of social change and confusion (Ledger, 1997, p. 3). For Ledger the “New Woman” was an urban phenomenon, and she points to the mainly urban organisations which attempted to assimilate women into city life. Organisations and institutions such as the Salvation Army, museums, department stores and tea shops, theatrical matinees and lecture halls all drew the “New Woman” into the city centre where she could escape the monotony and loneliness of a domestic existence and enter the public sphere.

Authors of both genders used their writing to comment on the burning issues of their time. They “were not waiting passively for a new age to emerge: they were in active rebellion against virtually everything the previous generation represented and were desperate to create new forms and structures to replace those they had destroyed” (Keating, p. 4). In a poem that seems to be lamenting the disappearance of the “Angel in the House” and in sharply ironic tones, the following appeared in the popular one-penny paper *Woman* on 26 September 1894:

She flouts Love's caresses
Reforms ladies' dresses
And scorns the Man-Monster's tirades
She seems scarcely human
This mannish 'New Woman,'
This 'Queen of the Blushless Brigade.'

(in Beckson, p. 129)

Such representations in women's periodicals indicate that not all women agreed with the “New Woman”. However, women were beginning to gain the benefits of entry into education and to the workplace and now enjoyed a more visible, public lifestyle. In 1888 the feminist writer Ella Hepworth Dixon assessed the difference that this new sort of freedom could make in a young girls life:

If young and pleasing women are permitted by public opinion to go to college, to live alone, to travel, to have a profession, to belong to a club, to give parties, to read and discuss whatsoever seems good to them and go to theatres without masculine escort, they have most of the privileges . . . for which the girl of 20 or 30 years ago was ready to barter herself for the first souter who offered himself and shelter of his name.

(Ella Hepworth Dixon, 1899, pp. 392-6)

The *fin de siècle* implied a kind of freedom and yet many women were still forced into roles that they did not want. For the majority of women, even “New Women”, marriage remained their only hope for a financially stable future. Many became lonely and embittered, often humiliated by the married lives they were forced to lead by their families and the society from which they came. Monica Widdowson, in *The Odd Women* exemplifies these feelings when she wishes “with wretchedness in her heart . . . she . . . must go to the same chamber in which her husband would sleep. She wished to be alone. The poorest bed in a servant’s garret would have been thrice welcome to her; liberty to lie awake, think without a disturbing presence” (Gissing, 1980, p. 201). Such was the anomaly of the life of the “New Woman” in *fin de siècle* Britain.

Conclusion

The closing decades of the nineteenth century can be seen as a period of radical change, politically, socially and philosophically. These changes were reflected in the approach of women to their traditional roles. Focusing on the changes taking place during the formative years of Katherine Cecil Thurston’s life enables us to locate her as a woman writer of the new century with the issues and struggles that that entailed. The publishing industry was also in the process of transformation and this is to be the focus of Chapter Two where the emergence of the New Woman writer will be at the centre of the discussion. Such an overview of women within the publishing history at this time will

provide a context for later chapters on Katherine Cecil Thurston which will form the main research of the thesis.

Chapter Two

Publishing, Authorship and the New Woman: The Edinburgh Context

The mood of optimism and fear that characterised the closing years of nineteenth century Britain created a climate of debate over every aspect of human existence. The creation of the new culturally aspiring mass readership discussed in Chapter One, led to an explosion of new literary forms and new types of authors arriving on the publishing scene. Authorship as a profession became open to a wide range of men and women who had never before been considered suitable for the job. In turn, new publishing companies were started to satisfy the demand of the new reader. Long-established, traditional companies found themselves competing with these new companies, each determined to find and satisfy their niche market.

2.1 The rise of Modernism

A climate of change and opportunity in the fields of publishing and authorship was created by the cultural conditions of the late nineteenth century. The rise in literacy, highlighted in Chapter One, created a market hitherto untapped by the publishing industry. New forms of writing emerged in which the reader “was positively engulfed with imaginative constructions of the next century: Utopias, monomaniac tracts, dire warnings, technological predictions, blueprints for survival . . .” (Jay and Neve, 1999, p. xiii). The prevailing cultural and social conditions were thus reflected in the literature of the day. Authors proposed new solutions for the problems and questions being debated: writers who embraced progressive, liberal views found a market and new outlets for their work, alongside those of traditional Victorian authors. This

collision between the old and the new that characterises the turn of the century marks it as an excitingly volatile and transitional period; a time when British cultural politics were caught between two ages, the Victorian and the Modern; a time fraught with anxiety and with an exhilarating sense of possibility.

Karl Beckson argues that the cultural trends of the *fin de siècle* were “moving in two simultaneously antithetical directions: declining Victorianism . . . and rising modernism” (Beckson, p. xiv), thus creating a climate of conflict and crisis in which every aspect of life and culture was examined and in many cases redefined.¹⁵ The new mass readership demanded new forms of writing as entertainment and instruction. The expanding market for educational books created work for many authors. Magazines such as *Tit Bits* provided this new readership with the articles and stories they desired, and offered openings for a new breed of author and journalist. New readers were demanding a more populist type of reading.

Peter McDonald cites Edmund Gosse in the *Contemporary Review* in April 1891 voicing the fears of some members of established literary society that great literature was threatened by a rising commercialisation and the new democratic climate created by the increase in the franchise and the Education Acts (McDonald, 1997, p. 1). Members of the “literary hierarchy” felt threatened by the new forms of writing for a mass readership and by the changing publishing world. They feared literature would become devalued from its position as a reflection of the cultural beliefs of the middle and upper classes. As Dale Spender notes: “the novel as we know it today emerged as a distinct form of entertainment in the eighteenth century . . . at the same time as the values of

¹⁵ Modernism had begun in the mid nineteenth century in France and was concerned with the idea that traditional forms of culture and life had become outdated. Modernists believed that traditional ways of living were holding back progress, and in order to make the world a better place every aspect of human existence needed to be re-examined and reinvented. The Modernist movement in literature grew out of the socio-economic and historic changes taking place throughout the closing decades of the nineteenth century. Literature began to reflect these changes, “constantly scanning a rapidly changing physical and social world in an attempt to make sense of the signs of their times” (Pykett, 1995, p. 6). The changing form and content of women’s writing is an aspect of Modernism dealt with in further chapters.

the new bourgeoisie came to dominate social beliefs” (in Belsey and Moore, 1997, p. 27).

Gosse writes that the “ ‘enlargement of the circle of readers’ meant ‘an increase of persons who, without ear, are admitted to the concert of literature’; and this wider audience, in turn, attracted publishers who ‘seduced’ authors ‘capable of doing better things’ into writing simply ‘for the sake of money’” (McDonald, 1997, p.1).¹⁶

2.2 Publishing

In the later part of the nineteenth century the spread of literacy, the popularity of the lending libraries,¹⁷ and the expansion of the periodical market all created opportunities for the publishing industry.¹⁸ Mass literacy encouraged the emergence of “the tabloid” and “new journalism,” detective fiction, spy novels, and science fiction, “the bestseller,” and short stories, forms and terms of mass literature still in use today.

The new “popular culture” emerging during the 1890s encouraged the rise of “penny weeklies” like the enormously successful *Tit Bits*. This new mass market led to the idea

¹⁶ In his lecture “The Hero as man of letters” Thomas Carlyle (1840) had defined the Victorian ideal of the writer as a prophet, priest or sage, and as exclusively male (Jay, 1995, p. 244). By writing for money, the male and female authors of the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries were therefore in direct conflict with this ideal.

¹⁷ Public libraries were established in many towns across Britain after the creation of the Public Libraries Act of 1850. The creation of libraries offering free access to books greatly encouraged the spread of literacy and an enjoyment of reading. Public libraries also became major purchasers of publishers stock, enhancing and expanding the business of publishing (Feather, 1988, p. 154).

¹⁸ The tradition of periodical publishing had begun in Britain in the eighteenth century. Two prominent periodicals of this period were *The Tatler* and *The Spectator*, both of which offered a blend of essays, correspondence, and views on politics, literature, culture and society. Their success set the format for the periodical in the nineteenth century. During this time, novelists began to serialise their work in periodical magazines such as *The Cornhill* and *Blackwood’s Magazine*. Serialisation of novels in this way enabled publishers to test the market with new authors and broadened the range of readership for already established authors. A new breed of author also began to write short stories specifically for the periodical market (Feather, 1988, pp. 164-5).

that “popular culture” of the 1890s “was eroding literate culture in the process of appropriating it” (McDonald, 1997, p. 9). These popular newspapers targeted the burgeoning literate public. Many of their professional writers were themselves from “the first generation of common readers . . . ascending to careers in . . . popular journalism, where they often encountered striking hostility and jealousy on the part of more affluent intellectuals” (Rose, p. 3). Andrew Milner notes:

Publishing had began as a highly competitive “cottage industry.” . . . It was only towards the very end of the nineteenth century, and in the press rather than in book publishing that more monopolistic forms of large scale capitalism first appeared.

(Milner, 1996, p. 99)

The launch of Alfred Harmsworth’s *Daily Mail* in 1896 created a newspaper specifically for the masses. The principle of Harmsworth’s new journalism was “giving the public what it wants” (Carey, 1992, p. 6), and this marked a new stage in the history of publishing: “the development of dominant patterns of ownership and control over the print media” (Milner, p. 99).

In 1812 *The Edinburgh Review* opined: “In this country there probably are not less than 200,000 persons who read for amusement and instruction among the middling classes of society. In the higher classes there are not as many as 20,000.” In 1844 *The Review* estimated the reading public as 300,000 and 30,000 respectively (Gedin, 1982, p. 19).

However, the creation of an expanding literate population was not universally welcomed. Some intellectuals felt that universal education devalued what they felt should be, in essence, the privilege of the few. Nietzsche insisted “that everyone can learn to read will ruin in the long run not only writing but thinking too” (Carey, 1992, p. 15). In 1934 Aldous Huxley echoed Nietzsche, lamenting “universal education has

created an immense class of what I may call the New Stupid"¹⁹ (in Carey, p. 16). While advancements in education and the franchise created a more democratic, literate society, the "British class system had always drawn a sharp distinction between workers and thinkers: it was the prerogative of the latter to interpret religion, economics, society and literature for the former" (Rose, p. 7). The rise of popular literature created a climate of debate over the value and purpose of popular literature.

The cities generated by the Industrial Revolution had created new centres of production for many industries, not least the book trade, which was quick to take advantage of this and new retail outlets began to emerge:

by the end of the nineteenth century there were at least 1,000 bookshops in England and Wales and few towns of any size which had no shop at which books and magazines could be bought. In the major cities there were many bookshops some of which were large and well stocked.

(Feather, p. 135)²⁰

In the spirit of enterprise so highly valued in Victorian Britain, new publishing houses sprang up. Firms such as William Heinemann, Hutchinson and Co., Methuen and Co., Bodley Head, and Hodder and Stoughton were keen to publish works reflecting the prevailing cultural climate.²¹ However, more traditional Victorian publishers such as William Blackwood and Sons and John Murray were still in existence and published

¹⁹ While Huxley is echoing Nietzsche's beliefs his comments are of course retrospective.

²⁰ Despite a rise in the number of bookshops throughout the U.K., price-based competition between booksellers, and conflict between publishers and booksellers over the retail sale price of books resulted in many booksellers experiencing financial hardship. The inability to set a fixed price for trade and retail books led to many booksellers going out of business. This situation was not resolved until 1900 with the creation of the Net Book Agreement, whereby books were sold to bookshops at varying discounts and then sold on to the consumer at a fixed price. (Feather, pp. 147-8)

²¹ Many of the new publishers profited from the demise of the three-decker novel and the creation of the 6s novels. One extremely innovative publisher was John Lane of the Bodley Head who specialised in selling avant-garde fiction in "quaintly named series..." (Kemp et al, 1997, p. 326).

works which continued to reflect the concerns of many.²²

2.3 The significance of the railways

The creation of the national railway network played a major role in the development of British publishing, creating a cheap distribution network across the United Kingdom and spawned a new literary genre – the railway book. Cheap books for reading on long railway journeys to be left behind at the end of that journey were a boon to the publishing industry, creating new wholesale and retail outlets, new readers and new novelists (Feather, p. 137). In an attempt to supply train readers with “portable, entertaining books” (Sutherland, 1988, p. 519), Routledge created their “Railway Series” which survived until 1899. Many other publishers followed Routledge’s example and “railway novels” or “yellowbacks” began to follow a common format:

a book roughly 17.5 by 12.2 centimetres, covered often in yellow-glazed boards, carrying an illustration . . . on the front cover and commonly a picture based advertisement on the back. Most cost between a shilling and two shillings and sixpence.

(Eliot, p. 51)²³

By the 1850s, W.H. Smith and Son had a stall at almost every principal railway line in the country and sales of books and periodicals reached an unprecedented level (Altick, pp. 299-301). The authors who were the favourites with the travelling public tended to

²² While many publishers were eager to exploit the demands of the new market for popular fiction, there were still many publishers who believed in the “improving value of the printed word” and who attempted to “impose a middle-class printed culture on the working classes” (Feather, p. 159).

²³ Yellowbacks were often cheap reprints of books published previously in a more expensive form. Books were now becoming cheaper, smaller and easier to handle ensuring their availability to a wider range of people in a wider variety of places. Yellowbacks therefore mark an important stage in publishing history, being a reflection of the desire of publishers to produce cheap books for a newly literate society.

be broader in their tastes than subscribers to the circulating libraries.²⁴ The success of the yellowbacks led to the creation of more popular genres of writing such as “shilling shockers” and the detective novel.

The introduction of cheap materials and production methods, free competition and efficient technologies offered huge opportunities to publishers. Altick maintains that “the three great requisites of a mass reading public – literacy, leisure and a little pocket money, became the possession of more and more people” (Altick, p. 306). The novel became “the dominant literary form of the nineteenth century and it was therefore a genre of the utmost importance to the publishing industry” (Feather, p. 150). The rise of a new mass readership now meant that literary consumption became a question of fashionability, a marker of status and of class differentiation.

Publishers had the ability to invest books with prestige. The reading public now identified the quality and content of books with their publishers. Each publishing house had its own unique personality, mostly imbued by the moral, political or religious views of their owners.²⁵ However, the economic realities of the publishing world were such

²⁴ Circulating libraries such as those of Charles Edward Mudie and W. H. Smith were tremendously popular from the middle of the nineteenth century, enabling borrowers to read the latest novels for a small fee. The large numbers of volumes they purchased from publishers enabled them to demand huge discounts and also to dictate the format in which the books appeared. The importance of the circulating libraries and their reliance on the three-decker novel will be explored later in this chapter.

²⁵ In 1911, D.H. Lawrence gave advice to a young female writer: “If she wants to do fiction, she’d better try William Heinemann or Methuen – or if it’s anything racy, John Long...” (Kemp et al, p. 325). A wide variety of fiction, aimed at attracting those with limited budgets began to appear between the 1860s and 1890s. Among these could be found George Newnes “Penny Library of Famous Books” which published well known titles by authors such as Sir Walter Scott, Charles Reade, and Charles Dickens for a penny. (Eliot, 2001, p. 52) A publisher with a reputation for supporting “serious” women novelists was John Lane. The publication of his Keynotes series helped establish a number of novelists such as Ella D’Arcy and George Egerton (Morton, 2005, p. 147). Elaine Showalter states that the audience for sensationalist novels was widely perceived to be “female, middle-class and leisured”. In an attempt to reach this audience, the publisher Bentley produced novels intended for the “private entertainment

that even publishers with strong ethics had to ensure their economic survival by publishing across a number of fields (McDonald, p. 14). Well-established Victorian publishers now had to compete with the rise of pioneering new companies. In exploring the publication of Katherine Cecil Thurston's work in future chapters, we will see how William Blackwood, a publisher who was strongly identified with the publication of novels for the Anglo-Indian market, began to publish the work of popular women novelists from the beginning of the twentieth century.

2.4 Edinburgh: "The Athens of the North"

Scotland's capital had long had a reputation as a centre of publishing excellence, contributing to the character of the city and in many ways being influenced by Edinburgh's reputation and standing in the fields of law, medicine, education and the church. Following a decline in publishing in Scotland after the Union of the Crowns in 1707, publishing gained a new impetus in the early eighteenth century and this in turn provided a firm base for the Scottish enlightenment. Early nineteenth century Edinburgh began to challenge London as the centre in Britain for the publishing industry. Scottish businessmen were great innovators in the publishing and printing industries. *The Edinburgh Review* had set the standard for the English speaking world of serious intellectual culture (Herman, 2003, p. 398):

The nineteenth century was the golden century of Scottish publishing. Scottish Publishers demonstrated qualities of entrepreneurship . . . and established key positions in scholarly and literary publishing of books and periodicals. They dominated the volume-publishing market, particularly in the areas of education and religion.

(McCleery ed., 1991, p. i)

of women with daylong leisure" (1999, p. 159). Ann Ardis states that in order to tempt readers to buy particular novels, some publishing houses marketed their new fiction by "implying it offered illicit pleasures . . . in advertising soon-to-be-published New Woman novels" (1991, p. 39).

Late-Victorian and Edwardian Edinburgh was never a city dominated by industry in the same way as other large Victorian cities such as Glasgow and Manchester. Instead, Edinburgh continued to be a city of small-scale crafts catering for a luxury market late into the Victorian era (Reynolds, 1989, p. 7). Yet Edinburgh epitomised the self-confidence, energy and optimism of the period. The professional people of Edinburgh – the lawyers, educators, doctors and clergymen, gave the city its reputation and character. The dominance of intellectualism, the power of the church, the strong commercial interests created a tension within the city between the need to maintain the respectability of everything that was held dear and the desire for social change. Geography and architecture have also played their part in shaping the city of Edinburgh and giving it its unique character. The creation of The New Town in the late 1700s with its residential terraces and sweeping crescents designed by architects such as Robert Adam and William Playfair “gave Edinburgh the look to match its sobriquet of the Athens of the North” (Herman, p. 256). This neo-classical look demonstrates what the people of Edinburgh thought about themselves – and how they wished the world to perceive them.

The creation of the New Town enabled the wealthy and influential to move out of the cramped Old Town into the classically designed squares and crescents that epitomised Georgian grandeur. Victorian times brought another shift in population as the middle and upper classes, aided by the new transport methods mentioned in Chapter One, moved to the new villas in the south of the city. Edinburgh was now truly divided along class lines and the gulf between rich and poor grew. Gone were the days when both lived among each other in the tenements and closes off the Royal Mile. The rich used their wealth to distance themselves from the poor, their surroundings being used to reflect the respectable image they chose to project.

However, during the closing years of the nineteenth century, the strength of Edinburgh as a mighty literary centre was waning. The heyday of Scottish publishing had long gone but the Scottish capital still remained the centre of publishing activity north of the border. The Scottish tradition in literature and publishing continued with firms such as Oliver and Boyd; Blackie and Sons; Archibald Constable; and William Blackwood and Sons all holding influence and reputation in publishing circles.

In 1890 the literary field was dominated by men with an established reputation, bolstered by those who held positions of influence, so that any newcomers to the profession were apt to be labelled "minor" (Jackson, 1950, p. 36). In Edinburgh a Scottish literary revival was attempted by Professor Patrick Geddes, who produced four volumes of a quarterly magazine, *The Evergreen*. This publication was not entirely artistic, and like so many "literary" productions of the 1890s was largely part of a social movement with Socialist tendencies. Much of the literature of the 1890s reflected a social zeal and desire for change (Jackson, pp. 40-2). Novels and plays became more outspoken in an effort to keep up with the ever changing mood of the decade.

A new lease of life was afforded to the novel with the abolition of the three-decker in 1894. At 31s. 6d, the three-decker novel was expensive and the majority of readers had to borrow from circulating libraries such as Mudie's Select Library, and W.H. Smith.²⁶ For an annual fee of a guinea, subscribers to Mudie's could borrow one volume at a time. This ensured that (unless the higher subscription that enabled readers to borrow

²⁶ Charles Edward Mudie had begun his career as a stationer and newsagent in Bloomsbury, London in 1842. In 1843 he opened his first circulating library. By 1875 he had 125 branches across the U.K. and regularly ordered new novels in huge quantities, often as many as 2,500 copies. Mudie liked the three-volume system because it enabled him to charge his customers three times the amount of a single volume. Because of his huge purchasing power (he would regularly buy more than half of the print-run of a moderately popular novel) publishers could not afford to change the format in which they published (Griest, 1970, pp 15-57; Feather, pp. 154-5).

three volumes at the same time was paid) readers would have to borrow and return three times in order to complete a three-decker novel. This combination of the three-decker form and the restrictive use of circulating libraries ensured that novels remained expensive, difficult to access and cumbersome in form and content.

The maintenance of the three-decker system was a reflection of the type of capitalist control seen within the publishing industry at this time. In effect, this kept novels within the realm of the circulating libraries: "by creating a closed system of mutual economic advantage, among writers, publishers and book borrowers, Mudie gained unprecedented and unsurpassed control over the book world and exercised a virtual monopoly of power to define literary value in his own terms" (McDonald, p. 19). Despite its artificially high price the three-decker continued to thrive until Mudie's and W.H. Smith's themselves decided that the system should end:

On 24 June 1894 Mudie's and Smith's announced that from the beginning of the following year they would pay no more than 4/- (less the usual discounts) per volume for fiction, and that the publishers must agree not to issue cheap editions of books purchased by the libraries until one year after publication.

(Keating, p. 25)

Publishers had clung to the three-decker system for financial security and yet it had been clear that the system "had served whatever usefulness it once had". The number of three volume novels published within the next few years fell dramatically and "the new single-volume novels were priced at 6/- (taking over the traditional price of the one-volume reprint of the three-decker), this remained in effect until 1914 (Keating, p. 26).

The eventual demise of Mudie reflects the changing social attitudes of the day, and in particular the changing attitude towards reading. Mudie's use of the word "select" was

in reference to the type of book stocked within the library and the clientele he aimed to attract. Mudie saw himself as a gatekeeper and censor of literary products,²⁷ through moral censorship of his holdings, thus providing a “safe” environment for middle-class women and children.²⁸ Mudie’s censorship meant that publishers would impose their own level of censorship in a bid to ensure that their novels were in turn stocked by Mudie. The publisher would clear their costs and make profit from the enterprise. Failure to find its way onto Mudie’s shelves could mean financial disaster for a three-decker novel. This monopoly ensured that novels were restricted to a specific size, cost, format, moral content and readership. The decline of the three-decker system therefore brought a new vitality to the novel. No longer did novels have to subscribe to Mudie’s format, size, or content (Elliot, in David ed., 2001, pp. 41-2). The demise of the circulating libraries’ monopoly in 1894 unsettled the domestic book market and added a commercial importance to the book buying public. It also contributed significantly to the rise of the “bestseller” phenomenon in the 1890s (McDonald, p. 19).

While women had always been authors, the women novelists of the *fin de siècle* played an important part in the fiction writing of the period. Authors like Sarah Grand began to question women’s position, and women such as Olive Schreiner, Sarah Grand, Iota, and Ella Hepworth Dixon wrote with a level of realism, analysis and observation which

²⁷ In “Literature at Nurse” (1885) George Moore criticised Mudie and owners of other circulating libraries for their ability to act as moral censor of the work they stocked. Moore believed that this denied authors the right to freely express themselves (Pykett, 1995, p. 14).

²⁸ Mudie’s willingness to stock only titles which he deemed suitable for consumption by women is an example of the way in which women were constrained by society’s ideas of what was suitable for them. Subscribers to Mudie’s could therefore be sure that the subject matter stocked by him would contain nothing progressive or shocking. The demise of his circulating library in 1904-05 can therefore be seen, not only as a reflection of the changing business practices taking place within the industry but as a change in the moral climate of the country.

expressed the radical new outlook of many women.²⁹

Women writers began to publish in the growing number of magazines and journals produced in response to the demand for entertaining and cheap publications. Among the many popular magazines of the day were a small quantity of “avant-garde magazines such as *The Savoy* and *The Yellow Book* where [women] made up over one-third of the contributors” (Showalter, 2000, p. viii).³⁰ *The Yellow Book*, founded in April 1894, most clearly reflected the mood of the period.³¹ It epitomised a change in direction for art and a new co-operation between class, nationality, gender, discipline and ideology: “*The Yellow Book* . . . epitomized the shift from domesticity to art and represented wide-scale collaboration and co-operation across the boundaries of class, nationality, gender, sexual orientation, discipline and ideology. It published works by many women poets, artists and writers” (Showalter, 1999, p. xxviii).

The Yellow Book became synonymous with the decadent movement and names such as Oscar Wilde, Max Beerbolm and Aubrey Beardsley. Unlike other authors like Bernard Shaw, Ibsen, and Grant Allen who used their writing as a way of stirring up the newly

²⁹ The “anti-marriage league” argument expressed by Mrs Oliphant was beginning to subside by the closing years of the nineteenth century. The New Woman authors mentioned here were more concerned with the “marriage problem novel” and the desire of women for emotional and economic independence. Peter Keating notes that the “marriage problem novel” assumed that “there was no such thing as normal or orthodox sexuality; no single generally acceptable pattern for family life; no one kind of sexuality that was attributable to all women and men” (Keating, p. 208). New Women authors were therefore using their writing to create new scenarios by which women could live their lives.

³⁰ Among the women who wrote for *The Yellow Book* were Ella Hepworth Dixon and Ella D’Arcy.

³¹ *The Yellow Book* was conceived on New Year’s Day 1894, and marketed itself as Britain’s definitive avant-garde periodical. Published by Elkin Mathews and John Lane, it quickly became associated with the decadent movement. It presented itself as a high quality periodical “one whose ethos was diametrically opposed to that of the vulgar masses. Its contributors were aggressively elitist in their self-representations . . . its readership . . . was almost exclusively middle-class – the very class that *The Yellow Book* professed to despise . . . *The Yellow Book* sold culture to the middle classes in the same way as *Tit-Bits* sold entertainment” (Tucker ed., 1999, p. 58).

awakened social conscience of the population, the names linked to *The Yellow Book* set out to shock: “Yellow became the colour of the hour, the symbol of the time – spirit. It was associated with all that was bizarre and queer in art and life, with all that was outrageously modern” (Jackson, p. 45).³² In contrast to the protest fiction which emerged at the same time, *The Yellow Book* represented all that was decadent and shocking. The confusion of the age meant that New Woman writers were often grouped together with the “Decadent movement which was in turn designated as ‘effeminate’ ” (Ledger and Luckhurst, pp. 97-9). Despite the fact that New Women and decadent men were often grouped together, they did not see themselves as natural allies and there were many tensions between them that surfaced, especially around the issues of gender and sexuality” (Showalter, 2001a, p.170).³³

The creation of periodicals such as *The Yellow Book* freed many authors from the moral constraints laid down by the likes of Mudie’s. Authors began to enjoy a greater freedom in what they wrote and in the form in which it appeared. This liberalization of literary works created numerous opportunities for the woman writer.

³² *The Yellow Book* was created as a reaction against the popular middle-class magazines and journals which were produced for the new mass-market readers. This was a time in which a variety of distinct literary movements were competing against each other: The Literary and dramatic naturalism of Henrik Ibsen, George Gissing and Emile Zola, competed with imperial adventure stories and romantic fiction. It is at this time that we also see the emergence of literary modernism as a movement. In an attempt to set itself apart from much of the available popular literature, *The Yellow Book* offered its readers access to stimulating and controversial literary and poetic work by writers supportive of the Decadent and “new”. (Ledger and Luckhurst, pp. 97-9). The format and design of *The Yellow Book* was also used to differentiate itself from the popular periodical. It wanted to “depart as far as may be from the old traditions of periodical literature, and to provide an illustrated Magazine which shall be beautiful as a piece of book-making, modern and distinguished in its letterpress and its pictures” (Maxwell, 2002, p. xxx). Through the publications of periodicals like this we can see certain members of society attempting to distance themselves from the proliferation of popular novels and periodicals which had been created to satisfy a new mass readership.

³³ Please see pp. 60-3 for a definition of “Decadence”.

2.5 Women writers and the publishing scene

The rise in female literacy, especially among the upper middle classes where girls were educated and then expected not to do anything with their education, gave rise to a growing number of young women who wanted to be recognised for what they could do.³⁴ Despite the rise in clerical and commercial positions highlighted in Chapter One, in Victorian Britain there were few occupations which an educated woman could undertake without attracting hostility or derision. The rise in the amount of published material and the appearance of the novel as the dominant form of the period led to the establishment of authorship as an occupation, with many authors able to make a living from their work. Women authors were particularly visible at this time and “it seemed that the nineteenth century was the Age of the Female Novelist” (Showalter, 1999, p3).

For the majority of women though, work “meant labour for others. Work in the sense of self-development, was in direct conflict with the subordination and repression inherent in the feminine ideal” (Showalter, 1999, p. 22).³⁵ Writing was one of the few occupations which could be pursued safely, was socially acceptable and could offer a degree of recognition for one’s literary accomplishments. It offered women a unique financial opportunity. In 1841 some 900 women were making a living from writing, fifty years later at the dawn of the *fin de siècle*, this had expanded to over 17,000

³⁴ At the close of the nineteenth century and in some cases, well into the twentieth century, women were educated according to their social class. Middle-class women were taught how to be good wives and mothers and to be economically and intellectually subservient to their husbands. Working-class women expected little more than domestic drudgery. It was widely recognised that in order for women to become economically and sexually equal to men they had to have access to the same education as them (Gardiner ed., 1993, p. 68).

³⁵ In the closing decades of the nineteenth century, employment opportunities for middle class women increased. While women had long been able to find work as governesses and nurses, the new professionalism surrounding these occupations ensured that there were more opportunities available to women in these professions. The growth in popularity of department stores ensured that further employment could be found in the retail sector. The introduction of the typewriter also brought with it numerous opportunities for women who began to move in numbers into the world of commerce and positions previously held by men (Gardiner ed., pp. 97-8).

occupied in the arts (Howarth, 2000, pp. 170-2).³⁶ In the nineteenth century middle-class women had few alternative occupations to writing: “forbidden the pulpit, the university lecture platform, the seat in parliament, they turned to an outlet in which they were welcome and through which they could express their ideas and wield influence otherwise denied them” (Colby, 1970, p.6).³⁷

Although the 1900s were seen as the age of women novelists, women had always written and sold their work. From the 1700s onwards women’s fiction writing was highly acclaimed by contemporary society:

For more than a century before Jane Austen surreptitiously took up her pen, women in ever increasing numbers and with spectacular success had been trying their hand at fiction. . . . Aphra Behn and Delariviere Manley . . . Eliza Haywood . . . Fanny Burney . . . Maria Edgeworth . . . a whole gallery of women: women from different backgrounds, different regions, and with different concerns, who all published well-acclaimed novels by the end of the 1700s.

(Spender in Belsey and Moore, 1997, p. 17)

Women writers throughout history had been praised and highly valued by both readers and reviewers. Despite this perceived surge in the number of women writers trying to have their work published, women still remained underrepresented as published writers. This was due to a complex set of factors: such as inequalities in the education system, a

³⁶ The Census of 1891 indicated that there were just under 2.5 million unmarried women in the U.K. This was at a time when women outnumbered men by approximately 900,000 (Ledger, 1997, p. 11). The presence of such large numbers of women with a need for financial independence highlighted the limited opportunities available to women.

³⁷ Virginia Woolf states the reasons why writing was seen as a suitable occupation for women: “That profession has never been shut to the daughters of educated men. This was due of course to the cheapness of its professional requirements. Books, pens and paper are so cheap, reading and writing have been, since the eighteenth century at least, so universally taught in our class, that it was impossible for any body of men to corner the necessary knowledge or to refuse admittance, except on their own terms, to those who wished to read a book or to write them” (Woolf, 1993, pp. 214-5). It was Woolf’s belief that the lack of demand on the family purse was what ensured writing became an acceptable occupation for women.

lack of privacy, responsibilities of child bearing, domestic obligations, and the restrictions of family and social expectations. Women also had to overcome their awareness of an oppressive male presence constraining their work (Eagleton ed., 2000, p. 66).³⁸

The patriarchal society epitomized by Patmore's "Angel in the house" ensured that women writers were marginalised and belittled in a number of ways. They were often dismissed as unfeminine and their literary work ignored. If women authors did not stick to the rigid stereotype their work would also be rejected. Spender explains how a patriarchal society can control and put a value on women's writing by judging them "not according to the value of their work; but according to whether they conform to the rules that men have set up for women, and which the 'men of letters' have shown great willingness to enforce" (Spender, 1986, p.28).³⁹ This was not a conscious effort to belittle women writers, however it can be seen as men operating to a set of "loosely defined rules and codes which have tended to work against women," who do not conform to the already established body of male texts nor do they represent the feminine qualities that they are supposed to represent in life (Eagleton ed., 2000, p. 67).

³⁸ Despite the growing educational opportunities available to women, a disparity in the quality of education between men and women still existed. On the whole, men still received a classical education with instruction in Greek and Latin – prerequisites for a university education. The few women who possessed these skills were on the whole largely self-taught. University education for women was still largely frowned upon by the middle-classes. Women with the desire for such an education invariably had to gain it without the support of their family. For a detailed account of women's struggle for admittance to Cambridge University see Rita McWilliams-Tullberg in Vicinus ed., 1977.

³⁹ Women could also be enforcers of patriarchal culture, ridiculing the desire for an education and career which growing numbers of women aspired to. George Eliot was just one such novelist who eagerly pointed out the deficiencies of women's education in her review "Silly Novels by Lady Novelists" (1856) (Showalter, 1999, pp. 37-43). It is not to be thought that all female authors were in support of progressive views: "Charlotte Yonge, Elizabeth Linton, Dinah Craik, Christina Rossetti, and Margaret Oliphant . . . were vehemently opposed to what Oliphant called 'the mad notion of the franchise for women' " (Coghill ed., in Showalter, 1999, pp. 216-7).

It would not appear that women were financially discriminated against by their publishers: "All writers who want to earn a living must to some extent cater for the interests of their time, and this necessarily reduces the number of options available" (Spender, 1986, p. 55). Even the sale of a "mediocre novel by an unknown author was likely to equal the yearly wage of a governess . . . even at its lower levels, fiction offered a better financial reward than say fancywork" (Showalter, 1999, pp. 48-9). The discrimination that women writers did face came more from their lack of formal education and of the prejudice of society and that of the publishers: "just about every woman writer who has ever got into print has commented, in order to even get an audience a woman writer must first please men (who are the publishers, advisers, critics), in a way that no man writer has ever been required to please women" (Spender, 1986, p. 55).

This demonstrates that the influences of Victorian publishers, in whom and what they chose to publish, was considerable: "the decision making powers were concentrated in the hands of men who not . . . surprisingly found the good and the great among their fellow men" (Spender in Belsey and Moore, 1997, p. 21).⁴⁰ However, this did not unnecessarily restrict the opportunities available to women authors. The majority of publishing houses were aware that the work of many women authors was popular, and they were keen to meet the demands of the market and ensure a healthy profit for their company.⁴¹

⁴⁰ Showalter highlights the fact that during the mid-nineteenth century, periodical criticism operated a double standard for men's and women's writing (Showalter, 1999, p. 76).

⁴¹ Feather (1988) posits that the emergence of a highly competitive and growing market for books in the second half of the nineteenth century ensured that the author enjoyed a strengthened position within the publishing process. The demand for new books and authors who could write them led to a new professionalism surrounding the work of writing and the creation of a number of professional bodies such as the Society of Authors, which worked to protect authors' rights. The work of these professional organisations will be discussed throughout this chapter.

2.6 Authorship as a profession

While authorship had become an established profession by the mid-nineteenth century, it was not always an easy profession. The nature of the Victorian book trade and the way in which copyright payments were made were bones of contention between author and publisher.⁴² In 1884, The Society of Authors had established itself as a major force within the British publishing industry. The importance of the author in the publishing process was acknowledged and the need for agreements between authors and publishers established. This, and the right of authors to control the dramatising of their own works, together with the reform of copyright, ensured that authorship was a safer financial profession to enter.

The 1890s saw the Society of Authors taking part in discussions with others involved in the book trade, which would lead to the signing of the Net Book Agreement which came into force on 1 January 1900. The practice of underselling had become widespread from the mid-1850s, and in 1890 Frederick Macmillan proposed a new practice, which would end underselling and proposed that all “new books . . . should be divided into two

⁴² In 1842 Long Copyright was re-established and extended to the period of the author's life plus seven years or forty two years from the date of publication, whichever was the longer period. In 1844 the British government began to make reciprocal copyright agreements with foreign countries in order to protect intellectual property. In 1891 The United States signed the International Copyright treaties and began to press for other countries to join in “a global intellectual property regime.” The cooperation of the United States with this treaty, although sometimes violated, enabled authors to benefit financially from the sale of their work in foreign territories. (St Clair, 2004, pp. 487 -9) Copyright law became an increasingly contentious issue as it became clear that large sums of money could be made by both author and publisher, from the publication of a successful novel (Feather, p. 174). Not all novelists did well out of transactions with their publishers. Gissing (1891) highlights the practice of “terms of half profits to the author” which ensured that publishers would publish an author's work without risk to the author, in a form which was suitable for the work and without delay. The publisher was also responsible for all or part of the production costs, but in return for this would share all the profits. This practice was open to abuse that it could only be “recommended in cases where the sale is certain to be so limited that the publisher . . . gets no more than a reasonable return for his time and trouble”. Gissing himself made no money from the publication of *Isabel Clarendon* in this manner. (Squire Sprigge, S. in Gissing, 1993, pp. 526-7)

categories: 'net books' upon which no discount was to be allowed by the bookseller, and 'subject books,' upon which the bookseller was free to allow a discount if he wished" (Altick, p. 316). The book trade adopted this "net book scheme" widely in 1899 when "1,106 out of 1,270 booksellers in the United Kingdom agreed to allow no discount on books priced at over 6s" (Altick, p. 316). Despite recurrent squabbles between publishers and booksellers this price regulation would become the cornerstone of the entire structure of British publishing in the twentieth century. The Victorian publishing industry met its new demands by bringing to the market, educational books, books on religion, history, drama, science, technology, travel and politics. This surge in the demand for print brought great opportunities for the woman author of the period.

Many women authors often had to write a type of fiction they despised, but which the public were eager to read, such as the popular sensation novels (Williams, 1986, p. 53). This provided the woman author with an income and the publisher with a source of revenue. The genre of the sensation novel grew in popularity from the time of its creation by Wilkie Collins in 1860 with the publication of *The Woman in White* (Pykett, 2001, p. 201 in David ed., 2001).⁴³ The sensation novel was "characterised by extravagant, passionate and sometimes horrific events" (Buck ed., 1992, p. 1007), and was preoccupied with the suffering of women in terms of the perceived unfairness of marriage and child custody laws. Showalter writes that the sensation novel was "a genre in which everything that was not forbidden was compulsory" (1999, p. 158). Social anxieties formed the mainstay of this genre:

Women's roles as wives and mothers, and men's roles as husband's and their relation to the public world of wealth and/or work . . . the law's regulation of social and sexual behaviour, and . . . the tendency of contemporary marriage laws and customs to imprison and victimize women

(Pykett, 2001, p. 202 in David ed., 2001)

⁴³ While Pykett asserts that Collins is credited with the creation of the sensation vogue she also states that the Brontë sisters can also be viewed as early sensationalists.

The most popular sensation novelists were women: Mrs Henry Wood, Mary Braddon, Rhoda Broughton and Ouida wrote a number of popular sensation novels from 1860 onwards.⁴⁴ Their popularity lay in their ability to portray

the secrets of women's dislike of their roles as daughters, wives and mothers. These women novelists made a powerful appeal to the female audience by subverting the traditions of feminine fiction to suit their own imagined impulses, by expressing a wide range of suppressed female emotions, and by tapping and satisfying fantasies of protest and escape . . . The enormous popularity of the women sensationalists reflects the skill with which they articulated the fantasies of their readers, fantasies that they themselves fervently shared.

(Showalter, 1999, p. 158)

Sensation novels were enormously popular with the reading public, yet many critics and established authors were hostile to the genre.⁴⁵ Charles Reade was one author who complained of the difficulties he experienced in placing his books with the circulating libraries: "They will only take in ladies' novels. Mrs Henry Wood, 'Ouida,' Miss Braddon – these are their gods." (Quoted by Alan Walbank, *Queens of the Circulating Library*, London, 1950, p. 154 in Showalter 1999, p. 157)

Not all female novelists approved of the subject matter of the sensationalists. Oliphant commented on Rhoda Broughton's *Coming Up as a Flower* (1867) proclaiming:

⁴⁴ Among the most popular of the sensation novels can be found Mrs Henry Wood's *East Lynne* (1861); Mary Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret* (1882); Rhoda Broughton's *Coming Up as a Flower* (1867).

⁴⁵ Mrs Henry Wood's second novel *East Lynne* (1861) sold over two and a half million copies between its publication date and 1900. Rhoda Broughton was one of the best-selling novelists of the Victorian period and was paid large amounts for copyright by her publisher Bentley (Buck ed., 1992, p. 373; p. 1149).

it is a shame to women so to write; and it is a shame to the women who read and accept as a true representation of themselves and their ways the equivocal talk and fleshly inclinations herein attributed to them.

(in Showalter, 1999, p. 173)

The popularity of the themes of protest and escape of the sensation novels show that these novels struck a chord with the reading public. However, the sensation novelists themselves were never able to confront women's position within society and many of the issues resurfaced in the New Women novels of the 1880s and 1890s. (Pykett, 2001, p. 204 in David ed., 2001)

Publishers were aware of the benefits of using women authors, who were often inexperienced businesswomen and in a poor negotiating position.⁴⁶ Late Victorian women were doubly hindered due to their lack of business skills and society's expectations of female behaviour. In spite of this, publishers expected their female authors to be able to take care of themselves. Women had to learn to become astute negotiators and businesswomen in order to make their living. Many women found difficulty in negotiating their position with what was seen as a male authority figure – the publisher.

In the late nineteenth century, the Society of Authors concentrated their efforts on three key issues which would force publishers to reconsider their financial and literary relationships with their authors: the role of the publisher's reader; the role of the literary

⁴⁶ Many authors were uncomfortable negotiating business matters with publishers. Often, as was the case with George Eliot, authors used a friend or relation to negotiate their publishing deals. In the 1870s we see the emergence of the first literary agents. Firms such as A.P. Watt, J.B. Pinker, and Curtis Brown began to act on behalf of authors and "undertook all the negotiations between the author and the publisher, in return for a proportion, usually 10 per cent, of the author's income from any book for which he was the agent". The introduction of the literary agent was greeted with hostility from the book trade, but their gradual acceptance can be seen as another aspect of the growing professionalism of authorship (Feather, p. 176-8).

agent and the question of the division of profits between author and publisher. As the publishing industry grew more professional, the development of literary agents became beneficial to authors, for the agents joined forces with the Society of Authors in an attempt to find a more equitable way of paying writers that reflected their commercial success. Women authors who found difficulties in reconciling the business side of writing with the Victorian feminine ideal would have benefited from the introduction of the literary agent. However, the willingness of publishers to deal with literary agents reflects the acknowledgement that all authors were part of the commercial world and should be adequately paid for their work (Feather, pp. 177-9).

These women were constrained by the expectations of their publishers and of the reading public. Perhaps the greatest constraints in terms of the subjects they could write about came from women's limited experience of life. Women authors excelled in writing domestic and sensationalist novels, areas in which they could exploit their experiences.⁴⁷ Editors could impose this censorship on what women authors could discuss and also impose their own notions of bestselling formulas on them.

Paradoxically, it was women's ability to write the sentimental fiction so despised by many that ensured that they were suited to writing the popular novels of the day.

Both male and female authors however, found themselves constrained by the realities of the marketplace. For the first time, the creation of a mass readership brought the

⁴⁷ Women novelists had little life experience or formal education to draw upon. However, women were encouraged to "be keen observers of detail and taught to be sensitive to nuances of behaviour" (Madden-Simpson ed., 1984, p.15). This skill enabled them to fill their novels and short stories with romance and sentiment, a fact which deemed their work less worthy than that of their male counterparts. Women were also conditioned to be self-effacing and modest, and to feel shame about their bodies. The culture of secrecy and shame which most middle-class women adhered to did not create an atmosphere which was conducive to self-revelation, a necessary pre-requisite for a novelist. This led to criticism of their work as immature and less valuable than that of the male novelist (Showalter, 1999, pp. 80-2).

economic realities of publishing in a free-market home to both publishers and authors. If writers wanted to make a living from their work they had to write the books that the masses wanted to read and if publishers wanted to make a profit they had to produce the books the public wanted to buy.

George Bernard Shaw experienced such difficulties in 1879 when trying to have his novel *Immaturity* published. After being turned down by almost every London publisher “he realised that a radical change had occurred in the reading public. ‘The Education Act of 1871’ he explained ‘was producing readers who had never before bought books, nor could have read them if they had.’ Publishers were finding that people wanted not George Eliot nor the ‘excessively literary’ Bernard Shaw, but adventure stories like Stevenson’s *Treasure Island* and *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*” (Carey, p. 6). Women authors may have been compromised by what they were able to write in order to make a living but the economic realities of publishing in this period determined what would sell and what would not. All authors were influenced by contemporary styles and trends.⁴⁸

The way in which copyright payments were made at this time ensured that many authors, not only women, stayed poor. During the mid to late-1900s, Victorian authors generally received a flat sum for the outright sale of their copyright. This was dependent on their reputations and publishers estimates of sales (Showalter, 1999, p.49). Many authors, desperate to earn a living from their work would agree to sell their copyright

⁴⁸ The closing decades of the nineteenth century was a time when women authors made their name writing sensation fiction. Sensation fiction inverted the “stereotypes of the domestic novel and [parodied] the conventions of their male contemporaries. Sensation novels expressed female anger, frustration, and sexual energy more directly than had been done previously. Readers were introduced to a new kind of heroine, one who could put her hostility toward men into violent action” (Showalter, 1999, p. 160). The popularity of this type of fiction with readers can be seen as a barometer of social change, and of women’s desire to break free of her role as “Angel in the House”.

for less than its market value.⁴⁹ If this work became a bestseller then they would be financially disadvantaged and the publisher would reap the rewards. While both male and female authors were hindered by this system, women were doubly disadvantaged, having no alternative career or means of making a living.

Levels of remuneration for authors varied widely. Some authors could fetch fantastic sums for their work. A typical level of earning, however, for a woman author is “exemplified by Adeline Sergeant, who wrote about seventy five novels, none of which ever became a bestseller. She averaged £100 per book and turned out up to five per year. In 1902, her best year, she made £1500” (Showalter, 1999, p. 49). When this is compared with the rates of pay a governess could earn, between £20 - £45 per year plus board, we can see how lucrative a writing career could be, and why many tried to break into the market (Showalter, 1999, p. 48).⁵⁰

The women who became novelists were, on the whole, the daughters of the upper middle classes, the professions and the aristocracy.⁵¹ Colby stresses that there were no more women writing in the 1900s than there had been in the 1800s. The perceived increase in the number of women authors lay, not in the fact that more women were

⁴⁹ In the Explanatory Notes to Gissing’s *New Grub Street* (Goode, 1993, pp. 522-40), Gissing’s earnings from his literary work are given as: “*Workers in the Dawn*, nothing; *Mrs Grundy’s Enemies* (unpublished), 50 guineas; *The Unclassed*, £30 for fixed term lease of copyright; *Isabel Clarendon*, nothing; *Demos*, £100” The sums involved here show what a precarious profession writing could be. This was further exacerbated by the many abuses of copyright by publishers.

⁵⁰ Between 1846-8, Dickens made a profit of nearly £10,000 from *Dombey and Son*. The executors of the late Mrs Henry Wood made £35,000 in three years from the posthumous publication of a collected edition of her work (Feather 1988, p. 174).

⁵¹ Women in these classes had the advantage of time in which to write, and were often exposed to political and/or cultural debate through their family connections. This enabled them to develop their authorial voice. Women such as Charlotte Perkins Gilman “were raised in an atmosphere where independent thinking and social activism were familiar” (Schwartz in Gilman, *The Yellow Wallpaper and Other Writings*, 1989, p. ix). Not all women novelists however had the luxury of financial security. Many women had no option but to write to support themselves, and often their families.

becoming authors but, as women became better educated and their understanding of the outside world increased, they wrote more and different kinds of novels. Women still wrote the domestic novels and romances they were famous for, but through their writing, as we saw with the likes of Sarah Grand, they also began to challenge the social, moral, ethical and religious problems of society. The way in which women were excluded from many aspects of social and political life was what propelled them into writing – work that required no formal training and no special equipment. Women’s writing during the Victorian period could therefore be seen as a consequence of dominant patriarchal culture. Katherine Cecil Thurston was one such woman who tackled the issues of the day through her writing.

The woman’s suffrage movement, formed in 1867, gave women a voice in areas previously denied to them. The rise of the suffrage movement can be linked to the rise in the type and quantity of material being written at this time: “In the 1880s and 1890s women writers played a central role in the formulation and popularisation of feminist ideology . . . women were exhilarated by the prospect of a new age in which female ability would have more scope” (Showalter, 1999, p. 182). Writing gave women a level of seriousness and dignity denied them in other areas of life. As women gained in consciousness and experience the role of the author enabled them to take part in the world in a way unavailable to them by their exclusion from or limited inclusion in other professions. Feminists challenged many of the restrictions on women’s self-expression, attacked the patriarchal domination of Victorian society and denounced the gospel of self-sacrifice. Women who may have in a different era become doctors, ministers, or academics expressed their opinions through writing.⁵²

⁵² Women authors such as Sarah Grand, Mona Caird, and Olive Schreiner were noted for writing novels with a purpose: “The 1880s and 1890s saw the rise of the feminist protest novel, a genre intimately linked for the first time in British history, to an organised women’s movement”. The publication of works by women concerned with

Although many articles on the Woman Question had appeared in the periodical press throughout the 1880s and early 1890s it was Ouida who extrapolated the now famous phrase “the New Woman” from Sarah Grand’s essay “The New Aspect of the Woman Question” (Ledger, 1997, p. 9).⁵³ This term “New Woman” signalled new or newly perceived forms of femininity which were seen to be representative of the Victorian *fin de siècle*.⁵⁴

While women had always written in political pamphlets, taken part in religious struggles and been connected with government, this was an age in which people believed that anything could happen, and they were willing to experiment with their lives. Many of the New Women writers used writing as a form of resistance against patriarchy. A growing movement emerged as the nineteenth century drew to a close to express social concerns and a desire for change through literature and art. Mona Caird was one of an increasing number of women authors to air their views on the Marriage Question. In her article “Marriage” published in the *Westminster Review* in August 1888 she referred to the institution of marriage as a “vexatious failure” (Beckson, p. 134).

inequalities in marriage, the workplace, and political disenfranchisement created a climate by which female readers rejected sentimental or domestic closure and moved towards feminism (Heilmann, 2004, pp. 1-2).

⁵³ Ouida or Marie Louise de la Ramée was born in 1839 in England. She began her writing career in *Bentley’s Miscellany* in the 1850s and her novels and short stories were noted for their sensational and glamorous plot lines. She enjoyed considerable success during the 1870s and 80s due to the expanding market for fiction made available through the lending libraries and railway bookstalls. Her most notable novels include *Under Two Flags* (1867), *Folle-Farine* (1871), *Friendship* (1878) and *Moths* (1880) (Jann in Schlueter and Schlueter, 1998, pp. 525-6).

⁵⁴ In addition to seeking access to increased opportunities, as previously discussed on p. 23, the New Woman was synonymous with adopting a new radical style of dress including the wearing of trousers or “bloomers”. The majority of Women still wore restrictive corsets, long dresses and large hats. However throughout the nineteenth century, reformers attempted to make women’s clothing more practical in the belief that this would aid women’s equality with men (Taylor, 2002, pp.105-42). This attempt at radicalisation of women’s clothing was ridiculed by many, including *Punch*, who regularly carried cartoons of bicycle riding women wearing trousers. The smoking of cigarettes was also associated with the New Woman, providing further evidence to her critics of her “masculinity”.

Women writers were examining society through the eyes of the New Woman, as she encountered new choices. Keen to profit, publishers freely published this work. As a reflection of changes in society,⁵⁵ women authors began to question their role and moved into different genres of writing. Whereas the novel is seen as the dominant literary form of the nineteenth century, women found numerous markets for their literary work. The new mass readership ensured that newspapers, magazines and journals flourished in the latter part of the century, and provided a valuable source of education and amusement for large numbers of the population: "For some male intellectuals, a regrettable aspect of popular newspapers was that they encouraged women . . . popular journalism became . . . a channel for awareness, independence and self-reliance among women" (Carey, p. 7). In the later stages of the nineteenth century, journalism had in fact overtaken book writing as a source of income.

Magazines such as *The Cornhill Magazine* (1860-1975), *Macmillan's Magazine* (1859-1907) and *Blackwood's Magazine* (1817-1980) provided outlets to authors of fiction, history, nature, science, travel and political commentary.

Many Victorian authorities liked to ridicule what they saw as intellectually lightweight "ladies", writing novels filled with dramatic incidents or emotional crises of what they knew nothing except what they in turn had read in other novels. These opinions reflected the views and beliefs of those who controlled the literary establishment at this time, and reflect the views rather than the actuality of that culture. Many women compromised their feminism in order to have their work published and to have access to a new and expanding reading public. However, they too were compromised by the literary establishment who failed to treat their work as literature and granted this status

⁵⁵ See Chapter 1 for a more detailed discussion of the legislative, educational and health improvements taking place during this period.

to but a few women.⁵⁶ Yet, the women writers of the *fin de siècle*, far from trying to fulfil the dominant ideologies of their time, could choose to subvert them.

Following in the footsteps of Emily Faithful and the Victoria Press⁵⁷ several notable feminists expanded control over publishing houses and as the nineteenth century moved into the twentieth, authors such as Virginia Woolf began to print their own novels. This independence owed much to the nineteenth century feminist's insistence on the need for women writers to be free of patriarchal commercialisation (Showalter, 1999, p. 31).

However, control over publishing houses was still in its infancy. As late as 1938 Virginia Woolf was still voicing the need for women to have control over the publishing, printing and distribution of women's writing:

Still, Madam, the private printing presses is an actual fact, and not beyond the reach of a moderate income. Typewriters and duplicators are actual facts and even cheaper. By using these cheap and so far forbidden instruments you can at once rid yourself of the pressure of boards, policies and editors. They will speak your own mind, in your own words, at your own time, at your own length, at your own bidding.

(Woolf, 1993, p. 223)

The New Woman writers challenged the accepted roles of women and used their novel writing as a way of creating new representations of women's lives. The setting of the novel was moved out of the domestic sphere and used to address the issues relevant to women's lives at the end of the nineteenth century"⁵⁸ (Christensen-Nelson, 1996, p.7).⁵⁹

⁵⁶ George Eliot was often given as an example of one of the few woman novelists of great standing, a cultivated and educated woman (Showalter, 1999, pp. 104-5).

⁵⁷ Emily Faithful founded the Victoria Printing Press in 1860. The Victoria Press published a number of women's magazines and journals and also trained and employed women for the printing trades (Showalter, 1999, p. 155; Reynolds, 1989, pp. 29-31).

⁵⁸ For a discussion of how literature was used as a medium to "both stimulate and allay social anxieties" see Modleski, (1988), p. 5.

⁵⁹ Heilmann identifies the New Woman writers as being pivotal in creating a "gynocentric space for the discussion and dissemination of feminist thought" (2004, pp. 1-2).

In addition to Sarah Grand, popular novelists who made their name as New Woman authors include Ella Hepworth Dixon, Iota, George Egerton, Ella D'Arcy, Mona Caird and Olive Schreiner, all of whom expressed concern for the limited opportunities available to women through their writing. Among the most popular works written by these New Women were: *The Heavenly Twins* (1893) and *The Beth Book* (1894) by Sarah Grand; *Keynotes* (1893), by George Egerton; and *A Yellow Aster* (1894), by Iota; Mona Caird's *The Daughters of Danaus* (1894), and Mary Cholmondeley's *Red Pottage* (1899).

Ann Ardis and Sally Ledger are keen to point out that the naming of the New Woman in the periodical press was a disaster for the women's movement in that critics were able to marginalize the activities of the real New Women in terms of changes in lifestyle and advancement in the professions, by concentrating purely on the New Woman novel (Ardis, 1991, p. 12.; Ledger, 1997, p. 9). By shifting the emphasis of the New Woman to that of the New Woman novel

critics were able to narrow the parameters of the debate on the Woman question ... as part of an attempt to undermine the late nineteenth-century women's movement and to limit its influence. A particular class (male and bourgeois) held power at the *fin de siècle* and the ideological discourses on the New Woman were undoubtedly promoted in order to ridicule and to control renegade women.

(Ledger, 1997, p. 9)

In limiting the type of debate surrounding women's desire for more social and economic freedom to that of the female novelists, ruling patriarchal society was able to limit the influence of these pioneering women by undermining their achievements.⁶⁰ The New Woman was frequently portrayed in the press as a threat to the human race and as

⁶⁰ The New Woman was often depicted as the "negation or perversion of womanhood" (Pykett, 1995, p. 18).

sexually abnormal.⁶¹ New Women were often associated with the decadent movement as represented by *The Yellow Book*. In an attempt to belittle her achievements:

“[l]iterary critics and reviewers persistently identified the New Woman with the decadent, perceiving in the ambitions of both a profound threat to the established culture” (Dowling, 1979, pp. 434-53).⁶² The “established culture” was part of a long period in which social roles and issues of gender were constantly questioned.⁶³

New Woman authors were often condemned by conservative patriarchal critics, many of whom felt threatened by the New Woman and the changes she represented. The fear engendered by New Women can be attributed to their association throughout the 1880s and 1890s with a variety of cultural and political movements which were viewed with suspicion: “decadence, socialism, imperialism and emergent homosexual identities”.⁶⁴

⁶¹ From as early as the 1860s, the satirical magazine *Punch*, carried a series of cartoons depicting the New Woman. The New Woman in *Punch* was often portrayed in a negative fashion, possessing male attributes and lacking the desired female qualities of passivity and serenity expected in Victorian society. However, not all of their cartoons were disparaging of the New Woman: several were supportive of the need for change, a reflection of the debate taking place throughout society.

⁶² The decadent movement and its relationship with *The Yellow Book* is discussed more fully earlier in this chapter.

⁶³ The gender crisis manifested itself in much of the literature written by New Women. Through their writing, women such as Olive Schreiner and Sarah Grand created worlds in which women were able to live and work as men. Katherine Cecil Thurston’s exploration of this theme will be discussed in further chapters.

⁶⁴ Showalter (2001b); Ledger and Luckhurst (2000) and Pykett (1995) comment on the difficulties associated with defining the term “decadence”: “In one sense, it was the pejorative label applied by the bourgeoisie to everything that seemed unnatural, artificial and perverse, from Art Nouveau to homosexuality . . . in another sense it was a post-Darwinian aesthetic movement (Showalter, 2001b, p. 169). The aesthetics of decadence were expressed through a new literary movement which “rejected all that was natural and biological in favour of the inner life of art, artifice, sensation and imagination” (Pierrot, “The Decadent Imagination” in Showalter, 2001b, p. 169). Conventional middle-class Victorian mores and beliefs were undermined by the decadents “contempt for conventionalities and a feverish desire to be abreast of the times” and in the “affectations and semi-indecency of fashionable conversation” (Stutfield “Tommyrotics”, 1895 in Ledger and Luckhurst, p. 126). Connections between The New Woman and the Decadent man as members of an “avant-garde attacking marriage and reproduction” (Dowling in Showalter, 2000, p. ix) were regularly made. Both were viewed as figures who “challenged traditional gender boundaries, and both

New Women were seen as a threat to the institution of marriage and in several cases

pathologised as sexual inverts, . . . this fact reveals one of the main sources of the panic provoked by the New Woman: there was a very real fear that she may not be at all interested in men, and could manage quite well without them.

(Ledger, 1997, pp. 4-5)

Victorian society was based on the concept of “fixed and stable identity” and the emergence of the New Woman resulted in an “unfixing of [this] identity” (Pykett, 1995, p. 5). The fear surrounding the changing cultural and political climate of the *fin de siècle* was thus reflected in society’s fear of the New Woman.

The rise of the New Woman author points to a tangible desire by women for freedom from the restraints of a confining patriarchal society and a need to create a distinctive female literary tradition:

Women writers of the 1890s were in the forefront of their time in their discussion of social issues and their exploration of female psychology . . . In their lives as well as in their fiction, these women were challenging the accepted social roles for women. . . . [T]hey transformed the novel by taking it out of the domestic sphere, using it to address women on issues relating to their lives and creating in it new representations of women.

(Pykett, 1995, pp. 55-6)

New Woman authors experimented with the narrative of women’s lives and helped develop:

. . . (were the focus of moral panics) in the mid 1890s.” (Pykett, 1995, p.16). The New Woman and the Decadent man appeared to blur the boundaries between the genders: “decadent art was unmanly and effeminate, while New Woman’s writing was unwomanly and perverse” (Showalter, 2000, p. x). Pykett posits that “Aestheticism . . . decadence and homosexuality . . . have been seen by some commentators as responses to or reactions against the New Woman” (1995, p. 19). Both terms grew out of the social anxieties of the age and both enabled new ways of exploring traditional male and female characteristics and expectations. The debate surrounding these characteristics was “fiercely contested” (Pykett, 1995, p. 20) in the literature and journalism of the day with Decadent man and New Woman often being pitted against one another.

a new range of fictional forms and techniques for the purpose. Some . . . focused on the restrictive social and economic realities of women's lives, mixing forensic or journalistic detail with hortatory feminist (or sometimes anti-feminist) rhetoric. Some . . . developed visionary allegorical or utopian forms as a way of representing the present and envisaging a better future for women. Others experimented with new fictional forms . . . self-consciously distancing themselves from the traditional plots of the three-volume novel in an effort to find an appropriate form for exploring and articulating the inner lives of women.

(Pykett, 1995, pp. 55-6)

The New Woman and the way in which she reacted to the socio-economic conditions of the age, was closely associated with all that was modern yet it is her experimentation with literary form which makes the New Woman a significant contributor to the development of Modernism in the early twentieth century.⁶⁵

There can be little doubt that the cultural impact of these novels reverberated throughout the community of women authors. In an address to the Women Writers Dinner in 1894, Mary Haweis reminded her audience that "in women's hands – in women writers' hands – lies the regeneration of the world . . . the page of the world's history lies before us now" (in Showalter, 1999, p. 182-3).⁶⁶ This statement goes some way to reflecting the hope and excitement felt by many women during the *fin de siècle*.

⁶⁵ There is much debate over the precise timing of the Modern movement, with 1900, 1910, 1914 and 1915 all stated as the year in which the modern era began.

⁶⁶ Mary Eliza Haweis (1848-1898) was an illustrator and designer of books. She is renowned as the author of several works on household taste and contributed to a number of popular women's magazines. She and her husband were part of a circle of intellectuals and cultural commentators. Haweis is echoing the beliefs of Sarah Grand who believed that the New Woman "was the spiritualized mother of the race and the herald of the new dawn, who could save society by feminizing it" (Pykett, 1995, p. 18). Haweis made this speech in the same year as Grand's essay appeared in the *North American Review*, illustrating how quickly the debate surrounding the New Woman was taken up.

2.7 The New Woman and the Edinburgh publishing scene

For the woman writer of the *fin de siècle* in Edinburgh, the contradiction of the Old World of the nineteenth century and the new twentieth century created great paradoxes. As a cosmopolitan city Edinburgh was a magnet for new ideas, and yet these ideas were often denied to women. As in most of the rest of Britain, the role of women was fiercely debated.

Edinburgh offered opportunities of suitable work for women writers. Journals such as *Blackwood's* and *The Edinburgh Review* offered opportunities for women to create works of fiction and take part in the social and political issues of the day. However, the men who controlled these institutions and others like them expected their women authors to respect the attitudes of their publishing houses, and of the society and attitudes which these publishing houses represented. This attitude was not limited to female authors. Finkelstein quotes the case of Charles Reade, who in 1876 wrote "A Woman Hater and the Women's Medical Movement" which championed the cause of aspiring women physicians. The piece was bought by Blackwood and serialised in the *Maga* in June 1876 and June 1877. Reade's work did not fit in with the entrenched conservative views of the proprietors and it appears that it was only purchased with a view to modifying the work and making it more acceptable to the magazine's owners and readership (Finkelstein, 2002, pp. 71-90).

The *fin de siècle* offered women opportunities never before available, but the majority of institutions which controlled literary avenues, were predominantly male and had the power to pass over the work of women writers if it didn't reflect the "house style" or the required image of woman.

2.8 William Blackwood and Sons

By the end of the nineteenth century the once mighty Scottish publishing firm of William Blackwood and Sons had begun its steady decline. Founded in 1804, Blackwood had, as discussed earlier in the chapter, been a major force in nineteenth century publishing, and in its first twenty five years had a remarkable impact on both British and American literature. Although famous for publishing a diverse range of authors such as George Eliot, Margaret Oliphant, Joseph Conrad and John Buchan, the firm had a reputation of publishing for a particular political and social class.

The work they produced was aimed at a “mainstream, essentially middle-class reading public. It was an audience thought likely to vote Conservative, an audience that was viewed as suspicious of change and unwilling to tolerate challenges to the literary and social status quo.” Its authors were drawn from the ranks of the military, the colonial civil service, conservative politicians and professional writers (Finkelstein, 2002, p. 77). Its audience included large numbers of expatriate readers, many of whom were dispersed throughout the colonies, in the military and the civil service. Fears over Britain’s internal decline were expressed through much of the fictional work published at this time. Authors such as Robert Louis Stevenson, Oscar Wilde, H. Rider Haggard and Rudyard Kipling voiced the fears of many over Britain’s internal decline and hopes for a cultural regeneration through her empire. The work published by Blackwood’s reflected the desires and concerns of this readership.

Blackwood’s had set up as a bookseller’s and publisher in 1804 at South Bridge in Edinburgh’s Old Town. It became the first business to move to Princes Street in the New Town in 1816, and then moved to spacious new offices at 45 George Street, again in the New Town. This was itself a reflection of the way in which the middle and upper classes of the city were choosing to separate themselves from the lower classes. The

layout of the firm's premises further confirms this. The printing and production work undertaken by the company took place at the rear of the building and was accessed from the main public face of the building by a footbridge. The elegant salon that Blackwood's provided for their authors was a reflection of the image that the directors of the company wanted to project to their readership and their authors. Blackwood's were reflecting the national, social, economic, institutional, and professional interests of a declining class. This was a time in which Britain was experiencing an internal decline and many, Blackwood's included, were looking towards the Empire for cultural regeneration.

The demand for leisure reading ensured that the marketplace had become the master. The successful publisher had to be one who recognised how it was developing and provide it not only with the reading material it required, but the authors it wanted to read. Novel writing was a work of labour and publishing, a business. This fact had shaped the Victorian publishing industry. Blackwood's failure to publish works that the rapidly expanding new audience would find appealing - works that reflected the way that the culture of the age thought about itself - had much to do with their decline.

The enormous technological advances that occurred during the latter two decades of the nineteenth century ensured that the printed word was more accessible to the public. The huge expansion in paper production, the development of large web-fed printers and of hot metal typesetting machines ensured a higher printing capacity for publishers and the creation of mass circulation daily newspapers. The collapse of the three-decker novel in 1894 resulted in the creation of a number of new, cheaper publishing formats. This and the formation of the public lending library ensured the dissemination of books.

Male publishers like Blackwood exerted huge influence and enormous power over their

authors (Showalter, 1999, p. 31). Not only did they have control over whether or not a manuscript was published, but they could also control what was written by their authors. Such patriarchal dominance was widespread. Kate Millet argues that patriarchy, which she defines as “the institution whereby that half of the population which is female is controlled by that half which is male,” is a political institution. It is her belief that patriarchy is the primary form of human oppression (Millet, 1977, p. 24).

The way in which Blackwood recruited its new authors had much to do with fostering a distinctive “Blackwoodian” writer, who could provide for the literary and cultural interests of their readership. The firm was operated on a personal level and new authors were invited “to join the invisible Blackwood community . . . Those who chose to join the House of Blackwood in turn provided conduits to new recruits” (Finkelstein, 2002, p. 26). House loyalty was fostered and new authors were found. The firm pursued “conservative policies . . . by using personal contacts to establish close links with key figures and contributors from British political, cultural, and social establishments. During this period the firm published texts that shaped or supported significant sociopolitical and cultural spheres of influence” (Finkelstein, 2002, p. 153) and were seen as upholding a set of interests which were viewed by certain members of society as prevalent.

While the proprietors of Blackwood’s were outward looking and keen to establish international interests, they were also keen to maintain the status quo, in terms of the maintenance of standards in religious and moral conduct at home in Edinburgh. Feather points out that the Victorian publishing house existed in the image of its owner, patriarchal and paternalistic. The books that he published tended to reflect the owner’s interests and beliefs which at the same time reflecting the interests and traditions of the Victorian middle classes: This was the case with Blackwood. Finkelstein further

confirms this when he states that, while leading Victorian publishers such as Blackwood produced their books for aesthetic and not commercial reasons, “lip-service was paid to their desire to produce high quality literature, meant to educate and entertain but never to raise a blush to the cheeks of middle-class maidens” (Finkelstein, 2002, p. 77).

The Blackwoods did not restrict their publishing ventures to the novel. *Blackwood's Magazine*, known to its contributors as *Maga*, was a monthly journal of miscellaneous articles, politics, literary criticism and social comment as well as a vehicle for serialisation of major novels. Started in 1817, it was the flagship for the publishing firm of Blackwood's. Under its fifth editor, William Blackwood III, who edited *Maga* in the later years of the nineteenth century into the early twentieth century, it became identified as an essential part of British colonial social life. *Maga's* writers were drawn upon to provide work that readers from the military and civil service could enjoy. For women of little or no formal education the variety of literary, biographical, travel and political works published by Blackwood would have been difficult to gain entry to. Women's lack of formal education ensured that certain literary avenues were barred to them as they could inject little or no specialisation into what they wrote. This is born out by the fact that huge numbers of women submitted manuscripts that were never accepted for publication. This is a point also made by Elizabeth Jay who cites figures from the Wellesley Index to Victorian Periodicals which states that out of 11, 560 authors only 11 women have more than 50 entries to their name (Jay, 1995, p. 244). Again this is associated with the view that women, lacking in formal education, were better suited to writing fiction. The traditions of friendships, temporary opinions and local customs observed by the Blackwood hierarchy would also ensure that women were excluded from this avenue of publication. For many women authorship was the “choice of those without choices” (Mumm, 1990, pp. 27-45).

What chance then for the New Woman writer of the *fin-de-siècle* to find a publishing home at the House of Blackwood? Even the most moral members of society at this time considered the occupation of author as compatible with women's obligations and virtues. Given the prejudice against which they had to struggle, the women writers who were more easily accepted were those who conformed most closely to the Victorian feminine ideal. Writing in the *Fortnightly Review* in 1890 Elizabeth Linton opined that "all editors, publishers, and author[s] of any name were on the side of the cultural establishment" (Ardis, 1990, pp. 41-2). Such beliefs were mirrored by many of the characters featured within the pages of New Woman fiction. In Ella Hepworth Dixon's *Story of a Modern Woman*, the protagonist Mary Erle has the publication of her novel stopped because her editor believes that women should write "pretty stories", with a "wedding at the end." Ardis quotes from a publication of Emily Morse Symonds (writing as George Paston) whose character Cossima Chudleigh is advised by her publisher to remove all "digressions in her first novel and add a wedding at the end." Cossima reminds herself that "she must begin by suiting herself to the requirements of the public, or at any rate of the publishers" (George Paston, 1899, *A Writer of Books*, in Ardis, 1990, p. 161). New Women authors were regularly reminded by their editors and publishers that their desire to rewrite the status quo in their novels would not be tolerated (Ardis, 1990, p. 160).

The domestic and sensational fiction produced during this period provided women writers with a means of ordering the world that they inhabited. Women used books as a way of communicating with other women. The work produced by these women when taken in the context of the period provides a meaningful insight into the cultural realities of the time.

It has already been established that Blackwood were synonymous for reflecting the

conservative values of the military and the British Empire, and yet this viewpoint was at odds with the emerging views in British political and cultural life.⁶⁷ Blackwood's rejection of New Women authors can therefore be seen as a "rejection of writers who did not fit in with the firm prevailing literary stance that was increasingly at odds with concurrent shifts and changes in British politics and literary and aesthetic concerns" (Finkelstein, 2002, p.13).

Conclusion

The change in the literary climate brought about by factors such as an increase in literacy, increase in leisure and travel time, and ease of access to the printed word resulted in the demand for a new type of writing. In response to this demand, publishers began to commission a wide range of diverse fiction, catering to the needs of the new reading public. Detective novels, science fiction novels, sensation novels all found popularity with the new reading public and ensured that new and lucrative careers as authors became available to both men and women. The success of these novels with the public provoked much anxiety over issues such as "what constituted suitable reading material . . . concerns about class, and concerns about gender." (Flint, 2001, in David ed., 2001, pp. 17-25) Women authors and the fiction they produced were at the heart of this debate.

The New Woman novelists of the late nineteenth century had paved the way for an emerging generation of female writers. The publishing scene was such that those who were writing appropriate material were quickly taken up by some of the major publishing houses. Blackwood was among a group of publishers who recognized the saleability of some of the fiction written by women in the new century. Katherine Cecil

⁶⁷ Please refer to pp. 15-6 for further details of the manner in which Blackwood published material which catered to the tastes of the military and Colonial market.

Thurston was one such author who benefited from this new publishing climate. Her relationship with Blackwood was to inaugurate a literary career that would lead to her becoming a popular and wealthy author. How this came about, and the trajectory of her relationship with Blackwood, is the subject of subsequent chapters. Chapter Three will focus on her family background, her marriage to the author Ernest Temple Thurston and her early publishing career.

Chapter Three

Katherine Cecil Thurston: The shaping of a female novelist

With the exception of two academic papers by the Irish scholar Gerardine Meaney, little research has been undertaken concerning the life or literary work of the Irish novelist Katherine Cecil Thurston. Yet in the ten short years which constituted her literary career, from 1901-11, Thurston achieved international recognition and success as a popular novelist. Thurston first came to the notice of Edinburgh publisher William Blackwood and Sons when she submitted several of her novels and short stories to them in 1902. Her first novel, *The Circle* was published by Blackwood in 1903; a year later in 1904, her most successful novel *John Chilcote, M.P.* was published in the United Kingdom, again by Blackwood, and simultaneously in the United States as *The Masquerader* by the New York publishing house, Harper and Brothers. While the publication of *The Circle* brought her to the attention of the public and confirmed her storytelling ability, it was the publication of this second novel, *John Chilcote, M.P.* that brought her worldwide recognition. The success of *John Chilcote* was such that a dramatisation of the novel appeared in the West-End and on Broadway, and was twice adapted as a Hollywood film – the second production of which featured Ronald Coleman as the main protagonist.⁶⁸

Thurston's third novel, *The Gambler*, was published in 1905, and was closely followed by three others; *The Mystics* (1907), *The Fly on the Wheel* (1908), and finally the sensationalistic *Max* (1910). Thurston maintained her close affiliation with Blackwoods, who would continue to publish the majority of her work in the United Kingdom. In the United States her work was published by Dodd Mead & Co, and also Harper & Brothers, a company with strong links to Blackwood.

⁶⁸ The English born actor Ronald Coleman enjoyed a career as one of Hollywood's leading men from the 1920s until his death in 1958.

In addition to these six novels, Thurston wrote and published a number of short stories and plays, never quite satisfying the public demand for her storytelling abilities. No sooner had the latest serialisation of her work been read than her fans were wondering when the next would appear. Thurston's writing was so popular with the reading public that when her second novel *John Chilcote, M.P.* was serialised in both *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* between January and October 1904, and also in *Harper's Bazaar* in the United States, one desperate American reader wrote to the editor of *Harper's* requesting that he be able to read the conclusion before it was published:

I am reading that most clever and wonderfully well written novel 'The Masquerader'. I have very serious heart trouble and may live years, and may die any minute. I should deeply regret going without knowing the general end of the story. May I know it? I will be as close as the grave itself, if I may. I just felt that (I have had so many troubles) it would be just my luck to die and not know the end.

(*The Scotsman*, (1911), 7 September, p. 5)

Happily, his request was granted. Thurston had the ability to create novels which matched the public mood. She was able to capture and recreate the sense of radicalism, and optimism alongside the hope *and* fear of change, which, as already established throughout Chapters One and Two, epitomised the era. Her popular storytelling ability brought her to the attention of both the public and the press. Thurston was also a strikingly attractive woman, in possession of an entertaining personality, and glamorous lifestyle. These factors coupled with her often controversial marriage to the English author Ernest Temple Thurston, ensured that she was much in demand as both author and celebrity on the pages of the many Edwardian newspapers and magazines.

Thurston's popularity in the United States surpassed even that of the United Kingdom. Her novels would regularly sell out within days of publication, with her American

publishers often taken unawares by the public clamour for her work. Following the publication of *The Masquerader*, *Harper's Book News* reported:

The book . . . has been out just seven days and in that short time: The Bookstores have sold out. A new big edition has gone to press. It is already being made into a play in England and into a different play in America. Requests have been received for translation into French and Italian. The publishers rather expected wide interest in the book, but not quite so sudden an attack upon supply. Thus far – and this is very unusual – every single review has been not only good, but almost feverishly enthusiastic.

(Acc 11378, Box 4, loose clipping from *Harper's Book News*. n.d., n.p.)

This clipping demonstrates that Thurston's popularity extended beyond that of the English speaking world with her novels translated for publication throughout Europe.

The income generated from her success as a novelist enabled Thurston to lead a glamorous and, some would say, decadent life. Following her marriage in 1901, Thurston set-up home in London and, although she purchased other houses, this would continue to be her base for the remaining years of her life. Her London home was the frequent venue for parties where she presided over an interesting and eclectic blend of guests. Guests drawn from the literary establishment, politicians, ambassadors, and friends and acquaintances from the upper echelons of London society, were entertained in lavish style at her home at 20 Victoria Road, Kensington. Thurston also loved to travel and she and her husband often embarked on trips to Europe: Venice and Monte Carlo being among their favourite destinations. Despite a love of exotic travel Thurston's favourite port of call was Cork, in her native Ireland. Thurston's rich social life and her love of travel provided her with valuable material for her literary work, with European destinations and Ireland featuring as the backdrop for the majority of her novels and short stories.

Throughout the ten years of her literary career, Thurston's name or photograph was rarely out of the press. Her novels regularly appeared in the best seller columns of newspapers and magazines on both sides of the Atlantic, and yet, as was the fate of many popular novelists of the early twentieth century, her name is practically unheard of today.

3.1 The early years

A few weeks after the death of Queen Victoria in January 1901, the twenty five year old Irish socialite Katherine Cecil Madden arrived in London from her home town of Cork to be married to the English author Ernest Temple Thurston. Her arrival in London coincided with the beginning of a period of upheaval in British history which would result in enormous political and social changes. The Labour party, which had grown out of the demands of ordinary working people for better living and working conditions, was still in its infancy, and had begun to demand suffrage for all men. This demand for suffrage in turn changed the face of twentieth century Britain. The radical spirit of the Edwardian era however, was typified by two militant campaigns – Home Rule for Ireland and Votes for Women – which saw campaigners for both issues taking to the streets in support of their cause; the first of these political causes had helped shape the life of Katherine Madden, the second helped to define her life and work.

This new spirit of radicalism and the willingness to challenge the status quo was also evident in much of the literature written and published at the time. Women authors in particular were keen to evince demands for greater freedom in their personal and professional lives through their literary work. The New Woman had become a phrase synonymous with the support of radical politics in favour of the rights of women during the closing decades of the nineteenth century; and New Woman literature abounded

during the Edwardian era.⁶⁹ It was in the publication of such works that Katherine Madden would make her name.

Katherine Cecil Madden was born on 18 April 1875 at Wood's Gift, County Cork, in the South of Ireland. The only child of banker and minor politician, Paul Joseph Madden and his first wife Elizabeth Dwyer,⁷⁰ Thurston spent her early years at her family home in Cork. Little is known of Thurston's early life or character, although *The Ardmore Journal* reported that she was "[O]ff [sic] a vivacious temperment [sic] she was devoted to riding and swimming" (Quain, J. T., 1984, p.26). An article on Thurston which appeared shortly after the publication of her first novel stated that

she makes no claim to have been the interesting or precocious child from whom its relatives "expect things." A strong appreciation of outdoor life, a love of dogs and horses – of all animals indeed – and a great devotion to the sea . . . made up most of the amusements and ambitions of her childhood.

(Acc 11378, Box 9, *The Bookman*, 4 March 1903, n.p.)

Thurston's love of adventure and of outdoor life continued throughout her life, as these extracts from letters demonstrate:

I have worked continuously save for a motor drive that I took late last night in company with Isabel and the Aunt. I love the speed and mystery of night drives,

⁶⁹ Pykett (1995) states that although it was widely perceived that the New Woman had disappeared from fiction by 1896, she remained a prominent figure well into the twentieth century with appearances in H. G. Wells's *Anne Veronica* (1909), D. H. Lawrence's *Sons and Lovers* (1913), and Virginia Woolf's *The Voyage Out* (1915), and *The Years* (1937).

⁷⁰ There is some controversy over the identity of Thurston's mother. *The Dictionary of National Biography; Second Supplement 1910-1911*, states that Thurston's mother was Catherine Barry. However, *Who Was Who (Vol. 1 1897-1915)* states that Thurston's mother was Elizabeth Dwyer of Cork. This has been corroborated by Mrs Rosemary Dowson, daughter of William and Nancy Pollock, who in recent years has been resident in "Maycroft", the house owned by Thurston from 1904 until her death in 1911.

⁷² Thurston was brought up in a traditional Victorian family where women received a scant education and on reaching adulthood did not expect to undertake serious work.

and to experience the full sense of adventure. I sat on the step of the car at the chauffeur's feet! Very mad, I suppose!

(Acc 11378, Box 12, Letter from Thurston to A. Bulkeley Gavin, 10 May 1909)

Another letter to the same recipient reads: "Some people are coming to call this afternoon – A great pity, because the woods are exquisite today, for we have suddenly fallen upon summer and the country is full of warmth and beauty" (Acc 11378, Box 12, 10 May 1911).

It is possible to gain a deeper insight into Thurston's early life in Ireland and of her character from this further extract from her interview with *The Bookman*:

'I was born in Cork' she told me, and her words had that suggestion of the delightful brogue . . . which adds to the charm of the speech of a cultured Irishwoman. 'I am an only child, and I was educated entirely at home, and quite spoilt, so I have been told. As a child one of my hobbies was the writing of little plays and children's stories; but I very soon grew out of the habit and became occupied with other interests. I doubt whether Irish Society helps very much to cultivate any serious lifework for a girl. We have a genius for enjoying ourselves, and if circumstances do not compel us we do not think much of engaging in any regular and exacting task. So that, with the pleasures of life which came to me after I came out, the memory of my childhood's writing days became fainter than ever.'

(Acc 11378, Box 9, Large Press Cuttings Book, p. 54)⁷²

Thurston appears to have had an idyllic childhood. Brought up by devoted parents and allowed the freedom to explore the countryside around her home, these early years gave her the opportunity to develop the independent spirit which stayed with her throughout her life.

The Maddens were a well known upper middle-class, Catholic family. Paul Madden was the Chairman and a Director of the Ulster and Leinster Bank, and was twice elected Mayor of Cork, in 1885 and 1886. He took a leading part in local politics on the

nationalist side and was a close friend of Charles Stewart Parnell:⁷³ “One of Thurston’s earliest recollections [was] of accompanying her father to Hawerden and hearing Mr Gladstone speak in favour of Irish home rule” (Acc 11378, Box 9, Large Press Cuttings Book *Easy Chair*, October 22 1904, n.p.).

Following the publication of Thurston’s second novel, *John Chilcote M.P.* in 1904, the *Dublin Freeman’s Journal* outlined her father’s standing within the Irish nationalist community:

It has been stated that Mrs Thurston whose ‘John Chilcote M.P.’ has taken the reading world by storm, is a daughter of the late Alderman Paul Madden of Cork . . . an ardent Home Ruler, and in Land League days sacrificed much time and money, and seriously imperilled his liberty. He was a devout Catholic, highly respected in commercial circles, and very charitable.

(Acc 11378, Box 10, *Dublin Freeman’s Journal*, n.d., n.p.)⁷⁴

As was the case with many upper middle-class girls at the end of the nineteenth century Thurston was educated privately at home. Girls’ education was, at this time, limited in its scope and depth. Thurston was exposed to the political climate of the day through her father’s interests. His willingness to have his daughter accompany him to political events gives an indication that he himself may have held radical views on women’s place in society. Feminist history contains evidence of many women who were educated or influenced by their father’s interests, often resulting in the daughter becoming more

⁷³ Thurston’s father was closely involved in the Irish Home Rule cause and was a close friend of Charles Stewart Parnell, a protestant landlord whose family estate was at Avondale in County Wicklow. Although he had received most of his education in England Parnell appeared to despise everything English. He was first elected to Parliament in the Meath by-election of April 1875 and became the accepted leader of the Irish Nationalist movement. (Martin, 2002)

⁷⁴ The Blackwell Companion to Modern Irish Culture states that The Land League was founded as a way of ending landlordism in Ireland, and was seen by its founders Michael Davitt and Charles Parnell as a first step towards Irish independence from Britain. The Land Act of 1881 gave tenants the right to a “fair rent, fixity of tenure and free sale” (2001, p. 158) of any property they occupied.

outgoing and radical than society deemed acceptable. Women such as Florence Nightingale and Elizabeth Blackwell were just two pioneering women of the late nineteenth century who experienced an education far beyond that of the majority of middle-class girls, and who benefited from the support and encouragement of their father.⁷⁵

Due to her father's philanthropic interests Thurston was also a "familiar figure at the bazaars and entertainment organised for charitable purposes and readily gave assistance in such good work" in the Cork area (Quain, J. T., 1984, p. 26). Thurston would continue with these charitable works throughout her life, regularly corresponding with people she had known in Ireland and sending money in order to support those in need: For example, in a letter to a Miss Allan of Ardmore in April 1907, Thurston's secretary wrote:

Mrs Thurston asks me to write and say although sorry to hear of Poor Julia's death she was glad to hear that she was well attended to up to the end, and that she too thinks it would be well to give the remaining twelve shillings to Mrs Sullivan who went to such pains in nursing her.

(Acc 11378, Box 2, Letterbook dated March 16th 1907 to -)

On 8 June 1907 Thurston's secretary wrote again to Miss Allen enclosing a cheque for 7/6: "Mrs Thurston asks me to send you the enclosed postal order for the benefit of that poor woman at Curragh whom you kindly brought to her notice last summer." Later that day her secretary was writing again, this time to a Mrs Dowson of Ardmore enclosing another postal order for 7/6: "Mrs Thurston . . . requested me to send you the enclosed postal order for the girl Mockler in whom you are taking a kind interest" (Acc 11378, Box 2, Letterbook dated March 16th 1907-).

⁷⁵ Margaret Forster (1986) and Elaine Showalter (1999) give further details of women who benefited from their fathers radical ideas on women's education.

Thurston's charitable work in many ways reflected the cultural climate of the time; charitable work was seen as an acceptable pastime for middle and upper class women:

There seemed so little choice and what choice there was seemed so narrow . . . women felt confined and trapped by their destiny . . . which is why so many of them turned to 'good works' to give other meaning to their lives.

(Forster, 1986, pp. 85-6)

Such charitable acts not only provided a valuable public service to the neediest members of society but acted as a useful outlet for capable and ambitious women, with too much time on their hands. While a certain number of middle and upper class women had no need or desire for paid employment, as already established in Chapter one, those who did were denied entry to the careers they desired. However, these "good works" did not provide an answer. Doing good to the poor only emphasized their own uselessness" (Forster, 1986, pp. 85-6). Regardless of their class, many women still wanted to lead active and worthwhile lives.⁷⁶ Spurred into action by the opportunities afforded by charitable work and encouraged by the growth of groups such as the women's suffrage movement and other feminist, reform, trades union and, political organizations, many middle and upper-class women became active philanthropic workers: "The diaries and letters of the . . . nineteenth century are filled to capacity with the frustration the female sex felt at their lack of options," (Forster, 1986, pp. 85-6) and it was out of these philanthropic works that certain professions took on a particular gender bias. Women such as Florence Nightingale, Elizabeth Blackwell, Elsie Inglis and Elizabeth Garret Anderson became pioneers in the field of nursing and medicine.⁷⁷

⁷⁶ It should be noted that the vast majority of women who wished to pursue a career came from the middle and upper classes. Most working-class women undertook unskilled work for very little remuneration. The menial tasks performed by working-class women however, provided much needed additional income to the family budget. See Gleadle (2001) for details of the work undertaken by working-class women.

⁷⁷ For a detailed account of the life and work of Elsie Inglis see Leneman (1998). The contribution made by Florence Nightingale is investigated by Forster (1986).

Other women used the knowledge gained from their charity work to influence the way in which local schools were set-up and run, to make differences to the charity offered to the needy and the way in which that charity was dispensed. These pioneering women of the late nineteenth century also turned to politics and trade unionism and raised their new found voices to bring about, what they believed to be, much needed changes to the society in which they lived.⁷⁸

Thurston's bank books from the Kensington branch of the London and County Banking Co. Ltd, dating from the period between 1904-10, detail further charitable contributions which she regularly made to a number of organizations, among them, the Sisters of Nazareth, the Poor Children's Society, the Lord Mayor's Cripples Fund, the Cruelty to Animals Society, the Convent of Mercy, and the Mercy Hospital (Acc 11378, Box 6, Bank Books). It is evident from the names of these charitable organisations that Thurston's Irish patriotism and religious grounding stayed with her throughout her life.

As her literary fame increased Thurston became involved in more public charitable concerns. In a letter dated 23 March 1907 to Sir W. Treloar, Lord Mayor of London, Thurston's secretary writes:

that she is anxious to render every assistance to 'The Lord Mayor's Cripples' Fund.' She would like to know the latest date for sending in manuscripts as having recently been unwell she is unable to write the required story immediately, but could have it ready a few weeks hence.

(Acc 11378, Box 2, Letterbook dated March 16th 1907-)

A further letter dated 15 April 1907, again to the Lord Mayor of London from Thurston's secretary reads: "Mrs Thurston has directed me to forward the enclosed

⁷⁸ Gleadle (2001) gives further details of the philanthropic and political works carried out by middle and upper-class women of the late nineteenth century.

manuscript which is her contribution to 'The Lord Mayor's Cripples' Fund' (Acc 11378, Box 2, Letterbook dated March 16th 1907-).⁷⁹

The type and depth of charitable enterprise undertaken by Thurston was typical of that of wealthy women of the period who took responsibility for the welfare of their staff and those in need in the local community. Although her philanthropic interests stretched further than a simple interest in those with whom she had an acquaintance and felt a certain responsibility, Thurston could not have been described as an overly charitable woman. The following letter demonstrates that while Thurston felt that charitable works were the right thing to do, she wasn't keen in taking a more personal interest in them: "Paying a visit to the Blind Asylum . . . It is one of those things I hate, but feel it is only humanly kind to do" (Acc 11378, Box 12, letter to A. Bulkeley Gavin, 5 May 1911). It is a telling factor of her character that her charitable interests did not extend into more radical areas such as women's suffrage, nor beyond the realms of donating money and a limited amount of her literary work.⁸⁰

Women's suffrage did not appear to have been of much interest to Thurston and although she had been brought up surrounded by Irish national politics neither did she

⁷⁹ Although no details are given off the title of the short story a further letter from Thurston's husband Ernest Temple Thurston to Mr Cosgrove of *Everybody's Magazine* reads "I am sending you a short story entitled 'The Six Candles of the Blessed Virgin' by my wife... The American serial rights of which I am offering you for publication in 'Everybody's Magazine' for thirty pounds. The story has been written for a large charity publication here in England got up by Sir Douglas Straight of 'The Pall Mall Gazetteer' on the lines of 'The Queens Christmas Carol.'" This may refer to the story which she submitted to 'The Lord Mayor's Cripples' Fund'. Although this letter was undated, May 24th has been written on the outside of the folded letter (Acc 11378, Box 2, Letterbook dated March 16th 1907-).

⁸⁰ Increasing involvement in charitable interests and reform work led to women playing a more active and visible role in society. Many of these women used their public involvement in social and political reform groups to champion the cause of the Women's Movement. Other's gained confidence in their abilities from involvement in charitable interests and felt emboldened to champion the cause of woman's suffrage. (Ledger and Luckhurst, 2000, pp. 191 – 3)

display a need or desire to pursue an interest in this herself. Her love of her home country was evident from her writing, from her desire to spend much time in it, and also from the affectionate way she spoke of it in interviews. It would appear that Thurston's early introduction to Irish nationalist politics gave her the confidence and assurance of one who was brought up surrounded by, and immersed in, political discussion but did not result in her taking an active interest in the politics of her homeland.

Her interest in women's suffrage was also limited and she continually refused to comment on this issue. In a letter to *The Planet* in 1907, six years after she had begun her writing career, she informed them "that I do not wish to express an opinion on the question of 'petticoat votes'" (Acc 11378, Box 2, Letterbook dated March 16th 1907 - , Letter from Katherine Cecil Thurston to A. L. Robinson Esq C/O *The Planet*). As we will see in Chapter Five, it wasn't until 1908 that she publicly expressed an opinion in favour of votes for women. While this may seem an unusual state of affairs for one who would make her name as a New Woman author, it was by no means unusual. Not all women felt galvanized to express opinions, campaign for changes in electoral law or demand access to education or careers which had previously been denied to them:

[I]t is another aspect of the history of feminism that solidarity among women in spite of their common experience, was never really embraced . . . What made so many women think they were not feminists was their hostility to the idea of being against men. If feminism meant being anti-male then they had no time for it.

(Forster, 1986, p. 4)

Thurston was definitely not anti-male. She clearly enjoyed the company of men and, although her marriage lasted only a few years, she had many male friends and, shortly before her death, again became engaged to be married. Thurston did not appear to feel

restricted by the opportunities available to her. She seems to have been fulfilled by her writing, and did not display a desire to campaign for women's rights.

Thurston's father died in 1901 and her mother in 1904. All that is yet known of Thurston's mother comes in the form of a reference to her, in a letter to her publisher, William Blackwood, on 26 December 1904 where Thurston informs him that her mother had died very suddenly and she had gone back to Ireland for the funeral:

I must apologise for not having wished you a happy Christmas but I had to neglect all usual greetings this year as I sustained a great loss a few weeks ago in the sudden and most unexpected death of my dear mother which took place in Ireland.

Thurston was so shocked by her mother's death that she continued: "Indeed since then I have been laid up and am only now beginning to shake of the effect of the shock and of my harrowing journey to Ireland" (MS 30 109, Incoming letter to Blackwood 1904). It would appear that the "dear mother" that Thurston refers to was in fact her step-mother Catherine Barry, whom Thurston's father had married following the death of her own mother, Elizabeth Dwyer. The loss of her mother at an early age may have been a further contributing factor to her closeness to her father and his willingness to include his daughter in his political and charitable work.

Such a strong male presence from an early age would have set Katherine Madden apart from the majority of upper-middle class girls and young women during the Victorian era. Her strong sense of independence and her fearless spirit would have been nurtured as she rode her horses, explored the countryside surrounding her home, and swam in the Irish Sea. However, she was not merely a country girl: her father's political beliefs ensured that she grew up surrounded by political debate. She was also privy to the

sophisticated adult world her father inhabited when she accompanied him to the various charitable and social events which, as Mayor of Cork required his attendance.

3.2 Marriage to Ernest Temple Thurston

In February 1901, the twenty-six year old Katherine Madden married the English playwright and author Ernest Temple Thurston, at the Roman Catholic Church of Corpus Christi, Maiden-lane, Strand, London (Acc 11378, Box 10, Press cuttings, *The Daily Telegraph*, Divorce Division, April 8, 1910, n.p.). The Thurstons set up home at 2 Priory Terrace, Kew and lived there until 1904, when they moved to a larger house at 20 Victoria Road, Kensington.⁸¹ Ernest Temple Thurston was fervently anti-Catholic and for a woman who had been immersed in the cause of Irish Home Rule and a devout Catholic throughout her life, her choice of husband appears strange.⁸² The Thurston archive contains no mention of the marriage ceremony; however, owing to the acrimonious nature of the couple's divorce, these may have been destroyed by Thurston.⁸³

⁸¹ In a list of works to be carried out by the House-Parlour-maid /Between Maid/Parlour Maid, made in Thurston's handwriting it is possible to deduce that 20 Victoria Road contained the following rooms: Drawing Room; Conservatory; Dining Room; Mistress's Bedroom and Dressing Room; Blue Bedroom; Telephone Room; Kitchen; Study; Scullery; Lavatory; and 2 Bedrooms at the top of the house. In addition to this Thurston also had a Studio at the bottom of her garden which she let to an artist named H. Clarence Whaite Esq. who often riled her by forgetting to pay his rent on time. Typical of the letters she would send to her solicitor, Mr Mackrell on the subject is "Mr Whaite has not yet sent either the rent of the Studio to Christmas or an explanation of the delay in doing so; and as a second quarter was due for on Lady Day I fear pressure must be brought to bear" (Acc 11378, Box 2, Letterbook, Letter dated 10 April 1907). When Thurston bought the lease of 20 Victoria Road in 1906 she had plans to turn this studio into a Billiard Room or Library and build a covered walkway from the house to the studio. It does not appear that these plans were ever carried out (Acc 11378, Box 6).

⁸² Ernest wrote a number of anti-Catholic novels, among them *The Apple of Eden* (1905), the story of a priest who falls in love; *Traffic* (1906), on the inhumanity of the Church in not allowing divorce and remarriage; *The Passionate Crime* (1915), in which an eccentric, religious poet commits a murder; *Enchantment* (1917), about a drunken squire who commits his daughter to a convent; *The Miracle* (1922), on the plight of a girl made pregnant by a priest; and *Jane Carroll* (1927), in which an Irish republican is killed because of his love for a married English woman.

⁸³ The Thurstons divorce which took place in 1910 will be explored in further chapters.

Ernest was born into a minor literary family in 1879.⁸⁴ He began his writing career when he was only sixteen years old, with the publication of a book of poems, and continued to write throughout his life. Temple Thurston had been discovered by Evelyn Waugh's father, Arthur, the Managing Director of the publishing firm of Chapman and Hall. For twenty five years Thurston was a "prominent and successful author. . . . His first novel *The Apple of Eden* recounted a priest's fall from grace: 'religion and sex is an infallible mixture'", Arthur Waugh was quoted as saying.

Thurston wrote two kinds of novel: the one powerful and realistic like *The Apple of Eden*, the other sentimentally romantic like *The City of Beautiful Nonsense* – which was a considerable best-seller. He was extremely anxious to succeed on the stage and wrote a number of plays that had little success. . . . He [also] wrote scenarios for the films.

(Waugh, 1967, p. 21)

Temple Thurston was "[t]all, dark, lean, photogenic." He was extremely "athletic and played lawn tennis well enough to compete in the opening rounds at Wimbledon. He [also] played cricket at Lord's for the Author's against the Publishers" (Waugh, 1967, p. 22).⁸⁵

Temple Thurston frequently set his novels and plays in his wife's native Ireland, among these are *The Apple of Eden* (1905), *Traffic* (1906), *The City of Beautiful Nonsense* (1910), *Thirteen* (1914), *The Passionate Crime* (1915), *Enchantment* (1917), and *The*

⁸⁴ The *Oxford Companion to Edwardian Fiction* (2002) states that Temple Thurston was brought up in Maidstone, Kent until he was ten years old, when his family moved to the south of Ireland. He joined his father's brewery business at 15 and wrote poetry in his spare time. He moved to London to pursue a writing career although he earned his living as an analyst in a Bermondsey yeast factory and as a journalist before going on to write over thirty novels.

⁸⁵ From the picture painted here by Waugh and the photographs of Thurston contained within the archive, it is clear that the Thurstons were an attractive and glamorous couple.

Tinker of Ballintray (1924).⁸⁶ Ireland was to feature so strongly in his work that a review in *The Irish Book Lover* stated: "when Mr Thurston left Cork for good . . . he carried away with him much of the legend and folk lore which he has since . . . embodied in his novels" (Acc 11378, Box 10, *Irish Book Lover*, 1925, n.p., n.d.).

Although Thurston enjoyed reasonable success he was never convinced that his writing achieved the attention it deserved, nor was he happy with his own social standing:

He was a great egoist, utterly self-centred; never satisfied that his work was receiving the attention it deserved from publishers and critics. . . . [H]e had a chip on his shoulder . . . Thurston was never quite strong enough, quite good enough to stand alone. He was never given more than respectful attention in the weekly reviews. He was never included in general articles on "trends in the modern novel", although even though he was not a major novelist, he had many of the minor qualities of a major novelist . . . He was ambitious and hard working. . . . He wrote with feeling. He was a better writer than many of those who were reviewed at length in highbrow columns . . . he himself was perpetually plagued by this lack of recognition. He was so desperately anxious to write 'a book that mattered'.

(Waugh 1967, pp. 21-4)

Temple Thurston's "lack of recognition" and feelings of inadequacy would create tensions in the Thurstons married life which were compounded by his wife's literary success. Although it was documented that Ernest encouraged his wife to begin writing, as she became progressively successful, Ernest became increasingly jealous.

Arthur Waugh stated that Ernest was so jealous of the success of *John Chilcote, M.P.* (1904) that he persuaded Waugh to "issue one of his novels in minute editions of 250 copies so that he could claim to have sold more editions than she had" (Waugh, 1967, p.

⁸⁶ *The Apple of Eden, Traffic, and The City of Beautiful Nonsense*, are set in the fictional village of Rathmore, which is based on Ardmore the village where the Thurstons owned a holiday home. All three novels contain references to Ardmore.

23). The correspondence in the Thurston archive gives a greater understanding of Ernest's personality and how affected he was by his wife's success and popularity. In particular this can be seen in his manner of dealing with her publishers after he took over the management of her work in 1905.⁸⁷

There is no evidence that Thurston had married into a wealthy family. At the time of their marriage Ernest was yet to make a success with his writing and was still working in a yeast factory. His financial records do not exist in the archive but one can deduce from the size and location of their first home together that they were comfortable. Further evidence of their social class and financial wealth can be gleaned from the clubs which both he and Thurston belonged to and frequented.⁸⁸ Thurston's own family had lived a comfortable upper-middle class life. The success of Thurston's writing and her popularity as a novelist would dramatically change the way they lived their lives, increasing their material possessions and catapulting them into the public eye.

As income from her first two novels began to flow in Thurston was able to buy a holiday home in her beloved Ireland. In 1904 she "bought the house, known as 'Maycroft' . . . in Ardmore, Co. Waterford" (Quain, J. T., 1984, p. 26).⁸⁹ As her material wealth increased Thurston attempted to buy a much larger house in the same area, and although unsuccessful, this confirms her affinity with the area.⁹⁰

⁸⁷ Examples of the way in which Ernest corresponded with his and Katherine's agents and publishers can be found later in this chapter.

⁸⁸ Details of the many clubs which the Thurston's belonged to can be found in section 3.3 of this chapter.

⁸⁹ Maycroft is one of the six "big houses" situated in the Ardmore area and listed in the Griffith Valuation Sheets held at the Valuation office, Irish Life Centre, Dublin. The others include The Mercy Convent, now known as Stella Maris; Lacken (Byron Lodge); Dhucarraig (Carrick on Sur, Presentation Sisters); Melrose and Atlantic Lodge.

⁹⁰ Further details of Thurston's attempt to purchase this property can be found in Acc 11378, Box 2, Letterbook dated March 16th 1907 - .

Ireland, and in particular, the Cork area would play an important role in the writing which Thurston undertook following her marriage. While Thurston had made her home in London from the time of her marriage in 1901 she maintained a close affiliation with her homeland and would return to it each year for extended holidays. She clearly enjoyed her visits to Ireland and much time and effort was spent in preparation of them. Thurston was fastidious in the way she organized her household and this merely increased as her material wealth grew. Letters would be sent ahead instructing her caretaker, Mrs Mockler of her duties before Thurston would arrive with her entourage. A letter from Thurston's secretary to Mrs Mockler on the 26th July 1907 states:

Mrs Thurston wants Mrs Mockler to have Maycroft ready for Mr and Mrs Pollock on August 1st when they will arrive and to have the second front bedroom . . . aired and ready.⁹¹ Mrs Thurston would be glad if Mrs Mockler could assist in the housework for the first five or six days until Mrs Thurston brings a third maid over with her. Two maids will arrive at Maycroft on August the first.

(Acc 11378, Box 2, dated March 16th 1907-)

Arrangements would also be laboriously made for the transportation of Thurston's car from mainland England to Cork,⁹² and for her garden at "Maycroft" to be regularly

⁹¹ The Pollock's were good friends of Katherine and Ernest Temple Thurston. Nancy Inez Barry was a lifelong friend and companion to Thurston. She married William Percival Hope Pollock, a London Stockbroker, who regularly carried out financial dealings for Thurston. In 1906 Ernest dedicated his book *Traffic* to W.P.H. Pollock. When Thurston died she left "Maycroft" to Nancy. The Pollocks subsequently erected a plaque at the house in memory of Katherine Cecil Thurston (Quain J.T. 1984, p. 26-7). Nancy and William Pollock had five children: three boys, David who died when he was twenty-five years old, Patrick who drowned in a boating accident in England, Dick who died in India while serving during the war, and two daughters, Catherine and Rosemary. Both Catherine and Rosemary's husbands held colonial civil service positions. During the war years William and Nancy Pollock lived at Maycroft with their grandchildren. Later on Rosemary, whose married name was Dowson, and her husband returned to Maycroft from Kenya with her two grandchildren, one of whom – Charles – went to school in Ardmore in the 1960s. When the Pollock's were in residence in Maycroft, a flag flew from one of the trees in the garden. Maycroft itself is a large semi-detached house said to date from 1846, and now the property of the Ahearne family from Cork.

⁹² On the 25th July 1907 Thurston wrote to the Traffic Manager, Great Western Railway, Paddington Station, London: "I wish to know if you can make arrangements for the conveyancing of my motor car – weight about one ton – on Tuesday 6 August next from

maintained.⁹³ In thus taking care of her domestic arrangements, it could be said that Thurston was demonstrating the patriarchal concept of femininity expected of women throughout the Victorian period.

In many ways Thurston was typical of the majority of women who chose writing as a career during this period. The prerequisites for a writing career have already been established in Chapter Two and Thurston's life met these: She came from a wealthy middle-class background and was able to enjoy the luxuries of education (however limited), time and space in which to pursue her writing, and the social contacts which ensured that she could find a suitable publisher for her work. Although Thurston spent much time organising her household staff, travel arrangement and accounts, the real work of running her main home and two holiday homes was left to her secretary, caretakers and her servants.

Most middle-class households employed domestic servants during this period. Thurston was no different and employed four servants to undertake her household tasks: cook-

Paddington to Cork – by sea from Fishguard. A week later on the 2nd of August 1907 she wrote to Mr Perrott of Cork: “My Car – L.C. 1803 – will arrive in Cork on Wednesday morning next 7th August at nine o'clock. Please send a man with a tin of Shell spirit to meet my Chauffeur and direct him to your garage” (Acc 11378, Box 2, dated March 16th 1907-). In a letter from Rosemary Dowson, daughter of William and Nancy Pollock, to Mirjam Neiman, Mrs Dowson states that “Mrs Thurston had one of the first cars in County Cork which caused quite a stir. I remember my Mother telling us how people jumped over hedges to get out of its way, and what fun it was. Not that they – the people in the car – actually meant to terrify the inhabitants, but that their reaction was – to get out of its way! And quickly!!” (Letter from Mrs Rosemary Dowson to Mirjam Neiman, dated 30 August 1999).

⁹³ Thurston would also make arrangements for the garden at “Maycroft” to be regularly attended to. One letter dated 3rd October 1906 from Thurston to Messrs R Hartland and Son, the Lough Nurseries, Cork instructs them to “[p]lease have your gardener to bring 3 standard rose trees with him to replace the 2 or 3 that have died on the front lawn... Please tell your man when he is down in Ardmore to see the garden with a view to suggesting a few useful things that might be planted there and that would suit the soil. But I do not wish to spend much money on this garden” (Acc 11378, Box 2, Letterbook dated 29 September 1908- 15 March 1907).

housekeeper; house parlour-maid; parlour maid and a kitchen-maid. It is notable that Thurston did not employ a great status symbol of the day: the male domestic servant or butler. In addition to the household staff, Thurston employed a private secretary to deal with her business correspondence and, from the time she purchased her car, a chauffeur.

The early years of the nineteenth century saw many of the working-class girls who would have, as a matter of course, gone into domestic service in order to make a living, venturing into new areas of work. Developments in education and in commerce, discussed in Chapter One, ensured that a number of different avenues were opening up for working-class girls. Many were tempted by the “glamour” of working in the new department stores, opening in major towns and cities across the country;⁹⁴ others were taking advantage of new commercial typing courses and going to work in offices.⁹⁵ This created a shortfall in the number of people willing to work in service, and when in 1907 Thurston was required to employ two new servants she too found it difficult to recruit suitable staff. Not only were the applicants few and far between, but those applying had terms and conditions of their own, which had to be matched before they would consider the job. (See Appendix 1 for details of the difficulties encountered by Thurston in hiring domestic staff.)

⁹⁴ Gleadle states that the large numbers of shops and department stores which became established in Britain’s towns and cities created a massive demand for female shop assistants “usually drawn from the upper working or lower middle-classes” (2001, p. 106).

⁹⁵ Office work was still seen as a middle-class profession until the beginning of the twentieth century, due to the high degree of presentation and literacy required. However, as the expansion of state education in the second half of the nineteenth century began to take effect working class girls also began to occupy these positions. Working-class girls also undertook positions in factories, heavy industry and agriculture. (Gleadle, 2001, p. 106)

Thurston would spend two months of each year at her seaside villa, "Maycroft" in Ardmore writing her novels.⁹⁶ It was here that she found the time to work without distraction, and was able to draw on the mood of the countryside and its people for inspiration (Quain, J. T., 1984, p. 27). Thurston's secretary gives an indication of this in a letter to William Blackwood on 1 July 1907: "Mrs Thurston directs me to write and say that she is waiting until she gets to Ireland to complete the last two chapters of 'The Fly on the Wheel.' She thinks that she could best complete the story in the atmosphere in which the scene is laid" (Acc 11378, Box 2, Letterbook dated March 16th 1907-). Her novel *The Gambler* (1905) was set in the fictional village of Carrimore which was based on Ardmore and contains several references to the countryside around Ardmore.⁹⁷

Although well-known in the Cork area, due to her family connections, as her fame as a novelist grew so too did the public interest in her as a celebrity. Mr James Quain, a local Cork historian has gathered evidence of the time Thurston spent in Ireland, and gives some indication of her flamboyant style and dress sense, which is further evidenced from the photographs contained within the archive. From her summer home in Ardmore, Thurston would make regular trips to her home town of Cork where she "usually stayed in Moore's Hotel and visited her friends and relatives. She was a woman with an imaginative and artistic sense of dress and frequently attracted attention when shopping owing to her gracious presence and her fame as a novelist" (Quain, J. T., 1984, p. 27).

⁹⁶ In a letter dated 10th June 1907 Thurston wrote to the Clerk of the Union of Youghall regarding the length of time she spent there, "I enclose two registration forms filled in. I seldom spend more than two months at my house Maycroft, Ardmore, Co. Waterford – usually going there in early August" (Acc 11378, Box 2 dated March 16th 1907-). From 1907 onwards Thurston would often spend longer periods of time at Maycroft, and her summer break would often extend to three months,

⁹⁷ According to Mrs Rosemary Dowson, daughter of William and Nancy Pollock, while she was writing *The Gambler*, Thurston and Nancy would "get up very early and walk across the strand to the other side of the bay, to watch the dawn breaking, so that Katherine could get it right, in her book!" (Letter from Mrs Rosemary Dowson to Mirjam Neiman, dated 30 August 1999).

Thurston's personal appearance would have set her apart from many of the campaigning feminists of the day. To be seen as

so obviously feminine was to be thought of as frivolous and empty headed . . . The sneering at attention to and love of clothes and make-up which became fashionable in feminist circles during the nineteenth century was emphatically disapproved of

(Forster, 1986, pp. 7-8)

by Thurston who preferred to follow her own brand of feminism. By dressing and acting in an overtly feminine and stylish manner Thurston was in effect "promoting the New Woman as a feminine superstar" (Heilmann, 2004, p.19). In so doing, Thurston was also promoting the cause of women's political rights by following in the footsteps of Sarah Grand whose articles "served a doubly didactic purpose, in that they were aimed at seducing female middle-class readers to feminist ideas . . . while offering an object lesson to feminists on how best to market the cause" (Heilmann, 2004, p. 19).

3.3 The club system

Ernest and Katherine Thurston enjoyed an active social life and this was enhanced by membership of a number of exclusive clubs which provided a network of friends and useful contacts. The club system was just one of the urban organisations referred to in Chapter One which enabled women to spend more time in the towns and cities which had previously been alien to them. The club system which operated in nineteenth and twentieth century England provided a method of shorthand by which people could be sure of who they were dealing with. Temple Thurston was a member of the influential Garrick Club, although due to his difficult temperament "he never seemed to belong

anywhere” (Waugh, 1967, p. 23). Among others, Thurston herself belonged to a number of clubs including The Sesame Club.

The Sesame Club was open to both men and women and provided an environment in which they could socialise with like-minded people for the purposes of entertainment and social connections which enabled them to further their careers and social standing.

The Sesame Club was especially concerned with educational matters; it was seen as “distinctly liberal, with perhaps a touch of radicalism. Men and women who compose both the offices and committees, work together amicably and harmoniously” (Krout, 1899, p. 88). Thurston’s membership of such a liberal club indicates her independent mind and spirit, unusual perhaps for a woman of her time but in accordance with the behaviour and attitude of the New Woman.⁹⁸ Among the other clubs frequented by Thurston were: the Ramblers Club; the Lyceum Club; the New Vagabond Club; and the Ladies Athenaeum Club at 31 Dover Street, London, W. which existed “for the association of ladies who are connected with or interested in art, literature, music, or politics” (Acc 11378, Box 6, Thurston’s copy of the Ladies Athenaeum Membership Book).⁹⁹

Thurston’s love of the outdoors which had begun during her childhood in Cork stayed with her, and although a resident in London from the time of her marriage, she became a member of the Ramblers Club which was situated at 215-217 Knightsbridge, SW. The object of which is stated in Thurston’s membership book as being

⁹⁸ Fellow New Woman authors, Mona Caird, Olive Schreiner and Sarah Grand, were all at one time or another members of the Sesame Club (Heilmann, 2004, p. 5).

⁹⁹ Thurston’s bank accounts with the Kensington Branch of the London and County Banking Co. Ltd, gives details of the regular payments of subscription fees and charges for each of the Club’s stated. Although Thurston was a meticulous record keeper and possessed a fantastic attention to detail, it would appear that she was not infallible as the following letter, dated 18 January 1911, from the Honorary Secretary of the New Vagabond Club illustrates: “Dear Madam, I am so sorry to recall the matter to your attention, but would you be kind enough to send me on your Club subscription for Nov 1910-11. These little amounts are apt to escape one’s memory” (Acc 11378, Box 6).

[F]ormed for the purpose of satisfying the desire which has been felt so long by a great number of people to bring into existence an exclusive club for the use of ladies and gentlemen (particularly those who are interested in Sport and Art) both at home and abroad.

(Acc 11378, Box 6)

The club system thrived in nineteenth and early twentieth century middle and upper-class society due to the limited social opportunities available to women. Membership of a club enabled women a degree of association with other like-minded men and women. Thurston used her experience of the club system and situated many of the characters of her novels in this setting. Drawing on the people and situations which were familiar to her enabled Thurston to create believable characters that truly captured the mood of the opening decade of the twentieth century, and the futility of the lives of many women.

3.4 Early marital difficulties

Despite their active social life and the success brought by their writing there were many difficulties within the Thurstons' marriage. These were mainly due to Ernest's inability to deal with the success of Katherine's writing. As her work outsold his and her popularity increased, Thurston became bothered by Ernest's lack of literary success and the effect this had on his mood. In a letter to William Blackwood she wrote: "I hope for his sake that his next novel is a success . . . he is quite sad at the moment and a little success would go some way to helping" (Acc 11378, Box 2, Loose letters, Letter from Thurston to William Blackwood).¹⁰⁰ Thurston was clearly uncomfortable at the level of her success in comparison with Ernest.

¹⁰⁰ This letter is undated and it is unclear whether it was ever sent to Blackwood.

From the beginning of her literary career, Thurston's work had been managed by The Literary Agency of London.¹⁰¹ However, in 1905 Ernest began to represent his wife's literary work. Ernest's representation of Thurston's writing may have been a further attempt on her part at including him in her work, or perhaps he himself needed to be involved in her success in a controlling and dominant role. Ernest was well known at his own publisher, Chapman and Hall, as being a difficult author:

He was not easy to do business with. He published for ten years with Chapman and Hall . . . but he was never satisfied with his books' sales . . . He made considerable demands upon his publisher . . . One of Thurston's agents said . . . 'I know that authors ask me out to lunch because they want to talk about their work, but I wish Thurston would wait till I have finished my first cocktail before he starts telling me the plot of his new novel'.

(Waugh, 1967, pp. 21-2)

Ernest's pompous and arrogant manner did little to help his wife's career or endear him to those who managed and published her writing: he would often infuriate them by the tone of his letters. Although Ernest would frequently send letters to Thurston's publishers and advisers, this letter, dated November 1905, from The Literary Agency of London, is the first indication that Ernest had officially taken over the management of his wife's work:

I note that you have now decided to manage both your own work and Mrs Thurston's yourself. May I however take this opportunity of saying that if later you may find, as will probably be the case, that your own literary work takes up so much of your time as to make it difficult or even impossible for you to attend to the business connected with the disposal of it and Mrs Thurston's novels, I shall be very glad again to place my services at your disposal.

The Literary Agency were obviously not convinced of Ernest's ability or that he had a head for business, as they continue: "From what you told me when I had the pleasure of

¹⁰¹ For further details of Thurston's relationship with The Literary Agency of London please refer to Chapter Four.

seeing you here about the terms upon which you and Mrs Thurston had been selling your work, I am quite clear that I could sell your work to better advantage than anyone else" (Acc 11378, Box 1, Loose sheets, Letter dated 21 November 1905).

Ernest's manner was often brusque and contradictory in his dealing with his wife's publishers. William Blackwood found him particularly difficult to deal with on a professional basis. In a letter to Blackwood dated 7 February 1905 Ernest states:

With regard to the publication of 'The Mystics' . . . personally I think that a book at that price would only do her harm financially. Supplemented with short stories and issued at 6/- I think is the only way that it ought to be published as I am sure that it would be unwise to connect her name with a book at half a crown.

Blackwood has annotated the letter thus: "This letter has rather riled me as if we knew nothing about publishing and what was best for an author" (MS 30 118, Incoming letters to Blackwood). Ernest's poor relationship with Blackwood continued: on 4 February 1907 Blackwood wrote:

You and your wife must remember how subservient you have made the interests of my Magazine to those of Messrs McClure . . . it is not within reason to expect that either my Magazine or any other Magazine can be at the disposal of any writer at the moment a story comes to hand months after the time arranged for its appearance.

(Acc 11378, Box 1, Correspondence with Blackwood)

Despite the couple's attempts to work together, Ernest became increasingly unhappy and began to spend longer periods of time away from their home. Perhaps in an attempt to remove Ernest from the pressures of their London life the Thurstons took the lease on a country cottage in February 1906.

Thurston would spend many weekends at Summer Cottage, Well End, Bourne End, where she was able to take part in the outdoor activities she enjoyed. No evidence exists, however, to confirm whether Ernest spent any time at the cottage with his wife and friends. Perhaps as an experiment, Summer Cottage was not as successful as Thurston had hoped. On December 14 1906 her secretary wrote to her caretaker, Mrs Howard: "Mrs Thurston will not be at the Cottage again for some time so she wants Mrs Howard to pack up carefully all the blankets at the cottage and send them to her . . ." (Acc 11378, Box 2, Small Letterbook). Taking such care of domestic arrangements, Thurston conforms to the expected role of the woman of the period. Such gendered delineation of roles was common at this time though a growing number of women born towards the end of the nineteenth century were beginning to question them (Heilmann, 2004, pp. 17-20). Thurston appears to belong to this group – caught between the restrictions of the Victorian period and the widening scope of the Edwardian period. As we will see in Chapter Seven, Thurston was often exasperated by the society in which she lived and the way in which she was expected to conform to the female stereotype, as this quotation demonstrates:

I am glad to tell you that in all these days of annoyance I have been able to control my nerves and my temper with the world at large. I have not once quarrelled with Nance or the Aunt. I have schooled myself to listen to the children's noise – and have even gone to the tea parties here that each other year drive me almost mad.

(Acc 11378, Box 12, 11 August 1911)

The tremendous tensions and pressures felt by women are reflected through the female characters which appear in Thurston's novels. Their understanding of the world which they inhabit and their reluctance to maintain the status quo give further evidence of Thurston's questioning of women's position.

By July 25 1907 Thurston was eager to let Summer Cottage out to tenants and was instructing Messrs Aldridge & Lever, of Bourne End that she was “desirous of letting my Cottage at Well End, Bourne End . . . from the present date – should a suitable tenant offer to take it” (Acc 11378, Box 2 Letterbook dated March 16th 1907-).

The strain of Thurston’s growing literary success, her membership of a “superior social caste” (Waugh, 1967, p. 23) coupled with Ernest’s unhappiness at his own social and literary standing must have made life unbearable for him. Ernest’s “difficult” nature has already been documented. However, his personality suffered in other ways. As a person “he was very far from being a happy man. It is possible that he was not a very pleasant one” revealing how unhappy the marriage probably was (Waugh, 1967, p. 21).

No letters between the couple occur in the Thurston archive, making it difficult to ascertain the state of their relationship. However, evidence of Ernest’s general attitude to women can be found in this extract of a letter to his literary agent on August 5th 1907:¹⁰²

Before the next three months have gone I am looking forward to sending you a large portion of “Mary Hamilton” – not Mary Rogier as at first suggested. It is not to form one of a trilogy after all as the spinster does not in my mind represent a type of woman – merely a condition. There are after all only two types – mothers and the rest.¹⁰³

¹⁰² This statement appears to contradict the statements made by Thurston as to the encouragement and support Ernest provided at the start of her writing career. While writing was viewed as an acceptable occupation for women at this time, Thurston’s success may have surpassed that expected by Ernest. Such success would have removed her from the realms of womanhood viewed as suitable by him.

¹⁰³ This is a reference to a book which Temple Thurston had at this period been writing a trilogy of the “types” of women which he felt existed in society at this time. On 30 May 1907 he wrote to James MacArthur of Harper and Brothers in New York that he was “well into my next subject which promises to be the biggest thing I have done yet. It is a trilogy on women. The first book is to be called Mary Rogier, deals with – The mother; the second, Drucilla Goodlake is on – The spinster and the third, the name for which I have not yet decided is concerned with the woman of pleasure. Don’t mistake this last to be the common prostitute or really the prostitute of any class beyond the sense that she avoids the responsibility of maternity in order to gain the pleasures of her sex. I intend to announce them all in fact in each volume as it appears, so that to a certain extent one should advertise the other. I trust that this idea dealing with the

By 1907, the Thurstons had been married for six years and remained childless. No evidence can be found in the Thurston archive as to the cause of their childless state and it would be an assumption to speculate. Illnesses associated with reproduction were often treated as psychological illnesses, a fact which put additional strain on women already suffering. Women tended to keep reproductive problems and miscarriage secret and Thurston makes no mention of this in her personal papers. It may have been that for Thurston the demands of motherhood were at odds with her life as a contemporary woman novelist and this seems to be reflected in Ernest's view of the types of women in existence at that time.¹⁰⁴

From the topic of his trilogy it appears that Ernest may only have viewed his wife as one who "avoids the responsibility of maternity in order to gain the pleasures of her sex" (Acc 11378, Box 2, Letterbook dated March 16 1907 -). Whether their inability to produce children was a cause of friction or planning is unclear, but Ernest's comments show that he had little respect for unmarried or childless women.

3.5 The scandal of divorce

Ernest became increasingly unhappy and began to spend longer periods of time away from the marital home. In 1907, a rift occurred and the pair were divorced in 1910.

Divorce was still relatively rare, and, despite the creation of the Married Women's

Property Acts, could still mean a loss of status for the woman. As a well-known New

elemental type in each individual will be one that will appeal to you as much as it does to me. I seem to be getting quite a reputation for the understanding of women and while that is in people's minds I want to clench it with the trilogy" (Acc 11378, Box 2, Letterbook dated March 16th 1907 -).

¹⁰⁴ Hattersley states that during the early Edwardian period the birth rate in Great Britain fell dramatically, mainly due to an increase in the availability of contraception. (2004, pp. 78-9)

Woman author, Thurston would have been “linked with the decadent movement by the conservative press as an example of cultural, national and sexual degeneracy,” (Meaney, 2000, p. 157) and as such her divorce was the object of public interest, featuring in a wide variety of daily newspapers and periodicals. Thurston was a celebrity author who often existed in the

realms of notoriety. Her divorce from novelist E. Temple Thurston was reported in great detail and the case was in effect fought by him as one between the claims of decadent art and those of the New Woman, attributing the desertion and adultery of which she accused him to their conflicting careers as novelists.

(Meaney, 2000, pp. 169)

Although no details exist of their marital rift, a newspaper article states that “according to Mrs Thurston her husband informed her that it was necessary that he should live his own life and for the purpose of literary work should go down into the very depths of society”. Ernest is quoted as saying “that she had the dominating personality” and that the decline in the state of their married life had been due to Katherine’s high earning power and inability to allow him “the complete domestic freedom of the literary artist . . . to come and go as he pleased” (Acc 11378 Box 10, *Massachusetts Republican*, April 9th 1910, n.p.). *The Times* also reported his belief that

it was necessary for his literary work that he should descend into the depths of society. He complained that she was making more money from her books than him, that her personality dominated his, and said that he wanted to leave her.

(*The Times* 8 April 1910: p. 3, col. 5)

Tensions over women’s increasing financial and social freedom were common during the Edwardian period as women began to demand and exercise more freedom. By choosing to divorce Ernest, Thurston is exercising some of that new-found freedom. Thurston was demonstrating her view that women’s lives were too restricted and also

her belief in the objectives of the New Woman. While Thurston herself displays many of the characteristics of the New Woman in terms of financial freedom and ability to begin and maintain a successful career, the Thurston's marriage seems to mirror the changes in society in terms of male and female roles. As capable as Thurston was in her career, she was still the product of her Irish middle-class late-Victorian background and we can see her fulfilling her domestic duties through her personal correspondence, yet perhaps the spirited girl who had been encouraged by her father to attend political rallies did not want to return to her previous domestic and social life once she had tasted the freedom brought to her by her literary success. What we see here is Thurston caught in the transition between traditional female Victorian behaviour discussed in Chapters One and Two, and that of the New Woman, and not fulfilling the role of either.

While Thurston appeared to want a conventional marriage, she was also fiercely independent. Ernest on the other hand, appeared unable to deal with the changes in society affecting the relationship between men and women. His belief in the role of women being purely that of wife and mother was at odds, not only with his wife's beliefs but with the general feeling which existed during the Edwardian era that women needed to move out of, or at least expand their feminine sphere and become more outgoing in their personal and professional lives.

Ernest appears to embody the life and persona of a late Victorian rake, who behind the respectability of his married life, desires to lead a decadent life. This he openly demonstrated in his divorce hearing where it was claimed that he wanted to be free to "go down into the very depths of society," to have "the complete domestic freedom of the literary artist . . . to come and go as he pleased" (Acc 11378 Box 10, *Massachusetts*

Republican, April 9th 1910).¹⁰⁵ In openly admitting to the desire to lead such a life Ernest was allying himself with the exponents of such a culture and in effect with the decadence of the Victorian era. In order to partake of such a life, Ernest would, however, have required a subservient wife, and unfortunately for him, Thurston was not such a woman. Their relationship in many ways represents the irreconcilable tensions and struggle between men and women at what was a critical pre-war period: Ernest represented the old order and Thurston the new. Their relationship ultimately reflects what was a head-on clash between two eras and two perceptions – that of the changing role of men and women in marriage and in work.

Thurston was granted a divorce from Ernest on 6 April 1910 on the grounds of his adultery and desertion. On 8 April 1910 the *Daily Telegraph* reported:

In the Probate and Divorce division, . . . a suit has been tried in which Mrs Katherine Cecil Thurston sought a dissolution of her marriage with Ernest Charles Thurston, Whom she accused of desertion and misconduct. . . . Mr Barnard, K.C. who appeared for petitioner said that the parties [had] . . . lived happily down to 1907. Then the husband became dissatisfied with his home, and from that time down to the date when it was alleged desertion commenced, he was in the habit for making excuses for leaving his wife. In October of 1907 he represented that for the purpose of certain literary work upon which he was engaged it was necessary that he should go down into the very depths of society.

Barnard . . . added that another reason that respondent gave was that his wife's personality dominated his and he must in consequence get away from her. The result was that he left his wife without her consent and took a flat in Soho. He saw her several times during 1908, but never offered to return to live with her. In

¹⁰⁵ Ernest exhibits here the characteristic desires of the flâneur which was portrayed in many of the popular and thought provoking novels of the day, such as Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890) and R. L. Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886). Such novels highlighted the fact that "[t]he drawing rooms and men's clubs . . . [were] ostensibly home to morally upright individuals: society's self-righteous. Only when one probes more deeply does the hollowness of these lives and the fragility of their morality become clear" (Dryden 2003, p.119). Ernest was the embodiment of this culture, where middle and upper class men were free to roam the city, leading lives of scandal and privilege; as Dryden states: "[t]he notion of flânerie necessarily implies a sense of ownership of the city by the male . . . Flânerie relied on the leisure to roam at will to take in the sights and atmosphere of the city, a luxury not easily afforded to women, or working class men" (Dryden, 2003, p.57).

December of 1909 she asked him if he was ever coming back, and he replied in the negative . . .

After this . . . it was discovered that the respondent had stayed at the Burton Court Hotel, New Milton, with a lady who was not his wife, and in consequence that petition was filed.

(Acc 11378, Box 10, Press Cuttings from 1910).

By “taking a flat in Soho” Ernest demonstrated his desire to lead the life of a late Victorian rake. Many upper-class men of the period had been, for several years seeking the pleasures of the poorer parts of London such as Soho and the East End. The East End, for example “was an area where wealthy men came to indulge in nefarious pleasures, notably sexual pleasures. Adjacent to the salubrious residential areas of the city, the East End, and particularly Whitechapel” (Dryden, 2003, p. 49) was seen as the playground of many wealthy upper-class men. By moving out of his comfortable marital home in Kensington, to the Soho area of London, Ernest was indicating that he wanted to follow in their footsteps.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁶ While upper-class men frequently visited the East End of London in search of sexual pleasures it was to many, who had no other choice but to make their home there, the scene of much violence and brutality. Two cases in particular had shocked and terrified the population: The Ripper Murders which took place between 1888 And 1891, and the practice of buying child virgins for sexual enjoyment, as exposed in “The Maiden Tribute of Modern Babylon” in the *Pall Mall Gazette* in 1885. When “W.T. Stead had conducted his own dual life when, using the techniques of the New Journalism, he investigated and determined to expose East End child prostitution. ‘Buying’ a young girl through the agency of a procuress, Stead set out to prove the ease with which a child could be acquired for sex. He scandalised London when in 1885, he published ‘The Maiden Tribute of Modern Babylon’ in the *Pall Mall Gazette* . . . ‘The Maiden Tribute’ famously exposed how members of the upper classes regularly ‘bought’ child virgins for sexual enjoyment” (Dryden, 2003, p.51). Such brutal acts epitomised the difference between the East and the West End of the city, and highlighted the duality of the lives of many of the “respectable” members of society. No evidence exists which indicates that Ernest was engaged in this type of activity, though his desire to live in Soho and “go down into the very depths of society” indicates that he wanted to explore this kind of life.

The New York Times touched on Ernest's difficult personality, his unhappiness and constant striving for literary greatness in this report following the divorce hearing, dated 9 April 1910:

Mr and Mrs Thurston seem to have dwelt together happily until about the time Mrs Thurston began to achieve fame. Their happiness probably, would have been increased if Mr Thurston had been the right kind of husband for a popular lady novelist. With money flowing in from the stupendous sales of her books, he might have been encouraged in the development of any ambition but the one fatal ambition which possessed him. It is a mistake to suppose that the husband of a famous woman, if he would preserve harmony in the domestic orchestra, must necessarily play second fiddle. He may take up another and less humiliating instrument. Mr Thurston might have adopted the philosophical oboe, the religious harp, or gone in for politics with the drum and cymbals. To be the husband of a writer of money-making fiction would not be derogatory to a sociologist, a settlement worker, or a Member of Parliament. But nothing would do for this husband but to excel in the field of his wife's triumphs, to be, in short, a popular gentleman novelist.

(Acc 11378, Box 10, n.p.)

Due to Thurston's fame as a New Woman novelist, the worldwide interest in the couple's divorce was intense and the media coverage salacious. Many newspaper clippings can be found among Thurston's personal papers, each one outlining to some degree the decline of her marital life and the details of Ernest's infidelity. Such media interest would have proved difficult for any woman in 1910. Divorce was relatively rare at this time and for a Roman Catholic such as Thurston it must have been doubly hard to bear.¹⁰⁷ Perhaps the most difficult time of all for Thurston was when she was compelled to take the witness box during the divorce proceedings. This account was published on 10 April 1910 in *Lloyd's Newspaper*, London:

¹⁰⁷ Although Ernest was anti-Catholic, some evidence exists that Thurston maintained her religion after her marriage. In a letter dated November 16 (n.y.) from Kathleen Slattery to Thurston, Mrs Slattery states: "Violet Cottee came to see me last evening, and says her parents are quite pleased that you have engaged her . . . I am most grateful that you have taken the girl as I dreaded her going into a home, where she would have no Catholic influence..." (Acc 11378, Box 6). Letters between Thurston and Alfred Bulkeley Gavin, discussed later in this Chapter and in Chapter 8 also give evidence of Thurston's religious convictions.

The authoress . . . said that it was in 1907 she came to the conclusion her husband was dissatisfied with his married life. He told her that he was a man who was not fit for married life. Before that - in 1906 - he had confessed to her that he had been unfaithful to her. She forgave him at that time. In October, 1907 . . . he said that he could not live conventionally as a married man that he had been unfaithful to her, and was sorry that he had not had the courage to tell her of his temperament before that . . . It was at this time . . . that he in fact left her.

(Acc 11378, Box 10)

Another article in the *St James Budget* on 15 April 1910 states further the evidence given by Thurston during the divorce proceedings "Mrs Thurston gave evidence that the marriage was one of affection, at any rate on her side . . . their life seemed happy during the early part of their married life" (Acc 11378, Box 10).

Despite the stigma of divorce many of the newspaper reports of the time spoke in favour of Thurston, as did many of her friends who offered their unstinting support. A letter dated 7 April 1910, from 12 Cadogan Court reads:

I am so glad you have done it - you plucky woman - I honour you. I didn't know it was coming off so soon - but in my opinion the sooner the better - and you are well rid of the little viper - all the same I am so sorry for all you have suffered.¹⁰⁸

Another letter dated 13 April 1910 and addressed Richmond, Co. Waterford continues in the same vein "I congratulate you on having achieved complete freedom, if there were such things as 'Divorce presents' I would send you one, they would be so much nicer than wedding presents." A further letter, dated 10 April 1910, from the Consul of Liberia states: "My dear Friend, Yes I was surprised, yet, I understand for I know you . . . I am delighted that it is over now and . . . a new chapter of your young and promising life has begun." Another letter dated 9 April 1910 from 14 Motcomb Street, Belgrave Square also speaks in encouraging tones: "You will not wish to have any

¹⁰⁸ This letter and those that follow are held in Acc 11378, Box 1, Personal Correspondence.

sympathy thrust upon you – it is felt and you will feel that it is felt.” However, the writer goes on to remind Thurston that “I am writing to remind you that you promised to take the chair for us at the club on April 27th, Wednesday, dining at 7 and chairing the debate. This I hope you will do.” The tone of these letters indicates that Thurston was a woman who formed close personal relationships with her friends and acquaintances. She was a woman who could count men and women among her closest circle and commanded great loyalty from them.

Thurston was deeply affected by the divorce proceeding. At the time of her divorce she wrote to Alfred Bulkeley Gavin, the man she hoped to marry the following year:

It has been a bigger ordeal that I have ever known – and the relief is in proportion . . . I am very happy – very, very happy and deeply grateful to the all-wise and supreme designer of our destiny for this gift of freedom.

(Acc 11378, Box 12, Letter dated 8 April 1910)

Her relief and happiness at having secured a divorce was such that Thurston threw herself into her work and public life. Her strength of character was such that on 11 May 1910 a correspondent from one of Thurston’s clubs wrote to thank her “so very much for taking the chair on the 27th . . . the debate as to whether too much is now done for children by the state” (Acc 11378, Box 1, Personal Correspondence, Divorce.

Undecipherable handwriting has made it difficult to ascertain the authors of many of these letters).

Following the Thurston’s divorce in 1910, and Katherine’s subsequent death in 1911, Ernest continued to court controversy. Despite claims during his divorce that he was “unsuited to married life”, Ernest remarried in 1911; however this marriage was also to

be short lived and also ended in divorce.¹⁰⁹ He married again in 1925. Ernest's moderate success as a novelist and playwright ensured that "he was able to finance his share of matrimonial confusion without excessive strain." (Waugh, 1967, p. 21).¹¹⁰

Ernest evaded military service during the Great War of 1914-18 on

the curious medical grounds that he suffered from agoraphobia – the fear of open spaces. His nerves, he claimed, would disintegrate on Salisbury Plain or on a battlefield; although as . . . [Arthur Waugh] remarked; he could with impunity take a cross-channel steamer to Ireland and France.

(Waugh, 1967, p.23)

Ernest Temple Thurston died of pneumonia at his home in London in 1933, he was fifty three years old (Quain, 1984, p. 28).

¹⁰⁹ A newspaper article from the time of this second divorce states that Temple Thurston and his new wife Joan Katherine Thurston had "lived happily until he engaged a private-secretary, named Miss Emily Cowlin... [Mrs Thurston] noticed that he became on friendly terms with Miss Cowlin and she objected to it, suggesting that he might engage another secretary. He refused and in May 1923 he suggested a separation, as their relations were getting rather strained. She consulted her solicitors, and accepted an invitation to go to India, thinking that perhaps her husband might tire of Miss Cowlin by the time she returned home. While in India, however, she received a letter from respondent in which he said:- 'Miss Cowlin is expecting to have a baby about next June. This will shortly be generally known, and as she is living openly with me at Goddards Green I again ask you most earnestly to take steps to divorce me . . . I feel sure you are not so insensible to anything I may have done in the past . . . to withhold from me longer than possible the opportunity of defending my child in the eyes of the world. Needless to say, with this further responsibility in my life, it is quite impossible, and I absolutely refuse, to live with you again.' " (*The Scotsman*, dated 18th November 1924, p. 4)

¹¹⁰ No details exist in the Thurston archive as to the details of the couples divorce settlement, although Thurston was obviously concerned about money from the time of her divorce and as we shall see in later chapters, was constantly looking for new ways of raising money and pushing her publishers for the best monetary and publicity deals for her work. Her bank account for 1910, the year of her divorce, shows several incoming payments of £200, annotated "settlement." This may have been part of her divorce settlement (Acc 11378, Box 6).

3.6 The influence of Ireland

Although her literary career only spanned a ten year period from the time of her marriage in 1901 until her death in 1911, Thurston's novels and serialisations were tremendously popular in Britain, throughout Europe and across the United States. The work produced by Thurston centred on the New Woman and were often sensationalist in nature. Some of her novels were set in Ireland and often contain Irish characters. The countryside of Ireland which is portrayed in Thurston's work is often romanticised. However this late Victorian and Edwardian middle class Irish society is portrayed as offering few opportunities for women wishing to pursue routes into education or indeed a career. Although brought up surrounded by exponents of the Irish Home Rule cause, Thurston "strictly avoided national politics in her writing, though the sexual politics of . . . [her] work was spectacularly . . . radical and overt" (Meaney 2000, p. 169).

Much of Thurston's work focuses on the social and psychological restrictions placed upon women. She is noticeably pessimistic about the scope for growth and freedom for women within her homeland. The novels which are set in Ireland, such as *The Fly on the Wheel*, demonstrate women's limited lives and the outcome that such restrictions can have on women, as Meaney states:

Thurston's novels everywhere celebrate the freedom of art, the right to independence of feeling and thought, and the facility of self-invention. Where these are missing, as in the Waterford of *The Fly on the Wheel*, life is simply not worth living.

(Meaney, 2000, p.170)

Where Thurston focuses on Irish characters abroad, and in particular female characters, then the potential for reinvention of the female role is far greater. In her first novel, *The Circle*, we see how the female protagonists' opportunities expand when she is able to

leave the confines of her home and travel. In her third novel *The Gambler*, and her final novel, *Max*, we see Thurston exploring the possibilities of aesthetic and sexual freedom made possible when again women escape the confines of home: "The woman artist, or potential artist, was an important figure in the increasingly self-reflective fiction which new women writers of the period produced", and Thurston was no different in her portrayal of such women. This marked an important shift from the work of earlier nineteenth-century women writers, who could not attribute

realistically to their characters the same freedoms they themselves enjoyed as writers and earners . . . Neither the sensational nor the politically committed women writers of the period felt obliged to preface their work with disclaimers, apologies, and self-defence, as the first women novelists had done. Yet their surrogates within their fiction are often themselves passionately defended and in-turn offer impassioned pleas not only for general social and sexual, but also specific educational and artistic freedom for women.

(Meaney, 2000, p.159)

Thurston carried with her many of the political, cultural and religious beliefs of her Irish background. Irish women at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries suffered the same social and political constraints as their European counterparts, however, the way in which Ireland had been subjugated and governed by Britain ensured that these restrictions "were intensified by the fact that the society within which these women operated was . . . militarily, politically, and economically defeated" (Meaney ed., 2002, p. 765).

The Irish nationalist movement enabled women like Thurston, to participate in politics, and although a young girl, Thurston would have been privy to much of the political and intellectual discussion taking place in a strongly nationalist household. This political participation coupled to the campaign for women's suffrage influenced Thurston and Irish women authors in general "quite directly in the characterisation and fiction

associated with the 'New Woman' . . . women's extensive involvement in nationalism . . . also opened up a heretofore unknown degree of political participation and offered the possibility of social and sexual change" (Meaney ed., 2002, p. 976). The period between 1880 and 1910 was therefore an important time in the development of the Irish novel and in particular for the fiction written by Irish women novelists or women novelists with Irish connections.

3.7 Thurston's early publishing career

Shortly after her marriage to Ernest, Thurston began her writing career. She was described as a talented and natural storyteller; however, apart from the interview with *The Bookman* there is little evidence to suggest that she had until this point ever considered writing.

Newspaper clippings from the period around the publication *The Circle* indicate that it was on the suggestion of Ernest that she began writing. *The Bookman* was one of many newspapers and magazines to inform their readers that

of writing she never thought, and though books appealed to her very early in life, the idea of writing one never crossed her mind. It was only three years ago that literary work was first suggested to Mrs Thurston by her husband and after twelve months or so of somewhat laborious attempts, she sent up her first story and was lucky enough to have it accepted.

(Acc 11378, Box 10, *The Bookman*, March 1903, n.p.)

A later clipping from an interview between Thurston and *The Scotsman* newspaper on 29 December 1904 reveals her personal background and method of working: "Briefly the shape which Mrs Thurston's success took is as follows: - In a twelvemonth, from 1901-02, she wrote, perhaps eight short stories, and . . . sent them round. They enjoyed brief journeyings; six of them were immediately accepted" (n.p.). For an inexperienced

writer to create eight short stories in a twelve month period and have six of them immediately accepted for publication gives some indication of Thurston's capacity for literary work and of her ability to create work which matched the public mood. The interviewer informs us that

[O]ne of these short stories attracted the attention of a well-known literary agent who suggested that Mrs Thurston should write a novel. 'The Circle' was the result, with an immediate success in America as well as in this country. And on the strength of that success, Mrs Thurston set out to win still wider fame by writing 'John Chilcote M.P.'¹¹¹

Thurston's meteoric rise to fame as a writer may have come as a surprise to her, but knowing what we do of Ernest's jealous nature we can only imagine the effect it would have had on a man who had constantly craved acclaim throughout his literary career and who now had to endure his wife's overnight success.

Further evidence of the Thurston's private life can be gleaned as the interview continues:

As Mrs Thurston told me of her purely social life before she took her pen in her hand, and then of her literary work, I detected that note of delighted surprise, her first sensation when awaking to fame still remaining. 'One of the objections and dangers for the woman worker, it seems to me is egoism,' was an opinion she expressed during our conversation; and that remark is one that I remember without referring to the notes which as an interviewer I was allowed to take, for it was impressed upon me by the delightful contrast between Mrs Thurston's quiet and unassuming manner in talking of her work and the pronounced self-confidence and talk 'from a pedestal' which one frequently meets with in those who have achieved - in men and women alike, and in all branches of work. Mrs Thurston is quite unspoilt by success.

¹¹¹ Publication details of this and subsequent interviews from Acc 11378, Box 9, Large Press Cuttings Book.

Thurston's "quiet and unassuming" manner when dealing with this journalist and her wariness of showing "egoism" would become her standard way of dealing with the press, her literary agents and her publishers for most of her career. The adoption of such an amiable persona enabled Thurston to manipulate situations to her own advantage and further her career and reputation. In this respect Thurston could have been said to be following Sarah Grand's guidelines, laid out in her "The Morals of Manner and Appearance" (1893) in which she stated "[t]o succeed all round, you must invite the eye, you must charm the ear, you must excite an appetite for the pleasure of knowing you and hearing you by acquiring . . . the reputation for being a pleasing person."¹¹² As Thurston became more confident in her literary work and her reputation as an author and celebrity increased she maintained this manner when dealing with those involved in her literary production and with her fans.

Thurston was a meticulous record keeper and through the investigation of publishing contracts, royalty statements, banking details, manuscripts and correspondence in her personal papers we gain a greater understanding of the life of a woman writer in the opening years of the twentieth century. Thurston was a financially astute author, careful to ensure that she received the best deal from her publishers, her literary agents, and also in her domestic arrangements. This may have been a legacy from her father who was a well known banker and who put much time and effort into rescuing the Ulster and Leinster bank from collapse. *The Scotsman* reported that Paul Madden was "remembered for having rendered a notable service to the South of Ireland by resuscitation of a Munster bank after a disastrous failure" (*The Scotsman*, 7 September 1911, p.5).

¹¹² Grand, 'The Morals of Manner and Appearance', *Humanitarian*, 3 (1893), repr. In *Sex, Social Purity and Sarah Grand*, 1, pp.24-26. Heilmann, A., Forward, S. eds

Another interview offers a deeper insight into Thurston's literary beginnings:

'It was only when I became engaged to my husband, that the interest revived, for I was brought into touch with literary ideas, and at his suggestion I began writing again – at first in quite an amateurish way, with some simple sketches, which I did not intend for publication, and which have never appeared in print. When, however, I was married in 1901, and came to London, I set to work more seriously; . . . Quickly as success has come to Mrs Thurston, it must not be supposed that it has come easily. 'I write slowly and then re-write and revise as often as I feel to be necessary in order to satisfy my own standard. For John Chilcote, M.P. I did a great deal of work in looking up material for the political portions of the book, and so on . . . Mrs Thurston confessed to a preference for her second book rather than her first, if only because of the extra work it entailed, and the interest which her research brought to her.

(Acc 11378, Box 9, Large Press Cuttings Book, p.54)

It is perhaps strange that a man with an ego such as Ernest would suggest a literary career for his wife. Chapters One and Two have already established that writing as an occupation was deemed suitable for women at this time, but Ernest could hardly have foreseen the success his wife would enjoy from her literary endeavours. While it may be true that Ernest was encouraging of Thurston's early attempts at writing it is not unimaginable that his early encouragement was manufactured by Thurston in order to appease her husband's jealous nature; her apparent effortless achievement made palatable to Ernest by the belief that her literary success was due to him.

That writing offered women the best chance of exceptional economic success and freedom has already been highlighted in Chapter Two. However, as also discussed in Chapter Two, many women felt the need to justify their writing. Thurston may have been aware of this need to justify her success when crediting Ernest with it. She may also have been driven to write by financial necessity. No bank statements exist from the early period of her marriage, between 1901 and 1904, so it would be speculation to assume this. However, from the time her writing became successful the Thurstons were

able to enjoy a lavish lifestyle, purchase a new home in London,¹¹³ her Irish holiday home – “Maycroft,” the lease of a further holiday home in England, a car; numerous stocks and shares, and to enjoy frequent trips abroad. It was not until 1910, the year of the couple’s divorce, that Ernest achieved a sizable literary success with *The City of Beautiful Nonsense*.

Chapter Two highlighted the annual incomes of both a governess and a typical author of the period. Thurston’s success as an author enabled her to achieve a level of financial independence unavailable to the majority of women in the Edwardian period. She frequently bought and sold shares through her stockbroker, William Hope Pollock. The following handwritten note gives some indication of her share dealings in the year before her death:

List of securities held for safe custody by the London County Westminster Bank Ltd, Kensington (opposite Kensington Palace) on behalf of Mrs Katherine Cecil Thurston. 5th May 1910.

26 Shares	Bank of Egypt Ltd	£700
600 Shares	Fairbairn Lawson Coombe Barbour Ltd. Pref	£603
£800 [Stock]	Cordoba Central Buenos Ayres Extension Ry.	£769
100 Shares	New Founders Association Ltd. Ordy	£162
95 Shares	Borax consolidated Ltd. Ordy stock	£483
£439 [Stock]	Buenos Ayres & Pacific Railway. Ordy Stock	£483
200 Shares	Rio de Janeiro Flour Mills & Granaries Ltd	£437

(Acc 11378, Box 7)¹¹⁴

¹¹³ A letter from A.C. Barry, Thurston’s secretary to her solicitor Mr Mackrell, dated 1 November 1906 states that Thurston paid rent quarterly on 20 Victoria Road until 1906 when she purchased the lease on the property. The letter reads, “Mrs Thurston did not deduct the £7-1- from the quarters rent due on March 1905 nor on March 25th 1906 as she was not aware she was entitled to do so... It was just at this time Mrs Thurston moved into 20 Victoria Road. In April 1905 I became her secretary and was merely told to send a cheque each quarter...” A further letter from Barry to her solicitor, dated 29 November 1906 states that in this year she paid £1200 for a 99 year lease on 20 Victoria Road and an annual ground rent of £30 (Acc 11378, Box 2). A valuation notice for the same property dated 1910, puts the Gross Rateable Value of the property at £155 and the Rateable Value at £130 (Acc 11378, Box 6).

¹¹⁴ These sums of money are estimated to equate to the following amounts in today’s terms: £700 = £43,672; £603 = £37,620; £769 = £47,977; £162 = £10,107; £483 = £30,134; £437 = £27,264. (Officer, 2001, <http://www.eh.net.hmit/ppwebbp>)

Without taking into account her property or the money in her bank accounts, that Thurston could amass almost a quarter of a million pounds in share dealings alone is an indicator of the success she achieved through her writing. There are no details in the archive of share dealings from the time of the Thurstons' early married life, neither are there any dealings attributed to Ernest. It seems fair to speculate that the money used by Thurston for investment purposes was that earned by her writing.

3.8 *The Circle*

As stated earlier in this chapter, Thurston's literary career had begun with the publication of two short stories – *Clio's Conclusions* and *The Adjusting of Things* - both of which appeared in *The Tatler* Magazine in 1902, though it wasn't until the publication of *The Circle* that Thurston began to gain international recognition as a writer.¹¹⁵ The Thurston archive contains no correspondence or details of her writing career before 1902. However, the Blackwood archive contains copies of incoming and outgoing letters relating to her work, dating from November 1902. The first, dated 13 November 1902, was from William Blackwood to Thurston's Literary Agent, Cazenove and Perris of The Literary Agency, 5 Henrietta Street, Covent Garden, London, in which they discuss a suitable publication date for *The Circle*. Dodd Mead and Co. of New York and Blackwood were at this time in negotiations for a suitable date for publication of the novel. Blackwood was "pleased to fall in with their arrangement. We believe that early in the year would be as good a time as any for issue in this country" (MS 30 347).

On 2 December 1902 Thurston signed an agreement with William Blackwood and Co. in which they agreed to pay her a royalty fee of ten per cent on the first thousand copies

¹¹⁵ Please see p. 125 for titles and publication details of further short stories produced by Thurston.

sold, 12.5 per cent on three thousand copies sold and thereafter 16.23 per cent. (Acc 11378, Box 6) On 30 December 1902 she signed a further agreement on *The Circle*, this time with Dodd Mead and Co in New York. Dodd Mead's generous agreement states that they were willing to pay her \$1,000 as an advance on the first 25,000 copies sold, ten per cent on all copies up to twenty eight thousand copies sold and fifteen per cent thereafter.

The numbers quoted by the American publisher appear much more optimistic than Blackwood's. This may be a case of America offering a much bigger market than that of Great Britain. However, it may also be an indication as discussed in Chapter Two that Blackwood's were out of tune with the changing market.¹¹⁶ Competition was growing from a new breed of entrepreneurial publishers who were more than willing to take on and promote new authors. William Blackwood firmly believed in paying a sensible price for long-term prospects. In a memo on this issue he said: "Experience of past years fees show that no special article from some popular idol of the day or hour repays the extra premium that has to be paid" (MS 30 071, undated memorandum). Despite the threat presented by new publishers Blackwood was resistant to changes within the industry, and in particular to the emerging attitude to bestselling authors.

Once the agreement had been signed Blackwood's wasted no time on setting up the plates for *The Circle*. On 8 December 1902 they informed Dodd Mead that they "regret that your proposal to sell us plates of 'The Circle' came too late for us to take advantage of it. When we arranged for the novel the American publisher had not been fixed and then we pressed to get on with proof to enable you to set up your edition" (MS 30 347). A further letter from Blackwood to Dodd Mead and Co, informs the American publisher

¹¹⁶ Please refer to Chapter Four for a detailed discussion and comparison between Thurston's publishing deals and those of her contemporaries.

that "Messrs Copp Clark and Co of Toronto have secured the Canadian rights of Mrs Thurston's novel 'The Circle'" (MS 30 347). By 7 January 1903 Blackwood and Dodd Mead had agreed on a suitable publication date for *The Circle*: 24 January 1903. However, Blackwood also noted that they "regret to hear that a mishap has occurred to the revised proofs of 'The Circle' and we have pleasure in sending by same mail a printed copy of the book from our edition" (MS 30 346, outgoing letters from Blackwood).

Although no details are given of the mishap that Blackwood alludes to, a press clipping from *The Bookman* in March 1903 enlightens us:

In reference to the American publication, a rather unusual incident postponed the appearance of 'The Circle' in the US from January 17th the date first fixed to February 9th. The corrected proofs of the book being forwarded from here in December reached New York safely; it was then the task of Messrs Dodd Mead to send them from New York to Boston for purposes of printing. By a curious chance the mails containing the packet were robbed – and the proofs lost.

(Acc 11378, Box 6, *The Bookman*, March 1903, n.p.)

Despite the delay, the book's reception was good, and on 6 March 1903 Blackwood was able to write to Dodd Mead and "send cuttings of 'The Circle'. This book has had a fine reception by the press and you may be able to see these cuttings. If you have any spare copies of the reviews we would be glad to see them" (MS 30 347, Outgoing letters from Blackwood).

On 5 February 1903 Blackwood wrote to his newest literary star congratulating her on the success of her first novel, but also to secure further work for his magazine:

I am happy to tell you that your excellent novel 'The Circle' has made a good start and promises to do well. We have already disposed of the first impression and part of a second. The figures up to date are –

Six-shilling edition 1237 copies Colonial Edition 343 copies

Have you ever written a short story, or have you anything of the kind on the stocks which you think might suit for my magazine? If you have I shall be pleased to consider it . . . Congratulating you warmly on your first very successful and well earned start as a novelist.

(Acc 11378, Box 10)

By corresponding with authors in this way Blackwood fostered a loyalty from his authors and created a distinctive house identity (Finkelstein, 2002, pp. 25-7). The American publisher, Dodd Mead & Co. were also delighted with the public response to *The Circle*. In a letter to Thurston, dated 9 April 1903, they wrote:

There has been so many notices of your book, and so many very favourable ones, that perhaps it is rather superfluous for your publisher to write about it, but I do want to say that I enjoyed it very much indeed. I see a great many manuscripts, and I assure you that 'The Circle' was an oasis in a desert. . . . We have backed up our personal liking of your book with much financial support, and 'The Circle' has been pushed very hard here in unusual ways, and at an expense we could not put on every book, especially on every new book. I was very pleased to hear from our Mr Gilder the other day that you are writing your next, and would offer it to us soon.

(Acc 11378, Box 4)

In *The Circle* Thurston played an important part in the development of "the New Woman character in fiction and of sensationalist and decadent fiction" as a whole (Meaney, 2000, p.158). Thurston wrote of the familiar circumstances, of the life of a young woman who as an only child feels compelled to stay with her aging father and tend to his needs. This young woman does eventually leave behind her duties as a daughter, but feels bound to return to them, only to realise that her new life is more satisfying and therefore returns to it. This was a theme familiar to many women at the

time. The traditional Victorian duties of a woman, resulted in tensions in women eager to stay within the bounds of respectability and yet craving a life outwith those bounds.

Though reviewed by many publications as a simple love story, *The Circle* contained the beginnings of Thurston's development into a New Woman author. Set in London at the beginning of the twentieth century, the story focuses on the development of Anna Solny, the only daughter of a Russian Jewish immigrant and friend to the "grotesque" Johann who harbours a secret love for her. Anna moves from her humble beginnings as her father's housekeeper and companion to train as an actress in Paris under the patronage of Mrs Jeanne Maxtead. Maxtead has been denied the life which she desired and sees the possibility of that promise being developed in the young Anna. Anna's success as an actress is outstanding. However, she returns to London to nurse her dying father. It is at this point that we think that Anna is about to turn her back on her hard won career and independence. Through Anna's friendship with the older woman and her decision to return to her acting career, we see Thurston commenting on the restrictions and bitterness felt by many women due to a lack of opportunities brought about by accident of their gender.

The opening pages of the novel establish Anna's feelings of entrapment in her life with her father. She tells her father:

'I wish I were a man! . . . I wish I were a man!' . . . [H]er father looked at her over his glasses. 'Why, my child? Are you not content? Is the life not good?' Anna leans back in her chair and replies 'Oh, good enough! . . . But if I were a man – If I were a man, father, I'd get on board a ship and be a sailor.'

(*The Circle*, p.3)

Later in the novel Anna's father attempts to stop her leaving the house: "[s]he turned to him, a torrent of speech behind her lips; . . . 'Father' she said shortly, 'let me pass.

Can't you see that worlds wouldn't keep me back? . . . I want to see things" (*The Circle*, pp. 6-7).

The rich Jeanne Maxtead represents the New Woman who has made an independent life. She informs the young Anna:

I was twenty-five when my husband died, leaving me with hundreds of acquaintances and a thousand pounds a-year . . . It was then that I stood up straight and looked about. I had to make my one thousand into four, so I had to know myself . . . What do you guess that I discovered? . . . I discovered that I had a capacity all my own.

(*The Circle*, pp. 64-5)

As Anna's father's housekeeper and companion, Jeanne Maxtead highlights the lack of opportunity available to the vast majority of women:

[Y]ou have brains, you have good looks, you have ambition – though you haven't discovered it yet; on the other hand . . . you have no education to speak of, you have no position worth the name, you possess not one influential friend. Left to yourself, what future do you see? Let me answer you. The saddest future on this profitable earth – the future of a thwarted career, of a discontented, wasted life.

(*The Circle*, p. 91)

In comparison with this picture of "discontented, wasted life," the glamorous Jeanne Maxtead, with her "Chinese robe with a fantastic pattern in gold and . . . slippers of Oriental make", embodies the spirit of the New Woman with her cigarettes and active social life: "Coffee and cigarettes at two in the morning! How many women would be sipping hot water and preparing for a day in bed?" asks Anna of her friend when finding her still awake at a late hour (*The Circle*, p. 148).

On Anna's return to London to nurse her dying father, she finds the tedium of domestic life unbearable. She sits with her father daily "waiting for a sign." Her old friend

Johann asks of her “waiting for what?” ... “Nothing,” she replies. To this Johann informs her “It is impossible to wait for nothing.” It is here that Thurston speaks of the futility of women’s domestic role when Anna replies, “There you are quite wrong, Johann; half of the women in the world wait for it till they die” (*The Circle*, p. 290). Following her father’s death Anna leaves her old home and Johann, and returns to her independent life and the promise of “plenty of work” the likes of which keep “many people sane” (*The Circle*, p. 290). Actresses were poorly regarded in Victorian and Edwardian society, and often viewed as no better than prostitutes. “Obedient” daughters and wives were, on the other hand, held in high esteem. By preferring to work of an actress Anna is stating that it is preferable to be viewed as an actress than accept the stultifying boredom of respectable womanhood.

At the time of its publication the general consensus of opinion was that the author of *The Circle* displayed a talent for storytelling unusual in a writer of such limited experience. In a review in *The Daily Telegraph* in January 1903 Thurston’s work was thus described:

It is something to come across so fresh and original a story as ‘The Circle’ . . . There is much that is crude, rough and inartistic in these pages. On the other hand, there [is] . . . an abounding vitality, which arrests the attention and makes us read the book from beginning to end. . . . it is a most vigorous first attempt . . . and is full of promise for things to come. A story most absorbing from the first page to the last, a novel more difficult to lay down, it is rarely our good fortune to peruse.

(Courtney W.L., “Books of the Day”, *The Daily Telegraph*, 28 January 1903, n.p.)¹¹⁷

As a testament to Thurston’s growing reputation, reviews appeared across a range of newspapers and magazines. A review in *Punch* echoed a similar view to *The Telegraph*

¹¹⁷ In making reference to “much that is crude, rough and inartistic” in Thurston’s work this critic highlights the points discussed in Chapters One and Two of the lack of education available to the majority of women and how this hindered them as authors.

when it opined: "My Baronite reading *The Circle* . . . positively forgot it was his duty to write about it, and gave himself up unthinkingly to the spell of the story. That fate of a hoary reviewer is the highest compliment that can be paid to Mrs Thurston" (*Punch Magazine*, 4 March, 1903, n.p.).

The Literary Herald was equally enthusiastic on 13 February 1903:

With the issue of *The Circle* Mrs Thurston at once takes rank with the group of contemporary writers whose work is most worthy of consideration from an artistic point of view, and to whom we look to carry on the best traditions of English fiction. . . . *The Circle* is a strong and serious piece of work and must be treated with respect . . . Passages from 'Romola' about the sacredness of duty to those who are dependent upon us come back on reading this story, and this we take to be the moral of the book – if indeed there is any moral intended, or anything beyond the dramatic presentation of a difficult and tragic situation – and if Mrs Thurston had a conscious model, George Eliot surely was that model. But the similarity is more in thought than in style or treatment and we have no wish to deprive Mrs Thurston of the credit that is due to her as an effective and independent writer.

(Acc 11378, Box 9, Small Press Cuttings Book)

This comparison with Eliot, however tenuous, shows that Thurston was being taken seriously as a promising new writer.

T.P.'s Weekly, Book of the Week column astutely observed that *The Circle* was more than a mere love story:

When you take up the book you are carried on insensibly and rapidly; and indeed it is difficult to lay it down until you have finished its pages. There is great go in the narrative, and there is throughout a note of originality and strenuousness which are infectious . . . But, as I have said, I regard all this as the ostensible purpose of the book. If I mistake not, it has a deeper meaning than a mere love story . . . a higher and deeper note is struck when you are practically done with the love story; indeed it has struck me that the authoress has built up the whole romance in order to create one scene in it; it is the scene which describes the awakening of conscience; that marks the agony with which the sacred duty neglected can pursue and, in the end torture can undo us.

(Acc 11378 Box 4, n.p., n.d.)

William Blackwood and Sons would have been pleased that Thurston's first novel had received such a warm reception, but perhaps the review which would have pleased them most came from *The Cork Examiner* on 4 February 1903, "the tone of the book is refreshingly wholesome, the style is vivacious and yet easy . . . The publishers have done their part in presenting the novel worthily, binding, type and paper are excellent" (Acc 11378, Box 9).

Both publishers were delighted with the large sales brought about by the public response to Thurston's first novel, and both were keen to secure more of her literary work for their future publishing programmes. However, the huge media attention surrounding the publication had alerted other publishers to the promise of Thurston's literary work. Shortly after the publication of *The Circle*, New York publishers McClure Phillips & Co. wrote:

In this day of commonplace fiction, your story, 'The Circle' comes like a fresh breath. I have just finished reading it and I cannot refrain from writing you and telling you how greatly I enjoyed it. It deserves a big audience, which I sincerely trust it will have.

I beg to tell you that we should like to publish a book of yours very much. If you are in or near New York, will you not let me come to see you? It would be a great pleasure to know you, and perhaps you would tell me something of your literary plans. Do you write short stories? If so, we should like to consider some of your work for our Magazine.

(Acc 11378, Box 4, letter dated 20 March 1903)

A further letter dated 18 June 1903 from Shurmer Sibthorp, a representative of a number of London publishers, among them *Cosmopolitan Magazine*, also showed interest in publishing Thurston's work in the United Kingdom:

As the representative of a number of London publishers I have been very much interested in reading your book THE CIRCLE and I should very greatly appreciate

any opportunity you can give me to consider future work from your pen, either in the way of short stories for magazine publication or longer stories for serial and book publication.

(Acc 11378, Box 4)

Despite the fact that women's suffrage was still to be won and many issues regarding women's place in society still had to be resolved, it is interesting to note the lack of reference to the "Woman Question", discussed in Chapters One and Two, in these reviews. The lack of comment on the issue may reflect the belief of many that the woman question of the nineteenth century had been resolved.

Conclusion

The success of Thurston's first novel highlighted the fact that she was an author of promise and a viable publishing proposition. Her willingness to engage in sexual politics in a conservative manner focuses on the tensions at play within Thurston as she tried to reconcile her position as wife and successful novelist. The popularity of her writing gives credence to the view that the debate surrounding the woman question was far from over. Chapter Four will focus on Thurston's growing reputation as an author in an expanding literary market. Her involvement in an increasingly complex literary environment will further highlight the developments of that industry and the female author's position within it.

Chapter Four

Continued literary success

Spurred on by the early success of *The Circle* Thurston continued with her writing, and the period between 1903 and 1907 was particularly prolific. In addition to the publication of three further novels, *John Chilcote MP* (1904), *The Gambler* (1905), and *The Mystics* (1907), Thurston successfully negotiated the publication of a number of short stories including “Things of Love” (1902), “The Hinges of Love” (1902), “Clio’s Conclusions” (1902), “The Adjusting of Things” (1902), “The Climax” (1903), “Human Nature” (1904), “An Oriental” (1904), “Votive Offering” (1905) “The Healer of Men” (1906), “The Times Change” (1907), and “Temptation” (1905). The short stories which were published prior to 1903 would reappear in further publications throughout her career.¹¹⁸

Although Thurston made a substantial income from her writing, following her divorce from Ernest we see her become increasingly concerned with her level of income and ability to support herself financially. Such concerns were common for authors of the period who lived by the efforts of their pen. As is the case with many popular women authors of the time, much of Thurston’s work – so popular at the time of writing has now disappeared. Despite the brevity of her success, her publishing history serves as a useful tool in ascertaining the opportunities available during her literary career for

¹¹⁸ The Thurston archive at the National Library of Scotland contains a number of undated manuscripts, several handwritten, and typescripts of short stories and plays by Thurston. In addition to the short stories already stated is one other entitled, *The Hand*. A number of undated typescripts and manuscripts (again several handwritten) of plays written by Thurston are also contained within the archive: *Fidelity*; *The Crucible*; *Harlequin*, *The Day After*; and *Max*. A lengthy manuscript of a novel entitled *Sandro* can also be found here. Unless otherwise stated throughout the thesis, no contracts or publication details can be found within the archive for these works. It is to be assumed that the majority and perhaps all of them remain unpublished.

writers of her kind. An archive such as the Thurston archive offers rich material of a type not usually closely investigated - that of a popular woman writer.

In his study of the publishing history of Grant Allen, *The Busiest Man in England*, Peter Morton states that authors with no other income other than that which resulted from their writing

walked a precarious path. With some talent and a modicum of luck, they could hope that their path lay upward – toward a bare living for most, cozy comfort for a small majority, luxurious affluence for a tiny few. Quite often, though, the path lay downward – toward penury, the meagre charitable pension, the workhouse, the gutter.

(Morton, 2005, p. xiii)

Morton goes on to state that during the latter part of the nineteenth century it was only a talented and popular minority who earned enough to live on from their writing. He asserts that the majority of writers of the period can be situated in four categories: those from moneyed families, those who married money, those with other professions, and, finally, those who worked for weekly and monthly magazines. (Morton, 2005, p. 112) The majority of female writers fell into this third class: “they had at least a roof over their head and clothes on their back supplied by a husband or father, even in the few cases . . . where they were more than able to supply their own” (Morton, 2005, p. 63). Thurston clearly belonged to this third group; although she was the main breadwinner in her relationship with Ernest, her divorce from him left her in a precarious position. She knew that without an education or profession to fall back on, her ability to earn would solely rest on her popularity as an author. Morton’s assertion that “in a few cases” women authors were able to support themselves is evidence of the small number of women able to finance their lives through their writing. As I have mooted in earlier

chapters, the lack of opportunities available to women through education and careers severely restricted the work available to them.

In 1899 Walter Besant asserted that there were thirteen hundred novelists active in Britain of which about sixty were making £1,000 a year and another 150 a tolerable living: “the rest of the one thousand three hundred make little or nothing” (Besant Walter, *The Pen and the Book*, Thomas Burleigh, 1899, p. 137; p. 143 in Morton, 2005, p. 112). By 1901 this figure had grown to eleven thousand (Morton, 2005, p. 61).

Despite this large increase in numbers, the majority of both men and women writing professionally rarely made enough to live on comfortably. Regardless of the fact that as early as 1824 relatively unknown authors such as Susan Ferrier, whose *Marriage* was published by William Blackwood, “was able to obtain £1,000 for the copyright of *The Inheritance*” (Feldman, from William Blackwood archives in St Clair, 2004, p. 173), it was as Morton states, only a “talented few” who were able to live from their writing alone. (Morton, 2005, p. 62)

Three of Thurston’s contemporaries who published with the publishing firm of Smith, Elder and Co. were The Honourable Emily Lawless (Lawless also published with John Murray, the publisher who bought over Smith, Elder), Katharine Tynan and, Mrs Humphrey Ward.¹¹⁹ The poet and novelist Emily Lawless (1845-1913) is an author who

¹¹⁹ The publishing firm of Smith, Elder and Co. was founded in 1816 by George Smith (1789-1846) in partnership with Alexander Elder. In 1843, Smith’s son, George Smith (1824-1901) took over much of the firm’s operations, and upon the death of his father in 1846 became sole head of the company. Smith, Elder and Co. prospered under George Smith’s leadership. Early in his tenure the firm published works by John Ruskin, Charlotte Bronte’s *Jane Eyre* (1848), and William Makepeace Thackeray. In 1859, Smith started *The Cornhill Magazine* with Thackeray as editor and in 1865, an evening newspaper with literary leanings *The Pall Mall Gazette*. Both the magazine and the newspaper attracted contributions from leading writers and artists. The firm was bought over by the publishing firm of John Murray. (Personal correspondence David McClay, Curator, The John Murray Archive) Since the acquisition of the Murray Archive by the

has been closely linked with Thurston. Thurston and Lawless were “two very different Irish women writers” but the writing of each “was fuelled by the emergence of a self-consciously political feminism” (Meaney, 2000 p. 170) and each figured the New Woman within their writing. Born in County Kildare, she was the eldest daughter of Lord and Lady Cloncurry, she remained single throughout her life: A fine horsewoman and swimmer she achieved the even more unusual distinction for a woman of the award of D.Litt from Trinity College, Dublin. (Buck ed., 1992, p. 724)

Lawless has been a difficult writer to categorise. A contributor to the prominent journal, *The Nineteenth Century*, her work “displays a high seriousness, moral tone, and historical weight” which “appear[s] to put her emphatically in the opposite camp to the decadents. She also appears to have opposed women’s suffrage, though it is difficult to read either her novel *Grania* (1892) or her biography of Maria Edgeworth as anything other than proto-feminist works” (Meaney, 2000, pp. 168-70).¹²⁰ Lawless’s mentor was the regular Blackwood contributor, Margaret Oliphant. In Oliphant’s obituary for Lawless’ mother Lady Cloncurry, she lauded Lawless’ achievements and pronounced her as being the new Maria Edgeworth.

Lawless published her first book *A Chelsea Householder* in 1882. The first of her novels published by Smith, Elder and Co., for which a literary agreement exists, is *With Essex in Ireland* which was published on 16 May 1890. For this book Smith, Elder and Co. “agree[d] to incur the cost of producing and publishing an edition of 1000 copies

National Library of Scotland in 2005 the archive has been in the process of cataloguing and conservation, and is not yet open for public consultation.

¹²⁰ *Grania: The Story of an Island* (1892) is a powerful exploration of the conflict between communal identity and feminine individuality. “This remarkably feminist novel marks Emily Lawless as one of the most significant early Irish woman writers.” (Buck ed., 1992, p. 724) Thurston’s *The Fly on the Wheel* is close to *Grania* in its exploration of the social and psychological restrictions on a young woman of independent mind in turn of the century Irish society. (Meaney, 2000, p. 172)

and pay to the Hon. Emily Lawless a Royalty of 3/6d per copy on every copy sold after the sale of 500 copies” (Murray Archive Acc 12604, Box 329b; Publication Arrangements 2, 1879-1899). Lawless’ second novel with Smith, Elder was *Grania: The Story of an Island* the first edition of which was published on 8 March 1892 and:

The entire copyright at home and abroad excepting the United States of America, assigned to Smith, Elder and Co. in consideration of the sum of five hundred pounds to be paid to Hon. Emily Lawless. Date of payment to author 9 October 1891.

(Murray Archive Acc 12604, Box 329b; Publication Arrangements 2, 1879-1899).

It wasn’t until 1906 that we see a considerable increase in Lawless’ income from her literary endeavours with the publication of *The Book of Gilly: Four months out of a life* which was published on 4 Dec 1906. For this Smith, Elder were willing to “undertake to publish the work on the terms of paying the author £100 in advance of the Royalties of 15% on all copies sold of the 1st edition of 1500 and of 25% on all copies sold of subsequent editions” (From Murray Archive Acc 12604, Box 331d; Publication Arrangements 3, 1899-).

No letters from Lawless to Smith Elder are yet available for consultation, however from the limited correspondence which I have been able to access within the Murray archive, it is possible to gain some understanding of the relationship between Lawless and her publisher John Murray.¹²¹ As was the custom of the day (Sutherland, 1976, p. 85) Lawless appeared to have had a close relationship with her publisher. However her correspondence with Murray shows that she walked a precarious path between trying to earn a respectable living from her writing and maintaining a friendly relationship with

¹²¹ At the present time only incoming letters from Lawless to Murray are available. Outgoing letterbooks are currently undergoing conservation.

her publisher, as this letter confirms: "You have always been so kind and friendly throughout our intercourse that I cannot look upon our relations as merely businesslike and should therefore dislike that you should have that impression" (From Murray Acc12604, MRR Transit Folder 106. Letter dated 5 Dec 1889). Despite her reluctance to sour relations between herself and Murray, Lawless was determined that her work would extract the optimum payment. She was adamant that she would not be disadvantaged by the ever-changing publishing climate of the time, as this extract from a letter dated 5 December 1889 demonstrates:

As I have frankly told you I did not find our last arrangement at all satisfactory, which was no doubt my own fault in not understanding matters more clearly at first. I have recently received an offer of 11% royalty on a 6/- book (same size and price as "Plain Frances") From the beginning and without deductions . . . I would be most obliged . . . whether you would see your way to offering me a similar royalty and also from the beginning, as I need hardly say that I would prefer publishing with you to going to a fresh publisher however good . . . if we could once hit upon an agreement satisfactory to us both it could be continued without discussion on any other book of mind you cared to undertake.

(From Murray Acc12604, MRR Transit Folder 106.)

In this letter to Murray, dated 9 October 1889, Lawless demonstrates that although confused by the changing publishing climate and the information given by Murray, she is keenly aware of the financial implications of her position:

When a book is advertised as in its 4th edition and the other having sold . . . 400 copies is now in its 2nd edition, and when the result is practically nil you will see, looking at the matter dispassionately that it is hard, will you not? Especially in a case where money is of considerable importance. For my pay I received £150 for "Major Lawrence" . . . When you first proposed "Two third profits" I demanded, as you remember having already had a slight experience of "half-profits" but you assured me both by letter and personally that you considered it "most favourable to the author and "more so than a royalty". Now it seems to me that setting aside the 3 volume editions and taking the 6/ ones on a royalty of 1/ per copy, which is low as most authors I know receive 1/3 from the start, sometimes 1/6 . . . There would have been about £40 for 750 of "Plain Frances" sold and £23 of £24 for between 400 and 500 of the 6/ edition of Major Lawrence . . . This is not much but it seems more than I am likely to get on the system I accepted upon your personal and friendly assurance, and I think, taking

all the circumstances into consideration you ought to see that I am not the less by having done so. This is all and please believe that in any case I am fully sensible of your past kindnesses to me personally, and shall always continue to be so.

(From Murray Acc12604, MRR Transit Folder 106.)

This letter dated 22 June 1888 gives evidence that Lawless was more than willing to confront Murray with inaccuracies in the publishing advice and financial payment she received:

I see in the *Athaeneum* that "The Major" has arrived at a 3rd edition as your son told me three months ago that it had about "squeezed its expected", my avaricious soul begins to wonder whether there is likely to be anything more forthcoming for its author . . . I cannot help wishing to keep what little profit I can of what I have already written.

(From Murray Acc12604, MRR Transit Folder 106.)

Nor was she afraid to haggle over the advance she was offered: "[y]our suggestion about an advance payment of the 2/3 profit of the first edition would suit me perfectly . . . pray do not think me very obstinate if I say I think it should be £200 instead of £150" (From Murray Acc12604, MRR Transit Folder 106. Letter dated 1889, no further date given).

One of the most highly regarded and popular Irish novelists of the period was the poet, novelist and journalist Katherine Tynan (1861-1931). Tynan was an immensely prolific author who produced over 160 volumes of poetry, novels, short stories, articles and memoirs. She was extremely influential in the Irish revival (the nationalist and cultural movement which flourished in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century (Buck ed., 1992, p. 1096).

Tynan's literary career began in 1885 with the publication of her first book *Louise de la Vallière* (1885). Her career with Smith, Elder began in 1899 with the publication of *She Walks in Beauty* on 24 November 1899. For this she sold "[t]he entire copyright at home and abroad . . . to Smith, Elder and Co. in consideration of the sum of £60 . . . A further sum of £60 to be paid . . . in the event of the sale of the work reaching 5000 copies." By 15 November 1900, Tynan was benefiting from the introduction of the Royalty system which, for the publication of *A Daughter of the Fields* saw her receiving

the sum of £50 on July 4th 1900 on account of Royalties of 20% of the published price of all copies sold of the 1st edition after the expenses of publication are covered and of 25% on copies sold of the 2nd edition after the expenses are covered. . . . The Royalty on the 1st edition (1425 copies) is to begin after the sale of 725 copies.

(From Murray Archive Acc 12604, Box 331d; Publication Arrangements 3, 1899-)

Despite the generosity of this royalty arrangement, Tynan would not receive a similar rate for her subsequent publications with Smith, Elder and Co. until 1907. *Love of Sisters* which was published on 25 September 1902 earned her an advance of £80 on "account of Royalties of 15% of the published price" (From Murray Archive Acc 12604, Box 331d; Publication Arrangements 3, 1899-). In 1907 with the publication of *Her Ladyship*, Tynan was offered an advance of £100 and royalties of 16.23 per cent on copies sold up to a maximum of 1950 and thereafter, 1/6d on all copies sold. (From Murray Archive Acc 12604, Box 331d; Publication Arrangements 3, 1899-) Similar royalty rates of 16.23 per cent was offered for her publication *The House of Crickets* (1908) on all copies sold up to 1950 and 25 per cent thereafter. (From Murray Archive Acc 12604, Box 331d; Publication Arrangements 3, 1899-)

Another popular novelist published by Smith, Elder and Co. was Mrs Humphrey Ward (1851-1920). Ward was a leading intellectual figure and an active philanthropist, her

novels deal principally with social and religious themes. She was an active campaigner for higher education for women but strongly opposed the suffrage movement. She was a leading campaigner and organised support for "An Appeal against Women's Suffrage" which was published in 1889. She became the first president of the Anti-Suffrage League in 1908 (Buck ed, 1992, p. 724). Meaney states that public dissociation with the demand for suffrage was a common occurrence amongst "moderate" women of the time "since moderates arguing for educational and social reform sometimes sought strategically to distance themselves from a position and campaign which attracted such hostility" (2002, p. 161).

Ward was a regular contributor to *The Times*, *Pall Mall Gazette* and *Macmillan's Magazine*. Her first novel for adults entitled *Robert Elsmere* (1888) was instantly successful when it was published by Smith, Elder. Elder had brought *Robert Elsmere* to Smith, Elder because her former publisher Macmillan had declined to publish it on the terms demanded by Ward. Ward had asked Macmillan for £200, but the success of her previous work with them had been disappointing. On the whole, authors who enjoyed good sales figures with their first novel could dictate large sums for subsequent novels. St Clair states that after the success enjoyed by Sir Walter Scott with his *Lay of the Last Minstrel* "Scott was offered over £1,000 for *Marmion*, unseen and unfinished. For *The Lady of the Lake* he received over £2,000" (2004, p. 161). In keeping with this publishing convention Macmillan were reluctant to offer Ward £200. Smith, Elder however, were happy to offer her this sum and "gave her another £100 . . . for an addition of 1000 copies (Huxley, 1923, p. 191).

Smith, Elder obviously believed that Ward was a valuable publishing commodity. In the advances and royalties offered to her we begin to see comparisons with the sums offered

to Thurston. For her novel *Eleanor* (1900) Ward was given an advance of £600 (interest to be charged at four per cent per annum until the date of publication), and a royalty rate of twenty per cent. This royalty was maintained for her two subsequent novels published by Smith, Elder: *Lady Rose's Daughter* (1903) and *The Marriage of William Ashe* (1905). By 1906 Ward was offered twenty per cent on the first 10,000 copies sold of *Fenwick's Career* and twenty five per cent on further sales. By 1910, the royalty received by Ward for *Canadian Born* had increased further. She was offered:

[t]he sum of £500 . . . paid on signing the Agreement, a further sum of £500 to be paid on the day of publication making £1000 in advance and in a/c of royalties. Royalties to be 25% of a 6/- book on the first 10,000 copies, 27 ½% up to 20000 copies, 30% after.

(From Murray Archive Acc 12604, Box 331d; Publication Arrangements 3, 1899-)

Thurston can clearly be seen an author who commanded sums far in advance of the majority of authors of the time. Morton gives examples of the few largest literary earners of the late Victorian period:

We gasp at the stupendous £10,000 that Longman paid Disraeli for *Endymion* in 1880, George Eliot had an income of about £5,000 a year in 1873 – more than the top echelon of barristers could command . . . Earnings rose steadily up to the end of the century and beyond. The British and American serial rights alone of Kipling's *Captains Courageous* went for £5,500 in 1896, which was the highest price ever paid by a magazine for fiction. These were the literary millionaires of the day, but even at the lower level novel-writing could pay very well. The forgotten James Payn . . . earned a steady £1,500 by his pen year in and year out. This was a very fine income indeed when a family could live in solid upper-middle-class comfort on half that.

(Morton, 2005, p. 61)

One of Thurston's contemporaries, the romantic novelist Elinor Glyn's work and lifestyle bears striking resemblances to that of Thurston:

Glyn was a romantic novelist, an expert on etiquette and romance, a first-hand observer of society, a traveller who had seen the courts of Russia, Spain, Britain, Egypt etc. She travelled extensively in Europe keeping a journal containing stories told to her, incidents of manners and portraits of those she met, dined or danced with.

(Weedon, 2006, Personal correspondence)

Writing in her memoir *Romantic Adventure* (1936), Glyn described herself as

a member of the band of pioneers in the cause of feminine emancipation who laboured so earnestly ... to free the souls and bodies of women from the heavy age-old trammels of custom and convention.'¹²² She wrote short stories for women's magazines, gave talks on style and fashion, and wrote a book entitled 'Philosophy of Love' in which she expounded her views on how to make love last, how to keep your husband – and when not to. She became a popular celebrity. The reasons for relative obscurity today are apparent when you read her memoirs: her world was that of high society, her values deeply rooted in her age

(Weedon, 2006, Unpublished paper)

In her 2006 paper "Earning Celebrity: Elinor Glyn as a writer" delivered at the SHARP conference in The Hague, Alexis Weedon gives evidence of Glyn's earnings. No literary agreements exist for Glyn's first book, *The Visits of Elizabeth* (1902) which was published by Duckworth, but subsequent agreements for her second novel *The Reflections of Ambrosine* show her being offered twenty five per cent of the nominal selling price of sales in Britain and her colonies but excluded Canada. These were terms offered for a further seven of Glyn's novels until 1907, when she was offered a £700 advance for her novel *Three Weeks*, twenty per cent royalty and 3d to be paid on all colonial copies sold.

¹²² Glyn, E (1936) *Romantic Adventure, Being the autobiography of E. Glyn*, London. I. Nicholson & Watson

Changes in copyright law throughout the Victorian period¹²³ and the end of publishers' reliance on the lending libraries in the 1880s resulted in the development of a competitive marketplace for books. Publishers began to exploit their "investment in the author through agreements and through selling subsidiary rights in their work."

(Weedon, 2003, p. 141) We see examples of both Thurston and her publishers taking advantage of these expanding markets by ensuring that her work appeared in a variety of formats and across a range of publications.

Throughout her literary career we see evidence of Thurston and her literary agent, attempting to coordinate the U.K. publication of her novels with that of the U.S. publication date. This was a common practice amongst British publishers of the day as they aimed "not to weaken their demand for international copyright" in an attempt "to try to secure simultaneous legal copyright protection in both countries" (St Clair, 2004, p. 391). Publication in the United States and indeed throughout the Colonies can be seen as a "feature of the internationalization of British book publishing and an indication of the importance of the market abroad" (Weedon, 2003, p. 32).

At the close of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth, several British publishing houses established overseas branches and began to produce volumes for this market. The colonial market was particularly important to Blackwood and one for which he produced his own editions and co-editions. Weedon states that these colonial editions were printed from the same plates as home editions, often at the same printing where a quarter to a half of the run was bound up for export" (2003, pp. 56-7). Both the Thurston and Blackwood archives offer evidence of this practice.

¹²³ St Clair asserts that The United States joined the international copyright treaties in 1891 and urged other countries to join. This ensured that offshore publication of English language texts became illegal, thus ensuring that authors benefited financially from the sale of their work globally. (2004, pp. 487-9)

Authors were routinely offered different royalty rates for the home and colonial markets. The details of the royalties offered to Thurston for *The Fly on the Wheel* shows the disparity between the two markets:

The Fly on the Wheel . . .
25% on the first 20,000: 27 ½ % on all sales beyond 20,000 ...
Colonial 15% . . . 12 ½ % up to 20,000 . . . 16 2/3 % beyond 20,000

(MS 30 843 Memoranda on Copyright, Blackwood)

We see further evidence of this disparity with the publication of *The Mystics* when Thurston was offered twenty per cent on the sale of up to 10,000 copies and twenty five per cent on sales beyond 10,000 copies. However the colonial edition of this novel was awarded fifteen per cent up to 10,000 copies. (MS 30 843 Memoranda on Copyright, Blackwood) Blackwood applied these rules to the majority of his authors: Joseph Conrad was offered a royalty of 16. 23 per cent for *Lord Jim* and *Tales*, yet only ten per cent on the colonial edition of both titles. (MS 30 843 Memoranda on Copyright, Blackwood) E.M. Forster was offered 12.5 per cent up to 500 copies of *The Longest Journey* (1907), 15 per cent of sales between 500 and 2,000, and 1/- per copy on sales between 2,000-5,000 and 25 per cent on sales beyond this number. However Forster was only offered ten per cent on sales up to 100 copies and 12.5 per cent beyond that on the colonial edition.

The sums earned by Thurston appear extraordinary even by contemporary standards. When viewed in the context of the period in which she lived and worked we gain a greater insight into her popularity as an author. Morton, writing of the literary and financial success enjoyed by Grant Allen in 1891 states that Allen was awarded an advance of £1,000, the equivalent of £64,341 in 2003, however:

as a guide to what such a sum meant in terms of what it would buy, such a conversion is wholly misleading . . . it has been said that a Victorian income, after being adjusted for inflation, should then be tripled to give a real idea of its buying power at the time.

(Morton, 2005, p. xv)

Exploration of the Blackwood archive provides valuable information on the royalties and copyright arrangements of a number of Thurston's contemporary authors.

Memoranda on Copyright held within the archive supplies us with financial information and offers insight into the sales targets expected for individual titles. The sales targets set for Thurston's novels are repeatedly higher than the majority of her contemporaries.

Thurston's work was regularly expected to sell upwards of 20,000 copies (MS 30 843 Memoranda on Copyright). Only one other Blackwood author, Miss Margaret Todd, a contemporary of Thurston's was expected to make higher sales: Her publication of *Fiona Maclean* (1892) was made on the arrangement of ten per cent for the first 100,000 copies sold and an advance of £30.

In comparison with Todd, Thurston was offered 25 per cent on the first 20,000 copies of *The Fly on the Wheel* and 27.5 per cent on all sales beyond 20,000, with an advance of £1,000 on the date of publication and £5,000 three months after the sale "if a sale of 20,000 has been reached in 6d- form" (MS 30, 843, Memoranda on Copyright, p. 319). Weedon states that "Sutherland (1976) took £1000 as a watershed figure for mid-century novelists" and that being offered a large sum in advance "meant you were one of the few highly paid writers" (Weedon, 2003, p. 19). These figures illustrate that Thurston can be viewed as an exceptional earner.

The numbers of copies of each title produced by a publishing house can be viewed as a marker of the expected success of the author. In general, publishers preferred to produce

short print runs of books in order that they could test the market thus avoiding heavy financial outlay and expensive mistakes; “only a very few titles were sufficiently successful and popular to be printed in long runs (Weedon, 2003, pp. 26-7). Writing of an earlier period, St Clair states that

[f]or the first fourteen years of its life in print *Frankenstein* existed in about a thousand copies . . . During its first forty years, a total of between 7000 and 8000 copies were printed and sold . . . Nor was *Frankenstein* unusual in this regard. The figures for Austen show a similarly modest success.

(2004, p. 365)

The publication of Mrs G Armytage’s *Maids of Honour* (1906) received a royalty rate of ten per cent on the first 300 copies; 12.5 per cent on any copies sold between 300 and 500 and 15 per cent on copies between 500 and 1,000, with no royalties payable on the first 300 books if 1000 copies were not sold. E.M. Forster’s *Longest Journey* fared little better than this. He was offered 12.5 per cent on sales of up to 500 copies, 15 per cent on copies between 500-2,000, and 1/- per copy between 2,000-5,000 copies.

Eliot states that a popular novelist of the 1880s and 90s such as Walter Besant might receive £1,200-£1,500 pounds for five years book rights on a novel” and that after “five years Besant was rarely offered more than £150 for all remaining rights,” (Eliot, 2001, p. 56-7).

Thurston clearly enjoyed a friendly relationship with her publisher William Blackwood. Such a relationship with one’s publisher was common practice during the Victorian period, and we see evidence of this in Lawless’ relationship with John Murray.

Sutherland states that the friendships formed between publisher and author were often intimate and that “a publisher came to know a lot about the personal and financial

privacies of an author and he was entrusted with confidences” (1976, p. 85). As already discussed in Chapter Three, the Thurston’s membership of a number of exclusive clubs would have gained them entry into the Blackwoodian circle. Again, Sutherland states that “[m]uch literary activity centred round dinner nights, ‘tobacco parliaments’, shared clubs and various social functions” (1976, p. 85). Thurston’s relationship with Blackwood can therefore be viewed as typical of the period.

As already discussed with Emily Lawless, the new professionalism surrounding publishing, which grew out of the development of copyright legislation, expanding markets and the introduction of literary agents, resulted in the often friendly author/publisher relationship becoming strained (Sutherland, 1976, p. 85). As Thurston’s business arrangements grew more complicated and her market and publishing territory expanded we see evidence of such a strain appearing in her relationship with Blackwood.

Following Blackwood’s request for a short story on 5 February 1903, although ill, Thurston was quick to submit a short story to *Maga*. Ernest wrote to Blackwood, that his wife was “unfortunately unwell, in fact has been in bed for five weeks and asks me to apologise to you for not being able to reply to your satisfactory letter in person. By the same post she is sending you a short story . . . hoping that you will find it useful for your magazine” (MS 30 100, Incoming letters to Blackwood, Letter dated 12 February 1903).¹²⁴ Although no details of her illness are available her personal correspondence indicates that Thurston was plagued by illnesses throughout her life. Regular letters to her doctors in London requesting appointments can be found among her papers. One, dated 12 April 1907, reads: “Mrs Thurston presents her compliments to Dr Risien Russell and will be pleased to keep the appointment he has made to see her on Monday

¹²⁴ This refers to her short story *The Climax* (1903).

morning next” (Acc 11378, Box 2, Letterbook dated March 16 1907 -). Another letter only a month later on 27 May 1907, informs a Dr Day of her intention of “keeping her appointment with him at ten thirty on Friday morning next” (Acc 11378, Box 2, Letterbook dated March 16 1907-). On 1 July 1907 Thurston was again in correspondence with Dr Day stating that she would “be pleased if he will make some appointments to see her on the mornings of next week” (Acc 11378, Box 2, Letterbook dated March 16 1907-). 1907 was a time of great stress in the Thurstons’ marriage, with Ernest announcing that he wished a separation. Her readiness to seek medical help may then have been due to the emotional distress caused by this request and his behaviour, or may indicate that Thurston was suffering from a more serious complaint.

Correspondence from Mrs Rosemary Dowson indicates that “Mrs Thurston suffered from epileptic fits, brought on by the strain of her writing”, and this may be the reason why she was bedridden following the publication of her first novel, (private correspondence from Mrs Rosemary Dowson to Mirjam Nieman, 30 August 1999). Rosemary Dowson’s mother, Nancy Inez Pollock, was Thurston’s lifelong friend and companion. Nancy was always on hand to ensure that Thurston did not harm herself when suffering from one of her frequent attacks. Indeed, it was on one of Thurston’s visits to Cork without Nancy where, according to Mrs Dowson, she suffered a particularly bad attack of *petit mal*, and died. This note from Mrs Dowson details Thurston’s illness:

Katherine suffered from ‘petit mal’ as it was called in those days, and the idea was that my mother should watch out for these attacks, and somehow divert them. Katherine had been staying at Ardmore with my mother, me and my elder sister and brother just before she died, so her death came as a great shock to my mother. Katherine had gone up to Cork, to stay in an [sic] hotel and wait for a fine day before crossing over, back to England. She must have woken in the night, stretched out for a glass of water or something like that, and fallen unconscious

because she was found with the top part of her body hanging over the bed, while the rest of her was caught up in the bed clothes.

(Private correspondence from Mrs Rosemary Dowson to Mirjam Nieman, 30 August 1999)

Great controversy surrounded Thurston's death with much speculation over whether she committed suicide or died of natural causes. The debate over the events surrounding her death and the subsequent media attention will be explored further in Chapter Eight.

No doubt aware of the interest which was being shown in Thurston's work, Blackwood accepted the short story which he had requested. On 24 February 1903 Ernest wrote to Blackwood that his wife "thanks you for your offer for her short story 'The Climax' and tho' the business part of her work, both long and short is in the hands of her agents, she feels that she may accept your offer without referring the matter to them" (MS 30 100, incoming letters to Blackwood, Letter dated 24 February 1903). The "agent" referred to by Ernest was The Literary Agency of London, who represented Thurston for many years. Her relationship with them will be explored in greater detail throughout this chapter.

By March Thurston had recovered from her illness and was able to deal personally with her correspondence. She wrote to Blackwood to thank him for his recent letter and to express her pleasure in the manner in which *The Circle* had been received: "It is very delightful indeed to feel that it has been so well received . . . I am very glad you liked my short story – I look forward much to seeing it in the Magazine. (MS 30 100, Incoming Letters to Blackwood, Letter dated 17 March 1903)

In August 1903 The Literary Agency of London was again in negotiations with various magazines trying to sell a second novel, entitled *The Interloper*. This was appearing

difficult to place and when they wrote to her on 28 August 1903 enclosing her first royalty payment from Blackwoods for *The Circle*, they also informed her of difficulties in finding a publisher and a suitable price:

We send with this our cheque for £42:1:0 together with an account showing that this amount is arrived at in payment of royalties due on "The Circle" to June 30th 1903 from Messrs Blackwood & Sons.

"The Interloper" – We are now in negotiation with the LADY'S PICTORIAL & hope for better luck. If however this fails, and if the QUEEN and Clement Shorter do not prove amenable, I propose to fall back at once upon Blackwood, unless something else turns up in the meantime.

(Acc 11378, Box 1, Correspondence: The Literary Agency 1903-08)

Following the success of *The Circle*, both Thurston and her agent would have hoped to secure a more lucrative financial arrangement for her second novel. This would have been in keeping with the publishing conventions of the day, whereby the success of one novel would have a considerable bearing on the advance and royalties offered for a subsequent novel (St Clair, 2004, p. 161). This understanding would have resulted in The Literary Agency approaching a number of publishers with the manuscript of *The Circle* in the hope that a more profitable deal would be established.

It would seem from the difficulty experienced by The Literary Agency that Thurston's second novel was not finding favour in British publishing circles. Considering the success of her first novel, this must have been a great disappointment to both parties.

The American market for *The Interloper*, however, appeared more favourable and The Literary Agency was able to sell both the book and serial rights to the New York publishing firm of Harper and Brothers. The American publisher was willing to pay \$500 for the American serial rights and \$1,000 on a/c of a 15 per cent royalty,

increasing to 20 per cent after the sale of 25,000 copies, their only stipulation being that Thurston must refrain from publishing another book in 1904 and that the title be changed, as they had already published a book under this title. Harper's viewed themselves as "the greatest publishing house in America" and also the publisher "with the four biggest magazines and periodicals in the country" (Acc 11378, Box 4, Letter dated 9 September 1904). No doubt they felt that with their enormous reach they would be able to tempt Thurston into publishing with them. They intended publishing *The Interloper* in *Harper's Bazaar* in December 1903 or January 1904 and also to publish it in book form in the autumn of 1904.

By September of 1903 negotiations with Harper and Brothers were complete and they had successfully secured the right to publish *The Interloper* in serial and book form. They were keen to capitalise on the interest in Thurston and her writing following the success of *The Circle*. In September 1903 they wrote:

I take pleasure in writing you and congratulating you on the success of your first book 'The Circle' and the decided promise of great things that it makes. I also feel pleased and proud that we have secured your second novel 'The Interloper' for serial and book publication. In some ways the promise of 'The Circle' is coming true in this book as far as I have read it . . .

(Acc 11378, Box 4, Letter dated 18 September 1903)¹²⁵

Harper's were obviously delighted that they were publishing the second of Thurston's novels. The British market however remained unconvinced as to the possibilities and appeal of this novel, and after much touting around, The Literary Agency did indeed

¹²⁵ *Harper's* was one of the leading respectable monthly magazines with a circulation of roughly 200,000 copies. This popular monthly contained a blend of articles designed to appeal to a wide audience: "fiction, articles about the famous, historical pieces, cultural articles and reviews . . . [and] had long since abandoned their aristocratic scruples about advertising." *Harper's* would use the pages of their magazines to promote the forthcoming writing of their popular authors and to create interest in these authors (Ohmann, 1996, pp. 24-6).

have to “fall back . . . upon Blackwood” for its publication. It seemed that Harper’s had their way in changing the title of Thurston’s second novel from *The Interloper* to *The Masquerader*. In keeping with the duality expressed in the subject matter of that novel it would change identity again for the U.K. market, making its debut with William Blackwood and Sons as *John Chilcote M.P.* This novel would confound the publishing establishment with the enormity of its success and ensure that Thurston became one of the best selling novelists of the Edwardian period.

4.1 Placing *John Chilcote M.P.*

Although plagued by illness throughout the early part of 1903, Thurston continued to write prolifically. The short stories which were published following the success of *The Circle* had all been written in the early period of her married life and publication of these in the period following *The Circle* ensured that her name and work remained in the public eye while freeing her time to write *John Chilcote M.P.* or *The Masquerader*. Thurston displayed a great sense of discipline in her literary work, which ensured that she was able to work to strict deadlines regardless of what was going on her private life.¹²⁶ In an interview in 1906 she gave some idea of the professional manner with which she approached her work:

It seems to me that careful forethought and preparation should be taken with books just as much as with paintings . . . An artist spends weeks and even months in making preliminary sketches and acquiring the information necessary to paint a successful picture. I think it is due to the public that the author should be just as painstaking in preparing his books.

¹²⁶ The following is taken from a small purple diary of Thurston’s, dated 1909, and held in the Thurston collection at the National Library of Scotland, in which she marks the dates on which she will complete or perhaps revise each of the chapters of a book she is working on at the time. No details of the book are given. However, if it was indeed 1909, then this was a time of great personal trauma due to her upcoming divorce: Sept 27 – 1; Oct 4 – 11; Oct 11 – 111; Oct 18 – 1V; Oct 25 – V; Nov 1 – VI; Nov 8 – V11; Nov 15 – V111; Nov 22 – 1X; Nov 29 – X; Dec 6 – X1; Dec 13 – X11; Dec 20 – X111; Dec 27 X1V.

She goes on however to indicate, that no matter how important her work as a writer was it was by no means *the* most important aspect of her life:

'You see' she added 'I have so many social and other engagements that unless I worked systematically I would never get anywhere at all, but having it all in my mind before I begin, I am ready to go on with the story whenever the opportunity offers.'

In an effort to assure the reader that all this work did not affect Mrs Thurston's ladylike status, the writer continues:

It is not to be thought from Mrs Thurston's businesslike way of doing things that she is in the slightest unfeminine. Rather, the system that she makes use of enables her to preserve her home life almost intact. 'I do not believe in letting the work interfere with the duties which every woman owes to her home,' said she. 'I start early every morning and keep at my work until noon, and that finishes the writing for the day, and the rest of the time belongs to my husband and friends.'

(Acc 11378, Box 10, Press Cuttings 1906, Unnamed publication, 4 March 1906, n.p.)¹²⁷

Another newspaper cutting reported that Thurston "is a most systematic literary worker", and quotes her as saying:

When once the primary idea, the dramatic centre, you might say has occurred to me, it often lies in the mind for weeks and months before a word is written. But during all that time it grows and develops, characters and incidents are added, and the balance of things is adjusted. Everything is carefully worked out before the paper is touched. The whole story is in my mind almost to the smallest detail before I start to write at all.

(Acc 11378, Box 10, Press Cuttings 1906, *Leader*, Richmond VA, 31 March 1906, n.p.)

¹²⁷ This interview gives a further indication that Thurston was keen to conform to middle-class Victorian conventions of womanhood discussed in Chapters One and Two. Such conformity would ensure favourable publicity from the popular press and appeal to the traditional beliefs of her readership.

She appeared to gain great pleasure from the routine of her writing and the rigour of researching and honing her literary ability.

In September 1903 Thurston wrote to Blackwood informing him that she had

heard a few days ago from my agent that subject to your approval of the latter part, my next book is to come out both serially and in book form in your hands . . . I am glad to be able to tell you that my book has been written for some months – and even to some degree corrected, so that I hope to be able to let you see the fully revised M.S. in about three weeks time.

(MS 30 100, Incoming Letter to Blackwood, Letter dated 18 September 1903).¹²⁸

The revision of the manuscript must have gone to plan. By 22 November 1903

Blackwood had accepted the manuscript for publication, and Thurston wrote:

[O]f my great pleasure in the fact that the last part of my book met with your approval, I must thank you personally for your kind consideration for my choice in the matter of a name – over which there were so many tiresome disappointments – My agents tell me that you have decided finally to use ‘John Chilcote M.P. I quite appreciate your kind thought in the decision, and hope very sincerely that the title may not prove unattractive to the public. I have all along, as I am sure my agents have suggested, had a strong desire that my personal taste should not interfere with the business side of the choice of a name, which I realise is distinctly important.

(MS 30 100, Incoming letter to Blackwood, Letter dated 22 November 1903).¹²⁹

¹²⁸ From this letter it would appear that Blackwood felt that his firm was the first choice for publication of *John Chilcote M.P.* However, as has been previously illustrated, Blackwood was in fact the last resort. This letter is early evidence of the way in which Thurston charmed Blackwood. While all authors had to please publishers, this letter is evidence of the way in which women writers had to please publishers to ensure publication, as discussed in Chapter Two. Sutherland asserts that “even at the peak of fame . . . a Victorian novelist was not always able to write what he wanted. Often the pressure on him was direct and unequivocal . . . Dickens was prohibited from writing a novel as different from *Pickwick Papers* as was the serial *Pickwick Papers* from its predecessors (1976, p. 76).

Blackwood planned that *John Chilcote* would make its first appearance in serial form in the New Years edition of *Maga*. On 1 January 1904 he enquired: "I hope you duly received the early copy of the New Years number of *Maga* with John Chilcote opening the ball and that you like the company it keeps" (Acc 11378, Box 4). Thurston was indeed pleased and on 5 January 1904 informed Blackwood that she felt "very proud to see the opening chapters amongst so much that was clever and interesting" (MS 30 109, Incoming Letters to Blackwood – 1904).

The practice of initial serialisation in *Blackwood's Magazine* closely followed by publication in book format was a tried and tested formula that Blackwood favoured, as Finkelstein points out:

[F]or a firm steeped in the patterns of mid-nineteenth-century publishing activity, it was a reassuring format that served as a means of positioning the firm's products within the literary marketplace. It offered the maintenance of a stable 'house identity' through the works championed and issues discussed in the magazines pages, a method of promoting forthcoming works, and a profitable enterprise in its own right.

(Finkelstein, 2002, p. 96)

This practice of using the literary periodical as a means of creating a house identity and of promoting and "testing" both literary works and the popularity of an author before going to the expense of publication in novel format was widespread during the period. Finkelstein notes that "*Bentley's Miscellany* (founded in 1837), *Macmillan's Magazine* (founded in 1859), and *Longman's Magazine* (founded in 1882) were just some of the journals created like Blackwood's to keep their firm's names in front of the reading

¹²⁹ The "many tiresome disappointments" which Thurston refers to may be an elusion to the stipulation of Harper and Sons that the title be changed from *The Interloper* to *The Masquerader*.

public” (Finkelstein, 2002, p. 96). While the benefits to the publisher of such a scheme are obvious, the author could also benefit from the practice in terms of increased exposure to a number of markets and further rights sales. However, due to the changing nature of the literary marketplace, the practice was not without its difficulties. The exploitation of rights sales in terms of to the colonial market, alongside serialisation rights will be discussed in further Chapters.

Harper’s planned to publish the novel on 12 October 1904 as *The Masquerader*. They wrote to Thurston: “I think we are going to do splendidly with ‘The Masquerader’; a great deal of interest has been taken in it during the serial course. We shall certainly give it all the advantage of a wide advertisement and be out with a brass band when it appears” (Acc 11378, Box 4, Letter dated 24 May 1904).

The reception of *John Chilcote M.P.* surpassed that of Thurston’s first novel. It was a resounding success attracting wide-spread media attention, and capturing the public imagination. One letter sent to Blackwood was immediately dispatched to Thurston: “I enclose letter I received for you this morning, and as it bears the seal of the House of Commons I shall be anxious to hear what the writer of it says. I hope something appreciative of your clever story, the wind up of which many are puzzling over and very anxious to know how it will wind up. They will be still more excited when they reach the end of the August instalment” (Acc 11378, Box 4, Letter dated 5 July 1904).

Thurston did not reply until 14 July when, ensconced in her summer home in Ireland, she was able to enlighten Blackwood as to the contents of this letter and let him know of her requests for a cover for her upcoming novel. This letter offers further evidence of how Thurston was able to charm Blackwood while at the same time ensuring that she obtained the desired result:

You are very good to consult me as to the cover of 'John Chilcote'. Personally I should like something quite plain – but of course you know best what is . . . The letter you sent me was, as you hoped, a very complimentary one – which was doubly pleasant coming from where it did – By the way, the writer of it mentions . . . a very tiny technical slip in this month's instalment – It is nothing important to the story merely that when Loden moves the motion for the adjournment of the House of the evening sitting, I forgot that his asking permission to do so must be done at the morning sitting and not at night.

As I think you know I cannot bear to be technically wrong even in the smallest way so I should like to correct this error before the story appears in the 'Mail'.

(MS 30 109, Incoming Letters to Blackwood)

Blackwood would often send Thurston gifts of books. He clearly enjoyed her company as this letter shows: "thank you for the charming photograph of yourself you so kindly sent me with . . . a gratifying inscription . . . it now stands on our drawing room chimney piece attracting much pleasing attention from our friends. My sister and I enjoyed your lunch party . . ." (Acc 11378, Box 4, Letter dated 5 July 1904).

The "Mail" referred to in Thurston's letter to Blackwood of 14 July 1904 was the *Daily Mail* newspaper. Aware of the need to appeal to and reach the widest reading public in order to increase sales and revenue, Blackwood had arranged for *John Chilcote* to appear – again in serial form – in the *Daily Mail*. He informed Thurston: "We only got settled up with Daily Mail yesterday and it is to start on the 6th August in its serial career there and I think and hope that it will be a splendid advertisement for the book and greatly help its sale (Acc 11378, Box 4, letter dated 5 July 1904). The expanding literary market discussed in Chapter Two enabled authors to sell the rights of their work to a broad range of publications, to publish in a range of formats and at differing prices. Such practices offered authors the opportunity to extend the monetary value of their

writing. This was particularly important at a time when more writers were attempting to earn a living from their writing.¹³⁰

The interest shown in the serialisation of *Chilcote* was astounding. Reviews appeared across a wide-range of publications on both sides of the Atlantic, each commenting on Thurston's excellent handling of the improbable tale and her storytelling abilities.

4.2 *John Chilcote M.P.* and Edwardian themes

This story which captured the imaginations of hundreds of thousands of readers throughout the world was the tale of two men, John Chilcote and John Loder physically identical but living vastly differing lives. Not only did they share physical characteristics but each was living a life of quiet desperation. Both tied to a life in which they felt trapped by circumstance: Chilcote had been born into a respected, successful upper-class family and as the only son was expected to follow in his father's footsteps and become an M.P. He had married a society wife – a woman from the correct background who would help him further his career, but for whom he had no love. He felt trapped and bound to a life of duty which offered him no pleasure. In an attempt to escape the confines of it he turns to morphia for release.

John Loder is also a victim of circumstance in that he is forced to scrape a meager living from journalism and is denied the political life he craves. Loder desires power and influence and feels embittered by the narrowness of his life and its lack of opportunities. Although he is a man of "intelligence and education!" (*John Chilcote M.P.*, p. 39), he is aware that this alone will not suffice: a man without influence could not succeed in Edwardian London. Loder points out to Chilcote that "London is cemented with

¹³⁰ See Chapter Six, for details of Weedon's study of the changing face of literary finance in the twentieth century.

intelligence. And education! What is education? . . . Education is the accessory; it is influence that is essential. You should know that” (*John Chilcote M.P.*, pp. 39-40).

In order to escape the confines of their lives, both men agree to assume the life of the other. By swapping roles, Chilcote is able to drift into a morphia induced haze, free of responsibility, and Loder achieves the power and influence he desires as an M.P.

At the time of publication *John Chilcote M.P.* embodied the dissatisfaction with society which many people experienced. As discussed in Chapter Two, the Edwardian era was a time of turmoil and change, a bridge between the old ways of Victorianism and the new ways of the twentieth century. Loder and Chilcote represent all that was wrong with Edwardian society, and the need for change. By illustrating the futility of both men’s lives Thurston emphasizes the rigidity of Edwardian life, a life in which duty and accident of birth can determine the life of an individual. She also highlights the difficulties experienced by individuals in attempting to change their lives or reinvent themselves. Highlighting the restrictive lives of even the most powerful men in the land, Thurston expresses the need for social reform for all, and not just for women.

In this case Thurston has chosen to focus on the limitations of Edwardian lives from the male perspective. However, the portrayal of Eve Chilcote as the constant in both men’s lives also shows the futility of the lives of women. Eve is trapped in her loveless marriage to Chilcote, but is powerless to change it: not only is she trapped by marriage, but she is trapped as a woman. Eve’s life as the wife of a successful M.P. was typical of the lives of middle and upper-class women of the time, and redolent of the issues facing women discussed in Chapters One and Two: The lack of opportunities to build a career or life outwith the home. The frustration felt by these capable women is expressed by Eve when she exclaims: “How splendid it must be to be a man!” (*John Chilcote M.P.*,

p. 182) Yet, in maintaining her femininity Eve's power grows: through her quiet determination and love, Loder becomes a better man than Chilcote.

The themes explored in *John Chilcote* were popular at the time of writing, and previously explored by many authors, not least Robert Louis Stevenson in *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*. The uncertainty of the period, in terms of the changes taking place in society and the way in which men and women were questioning their roles and the class system, was being played out on the pages of the novels, short stories and plays of the day. Thurston's work was therefore expressive of the changes sweeping society. The way in which she captured the feelings of frustration and anger experienced by the characters in this, her most famous novel, was a major factor in its success.

In many ways *John Chilcote M.P.* is a tale of good triumphing over evil, the story of what people can achieve when they have opportunities and take them. In the opening chapter of *Chilcote*, Loder exclaims: "No man has the right to squander what another would give his soul for. It lessens the general respect for power" (*John Chilcote M.P.*, p. 8). Thurston is commenting not only on the way men live their lives but also on the way women live theirs. Through her portrayal of Eve, Thurston demonstrates the power of women and how they can change society. In much the same way as Sarah Grand, in Chapter Three represented her New Women, Thurston portrays Eve as an intelligent, feminine, woman who is quietly and confidently aware that she holds the future in her hands. When Loder utters the final words in the novel "My consent or refusal," ... very quietly, "lies with – my wife," he acknowledges that Eve is the one with the power, that she will determine his future (*John Chilcote M.P.*, p. 328).

4.3 Looking to the future

Eager to secure a further publishing deal for his wife, Ernest wrote to Blackwood offering the serial rights of her next story. By this time *Chilcote* had been a resounding success in serial form, yet Blackwood was unwilling to accept any story for *Maga* without having first read it and approved of its contents. Regardless of whether or not he would have to pay more for her work at a later date, he maintained his cautious position, informing Ernest that

it is and has been a rule with *Maga* that no fiction is accepted which has not been first read and considered, and I regret therefore, that I cannot make any proposal for the serial rights of the new story without reading a considerable portion at any rate of the ms.

(Acc 11378, Box 2, Correspondence with Blackwood 1905-10,
Letter dated 14 July 1905)

It could be argued that Blackwood's reluctance to accept Thurston's next novel without first reading a considerable portion showed a lack of judgement on their part. By accepting her next novel at this early stage they would have been able to secure the contract without entering into a bidding war with rival publishers. This is further evidence that the business practices employed by Blackwood's were very much of the Victorian period and were at odds with those of the new breed of publishers who were beginning to dominate the market.

Meanwhile, Harper and Brothers were gearing up for the October launch of *The Masquerader* in America. Their preparations were in marked contrast to Blackwood's low-key approach. On 6 September James Macarthur of Harper's wrote to Thurston:

We have got a very good cover, and have just printed an excellent poster. Although we do not publish the book until October 12th, we are making all our preparations well in advance for the campaign. You know how insistent I have been in my conviction that 'The Masquerader' is bound to have a big sale; it is one

of the best stories I have read in years. I was sure of its possibilities at the start when I had only read a few chapters of the synopsis, and the complete story has far exceeded my expectation. I have been losing no opportunity to advertise it in advance, and have succeeded in ensuring the cooperation and enthusiasm of everybody connected with the handling of the book here. What I hope for is nothing less than it may be the book of the year, and I am now making efforts to bring that about.

(Acc 11378, Box 4, Letter dated 6 September 1904)

A few days later Macarthur again wrote to Thurston with another offer on *The Masquerader*. The healthy sales of *The Circle* in the previous year, the speed in which Thurston had completed her second novel, and the quality of her storytelling ability, all pointed to the fact that Thurston was an extremely promising publishing proposition. In stark contrast to her British publisher and in an effort to secure her next novel and thus ensure a healthy profit for his company, Macarthur wrote to Thurston assuring her of the effort and expertise that they would expound on *The Masquerader*:

[w]e have had a conference over 'The Masquerader', and we have decided to make it our leader, and push it to the limit, as we say here. We have had great faith in its success if properly handled, and we are determined to organize our forces on it and bend all our wits and energies to send it ahead of anything that has been published . . . We are full of plans and ideas, and mean to spare no expenditure in advertising the book. In fact, we are prepared to spend a large amount of money to insure the biggest hold on the public we can get, not only for this book, but for those to follow in your name.

. . . Whether we succeed or not, it will result in securing a more prominent place for you in the literary world, and proportionately in larger sales, Not the least [sic] factor in composing this will be the fact that your work is being published by the greatest publishing house in America, with the four biggest magazines and periodicals in the country.¹³¹

Here again the disparity between Harpers and Blackwoods is evident. In view of the time, effort and money that would go into ensuring that Harpers made a success of the novel they made Thurston a proposition:

¹³¹ The increase in the periodical market in the late nineteenth century had been fully exploited by Harper's who published a range of magazines and papers which appealed to a wide cross-section of the public.

Now in view of this we desire your cooperation to this extent. We hope to continue as your publishers, and in so doing to make it most profitable and advantageous for you. What we trust you will do meantime is to let us have your next novel, serial and bookrights, on the same terms as 'The Masquerader.' We are willing to accept it on these terms without further consideration, and should be glad if you would cable us, or have your agents cable us to that effect. By securing your work on these terms it will enable us to carry out the large and unusually expensive plans we have formulated for pushing 'The Masquerader' and will identify our interests more closely as one and the same. I hope you will see that the outcome of such a course will be to your advantage in the end.

(Acc 11378, Box 4, Letter dated 9 September 1904)

It is interesting to note that although Macarthur talks at length about "large and unusually expensive plans", he does not detail them or commit his company to any such plans in a contract. In offering to accept the next novel "without further consideration . . . on the same terms as 'The Masquerader'" may appear a generous offer for a relatively new author, but in reality they were hardly taking a risk with Thurston. If accepted, this offer put Harpers in an advantageous position, cornering the large American market with Thurston's work and ensuring that they would not have to offer a higher sum than necessary for her next novel. In stark contrast to Blackwoods, Harpers astutely reacted to the demands of the growing market for popular fiction: protecting their own share of that market and ensuring that they were able to compete with the new entrepreneurial publishers who were also trying to fulfil the demands of the market.

The Literary Agency had received a copy of Macarthur's letter and wrote to Thurston informing her that they believed that the tone of Macarthur's letter was "sheer guff" while admitting that it may be a "slight stimulation to them in advertising 'The Masquerader' to be having the next book". In the run-up to the publication of *John Chilcote / The Masquerader*, The Literary Agency had been trying to secure the best deal for Thurston's third novel, *The Gambler*. Until this point they had not approached Harper's as they had "doubts whether Harper's would again pay the necessary prices for the serial." The Literary Agency had instead approached *The Century* magazine with

the novel, believing that they could offer “a very much stronger thing than Harper’s could offer.” They had not replied promptly and were “obstinately hanging on to the subject”, perhaps waiting to see how *The Masquerader* was received in the American market. Aware of the demands of the market, The Literary Agency advised Thurston that the best way to go with *The Gambler* would be to “close with Harper’s, asking, however, an extra hundred pounds on the serial. This not for the sake of their beautiful blue eyes, but partly because even a larger offer from the Century would be almost impossible to work in view of their demand for both markets” (Acc 11378, Box 1, Letter dated 19 September 1904).

4.4 *John Chilcote M.P.*: The reception

Blackwood’s book edition of *John Chilcote M.P.* which appeared in October 1904 was an instant success. The importance of the circulating libraries in determining the success of a novel has already been discussed in Chapter Two: Shortly after the publication of *Chilcote* Blackwood wrote to Thurston expressing his delight in the response from the large circulating libraries, Smith’s and Mudie’s:

I was delighted to hear that *John Chilcote M.P.* had been launched successfully and that ‘repeat orders’ have been coming in daily . . . Even Smith . . . who bought a big number on subscription have already been in for two thirteens and that nervous buyer Mudie has had to send for four thirteens, and both will I hope have to continue doing so daily for some little time until the first readers return their copies . . .

It was capital getting so many of the daily newspapers to review it so promptly and every editor I wrote about the book with an early copy did not fail to respond.

(Acc 11378, Box 4 Letter dated 8 October 1904)¹³²

¹³² The “thirteens” referred to in this letter is a reference to the practice of discounting which many publishers of the period, Blackwood’s among them, took part in. Texts would be sold to the trade with a reduction in price or at a prepublication rate of thirteen for the price of twelve. Some of the largest book buyers of the time were the lending libraries: W.H. Smith and Charles Mudie’s circulating library. (Finkelstein, 2002, p.43. quoting from Sutherland, 1978)

While *John Chilcote M.P.* was receiving widespread acclaim, and her third novel *The Gambler* was the subject of negotiation on both sides of the Atlantic, Thurston was busy writing her fourth novel, *The Mystics*. This had been completed by August 1904 and the manuscript despatched to The Literary Agency. Only three years into her writing career Thurston was carving out a growing reputation for herself. The public demand for her work and the speed with which she was able to write ensured that her work was constantly in the public eye.

The response to *Chilcote* in the United States was greater than either author or publisher could have hoped for. *Harper's Book News* reported with enthusiasm:

This is just a tremendously good story of a strong man and a strong woman grasping for happiness – a story so good that there is not any better (not novel, but story) – anywhere on earth. It is written by a born storyteller – no mere writer . . . The book – which is by the way by Mrs Thurston, rather a new writer – has been out just seven days and in that short time:
The Book stores have sold out.
A new big edition has gone to press.
It is already being made into a play in England and into a different play in America.
Requests have been received for translation into French and German.
The publishers rather expected wide interest in the book, but not quite so sudden an attack upon supply.
Thus far – and this is unusual – every single review has been not only good, but almost feverishly enthusiastic.

(Acc 11378, Box 4, *Harper's Book News*, n.d., n.p)

The reviews were “feverishly enthusiastic” on both sides of the Atlantic. The *New York Times* reported that the reception of *The Masquerader* was a “tribute to the cleverness with which an exceedingly improbable tale has been told . . . Mrs Thurston has the story-telling gift highly developed” (Acc 11378, Box 4, Press clipping, 5 November 1904, n.p.). The following month they wrote: “so much has already been written about this unusual novel by Katherine Cecil Thurston, and so fierce has been the discussion which has raged among readers of The *New York Times* Book Review that there remains

little to be said further . . . It is a story of absorbing and unusual plot, unusually well handled" (Acc 11378, Box 4 Press Clipping, 10 December 1904, n.p.). One unknown American newspaper wrote that "it is said that one firm has ordered a thousand volumes a day of Mrs Thurston's novel 'The Masquerader' during the month of December" (Acc 11378, Box 4, Press Clipping, 21 December 1904, n.p.). *Harper's Literary Gossip* informed its readers that the demand for the book was so great that they had

been obliged to manufacture a new set of electrotypes for printing *The Masquerader*. This is a most unusual event in connection with any new novel. So great have been the orders for this book, however, and so frequent the editions, that the first plates have been worn out, and the book has been published only six weeks.

(Acc 11378, Box 9, small cuttings book, *Harper's Literary Gossip*, 1 December 1904, n.p.)

One week later, and no doubt happy that they had had a new set of plates constructed, Harper's reported: "one bookseller . . . has ordered a thousand copies a day during December, estimates that the book is now selling at the rate of one volume per minute" (Acc 11378, Box 9, small cuttings book, *Harper's Literary Gossip*, 8 December 1904, n.p.).

The British press were equally generous. An article in *Punch* announced: "John Chilcote M.P'.(Blackwood) will advance by leap and bound the movement towards the front rank of women novelists achieved by Mrs Thurston in The Circle. The book is marked by originality and power" (Acc 113878, Box 4, Press clipping, dated 20 October 1904, n.p.). On 25 January 1905 *Punch* featured a political cartoon by Bernard Partridge entitled "Ready to Oblige".¹³³ The satire included The Right Honourable Arthur

¹³³ In 1905 Bernard Partridge was the chief cartoonist at *Punch* and many critics believe that he was *Punch's* best ever artist. He was known for his strong conservative

Balfour, Prime Minister, reclining in a chair with a copy of *John Chilcote M.P.* resting on his lap. Meditatively he mutters: "I wish I could find a double to take my place in the house!"¹³⁴ The young Winston Churchill and David Lloyd George, who are standing close by him both mutter: "Ought not to be any difficulty about that!"¹³⁵ Both Lloyd George and Churchill were seen as the bright young stars of politics during the Edwardian era. Although from very different backgrounds and possessing different characters they formed a "glittering parliamentary partnership" (Hattersley, 2004, p.52). They were seen as the future of politics, in stark contrast to the tired Balfour. The inclusion of Thurston's work in a publication such as *Punch* shows how her writing was exacting comment from a wide range of readership and from all sectors of society.

The *Publishers Circular* of 14 October 1904 reported:

It is very refreshing to find such enthusiasm in an octogenarian novel reader as is evinced by one of Blackwood's oldest contributors, who wrote thus to the Editor on September 19:-

Never since I waited feverishly sixty years ago for the feuilletons of 'Monte Cristo' have I been so excited by a story as by 'John Chilcote'.

And Mrs Thurston has given me what Dumas did not – a perpetually increasing wonder as to how the adventure is to end. . . . in 'John Chilcote' the puzzle grows from the first page to the last, with such rapid enlargement, indeed that, as the climax approaches, one becomes hopelessly absorbed in the apparently insoluble question how Loder is to get out of his position.

The impossibilities of detail are forgotten in the subjugating domination of the incidents with the result that the story is as thrilling as Hyde and Jekyll, [sic] while it is infinitely more human in its interest.

viewpoint and in 1925 was knighted by the Conservative Prime Minister, Stanley Baldwin.

¹³⁴ Arthur Balfour was Conservative Prime Minister of Britain from 1902-05. He resigned on 4 December 1905 over disagreements on free trade (Hattersley, 2004, pp. 110-126).

¹³⁵ In 1905 David Lloyd George was an aspiring, radical, Liberal M.P., well known for his strong oratory. After Balfour's resignation in 1905 and the subsequent General Election in 1906 the Liberal Party was elected. The new Liberal Prime Minister, Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman gave Lloyd George the position of President of the Board of Trade. The young Winston Churchill was a recent convert to the Liberal party, after transferring his allegiance from the Conservative party in 1904. In the 1906 election he became a member of the new Liberal government as Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies (Hattersley, 2004, pp. 51-2).

I should add that I did not mean to write this letter until the story is finished; but I am so desirous to say to you what I think about it that I cannot postpone any longer. But I yearn to know the solution.

(Acc 11378, Box 4)

In comparing Thurston's writing to Stevenson's *Jekyll and Hyde*, this reviewer is making comment on the quality of Thurston's writing and storytelling ability. This ability had been commented on after the publication of *The Circle*, when another reviewer compared her work to that of George Eliot. Throughout her career Thurston's name was routinely linked with acclaimed and popular authors. This anonymous reviewer wrote of Thurston's appearance in an edition of *Pall Mall Magazine*: "The April number of the 'Pall Mall Magazine' is up to a high order of merit. The list of contributors includes Joseph Conrad, H.G. Wells, Arthur Morrison, Mrs Thurston [and] Jack London" (Acc 11378, Box 9, small cuttings book, no name, 18 April 1905, n.p.). Thurston was clearly becoming a renowned author.

4.5 Legal wrangles: Thurston vs. *The Novel* magazine

Not all the publicity surrounding the publication and reception of *John Chilcote* was welcome: an article in Pearson's *Novel Magazine* accused Thurston of plagiarism. The allegations appeared difficult to repudiate, and Thurston's literary agents recommended she use the services of The Society of Authors in order to defend herself. The new professionalism surrounding authorship, discussed in Chapter Two, resulted in the creation of organisations like the Society of Authors, which were formed to protect the rights of the author. Thurston had cause to use their services in 1905 following the publication of an article in *The Novel* magazine regarding *John Chilcote M.P.*

The review in the *Novel Magazine* stated that *John Chilcote M.P.* bore a remarkable resemblance to Israel Zangwill's *The Premier and the Painter* which had appeared in

the 1890s (Acc 11378, Box 9).¹³⁶ This review was discovered by The Literary Agency of London and passed to Thurston. The accompanying letter to the review reads:

I enclose some pages which have startled and annoyed us from Pearson's new Novel Magazine. The idea seems as impudent a one as I have seen for a long time. I have spoken to Mr Meldrum of Blackwoods who has also mentioned the matter to Mr Blackwood, and they agree with us in feeling that this use of your novel is quite illegitimate and is calculated to damage it, either by misrepresenting its scope or by extinguishing the curiosity of possible readers as to the drift and termination of the story . . . I . . . ask you whether you desire to see our solicitors on the legal aspect of the matter.

(Acc 11378, Box 1, Folder 3, Letter dated April 5, 1905)

Thurston immediately passed this on to Ernest, scribbling across the top of the letter "Will you do what you think best about this?" A letter later that day to Thurston from The Literary Agency of London gives further details:

Mr Thurston called this afternoon to say that you shared our views with regard to the proceedings of the Novel Magazine, and I went down at once to see our lawyers about it. They are distinctly of the opinion that we have good cause for action and approved my suggestion that your best course of action would be to join the Society of Authors and get them to fight the case for you . . . This would be at once the more economical – for it would be handled by the society's officials and at their charges – and I think too perhaps – the more dignified course; for the protest and possible subsequent proceedings would be made in the interests if the entire body of literary men and women.

(Acc 11378, Box 1, Folder 3, Letter dated April 5, 1905)

By 6 April 1905, The Literary Agency had visited the Secretary of the Society of Authors and put the case to him. Thurston was not a member of the Society but the Secretary felt that this "case was emphatically one of those which the society would like to fight" and that Thurston's interests

¹³⁶ The son of Eastern European immigrants who settled in London, Israel Zangwill made his name as a novelist, dramatist and political commentator. He wrote *The Premier and the Painter* (1888) in collaboration with Louis Cowen under the pseudonym J. Freeman Bell. A recurring theme throughout his work was that of the dilemma of the artist in society. He was a strong supporter of women's suffrage (Kemp et al, 2002, p. 430).

would be best served by it being entrusted to their hands. Naturally he raised the point that you were not a member of the Society. In such cases he said it was usual for the Society to make a bargain with an author who came to them whereby it bore a proportion of the costs. He thought this a special case, and without being able to bind his committee, considered it likely that they would pay a considerable share.

(Acc 11378, Box 1, Folder 3, Letter dated April 6 1905)

Thurston quickly became a member of The Society and on 20 April 1905 paid her first membership fee of £3.3. On 1 June 1905 she made another payment of £7.7. These payments would continue throughout her career and in January of 1908 she began to make yearly payments of £1.1 into the Society's Pension Fund. (Acc 11378, Box 6, Bankbook 'A' a/c)

By 19 April 1905, the affair seemed to be over and The Literary Agency wrote to Thurston enclosing the following apology from *The Novel*:

I very much regret that the author of 'John Chilcote, M.P.' so strongly objects to our reviews of that novel. I am sure you will acquit us of deliberate intent to do anything that might be thought prejudicial to Mrs Thurston's interests . . . I will gladly give the undertaking . . . that no other work by Mrs Thurston will be handled in this fashion without her consent.

(Acc 11378, Box 1, Folder 3, Letter dated April 19 1905)

By the time The Society had dealt with *The Novel* a similar piece appeared in the United States. This article in *The New York Critic* on 6 May 1905 was keen to distance itself from insinuating that Thurston was guilty of plagiarism, yet was no doubt happy to include a sensational piece on what was a bestselling and controversial novel:

Did Mrs Thurston get the idea of 'The Masquerader' from Mr Zangwill?
(We have not the slightest intention of accusing Mrs Thurston of plagiarism. Coincidence is too common for one to be in a hurry to bring charges of plagiarism against a writer. It is quite possible that Mrs Thurston never saw a copy of Mr

Zangwill's 'The Premier and the Painter,' and it is this possibility that makes Mr Lewis's discovery the more interesting – EDITOR CRITIC)

'The Masquerader' is one of the best-selling books of the hour . . . It is interesting . . . to find that every character, every detail together with the general plot are doubled in 'The Premier and the Painter' written by Israel Zangwill . . . Like the plot, the incidents, the characters, so do the 'atmosphere' and many little details correspond. . . . it may be that two books as similar as 'The Masquerader' and 'The Premier and the Painter' are purely coincidental, but if so, it is surely one of the most remarkable coincidences in literary history.

(Acc 11378, Box 9, *The Critic* pp. 551-4, Large Clippings Book)

This time Thurston dealt with the matter herself, strongly refuting any plagiarism charges. The letter dated 20 June 1905 appeared in the publication in July of 1905:

A Letter from the Author of "The Masquerader"

I may as well state at once that my first feeling upon seeing the heading of this article was one of resentment. For I have always held that plagiarism is, of all literary sins, infinitely the most unpardonable; and have flattered myself that it could never be honestly laid to my own door.

But as I read the article itself, I confess that my anger gave place to amazement, for certainly the facts brought forward by Mr Lewis are to me very amazing – forming as they do the most extraordinary case of dual suggestion that has come within my knowledge. For let me state – finally and emphatically – that I have never seen a copy of Mr Zangwill's 'The Premier and the Painter'; the book has never been discussed – or even mentioned – in my presence; the story, even in the most shadowy outline, has never been related to me.

I am fully aware that, despite your courteous note at the beginning of the article, Mr Lewis's discovery places me in a difficult position. It is impossible for me to allow the matter to go unnoticed; yet in refuting the imputation, I have only my personal statement to offer. One circumstance alone reassures me – the fact that two questions must suggest themselves to those who give the matter consideration: Firstly, would any writer having sufficient ingenuity to 'popularize' – as Mr Lewis graphically puts it – another writer's work, be so grossly stupid as to use not only the same scenes, the same characters, but actually the same atmosphere and environment as those in the original story?

Secondly, would any writer who had been fortunate enough to gain some measure of success with a first book consciously risk the danger of stealing for a second book a story published within the last seventeen years – by a writer as much in the public eye as Mr Zangwill?

I think that any impartial judge should answer "no" to both these questions . . .

(Acc 11378, Box 9, *The Critic* p.114, Large Clippings Book)

Thurston had been suitably emboldened by her success over *The Novel* to feel that she could repudiate *The Critic's* allegations. There is no evidence of Thurston discussing this matter further with Ernest. Following her initial reaction to pass the matter to him, she appears to have dealt with The Society of Authors and *The Novel* on her own.

Following the success of their case against *The Novel*, The Society of Authors was soon calling on Thurston with a favour of their own. On 7 August 1906, The Secretary requested whether she would

do me the favour of writing some article for the columns of 'The Author' . . . You will, I hope excuse my calling attention to the very generous support I have received from many of our best known members . . . I should like, if possible, an article dealing with other literary points, of interest to members of the Society. The length of the article should be from one to two thousand words . . .

(Acc 11378, Box 1)

Although no details exist to indicate that Thurston contributed a piece for the Society, this request is further evidence that Thurston was being taken seriously as a writer. Early in her career she was being approached as a writer of significance and one who The Society of Authors felt had something important to say.

Despite the unwelcome publicity surrounding the plagiarism case, the public interest in Thurston's private and literary life resulted in increased sales. The Literary Agency informed Thurston that "Blackwoods want to bring out 'John Chilcote M.P.' in a sixpenny edition, though they add that if the dramatic production revives the 6/- sale they would delay the issue . . . Pending the appearance of the play, it is rather difficult to make a definite arrangement" (Acc 11378, Box 1, Correspondence with The Literary

Agency 1903-1908, Letter dated 29 April 1905).¹³⁷ The sixpenny edition issued by Blackwood was successful in reviving interest in the title and Blackwood was soon able to inform Thurston that it had achieved sales of 100,000 copies. The usually cautious and reticent Blackwood was almost beside himself with excitement:

I cannot resist denying myself the pleasure of writing to tell you that John Chilcote M.P. has sold in its sixpenny edition form as last week we completed the sale of one hundred thousand copies, 100,000.

To have sold that number after the appearance in old Maga and after the good and large sale in the six shilling edition and within two months of its appearance as a 'sixpenny' is I consider a brilliant and splendid success.

We all congratulate you warmly and hope we may have the pleasure of reporting in due course news of further good sales.

(Acc 11378, Box 4, Letter dated 18 September 1905)

Sales of this edition continued to be strong and by October 1905 Thurston wrote to Blackwood telling him of her "very great pleasure" in hearing from him again:

I feel sure that this good circulation in the cheap edition will do much to keep my name before the public which of course tends to future advantage.

My American publishers have not brought out a cheap edition as yet but they are doing a great deal in the way of second serial with a number of papers in different parts of the United States – and of course the ordinary edition has sold over the 200,000 and is still going well.

(MS 30 118, Incoming Letters to Blackwood, Letter dated 4 October 1905)

Evidence of Thurston's keen understanding of the literary marketplace and of the vagaries of both the U.K and U.S. markets is clear. Thurston is becoming more publicly assertive and beginning to take increased control of the management of her work.

¹³⁷ The "dramatic production" mentioned by The Literary Agency is a reference to the dramatisation of *John Chilcote M.P.* by George Alexander at the St James Theatre, London. This dramatisation will be discussed later in this chapter.

4.6 Public popularity and private wealth

From the time of the publication of *The Circle* Thurston had received many letters from admirers, the majority of whom asked for her autograph, photographs, and occasionally personal appearances at their reading groups and clubs. Miss Louise Lederer of London was one of Thurston's many fans to implore her to attend her book club meetings:

We are nine ladies who have formed a Book Club . . . For our next meeting . . . we have chosen "The Circle" for discussion . . . I was wondering if you would do us the honour to attend this meeting and help us appreciate your own work better.

(Acc 11378, Box 4, Letter dated 14 February 1904)

Amongst the strangest of Thurston's fan mail is the following letter from Leon Bamber, Prisoner 20F05 at Penitentiary Blackwell's, Island City who, in a desperate attempt to secure a copy of *The Masquerader*, wrote to Thurston: "would you not be so generous as to please honour me with a copy of 'The Masquerader'? As 'in the 'world' I am living, 'The Masquerader' is not to be gotten for the price of life." He offered in return to "contribute my own view on Eve's and John's morality, if I will be clever enough to understand the circumstances" (Acc 11378, Box 4, Letter dated 7 November, no year).

Although the book was not available to inmates of the U.S. prison service, sales in the United States were particularly strong and The Literary Agency informed Thurston that up "to June 30 1905" the total number of copies of the ordinary edition of *The Masquerader* printed and sold by Harper's were as follows: "Total number of copies printed 170,165. Total number of copies sold 163,393" (Acc 11378, Box 1, Correspondence with The Literary Agency 1903-1908, Letter dated 22 August 1905). *The Masquerader* soon began to appear in the bestseller lists across the U.S. and the

Book News – Dealer 1905 was able to report that it was among the six bestselling books for December.¹³⁸

The huge numbers of *The Masquerader* sold ensured Thurston a more than healthy income. On 29 September 1903 she had signed a literary agreement with Harper's which stated that she would receive:

\$2,500 for serial rights
\$1,250 on receipt of completed M.S
\$1,250 on March 1st 1904
15% Royalty on copies of up to 25,000 copies
20% on all subsequent ones
\$1,000 to be paid on a/c of such royalties on day of publication

(Acc 11378, Box 6, Cash Book)

The Agreement with Blackwood on 30 October 1903 was less generous:

Publishers agree to pay £500 for British Serial Rights (With the exception of Canadian)
Payments to be as follows
£100 on signing
£100 on January 1st 1904
£100 on April 1st 1904
£100 on July 1st 1904
£100 on October 1st 1904
15% on all copies up to 3000
17 and a half % on all copies up to 6000
20% thereafter
On all Colonial Editions a royalty of 15%

(Acc 11378, Box 6, Cash Book)

138 Chapter Five, contains further details of the way in which these lists were constructed. The bestseller lists for December 1905 stated that across the United States, *The Masquerader* was an extremely popular novel: "The following lists have been compiled from reports made by leading booksellers throughout the country. The impartiality and accuracy of such reports render the lists of great value. Titles are given in the order of priority: New England States 1. *The Masquerader*; Mid Atlantic States 1. *The Masquerader*; Southern States None; Central States 1. *The Masquerader*; Western States None; Northern States 5. *The Masquerader*. (Acc 11378, Box 4 Press Clipping, 1905, n.p.).

These large sales ensured that Thurston would earn a phenomenal income from these two book deals. A small cash book, detailing in Thurston's own handwriting her income from her literary work, details substantial figures for the first few years of her literary career:

1904 – Total £1, 545:7:10
1905 – Total £11,320:16:11
1906 – Total £8,503:5:10

(Acc 11378, Box 8, Literary Cash A/C)

These sums are roughly equivalent to the following figures today:

£1, 545:7:10	-	£101,933.84
£11,320:16:11	-	£743,314.03
£8,503:5:10	-	£558,926.77

(Officer, 2001, <http://www.eh.net/hmit/ppwebbp>)

This was a huge amount of money for any author of the time to earn on a single book, and confirms the point made in Chapter Two that women writers were not financially discriminated against. A clipping from the American *Literary Post*, 4 May 1904 entitled “Money Rewards of Authors” comments on the growing status of modern day authors and their ability to earn substantially more money than their predecessors:

Conan Doyle wrote . . . ‘A Study in Scarlet’ he succeeded in selling it for £14 . . . Seventy thousand pounds probably represents the sum the Sherlock Holmes books together with the play, have brought the author.
Rudyard Kipling . . . For the serial rights of ‘Kim’ in England and this country he received £5000. He has accumulated a comfortable fortune and that is all.
Mrs Humphrey Ward’s profits have been large and constant . . . not one of her last 7 or 8 novels has returned her less than \$50,000.
Of Katherine Cecil Thurston’s ‘The Masquerader’ 200,000 copies were sold in the country alone, and issued under the title of ‘John Chilcote M.P.’ in England the book brought its author another comfortable fortune.

Thurston's return on this one novel was far in excess of the remuneration received by even the most bestselling authors of the time. This clipping indicates the impact Thurston was being discussed and ranked amongst the most successful novelists of the period.

4.7 From book to stage: The dramatisation of *John Chilcote M.P.*

By October 1904 *John Chilcote* had appeared on both sides of the Atlantic in serial and book form. The public response was phenomenal and in an effort to capitalise on its success Charles T. Helmsley, from the St James Theatre London wrote to Thurston enquiring: "Mr Alexander desires me to write and ask you if he could arrange to have your book 'John Chilcote M.P.' dramatized for the stage, and if so, whether you would let him have it on the same terms as others have done, namely: one half of the fees to go to the author of the book, and the other to the adapter" (Acc 11378, Box 4, Letter dated 4 October 1904). George Alexander was the well-known actor-manager of the St James Theatre in London's West End, who also worked with Henry Irving's dramatic company at the Lyceum Theatre. Alexander had come to public prominence in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. He was responsible for finding new writing by British dramatists and produced several of Oscar Wilde's plays, amongst them *The Importance of Being Earnest* and *Lady Windermere's Fan*. Alexander was noted for producing plays which dealt with sexual double standards and the personal cost of living a respectable life. He was also known for attracting well-known actors and actresses to the St James – amongst them, the flamboyant Mrs Patrick Campbell, and Ellen Terry. The offer of a dramatic adaptation of *Chilcote* by such a well-known and well-respected actor manager proves Thurston's growing popularity and is an indication

of the economics of publishing and the way in which, as Weedon posits in Chapters Five and Six, writers had to ensure publication across a broad range of formats.

Thurston welcomed the offer, perhaps also seeing in it a chance for Ernest to write the dramatic version and therefore share in her success. She wrote to Blackwood on 9 October: "Mr George Alexander the actor has taken the dramatic rights and I cannot but think you will be pleased as we are that this has happened, particularly as it is almost certain that the adaptation is to be done by my husband . . . I think that it ought to be another important advertisement for the book . . ." (MS 30 109, Incoming Letters to Blackwood, Letter dated 9 October 1904). The Literary Agency was quick to offer congratulations, hoping that Ernest would write the dramatization: "congratulations on the dramatic arrangements for 'John Chilcote'. I have no doubt this will be a very marked success, and I hope it will be Ernest's version that appears on the boards" (Acc 11378, Box 4, Letter dated 12 October 1904).

No doubt aware of the significance that the dramatisation would have on sales of the novel, James Macarthur of Harper's wrote: "I presume that your husband will attempt the Dramatization if that should be called for. I am very closely in touch with the theatrical manager here, as I am interested to some extent in the theatre myself" (Acc 11378, Box 4, Letter dated 6 September 1904). Dramatic rights to *The Masquerader* had also been sold and it was planned that the play should appear on the New York stage.

Ernest did in fact write the dramatization of *John Chilcote* for the U.K. market. *The Westminster Gazette* announced its forthcoming arrival thus: "Mr George Alexander has now definitely decided to produce the new play, 'John Chilcote M.P.' adapted by E. Temple Thurston from the story of Katherine Cecil Thurston, on Monday evening, May 1" (Acc 11378, Box 10, Press Clippings 1905, Clipping dated 13 April 1905, n.p.). The

press was full of the arrangements for the staging of the play. In writing the dramatisation Ernest had avoided the requirement for the two men Loder and Chilcote to be on the stage at the same time. George Alexander however overrode this idea and insisted on finding a look-alike actor to play the title role to his Loder. The preparations therefore “centred chiefly on his search for a double” (Acc 11378, Box 9 Large Cuttings book, *The Times*, 19 March 1905, n.p.). The huge media attention surrounding Alexander’s search for his double added to the impetus surrounding *Chilcote* and provided much free publicity.

The opening of the play was heralded as the event of the year. Even “the Prince and Princess of Wales . . . were present at the opening of ‘John Chilcote M.P.’ at the St James Theatre” (Acc 11378, Box 10, Press Clippings 1905, *Pall Mall Gazette*, n.p., n.d.). Thurston herself experienced another bout of illness around this time. In a private letter to a friend she says: “not five days ago my Doctor told me he would only allow me to go to the first night of ‘John Chilcote’ if I promised to lie up again immediately after for at least a week” (Letter from Thurston to Miss Bisland, 3 May 1905, McClure MSS II).

Despite the publicity surrounding the opening, the play received many adverse comments, mostly regarding Ernest’s handling of the dramatization. One review in *Punch*, observed:

A good or bad twenty minutes might be cut out of the it somewhere, which could considerably lighten the play and increase the chances of the public continuing to take their seats in the House to hear the speeches and applaud during the session the Parliamentary career of *John Chilcote* . . . I have omitted to say that the play is by Mr Thurston from Mrs Thurston’s novel, a fact of which I was only reminded when owing to the excitement and nervous tension caused by the two-hours-and-a-quarter drama, I found myself longing for refreshment, with such a thirst on.

(Acc 11378, Box 10, *Punch*, dated 10 May 1905, p. 330)

Such reviews would have reminded Ernest of his lack of literary success and provided Katherine with further marital anxiety. Thurston bravely wrote to her American friend, Miss Bisland: "You saw of course that our play has met with no favour at the hands of the papers – but Mr Alexander thinks it will have a run all the same – So we are not disheartened" (McClure MSS, Letter from Thurston to Miss Bisland, 3 May 1905).

Despite the poor reviews the *Daily Express* reported that "Mr George Alexander's production of 'John Chilcote M.P.' in spite of all adverse comment, is attracting good audiences to the St James's Theatre, and will probably carry the popular manager safely through the season . . ." (Acc 11378, Box 10, *Daily Express* newspaper, dated 10 May, 1905, n.p.).

However by December *M.A.P.* was sympathetically writing of the play:

It was an astonishingly elaborate production, and must have cost some thousands to put on the stage, but for some reason or another – perhaps the somewhat long and novelistic talk had something to do with it – the play did not bring its plucky producer the award he deserved and it was taken off at a significantly early date. There was considerable merit in the piece as a whole, and it is not unreasonable to assume that it fell a victim of the changing mood of the public.

(Acc 11378, Box 10, Press Cuttings – No Date, *M.A.P.* 30 December n.y., n.p.)¹³⁹

The public may not have responded to the stage version of *Chilcote* with any great enthusiasm but the novel continued to sell well, the stage version even reviving sales of what continued to be a popular novel.

Although *The Masquerader* was due to be produced for the American stage, delays occurred following its lacklustre appearance on the London stage. In March 1906 the Thurstons gave permission to the proposed producer, Hackett, to postpone the

¹³⁹ *M.A.P.* or *Mainly About People*, was one of the main gossip magazines of the time.

production until 1 October 1906 (Acc 11378, Box 9, Large Cuttings book, letter dated 7 March 1906). By November 1906 the theatrical agent Miss Elizabeth Marbury informed Thurston of further delays in production. The dramatic rights had been sold with a time limit applied: the play had not been produced within the limit and the producer did not want to pay for the extension.

Marbury enquired whether Thurston “would be willing to enter into a contract with another manager on the same basis as the Hackett contract.” Thurston was eager to have the play produced for the American stage and her secretary has annotated the letter thus: “Ansd by telephone. Conclude agmt with other American mangr of same standing as Mr Hackett, do nothing to prejdice Mrs Thurston’s standing – if Hackett not willing to pay for extension” [sic] (Acc 11378, Box 8, Loose correspondence, Letter dated 28 November 1906). No correspondence in the Thurston archive gives further information on whether or not the play was performed in the United States. Marbury would regularly correspond with Thurston requesting the opportunity of selling the dramatic rights of further novels in the U.S. In addition to selling to the U.S. market Thurston also sold the dramatic rights to a number of European countries.

Conclusion

In comparison with many of her contemporaries, this chapter highlights Thurston’s exceptional earnings and the sales potential of many of her novels. Her relationships with her publishers mirror that of the period: and we see evidence of the growing literary market and the difficulties experienced by authors in negotiating a position within that market and ensuring a fair and adequate income from it. The publication of *John Chilcote M.P.* would be the biggest success of Thurston’s literary career. It firmly established her reputation as one of the leading novelists of her day and ensured that her name was never out of the newspapers or magazines for the remainder of her life.

Chapter Five will focus on Thurston's success as a popular woman author and the changing cultural climate of the period. We will see evidence of how Thurston used the emerging cult of celebrity to promote her writing in many popular publications.

Thurston was a woman with a firm grasp of the economics of publishing and we will see further evidence of this, and her belief that publishing was emerging as part of a wider entertainment industry throughout Chapter Five.

Chapter Five

Katherine Cecil Thurston and the cult of the popular

The success of compulsory education in creating mass literacy has already been outlined in Chapter One. Katherine Cecil Thurston was one of a growing number of authors to benefit from the effects of this at the end of the nineteenth century and the resultant increase in demand for the printed word. The new mass readership brought about by an increase in the provision of mass education in the 1870s resulted in a new type of readership – the needs of which the market was quick to respond to. For the first time in literary history it was the demands of the masses, not “men of letters” that resulted in the creation of the “bestseller.”

Laura J. Miller comments on the value and purpose of the bestseller lists as an indicator of literary taste and social trend, and of their use as powerful marketing tools by publishers. (2000, pp. 286-7) The definition of the term “bestseller” is, however, often vague: The sociologist Robert Escarpit makes a distinction between the different speeds at which books sell in order to define the term. Escarpit states that books which sell quickly and break even within three months but then see sales decline rapidly can be defined as “fast sellers”. Books which have less spectacular sales but which sell well over a period of at least a couple years are defined as “steady sellers”, while the “bestseller” combines the high early sales of the fast seller and goes on to maintain those high sales for at least a couple of years. (Escarpit, 1966, p. 116) By using Escarpit’s definition we can see that several of Thurston’s novels could be termed bestsellers. In particular, the overnight success enjoyed by *Chilcote* was maintained for many years after the date of publication, likewise *The Circle* and *The Fly on the Wheel* (1908). The sales of *The Gambler* (1905) and *Max* (1910), which started strongly and then declined rapidly would place them in the category of the fast seller.

The growth of new entrepreneurial publishing houses and technological advancements in printing discussed in Chapter Two ensured that the number of novels published grew steadily through the latter part of the nineteenth century: “in 1866 the number of adult novels rose sharply to 755 and marked the inauguration of a boom that, with occasional variations, was to continue until just before the First World War” (Keating, 1989, p. 32). By 1906, five years into Thurston’s writing career, the number of novels published per year in Great Britain had risen to “a staggering 2,108” (Keating, 1989, p. 33). Some fifty thousand newspapers and periodicals, largely started during the Victorian period, also served this huge increase in mass-market readership. A large proportion of these papers and periodicals contained a fictional element and offered a further outlet to the growing number of writers of the period (Keating, 1989, p. 36). Thurston’s short stories and serialisations of her novels regularly appeared in the papers and periodicals of the day.

The term “bestseller” is often used in a disparaging way to give the impression that best selling books were of an inferior quality to that of those authors such as Conrad, Shaw, and Wells etc., whose work and names are still highly regarded today. Yet the works that made their way to the bestseller lists of their time were the books that the vast majority of the book buying public wanted to buy. While they cannot be seen as an index of literary merit, they do provide us with an insight into “the mood, the attitude, and the state of mind of a nation or a class at this or that period of time” (Cockburn, 1975 p. 8). The author of a bestseller was able to produce the type of story demanded by the public and to ensure that, the author had to be “more than usually aware of the needs of the potential customers,” a skill that Thurston ably demonstrated (Cockburn, 1975, p.16).

Tompkins believes that by interpreting literature in a way that stops defining texts as works of art, but sees them as a way of redefining the social order, allows us to examine the way that a particular culture thinks about itself, “articulating and proposing solutions for the problems that shape a particular historical moment” (Tompkins, 1985 p. xi). In this context the bestseller can be seen as a valuable source of information about how we live and think at a particular historical moment. Showalter presents the New Woman novelists and dramatists as “competitors in the marketplace . . . a major presence in the new literary world” (Showalter, 2000, p. vii) and as such a reflection of the mood of the period. By setting a bestselling novel in its historical context, it is possible to see why these novels were so powerful at the time of their publication. In particular, at the beginning of the twentieth century this provides a valuable indicator of the status of women. The impact of the New Woman author in terms of sales figures and popularity was highlighted by Edmund Gosse in 1895:

Things have come to a pretty pass when the combined prestige of the best poets, historians, critics and philosophers of the country does not weigh in the balance against a single novel by the New Woman. Mr Swinburne and Mr Herbert Spencer, Mr Leslie Stephen and Professor Huxley – their combined ‘sales’ might be dropped into the ocean of ‘The Heavenly Twins’ and scarcely cause a splash in that enormous flood.

(in Ledger, 1997, pp. 177-8)

Bestseller lists began to appear in the closing years of the nineteenth century on both sides of the Atlantic. *The Bookman* was one of the first publications to provide these lists.¹⁴⁰ *The Publishers Weekly*, also ran a bestseller list from 1912. They reprinted the

¹⁴⁰ *The Bookman* (London) was founded in 1891 by William Robertson Nicoll. It was aimed at “Bookbuyers, Bookreaders and Booksellers” and included features on popular authors, reviews, literary gossip and bestseller lists which could be found in a feature entitled “Sales of Books During the Month.” Each month bookshops from around Britain would submit details of their bestselling books. *The Bookman* (New York) was an imitation of its London counterpart which began in 1895. (Bassett & Walter, *Book History*, Vol. 4, 2001)

lists which had already appeared in *The Bookman* and then from *Books of the Month*. It was not long before several other newspapers and magazines aimed at both the book industry and the reading public were also publishing bestseller lists (Miller, 2000, pp. 286-304). Bestseller lists were followed closely by the public but they were not constructed in a scientific manner, so it is important not to view them as a definitive account of what was selling and what was not, at any given period (Miller, 2000, p.287).

Bassett and Walter state that the bestseller lists which appeared in *The Bookman* under the title "Sales of Books During the Month" are often described as the first bestseller lists. These lists which were submitted by booksellers from around Britain proposed to "give from month to month statements by representative and leading booksellers of the volumes they have found most popular during the previous month" (2001, p. 206). The editors of *The Bookman* did not, however, state how these booksellers were selected, nor did they offer any criteria for determining the manner in which a book would win a place on the list. As the column rarely mentions sales figures, Bassett and Walter state that "the lists could be the result of careful record keeping, the subjective impressions of the individual bookseller, factual errors, outright deceit, or some combination of these" (2001, p. 207).¹⁴¹ The information contained within this feature provides us with information relating to the demand of customers "as perceived by a number of booksellers from around the British Isles" (2001, p. 225). In addition to the "Sales of Books During the Month" feature, from 1894 *The Bookman* also carried a "Monthly Report of the Wholesale Book Trade" which consisted of a report of the wholesale trade in the form of a week-by-week breakdown of the wholesale sales and a list of bestselling titles. In keeping with the form of the "Sales of Books During the Month"

¹⁴¹ From 1898 onwards the "Sales of Books During the Month" feature became standardized and contained details of the name and location of the submitting store, authors name, title, publisher, and price of the book. Although the numbers of lists contained within the feature varied from month-to-month, on average the feature contained between ten and fifteen lists (Bassett and Walter, 2001, p. 207).

feature, the authors of this report were never identified and never revealed their method of selection of the books which appeared on the lists. Bassett and Walter, however, state that they probably relied on a “mixture of objective and subjective impressions” in making their selection (2001, p. 216). While the “Sales of Books During the Month” feature provides us with information on customers demands, “The Monthly Report on the Wholesale Book Trade” records what the bookshops were stocking.

The bestseller lists compiled during Thurston’s career were mainly constructed as marketing tools by publishers and others involved in the book trade. Miller argues that bestseller lists were used by industry professionals as a way of promoting particular authors and should therefore be viewed as cultural and economic indicators rather than as tools for informing or entertaining the book-reading public. In order to ensure a return on the investment in their author, publishers would attract media attention through the pages of these journals or make sure it made the bestseller list.

Thurston’s relationship with her publishers, highlighted in Chapters Three and Four, demonstrates how eager they were to market and promote her work in order to reap the rewards of their investment of time and money. This was particularly evident in the United States before the release of *The Masquerader* when James Macarthur of Harper and Brothers informed Thurston that they had “succeeded in ensuring the cooperation and enthusiasm of everybody connected with the handling of the book here. What I hope for is nothing less than it may be the book of the year, and I am now making efforts to bring that about” (Acc 11378, Box 4, Letter dated 6 September 1904).

Despite this “general agreement in the industry that the lists do not accurately reflect what books are the country’s top best-sellers, major publishers and booksellers have an interest in maintaining the authority of the lists” (Miller, 2000, p. 287). This ensures that

their reputation with their authors and with the reading public remains strong and that they are viewed by all parties as successful publishers. Thurston regularly featured on these lists. According to the Monthly Report of the *Wholesale Booktrade*, in 1904, *John Chilcote* was ranked in first place on five English lists along with Marie Corelli's *God's Good Man* and Anthony Hope's *Double Harness*. In Scotland she was ranked fourth on four lists, coming behind W. Earl Hodgson's *Trout Fishing*, Marie Corelli's *God's Good Man*, and Robert Hichens *Garden of Allah* (Bassett and Walter, 2002, pp. 227-233). Her inclusion in these bestseller lists should therefore be viewed not only as a gauge of her popularity as a novelist but also as an indicator of her economic and cultural value to her publishers.

There has been a tendency to classify works, such as Thurston's, that have been hugely popular and which have made an impact on reader's lives as merely sensationalist. Such works have often been deemed as inferior to classic texts. Tompkins believes that the strength of these "classic" texts does not lie in their "intrinsic merit," but in the way that they embody a "set of national, social, economic, institutional, and professional interests" (Tompkins, 1985, p. xii). In short, those with a vested interest and the ability to maintain the status of these texts will do so. According to Tompkins, novels situated within this traditional literary canon remain there because their authors, publishers, critics, promoters and readers have occupied positions of power which have enabled that work to maintain its pre-eminent state.

Similar points are made by Showalter (1999), Ledger (1997) and Woolf (1929, 1938). Showalter blames this residual approach to women's writing for the fragmentary nature of women's literary history:

[w]hich has reduced and condensed the extraordinary range and diversity of English women novelists to a tiny band of the 'great,' and derived all theories from them . . . Having lost sight of the minor novelists, who were the links in the chain that bound one generation to the next, we have not had a very clear understanding of the continuities in women's writing, nor any reliable information about the relationships between the writers' lives and the changes in the legal, economic, and social status of women.

(Showalter, 1999, p.7)

This is a point reiterated by Woolf in *A Room of One's Own*, when bemoaning women's lack of literary history and the impact of this on the potential woman writer of the day.

Woolf believed that without such a legacy a woman would find it difficult to find a literary voice, but with it, she would be able to draw "her life from the lives of the unknown who were her forerunners, as her brother did before her, she will be born" (Woolf, 1929, pp.102-3). Ledger sees the belittling of literature by women as stemming from the rise of mass culture in the 1880s and 1890s when male writers tried to "re-masculinise British fiction" (Ledger, 1997, p. 168). The masculine romance and new realism which emerged in male novels of the close of the nineteenth century were viewed as "serious literature rather than entertainment, a type of fiction which would be beyond the ken of women writers" (Ledger, 1997, pp. 178-9).

Thus novelists such as Thurston, who were fantastically popular at the time of publication and who have since fallen out of favour, have done so mainly because their writing was not favoured by the literary elite and not included within the canon. Popular writing was favoured by the masses, those who, on the whole, held little power and consequently had no ability to keep the work alive. Works such as Thurston's were "exceptional in the sense of reaching an exceptionally large audience . . . not because of its departure from the ordinary and conventional, but through its embrace of what is most widely shared" (Tompkins, 1985, p. xvi). Although the themes of Thurston's work were relevant to the time of their publication, with the passing of time and

women's changing role and the increase in their legal and political rights, her work, like that of many of the New Women writers, has become almost obsolete.

From the late-Victorian period onwards women's writing was constantly reflecting their lived experiences and often speculating on the possibilities available to them. As such, women's writing over the past hundred years or so has been constantly developing and changing to reflect the enormous changes in women's lives. The disappearance of Thurston's novels (and those of other women writers) following her death can be viewed in the context of this natural progression of women's writing. It has only been since the 1960s that feminists have been recovering the work of these forgotten women and constructing an alternative canon of their own.¹⁴²

With the creation of the new "bestseller" came the creation of a new bestselling author and the cult of personality. Readers were interested in not only what was being written but increasingly in who was doing the writing. Bestselling authors became personalities in their own right and could court publicity in order to promote sales of their novels and short stories.¹⁴³ From the start of her writing career, Thurston was keenly aware of the

¹⁴² The feminist publishing house of Virago Press, founded in 1973 has been successful in publishing a wide range of women's literature. In 1978 Virago launched the Virago Modern Classics series. These novels, influenced by the texts contained within Elaine Showalter's *A Literature of Their Own* aimed to "demonstrate the existence of a female literary tradition and to broaden the sometimes narrow definition of a classic" text: <http://www.virago.co.uk/virago/virago/history.asp?TAG=&CID=virago> (accessed: 1 November 2006) The success of this series has led to the rediscovery of the work of many "lost" women authors, Katherine Cecil Thurston amongst them. The success of the Virago Modern Classics series has been fuelled by an increase in scholarly interest in women's writing, leading to a rise in academic interest and research in this field.

¹⁴³ The celebrity author has had a long history stretching back to the 18th century: However the increase in popular literature for the new mass market led to a proliferation of magazines published in the 1890s such as *The Bookman* and the *Book Buyer*, devoted to the subject of contemporary authors and their work. Morton states that the *Bookman* "ministered to a broad range of quasi-literary appetites. It chronicled the small beer of writers' private lives . . . [and] also supplied ticker-tape information about the literary stock market." (2004, p. 59) In addition to *The Bookman* and *Book Buyer* were publication such as the *Athenaeum* and the *Academy*, both of which reviewed the latest

power of publicity and from the time of publication of her first novel she was an avid collector of press cuttings relating to her work. Both she and Ernest subscribed to several Press Clipping Bureaux – The Printing and Typewriting Agency of London, Woolgar and Roberts, London, The Manhattan Press Clipping Bureau and The Author's Clipping Bureau Boston, to track the reception of their work. A letter from Ernest to the Author's Clipping Bureau dated 16 October 1906 reads: "I am enclosing a cheque for a pound (£1). I will be glad if you will forward me criticisms of my book 'Traffic' which has just appeared published by Messrs Gillingham." A further letter dated 17 April 1907 from Ernest to The Author's Clipping Bureau, Boston reads "[i]n future please send American cuttings only to my wife and myself as we get the English ones from a cuttings bureau here" (Acc 11378, Box 2 Letterbook dated March 16th 1907 -).¹⁴⁴

Not all books that were reviewed would go on to become a bestseller: "But a book which was seriously, even though sometimes fatuously, reviewed and became a bestseller was one that the public was taking seriously: talking about, thinking about, inwardly more or less digesting. It was an event with consequences" (Cockburn, 1975, p. 24). The novels and short stories produced by Thurston during her short career captured the imagination of the book buying public. Her popularity as a writer means that at some level she was able to tap into the mood of her readers. She was able to speak in a language that they understood, on topics that had relevance and meaning to them: of the duality of people's lives, the struggle and anguish experienced by many

literary offerings as well as providing "a superior class of gossip." (2004, p. 59) In January 1893 a collection entitled *Notable Women Author's of the Day* by Helen C. Black was published, which allowed readers access to the lives of many of the popular female writers of the day. This publication contained photographs of the authors and their homes alongside articles and interviews with these new celebrities. The success of these publications ensured that "writers and their lives were under perpetual scrutiny by professional gossip-mongers" (Lockridge, ed., 1989, pp. 172 -183).

¹⁴⁴ Thurston's bank books from her accounts with the London and County Banking Co. show regular payments being made to each of these press clipping bureaux, for the period 1904 -10 (Acc 11378, Box 6).

women in their attempt to live a more meaningful life, and of the futility of many lives not only that of women. In doing so she provided a valuable “mirror of the time” (Cockburn, 1975, p.14). Her popularity as a novelist and celebrity was due to the fact that readers the world over identified with her and her writing.

5.1 Thurston and the art of fiction

Popular authors such as Thurston became celebrities at a time of global cultural change; the rise of mass literacy discussed in Chapter One and the phenomenon of the bestseller discussed in Chapter Two, ensured that authors no longer had to be within the literary canon to be seen as worthwhile.¹⁴⁵ Thurston herself was aware that her popularity rested not only in her storytelling ability but also on her ability to reflect the needs of her readership. In an interview with *The Book Monthly* in December 1904 and later on 17 January 1905 in an American newspaper, she says:

Much has been said for – and much against – the prominent position that the novel holds today; but it seems to me that the extraordinary vogue which it enjoys is neither the outcome of a great advance in fiction writing nor the result of any decadence in the public taste, but simply the natural consequence of an existing state of things.

Thurston is demonstrating her understanding of the social role of literature. By viewing it as “the natural consequence of an existing state of things” she asserts her belief that her writing does not play a part in changing society, but is merely reflecting what is happening around her. She goes on to say:

¹⁴⁵ Milner states that books contained within the literary canon are those which are viewed as “authentic” and “inspired” in ways that other (merely ‘fictional’) texts are not” (1996, p. 5). The literary canon therefore consists of books which are considered “great” or “fine” (1996, p. 6). The category in which either type of novel will be placed is a value judgement.

The modern aim, the modern idea – with women as well as with men – is to live at the highest pressure attainable, to compress as much as is humanly reasonable into one lifetime; and the result of this feverish state of being resolves itself into a periodical and insistent need for distraction from personal concerns . . . a mental rest-cure in an overtaxed world.

We turn to it when our minds are tired, much as we turn to the sea or mountains, when physically exhausted by an arduous season – social or commercial.

Thurston is in effect outlining a manifesto for her writing and suggesting that the novel will increasingly become a major source of enjoyment and part of a fledgling but growing entertainment industry. She is also demonstrating that her work and the work of many writers of the time had little to do with the multitude of self-improvement literature which several of the more traditional publishers still produced. While asserting that her writing has little to do with this genre she does however acknowledge

the many gifted men and women who use the novel as a medium for expressing their ideas; for it may reasonably be admitted that we are more likely to be brought into touch with what is high and fine during our temporary respites – mental or physical – than when harassed by the stress of personal endeavour.

For this it may be assumed that I consider the novel as a vehicle of instruction; and to a certain extent that is my belief, for I willingly acknowledge that amongst novelists – as amongst painters, dramatists or poets – there must always, of necessity, be found the born teacher, the man who, instinctively, subtly – and often unconsciously – conveys a lesson; although as the individual reader, I may welcome all work – whether it be instructive, interesting, or merely amusing – which I can sincerely feel has been well and honestly done.

This reference to literature which “conveys a lesson” refers in many ways to Thurston’s own writing. Her work was always entertaining and while she never believed that her message was polemical, there can be no denying that it did contain an underlying comment on the society of the day. The interview continues:

I think there is another ground upon which the novel may be granted a justification for existence: the ground that, except perhaps for the work of the dramatist, it forms almost the only social record of our own times.

In making this somewhat sweeping statement, I am not bearing in mind the novels of imagination, or the novels of imaginary incident, that live their hour strenuously, and then cease to exist. I am recalling the many careful, conscientious psychological novels that have been given us by thoughtful writers of our own generation – novels in which the social life . . . is faithfully depicted by a mind trained to observe.

It is an undeniable fact that, at the present period, the novelist is almost the only worker who finds romance – or rather, inspiration – in actual social life. We live in an age of impetuosity. Journalism has superseded careful and exhaustive biography; the type-writer has relegated letter writing to the region of lost arts; and it is to my thinking, a distinct question whether, under existing circumstances, that curious and complicated machinery of manners and customs . . . might not go altogether unrecorded but for the patience and observation of the novelist.

However, be this latter point as it may, I hold to my first opinion that the novel does indisputably fill a niche in the existing scheme of things; that its position is a question of demand and supply; and that, unless we witness a very rigorous change in the mode of actual existence, it will continue to be a necessity.

(Acc 11378 Box 8, *The Book Monthly*, Dec 1904, pp. 159-161)

For an author who was “chary” of putting forward her opinion on the matter of the novel’s place in society this would appear a rather lengthy and opinionated statement. It is interesting to note that Thurston sees the work of the novelist of the day as being one of instruction, and as a way of expressing one’s ideas, that through the novel we can become aware of the beliefs and values of a society at any given time. Thurston herself can surely be ranked among these thoughtful authors of her own generation who wrote “psychological novels . . . in which the social life of which each of us knows himself to be a unit, is faithfully depicted by a mind trained to observe” (Acc 11378 Box 8, *The Book Monthly*, Dec 1904, pp. 159-161). In making this statement we can see that Thurston herself was consciously depicting the society in which she lived, and recording cultural history for posterity. In turn she is also making a statement on women’s role and the limitations of women’s lives within that society.

Perhaps in self-recognition of what she felt were the limitations of her own literary abilities, Thurston comments on the role of literature, in an interview in 1910:

Literature is the painting of the world from the mirror of the artist's mind, and when the picture painted is weak and immature it is not necessarily the brush that has been guilty but the mirror that has not been polished. There must be searching self-criticism – if necessary, unhesitating self-condemnation.

(Acc 11378, Box 10, Press Cuttings 1910, *T.P's Weekly*, 11 February 1910)

Thurston displays a clear understanding of not only what she felt were the limitations of her own literary ability, but also the limitations discussed in Chapters One and Two and felt by many authors (not only women) who had been denied the education and exposure to the world which was available to many of the men who chose literary life as a career. However, Thurston refuses to see this as an excuse for poor work, choosing instead to continually strive to improve her own work. She believed that it was the responsibility of the author to faithfully represent the reality of experience and life.

In another interview in 1910 Thurston made further comment on this topic, giving an insight into how much effort she put into her own writing. For Thurston, writing fiction was a serious undertaking and a considerable responsibility:

Here and there . . . you meet the man or woman who says to you "oh this or that was not my real work. I did not put myself into it." There is no statement more false than this. There is no position less tenable for the artist. . . . [E]very word that a man writes contains inevitably something of himself; and if we are to be truly sincere, we do not shelter behind excuses, but prefer to say 'The work was weak, the work was immature, but at the time I could do no better.'

(Acc 11378, Box 10, Press Cuttings 1910, *New York Sun*, 9 March 1910, n.p.)

Thurston reacting to the criticisms made of the work of many women novelists of the period. Criticism of the quality of women's writing and of the genres in which they wrote and published were widespread and reflected mostly on their lack of education and the restrictive practices of the patriarchal publishers discussed in Chapter Two.

5.2 Thurston and popular culture

In addition to the articles in daily newspapers and periodicals, writers could also find themselves the subject of lifestyle articles. From the time of the publication of *The Circle* Thurston was courted for her opinion on important and topical matters of the day. While her opinion was regularly sought and she began to make regular public appearances as a guest speaker, her extravagant lifestyle was also scrutinised by the press and the public. Shortly after the publication of her first novel Thurston received this letter from *The Bookman*, dated 9 February 1903:

We are anxious to include something about yourself and your work in a series of short articles on New Authors which we have from time to time in 'The Bookman' and should be exceedingly obliged if you could let us have for this purpose some biographical notes or paragraphs and if possible a non-copyright photograph of yourself for the purpose of reproduction, as we should be glad to insert a photograph with the article.

(Acc 11378 Box 8, Large Folder).

On 24 July 1904, The Editor of the gossip magazine *M.A.P.*, Mr T.P. O'Connor M.P. wrote:¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁶ Thomas Power O'Connor was a fellow Irishman and contemporary of Thurston's father. He held similar political views to him and was a strong supporter of Parnell. He was elected as an Irish Nationalist M.P. for Galway in 1890 and remained in politics for over 40 years ending his career as 'Father' of the House of Commons. He combined politics with journalism and was the founder of several radical newspapers and periodicals, among them: *The Star*, *The Sun*, *M.A.P.* and *T.P.'s Weekly*. From Thurston's personal correspondence it is clear that Mr and Mrs T.P. O'Connor were among her closest friends.

Would you allow me to have a chat with you on behalf of "M.A.P"? I am conducting a little series entitled 'M.A.P. in the Library' consisting of very personal and anecdotal sketches of distinguished writers, and I should be highly honoured and gratified if you would, so to speak, 'sit' for my little gallery. Should you be so kind as to consent, nothing of course would be published which you have not seen and approved.

(Acc 11378, Box 8, Large Folder)

On 20 October 1904 the Editor of *The Young Woman*, wrote:

I write to ask whether you would be good enough to give me a brief interview for 'The Young Woman'. This magazine has for some years made a special feature of its interviews with leading people, and among those who have been interviewed are Mrs F.A. Steel, Mrs Humphrey Ward, the late Lord Leighton, Mrs W.K. Clifford, Mrs Crawford, Madame Sarah Grand, Mrs Joppling, and many others. In the November number which will be published shortly, I have an interview with Mrs T P O'Connor.

(Acc 11378, Box 9, Large Folder)

On 11 October 1905, *The Strand Magazine* asks "Will you give us permission to include yourself among the 'Portraits of Celebrities at Different Ages' now being published in this magazine" (Acc 11378, Box 8). In only a few short years Thurston had grown in stature from an unknown author, to one who was never far from the pages of the newspapers and periodicals of the day.

Interest in Thurston and her work came from across the world. Letters from fans and various representatives of the media regularly arrived at Thurston's residence following the publication of *The Circle*. A Letter from *Who's Who in America*, dated December 11 1905 reads:

Please furnish us with adequate data for a brief personal sketch of yourself for insertion in the new revised and enlarged edition of *Who's Who in America* now in course of preparation . . .

There is no charge whatever for the insertion and immediate response is requested in order that we may be accurate and not have to use data taken from secondary sources.

(Acc 11378, Box 8 Large Folder)

An undated letter from the Editor of the 'Saturday Review of Books', *The New York Times*, enquires: "If you have made any plans for the Fall, whether in the way of work or recreation. THE SATURDAY REVIEW OF BOOKS would be glad to learn what they are, as a matter of special interest to its many readers. The information you see fit to send us will NOT be printed in the first person, as coming direct from the author"

(Acc 11378, Box 8 Literary Correspondence).

A similar letter dated 3 April 1906 from the games manufacturer, Parker Bros. of Salem Massachusetts reads:

We are about to publish a new edition of the well known game of *Authors*, and would be greatly pleased to include your works, and the reproduction of a photograph, like those of other famous Authors in the list. We need hardly to remind you that the game of *Authors* is one which fixes in children's minds prominent literary works, with deep and lasting impressions, and we would be greatly pleased if you would very kindly send us a photograph . . . and a list of your books which would be represented by the four cards of the suit...

(Acc 11378, Box 1, Loose Sheets)

Unfortunately no evidence exists as to whether Thurston responded to this particular letter, or in fact whether she was included in Parker Brothers' game, *Authors*. Then, as now, *The Tatler* was responsible for the creation of many reputations. In an article dated 20 February 1903 they state: "Mrs Thurston . . . is one of the numerous young Irishwomen who have made a name for themselves in the literary world . . . There is no egotism I hope in my mentioning that THE TATLER was one of the first papers in London to recognise her distinct ability, and two short stories of hers – *Clio's Conclusions* and *The Adjusting of Things* – appeared in this journal many months ago"

(Acc 11378 Box 9).

The importance of the club system and Thurston's use of it has already been highlighted in Chapter Three and further evidence of its relevance is offered when on 27 September 1905 Thurston is approached by The Lyceum Club of London. The Honorary Secretary, Constance Smedley, who included Thurston amongst "a most distinguished galaxy of famous women authors," requested

to publish an annual in the form of a volume, containing representative work of the most distinguished international members of the Club both authors and artists. The book would be sold at the Arts and Crafts Exhibitions in London and Berlin, and also to the public through the usual channels. It is proposed to publish therein poems, stories, and essays of high literary merit on any subject, the literary merit of the collection being the only thing essential . . .

We are so much hoping that you will honour us by appearing in what we are certain will be a most distinguished galaxy of famous women authors. As this publication will be in the nature of a venture, and considering the status of our contributors, we feel we cannot hope to even adequately remunerate them, and therefore we have decided that 50% of the profits should be divided amongst the contributors.

(Acc 11378, Box 8, Large Folder)¹⁴⁷

Thurston herself was more than willing to court publicity. A letter from *The Car* magazine, dated 19 October 1905, reveals that she had instructed her secretary to approach them regarding an article about her: "In reply to your letter of the 18th inst, I may inform you that I shall be pleased to have an article on Mrs Thurston and her car to form one of our series of 'Cars and Country Houses'" (Acc 11378, Box 1). Thurston was the proud owner of a Léon Bolleé which had been ordered on her behalf by Ernest

¹⁴⁷ As well as being a co-founder of the London Lyceum Club for women, Constance Smedley was an author, a Publishers' Reader, and a regular contributor to various periodicals of the period. While working as a representative of the American magazine *Everybody's* she is largely credited with discovering Kenneth Grahame and urging him to write for publication. Grahame would go on to write *The Wind in The Willows*. After he unsuccessfully attempted to have the work published it was Smedley who introduced him to the American Literary agent Curtis Brown who persuaded Methuen to publish the work under the title *The Wind in the Reeds* in 1907. Letters between Thurston, her advisors, and Smedley show that she also had an interest in the placing and publishing of Thurston's work.

on the 4 July 1905 from the Victoria Carriage Works Ltd, Long Acre, London: "I hereby order a Motor Car as specified below. Price to be Nine hundred and seventy five pounds . . . Spec of particulars. 24hp Léon Bolleé with square laudaulette body no extension in front painted Blue and Yellow. Blue Leather Trimming. Monogram KCT" (Acc 11378, Box 6).

Thurston's love of this car and the adventure it offered her is well documented. Mrs Rosemary Dowson, for example, writes of how Thurston "had one of the first cars in Co. Cork which caused quite a stir. I remember my mother telling us how people jumped over hedges to get out of its way and what fun it was. Not that they – the people in the car – actually meant to terrify the inhabitants, but that their reaction was – to get out of its way! And quickly!!" (Private correspondence from Rosemary Dowson to Mirjam Nieman, 30 August 1999). The car was, however, involved in a number of small accidents – not all of which involved Thurston as the driver. In 1906 one unfortunate pedestrian – John Mackey – a man who was unable to jump over hedges

was the victim of a motor accident in Cork . . . A car which was being driven by Mr Ernest Temple Thurston, who was accompanied by his wife, Mrs Katherine Cecil Thurston the celebrated authoress was approaching Patrick Street from the direction of the Post Office when it struck Mackey on the hip and dashed him to the ground. The motor car was immediately brought to a standstill, Mr and Mrs Thurston alighted giving all assistance to the injured man.

(Acc 11378, Box 10 Press Cuttings – 1906, *The Irish Times*, 1 August 1906, n.p.)

Another un-attributed clipping illustrates that a further victim was not quite as lucky as Mr Mackey: "Mrs Thurston . . . was motoring from Cork to Youghal, the car . . . dashed into the midst of a flock of sheep. The result of the unavoidable rush of the motor car through the sheep was that one of the animals was killed, and three others injured" (Acc 11378, Box 10 Press Cuttings – n.d., n.p.). Although, she employed a

chauffer, Thurston would often drive her own car – a pursuit which was most unusual among women during this period, offering further evidence of her adventurous spirit and independent nature.

Thurston's wealth and glamorous lifestyle have already been documented in Chapters Three and Four, and her fans enjoyed reading about these in journals and periodicals. Thurston was a most attractive woman: "She was tall . . . very good looking . . . [and] dark haired" (Private correspondence from Rosemary Dowson to Mirjam Nieman, n.d). *T.P.'s Weekly* described her as "a very pretty woman" (Acc 11378, Box 10, Press Cuttings, July 7, 1906, n.p.). In a newspaper article following her death, *The Scotsman* commented:

The principal thing that struck me was her glowing colour and air of country vigour . . . Her dark eyes shone with the sparkle that high winds breed, and her step was sprightly and alert. She came across the room as if she were tramping over the heather.

(*The Scotsman*, 7 September 1911, p.5)

No doubt aware of the impression made by her striking looks and enigmatic personality, Thurston loved to dress up: apparently the radical dress so favoured by many New Women, and discussed in Chapter Two, was not to her taste. A number of photographs in the Thurston Archive at the National Library of Scotland, show her in the spectacular gowns, flamboyant hats and furs so favoured by society women of the Edwardian period. Newspaper clippings also contain details of the many gowns she wore when attending literary functions. Her friends at *T.P.'s Weekly* reported:

The women Writers' Dinner at the Criterion was this year a greater success than usual . . . Prominent novelists present successfully contradicted the assertion that women of brain are never really well dressed. Mrs Thurston, the author of 'John Chilcote M.P.' . . . wore a really exquisite gown of tomato coloured chiffon; the bodice was of the palest pink with bretelles of tomato-coloured chiffon, finished

by velvet an inch wide of the same colour, and embroidered in silver. The belt was black and in her hair she wore an originally designed tomato-coloured satin bow. Mrs Thurston has a very fine complexion, and wears her hair dressed with severity which gives her a character of her own.

(Acc 11378, Box 10, Press Cuttings, *T.P's Weekly*, 7 July 1906)

In one of her regular articles for *T.P's Weekly*, Constance Smedley, wrote of how spellbound people could be when meeting Thurston for the first time. She reported how when one dinner guest was asked to sit next to Mrs Thurston at a party that Thurston's "mask like beauty froze me." In the same article she comments on her "calm face, classically regular, perfect in colouring, the tall figure, the erect poise of head" (Acc 11378, Box 10, Press Cuttings 1910, *T.P.s Weekly*, 11 February 1910).

Although she professed to be "desperately shy" in public, Thurston was nevertheless a frequent guest at various social and literary occasions (Acc 11378, Box 10 Press Cuttings – 1910, *T.P.'s Weekly*, 11 February 1910, n.p.). In addition to attending the many engagements expected of a woman in her position, she was often invited as the guest of honour. *The Daily Tribune* reported:

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle presided last night at the annual ladies' night dinner at the Author's Club, held at the Criterion Restaurant. In proposing the health of Mr and Mrs Temple Thurston, the chairman said that theoretically they were that night entertaining only one person; but that one person was one of the foremost lady novelists of the day.

Thurston responded to the toast, and in so doing displayed the same self-effacing tone which she regularly assumed when dealing with William Blackwood. The article continues: "She said she wished them to regard her that night as one who had very lately come into their midst – one who was very much afraid of their criticism, but very proud to accept their hospitality, and very anxious to be accepted by them as a friend" (Acc 11378, Box 10, Press Cuttings 1906, *The Daily Tribune*, 12 June 1906, n.p.).

In Chapter Three we see Thurston's reluctance in 1907 to make comment on Votes for Women. However, by 1908 she was happy to advocate her support of women's place in society. The speech, dated 4 November 1908 reads:

We have much controversy today as to our position as a sex; . . . But here I am quite sure, here I am quite satisfied, that there is not one woman present – the most frivolously feminine or the most cannily thoughtful – who will not join with me in returning thanks for this proof of her natural sovereignty . . . that whatever her position in the world, woman's position in man's mind has always remained the same. She always has been – she always will be – the ideal, the being whom, without coercion, without even suggestion, he chooses to call – not his equal, but his superior.

(Acc 11378, Box 12, Loose Papers, 4 November 1908)

Here we see evidence of Thurston's belief that women were more than equal to men and were indeed superior to them. In making such public appearances and speeches Thurston demonstrates a key facet of the New Woman: the ability to "think for oneself, [speak] assertively about public issues in mixed company, giving speeches . . ." (Ohmann, 1996, p.267) and to champion women. Thurston is enjoying the emergent cult of celebrity and is clearly recognised by her peers as a woman who is not only entertaining, but also has something to say which is worth listening to.

On the occasion of the Women Writers' Dinner at the Criterion Restaurant in 1909, Thurston

spoke for five minutes on 'Women and Work.' She recalled her first Writers' Dinner when not a face in the crowd was familiar . . . Since then . . . '[t]he strange faces have become familiar.' Thurston continued, giving some indication of her views on the importance of work to a woman's life: 'I have gained a new sense of the value of work in the development of woman. Work has broadened her outlook and widened her sympathies. Let us give the world our best. Let us realise that we are participators in the making of the moment.'

(Acc 11378, Box 10, Press Cuttings 1909, *The British Weekly*, 1 June 1909, n.p.)

In making a public speech on such a contentious topic for its time, Thurston demonstrates her support for the importance of work in women's lives, and is also stating her belief that women could and should make contributions to society outwith the bounds of the home: she appears to be quite at home among London's literati.

Thurston continued to make public speeches: a year later again at the Woman Writers' Dinner, it was said that "Of the woman speakers, the best was Mrs K.C. Thurston" (Acc 11378, Box 10, Press Cuttings 1910, *Hearth and Home*, 12 May 1910, n.p.).

In addition to public appearances Thurston routinely entertained at home. Among the frequent guests at 20 Victoria Road were publishers, critics, literary friends, members of the political establishment and the aristocracy. Her personal papers contain calling cards evidencing the literary and personal circles that she moved amongst. Her domestic accounts books reveal Thurston as a generous hostess; although never wasteful, she was generous towards friends and family. In addition to the regular orders for fresh meat, dairy and bread products delivered on an almost daily basis to her homes, are orders for food for dinner parties and orders for wine and champagne. This letter from 12 June 1907 is addressed to George Stewart Hardy & Co of Bordeaux: "[p]lease send me as soon as possible three dozen bottles of (number 5987) Cuvie Speciale Champagne @ sixty four shillings per dozen – same quality exactly as you supplied me on the 8th of Novembre [sic] last" (Acc 11378, Box 2, Letterbook dated March 16th 1907-).

William Blackwood, for example, writes: "My sister and I enjoyed your lunch party and meeting the great T.P. O'Connor was delightful. I had no idea he could be so pleasant and entertaining. I have to thank him for a most friendly and gratifying article on the 100th anniversary of my firm" (Acc 11378, Box 4, Letter dated 5 July 1904). Blackwood occasionally asked O'Connor's opinion of Thurston's work. For instance. In 1907 he asked: "Have you heard anything about 'The Fly on the Wheel' from your own circle of

friends? Has Mr T.P. O'Connor been reading it? I should be glad to hear how these opening chapters have impressed him" (Acc 11378, Box 2, Correspondence with Blackwood 1905-1910, Letter dated 29 November 1907). Thurston was thus in many ways the creator of a literary circle into which she drew Blackwood, and became part of the literary establishment of the time, demonstrating confidence in her abilities as a New Woman author of note.

Thurston also loved travel and throughout her life was a frequent visitor to European cities and resorts. She made frequent visits to Paris, Monaco, Monte Carlo and various parts of Spain to gather much of the research required for her novels. In 1908 when Thurston was planning the plot of *Max*, the *Glasgow Evening News* wrote: "Mrs Thurston means to lay the scene of her next novel in Paris and she has been there to master the 'local colour.'" They also acknowledged that *The Fly on the Wheel*, a novel set in provincial Ireland was largely written at her summer home in Ireland (Acc 11378, Box 10, Press Cuttings 1908, 6 May 1908).

Conclusion

Inclusion in these lifestyle magazines created a cult of personality which in turn resulted in an increase in readers, attracted to her work by what they knew of her lifestyle. As Keating observes: "The monthly and weekly illustrated periodicals constantly drew attention not only to the opinions of popular and temporarily fashionable authors, but also to their homes, habits, looks, and personal habits" (Keating, 1989, p. 76). These "monthly and weekly illustrated periodicals" were the forerunners of the gossip and lifestyle magazines of today. The interest shown in Thurston can therefore be viewed in much the same way as current interest in contemporary popular authors and celebrities. The public interest in the bestselling Edwardian authors was the beginning of the growth of the celebrity, a phenomenon which was a result of an expanding market in

literary property across a wide range of mediums. The expansion of the literary marketplace would see the growth of the author as a celebrity with the introduction of film, radio and eventually television adaptations of their work. As writers began to collect

their journal and newspaper articles into volumes for republication, and rewriting novels serialized in the periodical press for the different formats available. The form of publication was fundamental to the negotiation of agreements; however it was the structured release of text in different formats that eventually led to the tie-in with the film industry toward the end of the period. Whether as a book or a film, the 'new release' is of greater commercial value than yesterday's story.

(Weedon, 1999, p. 191)

Thurston's work would be released as both dramatisations for stage and eventually, following her early death, for the screen. Through the work of authors such as Thurston we see evidence of the changes taking place within the publishing industry in terms of its growth from printer and seller of literary works to that of part of a large multi-media industry. The close of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth can therefore be viewed as the beginning of the modern age of publishing. Thurston's negotiation of the increasingly complex processes at play within this modern industry will be discussed within Chapter Six.

Chapter Six

Thurston and William Blackwood and Sons

Little is known of the manner of Thurston's introduction to the Edinburgh Publisher William Blackwood and Sons. Chapter Three, gives details of an early interview with *The Scotsman* newspaper which states that shortly after she began to write her first short stories: "[o]ne of these short stories attracted the attention of a well-known literary agent who suggested that Mrs Thurston should write a novel" (Acc 11378, Box 9, Large Press Cuttings Book, p.54, *The Scotsman* 29 December 1904, n.p.). This may be a reference to The Literary Agency of London who represented her for most of her literary career, excluding the period when, as discussed in Chapter Three, Ernest undertook the representation of her work. The Literary Agency may then have been the source of her introduction to Blackwood.

6.1 The role of the Literary Agent

A central facet of the new professionalism surrounding authorship discussed in Chapter Two was the creation of literary agents. The introduction of literary agents as mediators in the publishing process towards the end of the nineteenth century caused mixed reactions from publishers, many of whom viewed them as "a parasite living on our vital forces" (Sheehan, 1952, p. 75). Although Blackwood had initially shared this view of the literary agent he was soon to come round to the idea that they were a "necessary evil" and could understand "the increasing desire of authors to be saved all personal trouble of negotiations" (MS 30 071, William Blackwood III, undated memorandum). As well as negotiating on behalf of authors in the placement and remuneration of their literary work, agents would also act as "'scout[s] for material likely to profit both publisher and author" (Finkelstein, 2002, p. 131). Good agents would study the literary marketplace to match the best author to the most relevant publisher and therefore

audience. The Literary Agency of London may well have been working as a scout for various publishers, Blackwood's amongst them, when suggesting that Thurston write her first novel. Messrs Perris and Cazenove of The Literary Agency were successful in placing Thurston's work with various publishers around the world and in securing translation and dramatic rights for her novels.

The rise in literary agents at the start of the twentieth century heralded a new era for authors and a growing understanding that writing was gaining a new professionalism. There had been a steady rise in the number of agents towards the end of the nineteenth century: "in 1894 there were six agents registered in the London *Post Office Directory*" (Hepburn, 1968, p. 98) and "[b]y 1914 there were more than thirty agencies advertising literary services in trade journals" (Keating, 1989, p. 71). Authors were increasingly drawn to literary agents as a way of by-passing the often time-consuming negotiations with publishers: female authors in particular found that the services of a literary agent ensured that they were dealt with more professionally by the often traditional publishing establishment. Blackwood's were particularly noted for their patriarchal management style and Thurston would have welcomed the professionalism her literary agent brought to her work.

The Literary Agency of London had been founded in 1899 by C. F. Cazenove, George Herbert Perris and William Morris Coles, "and was one of eight literary agencies listed in *The Literary Year Book* for that year" (Gomme, 1998, p. 68). They were closely allied with the Society of Authors, and as discussed earlier, Thurston was able to benefit from these close links at the time of the plagiarism case against *The Novel*.¹⁴⁸ Thurston

¹⁴⁸ In the years leading up to the formation of The Literary Agency, Cazenove, Perris, and Coles had been involved with Walter Besant in the setting up of the Authors' Syndicate in 1890; this was an "ineffectual collective closely allied with the Society of Authors". (Finkelstein, personal correspondence, November, 2006)

appeared to have a good working relationship with the Agency, and they were invariably helpful and supportive of her work. In particular, “Cazenove was much liked and respected by authors and publishers (one obituary refers to him as a diplomat)” (Gomme, 1998, p.69). However, Cazenove’s “diplomatic” nature was, at times seriously strained when having to deal with Ernest’s petulant outbursts and changes of mind.

Thurston’s correspondence with her own agents shows how the relationship between author and agent could be mutually beneficial. Literary agents undertook the often irksome financial negotiations involved in the sale of copyright between authors and publishers, and were increasingly involved in the placement of literary work in the enormous range of publications new to the publishing market. By acting as arbiters of worth the literary agent can also be viewed as a “gatekeeper” in terms of what was suitable for publication and what was not. In addition to this “gatekeeping” function, literary agents were also in a position to introduce authors to publishers. This system of introduction was one in which Blackwood regularly relied upon in creating his stable of authors. This point is further expanded upon on pp. 206-8. Having a literary agent enabled the author to spend more time on their writing rather than trying to find a publisher.

At the time of Thurston’s entry into the literary marketplace, “[e]conomic power and control over literary property was shifting from publisher to author, with the author, via his agent, now seeking to control and determine his or her own market worth and economic value” (Finkelstein, 2002, p. 133). By choosing to operate through a literary agent Thurston demonstrated her understanding of the market and how best to manipulate it to her own financial advantage. What is not so clear was her decision in

1905, to stop using The Literary Agency of London and pass control of her literary work to Ernest.

Throughout literary history authors had used friends and family as their representatives when dealing with publishers. Among those female authors published by Blackwood, who had resorted to these measures were George Eliot and Margaret Todd, who both used unofficial representatives (Finkelstein, 2002, pp. 130-149). In these two cases, the women authors had used their partners as arbiters with differing degrees of success. In recognition of the new professionalism surrounding authorship and the increasing complexities of the market, this practice of casual representation had been dying out throughout the nineteenth century. Authors now preferred to be represented by a professional literary agent. Ernest's representation of his wife's work is further evidence of his desire to maintain the standards and mores of the Victorian era discussed in Chapter One. By controlling her work he offered approval of it, and could therefore be seen as the dominant member of the relationship.

Thurston took a proactive role in her dealings with The Literary Agency, regularly instructing them to try the publisher who would offer the best terms and ensure that her the highest commercial value. In addition to this she sought the most attractive terms possible from Perris and Cazenove regarding their commission. As early as 1903 Thurston approached The Literary Agency requesting a reduction in their commission rates. This was shortly after she had sold the serialisation rights of *John Chilcote M.P.* to Blackwoods and Harpers. In a demonstration of their willingness to keep such a promising new author on their books, Messrs Perris and Cazenove offered to reduce their commission from 15 per cent to 12 per cent on any new short stories and new novels, but not on existing ones. The fact that Thurston's books were already selling in large numbers was one of the key reasons why the agency could to reduce their

commission charges. They informed Thurston that "it would be impossible to do this were not substantial sums involved" (Acc 11378, Box 1, Correspondence from The Literary Agency 1903-08). Thurston was thus a commercially astute, professional author, taking care of her own interests.

Thurston kept a log of the dates when payments were due to be made on the agreements she signed. This log contained the publisher's name and the type of agreement it referred to (Acc 11378, Box 2, Literary Correspondence). If her agent or the publisher did not deliver on time Thurston took matters into her own hands. This letter dated 14 November 1906 from Thurston to The Literary Agency, is typical of the tone she adopted when she felt disadvantaged:

I am in receipt of your letter of the 9th inst. Re remittance from America. Messrs Harper & Brothers according to the Royalty statement dated June the 30th last are sending \$ 2377.20. Royalty due on "The Gambler" this sum is due – according to clause four of their Agreement – three months after the date of statement (30th. June) i.e. the money was due on October 1st. Therefore, I think my query was justified and that a delay has occurred.

(Acc 11378, Box 2, Small Letterbook)

In 1907 she assumed a similar tone with her literary agent, this time regarding her business dealings with Messrs Hutchinson: "I do not recollect getting as much as £3:16:4 worth of books from Messrs Hutchinson so please ask them to send a detailed statement of the account at their early convenience" (Acc 11378, Box 2 Letterbook dated March 16 1907 to -, Letter dated 9 April 1907). These letters offer evidence of Thurston's active management of her own affairs, and her confidence in business dealings.

6.2 Creating a 'Blackwoodian' community

Despite her use of a literary agent, and her husband's erratic outbursts, Thurston maintained a close relationship with William Blackwood and Sons. She formed a personal relationship with William Blackwood and would regularly write to him regarding her work. In a letter dated 30 April 1903 Thurston writes: "I shall be very glad indeed to have the pleasure of meeting you personally, and shall come to your offices at Paternoster Row on Saturday at 2.30" (MS 30 081, Incoming letters to Blackwood). In a further letter following this meeting, dated 6 May 1903, Thurston wrote: "I do not know how to thank you for your generous and most welcome present – If I may, I shall choose the library edition of George Eliot – tempted by the illustrations – for the Magazine also accept my thanks" (MS 30 081 Incoming letters to Blackwood). Such correspondence reveals how Thurston, and authors in general, as discussed in Chapters Two and Four, tried to please their publisher to ensure publication. Thurston displays compliance when dealing with Blackwood, which is not evident in her correspondence with her literary agents. In a letter dated February 11th 1904, Thurston writes to Blackwood about the upcoming publication of *John Chilcote M.P.*:

As regards the breaking off of the part at Chapter 1X- I am just a little sorry that it has to be so – as I think that the interest of the story gets decidedly stronger in Chapter X and also because it will mean getting somewhat behind the American publication . . . However, this is quite looking at it from a selfish point of view – which I am far from willing to adopt . . . so please do just what you find necessary and feel assured that I will be satisfied.

(MS 30 109, Incoming letters to Blackwood)

Thurston continued to act in such a manner with Blackwood regarding the publication of *John Chilcote M.P.*: "You are very good to consult me on the cover of 'John Chilcote' personally I should like something plain – but of course you know best what is suitable" (MS 30 119, Incoming letters to Blackwood, dated July 14th 1904). Her

correspondence with Blackwood shows a deft handling his paternalistic management style, ensuring that they maintained a cordial relationship.

Blackwood reacted keenly to Thurston's correspondence and in reply enquired of her health, her frequent trips to Ireland and her holiday excursions. This focus on "decidedly uncommercial matters" established in Chapter Two, was a style of management that Blackwood had learnt from his uncle John. John Blackwood believed in nurturing his authors and creating a personal relationship with them to maintain a circle of "Blackwoodian" authors (Finkelstein, 2002, pp. 136-140). By using a literary agent to conduct the hard bargaining, while still personally corresponding with her publisher in a friendly, even coquettish way, Thurston demonstrates a firm understanding of how to operate in the literary climate of the day. She displays a grasp of the business side of literary production and a well developed sense of how to use her feminine charms to ensure the successful publication of her work.

Again we see how the influential club system discussed in Chapter Three played a pivotal role in business practices. As already established in Chapter Two, Blackwood preferred to build on a stable of authors by using personal contacts to acquire new authors. Her use of a literary agent, her husband's membership of The Garrick Club and her own family background would all have provided ample opportunity for introduction to Blackwood and help secure the publication of *Chilcote*. Several Directors of Blackwood's were members of this exclusive gentlemen's club: it would have proved a valuable connection for a previously unpublished author to receive an introduction into the traditional publishing world of the Blackwoods. The Garrick Club had been "instituted for the general patronage of the drama; for the purpose of combining the use of a club . . . with the advantages of a literary society" (Dickens., 2001, p. 110).

David Storrer Meldrum had been employed by the firm in 1894 as a literary advisor and in 1896 was appointed as the manager of the London office. In recognition of his valuable work and expertise, Blackwood made him the first ever non-Blackwood partner to the firm in 1903 (Finkelstein, 2002, pp.12, 106-7, 111). Meldrum was also a member of The Garrick Club, and used this to make contacts and as a base for social and business occasions. Meldrum arranged lunches at The Garrick in an effort to draw

prospective authors he hoped to entice into the circle of contributors to the firm's magazines and lists, or organising dining parties for groups of 'Blackwoodian' writers, either potential or actual, . . . The 'network' of writers that John Blackwood had encouraged in his time . . . was continued through Meldrum's contacts in appropriate literary circles.

(Finkelstein, 2002, p. 107)

The Garrick Club was an exclusively male establishment and as such Thurston was denied entry. It could only have been through her male contacts that she would have gained access to the publishing fraternity that frequented this club. The Blackwoods were obviously keen to maintain and build a "stable" of suitable authors. However, their dependence on this old tried and tested method of recruitment of authors whom their traditional readers enjoyed also meant that they were becoming less popular with a new breed of reader who wanted more modern and innovative authors. New modernist authors such as H.G. Wells, D.H. Lawrence and E.M. Forster were becoming more popular with the public, yet Blackwood's reluctance to publish their work meant that, as discussed in Chapters One and Two, their reliance on their traditional colonial market was becoming stronger.

Blackwood ran his business in much the same way as a bourgeois gentleman's club. As Finkelstein states:

[t]he firm saw itself as the creator of unique intellectual, social, and work communities and spaces. The House functioned as a tightly run, male dominated space, yet also suggested itself to prospective authors, both male and female, as an open, welcoming and inclusive club of sorts. It was run on paternalistic lines, with clearly defined roles, structures of command, and subdivisions of tasks and space one might consider typical of any proper nineteenth century bourgeois household.

(Finkelstein, 2002. pp.16-17)

The Blackwoods used their invisible network of authors to form other links for potential publication. While Thurston's Irish nationalist background seemed strangely at odds with the Blackwoods' own conservative leanings, she was not the first novelist they had published with a nationalist background. The leading Irish novelist Steven Gwynne, who later became the nationalist Member of Parliament for Galway City, and Roger Casement, who was a prominent Irish nationalist leader, were both regular contributors (Finkelstein, 2002, p 107). Gwynne used his friendship with the Blackwoods and acted as a "mediator for both Anglo-Irish and colonial submissions to Blackwood's, while Casement emerged from a nationalist Irish community to contextualize himself within the colonial framework offered and supported by Blackwoods" (Finkelstein, 2002, p109). While no evidence exists to suggest that Thurston had been introduced by either of these men, it does not seem unreasonable to speculate that her husband's literary connections with The Garrick Club and her father's political background would have ensured that she became known to the Blackwood hierarchy and through these connections would have gained an introduction to the firm.

Blackwood's was also one of the many houses contacted by Ernest when looking for a publisher for his own work. Bearing in mind that Ernest was supposedly the person to suggest a literary career to his wife, it seems likely that she would have taken his advice on the placement of her work, and may have felt that the worldwide distribution network and reputation of Blackwoods made it an appropriate choice for herself.

Thurston was an ideal publishing prospect for Blackwood as one of their interests at this time was the publication of popular fiction by women. Finkelstein notes that at the time of Thurston's writing career, popular fiction by women "sold by the thousands during the first twenty years of the century and were the mainstay of the Blackwood catalog.[sic]" In fact Thurston belonged to a "group of London based popular women-novelists (many graduates of London University), who formed the core of his literary production in the 1890s and 1900s" (Finkelstein, 2002, pp. 135-140). Although Thurston mainly wrote about issues of gender and sexual politics, she never assumed a hectoring tone in her writing. These controversial issues were dealt with in a delicate manner and would therefore be acceptable to Blackwood, who never liked to publish any work which would be offensive to his readership.

The publication of *The Circle* gave Thurston access to Harper's: Blackwood had strong links with this American publisher therefore ensuring Thurston a friendly welcome in the American market. Despite many ups and downs in the publication of her work, Thurston maintained a close relationship with Blackwood throughout her career. Likewise her relationship with Harpers would continue for several years. Despite the huge number of publications at this time and the numerous new publishing houses which were emerging, Thurston published her work with relatively few companies. In addition to Blackwood's and Harper's, she was published by Dodd Mead & Co. of New York and Hutchinson & Co. of London.

Among those unsuccessful publishers who approached Thurston was one of a number of new publishers, A. M. Methuen. In 1906 Thurston's secretary wrote to them stating: "As I said in my last letter Mrs Thurston's work, both serial and book rights is all arranged for in the near future." Aware though of the need to maintain good relations, and also that they might need to call on their services at a later date, he continued: "But I have promised to keep your letter by me." Methuen were obviously keen to secure a

lengthy book deal with Thurston, but her secretary had to inform them: "I am afraid however, that your suggestion to claim the book rights of two novels for the placing of one serial would scarcely meet with her sanction" (Acc 11378, Box 2, Letterbook 29 September 1906-15 March 1907).

New entrepreneurial publishers such as Methuen, and Chatto and Windus were beginning to have a negative effect on the more traditional list publishers such as Blackwood. These new companies offered the kind of novels and serialisations which the new generation of readers wanted. By employing new publishing techniques and taking advantage of new technologies discussed in Chapter Two, they offered stiff competition to the established houses that had their roots firmly in the publishing traditions of the Victorian period.

While Thurston's writing was quite sensational enough for the likes of Blackwood's and their readership, it was never as groundbreaking or artistic as the publishers of the new modernist writers desired. The market for Thurston's work was never with the avant-garde modernists emerging during the Edwardian period.¹⁴⁹ Her readership remained firmly with the traditionalists of the era: men and women who were aware that societal change was happening around them, many of whom wanted to see such change, but who were happy to see it happen slowly and with as little disruption as possible. Most of all, her readers wanted a good read. Thurston's writing was firmly in the mainstream.

6.3 The publication of *The Mystics* and *The Gambler*

Although Thurston's work continued to appear in both serialisation and book form, the period between the end of 1904 and 1907 was a time of much confusion and uncertainty in the writing and publication of her work. Some of this can be attributed to the shock

¹⁴⁹ See Chapter Two, for details of the Modernist writers emerging at this time.

and grief of her mother's unexpected death, but Thurston's unspecified illnesses, highlighted in Chapter Four, resulted in delays in the submission of manuscripts, for which contracts had already been agreed. It was during this period, in November 1905, that Ernest took over the management of her work and it is perhaps this that causes the greatest uncertainty in determining what was happening in the publication of her work. Until the close of 1904 Thurston had been very much in her literary stride. She had successfully published several short stories, two novels, and had negotiated the dramatisation of one of these novels. The successful placing and publication of her work by The Literary Agency ensured a steady flow of income. Ernest had often been involved in correspondence between Thurston and her various publishers but from the time that he took over the management of her work in November 1905, the placing and publication of her manuscripts became disjointed. His constant change of mind and disagreements with publishers over cost, format and timing of publication would cause delays in publication and much bad feeling. The casual representation of an author's work by a friend or spouse, discussed earlier in this chapter, could often result in difficulties. Not only could their lack of tact lead to bad feeling between the publisher in question and the author, but their lack of understanding of the market could also seriously hinder the sale of copyright, putting the author at a financial disadvantage.

Thurston had been engaged in writing her third novel *The Gambler* (1905) for some time but was yet to finish it. The Literary Agency had been successful in placing this novel and an agreement had been signed on 15 June 1904 between Thurston and Hutchinson and Co. of 34 Paternoster Row for the Canadian Rights of *The Gambler* to commence in May 1905 in *The Lady's Realm* magazine, for the sum of £600.¹⁵⁰

¹⁵⁰ In January of 1905, Hutchinson would make an amendment to this agreement in which they deducted £100 from the royalties of *The Gambler*, due to Thurston selling rights of the book to Harper.

By August 1904 Thurston had completed her fourth novel, *The Mystics*, and submitted it to The Literary Agency of London. They believed it to be “admirable and have no objections to make of it.” It was their belief that the novel should be sent on to Blackwood with the “suggestion that its serial issue be followed by the appearance of a collection of her short stories, of which there seems to be plenty for a volume.” Perris and Cazenove then give an indication of the length of several of her short stories which they felt should appear in the new volume:

The *Mystics* runs to 25,000 words. *Human Nature* . . . is 6,000 words, *An Oriental* is 6,000 . . . *Temptation* is 10,000, *The Climax* is 7,000 and *Votive Offering* is 4,000 words. *Temptation* and *Human Nature* are still unsold . . . and I confess the former looks as if it might be difficult to find a home for. The length makes it a matter of considerable difficulty.

(Acc 11378, Box 1, Correspondence from The Literary Agency, 1903-08. Letter dated August 8, 1904)

In suggesting that the yet unpublished “*Human Nature*” and “*Temptation*” appear alongside the other already published short stories, Perris and Cazenove ensure that these more problematic manuscripts are also published. By grouping unpublished and published work together in this way, the unpublished work, in effect, acts as a magnet to the reader and stimulates further sales of what could be seen as a less attractive work. This is yet another way in which authors could extend the value of their published work.

On 8 August 1904 Thurston wrote to Blackwood from her holiday home in Ardmore and informed him that she was “very delighted . . . to hear from my agents today that ‘*The Mystics*’ has met with your approval” (MS 30 109, Incoming Letters to Blackwood, 1904). Both Blackwood and Thurston would have been hopeful that this new novel would ensure her continuing literary success.

Thurston continued to have a cordial relationship with Blackwood. On the occasion of his firm's centenary in 1904 she wrote:

[T]o offer my very sincere congratulations and good wishes. On this year that is so significant and eventful for your house.

Many times while we were in Ireland I thought of writing you a letter, for I followed with great interest the many complimentary articles that were written on your centenary . . . and I need not say that, for myself it has been a great privilege to be associated with the Magazine.

(MS 30 109, Incoming Letters to Blackwood, 1904)

By December 1904 William Blackwood had accepted *The Mystics* for serial publication in *Maga*. Thurston urged Blackwood to send her "the revised copy of 'The Mystics' – I have found a good many alterations necessary and should like much to see it before it goes in the Magazine. I am only sending the first instalment today but the rest will follow later" (MS 30 109, Incoming Letters to Blackwood, Letter dated 5 December 1904).

The Mystics was serialised in *Maga* between January and May 1905. In addition to its serialisation, Blackwood had plans to publish it as a 2/6 edition. The decision to publish at this low price in comparison with the usual form of initially issuing a novel at 6/ did not meet with Ernest's approval, and although Thurston was still at this point represented by The Literary Agency, Ernest wrote to Blackwood: "I think that a book at that price would only do her harm financially" and he felt that it should in fact be published in accordance with the thoughts of The Literary Agency, "supplemented with short stories and issued at 6/. I think it is the only way that it ought to be published as I am sure that it would be unwise to connect her name with a book at half a crown" (MS 30 118, Incoming Letters to Blackwood, Letter dated 7 February 1905).

The decision to publish at 2/6 was a strange one for Blackwood as he had a firm belief “from actual experience that in order to reap the full benefit of a book, he must work it in a very cheap form as well as in an expensive one” (Finkelstein, 2002, p.25). No reason was given by Blackwood as to why he had made this decision to publish in a cheaper form than usual, but he may simply have felt that the relatively short word length of *The Mystics* did not merit a higher price.

While Thurston, her literary agents and her husband deployed different methods in negotiating with her publishers, all were aware of the value of her work and the possibilities of increasing income due to the expanding market discussed in Chapters One and Two. It is clear that in the opening years of the twentieth century, “authors and their representatives . . . were increasingly aware of the need to maintain accountability in a trade that was both dependent on commercial success from aesthetic products and inexorably changing in the face of increased competition and expanding markets” (Finkelstein, 2002, p. 149). As an author who relied on writing for her income, Thurston, through her agents, was adamant that she would receive the highest value possible for her work.

Publisher’s strategies during this period reflect the changes discussed in Chapter Two, which brought about the end of the mutually beneficial financial relationship between Mudie and the publishers. The demise of the three-decker novel resulted in publishers having to devise new ways of protecting their investment in an author, and increasing their share of the market while employing new money-saving and money-making strategies. One key way in which this was undertaken was by the release of novels in a variety of formats and prices. Not all of the new reading public could afford to purchase novels of the format and price which traditional novel readers could afford to buy, and to reach this new market publishers had to release novels in cheaper editions.

By taking advantage of the new printing technologies and cheaper paper costs discussed in Chapter Two, publishers were able to release editions at different prices and at different times throughout the lifetime of the text, thus ensuring that the full financial potential of a literary work was achieved. By proposing to issue *The Mystics* at the price of 2/6 Blackwood no doubt felt that this was a reflection on the length of the book and a price which the market would accept. By suggesting a different format and price structure to that of Blackwood, Ernest believed that he was acting in what he felt was his wife's best literary interests. At this time authors were increasingly aware of the possible value of a text. As a reflection of the changing economics of publishing discussed in Chapters One and Two authors had to be aware of the many ways in which a text could be manipulated in order to extend its life and therefore revenue. As Alexis Weedon notes:

Professional writers who lived at the limit of their earnings began to market the text rather than the book by collecting their journal and newspaper articles into volumes for republication, and rewriting novels serialized in the periodical press for the different formats available. The form of publication was fundamental to the negotiation of agreements.

(Weedon, 1999, p. 191)

Chapter Three demonstrated how Ernest's disagreement over the proposed published price of *The Mystics* infuriated Blackwood, who felt that he knew best: "This letter has rather riled me as if we knew nothing about publishing and what was best for an author" (MS 30 118, Incoming letters to Blackwood, Letter dated 7 February 1905). Despite Blackwood's protestations, the reading public had by this time come to expect the staggered release of literary works, from the serialisation in magazines through to the cheap editions:

Selling and reprinting novels in different editions at different prices was one way in which popular fiction was made available to the public. In theory, it kept the

market fresh and encouraged different market sectors to buy the novel. However to retail fiction at cheap prices, publishers had to capitalize on the cost savings of the more efficient printing technologies and cheaper raw materials and had to pass these benefits on through careful price structuring and the timed release of different editions.

(Weedon, 1999, p.191)

Ernest probably viewed the publication of *The Mystics* as a cheap edition, following its serialisation in *Maga*, a slight on his wife's work, at the same time, denying her a potential source of earnings from the more expensive edition or from a collected volume of her work. Most new volumes sold better than previously released work and Ernest, no doubt expected his wife's new work to make something of an impact regardless of whether or not it was released as an expensive volume. Ernest and Blackwood could not agree on the most suitable format, meaning that *The Mystics* was not published in book form until 1907. Ernest was adamant that it would not be published at 2/6 and wrote to Blackwood:

I am herewith sending you the details of the terms that I am making for my wife's book 'The Mystics'. That it shall be published as either of the two following prices – at 6/- or 3/6d, both subject to trade discount with royalties on the 6/- 25% all through with an advance of £300 to be paid on the date of publication. On the 3/6d, 20% on the 1st 10,000 copies sold and thereafter with an advance of £200 to be paid on publication.

(Acc 11378, Box 2, Small letterbook dated 29.9.1906 – 15.3.07, Letter dated 9 February 1907)

By 25 January 1905 Thurston had signed further publishing agreements with both Blackwood and Harper's, the firm who had so successfully published *The Masquerader*. Harper's had secured the exclusive serial rights for *The Gambler* and *The Mystics* in the United States and the right of serial publication in Canada. They were willing to pay \$4,000 for *The Gambler* and \$1,000 for the shorter *Mystics*. This contract was in direct conflict with the earlier Hutchinson contract for *The Gambler* for which they had paid

for the Canadian rights. The Harper's contract was for a significantly larger amount than the Hutchinson contract and Thurston agreed to take a £100 reduction in royalties from Hutchinson in order to secure the deal with Harper's. Both Harper's and Blackwoods secured the book rights on *The Gambler* (Acc 11378, Box 2, Literary Agreements 1902-10).

Despite agreements with these publishers, the completed manuscript of *The Gambler* was not forthcoming. As established in Chapter Three, Thurston's mother had died in December of 1904 and this had rendered her bed-bound on her return from the funeral in Ireland. Thurston found it difficult to continue with her writing. In addition to her mother's death, she was dealing with the stress caused by the plagiarism allegations by *The Novel*, and the poor reception of Ernest's stage adaptation of *John Chilcote*.

detailed in Chapter Four. 1905 was thus a low point in Thurston's personal and literary life which may explain the confusion surrounding the timing of her next few novels and short stories.

By 26 January 1905, The Literary Agency was corresponding with Thurston regarding the Hutchinson agreement for *The Gambler*. They informed her that "There is one part in 'The Gambler' agreement I wish to touch on; it says book publication will take place in the Spring of 1906. This was drafted before it was arranged to meet Harpers' wishes by allowing them to publish in the Autumn of this year" (Acc 11378, Box 1, Correspondence from The Literary Agency, 1903-08). Both publishers would have wanted simultaneous publication in order to make as much impact as possible and to ensure that neither was disadvantaged by releasing the book at a later date. That such careful negotiations now surrounded the publication of literary work demonstrates the changing economic climate for the publishing industry.

By 1 June 1905 the completed manuscript of *The Gambler* was still to reach Messrs. Hutchinson and they wrote to The Literary Agency that “we have been hoping for some time past that we should get the delivery of the completion of the MS of ‘The Gambler’ which has been delayed through Mrs Thurston’s regrettable illness” (Acc 11378 Box 1, Correspondence from The Literary Agency, 1903-08). By 21 July 1905, The Literary Agency was clearly worried that she had yet to submit the completed manuscript and also to reply to their letters. Fearing that “some sort of emergency” had taken place they awaited her instructions as to what to do with Harper’s (Acc 11378, Box 1, Correspondence from The Literary Agency, 1903-08).

Although it had begun its serialisation in both *The Lady’s Realm* and *Harper’s Weekly* it would be another 6 months before Thurston completed the full manuscript of *The Gambler*. This must have been an exceptionally worrying time for Thurston. As a woman who liked to work to a tight timetable and enjoyed the routine of her writing, delays like these are an indicator that the troubles in her personal life were causing her concern. However, on 18 January 1906 The Literary Agency, were probably much relieved to hear that *The Gambler* would “be ready in the course of a few weeks” (Acc 11378, Box 1, Correspondence from The Literary Agency, 1903-08).

6.4 The reception of *The Gambler*

The Gambler was well received by both readers and critics. The *Daily Chronicle* announced its serial publication: “Mrs Katherine Cecil Thurston’s new novel which she entitles ‘The Gambler’, will begin serially in the May number of the ‘Lady’s Realm’. It is a study in hereditary instinct, and has an Irish heroine” (Acc 11378, Box 9, Large Cuttings Book, *Daily Chronicle*, March [no day] 1905, n.p.). There were some excellent reviews in America: “The story which Mrs Thurston has been publishing serially in Harper’s Weekly entitled ‘The Gambler’ is very much superior to the two novels with

which she made her reputation . . . it is better written and shows a greater gift of characterisation” (Acc 11378, Box 9, Large Cuttings Book, *The Sphere*, 7 September 1905, n.p.).

With each successive novel Thurston’s work appeared to grow in maturity. Perhaps the success of the characterisation of *The Gambler* owed much to the fact that Thurston was writing of Irish characters, the people whom she knew best. Harper’s *Literary Gossip* reported that the novel

[S]hot like a meteor to success. Published on September 14, the New York *Tribune* for that week placed it already second on its list of the ‘best sellers,’ and judging by the tremendous rate at which new copies are being turned out by Harpers, one may predict for *The Gambler*, a vogue even greater than that of . . . *The Masquerader*.

(Acc 11378, Box 9, Large Cuttings Book, Harper’s *Literary Gossip*, 28 September 1905)

Several months after Harper’s, on 12 February 1906 Hutchinson published *The Gambler* in book form (Acc 11378, Box 10, Press Cuttings 1906, *Evening Standard* 12 February 1906, n.p.). The book was “considerably over-subscribed by the booksellers’ advance orders, one firm alone taking over 5,000 copies and a second impression . . . put in hand before the first was completed” (Acc 11378, Box 10, Press Cuttings 1906, *Daily Mail*, 23 February 1906).

By 14 May 1906 sales of *The Gambler* had reached thirty thousand copies, including colonial sales but “had not reached anything like the number” anticipated by Ernest when he had negotiated the terms with Blackwood in February of 1906 (Acc 11378, Box 1, Correspondence with Blackwood, Letter dated 14 May 1906). Blackwood continued to find much to object to in the way Ernest conducted his wife’s business dealings. In particular he disliked the offhand manner in which messages were relayed

to him through a third party. In this letter dated 14 May 1906, Blackwood alludes to this in regards to sales of *The Gambler* when he writes: "I am only informed by a message given to my nephew at the Literary Fund Dinner in terms which do not enable me to add anything further to what I have already written to you on the subject. I shall require to have from you a business communication telling me more than merely that 'The Gambler' has sold in all 30,000 copies" (Acc 11378, Box 1 Correspondence with Blackwood, 1905-1910, Letter dated 14 May 1906).

Ernest's unprofessional manner in dealing with his wife's publishers continued to be a source of annoyance for Blackwood. On the 17 May 1906 Blackwood wrote:

My displeasure was caused by your communicating the position of 'The Gambler' to my nephew in such an unbusinesslike way, and I felt that we could not move further in the matter until we received a statement from yourself informing us of the sales in the Home and Colonial editions, as we know that Colonial sales of Messrs Hutchinson's from his connection with Australia through his brother's business there are unusually large. I am glad to hear that the sales of 'The Gambler' have now reached 32,000, but in making such an arrangement as is contemplated it is necessary that we should know the actual sales of the 6/- edition. It seems to me that your proposals as to a limit of 30,000 copies to be sold and the serial rights, are both very one sided as, if we do not sell 30,000 of any novel, Mrs Thurston would be at liberty to offer her next work to another House, and our efforts to maintain the larger sale thrown away. I cannot consider any proposal satisfactory which leaves my firm entirely in your hands and I do not see what is to be arranged by our entering into an arrangement for the publication of Mrs Thurston's future novels if from a slight drop in the sales, which might easily be caused by the nature of the story itself, my position as Publisher, is to become a matter of sufferance. The sales of a novel nowadays are practically confined to the first year of publication and to fix 30,000 practically the maximum sales attained by Mrs Thurston's published books, as a minimum sale for her future works, is I think, to make an arrangement, which is no arrangement. I am willing to agree to make the minimum of the Home and Colonial sale 20,000 copies and this, I think is a fair proposal . . . I know there would be no actual loss to us financially, but it would be detrimental to my firm's position were it noised abroad that arrangements had been made with Mrs Thurston for the publication of her future works, and then within a year or two the public to be told that her books had been transferred to another firm. I do not suggest for a moment that either you or Mrs Thurston would take such action in the event of the sales falling somewhat below 30,000 copies.

(Acc 11378, Box 1, Correspondence with Blackwood 1905-1910, Letter dated 17 May 1906)

This letter amply demonstrates Blackwood's cautious nature. (For the relationship between Blackwood and Hutchinson, see note 151 and the discussion on page 212 above.) He did not believe in offering bestselling authors enhanced terms on account of their popularity, a practice he believed possibly financially injurious to his company. This is in stark contrast to Thurston's other publishers, in particular Harper's, who seemed to openly court her business. This could be seen as a lack of judgement on Blackwood's part, particularly as sales of her second novel had been so high.

By September 1906 no further arrangements had been made for the book publication of *The Mystics*. Blackwood appears to have acquiesced to the Thurston's desire to have it appear in volume form alongside several short stories. He wrote to Thurston who was on holiday in Ireland, enquiring

if you have any further views with regard to the publication of 'The Mystics' in book form . . . If . . . you or Mr Thurston are still anxious to have the story produced for this Christmas . . . will you kindly let me know at once, and I will make enquiries and see if we can possibly obtain the illustrations and other matter necessary for the production of the book in time for the Christmas sale.

(Acc 13778, Box 1, Correspondence with Blackwood, Letter dated 10 September 1906)

No reply was forthcoming from Thurston and by mid-October Blackwood was again corresponding with Ernest on the subject of the publication of *The Mystics*. Although Thurston had acknowledged the letter from Blackwood and informed him that she would deal with the matter when she returned to London, it had escaped her mind. Blackwood had to inform Thurston that it was now "too late to do anything for this Christmas. The proposal was to use some of the illustrations which appeared in the *Metropolitan Magazine*, and we could not arrange this with America at so short a notice . . . if the book is to have a fair chance it must be out by the end of this month" (Acc

11378, Box 1, Correspondence with Blackwood 1905-1910. Letter dated 18 October 1906).

The publication of *The Mystics* gave the Thurstons cause for concern, but the difficulties in placing this novel had not deterred Thurston from assuming a less than strident tone when dealing with Mr Macarthur at Harper's. Macarthur was keen to maintain his company's relationship with Thurston, particularly after the success of *The Masquerader*. In expressing a willingness to publish *The Mystics*, Macarthur had hinted that he would also like to publish the next novel by Thurston. Aware that this could put her in a financially injurious position, Thurston wrote:

As I see from your last letter that you are taking a very keen interest in my next novel, I think it is only right to let you know now – before that interest can merge from a personal to a practical one – that I will not be able to place this next book with your firm for the following reason – about which I will be quite frank with you.

Some time ago – to be exact, about the time that the last report of 'The Gambler' sales reached me – I received a very substantial offer from another American firm for my next novel. Under ordinary conditions my wish would have been to have given you the opportunity of making an offer on your part for this same book, but looking carefully into the matter I was confronted with one definite fact – The terms you were able to offer upon 'The Gambler' after the success of 'The Masquerader' – viewing the matter reasonably I could not see that you would be at all likely to enter into competition with this new offer, and as it was one that in justice to myself I could not forego, I made up my mind to accept it. I have stated the case to you quite honestly – and I cannot but think you will see my position.

Thurston is referring to an offer by Dodd Mead & Co on her, yet to be seen, next novel. Thurston had signed a deal with them for the publication of *The Circle* on 20 December 1902, but they had lost out to Harper's who had successfully bid for not only *The Masquerader*, but also *The Gambler* and *The Mystics*, Harper's managing to secure both the serialisation and book rights of all three titles (Acc 11378, Box 2, Literary Agreements 1902-10).

Thurston's desire to change publisher was probably more than a financial consideration. The machinations over the publication date of *The Mystics* had given her great cause for concern. Ernest's inability to manage her affairs successfully in the U.S. and British markets had resulted in a delay in both the serialisation of the work and its release in book form. In reference to this delay, Thurston continued her letter to Macarthur:

Now with regard to 'The Mystics' I am disappointed of course to know that the Christmas publication is out of the question and with regard to the English appearance of the book, I do not think you are entirely fair to the Blackwoods, as I have gone back to them for my next book, and so I must believe their interest in my work is not passing – But that, of course is immaterial, what I really want to say is that I shall be grateful if you will let me know as soon as you possibly can what you now propose to do in the matter of publication – as I shall have my English dates to arrange.

Aware that the tone of her letter may not meet with their approval, she nevertheless ends in such a manner as to keep the lines of communication open:

I quite see that this letter of mine might alter your views expressed when you last wrote, and I shall be anxious to hear any new ones you may form.

(Acc 11378, Box 2, Small letterbook, Letter dated 16 November 1906)

A few days after informing Macarthur of her desire to change her American publisher, Thurston wrote to Blackwood enclosing "the first eleven chapters of 'The Fly on the Wheel'" (Acc 11378, Box 2, Small letterbook, Letter dated 21 November 1906). The British serialisation rights, had been signed by Ernest on his wife's behalf on 21 June 1906 (Acc 11378, Box 2, Literary Agreements 1902-10).

The Thurstons desire to have *The Mystics* published quickly and ensure that the money kept coming in was largely due to the fact that Thurston had, in 1905, signed a publishing deal with McClure Phillips & Co. of New York for the first serial rights in the U.S. "of a new novel (title to be decided upon)". However, a note on the envelope

of this agreement, in Thurston's handwriting reads "book never completed" (Acc 11378, Box 2, Literary Agreements, 7 September 1905). This may not appear to be too dramatic a development, but, contained in the Thurston archive is a seven hundred page handwritten and uncompleted manuscript, entitled *Sandro*. The time taken to write such a tome, not to mention the huge amount of research required, gives some indication of the value of the manuscript to Thurston. She gives no reason for not completing the manuscript and we can only assume that developments in her personal life relating to the death of her mother, and her literary life had brought about a personal crisis of confidence in her work, a crisis which could only have been added to by Ernest's inability to manage her work competently.

Two years had now passed since the publication of *The Mystics* in serialised form in *Maga*. By this point Ernest was adamant that it would not be published at 2/6 and wrote stridently to Blackwood in the terms already quoted on p. 216 (Acc 11378, Box 2, Small Letterbook, dated 29.9.1906 – 15.3.07, letter dated 9 February 1907) Determined that he would decide the price, Blackwood wrote to Ernest on 19 February 1907: "I am of the opinion that it would be a mistake to bring the book [The Mystics] out at 6/-. I am accordingly arranging to publish at 3/6d . . . I think we should certainly have the illustrations from the Metropolitan Magazine . . . our intention is to publish the volume in April (Acc 11378, Bo1, Folder 2, Correspondence Blackwoods, 1905-10).

Blackwood had the last word: *The Mystics* was eventually published in the United Kingdom by Blackwood on 4 April 1907, at the price of 3s 6d" (Acc 11378, Box 10, Press Clippings 1907), and simultaneously in the U.S. by Messrs. Harper's (Acc 11378, Small letterbook, letter from Thurston's secretary to William Blackwood, 19 February 1907). On 9 April 1907 James Blackwood wrote to Thurston to inform her that they had eventually started to sell *The Mystics*: "We began subscribing the book yesterday

and I am glad to be able to be able to tell you that it has been pretty well taken up by the larger wholesale Houses, and that the first subscription looks like approaching 10,000 copies (Acc 11378, Box 1, Folder 2, Correspondence Blackwoods, 1905-10).

Advanced subscriptions of *The Mystics* were promising: "over 13,000 copies . . . were sold in advance of publication" (Acc 11378, Box 10, Press Clippings 1907, *Glasgow Evening Times*, 13 April, 1907, n.p.). However, the breakdown in communication during the lengthy and troublesome publication of *The Mystics* continued to the end. Thurston had requested that *The Mystics* be dedicated to her cousin Nancy Inez Pollock, but did not want the dedication to appear on the review copies. Unfortunately, her request came too late for Blackwood to remove the dedication and he wrote to her secretary: "I am very sorry to say that my letters informing the press that 'The Mystics' is dedicated to Mrs Thurston's cousin had already gone off by the time I received your letter . . . I can only again apologise for the mistake which seems to have been made. Will you tell her please that the subscription is now up to 11,000 copies and this about finishes the subscription" (Acc 11378, Box 1, Folder 2, Correspondence Blackwood, 1905-10).

6.5 *The Mystics*: reception and plot

The novel did not enjoy the critical reception that her previous publications received. Many of the criticisms related to its length. *The Lady's Pictorial* commented: "[t]he majority of novels are too long, but 'The Mystics' is too short for the proper working out of the story. The scenes that would have made the book really great are slurred over with reckless haste" (Acc 11378, Box 10, Press Clippings 1907, *Lady's Pictoria*, 10 August 1907, n.p.). A further critic commented: "One is somewhat disappointed in 'The Mystics'" (Acc 11378, Box 10, Press Clippings 1907, *Mobile Alabama Register*, 19 May 1907, n.p.). Another wrote:

The material for a short story that, at best could have been little save an experiment in futility, have been expanded by Katherine Cecil Thurston into nearly 200 pages and termed a novel under the title 'The Mystics.' . . . The bit of preposterous bunkum . . . One inclines to the belief that the writer of this book is miscast as an author, one who could sell 'The Mystics' could sell anything, from white elephants to volcanoes.

(Acc 11378, Box 10, Press Clippings 1907, No publication name, New York, 18 May 1907, n.p.)

The Mystics is the tale of a religious sect and a man who assumes the role of their "prophet" in order to secure his inheritance. The protagonist, John Henderson, is a man who believes that he has been denied the life to which he felt entitled. Sent as a boy to work for his uncle, Henderson lived a harsh life denied of pleasure. He was content to endure this, believing that his uncle would leave him his fortune, but on the death of the uncle, Henderson learns that he has only inherited a few hundred pounds – the bulk of the estate being left to 'The Mystics'.

In an attempt to secure the fortune left to 'The Mystics', in an act of deceit, he assumes the head role of the sect. All goes well for Henderson until he falls in love with one of the members of the sect. Shamed by what he has become, and in an effort to secure her affection he admits to his falsehood and renounces his wrongdoing. While *The Mystics* bore a certain resemblance to the plot of *John Chilcote*, in that the main character assumes the role of another in order to enhance the life he leads, it has none of the gripping storyline of that novel. Thurston seemed to have lost her way with this short novel which is lacking in credibility and substance.

As has already been noted earlier in this chapter, Thurston's literary agents had suggested that the work appear in volume form with a number of short stories. Ernest

with his lack of understanding of the complexities of the new literary marketplace had unfortunately insisted on a different path.

Thurston's literary followers must have been sorely disappointed. In summing up its view one newspaper wrote: "[t]he most noticeable thing about this story is the way in which the ground was prepared for a big one and then deserted" (Acc 11378, Box 10, Press Clippings 1907, *Republican*, Denver Colorado, April 28 1907, n.p.). Both critics and the reading public had come to expect great things from Thurston's writing, the stature of which seemed to grow with the release of each successive novel. Another American newspaper pointed out that "The author of 'The Masquerader' and 'The Gambler' has taken a long step backward in 'The Mystics'" (Acc 11378, Box 10, Press Clippings 1907, *American*, Nashville Tennessee, 28 April 1907, n.p.). Another, more hopefully noted: "'The Mystics' is apparently a sort of interlude for Mrs Thurston" (Acc 11378, Box 10, Press Clippings 1907, *Globe Democrat*, St Louis Missouri, 27 April 1907, n.p.).

No doubt Thurston would have been hoping that this was "a sort of interlude" in her success. While no comment from her appears to exist on the matter, perhaps her views on the reception of *The Mystics* is best illustrated by the large numbers of unopened envelopes containing press clippings in the Thurston archive relating to this novel. This undoubtedly has something to do with the fact that the vast majority of the reviews of the novel were unfavourable. Despite these poor reviews Thurston could have taken some consolation from the fact that Harper's *Literary Gossip* reported on 6 June 1907 that "[t]he book most in demand last week, in the New York Public Library, was *The Mystics*" (Acc 11378, Box 10, Press Clippings 1907, n.p.).

Conclusion

The eventual publication of *The Mystics* brought to a close, what had been a particularly difficult period, personally and professionally for Thurston. The poor critical response to the novel appeared to signal the demise of her popularity as a prominent popular author. Yet despite the poor reception, this book still managed to sell significant numbers, illustrating that her literary reputation was such that the reading public still had an appetite for her writing. 1907 was also the year in which Ernest indicated that he wanted their marriage to end. This would have been a tumultuous event for any Edwardian woman, and especially for one who – although financially independent – had been brought up with Victorian conventions. Despite these events of magnitude Thurston would continue with her life, rebuilding both her literary reputation and her personal life. Chapter Seven will discuss the publication of her final two novels, *The Fly on the Wheel* and *Max*, and we will begin to see evidence of Thurston's growing confidence in both her literary and private life. Thurston will be positioned alongside other New Women authors and her place amongst Irish women authors will also be considered.

Chapter Seven

Thurston's place among Irish New Woman authors

Although the history of women authors can be traced across several centuries, the 1890s was a significant period in the awakening and development of the woman author.

Academics such as Elaine Showalter (1999) and Jane Eldridge Miller (1994) view the 1890s as a transitional period in women's writing, a time when women began to experiment with new subject matter and the structure of their writing. As previously discussed in Chapters One and Two, women began to appear in novels and short stories in roles which were in direct contrast to the traditional Victorian view of women's place.

Keating observes that the traditional Victorian view of family life and marriage was under attack during this period (Keating, 1989, p. 152) and representations of this soon began to appear in popular fiction. Authors such as Ouida, Mona Caird, and Olive Schreiner wrote books in which women were depicted living independent and self-sufficient lives, moving out of their traditional domestic scene into the world of work and education, and experimenting with Utopian visions of the future. Thus we can see evidence of how sweeping social changes were impacting on the content and form of the book. However, the demise of the three-decker format, discussed in Chapter Two, also played its part in the restructure of the novel and the changing economic cultural conditions of the day.

The culmination of a novel in the traditional "happy ending" of a marriage scene, the feature of such novels as H. G. Wells' *Ann Veronica* (1909), was no longer viewed as the only successful outcome. Both male and female authors began to imagine, different

outcomes and a more varied narrative in terms of women's place in society and society in general.

Chapter Two established how the 1890s was perceived as the first wave of feminist fiction "which helped to determine the nature and scope of modern feminism" (Kemp et al, 1997, p. 126). The New Woman fiction of the 1890s dared to imagine a world in which women were free of the constraints imposed on them, and demonstrated that women could enjoy a more expansive life beyond that of marriage. In challenging the content and structure of novels in this way, women writers of the 1890s were paving the way for the acceptance of more experimental fiction which would begin to appear in the Edwardian period. But it was not only women's place in society which was being challenged in the literature of the 1890s:

[T]he turn of the century gender crisis was an extremely important part of the social and intellectual formation in which (and by which) early twentieth century fiction was produced. Modern woman (and hence modern man), modern marriage, free love, the artistic expectations of women, female eroticism, these were the fundamental themes of the late Victorian dissolution.

(Pykett, 1995, p. 15)¹⁵¹

As the Victorian era gave way to the modern, the exploration of such themes made it appear as if established society was under threat. It was during this period that literary modernism began to emerge.

Early feminism had left its mark on Irish women's writing. Meaney argues that the period between 1890 and 1910 "was an important one in the development of the Irish novel [and] . . . the development of fiction by Irish women" (2002, p. 157) or women with Irish connections. It was during this period that a number of Irish women writers

¹⁵¹ Pykett is quoting from Bradbury, (1993, p. 22)

came to prominence with their portrayal of the New Woman.¹⁵² Perhaps the most prominent of the New Woman writers, and the one who coined the term “New Woman”, was Sarah Grand. Born in Ireland, she moved to London following an unhappy marriage, and it was here that she made her name as a leading New Woman novelist. Unlike Thurston, however, she was politically active as a suffragette and was also a member of the Writers Suffrage League. She was an ardent essayist and lecturer on topics such as the state of education for women, the unfairness of marriage laws from a female perspective and the sexual double standards of the day. Many of her essays and lectures were published as a volume entitled *Modern Man and Maid* in 1898 (Kemp et al, 1997, p.159).

Another of Thurston’s compatriots was Mary Chavelita Dunne, who wrote under the pseudonym of George Egerton (1859 -1945). Egerton was the daughter of an impoverished Irish Catholic, and although born in Australia, returned to Ireland during her childhood. Her stormy personal life indicates a woman of independent spirit who did not believe in living the life of compromise which was expected of her gender. Egerton was a competent linguist, journalist and author who also turned her hand to writing for the theatre (Kemp et al, 1997, pp.113-4). She is perhaps best known for her collections of short stories entitled *Keynotes*, which appeared in 1893, and *Discords* in 1894. Both contained stories which challenged patriarchal attitudes, “explore female oppression as well as celebrating women’s potential” (Buck, ed., 1992, pp. 695-6). Like Grand, Egerton was associated with a political form of writing and was often controversial in her views.

¹⁵² While the 1890s saw a number of prominent New Women writers come to the fore, Irish literary history is peppered with women supportive of the feminist cause. Women such as Maria Edgeworth (1768-1849), who in addition to writing a number of novels which focus on contemporary society, wrote in defence of women’s education. (Schlueter and Schlueter, eds., 1998, p. 217)

Kathleen Hunt, who wrote under the pseudonym of Iota, was another prominent Irish author with New Woman tendencies. In 1894 she wrote *A Yellow Aster*, a book which would associate her with the New Woman novelists. Another woman novelist and essayist associated with nationalist and feminist politics was Emily Lawless (1845-1913). A predecessor of Thurston, she was most famous for *Grania: The Story of an Island* (1892) and a literary biography, *Maria Edgeworth* (1904), which has been described as “a classic of literary biography and a monument of feminist scholarship” (Schlueter and Schlueter eds., 1998, p. 80). The publication of *Grania*, marked Lawless out as “one of the most significant early Irish women writers” (Buck, ed., 1992, p. 724)

In recognition of Thurston’s position amongst these novelists, Meaney writes:

“[a]mongst the most prominent of these women writers with an Irish connection however were Sarah Grand, George Egerton and Katherine Cecil Thurston, Thurston being the most decadent, sensational and successful of the three” (Meaney, ed., 2002, p. 977). Thurston did not write with the “gritty realism” associated with her homeland, but instead chose to highlight women’s political and social plight through the lens of sensationalist fiction. One American reviewer commented that “Mrs Thurston is a novelist and romanticist, not a moraliser. She spends no part of her time and purpose in the expression of personal opinions” (Acc 11378, Box 10 Press Cuttings, *Virginia Times*, 29 October 1910, n.p.). This belief is reinforced by Meaney:

[w]hilst Ireland did not produce standard realist fiction in the nineteenth century . . . it was a happier breeding ground for gothic forms and supernatural tales. Women were prominent exponents of this kind of fiction . . . Women like Katherine Cecil Thurston who were infamous in themselves and sensationalist in their fiction, offered interrogations of gender and society, which outside of the alibris of religion or nation were acceptable as an aspect of popular literature’s sensationalism. These were expected to be shocking and as such they represent the new questioning of sexual roles at the end of the nineteenth century and at the beginning of the twentieth century which is explicit in the work of Katherine Cecil Thurston and her compatriots.

While Grand and Egerton were closely associated with the feminist politics of the 1880s and 1890s, and were both seen as part of the vanguard of New Woman writing, Thurston, following several years in their wake, was never an overtly political author. Despite the perception of her as a purely sensationalist writer “the sexual politics of [her] . . . work was spectacularly . . . radical and overt” (Meaney, ed., 2002, p. 169). There is no evidence to suggest that Thurston was actively involved in the suffragette movement or as an activist in any of the feminist political causes of the 1890s or of the Edwardian period. Thurston’s writing career did not carry any of the hallmarks of her feisty compatriots. She did not give advice to her readers through political tracts, nor did she contribute any journalistic pieces to the political or popular press. Unlike her predecessor Emily Lawless, Thurston never became involved in Irish nationalist politics. Despite being the daughter of a home-rule Mayor of Cork, Thurston “strictly avoided national politics in her writing” (Meaney, ed., 2002, p. 169).

Despite this lack of radical political involvement, she displayed many of the characteristics of the New Woman and took part in many of the associated activities. Sensationalist fiction enabled Thurston to explore material which was “unusual, sensational or more extreme in its nature than that which could be encompassed within the conventions of realist narrative or within the political or religious forms which made women’s writing in other forms respectable” (Meaney, ed., 2002, p770). This ensured publication in publishing houses and magazines that may not have been happy to publish the work of a politically active woman. This is particularly true of Blackwood who had been, from 1860 onwards, reluctant to publish the work, not only of liberal or radically minded women but were rejecting many “‘liberal’ authors, such as George

Bernard Shaw, Robert Louis Stevenson, H.G. Wells, and Thomas Hardy” (Finkelstein, 2002, p. 13).

As discussed in previous chapters, Blackwood seemed to be out of touch with the changes in the political and social landscape of Britain during this period. In particular, during the closing decade of the nineteenth century and into the Edwardian era, these changes seemed to be distinctly contrary to Blackwood’s “prevailing ideological and literary stance, a stance that was increasingly at odds with concurrent shifts and changes in British politics and literary and aesthetic concerns” (Finkelstein, 2002, p. 13). By “couching” the narrative of her novels in a form acceptable to the traditional and paternalistic William Blackwood, Thurston could ensure publication where other more “liberal” authors had failed.

The fame and financial independence afforded to Thurston by the popularity of her writing and the infamy and decadence of her personal life thrust her into the position of an independent and free-thinking woman. As such, Thurston could embrace many of the issues explored by New Woman writers of the time, in the way she lived her own life. The fiction produced by New Woman authors examined issues such as sexuality, marriage, divorce and single motherhood. Through their writing, they were creating and offering alternative ways for women to live their lives:

[T]hey invented fantasy interludes, in which a woman will dream of an entirely different world or will cross-dress, experimenting with the freedom available to boys and men. Within the conventional tale of courtship and marriage, we have an effort to explain and analyse other, more inchoate desires and hopes of women.¹⁵³

(Vicinus, 1983. pp. xvi-xvii)

¹⁵³ While Thurston did not experiment with cross-dressing in her own life, the female protagonist of *Max* chooses to live as a man in order to experience the freedom enjoyed by men at the beginning of the 20th century.

Thurston used many of these new narratives in her own work. In particular, the themes of courtship and marriage were used as a vehicle to explore women's other aspirations. *Max*, in particular, embraces the theme of a woman choosing to live a man's life in order to break the boundaries of her limited opportunities.

The themes explored by New Woman authors brought into the open, alternate lives for women. These novels were available to large numbers of women, across the social spectrum, and their coverage in the popular press ensured their topics were openly debated. Women no longer felt alone in their desire for independence. New Woman authors ensured women's awareness of alternatives in their lives. Possibilities were made palatable to a wide range of women through the writing of Thurston and Grand, whose approach was less forceful than the more strident feminists. Thurston and Grand seduced "female middle-class readers to feminist ideas (however diluted), while offering an object lesson to feminists on how best to market the cause" (Heilmann, 2004, p. 19). In contrast to the strident feminists' adoption of radical dress and political demonstration to further the cause of women, Thurston used her femininity and literary success to demonstrate that women could be both successful and feminine.

A recurring theme in Thurston's writing is that of women experimenting with different modes of living to escape the narrow confines of their life. In her earliest novel, *The Circle* Thurston highlights the futility of the lot of many women desperate for a life beyond the domestic. This is amply demonstrated through Anna Solny, who escapes her domestic environment to experience the glamour of a life as a Parisian actress. Thurston was also adept at portraying the emptiness of women's lives. *The Fly on the Wheel* is particularly graphic in its depiction of the narrowness of women's lives in rural middle-class Ireland: here the heroine takes the only means of escape available to her, suicide. The theme of escape occurs throughout her novels, culminating in *Max*, where Maxine

in a desperate attempt to create a more fulfilling and worthwhile life assumes the identity of the male, Max, and escapes to Paris.

In recreating the themes of earlier New Woman authors, Thurston followed in the tradition of such fiction, the main value of which had been to provide a bridge between, as well as a challenge to much of the popular literature and political writing of the time: “One of the defining characteristics of New Woman fiction was its challenge to and subversion of the conventional dichotomies between literature and political writing, art and popular culture”, and this is amply demonstrated in Thurston’s writing (Heilmann, 2004, p. 1).¹⁵⁴ While Thurston’s narratives often contained a political message, and challenged the status quo they appealed to a wider mainstream readership. Thurston used popular culture, newspaper serialisations, magazines and journals to reach a wide and varied audience.

Thurston’s own life echoed many of the contradictions of the New Woman. Through her correspondence and personal records, detailed in previous chapters, we see her eagerness to be financially independent. She was clearly capable of this, yet at the same time she often relied on men, her husband, her male friends, her publishers and literary agents, for encouragement and reassurance regarding her personal and commercial decisions. Her letters reveal a woman who was emotionally reliant on the men around her, yet one who was courageously trying to live the “most meaningful life she might dare to live as a woman in her historical circumstances” (Showalter, 2002, p. 14). This split between a need for independence and a need for masculine approval gives further credence to Thurston’s position as a woman caught between the Victorian and the modern era.

¹⁵⁴ Heilmann is quoting from Ardis, 1990, p. 42.

In many aspects of her life Thurston appeared to be the complete antithesis of the New Woman. The respectably married wife of a moderately successful author and playwright and dutiful Catholic daughter of a well-respected Irish politician, Thurston performed the daughterly and wifely duties expected of her. Yet, she displayed a determination to live outside the bounds of social acceptability or convention. As a child she was described as having an “adventurous spirit” (*The Times*, Obituary, 7 September 1911, n.p.), and this independence continued throughout her life. This often hidden side of Thurston is perhaps best displayed in her private letters to Alfred Bulkeley Gavin which will be discussed in Chapter Eight. The way she handled her career, her finances and her private life all point to a woman with a fierce determination to live her life on her own terms.

Despite this independent spirit, Thurston remained married to Ernest, although she was aware of his very public infidelity. Not only did she remain married to him and tried to reconcile their marriage, but she ensured that he played a pivotal role in the management of her literary work. In so doing Thurston remained true to the feminine roles expected of the Edwardian wife. Yet, their eventual divorce which took place in front of the world’s press and her subsequent return to public and literary life reveal her as a determined and independent woman. She created a new life for herself and came to terms with the power and control which she now had over that life. For many women of the period, power over their own lives and careers was completely new and uncharted territory.

This coming to terms with power is something that many women have found difficult, and “some gifted women unconsciously and indirectly take power over their lives by committing an outrageous act, a social or sexual sin that frees them from the constraints of conventional society and its expectations—defying parents, rejecting religion, or

leaving a marriage” (Heilbrun, 1988, p. 130). Thurston committed “outrageous” acts in her search for control over her life. Her divorce, her affair with Alfred Bulkeley Gavin, and her decadent lifestyle, can in this context be seen as her way of controlling a world in which she felt that she had had little or no control.

7.1 The publication of *The Fly on the Wheel*

1906 and 1907 was a period of intense unhappiness and uncertainty in Thurston’s life. Her marriage to Ernest was disintegrating and the poor reception of *The Mystics* suggested a literary decline. Delays in the publication of her work in both the U.K. and the United States must have been deeply worrying to a woman who prided herself on organisation and of adopting and maintaining a businesslike manner towards her writing.

In the early months of 1906 Thurston completed the first six chapters of *The Fly on the Wheel*. These were despatched to Blackwood, who was impressed with this latest offering, not only in terms of the quality of writing but also due to the fact that, as Thurston had assured him, “there is nothing in it that I could object to as unsuited for the Magazine” (Acc 11378, Box 1, Loose sheets, Letter from William Blackwood, dated 14 June 1906). The Thurstons were eager to have *The Fly on the Wheel* published in serial form for the Christmas market. Ernest had signed an agreement with Blackwood’s on behalf of his wife in June 1906 for the British Serial Rights, yet still no publication date had been set (Acc 11378, Box 2 Small Letterbook dated 20.9.1906 – 15.3.07, Agreement dated 21 June 1906). Despite the fact that Blackwood had made contact with Thurston in Ireland shortly after the agreement was signed, no further correspondence had been received by Blackwood on the matter.

Due to the lack of communication, Blackwood decided to serialise another novel in place of *The Fly*, and did not now plan to serialise it in *Maga* until March 1907 (Acc 11378, Box 1, Folder 2, Correspondence with Blackwood 1905 -10). There is no evidence to suggest that Thurston was aware of any delays or difficulties in the publication. She continued with her writing, leaving the business-side of things to Ernest. In November 1906, she despatched eleven chapters of *The Fly* to Blackwood and awaited his response (Acc 11378, Box 2, Small Letterbook, letter from Thurston, dated 21 November 1906.).

Despite Thurston's assurances to Blackwood that the content of her latest novel would be suitable for *Maga*, he was worried by what he read. On 29 November he informed her that he "could not be enthusiastic about it" and that he felt "anxious about the impression the later portion of the work will make on the critics and your circle of readers" (Acc 11378, Correspondence with Blackwood 1905 -10, Letter dated 29 November). The conclusion of the story which so worried Blackwood, dealt with the suicide of the main character, not the type of subject matter which readers of *Maga* were used to. Despite this, there is no evidence that Blackwood suggested an alternative ending. This was most unlike Blackwood who would often offer alternative narratives for his authors in an attempt to ensure a positive reception from his readers, and to "conform with the firm's preconceived notions of literature" (Finkelstein, 2002, p. 72).

Ernest continued his erratic management of his wife's work. He was keen to have *The Fly* serialised in America and had successfully negotiated its publication in *The Metropolitan Magazine*, yet remained very casual about maintaining contact with Blackwood. Due to this silence, Blackwood wrote to Ernest and proposed postponing publication until October 1907 (Acc 11378, Box 1, Folder 2, Correspondence with Blackwood 1905-10, Letter dated 30 January 1907). Thurston instructed Ernest to

respond immediately. A letter of 31 January 1907, reveals a very different tone to the one normally assumed by Ernest. It is entirely probable that, seeing the damage that Ernest's mismanagement of her work was doing, Thurston had taken the matter into her own hands. In this clearly articulated and strident letter, Ernest informs Blackwood of Thurston's displeasure at being thrust "aside until so late a date as October without giving her any warning of your intentions. So much does she feel this, as being entirely detrimental to her interests, that she has instructed me to ask you seriously to reconsider your interests." He points out:

how this prolonged delay will interfere with her interests when I remind you that 'The Gambler' was published in book form in February of 1906 and by this decision it would occasion a lapse of two years and about six months before the appearance of 'The Fly on the Wheel.' . . . I think you cannot fail to see with my wife that this unnecessarily prolonged delay is one that she can scarcely agree to, seeing that with a sufficient amount of MS., which has been in your possession since the month of November . . . it has been by no means necessary for you to put her work aside without giving her due warning of your intentions. . . . I hope that you will see your way to commence the serial in April in place of the other which you intend to bring out that month.

(Acc 11378, Box 2, Small Letterbook)

Although pure conjecture, the tone, and the speed with which this letter was sent, points to Thurston taking managerial control. She was playing on her success as a popular writer in order to sway Blackwood's opinion. Blackwood, on the other hand, was not willing to, as he saw it, pander to the request of a popular author. Thurston is acting as a professional author of the twentieth century and Blackwood hanging on to the publishing conventions of the late nineteenth century. His determination to maintain the old ways of publishing and operate the company in a paternalistic manner was becoming outdated (See Finkelstein, 2002, p.104) Blackwood was not keen to embrace new working practices. His recalcitrance in this matter was echoed in his dealings with several other writers of the day. Writers were becoming increasingly disillusioned by the treatment they received from Blackwood. The close control he maintained over

everything in *Maga* and the books he published was stultifying to many of his more modern authors. The firm's reliance on the colonial market and the royalties received by authors from this market were also becoming a bone of contention between author and publisher.

E. M. Forster who had published *Where Angels fear to Tread* (1905) with Blackwood was particularly angry when in 1907, he was offered a very poor royalty rate for his new novel *A Room with A View* (1908). Blackwood had based this proposed royalty on the reception of the first novel. Following this incident Forster said: "[a]m quarrelling with Blackwood, and I think I shall have to go elsewhere. We broke over the Colonies, and we aren't the last people who will break over them" (Finkelstein, 2002, p. 104). Forster was one in a long line of writers who, on becoming disillusioned by Blackwood's "lackadaisical approach to his work" (Finkelstein, 2002, p.105)¹⁵⁵ were turning to other publishers, more in tune with the demands of the contemporary marketplace.

Perhaps in recognition of Thurston's popularity and her enormous appeal to the all-important colonial market, Blackwood keenly replied: "I shall be pleased to reconsider the starting of 'The Fly on the Wheel' in my magazine in April or May whichever month may be most suitable for me, if you will tell me how far the story has progressed. As you are aware I have seen only eleven chapters and these would run to three months or so only." It is clear from this letter that the Thurstons were experiencing difficulties in obtaining simultaneous publication in the United States and United Kingdom market. Ernest's silence may have been an attempt to stall publication until the American publisher, in this case S.S. McClure, were ready. Blackwood continues:

¹⁵⁵ *A Room With a View* was eventually published in the United Kingdom by Edward Arnold.

You and Mrs Thurston must remember how subservient you made the interests of my Magazine to those of Messrs McClure. In the first place the story which was originally arranged to run in my Magazine was dropped because Mr McClure did not consider it suitable for his magazine, and in place of the story starting in the October number of my Magazine, as was intended, another story was substituted for it which was not ready to begin at that time. I was thus obliged to make other arrangements and run another novel in place of it. Moreover, I was not informed of the hitch with America until long after you knew of it . . . I can understand the desire that the story should, when ready, be serialised and published without delay, but it is not within reason to expect that either my Magazine or any other Magazine can be at the disposal of any writer at the moment a story comes to hand months after the time arranged for its appearance.

(Acc 11378, Box 1, Folder 2, Correspondence with Blackwood 1905-10, Letter dated 4 February 1907)

Despite informing Blackwood that they wished the publication date of *The Fly* to be brought forward Ernest again suggested a change of plan. *The Mystics* was due to begin its serialisation in April with Harper's. Ernest now believed it would be best to delay publication until October as Blackwood had suggested. An infuriated Blackwood wrote:

I find your constant change of plans disconcerting. At your urgent request I consented to reconsider the date for starting 'The Fly on the Wheel' in my Magazine, and now in reply to my letter I am told the Messrs Harper have decided to publish 'The Mystics' in April, and it will be more in your interests that I begin the serial issue in October as I suggested. I see your difficulty but I also see that you objected to my proposal and now revert to it without regard to my convenience or interests . . .

What I now require to know is when the serial issue of 'The Fly on the Wheel' will begin in America, and when the work is to be published there in book form. Until I hear from you on these points the date when the first instalment will begin in my Magazine must necessarily remain an open question. I shall also be glad to know how far Mrs Thurston has progressed with the writing of the story and when it is likely to be completed.

I shall be glad if you will send me your proposals for the publication of 'The Mystics' in April as there is no time to be lost if the volume is to come out simultaneously with the American publication.

(Acc 11378, Box 1, Folder 2, Correspondence with Blackwood 1905-10)

Many of the difficulties Thurston faced in placing her work were due to Ernest's lack of understanding of the current literary marketplace. The sheer number of publications available to authors, and the diversity of these publications in terms of target market and

circulation figures would have been daunting to someone with a limited understanding of the developing publishing scene. Thurston's rejection of The Literary Agency has already been discussed in Chapter Four and we can see evidence here of how her lack of a literary agent was having a detrimental effect on her standing as a popular author.

Ernest had secured serial rights in America with McClure and serial and book rights in the U.K. with Blackwood. He was, however, keen to sell further serial and book rights to Harper's in New York. Harper's were reluctant to enter into such an arrangement (Acc 11378, Box 2, Small Letterbook dated 20.9.1906 -15.3.07, Letter dated 3 March 1907). The difficulties seemed to be related to the serialisation and not the novel itself. Harper's did not want to serialise *The Fly*. Perhaps as a result of its subsequent serialisation with McClure, they may have believed that the remuneration an author such as Thurston would expect would not be recouped. However, their reluctance may have also been due to the fact that, as previously discussed in Chapter Six, Thurston had informed them that she wished her next novel to go to Dodd Mead and Co.

In recognition of Harper's reluctance, Ernest wrote to James Macarthur:

Curtis Brown has found a possible opening for the serial rights of 'The Fly on the Wheel' and I have accordingly sent his representative a letter of authorisation to take the MS from you. This you will understand is only for the serial rights. I intend sending you another draft of an agreement for the bookrights without serial which I understand from your last letter you are ready to consider.

(Acc 11378, Box 2 Letterbook dated March 16 1907 -)

Despite, or perhaps because of, Ernest's efforts *The Fly* did not appear in serialised form in America (Acc 11378, Box 1, Folder 2, Correspondence with Blackwood 1905 -1910, Letter dated 23 September 1907). Harper's were also unwilling to enter into a bidding

war with Dodd Mead, the firm who would eventually publish the novel for the U.S. market.

Thurston had completed the final chapters of the novel while in Ireland and had sent "chapters 12 – 27 inclusive of 'The Fly on the Wheel'" to Blackwood (Acc 11378, Box 1, Folder 2, Correspondence with Blackwood 1905-1910, Letter dated 17 September 1907). She had produced a manuscript which met with Blackwood's approval. In a letter to Thurston which makes no reference to the controversial ending of the book, he wrote "to inform her how glad he was to receive the concluding chapters of 'the Fly on the Wheel' . . . I hope the critics will be as favourably impressed with these chapters as I was" (Acc 11378, Box 1, Folder 2, Correspondence Blackwood 1905-1910, Letter dated 23 September 1907).

Negotiations between the Thurstons and Dodd Mead and Co. appeared to be going well. The American company had indicated that they wished to publish in serial and book form. The Thurstons were eager to insert a clause in the contract which would force Dodd Mead to ensure sales of at least 55,000 books or face financial penalties. Dodd Mead demanded its removal from the contract. Thurston acquiesced and Curtis Brown was able to forward a letter from the publisher to Ernest in which they expressed

[T]heir appreciation of your decision to withdraw the clause for selling 55,000 copies. Mr Dodd writes:-

I can assure you however that we shall put our backs into selling this book and try our level best to get every ounce of ale out of it. But it would not be fair to Mrs Thurston to judge the selling of this book by the others when she admits that the subject is not as popular.

(Acc 11378, Box 8, Loose Correspondence, Letter dated 11 February 1908)

In February 1908 Thurston signed two agreements with Dodd Mead: the first for the exclusive rights in the U.S.A. of *The Fly*. Royalties were for 20 per cent of published retail price of the first 50,000 copies sold and 22.5 per cent on all copies sold thereafter, £500 of which was paid on publication in advance of the royalty. The second agreement was for the exclusive Canadian publishing rights in volume form simultaneous with the U.S. publication (Acc 11378, Box 2, Small Letterbook dated 20.9.1906 -15.3.07, Agreements dated 18 and 19 February 1908). Although *The Bookman* had reported as early as December 1906 that *The Fly* was “to run as a serial in Blackwood’s Magazine, beginning early next year” (Acc 11378, Box 10, Press Cuttings 1906, Christmas *Bookman*, December 1906, n.p.), it would be October 1907 before it began serialisation in *Maga* and March 1908 before it was released in book form (Acc 11378, Box 10, Press Cuttings 1907, *Army and Navy Gazette*, 5 October 1907).

Despite the difficulties surrounding the publication of *The Fly*, “very large advance orders” were received by Blackwood (Acc 11378, Box 8, Press Cuttings, *No Name* 29 April 1908). After the unfavourable critical reception of *The Mystics*, Thurston would have been concerned that this book would not be a critical success. *The Fly* however, met with almost universal approval. It was “by far the most clever and thoughtful novel that Mrs Thurston has written since the days of ‘John Chilcote’” (Acc 11378, Box 8, Press Cuttings, *Daily Standard* 13 March 1908). That Thurston had written a book of the same universal appeal as *John Chilcote M.P.* soon became apparent. One newspaper commented that this fifth novel was “a decided step forward from her earlier work. Here we have less melodrama; the machinery of the plot is less mechanical, so to say and the characters are pulsing with life” (Acc 11378, Box 8, Press Cuttings, *Liverpool Daily Post and Mercury*, 8 March 1908). Another critic declared that *The Fly on the Wheel*

is as earnest and attractive a piece of work as has come from the pen of a novelist during the past few years. It will enhance her reputation. She has dealt deftly with a poignant human problem, and found the answer in the only artistic way.

(Acc 11378, Box 8, Press Cuttings, *Daily Chronicle*, 12 March 1908)

Blackwood was pleased at the favourable response. He wrote to Thurston: "I have I think already congratulated you on the successful start the book has made and see the critics have on the whole reviewed it favourably" (Acc 11378, Box 1, Correspondence with Blackwood 1905-10, Letter dated 1 April 1908). By May the novel had sold "17, 370 of which 4,850 have been sold in the Colonial Edition", Blackwood believed this be on "on the whole fairly satisfactory" (Acc 11378, Box 1, Correspondence with Blackwood 1905-10, letter dated 12 May 1908).

Following the American publication by Dodd, Mead, New York *Vogue* commented that "[t]he story is one of greater ease and more clearly mature art and power than its predecessors by the same author." It also made one of the few criticisms in which it commented on the "somewhat vulgar pale purple cover to which it stares at one from the counter of the bookseller" (Acc 11378, Box 8, Press Cuttings 1909, *Vogue*, 7 January 1909).

7.2 *The Fly on the Wheel*: Woman's subjugation

The story which had captured the imagination of readers and critics gave "a very realistic picture of middle-class life in an Irish provincial town – with all its petty hypocrisies, its sordid narrow mindedness, its social bigotry, its comedy and its tragedy." This was also a story which painted "a pathetic picture of the barren matrimonial outlook of girls of this rank of society in Irish life" (Acc 11378, Box 8, Press Cuttings, *Irish Daily Independent*, 6 April 1906). It was not only the obligations of marriage which Thurston deplored, but the meaningless activities with which women

had to fill their days. Thurston was herself viewed as a New Woman and yet even she appeared hindered by the restrictions on women's lives. Despite the fact that Thurston and Nancy Inez Pollock had been friends since childhood, Thurston was often exasperated by the close proximity in which they lived:

I am glad to tell you that in all these days of annoyance I have been able to control my nerves and my temper with the world at large. I have not once quarrelled with Nance or the Aunt. I have schooled myself to listen to the children's noise – and have even gone to the tea parties here that each other year drive me almost mad.

(Acc 11378, Box 12, 11 August 1911)

In a stunning attack on the lack of opportunity facing women, Thurston once again explored the conflict between love and duty which, despite improvements in women's legal and educational status, was still a theme which women struggled to overcome or accept. In making reference to the fly on the axle of the chariot wheel in one of *Æsops Fables*,¹⁵⁶ Thurston highlights the lack of opportunity available to the protagonist, Isabel Costeloe.

In an afterword to the 1987 edition published by Virago, Janet Madden-Simpson comments on how these two elements of

independence and power lie at the centre of all Thurston's writing, but never are they as sensitively probed as in *The Fly on the Wheel*, the novel which was closest to Thurston's heart, and the one in which she is most dextrous in blending those two characteristic – and often warring – elements of her work: a flair for the dramatic and an abiding interest in psychology.

(Madden-Simpson, 1986, p. 331)

Thurston was famous for characters who were bent on the re-invention of their lives:

“Thurston's novels everywhere celebrate the freedom of art, the right in independence

¹⁵⁶ The fly on the axle of the chariot wheel urges the mule to go faster but is told that it is only the driver of the carriage that the mule will listen to.

of feeling and thought, and the facility of self-invention" (Meaney, 2000, p. 170). Yet, paradoxically, as Meaney posits, the novel which she is so closely associated with is the one in which the protagonist is unable to reinvent herself (Meaney, 2000, p. 169).

Isabel Costeloe, is a young woman educated in Dublin and Paris, but who finds, on completion of her education, that she can do nothing but return to the provincial town of her birth and find a husband. Through the circumstances of Isabel's life, Thurston paints a picture of the stultifying existence which many women had to accept. Isabel's limited choices are reinforced by her Priest: "You'll have to be getting married or going into a convent one of these fine days" (Thurston, 1908, p. 229). Madden-Simpson sees Isabel as a clear representation of the New Woman:

With her cloud of dark hair, her New Womanish public cigarette smoking, her suspect foreign education . . . [her] refusal to 'Squeeze down to fit' Waterford society marks her as a deviant, a temptress, who . . . flouts . . . [and] threatens to undermine the most essential foundation of society, the family.

(Madden-Simpson ed., 1986, p. 335)

Isabel has fallen in love with the local solicitor, a married man. Caught between Victorian sensibilities and the emerging acceptance of the twentieth century, she knows that to publicly admit her feelings would be unacceptable. Unable to accept a life without him she sees only a bleak future:

In the fairy tale Cinderella has but to await the Prince, but upon the stage of middle-class Irish life the godmother's wand has lost its cunning, the rags remain merely rags, and the lean mice gnaw the pumpkin. To girls such as Isabel, the future is cruelly stereotyped: a year or two of social success, while the face and personality are new to the limited circle, then the slow decline of that ardent popularity, the imperceptible drawing out of the years, until eighteen merges in to twenty-eight, and the girl wakes up with alarm to find that a newer band of pleasure-seekers is pouring back from the convent schools, ousting her from her supremacy. And then? The question is very poignant. In no country in the world does the feminine mind shrink more sensitively from the stigma of old maid than in Ireland, where the woman-worker – the woman of broad interests – exists only

as a rare type . . . Such women either marry or they do not marry, and in that simple statement is compromised the tragedy of existence.

(Thurston, 1908, pp. 223-4)

Knowing that she can never have the relationship she wants with the man she loves, she commits suicide. Thurston deplores the role of marriage as an “economic and social arrangement” (Madden-Simpson, 1986, p.335). However, it is not only marriage within “respectable” society which Thurston deplores, but the role of women in upholding and nurturing these beliefs and refusing to acknowledge that they have to marry for “money or position or any such thing as that” (Thurston, 1908, p. 61) in order to survive.

Isabel chooses death rather than submit to the life of respectable Munster society.

Madden-Simpson sees Isabel’s suicide not as an act of despair but as an act of

affirmation – it is the only direction in which her wish for significant action can take her . . . Her choice of death over the living death with she perceived life to be is both a protest and an act of self-love. She will not take refuge in a loveless but socially advantageous alliance any more than she will have power to change the middle-class world. Her awareness of herself as a sexual being, as an independent-minded and autonomous being, leads her to see death as a choice of freedom, as a counter to the slow extinction of selfhood.

(Madden-Simpson ed., 1986, p.335)

Isabel’s suicide is all the more shocking to the reader because it is seen as her only choice and the only way to freedom.

Thurston’s own marriage was ending and it is probably this which contributes to the particularly adept manner with which she deals with issues of independence and power. Despite not being the most popular of her novels in terms of sales, *The Fly on the Wheel* is most closely associated with Thurston, and the one which has endured. It displays a real understanding of the psychology of a small Irish town and of the issues facing its

womenfolk. The futility of her own relationship with Ernest and the way she endeavoured to preserve the marriage gave her ample subject matter. Thurston would have been aware that, if her own marriage ended, the stigma of divorce could change her status and her own fears seem to be expressed through Isabel. However, it is the circumstances surrounding Thurston's own death, which will be discussed in Chapter Eight, which most closely associate Thurston with this novel, and in particular Isabel Costeloe.

Conclusion

Buoyed by the success of her fifth novel, Thurston embarked on a new period in her life. Although she had attempted numerous reconciliations with Ernest, it became clear by 1908 that the marriage was over. Thurston threw herself into her work and embarked on another novel, *Max*. It is obvious from her correspondence that in the summer of 1908 Thurston was looking to the future and despite the end of her relationship with Ernest, was eager to continue her literary career. She had spent the summer months in her Irish home where she was able to recover from the stresses of the previous year.

Thurston now dealt with the majority of her correspondence with the assistance of her secretary and family friend Austin Barry. Despite Ernest's departure Thurston did not engage a literary agent in the U.K. Whether this was a wise move is debatable, but it demonstrates that she felt comfortable dealing with business matters herself, another indication of her new-found independence. As we will see in Chapter Eight, this belief in her own ability to handle her literary affairs would be shaken with the publication of *Max*.

In August 1908 Thurston wrote to Blackwood informing him that she had started her sixth novel and enquiring whether he would be interested in its serialisation.

Blackwood responded favourably:

I shall be pleased to see the first twelve chapters of your new novel when you have completed them, and if we can come to an arrangement with you for this book, we shall of course meet your views as soon as possible with regard to simultaneous publication in America . . . When I have read the first twelve chapters of the book I shall write you about them, but I cannot promise that I shall come to a definite decision upon the work without seeing it as a whole.

(Acc 11378, Box 1, Folder 2, Correspondence with Blackwood 1905-10, Letter dated 25 August 1908)

Blackwood displays his usual cautionary style, perhaps mindful of the strains that Thurston had been under, but also wary that the smooth publication of his magazine would not be jeopardised by delays in submission. Blackwood's previous dealings with the Thurstons had not been easy and ensured that he remained cautionary.

However, events in Thurston's life were about to take a new direction. With the finalisation of her divorce she was able to embark on a new phase of her life, one in which she would have independence, control over her literary career and finally find happiness, however briefly. Her relationship with Alfred Bulkeley Gavin was to be one of the happiest times of her short life and this was to have a significant effect upon her final novel *Max*. In the final chapter Thurston's final years and her last novel will be discussed within the context of her relationship with Gavin. The Chapter will finish with an overview of the publication and dissemination of her work in the years following her death.

Chapter Eight

A new phase: Alfred Bulkeley Gavin

Thurston had obviously been affected by the final split with Ernest and although buoyed by being back in her native Ireland surrounded by her closest friends, attention to her work remained difficult. Thurston's papers indicate that at this time she embarked on a relationship with Alfred Bulkeley Gavin, a Scottish doctor living and practising in London. It is not clear how they met, but from their many letters in the archive it is obvious that they had a passionate relationship from 1908 until Thurston's death in 1911, in the month before they were due to be married. It is unclear if Gavin was Thurston's doctor at the time of meeting, but the couple used his profession as a means of continuing their secret relationship.¹⁵⁷ Thurston's first known letter to Gavin shows the depth of feeling which she felt on their first meeting:

Dear Dr Gavin,

I am writing to you upon one of those impulses that come to us at times . . . I am unhappy tonight because I feel that I have unwittingly imposed upon you, and in a measure broken the mental link that we forged in those most interesting talks when we made excursion into the realm of mysterious human things.

It is a great and rare privilege to touch another's mind – a privilege that one loses very reluctantly . . . This evening I wished you to talk to me – and could not induce myself to say so. May I ask you instead to see me if you conveniently can tomorrow night, when I shall be at home at ten o'clock.

(Acc 11378, Box 12, Letter dated 28 September 1908)

In actively pursuing Gavin, Thurston gives a further indication of her "new" thinking and independent mind. In Gavin, Thurston found a "communion of spirit" lacking in her

¹⁵⁷ This letter to Gavin, written when Thurston was staying in Monte Carlo in 1909, engaged in researching and writing *Max* gives an example of the subterfuge they would use in order to spend time together: "You remember we thought it impossible for us to meet before the following day, but now, on account of my illness it will be entirely natural that you should see me after the long journey" (Acc 11378, Box 12, n.d. 1909). Another undated letter, also sent in 1909 reads: "Let me see you twice on Thursday. Come to me any time after lunch that suits you, and again at night. Circumstances make it feasible, and I shall remain in bed so the visit will be professional" (Acc 11378, Box 12, n.d. 1909).

relationship with Ernest. She consulted him on every aspect of her life and trusted his opinion: "I love and honour you exceedingly for your sense of duty, a quality never demonstrated by those with whom I come in contact" (Acc 11378, Box 12, Letter dated 22 August 1910). After her tumultuous relationship with Ernest, Thurston appeared to be embarking on what was seen as an "individualistic" relationship with Gavin where each was free to pursue their careers.¹⁵⁸

Their letters demonstrate that despite embarking on a relationship, Thurston maintained her professional life, an unusual practice for a woman of her time. The couple spent long spells apart due to Thurston's writing commitments and time-consuming research which she undertook prior to writing. Much of this research took place abroad, in particular in Paris and Monte Carlo where Thurston was able to immerse herself in the culture and atmosphere of French life in preparation for writing *Max*. Despite her enjoyment of the trips abroad and her writing it is obvious from her letters to Gavin that she despised their times apart. Not even a trip to one of Paris' famous couturier could please her: "I have spent a tiring afternoon, dragged by the Princess to Paquin's to see her clothes – where you would never believe how manlike and bored I felt!" (Acc 11378, Box 12, Letter to A. Bulkeley Gavin, n.d.) Irrespective of her independence and glamorous lifestyle, Thurston had a real desire for a stable domestic life. From early in their relationship, she craved Gavin's company and the routine of their life together:

All my hopes centre about the autumn, when we will sit in the dusk by the fire with the doggies and talk – and I will have tea and listen to you playing as on the last sweet, sad day when I realised how much home the flat has grown to be.

(Acc 11378, Box 12, Letter dated August 11 1909)

¹⁵⁸ For a detailed analysis of the way in which Grand, Schreiner and Caird dealt with "individualistic" relationships between men and women please see Heilmann, 2004.

In another, this time undated, letter to Gavin we see further evidence of Thurston's desire for a stable existence. She writes of her:

burning thankfulness that my life is not cast in bohemian places – that my existence is made up of real things and that the future holds for us a home – most precious, deep meaning word in the world.

(Acc 11378, Box 12, Undated letter)

A month after Blackwood had requesting the opening chapters of *Max* he still had not received them. He wrote to Thurston:

I had hoped to hear from you before this with the first 12 Chapters of your new novel about which you wrote me in August. I shall be glad if you can on receipt of this send me as much of it as you possibly can, as it will be necessary for me to make arrangements without loss of time with regard to new serials for my Magazine. Will you at the same time tell me when you expect to complete the work and if you can have it ready in the beginning of 1908. [Sic] Should the novel suit me for the Magazine I should wish to begin it not later than March.

(Acc 11378, Box 1, Folder 2, Correspondence with Blackwood 1905 – 1910, Letter dated 26 September 1908)

On 31 December 1908 Blackwood acknowledged receipt of “Nine Chapters of your new novel at present entitled *Max*” together with a full synopsis of the story (Acc 11378, Box 1, Folder 2, Correspondence with Blackwood 1905 – 1910). Just as she had always sought Blackwood's advice, she requested his candid opinion of her novel and its title.

Blackwood took his time in considering the content and plot of *Max*. He believed the title should remain the same, thinking that it had “an individual touch.” However, he was reluctant to serialise it in *Maga* due to the unsuitable content of one chapter in which bohemian Paris was evoked in perhaps too much detail for him and his readers:

Chapters II – VIII are extremely readable and carry the reader along. The 9th Chapter though most dramatic is one that I should feel very doubtful about your retaining in the book with all those disagreeable details. I regret to say the nature of the story makes me feel doubtful about it being likely to suit me for serial publication in the Magazine. At all events I could not see my way to saying anything definite about it at this stage. If you will send me the manuscript when completed, however, I shall be happy to re-consider it.

Despite not being suitable *Maga*, Blackwood still believed that with *Max*, Thurston had “every prospect of making a very popular novel” (Acc 11378, Box 1, Folder 2, Correspondence with Blackwood 1905 – 1910, Letter dated 14 January 1909).

Thurston was eager to defend her work and responded immediately. She acknowledged that the story may not be suitable for *Maga*, but did not want to change the storyline in order to fit in with Blackwood’s idea of what was suitable. Thurston was now solely reliant on income from her writing. Her papers contain no material to suggest that Ernest supported her financially during this period. While this would have been an unusual situation in the Edwardian era, it was not unusual in Thurston’s case.

Throughout their married life Thurston had supplied the main income. Ernest’s writing had been sporadic and only after her death did he enjoy any financial success as a novelist. From publication of *John Chilcote M.P.*, Thurston’s income had financed their glamorous lifestyle.

Thurston had invested her money carefully with the help of her friend and stockbroker William Pollock, who in addition to being Nancy Pollock’s husband, was a partner in the London stock brokers Hope-Pollock and Co. Thurston kept a firm rein on her outgoings: her personal papers and accounts books indicate that she kept a daily record of expenditure and, as displayed in Appendix 1, expected the same levels of thrift from her staff. She was quick to question any domestic accounts from suppliers which she

felt had been overcharged.¹⁵⁹ Thurston was aware her financial independence depended on her supplying the market with novels that would sell in significant numbers.

Ensuring this involved securing publication in as many forms and across as broad a range of publications as possible. Demonstrating her awareness of market demands, and not wishing to alienate Blackwood, she assured him that the story of *Max* could still evolve along lines suitable for *Maga*.

Blackwood responded to her letter informing her that he saw her

point of view and would not have you depart from it in the writing of the novel. It may be, as you fear, that the story will not evolve on lines suited for *Maga*, but I shall be happy to fall in with your wishes and reconsider it in the early summer when you will have 18 or 20 chapters to send me.

He goes on to elaborate on the section which he had found particularly unpleasant:

Lizzie (if I remember the name rightly) Blake's old friend, was the character introduced in the dancing saloon which jarred on me the most. But the atmosphere of the whole chapter was more or less objectionable to me. I admit the necessity for the touch of realism if your story is to have a convincing background. Unfortunately it is just this essential point which raises a doubt in my mind and obliges me to postpone coming to a decision regarding its serial issue in *Maga* until I have seen more of it worked out in detail.

¹⁵⁹ In this letter to Messrs. John Barker and Co, Thurston writes: "In the last account you sent me there are two pairs of silk stockings entered, the pair on February the 1st (8/11d) and the second pair on February the 4th (11/9d). Now I only recollect getting the one pair ... so I would be obliged if you would let me know who got the second pair" (Acc 11378, Box 2, Letterbook, 19 March 1907). The garage to which Thurston took her car for servicing and repair would also have their accounts scrutinised by Thurston. In this dictated letter to her secretary, Thurston writes that she was "surprised to find that you carried out repairs to the extent of almost £24 without having previously acquainted her of your intention of doing so; in future please always advise when in your opinion repairs of an extensive nature are necessary. ... Kindly note that there is an error of two days in the dates of the garage charges..." (Acc 11378, Box 2, Letterbook, 26 April 1907). Even Thurston's milkman was the subject of such scrutiny: "In the account for the past week 351/5 pints of milk are charged for in the pass book whereas in the check book 33 pints are entered – this being the correct amount ... these errors which are small in themselves but might be considerable by the end of the year will not occur in future" (Acc 11378, Box 2, Letterbook, 10 May 1907).

As discussed in Chapter Seven, it was this type of conservatism that many authors were finding so difficult. Blackwood was unwilling to take a risk on any manuscript which may not have met with the approval of his traditional readership. Neither would he try to appeal to a broader readership or attract new readers of more avant-garde texts. Once again we see Blackwood increasingly out of touch with a rapidly changing market.

Thurston, however, was aware that her writing was not in the same mould as the Modernists and did not appeal to that market. She knew that her market lay with those readers who, although open to much of the new thinking which accompanied the opening decade of the twentieth century were still very much of the Victorian era. Thurston was of course financially reliant on the paternalistic Blackwood and therefore reluctant to offend him and restrict what was in effect her core readership.

She continued writing and by July 1909 Blackwood was in receipt of the first twenty one chapters and the full synopsis of the manuscript. Thurston requested he consider this for serialization, and while he acknowledged that it was an “interestingly written story” he maintained that it was still not suitable for serialization in his magazine. In acknowledgment of Thurston’s understanding of the marketplace he wrote, “[a]s we both originally feared, the story, I am sorry to say is evolved on lines, and is of a nature which does not enable me to use it in my magazine ” (Acc 11378, Box 1, Folder 2, Correspondence with Blackwood 1905 – 1910, Letter dated 24 July 1909). Within a few weeks Thurston had requested the return of this manuscript from Blackwood. As had previously been the case, while not wishing to serialise the novel, Blackwood was still keen to consider “the whole story for book form publication” (Acc 11378, Box 1, Folder 2, Correspondence with Blackwood 1905 – 1910, Letter dated 9 August 1909).

Thurston continued to have difficulty in securing the serialisation of *Max* in the U.K. and Blackwood maintained a supportive stance. On 21 September 1909 he indicated that he was “sorry . . . you have not as yet succeeded in arranging for serial rights of *Max* but hoping you may yet pull it off” (Acc 11378, Box 1, Folder 2, Correspondence with Blackwood 1905 – 1910). Maintaining a cordial relationship with Thurston, Blackwood again demonstrates the characteristic paternalistic management style, discussed in Chapter Six.

Although Thurston had not yet secured serialisation, many publishers were showing an interest in it. As early as May 1909, Dodd Mead had telegraphed Thurston: “Am writing offer, Dodd” (Acc 11378, Box 2, Literary Agreements 1902 10, Telegram dated 21 May 1909). While Dodd Mead was eager to secure the book rights of *Max* they were not sure of strong prospects for serialisation. The letter expands on the poor response to requests for serialisation from America:

On receipt of the manuscript I at once had the great pleasure of reading it. I like the opening chapters; they are graphic and clever, but as far as judging the story is concerned the vital part commences where the full writing ceases and the synopsis begins. As one of our readers says, the whole crux of the matter is in the way Mrs Thurston handles the very delicate position in which the heroine finds herself, because she must be a consummate actress to deceive a man of the world as she does. However I have no doubt that you will be successful here as you were with ‘The Masquerader’ which is saying all that can be said. But this is the point which seems to interfere with a possible serial sale.

Dodd Mead had offered the serial to four leading U.S. magazines with no success:

Hampton’s is a rather new magazine but has come up very strongly in the last year and a half. Judging from the first chapters the editors do not seem to see a good serial in it. I hear by telephone from the fifth [sic] magazine that he is in great doubt about the story and is getting another opinion. On the whole the chances are not particularly good for selling it serially. As you doubtless know the American editors are very independent and names, especially of English authors do not mean as much to them as they used to.

Dodd Mead were requesting all serial rights of *Max* for the sum of £500 and offering £500 on account and 20 per cent of sales of 50,000 copies and 21.5 per cent on sales above 50,000 copies (Acc 11378, Box 2, Literary Agreements 1902 10, Telegram dated 21 May 1909). Thurston was not impressed and within days had declined it by telegram, following with a curt letter:

On June 1st I cabled you as follows: 'Offer declined. Regret cannot accept less than terms named in clause 24 of contract.' And not having had a reply from you since, I am compelled to assume that your option of my book *Max* has lapsed. This being the case, I shall be glad if you will kindly return me the manuscript.

(Acc 11378, Box 2, Literary Agreements 1902 – 10, letter dated 5 June 1909)

Thurston's publishing relationship with Dodd Mead had been short lived. Although they had published *The Fly* in America, Thurston did not display any outward signs of loyalty to any publisher and always chose the company offering her the best deal. Within a month of rejecting the contract with Dodd Mead, Thurston's American agent found another publisher for *Max*. Proving that she was still a popular, highly profitable writer, the American literary agent Curtis Brown secured serialisation and book rights with Harper's, who were eager to have her back. On 26 July 1909 Thurston signed an agreement giving

Harper and Brothers, Publishers, New York . . . exclusive rights to publish in U.S.A of *Max*. 20% of retail price . . . £1200 to be paid to Author for American and Canadian first serial rights. To be payable £600 on date of publication of 1st instalment in Harpers Bazaar; £300 on March 1 1910 and the balance on 1 June 1910 . . . £1200 to author on day of first publication in book form.

(Acc 11378, Box 2, Literary Agreements 1902-10)

On 31 January 1910 Thurston secured exclusive serialisation rights (excluding U.S.A) for *Max* with Hutchinson and Co., the London firm who had published *The Gambler* (Acc 11378, Box 2, Literary Agreements 1902 – 10).

Although Thurston was nervously awaiting press reviews of *Max*, she was delighted that Gavin had enjoyed the book. She wrote to him from Ireland informing him:

Your love of *Max* has made me – Darling, I could feel in every word you wrote, so close a sympathy and understanding of my mind – if ever a book belonged to a human being this book is yours, undedicated though it will be, every word, every thought in it is of you, inspired by you and yours absolutely.

Thurston had clearly drawn on her intense feelings for Gavin and their relationship when writing *Max*:

I am filled with joy that something of the exaltation that came into my life with that first hour on the balcony at the Ritz has shown in the pages, that as I say were written with one thought filling my whole being – the thought of you.

(Acc 11378, Box 12, Letter dated 31 August 1910)

Thurston was eager that *Max* would be seen as a success, and not only for financial reasons. The book, started at the beginning of her relationship with Gavin, had taken on a totemic role: “I never troubled myself about any book as I do about this, because you dearest, said in one letter that you thought it would, in a way, forecast our own future” (Acc 11378, Box 12, 24 September 1910). These few lines convey Thurston’s concern for her future literary career and her relationship with Gavin. At the time of this letter the couple had decided to marry and Thurston was seeking an annulment of her marriage to Ernest through the Catholic Church in Rome. She was desperately

concerned that this would not be granted and appears to have been – superstitiously – searching for an omen that this would go to plan.¹⁶⁰

Thurston need not have worried. Following publication in America, *Max* proved another major success. The press reviewed it favourably. The *Boston Times* informed its readers:

Hardly more than a month has passed since Mrs Katherine Cecil Thurston's novel 'Max' made its appearance, yet it seems to have taken both press and public by storm and the reviewers are all praising it for something even better than was 'The Masquerader'.

(Acc 11378, Box 10, Press Cuttings 1910, Clipping dated 29 October 1910)

In the U.K., *The Pall Mall Gazette* was also broadly supportive. Despite believing that "[t]he story is a little thin" they also thought that "its merit is in the telling, the refined delicacy of treatment being by no means the least of the many charms that distinguish Mrs Thurston's handling of a difficult and even dangerous theme" (Acc 11378, Box 4, Press Clippings relating to *Max*, September 22 n.y.). *The Bookman* praised her skill in handling a "delicate psychological problem . . . with skill, grace and thoroughness" (Acc 11378, Box 4, Press Clippings relating to *Max*, n.d.). *Punch* believed that in *Max*, Thurston had understood "the highly-strung temperament and her book is especially to be recommended to those revolutionary spirits who think that the obligations of sex can

¹⁶⁰ Despite attempts at ensuring the secrecy of their relationship and in particular the annulment of her marriage with Ernest a mysterious article had appeared in the *New York Herald* on 28 July 1911, giving details of the whole affair and even their upcoming marriage. It appeared that the story had been leaked by an unwitting priest who had been dealing with the annulment, as this letter from Thurston to Gavin demonstrates: "I have not yet discovered the mysterious newspaper but I have made a very curious discovery that seems to fix all the publicity of our affairs and the church – it seems that there is some Cork girl who is marrying a soldier who is protestant and is getting or has got, the dispensation at Westminster. The priest who worked this for her was someone connected with our case, and he it was who told those people all about the matter . . . I think it is quite a disgraceful business on the part of Rome" (Acc 11378, Box 12, 11 August 1911).

easily be avoided" (Acc 11378, Box 4, Press Clippings relating to Max, n.d.). Although Blackwood had reservations, *The Scotsman* newspaper reported that "Mrs Thurston has handled the sex question as here presented delicately and inoffensively" (Acc 11378, Box 4, Press Clippings relating to Max, October 24, n.y).¹⁶¹

Despite recommendations from the press and the fact that "a second edition was printed before publication day" (Acc 11378, Box 10, Press Clippings 1910, no title, n.d.), and that "the most widely read novel just now is Katherine Cecil Thurston's 'Max'" (Acc 11378, Box 10 Press Clippings 1911, *Sydney Mail*, 25 January 1911), Thurston was not satisfied with Harper's efforts. On 26 January 1911 Harper's assured her that the book had achieved "a sale of sixty thousand copies . . ." and that this was "no ordinary thing nowadays." They thought that *Max* had

been the success of the season and I want you to know that everyone here has done his utmost to contribute to this success. And it is not over by any means. We are still advertising and the booksellers are still buying. I'm sure the next statement will be a good amount too.

(Acc 11378, Box 4, Loose Letter from Harper and Brothers to Thurston, Letter dated 26 January 1911)

Thurston had for some time been contemplating a trip to the United States. One press clipping from 1910 states:

¹⁶¹ Despite Blackwood's concern over the realism of many of the scenes contained within *Max*, Thurston was concerned that her writing would fall foul of the critics. She wrote to Gavin that the reviews "all praise the literature of the book and greatly praise the pictures of Paris life, which pleases me very much, because you know how the critics would love to point out a woman's failure to depict such scenes . . ." (Acc 11378, Box 12, Letter dated 24 September 1910). From this quotation we see evidence of Thurston's annoyance at the level of criticism which was often levelled at women authors and their literary abilities. As we have seen in previous chapters, Thurston was a diligent writer who spent time honing her craft and strived to produce the best work possible. These traits would have ensured that the wait for any critical response to her writing was tense time.

Katherine Cecil Thurston is very anxious to visit America and has written friends here that she hopes to come here within the next few months. She has always expressed a keen interest in this country and many Americans have made her acquaintance in London.

(Acc 11378, Box 8, Research File, Clipping, *New York Sun*, 24 December 1910)

Shortly after this, on 11 January 1911, *The Daily Chronicle* also announced that “America is becoming a land of pilgrimage for our novelists . . . Mrs Thurston is about to visit us” (Acc 11378, Box 8, Research File, Clipping). Among Thurston’s papers are requests for travel information from Thomas Cook and Son, alongside travel brochures detailing the cost of travelling from Liverpool to New York. This letter from Thomas Cook, dated 15 January 1910 details her proposed travel plans:

We now have pleasure in enclosing . . . an illustrated brochure of SS Lusitania and SS Mauretania which we think will give you a good idea of accommodation provided in the way of staterooms and public rooms . . . we can at the moment offer either room B99 at a rate of £30 each or B37 at £35 each. The latter room as you will notice is very much larger and contains two portholes . . . We enclose herewith sailing list, in which we have marked the large steamers homeward bound, about the time we understand you propose leaving New York.

(Acc 11378, Box 6, Loose letter)

Thurston never made the trip to America. In April, 1910 she appeared in court for her divorce proceedings and she proposed delaying the trip until the following year. It appears that, despite her money worries, she was considering visiting America with Gavin following their wedding in the autumn of 1911.¹⁶² The correspondence with Harper’s makes reference to this proposed trip and acknowledges Thurston’s broad-mindedness and her modern lifestyle:

¹⁶² Thurston wrote to Gavin informing him that: “I have heard that most people intending to go to America this autumn on the big boats have engaged their berths some time since, and I thought of asking you to look in at the Cunard offices some day that you were at the Bank. But really in the last few days I have been wondering whether if you felt the money problem so keenly, we ought to consider taking the journey – You know I would quite willingly give it up” (Acc 11378, Box 12, 19 May 1911).

By the way, what have you decided about your American visit? I hope you are coming before April. I have already engaged a father confessor for you. . . . He is a kindly, broad minded soul. I'm sure you will find him satisfactorily tolerant. Also a new hotel and restaurant – The Ritz Carlton has just been opened, where ladies may smoke without fear of interruption. So you see we are quite prepared for you. Let me know what you have decided or if you are too busy tell Austin to write to me. But sometime dear lady put off the suitor of the moment for a long enough time to write me that long promised letter which shall tell me everything about yourself, about London and about the new book.

(Acc 11378, Box 4, General Literary Correspondence, Letter date 26 January n.y.)¹⁶³

Despite these mildly flirtatious and encouraging words, Thurston was still concerned about Harper's promotion of her book. Annoyed by her allegations, they responded:

Many thanks for your frank letter of February 16th. I am sure that it is always best to say just what you think in such matters, whether it is agreeable or disagreeable. As to differences of points of view, they are inevitable at times, especially when author and publisher have no opportunity to talk things over together. But I believe that we can convince you that we are right in our opinion that 'Max' has been a big success, even for this country of successes. We can't back down from that position one inch. Incidentally, just to interject some pleasant news, let me say that since your statement was sent you, 'Max' has gone on nicely and is nearing sixty seven thousand. So the book is evidently not dead by any means. Of course everyone here was much distressed by your letter. We have worked over 'Max' with the greatest enthusiasm and we felt, as the whole publishing world feels, that our efforts have been amply repaid. . . . [Max] . . . has been the most successful novel of the season. . . . It came to the front at once and in the list of six best sellers and in the November *Bookman* . . . it ranked third. As to advertising, no book in years has had greater publicity in the newspapers, in the magazines, in the tram cars and in the shops. I wish you could have seen the window of Brentano's our big Fifth Avenue shop) with a solid wall of Max against which the title of the book was spelled in letters three feet high made out of the paper jackets in which the book was wrapped. And this was only one of dozens of such exhibits . . . all of which we paid for.

(Acc 11378, Box 4, Loose Letter from Harper and Brothers to Thurston, Letter dated 28 February 1911)

Thurston's concern over the promotion and sale of *Max*, shows her keen awareness of the literary marketplace and the level of involvement required by publishers in the new

¹⁶³ It is clear from this letter that Thurston's relationship with Gavin and their plans to marry was not common knowledge.

publishing environment. Harper's response indicates that they were well aware of her importance as a bestselling author and of their responsibilities in ensuring appropriate marketing. Their repeated reference to the high levels of marketing enjoyed by *Max* points to the rising importance of advertising and marketing within the publishing industry.

The archive contains no details of the Thurston's divorce settlement, but it is clear that during her divorce and immediately afterwards Thurston was worried about money and sold large amounts of shares in a variety of companies. It may be that in order to secure her divorce from Ernest she paid him a large sum of money. This financial strain urged Thurston to reconsider her need of a literary agent. She wrote to Gavin:

I have received the statement for Max – You will be dreadfully disappointed, as I am – and I want you to tell me what you think I ought to say to Wells about it. I think there must be something wrong somewhere, and I rather wonder whether I ought not to try an agent for my next book.

(Acc 11378, Box 12, 22 August 1911)

Gavin was also experiencing financial worries and this letter from Thurston hints that this may have been due, in some way, to their relationship. While their relationship was not common knowledge, Thurston sees his financial situation as being tied to her:

I am very unhappy that money affairs are depressing you . . . It is cruel indeed that this constant care must be made upon you, so cruel that I often wonder whether you do not sometimes doubt if I am worth so high a price as you are paying.

(Acc 11378, Box 12, n.d.)

Whether or not Gavin also had to subsidise Ernest's lifestyle is speculative, but it is clear that there was correspondence between Thurston and Ernest up until her death.¹⁶⁴ It is of course highly possible that his money worries were in no way connected to Thurston's, and may simply relate to difficulties within his medical practice.

8.1 The plot of *Max*

Chapter Seven highlighted the way in which *The Fly on the Wheel* bleakly emphasised the limitations of women's lives, offering little hope for the future; *Max*, however was altogether more optimistic. While Meaney sees *The Fly* as representing "social realism and pessimism" she views *Max* as "an emphatic recovery from both afflictions" (Meaney, ed., 2002, p. 170). In writing *Max*, Thurston displays what Madden-Simpson sees as a "clearly articulated female fantasy of turn-of-the-century strivings toward gender-based equality" (Madden-Simpson ed., 1986, pp. 330-1). Thurston's letters to Gavin indicate that *they* enjoyed an "equal" relationship and that the depth of the relationship was one which Thurston had not experienced before. Thurston's relationship with Ernest appeared to have been a "negotiated" relationship while her relationship with Gavin was a love-match and she may have drawn on the equality of their relationship as a theme for *Max*. In a letter to Gavin, written a few months into their relationship, she wrote:

No one in all my life has appealed to me as you do – has given me that strange feeling of complete satisfaction that is best expressed when I say, as I have said to you, that my mind absolutely rests upon the thought of you.

(Acc 11378, Box 12, 2 February 1909)

¹⁶⁴ Thurston maintained a reluctant correspondence with Ernest following their divorce as this letter demonstrates: "I got two letters from Ernest since I have been here – and his new book, which is very poor and slight in the extreme. I suppose I shall have to write and thank him for it as the two letters remain unanswered" (Acc 11378, Box 2, 5 May 1911).

A few months later she informed him:

I know now that God could not have given us so perfectly, the one to the other only to break and crush us in the end . . . Nothing matters while my soul is yours, and yours mine – and darling, we so wholly and absolutely possess each other.

(Acc 11378, Box 12, 13 September 1909)

Max is the story of a young woman, Maxine, who disguises herself as a man and travels from her native Russia to Paris in order to live the life of an artist.¹⁶⁵ She is aware that unless she disguises herself as a man, she will be unable to pursue her career. As Max she soon finds herself in the company of the amiable Irishman Ned Blake and they form a close friendship. Living alone in Bohemian Montmartre Max enjoys a freedom which has been denied to her in her previous existence as a woman. She is free to spend time exploring the city and her own creativity. No part of the city is denied her:

He went forward . . . plunging downward into the darker regions of the rue des Martyrs and the rue Montmartre. To the boy these corners had no terrors, for in his untarnished friendship with Blake, all sides of life had been viewed in turn, as all topics had been discussed as component parts of a fascinatingly interesting world. To-night he went forward, mingling with the inhabitants of the district, revelling with morbid realism in the forbidding dinginess of their appearance.

(*Max*, 1910, p. 278)

Thurston is highlighting how the “accident of birth” ensures that men and women are treated differently and how women are denied potentially enriching experiences.

Through Max’s friendship with Blake, Thurston suggests that the best type of relationship between men and women is one where true friendship exists and that friendship and love can only endure if it is given freely: “He loved Blake with a

¹⁶⁵ The female artist in New Woman fiction acted as the cultural equivalent of the feminist and acted as a vehicle for “figuring a conflicted feminine interiority, . . . for exploring some of the contradictions involved in dominant definitions of (middle class) femininity” and for “Celebrating female desire” (Pykett in Thomson ed., (1999) p. 128).

wonderful unsexual love, and he yearned to lay himself at his feet, to offer him of his best – gifts of the gods, given with free hands from a free heart” (*Max* p. 246).

This point is reinforced when Blake discovers that Max is Maxine, and his love for her grows. Maxine is determined to maintain her independence, and is adamant that she “must be loved as an equal” (*Max* p. 232). Thurston highlights the fact that in relationships of this period, women were viewed as children and were expected to be treated as such. Maxine however, has no desire to “belong” to anyone:

‘I am not your love! I am not your friend! I am not your Max or your Maxine!’
... Now at least they confronted each other – man and woman; now at last the issue in the war of sex was to be put to the test. ‘... I will belong to no one. I must possess myself.’

(p.302)

The independent life Max has enjoyed enables Maxine to grow in confidence and begin to know herself. She informs Blake:

‘I know myself for an individual – for a definite entity; I know that here, within me’ – she struck her breast- ‘I have power - power to think - power to achieve. And how do you think that power is to be developed?’ She paused, looking at him with burning eyes. ‘Not by the giving of my soul into bondage-not by the submerging of myself in another being ... Can’t you understand? I left Russia to make a new life; I made myself a man, not for a whim, but as a symbol. Sex is only an accident. Mentally, I am as good a man as you are.’

(p.303)

Maxine is reluctant to relinquish her freedom in exchange for marriage:

I refuse to be entrapped! I Know love - I know all the specious things that love can say; the talk of independence, the talk of equality! But I know the reality too. The reality is the absolute annihilation of the woman - the absolute merging of her identity.

(p. 304)

In marrying Blake, Maxine was expected to give up her freedom, her career, and the independence she had enjoyed as Max. Thurston exposes the futility and limitations of the lives of women. Maxine's relationship with Blake however, was based on friendship and equality, two factors unusual in a typical Victorian marriage. Through their relationship Thurston points to a new way of living, to a relationship based on equality, friendship and love, a "new utopia". Maxine and Blake are embarking on a new type of relationship, as acknowledged by Blake: "Maxine, this is some dream?" and Maxine replies: "No; it is no dream. We are awake. It is life!" (p. 315).

Thurston appeared to enjoy a similar relationship with Gavin. Her letters to him give us a glimpse of what she viewed as their idyllic life of true friendship and love, and it is perhaps for this reason that Thurston was most adamant that the book be a success.

8.2 Thurston's death

Thurston had spent the summer of 1911 at her Irish home in Ardmore. Tensions in her relationship with Nancy and Austin Barry meant that this was not the relaxing summer which she usually enjoyed. It is clear from her correspondence with Gavin that not even Nancy was aware of their relationship at this point. Thurston cryptically wrote to Gavin "when writing do not use the secondhand writing. It might give the thing away, as Nance knows your handwriting". (Acc 11378, Box 12, Letter dated August 1911)

Thurston's commitment to Catholicism and desire for an annulment of her marriage to Ernest goes some way to explaining the secrecy surrounding their relationship.

Tensions surrounding the annulment continued throughout the summer. A letter from Thurston to Gavin, gives insight into the progress of the annulment and her frustration at the time it has taken: "I have had a letter from Uncle Percy . . . telling me that in all probability the decree will not be made absolute until October 17th – I cannot tell you how long it seems to stay away from you till then." (Acc 11378, Box 12, Undated

letter)¹⁶⁶ Despite the uncertainty surrounding the annulment Thurston and Gavin went ahead with the plans for their wedding. The following note in Thurston's handwriting was found among her papers for 1911, giving the first indication that they were to be married in October of that year:

We announce the marriage of Dr A. S. Bulkeley Gavin and Mrs Katherine Cecil Thurston which took place on the 19th inst, the ceremony being performed by the Ven the Archdeacon of Westminster.

Dr Bulkeley Gavin, who is the youngest son of Mr Alexander Gavin . . . of Dalmellington, Ayrshire, is a well-known West End physician living in Berkeley Square.

In brackets at the foot of the announcement Thurston has written, "I would put no details as to those present etc. It would only make it remarkable that I had no relation at the marriage" (Acc 11378, Box 12, Undated). It is unclear why none of Thurston's relatives were to be present at the wedding. There may have been some family disapproval at her divorce and remarriage, and it is clear from her letters to Gavin that her normally close relationship with Nancy was strained during this time. Thurston's determination to marry Gavin without the approval of her family gives further indication of her independent spirit.

Katherine Cecil Thurston's body was discovered on 5 September 1911 in Moore's Hotel, Cork, one month before she was due to marry Gavin. She was thirty six years old. Press speculation was rife as to the manner of her death.¹⁶⁷ Despite the coroner's

¹⁶⁶ Although this letter is undated it was located with other letters from 1911.

¹⁶⁷ *The Scotsman* newspaper reported: "At an inquiry in Cork yesterday into the circumstances attending the death in a local hotel of the well-known authoress, Mrs Katherine Cecil Thurston, the jury returned a verdict of death from natural causes. The evidence shows that she was found lifeless yesterday morning when the housemaid took breakfast up to her room. Getting no answer to her knock, the maid entered the chamber and saw Mrs Thurston lying face downwards on the floor. Dr O'Sullivan stated that the deceased had consulted him for fainting fits. Death had taken place ten hours before the discovery that morning" (*The Scotsman*, 7 September 1911, p. 5)

verdict of “natural causes” her legions of fans were not convinced. This speculation was fuelled and “became literary biography when it was repeated by the bibliographer Stephen Brown in his *Catalogue of Ireland in Fiction in 1911*” (Madden-Simpson ed., 1986, p. 330).

The thought of Thurston committing suicide at a time when she was seen to be happy in both her personal and working life has been repudiated by Rosemary Dowson:

I have just come across a letter I wrote to the Editor of Virago Modern Classics . . . Mrs Thurston suffered from epileptic fits brought on by the strain of her writing, she died . . . after a particularly happy day spent with friends in Cork. I feel if Janet Madden-Simpson knew the full details of Mrs Thurston’s death, she would realise, that she died of an Epileptic attack and that she certainly did not kill herself.

(Personal correspondence from R. Dowson to M. Nieman, 30 August 1999)

The personal letters from Thurston to Gavin written in the months before her death do not give the impression of a woman suffering depression. Apart from minor financial worries, and the strain of her annulment she was looking forward to her marriage and future literary plans. Her final letter to Gavin, written the day before her death, clearly expresses her optimism for the future:

On no account take the dress boxes that are lying against the study wall, because these are the things I shall want to take away with me when we go on our short sweet honeymoon (Paris is it to be?). Also in one of these boxes is my wedding dress!

(Acc 11378, Box 12, Letter dated 4 September 1911, Moore’s Hotel, Cork)

Conclusion

Thurston's death brought to an end what can only be considered a promising literary career. Despite setbacks in her private life, and poor, even scathing reviews of several of her novels, Thurston was never deterred from striving to improve her writing style and hone her storytelling abilities. The many requests for dramatic rights of her novels are testimony to her ability to create scenarios which struck a chord with huge swathes of public opinion around the world. That several years after her death *John Chilcote M.P.* was twice recreated for the screen points to the enduring nature of her work.

For an archive such as this to lie unexplored for almost a century after the death of its owner is an indication of the lack of value placed on the work of popular women authors throughout the first half of the twentieth century. The importance of New Woman writing has, however, enjoyed a renaissance since the rediscovery of New Women fiction from the 1970s onwards. The importance of projects such as that of Virago Press in rehabilitating many "lost" women writers have highlighted the value of past women's writing. We now recognise the value of their work in creating a future vision by which readers could create new scenarios for their own lives:

When you happen to be trapped powerless behind walls . . . you dream of escape. And magic flourishes when you spell out that dream and make the frontiers vanish. Dreams can change your life, and eventually the world. Liberation starts with images dancing in your little head, and you can translate those images to words.

(Mernissi, 1994, p. 120 in Heilmann, 2004, p.237)

That this archive has now been unearthed is indicative of the progress we have made in understanding the value and importance of reclaiming the work of women writers such as Thurston. Women who touched the lives of those who read them and who, through their writing were able to express their desire, and the desires of their readership for a

different way of life, a move away from the enduring legacy of Victorianism, reaching out towards the modern era.

The Thurston archive offers us a view of a remarkable woman author who was comfortable using her femininity to advance her career. She does not conform to the popular stereotype of the “mannish” New Woman, yet she displays a strength of character, resolve and determination that speaks of the emerging New Woman with the ability to take control of her own life – including importantly, the management of her own finances and business deals. The use and promotion of her femininity helps situate Thurston alongside her contemporaries, women such as Sarah Grand and Mona Caird who were successful in securing the support of “a broad community of primarily women readers.”

Through this community of women readers, authors such as Grand and Thurston were able to deconstruct “patriarchal mythologies”. Their self-portrayal and literary construct of the New Woman therefore “went a long way towards reconciling these communities to New Woman mythologies” (Heilmann, 2004, p. 236). Mainstream female readers who were unwilling to adopt the strident political tone of many of the New Woman exponents were more at home with Grand’s and Thurston’s more feminine portrayals of New Women and therefore more likely to adopt their gentle brand of feminism.

Paradoxically, Thurston’s refusal to take part in feminist politics may be the reason why she has remained in obscurity while many of her more vocal literary sisters remained in the public consciousness.

Following Thurston’s death, several of her novels continued in print – most significantly *John Chilcote M.P.* and *The Fly on the Wheel*. Yet, despite her popularity as a novelist Thurston’s literary work quickly disappeared from vogue. The 1914-18

war and the period immediately following brought the creation of a different world to the one in which Thurston had grown up and developed her literary style. Women's contribution to the war effort was acknowledged and the long battle for female enfranchisement recognised with the passing of the 1918 Representation of the People Act – an Act which saw the beginning of universal female suffrage.

The Great War of 1914-18 brought about a tremendous shift in women's expectations and recognition of their abilities. The post-war world was a very different place to that of the Edwardian era. The world which Thurston inhabited and wrote about appeared removed from the realities of the post-war period – and despite her bestselling status it hardly seems surprising that her work seemed naïve and outdated. Thurston suffered the fate of many male and female authors of the late-Victorian and Edwardian period and simply disappeared from the public consciousness.

Despite the huge advances in terms of voting rights, education and career opportunities mentioned in earlier chapters, women still struggled to be recognized as artists and writers. As late as 1929 in *A Room of One's Own*, Virginia Woolf was still writing of the difficulties experienced by women in their desire for independence as writers.

Women authors in the 1920s and 30s were still culturally impoverished, struggling to finance themselves and their writing, excluded from many aspects of the world available to men and the world of literature. It is clear that despite the apparent advances made by the women novelists of the Victorian and Edwardian eras, women writers of the post-war period were still subject to gender prejudices.

In addition to the enormous political and cultural changes which followed the 1914-18 war, the rise of Modernism and other experimental forms of writing began to make an impact on the content of literature and work such as Thurston's soon became unpopular.

Male and female authors who had enjoyed great success during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries with adventure stories and sensationalist novels were seen to represent the earlier pre-war period. Society had moved on. Men and women expected a different way of life; they had new expectations and wanted their reading matter to reflect this.

While many of the novelists who fell out of favour during this period, authors such as Robert Louis Stevenson and Joseph Conrad enjoyed a resurgence in popularity as the twentieth century moved forward. Thurston's work, however, remained in obscurity. It may be entirely plausible that her work merely failed to match the public mood, but her dwindling popularity may be due to the fact that there was no-one to manage her literary affairs. In her will Thurston passed control of her estate to her friend Nancy's husband, William Hope Pollock, and her fiancé, Alfred Bulkeley Gavin. Pollock, a stockbroker, and Gavin, a doctor, had very little interest or understanding of the literary market. Indeed, it is possible to see from the many unpublished manuscripts within the archive that neither had an interest in managing her work or preserving her literary reputation.

The creation and sale of copyright ensured that the life and monetary value of novels increased throughout the twentieth century. Thurston's novels may not have endured in literary form but following her death they did find continued success on stage and screen in the United States. As discussed in Chapter Four, *John Chilcote M.P.* had not enjoyed a particularly successful stage debut in London in 1905. However, this did not deter John Hunter Booth preparing a Broadway version of the play in 1917 under its American title *The Masquerader*.

The rise of Hollywood and popularity of film ensured that Thurston's work remained in the public eye and enjoyed continued success. In 1922, an adaptation of the play *The*

Masquerader by John Hunter Booth made its film debut on the silent screen with Guy Bates Post playing both Loder and Chilcote. In 1933, this time in an adaptation by Samuel Goldwyn, Ronald Coleman took to the screen to play this dual role accomplishing "his task with such thoroughness that improbable as is the tale, it affords genuinely pleasing entertainment" (*New York Times*, 4 September 1933, n.p.). The continued success of Thurston's work in these new cultural forms can be seen as a reflection of the changing business practices at work within the publishing industry in the early decades of the twentieth century as literature became part of and competed with other media.

The aim of this thesis has been to marshal the evidence found within the unpublished Thurston archive as well as information gained from a variety of published sources to create a coherent narrative of the life and publishing career of a major Edwardian author. In the process of undertaking this task I have sought to position her work within the changing world of publishing. In highlighting Thurston's work in this way we see evidence of the changing cultural practices at work within the publishing industry. In particular we see evidence of the changing fortunes of Edinburgh publisher William Blackwood as they struggled to deal with new business practices, such as the creation of the Literary Agent and the exploitation of copyright. The way in which Blackwood tried to mould authors and manipulate their texts, as previously detailed by Finkelstein is amply demonstrated here; as are the different business practices employed by a new breed of entrepreneurial publisher, more at home with the exploitation of copyright and the rise of advertising and celebrity culture as a means of increasing sales.

Thurston may have enjoyed a reputation as a popular novelist, but through this archive we see evidence of her struggle to come to terms with her reputation and with her role as an independent woman. It seems strange that Thurston should choose to publish her

work through the traditional house of Blackwood, but Thurston was comfortable with their conservative values. Through her correspondence we see that she too struggled with emerging business practices. Despite her awareness of contemporary business and the importance of exploiting her work in as many ways as possible, she often felt at sea with the fast moving world of international literary culture and felt at home with Blackwood and their traditional ways of doing business.

The Thurston archive offers a rare insight into the way a strong minded woman managed her literary career during a period of shifting economic and cultural evaluation. Building on the work of David Finkelstein we gain a further glimpse of the workings of Blackwood, detailing the processes and emotions involved in creating and publishing a literary text. We see evidence of the way in which author and publisher dealt with the often complex negotiations over royalties and publication dates in an international marketplace. Through Thurston's relationship with her publishers we see evidence of the changing perception of the author in various markets (U.K. and American) and the ways in which a publisher's perception of literary work could impact on the cultural value and perception of that work.

Through the personal and business correspondence contained within the archive we are also provided with a fascinating snapshot of turn of the century literary marriage. In particular we see how Ernest tried to dominate the relationship and Thurston's struggle to assert her professional life without upsetting the traditional balance of their marriage. Despite Ernest's attempts to maintain the dominant position Thurston was determined to establish her literary career and maintain her writing schedule. Their relationship can be seen as a reflection of the changing status quo and of some of the New Women literature of the time such as Gilman's *Yellow Wallpaper*.

Thurston's work cannot be seen as being of great literary merit, but it provides us with a counterbalance to that of the prevailing patriarchal culture of the period and shows a keen awareness as I have stressed throughout, of the struggle women faced to gain and maintain their intellectual independence. This thesis furthers the work of feminists whose aim has been to recoup the lives and work of forgotten women authors, bringing them again to public attention. The data contained within this thesis provides a valuable resource for future researchers in the field of feminist history and of book history.

The size and scope of this archive is such that there is much work still to be undertaken. Although Meaney has begun to locate the importance of Thurston to the field of Irish Studies this is a particular area for future exploitation. The sale of copyright in foreign language editions of her work and their dramatisations also needs to be explored further. Most interestingly, among her literary correspondence are a number of unpublished, plays, short stories and novels. One book in particular, *The Hand*, the novel she was working on at the time of her death is still awaiting publication.

Through this archive we gain a valuable insight into the often complex negotiations undertaken by and on behalf of women authors. We see evidence of the way in which women had to negotiate with their family to gain the time required for literary work, and how their lack of formal education could often hamper their literary endeavours. The social restrictions placed upon women were also a barrier to entry to many of the social and professional circles which would have ensured their admittance to literary and publishing circles. This thesis highlights the economic, cultural and social networks at play in Edwardian publishing and the way in which this woman novelist was able to navigate through the changing climate to ensure her own success.

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Appendix 1

On 24 May 1907 Thurston wrote to Mr E. E. Peacock of *The Morning Post* newspaper requesting that the following notice be placed in the paper:

Please insert twice the two advertisements given below. I enclose a cheque for thirteen shillings.

As I do not wish my name to appear I enclose two stamped addressed envelopes for the replies to be forwarded to me.

Wanted for small establishment, a Cook-housekeeper. Must cook well, be strictly economical and have high personal references. Four in family. Kitchen maid kept. Wages £35.

Wanted a capable housemaid. Must be highly recommended a thoroughly clean in work and person. Required to help in waiting. Wages 324.

(Acc 11378, Box 2 Letterbook dated March 16th 1907 -)

By 28 May 1907 Thurston had received an application for the position of Cook-Housekeeper, and illustrating the fact that she ran a tight ship she wrote to the applicant

Mrs Temple Thurston has received Margaret Kilner's application for the position of Cook- Housekeeper and thinks it would save time on either side to have answers to the following – before arranging an interview:-

1. Please give full particulars of the class of cooking most proficient in.
2. Mention the sum per week considered necessary to provide Breakfast, Light Luncheon (frequently only one person for this meal.), Afternoon tea, Late Dinner (four or five courses – Occasionally out for this meal.) for four persons.
3. Mention the sum required per week for food for four servants kept.
4. Mention the average sum considered necessary for weekly laundry bills.

Should Mrs Temple Thurston engage M. Kilner she would require her on June the 15th.

(Acc 11378, Box 2 Letterbook dated March 16th 1907 -).

Margaret Kilner obviously didn't live up to Thurston's "strictly economical" standards.

Nor was she able to furnish her prospective employer with suitable answers to the

questions asked of her, as Thurston continued to interview for the position of Cook-housekeeper at 20 Victoria Road. By 12 June Thurston appeared to have found her ideal Cook-Housekeeper in the form of Miss Ford. In applying for the position Miss Ford had enclosed the following testimonial from her former employer, a Mrs Humphreys-Davies of Brighton:

Mrs Humphreys-Davies has much pleasure in thoroughly recommending Miss Ford as a very good cook and economical housekeeper. She is also a very pleasant person and quite a lady in every way, also bright, cheerful and fond of children. Mrs Humphrey-Davies is quite sure that Miss Ford will do her utmost to please.

(Acc 11378, Box 2 Letterbook dated March 16th 1907 -).

Thurston wrote to Miss Ford immediately, informing her that "providing she obtains satisfactory answers to the letters addressed to the two referees given" she would be "willing to engage Miss Ford if she came on Saturday next..." (Acc 11378, Box 2 Letterbook dated March 16th 1907 -). Miss Ford sent a letter in reply to Thurston, and although there is no record of what was contained within that letter, the contents did not impress Thurston that this was the Cook- Housekeeper she desired: "Mrs K.C. Thurston is in receipt of Miss Ford's letter and from the tone of it Mrs Thurston has decided that Miss Ford is not a suitable person for her employment, and wishes her to consider the matter at an end." (Acc 11378, Box 2 Letterbook dated March 16th 1907 -) Thurston would have been eager to employ the two servants quickly as she had imposed a deadline for the employment of each of the two to enable her to travel to her holiday home in Ireland. By 18 June Thurston had received a letter from Mrs H.E. Mee in application for the position of Cook-Housekeeper, however Mrs Mee was insistent that she be given her own room at 20 Victoria Road. Thurston had to reply that "as her house was a small one it would not be convenient for Mrs Thurston to give her a

bedroom for her own use only..." (Acc 11378, Box 2 Letterbook dated March 16th 1907 -).

The position of Parlour-maid was equally difficult to fill. By 11 June 1907 Thurston had received only three applications for both positions and not finding any of them suitable, in desperation she wrote to The Ladies Social and Employment Guild:

Mrs Thurston would be glad if "The Ladies Social and Employment Guild" could introduce for her employment a highly recommended and capable House-parlour-maid. Wages to be £24 per annum. Mrs Thurston would require the maid to act as House-parlour maid in the country (Ireland) for about three months each year and for the remaining months she would only be required to act as House-maid. Mrs Thurston would be glad of an early reply as she wishes to have the place filled on Saturday next. She could interview any suitable persons on Thursday next at eight o'clock p.m.

(Acc 11378, Box 2 Letterbook dated March 16th 1907 -).

The Ladies Social and Employment Guild were unable to furnish Thurston with a suitable maid and on 1 July 1907 she was in correspondence with Mrs Hunt's Employment Agency. Perhaps realising that it was going to be extremely difficult to fill the position with a maid with whom she would be completely happy, Thurston decided that to enable her to travel to Ireland sooner rather than later she would employ a temporary maid. She wrote to Mrs Hunt's agency and informing them that she would "call or send tomorrow at 12 o'clock noon to interview some temporary Parlour-maids. I wish to see only middle aged (not over 40) capable and very respectable applicants. P.S. The person I select will be required for London and will reside in my house. I do not wish – unless absolutely necessary – to pay more than ten or twelve shillings per week." (Acc 11378, Box 2 Letterbook dated March 16th 1907 -).

By 19 July Thurston had decided that she would look to her native Ireland in order to fill the positions and wrote to the Editor of *The Cork Constitution*, to the Manager of

The Irish Times, and to the Manager of *The Irish Independent*, placing advertisements for the two positions. (Acc 11378, Box 2 Letterbook dated March 16th 1907 -)

Thurston must have been successful in appointing new staff; on 26 July 1907 she was able to write to her Irish caretaker instructing her to "have Maycroft ready for Mr and Mrs Pollock on August 1st when they will arrive... Mrs Thurston would be glad if Mrs Mockler could assist in the house work for the first five or six days until Mrs Thurston brings a third maid over with her. Two maids will arrive at Maycroft on August the first." (Acc 11378, Box 2 Letterbook dated March 16th 1907 -).

This list of works to be carried out by the maids in the Thurston household is representative of what would be expected of a maid in the Edwardian period. By today's standards the workload is colossal and it is therefore hardly surprising that there was such a poor response to the advertisements of the positions, when working class girls could look elsewhere for employment. Although the conditions in shops and factories were not in themselves at all attractive they must have appeared so to the prospective maid.