The Past and Future Lives of Writing in Victorian Fiction

By

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INTRODUCTION

New Questions, Old Forms

In the midst of a classic struggle between good and evil, Mina Harker endeavors to fortify herself and her friends through the creation of a typewritten record of events. She declares, “I shall be prepared. I shall get my typewriter from this very hour and begin transcribing. Then we shall be ready for other eyes if required” (161). Bram Stoker’s *Dracula* (1897) has long been discussed for its representation of dualities: human and nonhuman, Englishmen and “Other,” folkloric remedies and cutting-edge science. More recently, scholars have begun to attend to the communication technologies that are not only present in the story but are, as Mina’s declaration suggests, crucial to the plot’s unfolding. These forms of communication include older media—such as letters and journal entries—as well as newer ones, from phonographic cylinders and telegrams to typewritten documents.[1] Midway through the novel, Mina collects and then converts the mixture of textual documents into one typewritten collection. While this collection assists in driving the characters forward in their mission to defeat Dracula, the novel’s conclusion questions its—and by extension, new media’s—long-term status. Seven years following Dracula’s defeat, Jonathan Harker and his surviving companions recall their encounter with the Count by returning to Mina’s collection. Jonathan informs readers, “I took the papers from the safe where they have been ever since our return so long ago. We were struck with the fact, that in all the mass of material of which the record is composed, there is hardly one authentic document; nothing but a mass of type-writing” (326). He acknowledges, “We could hardly ask anyone, even did we wish to, to accept these as proofs of so wild a story” (326-327). Ending the novel with this revelation begs reflection on how material forms circulate in society, not in the present but in the future. As Jennifer Wicke observes, for “all its feudalism and medieval gore,” *Dracula* “is textually completely au courant” (470). Wicke’s observation gestures to the novel’s deep engagement with its own cultural moment. The collision of old and new forms of communication in the Victorian period destabilized conceptions of textuality. What kinds of texts counted as authentic and how they would be accessed by future readers were questions that were actively under debate.

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[1] In this dissertation, I follow Lisa Gitelman’s definition of media “as socially realized structures of communication, where structures include both technological forms and their associated protocols, and where communication is a cultural practice” (*Always* 7).

During the nineteenth century, typewriting was celebrated as an innovative medium that accelerated the speed with which humans could communicate. Typing competitions even became a popular pastime (Keep). Yet, while typewriters were effective for producing information quickly, they were, *Dracula* suggests, ineffective as “authentic” records, having removed the uniquely human trace that was present in the original forms (for example, Harker’s handwriting). *Dracula*’s interest in textual collation reverberates across a range of Victorian characters and genres, from *Bleak House*’s illiterate collector Krook (1852-1853) and *Lady Audley’s Secret*’s lawyer-turned-amateur detective Robert Audley (1862) to *The Ring and the Book*’s (1868-1869) blend of text types and *Middlemarch*’s failed attempt at textual comprehensiveness, *The Key to All Mythologies* (1871-1872). These novels, along with the three that will be the case studies of this project—*The Woman in White* (1859-1860), *Romola* (1862-1863), and *She* (1886-1887)—are all united in their exploration of the process by which information is collected and preserved across material forms.

Questions of material form have carried over and intensified in the digital era. In what contexts can an electronic copy serve as a substitute for its print predecessor? What information is lost when a text’s form changes? How should our approaches to reading change in response?

Although pressing and pertinent, these questions are not new. My dissertation makes the case that Victorian writers asked and answered similar questions, and they did so in ways that can be helpful for framing the stakes of media transformations today. Confronted with new media, Victorian writers reanalyzed pre-existing forms of communication to imagine both how they might be repurposed as well as what would be lost if they were relinquished.

In proposing we look to the Victorians to better understand their as well as our own media shifts, I am following in the tradition of history of the book, digital humanities, and media history scholars who have used the nineteenth-century proliferation of print to conceptualize the effects of mass digitization. Well-documented advancements in printing technologies, the rapid creation of new media, and the abolition of the Stamp and Paper Taxes in 1855 and 1861 collectively produced a surfeit of textual information.[2] Andrew King and John Plunkett estimate, "If between 1840 and 1870 the British population rose by 40 per cent, the number of books published annually rose by about 400 per cent" (2). Aileen Fyfe observes the popularity of quarterly—and then weekly and daily—reviews that surfaced to help readers stay informed amidst the overflow, and finds "by the end of the century there were so many review journals that it was barely feasible for one reader to keep up with them all (let alone the books that they summarised)" ("Information" 592). With this surge of high and low, literary and informational print in mind, Paul Fyfe argues that we can find in Victorians' responses analogs for thinking through issues of classification and access ("Random"). For Tom Standage, the telegraph functioned as a precursor to the Internet, both triggering fundamental changes in communication practices.[3] The increased attention to the digital humanities as a field/subfield/methodology has corresponded with interest in how the technologies responsible for digital media are also Victorian legacies. Nineteenth-century mathematician Charles Babbage earned his nickname "the father of computing" for his invention of the Analytical Engine, the precursor to computers (Salkind), and in 2009, the social science community highlighted the contributions of Ada Lovelace, the first computer programmer, to the history of computing by inaugurating an annual "Ada Lovelace Day."

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[2] For twentieth and twenty-first century discussions, see Richard Altick, Patrick Brantlinger (*Reading*), and Mary Elizabeth Leighton and Lisa Surridge. For Victorian writers' accounts, see Wilkie Collins's "The Unknown Public" and Margaret Oliphant's "The Byways of Literature."

Even though we conceptualize today's transition from print to electronic forms by studying what came before us, we tend not to acknowledge that Victorians engaged in a similar process of looking back to grapple with their media transitions. Instead, discussions of the Victorian "print explosion" and "information revolution" foreground technological innovation. Richard Menke describes a budding "culture of information [in the mid-nineteenth century]…that both reflected and inspired the creation of new media" (5). A short list of these media includes: the electric telegraph, the typewriter, the telephone, the gramophone, the phonograph, and wireless telegraphy.[4] Printing technologies also received an upgrade, from the steam press (1814) and cylinder press (1840s) to composing machines (1850s) and linotype machines (1886) (Leighton and Surridge 13). The additional introduction of the railway, mail coaches, and steamer ships expanded and accelerated the circulation of texts, along with providing a new venue for their purchase (the railway stall).[5]

By focusing on innovation, modern scholars have biased the narrative toward new media, consequently eliding the persistence of older media in the period. Newer technologies did not immediately displace their forerunners. They did, however, call into question the impact of form on interpretation. Moving the conversation away from issues of textual production and circulation and toward preservation, “The Past and Future Lives of Writing in Victorian Fiction” recovers Victorians’ engagement with pre-print texts in fiction and periodicals. I argue that Victorians writers interrogated the durability of material forms in order to navigate an increasingly varied media ecology, where the status of writing was actively under review. By “media ecology,” I adopt Richard Menke’s conception that locates media—at once technological and social—in a reciprocal relationship with the culture that it shapes and by which is shaped. The case studies offered in “Past and Future Lives” show how textual preservation, which ultimately informs interpretation, was (and remains) bound to material, political, and personal interests. Each chapter foregrounds one of these intertwined interests and applies them to a collection of media, from a mix of pre-print forms (Chapter 1) and early modern manuscripts (Chapter 2) to ancient rock inscriptions (Chapter 3) and electronic texts (Coda). In the first chapter, I will contextualize the Victorian media ecology and demonstrate how fiction could model reading strategies for managing an influx of information distilled across a plurality of older forms. In second chapter, I begin discussing how Victorians looked further and further back in time to imagine scenarios of textual preservation and destruction, with the attending benefits and consequences for social stability. Because I also move chronologically via the case studies that ground each chapter—*The Woman in White*, *Romola*, and *She*—I am able to reflect in Chapter 3 on how and why the preservation of older media assumes a greater urgency at the end of the century. Following the example set forth by the three case studies, I conclude with a reflection on implications of textual remediation with electronic media today.

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[3] For additional readings of Victorian media alongside our own, see: Jay Clayton, Herbert Sussman and Gerhard Joseph, and Toni Weller.

[4] See Priscilla Coit Murphy, Laura B. Schiavo, Katherine Stubbs, and Diane Zimmerman Umble

[5] See Aileen Fyfe (*Steam*), Ruth Livesey, and Douglas R. Burgess, Jr.

Information Management and Victorian Fiction

The last decade of history of the book, digital humanities, and media history scholarship attests to a renewed interest in the nineteenth century as an "information age." While critics do not agree as to whether it is the first information age (some would grant that appellation to the Gutenberg era or the twentieth-century with the invention of the transistor), the disagreements showcase the linkage of critical understandings of information to material forms, and the agreements testify to the nineteenth century's being *an* age of profound changes in the conceptualization, accessibility, and organization of information.[6] Daniel Headrick, arguing against the notion of any first information age, writes that "humans have always needed and used information" (217). However, he adds that "there have been periods of sharp *acceleration*…in the amount of information that people had access to and in the creation of information systems to deal with it" (8). For Headrick, the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries formed such a period. In *When Information Came of Age: Technologies of Knowledge in the Age of Reason and Revolution, 1700-1850*, he tracks the information systems that developed to organize, display, and store the increasing mass of information.[7] Expanding on Headrick's work, which stops at midcentury, my interest in "Past and Future Lives" lies in the strategies Victorians developed for collating and preserving information in the latter half of the nineteenth century.

Throughout my project, I will emphasize how literature participated in conversations of information management by serving as a vehicle for modeling curatorial approaches and imagining their outcomes. Digesting information in bits (and bytes) may feel familiar to us, but the experience was novel to Victorian readers, many of whom were newly literate. In response to the outpouring of information, Victorians refined methods for sorting, evaluating, and cataloging texts. Media historians have foregrounded the period's nonliterary approaches. Along with the management systems that Headrick marks as debuting (statistics, graphs) and improving (maps, dictionaries, scientific taxonomies) in the century, Mike Esbester adds tax forms and timetables, with a special emphasis on railway guides ("Taxing", "Nineteenth"). Aileen Fyfe moves us closer to the literary by noting the development of new classificatory systems in libraries, where "[t]he efficient retrieval of information was a clear concern for librarians like Poole and his contemporary, Melvil Dewey, as they sought ways to organise, classify and catalogue their holdings to make it easier for both librarians and readers to find what they sought" ("Information" 593). However, I contend that nineteenth-century literature was not just an information product that had to be managed. Instead, it also contributed to the development of strategies through the imaginative experimentation of systems for ordering information. In *The Woman in White*, characters' social and legal identities are dependent on the narrative they can construct from a mixture of textual forms that they pull together, including tombstone inscriptions and church registers to handwriting on clothing. Wilkie Collins even enacts the novel's thematic interest on a formal level by experimenting with a multi-narrator structure that is itself materially diverse (some narrations are written testimonies while others come from dictation and a journal) and curated to serve an agenda.

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[6] For the Gutenberg era's and transistor's claims, respectively, see Harold A. Linstone and Ian I. Mitroff, as well as Michael Riordan and Lillian Hoddeson. For an overview of information in the Victorian period, see Thomas Richards, Aileen Fyfe ("Information"), Menke, and Weller.

[7] For one example, to stay current with the latest publications, Victorian readers turned to literature reviews and excerpts in quarterly, monthly, and daily periodicals. By the end of the century, however, even keeping up with the number of reviews became a challenge. Aileen Fyfe links "the popularity of eclectic magazines like George Newnes's weekly *Tit-Bits* (1881) and W.H. Stead's monthly *Review of Reviews* (1890)"—magazines that offered "snippets and summaries of the contents of other periodicals"— to readers' desire for "universal coverage" ("Information" 592).

My approach builds most on Menke's thought-provoking work on Victorian realism and new media. In *Telegraphic Realism: Victorian Fiction and Other Information Systems*, Menke explores how realist "fiction could offer a forum for exploring a real world that had come to seem laden with information, or even constituted by it. In this light, a sprawling Victorian triple-decker looks like both a treatment of a world as information, and an affirmation that such a mass of information could be arranged and made meaningful while still remaining true" (4). Like Menke, I "take up a challenge suggested by Alexander Welsh's groundbreaking *George Eliot and Blackmail* (1985): to read Victorian texts in relation not merely to particular media but more broadly to an emergent 'culture of information,' to the growing importance of the large-scale production and rapid circulation of information in the nineteenth century" (5). However, while Welsh uses the blackmail plot and Menke looks to mimesis to explain how Victorian literature processes mass information, I highlight old media's importance as a container of information within fiction. Specifically, I consider how genres such as sensation fiction, the historical novel, and the gothic novel probe the durability of older, pre-print forms in order to anticipate the possible long-term ramifications of a shifting media ecology, of which erasure is the most severe. In George Eliot's *Romola*, handwriting provides a tangible connection between a writer in the fifteenth century and a reader today. Without a social structure in place to retain the original context of that handwriting, however, the writer can—and does in the novel—become anonymized, detached from his written legacy.

My argument emerges from scholarship that addresses the impact of material forms on the reception of information. As N. Katherine Hayles points out, "the proposition that we think through, with, and alongside media" is not new (1). Marshall McLuhan, Friedrich Kittler, Lev Manovich and others have studied how, in McLuhan's famous words, "the medium is the message." Hayles expands on their work by "chart[ing] the implications of media upheavals within the humanities and qualitative social sciences" as the disciplines move further into the digital realm (1). According to Hayles, "The Age of Print is passing"—by which she means it is no longer the default mode of communication—"and the assumptions, presuppositions, and practices associated with it are now becoming visible as media-specific practices rather than the largely invisible status quo" (2). My project likewise looks at how the presumed passing age of a form (even if, more than not, the passing is hype rather than reality) invites us to rethink our relationship with that form. But rethinking does not mean abandonment, as I shall illustrate in *Romola* and H. Rider Haggard's *She*, where the preservation and conservation of older material forms is prioritized.

During periods of media transition, old and new forms of communication engage in a process of mutual definition. This engagement is typically posed as a coup on the part of new media. Paul Duguid identifies two "futurological tropes" that structure these media discussions. The first, "supersession," assumes the death of old media at the hands of their incumbents, and the second, "liberation," believes that new media will grant more direct access to information, with fewer barriers. These tropes consistently appear in Victorian articles that celebrate new media, as well as in the ones that express regret or apprehension. To address supersession first, an emblematic article published in 1889 for *The Sunday at Home* titled, "A Few Words on Letter-Writing," predicts:

> The telegram, the copying-press, the typewriter—we have destroyed the sentiment of the old letter by these devices for our greater ease. The telephone is with us now; with the phonograph we are threatened. By-and-by we shall talk with our living voices to friends unseen across the seas, and hear their answers borne to us from their shores, and the pens will rust and the ink be dried up and postage stamps be needed no more. (178)

The writer presents media as a zero-sum game that will be determined by convenience and immediacy (as reflected in "living voice") above all else. While the prediction of long-distance telephone conversations has indeed come to pass, the other forecasts—the obsolescence of postage stamps and pens—remain unfulfilled. In fact, despite the sounding of the death knell, the number of letters the British Post Office managed from 1840-1901 increased from 169 million to 2,323 million (Mitchell 563-564). The writer's anticipatory leap resonates with public panic today that the advent of e-readers portend the demise of printed books and that we will all be living in a paperless office. But, as Geoffrey B. Pingree and Lisa Gitelman, David Thorburn and Henry Jenkins, and Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin remind us, media transition is, more often than not, a slow process that involves exchange rather than outright replacement.[8] Pingree and Gitelman, building on Rick Altman's conception of "crisis historiography," explain that "when new media emerge in a society, their place is at first ill defined, and their ultimate meanings or functions are shaped over time by that society's existing habits of media use (which, of course, derive from experience with other, established media), by shared desires for new uses, and by the slow process of adaptation between the two" (xii). It is this process of adaptation between the existing habits of media use and the desire for new applications and meaning that particularly interests me—as well as the Victorian authors I discuss—in "Past and Future Lives." Excitement at the end of the nineteenth century over the invention of the phonograph expressed itself as a desire for a more authentic, less mediated record of human existence.[9] *She*, published during the early hype of the photograph, imagines the kinds of unique, direct access earlier forms of writing provide to the human record. Not only are these older forms more durable in the novel, they also demonstrate that past writing can have a significant impact on future knowledge, making the preservation of writing all the more important.

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[8] And sometimes, older traditions resurface for a short time on account of new media. Richard Altick notes that at midcentury, "So overburdened were the printers' facilities that a type famine occurred, during which the old-fashioned *ſ*, disused for more than half a century, was brought back from retirement until the type-founders could catch up with the demand" (357). While the reintroduction was temporary, the example illustrates the back-and-forth exchange of old and new that I will stress throughout the dissertation.

[9] Priscilla Coit Murphy highlights one exemplary response by Octave Uzanne, published in *Scribner's* magazine in 1894. Uzanne predicts—and celebrates—that the phonograph will replace print, turning authors from "Writers" into "Narrators," whose voices "Readers" would be able to hear directly, sans the mediation of the page.

In addition to yielding unprecedented amounts of information, the rapid mechanization of media also initiated a reconceptualization of writing and its social status. Christopher Keep explains that “the electronic impulses or sonic vibrations” of new media freed the word “of the gravitational pull of graphic inscription” (153). Keep analyzes this freedom for its effects on time and space. He writes, “[N]ew communications technologies allowed more words to travel faster and farther than was heretofore possible,” which had the effect of “creating the impression of a world simultaneously shrinking and coming apart” (153). While more information was available, the overwhelming mass—often separated from “adequate context” (153)—seemed ungraspable, much like digitization today has made texts both more and less accessible by traditional reading standards. Like Keep, Nicholas Daly associates new media with an emerging industrial temporality. He argues that sensation fiction in the 1860s endeavors to acclimate readers to the accelerated pace of everyday life through its deployment of suspense. It is certainly true that early praise for new media in the periodicals touts their high-speed capabilities. George Wilson, writing on the telegraph for *The Edinburgh Review* in 1849, marvels, “The exact velocity of electricity along a copper wire is 288,000 miles in a second. It is calculated, accordingly, that we could telegraph to our antipodes in rather less than five hundredth part of one second of time!” (459). Electricity and copper wires transmit messages farther and faster than pen and ink could ever match, but some of this enthusiasm is tempered later in the century. “Telegraph Systems of the World: The Story of the Nerves of Our Commercial Life,” an article published in *The Windsor Magazine* in 1896, begins, “The time required to send a telegram or cablegram and receive an answer is frequently a disappointment, if not an irritation, to people who have never considered the telegraph as anything but a streak of electricity….He who is surprised at this forgets the manipulation which the message goes through" (49). This "manipulation" consists of the operators who transmit the messages. The writer postulates, "If there were no overcrowding of wires, no delays from inattention, no changes, no messages having 'right of way,' the result would be quite satisfactory to the popular demand for 'lightning speed'" (49). This declaration exposes the illusion underlying Duguid's liberation trope. Telegrams, much like electronic texts, might well circulate faster and farther than their written counterparts, but that does not mean they should be accepted uncritically. Layers of mediation and hierarchies still exist. As *The Woman in White* and *Romola* caution, we must know the affordances of our forms—which includes their potential for tampering—in order to cull information responsibly.

Nevertheless, excitement for near-instantaneous communication seemed to place writing at a disadvantage. Victorian fiction aims to work out whether or not that impression is valid. The profusion of slower, older media forms in the novels invites reflection on the affordances of writing and what we stand to gain or lose by its replacement. New media may, as Wilson posits, "annihilate space and time" (459), but at what cost to writing and by extension, to the way we understand the past through material forms? Sending a message via a telegraph, a technology comprised of coils, dials, and index needles, created a different experience for sender and recipient, not just because telegraphs contained their own alphabet (Appendix: Fig. 1).[10] Writing, meanwhile, contains visible traces of its author, from the slopes of the letters to the spaces between them; telegrams, which go through operators, lack those traces. "A Few Words on Letter-Writing" acknowledges the loss of this intimate connection: "Nothing, not the historian's most consummate skill, brings the past so vividly before us as do the letters of men and women, happily preserved to us" (178). The novels I consider in the chapters to follow put this claim to the test by interrogating the significance of the written trace as a distinctive, trustworthy carrier of information. In making a case for the written form's particular and important affordances (such as, the visible between writer and text that it retains), the novels ultimately demonstrate that older forms are important vehicles of information preservation at the same time that they themselves need to be materially preserved.

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[10] Unlike computers, which automate and therein obscure the translation that occurs from machine to human language (and vice versa), telegraphs require people to convert the code.

The corollary to an outpouring of information is a heightened attention to the need for preservation standards. These standards must account for texts' material forms (to guard against deterioration and tampering), as well as how they shall be organized so that they may be reliably retrieved in the future. *The Woman in White*, *Romola*, and *She* all engage with the process by which disparate texts may be collected to create an archive for future use. A search for the word "archiv*" (with the * to catch variations of "archive") in the *British Periodicals Database*, which includes the full print runs for nearly 500 British periodicals from the seventeenth to the early twenty-first centuries, depicts a steady rise of texts that at least mention the word once. This interest reaches its apex in the middle-end of the nineteenth century.[11]

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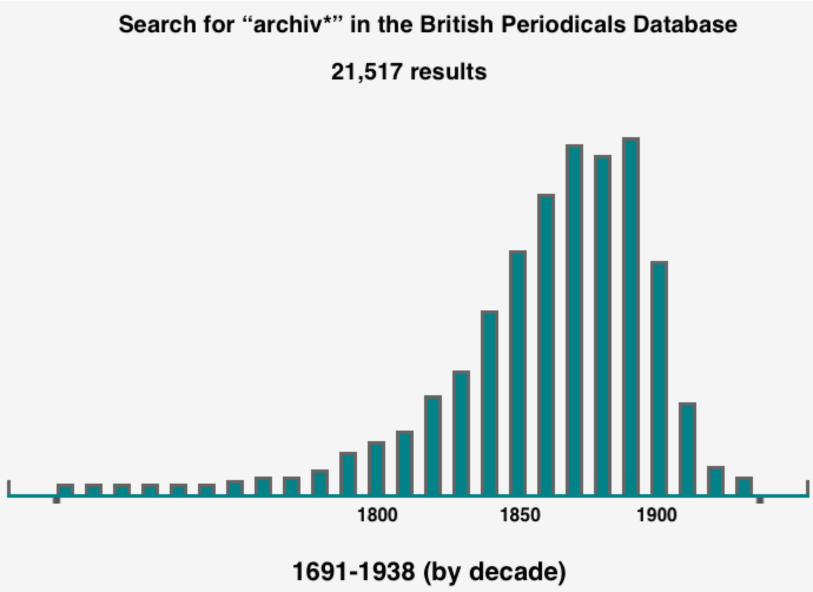
[11] The frequencies have not been normalized, meaning the curve is partly an artifact of the decades that are most represented in the *British Periodicals Database*. Nevertheless, the graph is suggestive, especially with respect to the drop off that occurs around 1900, which is not an artifact of text quantity because there are more texts in the database for the early 1900s.



Screenshot of results from the British Periodicals Database

The bar graph speaks to Victorians' attention to preservation at an archival level. They were not just questioning how best to preserve individual texts. Rather, as each of my chapters will make the case, they were invested in creating an archive, a collection of texts that could be drawn on when needed. An 1869 article in *The Daily News* reflects a growing concern over how to construct an archive that would be physically and conceptually responsive to an increasing influx of materials (a concern shared by digital humanists and archivists in the twenty-first century as well): "We think of future librarians as of those children renowned in fairy tales, who have impossible tasks appointed them by malicious godmothers—to collect in a day all the sands of the shore, or to count ere dinner time all the grains of wheat in a kingdom. There will appear no exaggeration in this to anyone who will go to the British Museum and study the catalogue" ("Foreign" 5). Robert Darnton's influential communications circuit does not, as Darnton himself acknowledges in his recent reflection on the model, "do justice to phenomena such as preservation and evolution in the long-term history of books" (504). My reading of how Victorian authors conceived of textual preservation over a long durée starts to addresses this gap.

In a reflection on archival formation today, Marlene Manoff explains that “archival work is about making fine discriminations to identify what is significant from a mass of data” (19). This is precisely the type of discriminatory training that I argue Victorian novels offer their readers.

The three case studies that structure “Past and Future Lives”—*The Woman in White*, *Romola*, and *She*—each take up a collection of pre-print materials to which they apply different methods of curation, evaluation, and preservation, from personal archives to libraries. In his foundational study on inscription, Kittler formulates a “discourse network” at either end of the nineteenth century. Following Michel Foucault’s theorization but with more of an emphasis on the material conditions of storage, Kittler defines a discourse network as “the network of technologies and institutions that allow a given culture to select, store, and produce relevant data” (369). He delineates the discourse networks of 1800 and 1900 by noting the primacy of alphabetic writing in the former and the competition between writing and new media forms in the latter. But, as Menke points out, he overlooks the middle of the century. Menke advocates for a discourse network of the 1850s, arguing that at midcentury, “writing appears neither purely as a form of natural speech (as in Kittler’s 1800 discourse network) nor as a disenchanted, combinatory technology (his 1900)” (8). Building from both Kittler and Menke, my project considers the conditions that facilitate the preservation of writing from the mid to late Victorian period. In addition to driving the plots of all three case studies forward, the manner in which written collections are assembled, disassembled, and preserved models strategies for readers who, in a period of mass information, must also learn to become curators.

Rock, Paper, Signals

Writing has proven remarkably resilient as a form of communication. The telegraph and the typewriter have effectively been phased out, replaced by their electronic successors, but writing—despite its slowness and potential illegibility—persists. Why? My project examines the ways Victorian novels express writing's resiliency and imagine its implications for our understanding of history. Although the introduction of new forms did not replace writing, they did challenge its status as a producer and container of information. Each chapter participates in a conversation around mass information, not by privileging new media or methods but rather by looking to older, time-tested forms. Foregrounding collections of pre-print texts, including inscribed pottery and handwritten manuscripts, all three novels direct our attention to the durability of forms over time, as well as to the implications of that durability. In his 2010 keynote for the Victorian Institute Conference, Dan Cohen predicts that scholars of history (literary and otherwise) will soon be immersed "in a debate about how we know the past and how we look at the written record." In "Past and Future Lives," I demonstrate that this debate is far from new. In fact, it is fitting that we would raise the question in our study of Victorian literature in particular, because the nineteenth-century mechanization and overabundance of texts led the Victorians themselves to reimagine written forms by way looking to the recent, distant, and very distant past.

In Chapter 1, I flesh out the Victorian information revolution and argue that Collins's popular sensation novel, *The Woman in White*, prepares readers to navigate an increasingly complex media ecology where pre-print forms can be re-contextualized and physically altered to support competing narratives. The novel's commitment to maintaining the dual impulse of suspicion and reliance on these forms invites readers to evaluate consciously the complacent assumptions we bring to bear on older media. The occasional unreliability of information conveyed through pre-print forms in the novel questions whether the world is—or indeed ever has been—knowable via writing.

At the very least, older forms of writing, rooted as they are in tradition, offer a kind of social stability that new media endangers. Turning in Chapter 2 from sensation fiction to the historical novel, I examine Eliot's *Romola*. Set in the late fifteenth century, the novel might at first glance seem detached from nineteenth-century conversations surrounding new media. But while the setting marks a departure in Eliot's oeuvre, it actually facilitates her study of material forms in the Victorian period by providing her with an analogous moment of media transition: the print revolution. *Romola* interrogates the shift from manuscripts to print, and in the process, questions both the archival and social implications that accompany the transition from slow writing with time-tested standards of preservation to the quick and un-curated mass production of print.

Moving to a third textual collection that has been hyper-curated for centuries, Rider Haggard's gothic novel *She*, the subject of Chapter 3, marries the nineteenth-century setting of *The Woman in White* with *Romola*'s emphasis on historical antecedents by taking its Victorian protagonists outside of England and relocating them among ancient ruins in Africa. In *She*, older forms of inscription—such as rock carvings—shape characters' understandings of human and national histories and, importantly, they also influence how characters behave, despite the texts' being centuries old. Far from static records, ancient forms of writing actively shape the outcome of the novel. In contrast, the hints of new media that do appear in *She* prove dangerous and unreliable, blurring the boundary between human and machine.

Taking a cue from the Victorians, in the Coda I address how we might use older forms to theorize the limitations and advantages of electronic forms for the study of literature. Bytes—units of computer code—inundate us with information that cannot always be relied upon to be accurate, and oftentimes, the manipulation of information from one source to another further hinders our ability to assess what we are reading. Take as one example the emergence of the 2011 blog *Literally Unbelievable: Stories from The Onion as Interpreted by Facebook* (Hongo). The popular site showcases hundreds of vexed responses from people who falsely interpret as accurate articles from the satirical newspaper. Their confusion, while sometimes humorous and sometimes dismaying, cannot be wholly chalked up to naiveté. *The Onion* adopts the conventions deployed in "serious" print publications to connote trustworthiness: genre headings ("Business", "Science & Technology", "Entertainment"), photographic evidence, quotations from experts, statistics, and bylines. Such conceits lay bare what we look for when we evaluate printed information at the same time that they caution us against assuming that digital texts are just written or printed texts online. In reflecting upon the resonant challenges of the Victorian print and new media explosion and mass digitization today, I join digital humanities scholars in imagining the kinds of apparatus we have to develop in order to interact with a digital media as a new kind of text, distinct from (if also connected) to its analog counterpart.

Old and new media alike have, as *The Woman in White*, *Romola*, and *She* illustrate, unique advantages and limitations. As all three case studies caution, not acknowledging these different affordances and the assumptions we bring—consciously or unconsciously—to material forms both increases the odds of our being deceived and jeopardizes the futurity of the texts themselves. While all three novels engage with old media, their aims are forward looking: the creation of sustainable, reliable (as reliable as can be) archives for future generations. As more and more material is produced and circulated online, we should follow the Victorians' example and consider what the digital realm offers us for the preservation of old and new texts alike, as well as what information will be lost in the material transition.

CHAPTER 1

Information Management in *The Woman in White*

Moments before Count Fosco writes his confession, he turns to his counterpart and our narrator, Walter Hartright, and declares, “One of the rarest of all the intellectual accomplishments that a man can possess, is the grand faculty of arranging his ideas. Immense privilege! I possess it. Do you?” (592). Fosco’s boastful remarks do more than just highlight his self-confidence; they also gesture to the novel’s overarching thematic and formal interest in narrative organization. In the novel, the ability to construct a compelling story out of written documents is both the means of perpetrating crimes and the method for exacting justice. With eleven narrators (not all of whom are human) and a multitude of written media (including memoranda, letters, newspapers, books, legal settlements, medical certificates, church subscriptions, journal entries, church registers, messages in sand, and inscriptions on bodies and a tombstone), *The Woman in White* (1859-1860) is fundamentally a novel about texts—how they are created, managed, and interpreted.

Following Fosco’s question, Walter undertakes a two-page description that documents the Count’s writing process, from the implements he used to the actual act of writing. First, Fosco prepares an outline of how the narrative should unfold; he "marched backwards and forwards in the room, until the coffee appeared, humming to himself, and marking the places at which obstacles occurred in the arrangement of his ideas” (592-593). Next, he prepares a written draft, after which the revision process begins: “I [Fosco] proceed to the arrangement of my slips, to the revision of my slips, to the reading of my slips—addressed, emphatically, to your private ear” (594). The emphasis on Fosco’s process defies the idea that writing—even writing that purports to be a mere disclosure of events—is objective and contains an inherent order. Rather, texts are meticulously arranged and edited. Over the course of the novel, *The Woman in White* makes the case that as consumers of texts, readers must make a conscious effort to consider how their presentation influences our takeaway information.

Mid- to late Victorian plots often revolve around a need for what we would today call version control, a system for recording changes to documents. Improperly documented, overwritten, or secretly edited texts promote mis-readings and foster social unrest. *Bleak House*'s (1852-1853) *Jarndyce versus Jarndyce* highlights ensuing legal complications that arise, while altered documents in *Lady Audley's Secret* (1862) endanger the family unit. In *The Woman in White*, the effects of textual corruption include no less than the recorded death of a living woman, the improper institutionalization of that same woman who is then assigned a false identity, and the disinheritance of a Baron. The key to restoring characters' rights lies in re-documentation; Walter must create a new, master narrative, which he does through tracking down and replacing corrupted texts.

Since its debut in the 1860s, sensation fiction has been discussed in terms of bodily effects. Nineteenth-century reviewers, many of whom condemn the genre for pandering to base pleasures, associate it with sleep deprivation, spine-tingling sensations, and mass readerships.[12] Unlike its generic predecessors that elicit a bodily response "through supernatural agencies, or by means of the fantastic creations of lawless genius or violent horrors of crime" (Oliphant 566), sensation fiction achieves its results by showing "[m]odern England—the England of to-day's newspaper" (James 593). Henry James celebrates that "[t]he novelty [of *Lady Audley's Secret*] lay in the heroine being, not a picturesque Italian of the fourteenth century, but an English gentlewoman of the current year, familiar with the use of the railway and the telegraph" (593).

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[12] For representative nineteenth-century reviews, see Margaret Oliphant and H.L. Mansel. For a foundational twentieth-century reading, see D.A. Miller, who argues that "[t]he genre offers us one of the first instances of modern literature to address itself primarily to the sympathetic nervous system" (146).

James repeats this sentiment in his appraisal of *The Woman in White*, which, "with its diaries and letters and general ponderosity, was a kind of nineteenth century version of 'Clarissa Harlowe.' Mind, we say a nineteenth century version" (593). Current critics regularly take up James's observation of the railway and telegraph to argue that sensation fiction trained readers for modernity.[13] But in focusing on emerging technologies, critics have undervalued the significance of older media to readers' training. What about the "diaries and letters" James also observes? How could a "nineteenth century version of 'Clarissa Harlowe'" prepare readers for living in a world of mass media?

In this chapter, I will argue that *The Woman in White* is modern, not because the solution to the novel's mystery hinges on a mastery of new technologies, but because it depicts a rich, realistic media ecology, one that is both deeply suspicious of and also reliant on a plurality of forms. The novel's commitment to maintaining the dual impulse of suspicion and reliance pressures readers to evaluate consciously the assumptions we bring to forms of writing. Christopher Keep notes that new technologies like the telegraph contributed such "an outpouring of facts without adequate context that the world seemed increasingly remote and unknowable" (153). The instability of information conveyed through pre-print forms in *The Woman in White* questions whether the world was, in fact, ever knowable via writing. Even older, banal forms that we complacently accept as trustworthy, such as tombstones, can be deceptive.

The explosion of affordable print in the middle of the nineteenth century meant that readers, many of whom were newly literate, suddenly encountered unprecedented amounts of information. History of the book and media history scholars discuss this period in terms of innovation. Richard Menke describes a nascent "culture of information…that both reflected and inspired the creation of new media" (5), including the electric telegraph, the wireless telegraph, and the telephone. Daniel Headrick charts the management systems that emerged (statistics, graphs) and improved (maps, dictionaries, scientific taxonomies) during the period to catalog the outpouring of information (v), while Aileen Fyfe looks at how new industrial technologies (such as steam-powered printing) and transportation systems (railways, steamships) increased the production and distribution of information (*Steam*). *The Woman in White*, along with *Romola* and *She*, participate in this conversation around mass information, not by privileging new media or methods but rather by gesturing back. Foregrounding collections of pre-print texts, including inscribed pottery and handwritten manuscripts, all three novels direct our attention to the durability of forms over time. Just as printed books have not gone away with the invention of the iPad or Kindle, neither did older forms of writing disappear with the invention of the telegraph. But, the introduction of new forms does and did challenge the status of older ones, prompting us to rethink how we engage with and understand them as individual objects and as a collection. *The Woman in White*, with its multitude of text types, self-reflexively embodies this challenge.

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[13] For an analysis of modernity and temporal training, see Nicholas Daly. For a critique of gender and modernity, see Louise Lee.

Serialized weekly in Charles Dickens's *All the Year Round*, *The Woman in White* pits Marian Halcombe and her drawing instructor Walter against Sir Percival Glyde and his expatriate ally Fosco. The source of their contest is Laura Fairlie, who is at once Marian's sister, Walter's love interest, and Sir Percival's wife. In a ploy to acquire Laura's fortune, Sir Percival and Fosco fake Laura's death by switching hers and the mysterious Anne Catherick's identities, a feat that is first facilitated by the uncanny resemblance between the two and then bolstered by false documents. After the swap—which leaves Laura legally and socially dead—the contest becomes a question of whose narrative, supported by written evidence, will prevail.

With a plot that revolves heavily around the (re)assembly of written materials, *The Woman in White* challenges readers to dissect how narratives are constructed, including its own. Walter never answers Fosco's "Do you?" question that begins this chapter, but his repeated disclosures on how he has assembled the overarching story invite us to answer the question for him and ourselves. Like *She*, Collins's novel operates under the conceit that characters within the novel have compiled the manuscript before readers. With *The Woman in White*, however, each character's narration is delineated.[14] Walter/Collins has arranged the story so that each narrator provides only a portion of it. Importantly, their narrations are not completely chronological, despite Walter's claim that each narrator shall pick up where the other leaves off. This means that narrations overlap in content, exposing readers to different interpretations of the same events. We can use these competing interpretations to measure our readings along the way—do we share Marian's impression of Fosco or Eliza Michelson's? Why—do we have information they don't? If so, from where did we glean it?

The multi-narrator frame of *The Woman in White* models strategies for pulling information together from distinct yet connected documents. The novel begins with three of the most direct and trustworthy narrators (Walter, Mr. Gilmore, and Marian), equipping us for the less forthcoming ones who follow. With these later narrators who, through their own biases, fail to provide more than surface explanations, we must look for patterns to inform our readings. This act of moving back and forth (between individual texts and a larger collection) in order to construct a coherent narrative represents what's required in a period of media overload.

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[14] While Walter is the overarching narrator in *The Woman in White*, he does designate sections of the story to other narrators. In *She*, Leo is a silent contributor. We really only hear Holly's voice, even though he uses "we" when he describes the decision to write and publish the story.

Media Affordances: Looking Back to Plan Ahead

Time plays a crucial role in defining outcomes in *The Woman in White*. To unravel Sir Percival and the Count's crime, Walter must establish a master timeline of events that can be supported with written documentation. When he first approaches Mr. Kyrle about exposing the fraud against Laura, the lawyer advises, "If you could show a discrepancy between the date of the doctor's certificate and the date of Lady Glyde's journey to London, the matter would wear a totally different aspect; and I should be the first to say, Let us go on" (443). The dates of Laura's journey and Anne Catherick's death serve as the scheme's one weak point. We see time factor in again when Walter instructs Pesca to open a letter at an appointed hour. Here, time acts as a safeguard against physical harm from Fosco, securing Walter the Count's confession.[15] With *The Woman in White* for a case study, Nicholas Daly argues, "What the sensation novel was preaching to the nerves was a new time-discipline: to be immersed in the plot of a sensation novel, to have one's nerves quiver with those of the hero or heroine, was to be wired into a new mode of temporality. Time-consciousness would be recast as pleasurable suspense" (49). For Daly, the function of time in the novel is to train readers "to live within the temporality of the railway age" (50).

Instead of reading the novel's time consciousness as a move to acclimate readers to a new, industrial temporality through an emphasis on speed and physical sensations, I argue that it actually draws our attention back to form—older, slower forms in particular. By the mid nineteenth century, epistolary fiction had become outmoded. *The London Review*, in praise of *The Woman in White's* overarching narrative construction, lauds Collins's innovative approach: "It is much better than the old and now long-disused plan, of telling a story in a series of letters"

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[15] Periodical reviews criticized the dates Collins used in the serialized run of the novel on the grounds that they established an unrealistic timeline; Collins changed the dates for the first volume edition, but those, too, did not line up in terms of when they placed Laura in London and when Anne died.

("Woman" 233). While most of the novel's sections do indeed depart from that tradition, Marian's narration stands out as anomalous. The journal form—which Collins includes in several of his novels, including *No Name* (1862)*, Armadale* (1866)*,* and *The Moonstone* (1868)—evokes the older, epistolary genre, and more than that, it highlights its potential utility.[16] Unlike the other narrations that are general in their temporal references, Marian's is methodically dated, sometimes even to the hour, a valuable attribute in a storyworld where so much depends on the accurate recall of dates. As characters in the novel frequently remind us, human memory cannot be relied upon to verify specific dates; questions of time, then, are only ever settled with writing.[17] Readers are never more temporally oriented in the novel than when we are reading Marian's account: we see when she jumps forward in the narrative and can calculate the amount of time she passes over, unlike in the other narrations.

Because it provides a consistent temporal record, Marian's journal acts as a dependable archive. In contrast to dateless media, journals have an inherent chronological order for managing information. Entries are firmly routed in a specific context and as such, are more reliable sources of information. Marian, Laura, and Walter regularly look to prior entries to retrieve information to assess past decisions and guide future ones. While at Blackwater Park, Marian consoles herself with her role in facilitating Laura's marriage: "[I] searched through my old journals to see what my share in the fatal error of her marriage had really been, and what I might have once done to save her from it. The result soothes me a little—for it showed that, however blindly and ignorantly I acted, I acted for the best" (266). Her entries serve as a frozen record of events as they happen; this is, perhaps, why Walter includes Marian's journal for her narration. When Laura and Marian are trying to decipher Sir Percival and the Count's next steps, Marian turns to the archive: "I will get my journal, and you shall see if I am right or wrong….On looking back to the entry referring to the lawyer's visit, we found that my recollection of the two alternatives presented was accurately correct" (284).[18] Even Marian's unintentional reunion with Laura (whom she thinks is deceased) in the asylum only occurs as the result of her having recorded a prior conversation with Walter:

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[16] The difference between Marian's and Walter's narrations opens up the possibility for a gendered critique of the novel. Whereas Walter is writing in a modern, courtroom style, Marian uses an antiquated—though valuable—form. Additionally, Walter co-opts Laura's and Marian's voices in the latter half of the novel; Laura herself never narrates her own experience. For a rich discussion of gender and narrative allotment, see Ann Elizabeth Gaylin.

[17] Mrs. Michelson's narrative repeatedly speaks to the mind's inability to retain dates that do not hold personal importance: "I made no memorandum at the time, and I cannot therefore be sure to a day, of the date; but I believe I am correct in stating that Miss Halcombe's serious illness began during the last fortnight or ten days in June" (357). She falters again later in her account: "The next day, or a day or two after, I forget which" (396). Fosco vividly remembers the dates, but that's only because, as Walter points out, the dates were exceptionally meaningful to his plan.

> When Mr. Hartright had met Anne Catherick at Limmeridge, she had informed him of the locality in which the house was situated; and Miss Halcombe had noted down the direction in her diary, with all the other particulars of the interview, exactly if she heard them from Mr. Hartright's own lips. Accordingly, she looked back at the entry, and extracted the address; furnished herself with the Count's letter to Mr. Fairlie, as a species of credential which might be useful to her; and started by herself for the Asylum, on the eleventh of October. (418)[19]

Marian's journal preserves oral conversations. Ephemeral exchanges are suddenly transformed into time-stamped, archival documents that can impact future decisions.[20]

In the second-half of the novel, Walter's struggle to locate written confirmation of the day Laura departed Blackwater Park prompts readers to feel all the more keenly the cessation of

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[18] Marian's logic here mirrors Fosco's. During Sir Percival and the Count's nighttime conversation, Fosco remarks, "Before we advance to what I do *not* know, let us be quite certain of what I *do* know. Let us first see if I am right about the time that is past, before I make any proposal to you for the time that is to come" (322).

[19] Walter's strange use of third-person here calls attention to the fact that he is narrating Marian's experience. His doing so breaks from his own requirement that the story be retold by first-hand accounts.

[20] Gilmore's narrative; oral conversation prior to drawing of the marriage settlement "We should be obliged to commit to writing questions which ought always to be discussed on both sides by word of mouth" (141). "Do—now pray do let us settle this little difference of ours by word of mouth, if we can!" (152)

Marian’s journal. In his attempt to retrieve the date of Laura’s departure from other sources, Walter encounters dead ends. He reports, “It was not till some days afterwards (how many days exactly, Mrs. Michelson, in the absence of any written memorandum on the subject, could not undertake to say) that a letter arrived from Madame Fosco announcing Lady Glyde’s [in actuality, Anne’s] sudden death in Count Fosco’s house. The letter avoided mentioning dates” (415). The absence of dates on Madame Fosco’s letter reflects her (or Count Fosco’s) foresight that the letter could be used as evidence against the conspiracy. She capitalizes on the fact that letters—which might or might not contain a date—typically get separated from their envelopes that, unless hand delivered, would contain a postmark and therefore an official date.[21]

The nineteenth-century print explosion meant that readers were confronted not just with more narratives to deconstruct, but also with a plurality of forms, each with their own affordances. Unlike scrolls, codices (bound books) allow for what Peter Stallybrass calls “discontinuous reading.” All sections of a book are instantly accessible, enabling readers to flip back and forth between pages. The inclusion of chapter breaks in eighteenth-century novels, “openly permitted a reading oriented around pauses” (Dames). Nicholas Dames points out that readers suddenly had guides for when to take a break, and novelists developed a new sense for how readers would interact with their books. In the nineteenth century, Keep notes, “In contrast to the series of dashes and dots of the Morse code or the rapid curls and slashing lines of shorthand, the conventional phonetic sign of the alphabet was deadly slow” (153). Instead of incorporating the telegraph, which would have been more in keeping with the railway temporality Daly identifies, *The Woman in White* deploys a mixture of slower media. The emphasis on “deadly slow” forms prolongs attention on the materiality of writing. While speed may be an advantage of telegraphs, information is lost in the turn away from handwritten letters. Telegraphs do not visibly call out their authors. Walter and Marian repeatedly analyze the handwriting on the letters they receive to make deductions about the senders. Meanwhile, the tombstone inscription, which resembles the telegraph in that it, too, doesn’t reflect back on its creator, also has a slowness about it that speaks to its durability as a material form — “a sharp stroke of…steel” is required to write and overwrite the tombstone inscription letter by letter (619). Collins’s novel challenges readers to think about what we’re reading as much as how.

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[21] Walter’s experience with Mrs. Vesey reiterates the point: “When I asked next for the letter which Laura had written to Mrs. Vesey from Blackwater Park, it was given to me without the envelope, which had been thrown into the waste-paper basket, and long since destroyed. In the letter itself, no date was mentioned—not even the day of the week” (436).

By knowing what different material forms are capable of, we can expose the assumptions we bring to bear on them and better evaluate the information we derive. Even though the multi-narrator novel was uncommon at the time *The Woman in White* was published, it wasn’t entirely new, despite Collins’s speculation in the 1860 preface. Tobias Smollett’s epistolary novel *The Expedition of Humphry Clinker* (1771) also includes several character-narrators. What sets *The Woman in White* apart is that its narrations are comprised of different text types, from Marian’s journal and the tombstone’s inscription to Hester Pinhorn’s dictated testimony. In his theorization of affordances, James Gibson defines “[t]he *affordances* of the environment” in terms of what it *offers* the animal, what it *provides* or *furnishes*, either for good or ill” (127). Although the term “affordance” didn’t originate until the late twentieth century, I argue that we see Collins grapple with the concept in *The Woman in White*. The novel teaches us to read in a mixed media world by calling attention to what different forms allow “for good or ill.”[22] In the examples of Marian’s journal and handwritten letters, I have touched on how their forms might be leveraged for good. In the remainder of this first section, I shall turn to a consideration of how someone could take advantage of form for ill.

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[22] For additional applications of the theory of affordances to literature, see Caroline Levine (*Forms)* and Jonathan Hope and Michael Witmore.

Notwithstanding Marian's references to her journal as her "secret pages" (217), privacy is not an affordance of the form. While social conventions might treat journals as restricted, the form (barring a lock—and even that would only be a deterrent), like with any other written material, permits access to anyone who can read. Marian establishes early on in her stay at Blackwater Park that letters sent via the postbag aren't secure:

> Whatever influence animated me, I found cause to congratulate myself on having obeyed it, as soon as I prepared to seal the letter in my own room. I had originally closed the envelope, in the usual way, by moistening the adhesive point and pressing it on the paper beneath; and, when I now tried it with my finger, after a lapse of full three-quarters of an hour, the envelope opened on the instant, without sticking or tearing. Perhaps I had fastened it insufficiently? Perhaps there might have been some defect in the adhesive gum? Or, perhaps—No! it is quite revolting enough to feel that third conjecture stirring in my mind. I would rather not see it confronting me, in plain black and white. (255)

The materiality of the letter makes it liable to tampering; it is also, in this case, the mechanism that reveals the tampering.[23] We see this also with Fanny's crumpled letter (with the crumpling signaling Madame Fosco's interference). Surprisingly, Marian doesn't suspect that her journal could be similarly vulnerable. When she receives a letter from Walter, she contemplates whether she ought to "burn the letter at once, for fear of its one day failing into wrong hands. It not only refers to Laura in terms which ought to remain a secret for ever between the writer and me; but it reiterates his suspicion—so obstinate, so unaccountable, so alarming—that he has been secretly watched since he left Limmeridge" (183). She then proceeds to quote from the letter:

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[23] The material conditions of letter writing are actually what lead to Madame Fosco's discovery that Marian is again writing letters (this time to send to Mr. Kyrle and Mr. Fairlie). Marian explains, "I write with a heavy hand, and a quill pen, scraping and scratching noisily over the paper. It was more likely that Madame Fosco would hear the scraping of my pen than that I should hear the rustling of her dress. Another reason (if I had wanted one) for not trusting my letters to the post-bag in the hall" (307).

> His own words are, 'These events have a meaning, these events must lead to a result. The mystery of Anne Catherick is *not* cleared up yet. She may never cross my path again; but if she ever crosses yours, make better use of the opportunity, Miss Halcombe, than I made of it. I speak on strong conviction; I entreat you to remember what I say.' These are his own expressions. There is no danger of my forgetting them—my memory is only too ready to dwell on any words of Hartright's that refer to Anne Catherick. But there is a danger in my keeping the letter. The mere accident might place it at the mercy of strangers. I may fall ill; I may die. Better to burn it at once, and have one anxiety the less. (183)

Not once but twice Marian points out that she is copying a section from Walter's letter directly into her journal, even while she expresses a fear that someone will read the contents of his message. We see Marian make a similar decision with her first letter from Mr. Kyrle: "I opened it at once, and read these lines. I copy them here, thinking it best to destroy the original for caution's sake" (268). Evidently, Marian attributes a liability to letters than she does not ascribe to her journal. This is the one time Marian is shown to be unequivocally mistaken, because her journal is, in fact, read and written in during her illness.[24]

Paper documents, however, are not the only type of writing open to corruption. In the asylum, a nurse attempts to convince Laura of her identity as Anne by appealing to the writing on her clothing: "Look at your own name on your own clothes, and don't worry us all anymore about being Lady Glyde. She's dead and buried; and you're alive and hearty. Do look at your clothes now! There it is, in good marking ink…Anne Catherick, as plain as print!" (427). The "marking ink" brands Laura as Anne over any testimony she could offer to the contrary. This fatal evidence is an example of writing that is literally put upon Laura; in his confession, Fosco's mentions that Mrs. Rubelle dressed her in Anne's clothes for the express purpose of "the resurrection of the woman who was dead, in the person of the woman who was living" (610). Laura's death, meanwhile, is sealed with the inscription of Laura's name upon her family's tombstone.

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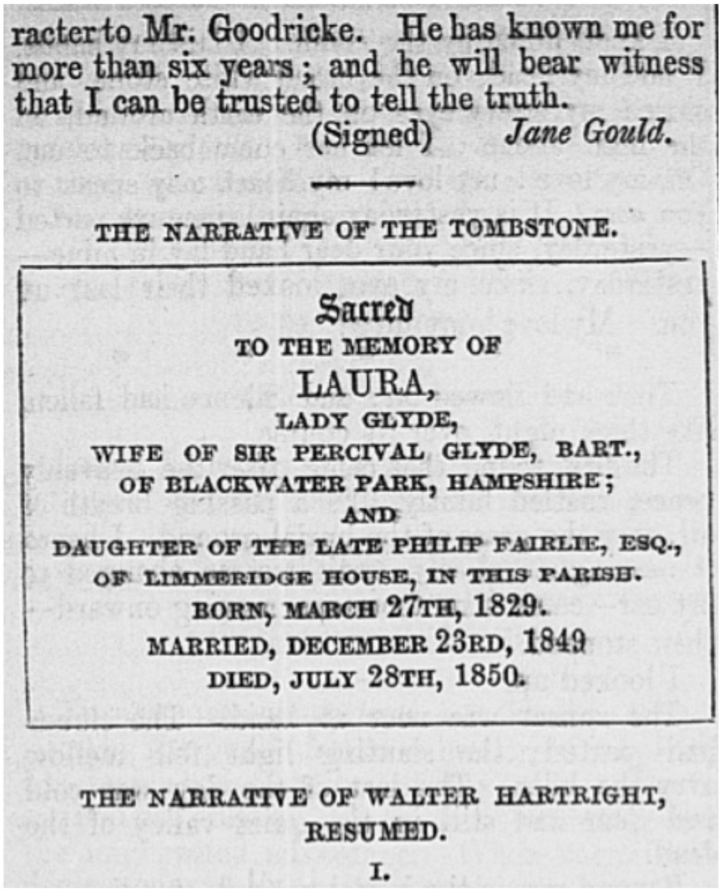
[24] In the serial installment, Marian copies Mr. Kyrle's letter, but she does so "without the address to [herself], or the writer's signature" (478). The installment even contains a long dash set off by quotation marks to emphasize the removal of the writer's signature (Appendix: Fig. 2). Her decision to remove the address and signature suggests that, despite her claims, she anticipates that someone might look at her journal. Collins omits reference to the removals in the 1860 edition, bolstering Marian's conviction that the journal is inviolable.

Visually and formally distinguished from other types of writing in the novel, the tombstone inscription stands out as uniquely authoritative, which makes its deception all the more shocking. Immediately following, we receive "The Narration of the Tombstone," the shortest narrative section and the only one that is offered by a written artifact—it is also the only one that records patently false information, though readers won't know that until the succeeding chapter when Walter resumes his role as narrator. Unlike Penguin's modern reprinting of *The Woman in White*, the serial installment visually demarcates the tombstone's narration (*AYR* 127).



racter to Mr. Goodricke. He has known me for more than six years; and he will bear witness that I can be trusted to tell the truth.

(Signed) *Jane Gould.*

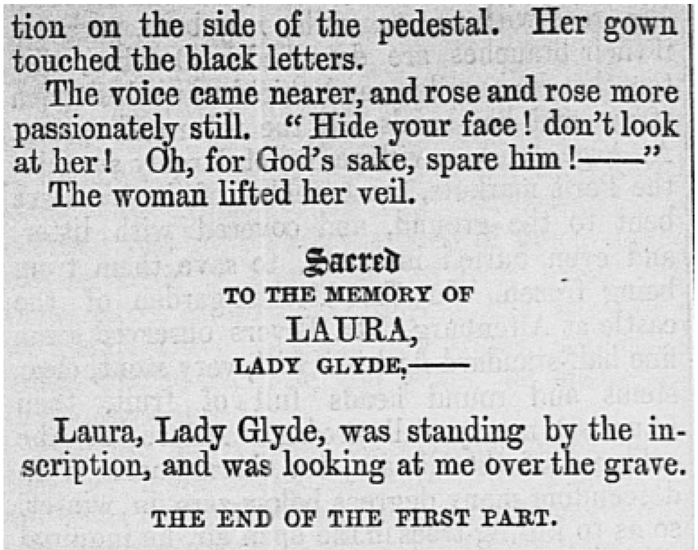
THE NARRATIVE OF THE TOMBSTONE.

Sacred
TO THE MEMORY OF
LAURA,
LADY GLYDE,
WIFE OF SIR PERCIVAL GLYDE, BART.,
OF BLACKWATER PARK, HAMPSHIRE;
AND
DAUGHTER OF THE LATE PHILIP FAIRLIE, ESQ.,
OF LIMMERIDGE HOUSE, IN THIS PARISH.
BORN, MARCH 27TH, 1829.
MARRIED, DECEMBER 23RD, 1849
DIED, JULY 28TH, 1850.

THE NARRATIVE OF WALTER HARTRIGHT, RESUMED.

I.

Not only is it blocked off, but the type also changes; it appears as an exact copy of the tombstone inscription, seemingly devoid of human intervention. But, of course, even though we ostensibly don't have a human mediator in this narration, the inscription didn't compose or inscribe itself, nor did it insert itself into the story. Written evidence, then, even when it appears in its most objective form, still reflects human motives and affects human lives. "The Narration" appears again within Walter's section. The inscription (once more visually represented in the serial installment with its unique type and layout) is inserted between the lines: "The woman lifted her veil" and "Laura, Lady Glyde" (*AYR* 129).



tion on the side of the pedestal. Her gown touched the black letters.

The voice came nearer, and rose and rose more passionately still. "Hide your face! don't look at her! Oh, for God's sake, spare him!——"

The woman lifted her veil.

Sacred
TO THE MEMORY OF
LAURA,
LADY GLYDE,——

Laura, Lady Glyde, was standing by the inscription, and was looking at me over the grave.

THE END OF THE FIRST PART.

Through this placement and the em-dash Walter adds to the end of the inscription, Walter fuses the writing with Laura herself. Laura is even depicted as being physically connected to the inscription: "Her gown touched the black letters" (410). The inscription defines Laura's personhood. Brantlinger argues that "in [*Lady Audley's Secret*] the most modern, instantaneous communications medium, the telegraph, carries deceit or helps to multiply secrecy, rather than the reverse" (*Reading* 150). In *The Woman in White*, the oldest of the included forms—rock inscription—proves as susceptible to falsehoods.

The tombstone inscription's unmatched authority speaks to the importance of inscription as a public form. Even though the medical certificate also records Laura's death, we don't hear about whether or how it is ever corrected. In contrast, we learn in detail how the inscription (which presumably holds less legal authority) is removed. I argue that the difference resides in the public authority of the inscription; Laura's identity is only truly restored with the erasure of the public-facing writing. Walter notes that the whole "throng of villagers collected round the grave" to "see the false inscription struck off the tombstone with their own eyes" (619). He reports:

> In a breathless silence, the first sharp stroke of the steel sounded on the marble. Not a voice was heard; not a soul moved, till those three words, 'Laura, Lady Glyde', had vanished from sight. Then, there was a great heave of relief among the crowd, as if they felt that the last fetters of the conspiracy had been struck off Laura herself—and the assembly slowly withdrew. It was late in the day before the whole inscription was erased. One line only was afterwards engraved in its place: 'Anne Catherick, July 25th, 1850.' (619)

The removal of Laura's name from the tombstone restores her identity within the community, even before the entirety of the inscription is erased. Walter's use of "erased" as opposed to "destroyed" or "carved away" underlines that writing is being undone.

The closer we are to uncovering Sir Percival's secret, the more our attention is directed to the material affordances of the page. Following a clue Mrs. Catherick lets slip about Sir Percival's mother, Walter suspects that the Baron's parents were not married. This leads him to examine the church register in Old Welmingham. His initial reading of the pages, however, is not illuminating. He disparages, "The Secret, which I have believed, until this moment, to be within my grasp, seemed now farther from my reach than ever" (501). He explains, "The register of the marriage of Sir Felix Glyde was in no respect remarkable, except for the narrowness of the space into which it was compressed at the bottom of the page," which Walter ascribes to a "want of room" (501). Little does Walter suspect at this point that this "want of room" afforded Sir Percival's original deceit.

A comparison with the duplicate register reveals that Sir Percival commits the fraud by taking advantage of the material conditions of the register. In place of Sir Felix Glyde's marriage, Walter discovers "a blank space—a space evidently left because it was too narrow to contain the entry of the marriages of the two brothers…That space told the whole story!....Here, at Knowlesbury, was the chance of committing the forgery, shown to me in the copy—and there, at Old Welmingham, was the forgery committed, in the register of the church!" (508). Suddenly, the copy becomes more authentic than the original. Mrs. Catherick's letter to Walter corroborates the reading that Sir Percival's crime was a matter of material opportunity. She explains that he initially planned to tear out a page (another affordance of books), thereby removing any positive evidence that his parents had not been married:

> But when he came to look privately at the register for himself, he found at the bottom of one of the pages for the year eighteen hundred and three a blank space left…The sight of this chance altered his plans. It was an opportunity he had never hoped for, or thought of—and he took it, you know how.... He was some time getting the ink the right colour (mixing it over and over again in pots and bottles of mine), and some time, afterwards, in practising the handwriting. But he succeeded in the end—and made an honest woman of his mother, after she was dead in her grave!" (531-532)

The fact that Walter doesn't suspect the forgery when he looks at the entry in the original register indicates that Sir Percival excelled in his mimicry of the ink and handwriting. Had it not been for the duplicate, which offered a frozen record of the register, the crime would have gone undetected.[25]

The material environment in which the church register resides further provides the opportunity for tampering. On his way back to the church, Walter reflects, "The copy of the register was sure to be safe in Mr. Wansborough's strong room. But the position of the original, in the vestry, was, as I had seen with my own eyes, anything but secure" (510-511). When

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[25] The church register is not the only place Sir Percival successfully commits a forgery. He also rewrites Anne's message to Laura in the sand in order to trap Laura into admitting that the two women met (298).

Walter first comes across the “large volume bound in greasy brown leather,” he remarks, “I was struck by the insecurity of the place in which the register was kept. The door of the press was worked and cracked with age; and the lock was of the smallest and commonest kind. I could have forced it easily with the walking-stick I carried in my hand” (499). Walter’s observations signal the events that are to follow. The walking stick reference evokes Sir Percival (in her narration, Marian observes that he is wont to making them) who will indeed break the lock, trapping himself in the church. Walter’s additional remark that “[s]urely, a book of such importance as this ought to be protected by a better lock, and kept carefully in an iron safe” (499) further foreshadows Sir Percival’s end. More than that, it raises questions prevalent to this dissertation’s next two chapters: how should texts should be valued and maintained for posterity?

Information Management: Serial Reading and Curation

The outpouring of texts precipitated a methodological crisis for Victorians who were well aware that more was being written then could be read and cataloged. In *Telegraphic Realism*, Menke takes up Charles Babbage’s 1837 claim that “[t]he air is itself one vast library, on whose pages are forever written all that man has ever said or woman whispered” to “offer an inkling of the late-Victorian fear of a world that threatens to overwhelm with data” (25). Such a world requires an information management system to organize and process materials. But what system would be best was debatable. An 1869 article in London’s *The Daily News* provocatively hopes that “human labor of the literary sort may be in part superseded by machinery” to cope with the “illimitable mass” of information (“Foreign” 5). It maintains, “Machinery has done wonders, and when we think of what literature is becoming, it is certainly to be wished that we could read it by machinery, and by machinery digest it. (5). While digital humanists are currently negotiating the role of machines in literary analysis (and in the coda I will address the challenges Victorianists face in moving from print and pre-print to electronic media), Victorians still had to rely on their own cognitive capacities.

The Woman in White plays with information management on the level of both content (the plot revolves around characters systematically ordering texts) and form (Collins presents the novel as a curated set of testimonies), encouraging readers to reflect on methods of narrative arrangement. In the 1860 preface to the novel, Collins writes, "An experiment is attempted in this novel, which has not (so far as I know) been hitherto tried in fiction. The story of the book is told throughout by the characters of the book. They are all placed in different positions along the chain of events; and they all take the chain up in turn, and carry it on to the end" (3). While the method of execution might have been novel, with respect to its use of a plethora of text types for its narrations, the medium through which it was expressed—the serial novel—was quite familiar to nineteenth-century readers.

Serial reading presents a recognizable model for how to gather information in a period of media overload.[26] It requires readers to accumulate and stitch together bits of information over interrupted lengths of time. Although serial novels—which later become bound, complete entities—seem to promise an eventual mastery of information that is unrealistic, the act of reading them negates the illusion. As Katie Lanning demonstrates in "Reading *The Moonstone* in *All the Year Round*," the periodical context encourages readers to draw connections among serial installments and other miscellany in the same issue. The number of connections that can be made are immeasurable, and with so much being printed, readers can't possibly read everything. Linda Hughes argues, "Periodicals, more than any other print form, made Victoria's reign the first mass-media era" (2), because of their density. To achieve some kind of narrative coherence, we have to read strategically.

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[26] See Julia M. Chavez for a discussion of different educational benefits that could be associated with the "wandering mode of reading" (142) serialization promoted.

For Collins, this strategic reading entails a negotiation of disparate narrative voices and material forms. Readers become curators who must decide what information to keep and what to discard. In the 1860 preface, Collins instructs us to see the individual narrations as part of a larger collection: "No small portion of this space is occupied by hundreds of little 'connecting links', of trifling value in themselves, but of the utmost importance in maintaining the smoothness, the reality, and the probability of the entire narrative" (4). Characters themselves construct meaning by establishing links across testimonies. Walter, on the edge of discovering who Anne's father is, reflects, "Taken by itself, this statement [a letter from Major Donthorne] was, perhaps, of little positive value—but, taken in connexion with certain facts, every one of which either Marian or I knew to be true, suggested one plain conclusion that was, to our minds, irresistible" (553). The unraveling of Anne's parentage provides readers with a condensed view of how mysteries are solved throughout the novel: "a multitude of small considerations," "taken in connexion with certain facts," are "massed together" (552). While each individual text contains information on its surface, deeper (Walter would say truer) meanings emerge through conjunctive readings.

The Woman in White oscillates between leaving us to draw our own conclusions and overtly directing our readings. If we treat the novel as a guide for how to approach multiple forms of information delivery, this oscillation functions as a kind of check-in, a verification that we have been picking up on the right cues. Because most of the narrations are retrospective, characters generally know when they or others have misread situations, and despite the guidelines Walter sets forth, they occasionally signal how a passage should be read. During

Gilmore's narration, for instance, he prepares readers to keep Laura's fortune foremost in our minds: "I warn all readers of these lines that Miss Fairlie's inheritance is a very serious part of Miss Fairlie's story; and that Mr. Gilmore's experience, in this particular, must be their experience also, if they wish to understand the narratives which are yet to come" (147). Other times, we are steered away from focusing events. Mrs. Michelson, in her description of the time following Laura's departure from Blackwater Park, writes, "I've been informed that the particulars of Miss Halcombe's waking, and of what passed between us when she found me sitting by her bedside, are not material for the purpose which is to be answered by the present narrative" (397). Mrs. Michelson's disclosure both directs our attention away from Marian's reaction to the news that her sister has died and reminds us of the overarching frame of the story. Her narration serves a larger narrative, one Walter defines.

The novel's narrators can be divided into two types: consistently sharp and consistently flawed. By identifying the sharp characters, we're given a compass for evaluating the others. Walter, one of the sharpest narrators (perhaps the effect of his being the principal narrator), models the deductive process. He explains, "I could not account to myself for the circumstance of the clerk's guilty wife voluntarily living out all her after-existence on the scene of her disgrace. The woman's own reported statement that she had taken this strange course as a practical assertion of her innocence, did not satisfy me" (471). The cause for his dissatisfaction is that "[i]t seemed, to [his] mind, more natural and more probable to assume that she was not so completely a free agent in this matter as she had herself asserted. In that case, who was the likeliest person to possess the power of compelling her to remain at Welmingham?" (471). Walter answers his own question by extrapolating from facts: "The person unquestionably from whom she derived the means of living. She had refused assistance from her husband, she had no adequate resources of her own, she was a friendless, degraded woman: from what source should she derive help, but from the source at which report pointed—Sir Percival Glyde?" (471). The step-by-step process by which Walter evaluates Mrs. Clements's narrative demonstrates how we can reconstitute pieces of a story to arrive at alternative readings. Importantly, Walter's alterative readings are not immediately confirmed; they are, as Caroline Levine argues, hypotheses that will be tested over the course of the novel. The interval between hypothesis and confirmation provides us with the opportunity to read for additional clues that will support, refute, or amend the proposed reading.

Unlike mystery stories that use red *herring*s to lead readers to false deductions, *The Woman in White* doesn't attempt to misinform us. Rather, the novel endeavors to teach us how to cull information together correctly. While we are excitedly held in suspense over the connection between Fosco and Pesca or Sir Percival Glyde and Anne Catherick, we are not actively misled to believe one explanation over another—though the novel provides cautionary examples of characters who are intentionally misled with writing. In the latter case, we are provided with two competing narratives early on: Sir Percival is Anne's father or he is not. Mrs. Clements implies that there was a romantic affair of which Anne is the byproduct. But Walter, as we've seen, does not fully accept Mrs. Clements's account. He agrees that Mr. Catherick is not Anne's father, but he remains skeptical as to who might be, so he attempts to gather more information. He asks Mrs. Clements if there is a personal resemblance between Anne and Sir Percival (there is not). He follows with a question about where Mrs. Catherick and the Baronet each resided prior to Old Welmingham. Even though the resulting answers do not foreclose the possibility that Sir Percival is Anne's father, they are suggestive enough that "the impression on [Walter's] mind was now decidedly adverse to the opinion that Sir Percival was Anne's father, and decidedly favourable to the conclusion that the secret of his stolen interviews with Mrs. Catherick was entirely unconnected with the disgrace which the woman had inflicted" (473). The question of Anne's father is subsequently dropped for the next couple hundred pages, leaving us to form our own hypotheses: agree with Mrs. Clements (whose conviction is grounded in an observed tête-à-tête between the suspected couple) or with Walter (who discerns a different connection between Sir Percival and Mrs. Catherick and who has been an astute reader up to this point in the story). Beth Palmer observes that *Lady Audley's Secret* likewise encourages readers both to follow the de facto detective's processes and "to identify their own reading processes as serial readers…Both are piecing together paper chains" (88). Through this setup, "Braddon's readers, aligned with Robert, are invited to see themselves as confident navigators of the story and its wider print context" (88). I argue that Collins extends this invitation—and preparation—by including not only a variety of media but also a mix of narrators whose perspectives conflict.

Not all narrators have Walter's dependable sharpness; if they did, the novel wouldn't be much of a guide for sorting through an overabundance of potentially deceptive information. Even though characters share the narration of the story, their portions are uneven—both in terms of length and reliability. To disentangle *The Woman in White*'s many mysteries, readers must learn to navigate across narrative voices without the overt assistance of Walter or Marian. Each of the eleven narrators offers information that is key to deciphering one or more mysteries, but some do so unwittingly. Mr. Fairlie, for instance, doesn't see what the point is in recording his conversation with a maid, and Eliza Michelson maintains a steadfast trust in the Count. To takeaway the right clues from these narrators, we should read for patterns across them. Both Mr. Fairlie and Mrs. Michelson note what they perceive to be forgetfulness on the part of the Count. Mr. Fairlie yields to Fosco's request to invite Laura to Limmeridge House: "There was not the least danger of the invitation being accepted, for there was not the least chance that Laura would consent to leave Blackwater Park, while Marian was lying there ill. How this charmingly convenient obstacle could have escaped the officious penetration of the Count, it was impossible to conceive—but it *had* escaped him" (355). Mr. Fairlie may celebrate the Count's "forgetfulness," but we who have witnessed (via Marian's journal) Fosco's character know that he is a calculating man. It is indeed "impossible to conceive" that he would have overlooked Laura's devotion to Marian. Mrs. Michelson—who even in retrospect remains "quite unshaken" in her "persuasion of the Count's innocence" (398)—offers a similar description of Fosco. Impatient with being kept from Marian, Laura attempts to rush into her sickroom. Mrs. Michelson reports, "Instead of stopping her, the Count moved into the sitting-room, and made way for her to go in. On all other occasions, he was the last man in the world to forget anything; but, in the surprise of the moment, he apparently forgot the danger of infection from typhus, and the urgent necessity of forcing Lady Glyde to take proper care of herself" (370). We can half agree with Mrs. Michelson's report here; the Count is indeed "the last man in the world to forget anything." Because we do not share Mrs. Michelson's bias toward Fosco, we are not inclined to read this moment as exceptional, especially because we have just heard from Mr. Fairlie that Fosco was uncharacteristically "forgetful" in their encounter together. Individually, these scenes might represent anomalous behavior, but together, they form "connecting links" and suggest that we should read the two narrations with a skeptical eye.

In addition to repetition across narrations, repetition within individual sections also functions as a guide for reading. With Mr. Fairlie, a negligently laissez-faire character, Collins plays up his lethargic, self-interestedness such that his narration is punctuated with interruptions. Mr. Fairlie frequently pauses to bemoan his lot or recover his energy. As a consequence of these interruptions, he loses his place and repeats himself at what prove to be important events in the story. One of the pivotal reveals contained in Mr. Fairlie's narrative (and later explained in the Count's) is that Madame Fosco drugs Laura's maid Fanny in order to tamper with letters Marian had given her. But unlike Walter or Marian (who would have analyzed the implications of the story), Fairlie doesn't draw conclusions, apart from the impact Fanny has had on his nerves. He reports that Fanny stated:

> [T]he Countess insisted on making the tea, and carried her ridiculous ostentation of humility so far as to take one cup herself, and to insist on the girl's taking the other. The girl drank the tea; and, according to her own account, solemnised the extraordinary occasion, five minutes afterwards, by fainting dead away, for the first time in her life. Here again, I use her own words. Louis thinks they were accompanied by an increased secretion of tears. I can't say, myself. The effort of listening being quite as much as I could manage, my eyes were closed. (342)

What Mr. Fairlie reads as a "ridiculous ostentation of humility," readers should see as a calculated move to ensure Fanny drinks from the drugged glass. But lest that escape our attention, Collins includes the scene twice. Mr. Fairlie recaps, "Where did I leave off? Ah, yes—she fainted, after drinking a cup of tea with the Countess: a proceeding which might have interested me, if I had been a medical man; but, being nothing of the sort, I felt bored by hearing of it, nothing more" (342-343). This concise recap of the scene, coupled with the flippant reference to "a medical man," further emphasizes that Fanny was drugged. Since Mr. Fairlie declines to comment on the passage's implications, it remains with readers to draw out clues and develop our own explanation.

Despite Mrs. Michelson's unwavering faith in the Count's character, her grammatical asides often reveal the moments where we should be suspicious of Fosco and his co-conspirator, Sir Percival. Mrs. Michelson's narration covers the sisters' final days at Blackwater Park. When Marian first shows signs of recovering from her illness, Mrs. Michelson notes, "the Count (I cannot imagine why) lost all the self-control he had so judiciously preserved on former occasions, and taunted the doctor, over and over again, with his mistake about the fever, when it changed to typhus" (373). Mrs. Michelson may be unable (or unwilling) to hazard a guess as to why Fosco behaves as he does, but her parenthetical disavowal induces readers to speculate.[27] Since Mrs. Michelson is only too ready to credit the Count with meritorious intentions, her inability to imagine his motives indicates that they are unquestionably underhanded. The serial installment concludes here, leaving readers time to speculate as to what the true motive might have been. In the next serial installment, Laura boldly offers an explanation, "The Count knew Mr. Dawson would never consent to Marion's taking a journey–he purposely insulted the doctor to get him out of the house" (385). Laura supplies the answer Mrs. Michelson was unwilling to give herself. This moment speaks to Laura's (often downplayed) shrewdness, marking her as a character whose impressions can be trusted, particularly as Fosco is concerned.[28] After Laura makes derogative remarks about the Count (she essentially accuses him of imprisoning Marian), Mrs. Michelson interjects, "I thought it right, at this point, to mention that Miss Halcombe had already gone on to Cumberland, according to Sir Percival's account of the matter" (386). The parenthetical "at this point" suggests that Mrs. Michelson is endeavoring to defend the Count, moving attention away from him and to Sir Percival. The add-on at the end of the sentence—which Mrs. Michelson adds as a surety that Marian is back in Limmeridge House—serves as a reminder that we only have Sir Percival's explanation for Marian's absence. Even if Mrs. Michelson, whom we know is a flawed reader in matters that involve the Fosco, isn't suspicious, we should not be quick to accept his or her account unreservedly. Instead, we should follow Laura's example and be "afraid to believe it" (386).

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[27] We see another example of this in Mrs. Michelson's response to her hopeless errand of securing a house in Torquay. She observes, "Every one must feel, what I have felt myself since that time, that these circumstances were more than unusual — they were almost suspicious" (378). The parenthetical indicates that, in retrospection, Mrs. Michelson has viewed this moment as important to the events that followed after, and as a result, we as readers should pay attention the passage. The fact that she—one of Fosco's most enthusiastic defenders—is willing to go so far as to reveal misgivings that border on suspicion suggests that we should be tenfold more suspicious of Fosco's and Sir Percival's motives.

[28] Laura is the first character to identify Fosco as a spy. Hartright devalues her acumen, though, when he remarks that she "had applied the word to him [Fosco] at hazard, in natural anger at his proceedings towards herself. I applied it to him, with the deliberate conviction that his vocation in life was the vocation of a Spy" (564). While Hartright is willing to credit Marian (who is repeatedly described in masculine terms) with sound reasoning, he is unwilling to do so with Laura, attributing her judgment to an emotional response.

The fact that Walter and Marian are unfailing in their interpretations of people and events establishes them as characters we can learn from, though we should remember that we're reading their master narrative (Sir Percival might present them differently). While sharpness is a trait of the heroes of the novel, it is also a distinguishing characteristic of the lead villain, underlying the power that comes with being able to parse information in a world increasingly driven by text. Fosco's strength as a conspirator lies in his ability to read and assess. Early on, Marian observes the contrast between Sir Percival's hot-tempered response to situations and Fosco's slower, measured approach. Fosco himself critiques his partner for failing to interpret correctly: "Where are your eyes? Can you look at Miss Halcombe, and not see that she has the foresight and the resolution of a man?" (324). We see this divergence again during the gentlemen's nighttime tête-à-tête. Sir Percival asks, "Who can read the letter [Anne] hid in the sand, and not see that my wife is in possession of the secret, deny it as she may?" (330). The question is, as far as Sir Percival is concerned, rhetorical; the Baron has already convinced himself beyond reason that his secret has been exposed and that the letter proves it. Fosco's response, however, is not so conclusive: "One moment, Percival. If Lady Glyde does know the secret, she must know also that it is a compromising secret for *you*. As your wife, surely it is in her interest to keep it?" (331). Fosco's use of the conditional suggests that he has reservations about Sir Percival's interpretation. Fosco bases his moves and countermoves on the information he is able to parse correctly; this is what makes him a dangerous adversary.

Conclusion: The Status of Writing

Despite the potential for writing to bear false testimony, it remains *the* source for information in *The Woman in White*. After his perusal of the copied—and yet more authentic—church register, Walter explains, "My first necessity was to secure positive evidence, in writing, of the discovery that I had just made" (510). His discovery—that Sir Percival has tampered with the register—undermines the authority of writing, because it shows that it can be used to deceive. Still, even in this moment, Walter maintains the need to obtain written evidence to document the crime. Marian records the nighttime conversation between the Count and Sir Percival with the same urgency in her journal: "[T]he words those two men had said to each other, would furnish us, not only with our justification for leaving the house, but with our weapons of defence against them as well. I recall the impulse that awakened in me to preserve those words in writing, exactly as they were spoken, while the time was my own" (335). The novel presents writing as such a strong marker of proof that only other writing can counter it. We see this over and over again. When Walter considers returning with Laura to Limmeridge even though he hasn't yet proven the discrepancy in the dates, he ultimately concludes that the effort would only resort in "an excellent foundation for a trial in a court of law" (559). Even if the servants recognize Laura and her handwriting could be identified, Walter questions whether "the recognition and the handwriting [would] prove her identity…against the evidence of her aunt, against the evidence of the medical certificate, against the fact of the funeral and the fact of the inscription on the tomb?

No!” (559).[29] The servants’ recognition would be countered by Madame Fosco and the funeral, while Laura’s handwriting would be disputed by the medical certificate and the inscription. Walter’s switch from “evidence” to “fact” implies that the inscription, unlike the certificate, is indisputable. Yet, as later events show, the inscription itself is capable of being erased.

By calling our attention to the instability of information derived from texts, *The Woman in White* prepares readers for a world that contains an increasing multiplicity of forms. The tombstone inscription, in Fosco’s telling, testifies to Laura’s death. In Walter’s account, it is a falsehood. Whoever controls the narrative frame drives interpretation. This is why we see Mr. Kyrle change from incredulous to credulous and why our own interpretations of passages alter over the course of the novel. Henry James argues that Collins’s novels “are massive and elaborate constructions—monuments of mosaic work, for the proper mastery of which it would seem, at first, that an index and note-book were required” (593). Reading Collins’s novels is an act of curation or information management; the novels are *constructions, mosaics* that require assembly and a method of cataloging to understand them.

In this dissertation, I argue that Victorian authors looked to histories of pre-print to explore the ramifications of media shifts on the status of writing. With *She*, we will see that older material forms shape our knowledge of human history. Collections of inscriptions link us to former societies and challenge our perceptions of the past. In *Romola*, the industrialization of writing threatens this link. With the outflow of print, “truth” becomes even more circumspect, even more capricious. The preservation of older material forms falls second to investments in the production and circulation of emerging forms, as pre-print, archival collections are dismantled. *The Woman in White* picks up dismantled texts and shows how they can be rearranged to produce contradictory meanings. Older forms of writing prove as unstable, as mediated as emerging communication technologies, with the added danger that their readers have become complacent with time. To navigate in a world where material forms and the information they convey are in flux, readers must learn how to become curators.

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[29] Five years prior to the publication of *The Woman in White*, the *Common Law Procedure Act* of 1854 was passed in England. This act allowed for the comparison of disputed writings against ones the Judge approves of as genuine (1317)

CHAPTER 2

Media Matters: From Manuscripts to Print in *Romola*

The epilogue to George Eliot's historical novel *Romola* (1862-1863) has garnered special attention for its reversal of traditional domestic norms, with the eponymous heroine assuming the responsibility for her deceased husband's mistress and children.[30] But there is another dimension to the novel's ending that is worth exploring in more detail. Running concurrently to the novel's overarching domestic narrative is one on the history of textual media. The epilogue is no different. The household scene readers encounter foregrounds reading practices. When not distracted by an "inquisitive fly," Lillo, one of the children, sits with a "finely-printed copy of Petrarch which he kept open at one place, as if he were learning something by heart" (546). Taken by itself, the description might seem innocuous enough; however, as the capstone to a novel that deeply and repeatedly investigates the transition from manuscripts to print, this moment offers a possible meeting point between the two media types and the methods of engagement they promote. Among the critiques characters levy against print in the novel are that it is prone to error and produced quickly for undiscerning readers.[31] Manuscripts, meanwhile, are produced slowly by scholars and digested by their readers to the point of memorization. The scene with Lillo gestures toward a possible future in which the succeeding generation merges the two cultures. "Finely-printed" suggests a careful model of print production, and Lillo's rote engagement with the book echoes the reading practices *Romola* associated with manuscripts. Despite raising the potential for the two cultures—manuscript and print—to blend in future generations, the novel withholds an unambiguously promising future, for Lillo does show a stronger "air of interest" (546) in the fly than in the book, and he balks at Romola's suggestion that he become a scholar. The open-ended conclusion syncs with mid-Victorian uncertainty over how their own developing materials forms would—or would not—become incorporated and preserved.

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[30] For a discussion of gender, see Alison Booth and Robin Sheets.

[31] While manuscripts are also prone to human error (a fact the novel glosses over), print enables the replication of errors on a larger scale. For Bardo, printers are also more susceptible to errors than the scholars who have devoted their lives to their texts.

The fifteenth-century setting coupled with the nineteenth-century serial run in the *Cornhill* uniquely positions *Romola* inside periods that were important not only for the development of print but also for reading practices. The fifteenth century witnessed the transition from the scroll to the "navigable book." Early manuscript books, or codices, introduced a temporally disjointed style of reading that countered the linear, continuous reading that older forms such as the scroll prescribed. Peter Stallybrass explains, "One cannot move easily back and forth between distant points on a scroll. But it is precisely such movement back and forth that the book permits. It not only allows for discontinuous reading; it encourages it. Indeed, it may even enforce it" (46). While the narrative of *Romola* is set during the nascent time of "discontinuous reading," the book itself belongs to the nineteenth century, a period that witnessed cheaper paper, serialized novels, and educational reforms that combined to produce an explosion of print and newly literate readerships.[32]

If, as John Stuart Mill declares, the nineteenth century should be defined as "an age of transition" (20), then *Romola*, with its fifteenth-century setting, is unexpectedly one of the most emblematic novels of the Victorian period. Transition touches every level of the plot.[33] The narrative opens onto a scene of governmental transition, with Lorenzo de Medici's death igniting a political contest between the old Medici vanguard, the King of France, and a rising populist party. Fueling the political upheaval, Fra Girolamo Savonarola, the Prior of San Marco, advocates for a popular Republic and renounces Pope Alexander, setting Florence at odds with Rome. At the same time, Savonarola's renunciation of worldly possessions upturns social practices, prompting characters to strip themselves of perceived vanities, from jewelry and rouge to Greco-Roman literature.

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[32] The periodical format *Romola*'s readers encountered contained its own reading constraints, paradoxically sharing traits with both the scroll and the codex. With serial releases, readers could only read up to whatever the latest installment was, a temporal and physical constraint that, on the one hand, limited their reading in a manner analogous to that of scrolls—readers couldn't jump ahead. On the other hand, unlike with scroll reading where you could proceed from start to finish, the release of one installment at a time precluded unrestricted continuous reading. Unless readers saved all of the serial installments until the end of the print run and read them back-to-back or waited for the volume publication, they were forced to take breaks of at least the length of one month (in the case of *Romola*) between releases. Serial publishing also facilitated discontinuous reading in the case of readers who purchased installments irregularly.

For most of the novel's transitions, texts determine social outcomes. Bardo di Bardi's manuscript library—comprised of copies of the Greco-Roman texts that Savonarola's followers burn—becomes the means of uniting and estranging Romola de Bardi from her husband Tito Melema, an alleged scholar who contributes to the production of both manuscripts and printed books. Tito himself transitions in status from a foreign stranger to a political star, managing the written correspondence of the major factions in Florence. Leveraging his position, he arranges for the interception of the handwritten letter that precipitates Savonarola's imprisonment. A seized letter also prompts the arrest of Romola's godfather and his companions. Calvo Baldassarre, the adoptive father Tito publicly rejects, is a scholar-turned-criminal whose command of writing wavers during his quest for revenge, ultimately failing him and placing his sanity in question. By locating texts—which are themselves undergoing a material shift in the novel—at the center of social unrest, *Romola* asks its characters as well as its readers to grapple with the changing social dynamics that media transformations foster.

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[33] Eliot even retroactively describes *Romola* as having marked a transition in her life. According to John Walter Cross, "She told me she could put her finger on it [*Romola*] as marking a well-defined transition in her life. In her own words, 'I began it a young woman—I finished it an old woman'" (255). Critics also conventionally identify the novel as separating Eliot's early and later novels. Mark Turner points out that the illustrations that accompanied the novel's serialization, which were derived from high-quality wood-block engravings, were unique to *The Cornhill Magazine* and helped establish it as a forerunner in a larger technological shift toward print journalism in the latter half of the nineteenth century (18). *Romola*'s own material format, then, echoes its thematic content; it is a novel that thinks about the effects of print transitions at the same time that it is itself contributing to a moment of transition.

Current-day scholars and the public alike tend to cast old and new media as antagonistic. Paul Duguid identifies two "futurological tropes" that pervade media discussions today: supersession, which presumes that "each new technological type vanquishes or subsumes its predecessors," and liberation, which posits that new technologies will provide more direct, less mediated access to information (65). These reductive tropes drive panic that the advent of Kindles (and before the Kindle, the phonograph and motion picture) portends the death of printed books. However, media replacement is never instantaneous and seldom absolute. MIT's *Media in Transition* series responds to Duguid and challenges "the idea that new technologies displace older systems with decisive suddenness" (Thorburn and Jenkins 2). Instead, the essays "conceive of media change as an accretive, gradual process" (2), where "each medium is touched by and in turn touches its neighbors and rivals" (11). Old and new media engage in a period of co-definition; it is within such a period that *Romola* situates itself. Current criticism on media developments in the Victorian period privileges the phonograph, photograph, telegraph, and telephone, with print functioning as the older media against which these new communication technologies are measured.[34] However, I argue that Victorians were also invested in looking to the past to interrogate their rapidly changing media ecology. In anticipation of Carolyn Marvin's call to consider "when old technologies were new" to better understand today's media, the Victorians looked to the emergence of older material forms to frame the stakes of nineteenth-century technological transformations.[35]

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[34] See Priscilla Coit Murphy (phonograph), Laura B. Schiavo (photography), Katherine Stubbs (telegraph), and Diane Zimmerman Umble (telephone).

[35] The old technologies Marvin looks at include the telegraph, telephone, and phonograph.

In "The Past and Future Lives of Writing in Victorian Fiction," I claim that scholarly attention to nineteenth-century media has, by privileging new media that was produced in the period, focused on production and dissemination, underserving issues of preservation. In this chapter, I will show that this is not a modern tendency; Eliot's characters similarly segment the issues according to material format. When speaking of his manuscript archive, Bardo's thoughts are absorbed in their futurity: how will they be maintained? Will they remain a collection? When it comes to printed books, Bardo shifts to a critique of production: printers introduce errors in the texts. But rather than segmenting these issues into separate conversations, *Romola* brings them together; in doing so, the novel makes a case for the continued social value of older media. The ostensibly quick and capricious production and circulation of print (production introduces errors, circulation spreads contradictory information that was created to advance changeable popular perspectives) cannot be depended upon for reliable information. In fact, relying upon it, as characters do in the case of Savonarola's confession, proves dangerous. By contrast, Bardo's library is depicted as having great scholastic value, but because Tito is not willing to invest in its preservation, the archive is dismantled. Much as we should not depend only on digital surrogates as replacements of printed books today, the juxtaposition of old and new media in *Romola* reinforces that we should both interrogate our reliance on new material forms for information and maintain older forms, at the very least until the reliability and sustainability of the former can be established.

As a genre, the historical novel provides a rich vehicle for thinking through our interactions with media. George Lukács's seminal study of the genre celebrates the new "historical faithfulness" that distinguishes early nineteenth-century fiction, exemplified in Walter Scott's characters' depictions. Looking midcentury, Richard Menke contends that in contrast to

Scott's novels, which separate "media awareness" from "historical consciousness," Charles Dickens's *A Tale of Two Cities* (1859) "suggests a recognition of media change as an inescapable feature of modern history" (106). While Menke restricts his observation to *A Tale*, I would like to point out that we see this investment in media transitions in a cluster of historical novels published in the same five-year span. William Makepeace Thackeray's *The Virginians, A Tale of the Last Century* (1857-1859) tracks the abundance of written and printed information on both sides of the Atlantic during the American Revolution, with one character asking (in Bardo fashion) the pivotal question, "what is the world come to, with your printers[?]" (320). Charles Reade's *The Cloister and the Hearth, A Tale of the Middle Ages* (1861) jumps further back in time and recounts the life of a fifteenth-century scribe who competes with the printing press for commissions, an unfavorable contest, "for man may not vie with iron" (149).[36] The surge of attention to the shift from pre-print to print during pivotal moments in history speaks to Victorians' conceptual use of older forms to imagine what the implications of their own media transformations might be.

In "Silly Novels by Lady Novelists" (1856), Eliot theorizes about the limitations of historical fiction; what she identifies, however, further speaks to the genre's ability to leverage the past to interrogate the present. She explains, "The finest effort to reanimate the past is of course only approximative—is always more or less an infusion of the modern spirit into the ancient form" (458). *Romola* enacts that sentiment by using prior media transitions to think through modern shifts. Alexander Welsh's foundational *George Eliot and Blackmail* situates *Romola* within the context of the Victorian information revolution by looking at character-to-character relationships, with a particular focus on how personal secrets are uncovered. However,

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[36] In one scene that sums up the antagonist relationship between writing and print, the scribe comes across a copy of Lactantius. At first, he thinks it was written. Upon closer discovery, he remarks: "I am sped; mine enemy is at the door. The press is in Rome" (172).

I argue that the novel's engagement with the information revolution is not about person-to-person relationships but rather is about our relationship with texts, which is primary and ultimately structures our relationships with one another. Even in Wilkie Collins's *The Woman in White* (1859-1860), which is very much about secrets, it is our textual identity—formed through an assemblage of writing, from letters to entries in church registers—that holds social, legal significance. Whereas Collins's novel explores how that identity is constructed in the present, *Romola* looks at how it might extend into the future. Through the circulation of writing in the novel (some of which refers to "real" texts such as Savonarola's letters), readers are drawn into and out of the storyworld. This back-and-forth action encourages reflection on the durability and vulnerability of texts in both the fifteenth and nineteenth centuries.

For Victorian and current critics alike, George Eliot's historical novel has seemed strangely detached from the author's usual engagement with nineteenth-century issues such as the railway, Industrial Revolution, Protestantism, and social reform. Although the fifteenth-century, Florentine backdrop disappointed contemporary readers who were accustomed to the author's pastoral English settings, the switch facilitated Eliot's study of material forms in the Victorian period by providing her with an analogous moment of media transition: the print revolution.[37] Early modern Florentines, like their Victorian successors, experienced an outpouring of print that was fueled by technological advancements. A leader in manuscript production as well as an early adopter of the printing press, Florence was a media battleground; texts competed for both audiences and space on shelves (Nuovo 2). By focusing on the novel's attention to the materiality of texts and the channels by which they are created, circulated, and preserved, I demonstrate that Eliot’s novel remains deeply engaged with its contemporary moment and offers a lens through which we can consider the challenges digitization poses today.

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[37] Rather than an absolute overthrow, as "revolution" might suggest, the turn to print was a gradual transition; a robust manuscript culture persisted into the late eighteenth, early nineteenth century. The "end" date for manuscript culture is one that is increasingly pushed forward in time. See Rachael Scarborough King, who herself extends manuscript culture into the nineteenth century, for an overview of how scholars have tracked manuscript culture.

The Order of Old Media: Slow Writing and the Archive

Much as *The Woman in White* offers narrator Walter Hartright as a guide for navigating the media ecology of the mid-nineteenth century, the Proem that begins George Eliot’s *Romola* (1862-1863) models how to engage critically with the past in order to analyze the present. The narrator starts by walking readers through a scenario in which we are called on to imagine a transitional moment in human history: Columbus’s 1492 voyage. Even though the narrator begins with “[m]ore than three centuries and a half ago” (3)—a clause that marks from the outset readers’ temporal distance from Columbus’s voyage—she proceeds to emphasize the continued similarities rather than the differences between the fifteenth and nineteenth centuries. Columbus “saw nearly the same outline of firm land and unstable sea—saw the same great mountain shadows on the same valleys as he has seen to-day…saw the domes and spires of cities rising…in the same spots where they rise to-day” (3). And it is not just the physical landscape that has remained unchanged: “[A]s the faint light of his [Columbus’s] course pierced into the dwellings of men, it fell, as now, on the rosy warmth of nestling children; on the haggard waking of sorrow and sickness….[T]he life-currents that ebb and flow in human hearts, pulsate to the same great needs, the same great loves and terrors” (3). This early affirmation of similarities presents a picture of stability and gradual change, if change occurs at all. The sameness in both geography and the human condition establishes the possibility of using the past—the fifteenth-century past specifically—as an analog for thinking about the present.

More than that, the repetition makes the only two departures from the pattern even more striking: geographical formations and human needs might not have changed, but forms of communication and social life have. It is this linkage between material forms and social life that *Romola* asks its readers to interrogate. Following Columbus, the narrator introduces a fifteenth-century Florentine spirit who rises to walk through the streets of modern Italy. When the spirit considers the geography around him, "the sense of familiarity is so much stronger than the perception of change, that he thinks it might be possible to descend once more among the streets" (4). He assumes, "There is knowledge…to be had in the streets below…in front of the churches, and under the sheltering Loggie, where surely our citizens have still their gossips and debates, their bitter and merry jests as of old. For are not the well-remembered buildings all there?" (9). However, the narrator warns this spirit—who had himself live through the shift from manuscripts to print—that despite the relative sameness of geography and human desires, "the changes are great" (9). "The speech of [modern] Florentines would sound as a riddle" to him and "inquiries into scholarship, official or monastic," would confuse him (9).[38] Modes of communication and perceived knowledge go hand-in-hand; changes to one promote changes in the other. *Romola* calls on readers to consider how specific material forms—manuscripts, letters, printed pamphlets—contribute to social (in)stability.

From the outset, *Romola* steeps manuscripts and their creators in a long-durée view of history, a depiction that reinforces the preservation-focus of manuscript culture. First introduced to readers by way of his ancestral tree—which extends across centuries—Bardo is described as having "inherited the old family pride and energy; the old love of pre-eminence, [and] the old desire to leave a lasting track of his footsteps on the fast-whirling earth (44). The anaphora firmly roots Bardo in a line of succession and speaks to a slowness and orderliness that I argue *Romola* ascribes to manuscript culture. Manuscripts and their creators are born into a long history that aims—as "a lasting track" gestures—to continue into the future.[39] Bardo's "deep-veined hand," which has been "cramped by much copying of manuscripts" (45), further embodies a sense of creation through slow repetition. Even Bardo's work is derivative, copies painstakingly produced from preceding texts. Thinking of succession as paramount to the continuation of manuscript culture also gives us a frame in which to consider Bardo's frequent lament that his son refuses to carry on his work. Although Romola performs the work in her brother's place, Bardo mistakenly entrusts Tito with the task when the opportunity presents itself. Tito, the Greek outsider, is the novel's emblematic defector at both the domestic and state levels—he disowns his father, discards his marriage vows (to both Romola and Tessa), forsakes his promise to Bardo, and exchanges political alliances according to whatever will yield him the most profit. His rejection of ties to the past sets him in stark contrast to Bardo and makes him a threat to rather than a protector of manuscript culture. This rejection of ties emerges as a point of contention for Bardo with printed books as well. He does acknowledge them as (however unwelcome) successors to manuscripts when he claims: "And even these mechanical printers who threaten to make learning a base and vulgar thing—even they must depend on the manuscripts over which we scholars have bent" (48). These remarks highlight the generational interconnectedness of the printing market; texts link one generation of printing with another. New books are typed based on old manuscripts. The problem for Bardo lies in what he sees as print's refusal to acknowledge that succession and history.

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[38] The narrator reveals that "in his prime, [the spirit] had been eager for the most correct manuscripts…and in his old age he had made haste to look at the first sheets of that fine Homer which was among the early glories of the Florentine press" (7). The description establishes a series of dualities—youth and old age, manuscripts and print, classical text and new technology—that foreground the novel's interest in responses to material forms over time.

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[39] Romola reiterates this ambition in the epilogue when she tells Lillo that her father desired to "have made his learning of greater use to men, so that he might still have lived in his works after he was in his grave" (547).

Unlike in *The Woman in White* where the register copy proves more authentic than the original, in *Romola*, the possibility of a copy—and not just any copy, but a printed copy—portends erasure. Written copies do not trigger the same kind of effacement; Bardo's manuscripts, after all, are the very means by which he hopes to preserve his name. The difference resides in the customs surrounding production. Print disrupts established ways of crediting texts. Bardo explains, "For even if I were to yield to the wish of Aldo Manuzio when he sets up his press at Venice, and give him the aid of my annotated manuscripts, I know well what would be the result: some other scholar's name would stand on the title-page of the edition" (53). Bardo's primary concern here is that printed books will supplant his written labor; the printer's name will replace the writer's. Fifteenth-century publication methods legitimate this apprehension. Elizabeth Eisenstein notes, "As self-serving publicists, early printers issued book lists, circulars and broadsides. They put their firm's name, emblem, and shop address on the front page of their books. Indeed, their use of title pages entailed a significant reversal of scribal procedures; they put themselves first. Scribal colophons had come last" (33). Bardo vehemently resists such displacement. He insists, "I claim my right: it is not fair that the work of my brain and my hands should not be a monument to me—it is not just that my labour should bear the name of another man. It is but little to ask…that my name should be over the door—that men should own themselves debtors to the Bardi library in Florence" (54). The frequent use of "my" emphasizes Bardo's sense of ownership over the texts he has transcribed and collected. Even though Bardo is not an "author" in the Romantic sense of creative genius, the physical acts of writing and collecting should, to Bardo, ensure that his contribution is marked for future generations. Importantly, though, it is not that future generations should owe themselves "debtors" (a word that once more evokes a notion of succession) to Bardo alone, but rather to the "Bardi library," to the archive itself.

Manuscripts are primarily discussed in the collective; their value (both as a scholarly archive and as a commodity) resides in their cumulative identity. The organization of the Bardi library, the novel's paradigmatic manuscript collection, is enveloped in the same rhetoric of stability and inheritance. When first describing the archive for readers, the narrator notes the "scrupulous order" in which the books have been arranged and maintained. Bardo's blindness heightens his need for an unchanging cataloging system within the library. Without one, he would become detached from the collection, a fear best expressed in the following exchange over the location of Bardo's annotated copy of the Greek poet Nonnus:

> 'Is it in the right place, Romola?' asked Bardo, who was perpetually seeking the assurance that the outward fact continued to correspond with the image which lived to the minutest detail in his mind.
>
> 'Yes, father; at the west end of the room, on the third shelf from the bottom, behind the bust of Hadrian, above Apollonius Rhodius and Callimachus, and below Lucan and Silius Italicus.' (47)

In this moment where the library's organization is explicitly questioned, the language of the passage reinforces order. The manuscript is, indeed, in the "right" place, with that place being defined vis-à-vis other objects within the archive, each of which has its own respective place. If archival organization facilitates the findability of the texts, their material construction ensures their long-term endurance. When Romola retrieves Nonnus, Bardo responds, without seeing: "The vellum is yellowed in these thirteen years" (48). Romola confirms his statement and quickly follows up with an affirmation that "[his] letters at the back are dark and plain still—fine

Roman letters; and the Greek character…is more beautiful that any of [his] bought manuscripts" (48).[40] The yellow color of the vellum signifies the manuscript's age, while the still dark and legible letters speaks to its durability. This durability may be credited largely to the materials traditionally associated with manuscripts. Vellum, parchment made from calfskin, was more resilient than its paper counterpart, which was typically made from rags or linen and was itself fairly new to Europeans in the fifteenth century. According to Brian Richardson, it was only late in the fourteenth century that paper began to be "used widely in place of vellum," and since paper was considerably cheaper than vellum, weighed less, and offered a completely flat surface, it was the preferred medium for printing (*Printing* 7-8). During the years of *Romola*'s publication, England was experiencing a paper shortage that was widely discussed in British periodicals. *Chambers's Journal of Popular Literature, Science, and the Arts* even reports, in an article appropriately titled "The Paper Difficulty," an offering of a cash reward "to any one who could discover a new material for paper" (295). *Romola*'s signaling of the resiliency of vellum underlines the importance of material form to textual preservation.[41]

But Bardo isn't just concerned that his manuscripts will survive physically—he is also anxious as to how they will be used by future scholars. While we might read this anxiety as elitist in nature, *Romola* does assign different reading styles to scholars and the general public.[42]

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[40] Romola's specific reference to her father's Roman letters and Greek character underline another dimension of print that threatens not the preservation of printed books but of writers. The intimate relationship between scholars (*Romola*'s representatives of manuscript culture) and their texts is positioned against the commercially driven one printers share with their books. The scholar's relationship is corporeal. Bardo's handwriting forms a lasting, visible, and unique link between himself and the texts he is copying for future scholars. Printed books do not contain these unique links, though their typesets were originally based on handwriting. In fact, it was in the late fifteenth century that new ways of printing Greek characters developed. Aldo Manuzio, the printer Bardo begrudges above all others, is one of the innovators behind the new systems (Richardson, *Printing* 39).

[41] The Library of Congress identifies the mid-nineteenth century switch from rags to wood "as the raw material for paper manufacture" as one of the reasons that paper books from the nineteenth century are deteriorating more quickly than older books ("Deterioration"). Different materials require different conservation efforts for long-term preservation.

[42] According to Richardson, early modern resistance to printing revolved around the democratization of print. He writes, "The ethos of print publication was more evidently commercial than that of its scribal equivalent. The printed

These styles are correlated with text type. The fact that scholars read manuscripts not by sight but by memory locates them in a tradition of rote learning that stands in contrast to the public's surface reading. As a blind man, Bardo relies upon memory in order to engage with texts.[43] Similarly, Baldassarre—a fellow scholar—has lost the ability to read, a deficit that directly correlates with his loss in social standing. There is, however, one moment where he fully, if temporarily, regains control of his faculties. Even in that rare moment where "the magic signs" of writing once more "conjure up a world" for him, "the light was too pale for him to read" (318). But it was, the narrator explains, "No matter; he knew that chapter; he read inwardly" and "was once more a man who knew cities, whose sense of vision was instructed with large experience, and who felt the keen delight of holding all things in the grasp of language. Names! Images!—his mind rushed through its wealth without pausing, like one who enters on a great inheritance" (318). Bardo's and Baldassarre's deep engagement with manuscripts—which are once more framed in the language of inheritance—stems not from casual sighted reading but from having studied their content for years, from having embodied them.

The embodied connection scholars' bear to manuscripts holds true for textual production as well, further celebrating a slower temporality. For Bardo, "the scribe…loves the words that grow under his hand....scholars have bent [over manuscripts] with that insight into the poet's meaning which is closely akin to the *mens divinior* of the poet himself " (48). Words do not just appear, as they do with print; they grow. This organic, bodily description stands in contrast to the "mechanical printers" who "would flood the world with grammatical falsities and inexplicable

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word could be seen as lowering the standards of writers eager to gain fame, and as giving too many people access to knowledge" ("Publication" 170). Such reasoning is echoed in Victorian periodicals in articles that lament the dangers of an abundance of cheap print.

[43] Even though Romola does assist Bardo, his engagement with the texts appears to be structured largely by memory. For instance, after Romola pulls Nonnus, Bardo instructs: "find the passage in the fifth book, to which Poliziano refers—I know it very well" (48).

anomalies that would turn the very fountains of Parnassus into a deluge of poisonous mud" (48). The mechanization of writing was becoming even more pronounced in the nineteenth century. In an 1849 article for *The Edinburgh Review*, George Wilson (director and deputy chairman of the Manchester & Leeds Railway) observes "that by the marvelously simple device of dissolving a few pieces of metal connected with a long wire, we can develope [*sic*] instantaneously, a thousand miles off, a force which will speak for us, write for us, print for us, and so far as the conveyance of our thoughts is concerned, annihilate space and time" (459). These "for"s that take over production and distribution trouble *Romola*, as does the emphasis on instantaneity, which carries with it both a suggestion of ephemerality and a lack of trustworthiness—telegrams, unlike classical manuscripts, have not be vetted by time.[44] To think through this nineteenth-century moment of textual uncertainty, *Romola* looks back to a time when writing was seemed similarly threatened. In the novel, manuscripts belong to a culture of habit: they are slowly produced by and for scholars who have established practices for how to read and store them. They are catalogued and contained, and their content is creditable. Print, which circulates broadly and quickly with no eye toward archivization, promises no such containment. It does, as Bardo's fears, "flood the world."

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[44] Although most Victorian novels were printed, their initial creation still began with writing. In *Track Changes: A Literary History of Word Processing*, Matthew Kirschenbaum points out that Mark Twain's "*Life on the Mississippi* (1883) was the first piece of *belles lettres* to be submitted to a publisher as a typescript" (ix). While not Kirschenbaum's point, his example provides a reminder that Victorian writers were still largely just that—writers; they produced manuscripts for print. Eliot regularly reflects in her letters on the intimate connection she felt to her writing. Years after *Romola*, she maintains that "there is no book of mine about which I more thoroughly feel that I could swear by every sentence as having been written with my best blood" (*George* 217). Eliot's bodily connection to her writing matches Bardo's expressed connection to his manuscripts. While the typewriter would not be standardized and popularized until a few years after *Romola*'s composition, its fellow new media counterpart, the telegraph, was already dramatically altering the physical connection between writer and text.

New Media and Social Instability

When the Greek foreigner Tito first arrives in Florence, he visits the barber Nello's shop. Upon "looking through a latticed screen which divided the shop from a room of about equal size, opening on to a still smaller walled enclosure, where a few bays and laurels surrounded a stone Hermes," he jokingly declares the "little adytum" the meeting spot of Nello's "conclave of *eruditi*" (33). Kept inside this sanctuary, under the watchful gaze of Hermes (fittingly, the god of communication and transitions), is "a table, with one book in manuscript and one printed in capitals lying open upon it" (33). Early on in *Romola*, readers find themselves in a moment of media transition where manuscripts and print occupy shifting terrain. They coexist in a space simultaneously cast as commercial (shop) and sacred (adytum), where the line between lay readers (a barber) and scholars (eruditi) blurs. Serving as a source of tension for characters in the novel, this collapse of rigid boundaries invites an examination of how characters collect, circulate, and read texts comprised of different material forms.

Printed texts, unlike manuscripts, represent an accelerated temporality. They are both produced and perused quickly, reflecting in Nicholas Daly's theorization of *The Woman in White*, the increased speed of modernity. While this accelerated aspect makes them popular and current, it also feeds social unrest in Eliot's novel. Romola's walk though "the heart of the city" following the imprisonment of her godfather and his fellow Medici supporters reveals "that the parties for and against the death of the conspirators were bent on making the fullest use of the three days' interval in order to determine the popular mood. Already handbills were in circulation" (456). Far from being designed for long-term scholastic study, printed texts are instruments for short-term propaganda (in this case, three days). The "already" underlines the rapidity with which they are produced, a point further emphasized when Romola approaches

Bratti Farravecchi (a trader who barters print along with other wares) to purchase the pair of handbills. The narrator observes that he "separate[ed]" the wet sheets with a slowness that tried Romola's patience" (457). Still wet, the pamphlets are as "off-the-press" as they can be, and yet even Romola's temperament is challenged. Though Romola's impatience may be ascribed to concern for her godfather, the scene nevertheless marks a transition from the valued slow production of manuscripts to the immediacy of print, much as we now turn from printed newspapers to social media for news. While the immediacy of print (and social media) provides the potential for positive social intervention, that potential lies dormant, or at least, is undermined by the equally potent possibility that ulterior agendas will circulate via the same channels.

Unlike the Bardi library—which was carefully curated for the pursuit of higher learning—print has no such steward. The closest to an arbiter that we see is Bratti. When Romola asks him which pamphlet he sells more of, presumably as a means to gauge which way the public consensus is leaning, he explains:

> 'Justice' [the pamphlet in favor of the prisoners' execution] goes the quickest,—so I raised the price and made it two danari. But then I bethought me the 'Law' [pamphlet in favor of the Appeal to the Great Council] was good ware too, and had as good a right to be charged for as 'Justice,' for people set no store by cheap things, and if I sold the 'Law' at one danaro, I should be doing it a wrong. And I'm a fair trader. 'Law,' or 'Justice,' it's all one to me; they're good wares. I get 'em both for nothing, and I sell 'em at a fair profit. (457)

Importantly, Bratti's speech does more than just showcase the commercial effects of supply and demand; it also highlights the detachment of the printed handbills from their authors. Unlike

Bardo's manuscripts, which are referred to as "Nonnus" and "Petrarca," the printed pamphlets are sold with abstract, culturally determined keywords: "Justice" and "Law." Bratti's description also associates print with a troubling reading practice; he speculates that readers will intuit a difference in quality between the bills if there were a difference in price. The fact that Bratti's digression reveals that he priced the bills based on a mix of economic and subjective assessments underlines the danger of readers' evaluating a text's quality on the basis of its presentation, which is both arbitrary and changeable.

The narrator invites *Romola*'s readers to reflect on our own reading habits when she analyzes the implications of the "equally large print" (456) of both handbills. She observes that "[r]ound these jutting islets of black capitals there were lakes of smaller characters setting forth arguments less necessary to be read; for it was an opinion entertained at that time (in the first flush of triumph of the discovery of printing), that there was no argument more widely convincing than question-begging phrases in large type" (456). The "lakes of smaller characters" harkens back to the "flood" and "deluge" Bardo feared. Readers are inundated with information that is laid out to sway the takeaway of each text. The parenthetical, which reminds readers that *Romola* is staged at the onset of print, prompts us to consider whether reading habits have actually changed now that print is commonplace—the prevalence of expressions today such as "reading the fine print" and "click bait" suggests that they have not.[45] Romola herself "cared especially to become acquainted with the arguments in smaller type" (457), a reading approach that separates her from the masses. Positioned between Bardo and Tito, invested in both her father's manuscript archive and Bratti's printed pamphlets, Romola functions as a bridge between the cultures, which is, perhaps, why she is the ideal instructor for Lillo, who, as I argued at the beginning of this chapter, represents a future generation that has absorbed the customs of manuscript readers and applied them to print.

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[45] See Gwendolyn Blume for a discussion of how printed books in the nineteenth century were packaged to form "reader-brands."

Like *The Woman in White*, which models for readers how to compile information from across a range of texts, *Romola* challenges readers to actively deconstruct our reading networks. When the Florentine masses gather to read the placard that announces the papacy's challenge to Savonarola for a trial by fire, they find themselves in need of a "scholar" to read the notice. In a back-and-forth exchange between Tito and the crowd's representative, Goro, it is decided that Tito will "read the Latin bit by bit, and then tell [the crowd] what it means," after which the crowd shall, as Tito says, "judge if I give you the right meaning" (484). Despite Goro's immediate acquiescence that the arrangement is "fair" (484), it is actually nonsensical, for the crowd, being unable to read the Latin, is unable to assess whether Tito interprets the writing correctly. Contrary to the liberation trope Duguid identifies, where new technology is assumed to involve more direct access to information, print appears heavily mediated. Disconcertingly, *Romola*'s readers are placed in a similar position. Elsewhere in the novel, Eliot includes footnotes that translate Italian passages or add historical anecdotes. Here, Eliot remains silent. The absence of footnotes requires readers to likewise rely on Tito's translations (unless they know Latin), calling attention to the role of mediator that the narrator has played hitherto and will continue to play later in the novel. What information we are given and what is withheld from us is Eliot's prerogative, much like it is the Signoria's choice to use Latin to challenge Savonarola but "good Tuscan" to encourage the townspeople to show up to the trial. The move between Latin and Tuscan (while adds gravitas to the challenge) raises the question of who has "direct" access to information. The narrator points out that the public's aural sense for Latin, which they derive from preachers who interpret the language for them at mass, was insufficient to aid them in translating the placard (482), raising the questions: when and how can readers become their own interpreters? If readers want more direct access to information, they must seek out additional resources (in this case, a Latin dictionary) to compare the text against.

With Savonarola's confession, the inauthenticity of print that Bardo predicts is contrasted with the perceived authenticity of writing. The narrator acknowledges that there were "obvious facts that at once threw discredit on the printed document," and Romola, struggling to reconcile the text with what she knows of the friar "despair[s] of ever speaking with Fra Girolamo" (535) again, meaning the text will have to function in place of first-hand explanation. Romola's despair reflects the potency of the printed document. Despite being patently erroneous, it effectively discredits Savonarola. Romola reads the printed "evidence [of the confession] again and again, desiring to judge it by some clearer light than the contradictory impressions that were taking the form of assertions in the mouths of both partisans and enemies" (535). The material form is especially damning for Savonarola because it is not containable. When the confession was first released, "sever measures were immediately taken for recalling it. Of course there were copies accidentally mislaid, and a second edition, *not* by order of the Signoria, was soon in the hands of eager readers" (535). Once more, the increase in the speed of production and the lack of trustworthy curatorial oversight proves dangerous to social stability.[46]

While print fuels social unrest, it is not the only text type that seals Savonarola's fate; his handwritten, intercepted letter provides the initial excuse for his arrest. The fact that writing, and not just print, can be destabilizing gestures to an indictment against a lack of established, sanctioned modes of circulation. For the confession, the narrator emphasizes via italics that the second edition—which is the one that proliferated—was not officially sanctioned (though the question remains as to who "accidentally mislaid" the original text). In a similar move, Tito colludes to seize Savonarola's letter—it never reaches is authorized recipient. Speaking of the transition from manuscripts to print, Jan-Dirk Müller contends, "Writing naturally depends on material conditions even after the invention of print. But longevity is guaranteed no longer by the written 'monument' itself but rather by the numerous institutions that select the constantly growing reservoir of writings and allow them to become effective" (189). I argue that *Romola* foregrounds the necessity of institutions not just for preservation, but also for corralling the increased outpouring of texts.

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[46] We see this concern over textual curation elsewhere in the nineteenth century as well. Meredith McGill has argued that Charles Dickens's resistance to pirated publishing stems, in part, from his perceived loss of control over both his readership and the articles that circulated alongside his novels (*American*).

Romola's repeated references to the factual, not just fictional existence of Savonarola's writing asks readers to pivot between the storyworld, the historical fifteenth-century, and the nineteenth-century (as well as the twenty-first). The narrator recounts that Savonarola "took from [his desk] a letter on which Tito could see, but not read, an address in the Frate's own minute and exquisite handwriting, still to be seen covering the margins of his Bibles" (499). Handwriting—ink on paper—becomes the material evidence that links the past and the present, fiction and reality.[47] The letter Tito sees only exists in the fictional world contained in the text; however, the Bibles with Savonarola's marginalia are real and tangible. By insisting (through historical anecdotes and intertextual references) that readers maintain that duality, *Romola* both emphasizes the link between form and preservation. Nineteenth and twenty-first century readers alike can (if they go to Florence) see Savonarola's handwriting for themselves, without the mediation of a narrator or author.

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[47] Again collapsing historical and fictional events, *Romola*'s narrator recounts the incident that led to the friar's execution: Savonarola gave orders to one of his followers "to prepare the way for a letter to the French King himself in Savonarola's handwriting, which now lay ready in the desk at his side. It was a letter calling on the King to assist in summoning a General Council, that might reform the abuses of the Church, and begin by deposing Pope Alexander" (497). The novel's repeated focus on Savonarola's handwriting reiterates the material trace that intimately links an author to a written text, a trace that is missing from Savonarola's printed confession.

Conclusion: Future Forms

At its core, *Romola* grapples with the social implications of changes to the production, circulation, and preservation of texts. This grappling, which is intimately linked to contrasting temporalities, was not restricted to the novel's storyline alone; the novel's own form and timeline for production was a repeated point of contention for Eliot and her publishers.[48] Following Eliot's example of using a prior media transition to think through her contemporary moment, I will conclude this chapter by outlining some of the ways that a quick examination of *Romola*'s lifecycle can help us conceive of our responsibilities to print and digital archives.

Much like Bardo, Eliot and her publishers worked with an eye toward the future reception of *Romola*. In the article "Our Birth and Parentage," published in *The Cornhill* in 1901, George Smith reminisces over his attempts to persuade Eliot to reconsider her decision to write fewer installments than he proposed. He writes, "We [Smith and Lewes] pointed out to her that the publication in the MAGAZINE was ephemeral, and that the work would be published in a separate form afterwards and be judged as a whole. However, nothing could ever move her" (10). Smith mentions this exchange as a testament to what he called Eliot's "artistic sensibility," but his language reveals more than that. By referring to magazine publication as ephemeral, Smith predicts two conflicting *Romola*s: the original, serialized version and the subsequent triple-decker edition that will, by his implication, be more lasting. In addition to begging the question of what the purpose of the initial serial run is, Smith's claim leaves unaddressed how the serialized version's failure or success will be included in the future "judgment as a whole." Although authors would oftentimes alter their serialized installments for book publication (Andrew Brown meticulously tracks Eliot's numerous revisions to *Romola* as it transitioned from serial installments to a triple-decker novel), it is not as though the new format would ensure the serial publication's obsolescence.

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[48] William Blackwood initially expressed reservations about the likelihood of *Romola*'s success as a serial: "I have no doubt it will be a fine thing but it was doubtful in my mind how far it would bear being given in fragments in the Magazine and certainly it would not suit the readers of the *Cornhill Magazine*. I intended to have decided on the form of publication when I had read the M.S." (Haight, v.4 38). George Smith, the ultimate publisher of *Romola*, articulated similar reservations at first. George Henry Lewes recounts, "He dissuaded us from the notion of a [sixpenny] serial, believing that it would not *tell* in small portions. He wishes to publish it in the 'Cornhill Magazine,' but in considerable instalments—of 45 or 40 pages each number, with two illustrations" (Haight, v.4 33-34). The debate over the form of the novel signals a correlation between content, form, commerce, and reading experience, a correlation that plays out across *Romola*.

In fact, nineteenth-century reviews of *Romola* often include comparisons of the two versions of the novel, with comments on the effects that those versions have on the reading experience. Carol Martin points out that R. H. Hutton, who is initially depreciative of *Romola*, eventually assigns literary value to the text toward the end of its serial run (147). Hutton defends his initial disinclination by suggesting that the text does not lend itself to the serial format (echoing George Smith's, William Blackwood's and Eliot's own concerns). In the July 1863 issue of *The Spectator*, he argues, "George Eliot's drawings all require a certain space, like Raffael's Cartoons, and are not of that kind which produce their effect by reiteration of scenes each complete in itself. You have to unroll a large surface of the picture before even the smallest unit of its effect is attained" (199). The metaphor of "unrolling" gestures to the necessity of reading *Romola* continuously, like a scroll, in order to feel the weight of the narrative; it is in the collective rather than in mini autonomous parts that the novel becomes effective. The specter of Smith's two *Romola*s (the serial and the triple decker) appears again in an *Athenaeum* review that was published the same month as Hutton's. The reviewer asserts: "Those who have read 'Romola' in its monthly course should begin the story afresh, now that it is complete and appears in a connected form; otherwise they may be unable to recognize the many rare merits and beauties which it contains" (*Athenaeum*, 1863 46). Once more, not unlike Bardo's manuscript library, the collection is prized above the segmented installments. Like *The Woman in White* and

H. Rider Haggard's *She* (1886-1887), *Romola* is invested—both in terms of its own construction and on the level of plot—in the process by which textual units come together to form a collection, as well as the selection process that determines which texts make it into that collection.

With twenty-first century mass digitization efforts underway, Smith's claim of ephemerality is no longer (if ever it was) true. Susan Bernstein's blog "Serial Readers" and the increasing availability of facsimile copies of periodical publications, such as those present in the *British Periodicals Database*, illustrate both a renewed interest and ability to access Victorian novels in their original serial format. In fact, like *Romola*'s Florentines, we must now learn to navigate an inundation of forms, formats, and editions, all of which can be produced and disseminated quickly, if sometimes at the expense of accuracy, copyright laws, and unacknowledged labor. While free databases like *Project Gutenberg* exist and are valuable resources for public consumption, the lack of documented provenance of the texts in the collection poses a challenge for researchers for whom knowing the edition of the text is important to the questions that can be asked and answered.[49]

While scholar-driven enterprises are underway, commercial vendors have led systematic digitization efforts, placing readers in a black-box situation.[50] Like the gathered masses who rely on Tito to translate the placard, we must rely on vendors to document textual provenance, along with the software that was used to digitize the materials before we can engage with the texts responsibly. Ownership over the texts also remains a point of contention. Laura Mandell recounts that in the mid-to-late twentieth century, the British Library hired a vendor to digitize their eighteenth-century collection. In the contract, the British Library authorized the vendor to resell the microfilm to other libraries. The company that sold the microfilm, Research Publications, would eventually become Gale, with those digitized microfilm reels becoming the basis for Gale's *Eighteenth Century Collections Online* (ECCO) database. With striking resonances to Bardo's concern over what would happen if he lent his manuscripts to printers, Mandell explains the crux of the situation: on the one hand, "the British Library could not have microfilmed or digitized its collections without vendor agreement" due to the associated expenses, but on the other hand "the British people are being forced to buy back their own cultural heritage at an exorbitant cost." As a result of the double bind, Mandell advocates for finding ways to work with vendors, exemplified by her online tool TypeWright, which involves a negotiation with Gale and ProQuest. Any user(s) who corrects textual errors produced during the digitization process for the *18thConnect* database may keep the corrected document, which the user can then choose to make freely available online; in return, the vendors also receive the corrected document, improving the quality of their collection.

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[49] At a guest lecture at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, McGill stressed that the most recent edition of a novel is no longer considered the "best" or most authoritative. We can see this transition in the example of *Frankenstein*, where the 1818 edition has been revived in classrooms where previously the 1831 was more frequently used.

[50] Run by scholars, the HathiTrust Digital Library contains extensive metadata for their texts and presents an alternative to commercially driven enterprises. HathiTrust is comprised of a partnership between "92 academic and research institutions," and it "contains more that 11 million volumes contributed by 28 libraries. More than 400 languages are represented in the deposited collections, which include materials created from medieval times to the present" (York and Schottlaender 48). Jeremy York and Brian E. C. Schottlaender describe the motives behind the partnership: "Through its collective activities, HathiTrust is enabling libraries to move from vision to action by reimagining library collections, resources, and services at an unprecedented scale" (49). Though the University of Michigan currently supports the library's infrastructure, you would not know so by the title; HathiTrust aims to be and is a collective library. Perhaps this aspect of collectivity will act as a safeguard against the liabilities to which the Bardi library succumbed; however, it is still entrenched in an economic environment, as the "Cost" page with its "Pricing Model" for partner institutions reveals.

Romola challenges readers to recognize the social structures that mediate our relationships with material forms and the information that we glean from them. Even more attentiveness is required today with mass digitization; to be responsible scholars we must know the steps that led to the texts' digital production, and if we produce or store work online, we must think carefully about the sustainability of the platform so that it remains accessible 5, 50, 500 years from now. Relying on commercial vendors provides a short-term solution. What will happen to our digital resources if the companies we are relying upon fold, change creative directions, or simply stop maintaining the sites? We must also consider what our responsibilities are to our texts when it comes to what and how we digitize. Do we include the advertisements that circulated alongside them? Which version of the text do we prioritize online? Rider Haggard's *She*, the subject of chapter 3, will pick up this thread of collection creation, access, and sustainability to consider the ramifications our decisions have for future knowledge.

CHAPTER 3

“The Motive Spring”: Media Archaeology in *She*

“It is…of the highest importance to gain a clear insight into the means of modification and co-adaptation” –Charles Darwin, *On the Origin of Species* (29)

During a tour of the ancient City of Imperial Kôr, Ludwig Horace Holly examines writing left by a priest on cave walls that recount the history of the fallen nation. Upon learning that the priest was the city’s last survivor, Holly writes:

> I gave a sigh of astonishment,—the utter desolation depicted in this rude scrawl was so overpowering. It was terrible to think of this solitary survivor of a mighty people recording its fate before he, too, went down into darkness. What must the old man have felt as, in ghastly terrifying solitude, by the light of one lamp feebly illuminating a little space of gloom, he in a few brief lines daubed the history of his nation’s death upon the cavern wall? (173)

Although at least six-thousand years old by Holly’s estimation (235), the “rude scrawl” remains potent; it elicits a bodily response from Holly and is the vehicle through which knowledge of Kôr and its people survives. That the scrawl is able to have this effect after so many years is the result of its preservation. The cave environment protected the writing so that “the pigment [is] still…quite fresh enough to show the form of the letters” (172) that may then be translated into words, because Holly’s companion, Ayesha, “found the key thereto” (171). Set in the context of knowledge dissemination over the course of centuries, this passage both underlines the conditions necessary for textual transmission and imagines future interactions with the texts that survive. One question that lingers, sometimes explicitly and other times implicitly, and remains unanswered throughout *She* (1886-1887) is whether the information being conveyed is true.

Both *The Woman in White* (1859-1860) and *Romola* (1862-1863) question the reliability of texts as records of human life, exposing the impact a text's materiality has on its perceived authority. For Laura Fairlie, a tombstone inscription testifies to her social identity more than her breathing body does, and for Girolamo Savonarola, a printed confession exposes him to public opinion as a fraud subject to execution. In both novels, the plot covers the lifespan of a single human. What happens to the reliability of texts and the impact they have when the timeline multiplies exponentially to include hundreds, thousands of years? H. Rider Haggard's gothic novel, which repeatedly questions the trustworthiness of received information, asks exactly that. *She* tracks the succession of a written inheritance across geographies and generations to its origin in ancient Egypt, and in so doing, it offers a self-conscious exploration of the conditions that lead to the survival of written materials. For the novel, this survival is paramount, because the information that is transmitted via conserved inscriptions dictates future actions. While *The Woman in White* and *Romola* model how collections can be assembled for current use, only occasionally gesturing to long-term future implications, *She*'s extensive timeline means that we actually see the effect that preservation has on future generations. And while *The Woman in White* focuses on the scale of individuals and *Romola* on the state, for *She*, the stakes of preservation involve no less than either the recovery or erasure of entire civilizations.

Scholarship on fin-de-siècle, gothic fiction has chiefly focused on the imperialistic, New Woman, and evolutionary anxieties they expose.[51] Geographic borders in the novels prove permeable, allowing a monstrous "Other" to invade England. Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897) is a classic example. The novel begins in Transylvania with the Count's search for an estate in England. Upon his arrival, Dracula competes with the male protagonists for control over the body of Lucy Westerna, who, after transforming into a vampire, becomes hyper-sexualized and anti-maternal, a symbol of the threat the Count poses to English domestic ideals. Degeneration is another recurring topic that undermines the English national and evolutionary narrative of forward progress. In Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886), Henry Jekyll, a respected, English physician, devolves into the "ape-like" murderer Edward Hyde. There is, however, another, under-examined narrative strand that unites late gothic texts: meticulous attention to writing and its transmission (over time, borders, and technologies). The protagonists in *Dracula* triumph due to their mixing of traditional forms of record-keeping—such as diary entries—with newer technologies like the telegraph, typewriter, and phonograph.[52] *Jekyll and Hyde*, meanwhile, emphasizes a fundamental link between personal identity and handwriting, while also invoking multiple genres (medical, legal, and literary) in its narrations. When human and national boundaries are threatened, these novels deploy writing as a mechanism for reestablishing order and control.

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[51] See Patrick Brantlinger ("Imperial"), Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, and Kelly Hurley for exemplars of these approaches to the gothic.

Published in the same year, *Jekyll and Hyde* and *She* share many narrative devices, including a will that was written with suspicious stipulations, a protagonist with an improbable dual-identity, an antagonist who is a monstrous "Other," and autobiographical writing that propels the plot forward. However, while the central action for *Jekyll and Hyde* occurs within modern England, Rider Haggard's characters leave England for a region in Africa. This difference, which exposes the characters to the textual remains of an ancient civilization that predated the Egyptians, enables *She* to explore the durability and implications of written forms—including handwritten letters, glyphs on a cave wall, and inscriptions on a broken piece of pottery—across time periods, geographies, and empires.

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[52] For a recent discussion of Stoker's use of modern technologies in *Dracula*, see Leanne Page.

Criticism on *She* resembles the scholarship on fin-de-siècle novels at large. Patrick Brantlinger includes Rider Haggard's novel in his analysis of "imperial Gothic" literature, texts that address the concern over the decline of the British Empire in the late nineteenth century. Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar analyze how the novel conveys an anxiety over the "New Woman" that threatens patriarchal authority. More recently, Tamar Heller has combined these two strands of criticism to understand the stakes of Ayesha's racial hybridity. Alongside these national, gendered, racialized, and psychoanalytic narratives, however, is a history of writing. In fact, it is the successful transmission of written artifacts over two-thousand years and multiple countries that first enables and then drives the plot. In this chapter, I recover this narrative thread, revealing late nineteenth-century fiction's attempt to reassert the primacy of writing as a time-tested record of human achievement, in contrast to new media, which relied upon unstable technologies for preservation.

New media led to a reimagining of what it was possible for humans to record of ourselves and our nations. With the invention of the phonograph (translated to "sound writing") in 1878, it suddenly became possible to record what inventor Thomas Edison called "sounds hitherto fugitive" for "reproduction at will" (527). It promised future generations unmediated access to "the words of our Washingtons, our Lincolns, our Gladstones" (534). The figures that Edison chooses to use as examples underlines (to reapply Stephen Greenblatt's theorization) the "self-fashioning" potential of the device. In addition to recording everyday sounds and people, the phonograph may become a vehicle for representing national achievements. While the potential for captured sounds is alluring, Lisa Gitelman points out that the phonograph machine is required not just for recording sounds but also for their playback. Sans the machine, you would be left with tinfoil that was at once "illegible and yet somehow textual, public and inscribed"

("Souvenir" 157). This tinfoil contributes to textuality's "shifting and ambiguous ground" (Menke 11) in the Victorian period between the material and immaterial. As Richard Menke points out, on the one hand, writing was a physical, embodied object, unlike the telegraph's transient electrical impulses. On the other hand, "In comparison to the new technologies that *stored* data without writing, written texts might seem disembodied….compared to printed writing, the photograph and phonograph bespeak a presence at their origins, a physical contiguity between the recorded object and the medium of representation" (10). With *She*, I argue that Rider Haggard re-materializes writing and makes a case for its importance as a national record-keeper, proving itself equally adept—under the right environmental conditions—at capturing lineages as well as otherwise unknown civilizations.

Throughout *She*, timelines for humans and for writing overlap, inviting a reflection on writing's ability to outlast and preserve the culture from which it is derived. While human life proves changeable (with the title character, Ayesha, we witness both the evolution and degeneration of a human), written communication in all of its traditional forms (a glyph on a cave wall, an inscription on a broken piece of pottery) remains stable. In this chapter, I will consider how Rider Haggard, like Wilkie Collins and George Eliot, imagine the durability of older forms of writing, but this time, instead of looking at the social implications for individuals at a local or state level, I will do so in the larger context of nineteenth-century conceptions of civilization. Edison's declaration that the phonograph "commanded such profound and earnest attention throughout the civilized world" (527) speaks to the nineteenth-century assumption that an advanced state of civilization and new technology go hand and hand. *She*—which uses primitive inscriptions as the mechanism for recovering information about a destroyed though highly advanced civilization—cautions against overlooking the significance and sophistication of older material forms, as well as the societies that deploy them.

In *She*, the preservation of writing becomes important not just for its ability to serve as a record, but also for its impact on the future. Rider Haggard's novel departs from Eliot's in two ways: 1) the greatest threat older media faces is not replacement by a newer counterpart but is rather physical destruction, and 2) instead of only anticipating how future readers might engage with older media, we actually see the future readers for whom the textual collection was intended, as well as the ensuing consequences. These differences combine in the novel to make a powerful argument for the careful conservation of older media in their original form, and because deterioration is sometimes inevitable and future knowledge is unpredictable, newer textual surrogates should also be created alongside conservation efforts.

Events in *She* are shaped by what has been preserved over generations in a family archive; the novel itself, which records the events as well as the history that led up to them, also functions as an archive for future edification. A writer for *The Dublin Review* makes this point in an 1887 review of *She*, claiming that the inscribed potsherd, which has been "transmitted to the hero through an ancestry traced back to the Pharaohs," is "the ancient record which forms the motive spring of the travelers" ("She" 420). There is no story without the writing on the potsherd. One conceit of the novel is that the text before readers has been composed by the two primary protagonists (Holly and Leo Vincey); after recording the events of the story, they sent the written manuscript (the novel) to a publisher for mass publication. Holly, the primary narrator, explains that *She* is intended for future readers. He writes, "I have only tried to give a short and clear account of an occurrence which I believe to be unique…not with a view to immediate publication, but merely to put on paper while they are yet fresh in our memories the details of our journey and its result….we do not intend [they should be made public] during our joint lives" (279). Holly both anticipates and intends that his manuscript will outlive the people whose experiences it records. The human mind, with its tendency to embellish, distort, or forget over time, is held up against writing, which provides a more reliable record and motivates future events.

Published only one year after Rider Haggard's equally famous and well-received *King Solomon's Mines* (1885), *She* follows its predecessor's example and documents the adventures of a group of Englishmen who travel to Africa. This time, the heroes travel to retrace the steps of Leo's ancestors and discover the secrets behind Ayesha, an allegedly immortal white queen who rules under the moniker: *She-who-must-be-obeyed*. The novel first appeared in fifteen weekly installments in *The Graphic* from October 2, 1886-January 8, 1887. The first fourteen of these conclude with "To be continued," a note that both adds suspense and calls attention to the reading restraints imposed by the serial form. Several chapters are similarly elongated, split across installments. For instance, installment nine begins: "Chapter XVI (Continued)" (176). This visual emphasis on continuity formally highlights the novel's interest in slow time and sequences, which the weekly release of installments also accentuates. While the focus of the novel is on a two-thousand-year old family feud, the characters visit the remains of an ancient civilization that is at least six-thousand years old, and they repeatedly look forward to an undated period of time. This long durée perspective enables the novel to grapple with the material challenges to preservation, as well as the long-term implications of preservation for future events.

Media Preservation: Past Records, Future Instructions

The notion of an "original" or "first" that gives way to copies (sometimes with slight variations) recurs throughout the text; founding ancestors and their heirs are carefully retraced, geographical locations are (re)encountered, love triangles and storylines repeat with a slight—though significant—change.[53] Holly regularly speculates as to the original identity or use of people, spaces, languages, and objects.[54] Sometimes readers are privy to the chronology (the people of Kôr die, are perfectly preserved as mummies, and eventually become torches for a bonfire thousands of years later), but some histories remain unconfirmed. Are the Amahagger the mixed-race descendants of the denizens of Imperial Kôr? Was Holly's room in Kôr originally a sepulcher? Is Leo truly the reincarnation of Kallikrates or does he just bear "some extraordinary racial resemblance" (280) to his ancestor? Is Ayesha herself immortal or a generational copy? With respect to Ayesha, Ustane posits the latter scenario, explaining to Holly, "What she believed was that the Queen chose a husband from time to time, and as soon as a female child was born this husband, who was never again seen, was put to death. Then the female child grew up and took the place of the Queen when its mother died, and had been buried in the great caves" (100). As impossible as the alternative appears, Holly gradually finds himself convinced of Ayesha's immortality, but he concludes his conjecture (as he almost always does) with a nod to the book's reader who "must form his own opinion" (280). Upon the completion of *She*, a reviewer for *The Standard* remarks how "no one can even try to believe that a woman could live for upwards of two-thousand years in the full bloom of her beauty", and yet, "The story is written with the same air of truth and fidelity of detail [as in *King Solomon's Mines*]…and at times one is almost tempted by the realism and glamour of the terrible Queen to believe that there may be things in Nature beyond anything we have dreamt of, and that 'She' has really existed" ("She" 2). Like *The Woman in White*, *She* functions as a record of collected observations that readers must navigate to recreate timelines and establish their own interpretations. While Rider Haggard's novel does not draw definitive conclusions for readers, it does offer strategies for what to look for in order to substantiate one interpretation over another.

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[53] Holly will also use the idea of an original as evidence to support the veracity of his and others' observations. With the sherd of Amenartas (one of Leo's founding ancestors), Holly maintains its authenticity by claiming: "It was too original" (60) to have been invented by the imagination. The emphasis on originals, copies, and variation also gesture to nineteenth-century evolutionary theories.

[54] Here, Andrew Stauffer, editor of the Broadview edition of *She* (currently the only modern edition based off of the original serial installments), follows Holly's lead and tracks the linguistic roots of "Amahagger." Holly himself expresses interest in etymologies, particularly with regards to the changes in the Vincey family name. He writes, "It is very curious to observe how the idea of revenge, inspired by an Egyptian before the time of Christ, is thus, as it were, embalmed in an English family name" (90n2). Once again, the duality of origin and succession, cause and effect is raised.

Like Walter Hartright's preamble in *The Woman in White* and *Romola*'s Proem, *She* begins with a model for how readers should approach the text before them. The common denominator across all three introductory guides is an emphasis on provenance. Walter explains how the collection of narrations before readers came to exist (he also spends half of the novel unearthing the original context of written documents, such as the church register). *Romola*'s narrator revives a fifteenth-century spirit who walks through modern Florence and grapples with changes that have occurred to modes of communication. In the introduction to *She*, the self-proclaimed Editor of the manuscript describes how "the record of…one of the most wonderful and mysterious adventures ever experienced by mortal men" (35) came into his hands. He retraces the text's provenance, beginning with when he first met Holly and Leo and proceeding to an explanation of how, years later, he acquired a package from Holly that contained the She manuscript "copied out fairly," along with "the Scarab, the 'Royal Son of the Sun,' and the original sherd" (37). While the Editor's recreation of how he serendipitously acquired the text follows the "found manuscript" tradition and serves to add a veneer of veracity to the story (by giving it a history that allegedly lives outside of the text), it also does more than that. It models a method early on in the novel for reassembling historical narratives: find the source or origin story, and then build outward in a linear progression. *She*'s structure formally resembles a Russian nesting egg, much like a frame narrative; a series of events are embedded in a series of events that in turn have a series of steps that must be followed in a particular order for certain outcomes to emerge. The Editor's example demonstrates provenance as a central criterion for textual reconstruction and evaluation.

The *She* manuscript, which Holly narrates, follows and reinforces the pattern established in the Editor's introduction, and it adds a human timeline against which textual survival is measured in the novel. Holly begins by walking us through the origin of his involvement in what he maintains is "the most wonderful history, as distinguished from romance, that its records can show" (38). Like the Editor, Holly refers to the test as a historical "record," underlining the evidentiary status of his manuscript. Holly's place within the record begins with a meeting he had with Leo's father, Vincey. The latter requests that his friend will accept the charge of becoming Leo's guardian. Vincey then proceeds to chart—in detail—the lineage of his family, beginning with its founder, his "sixty-fifth or sixty-sixth lineal ancestor" Kallikrates, who was "an Egyptian priest of Isis, though he was himself of Grecian extraction" (42). Kallikrates fled from Egypt around 339 B.C.E. when he abandoned his vows in favor of Amenartas, "a Princess of Royal blood" (42). From Egypt, the couple fled to Africa where they encountered Ayesha, who subsequently fell in love with Kallikrates and murdered him after he rejected her. Amenartas consequently escaped to Athens with their son, and many years later, the family migrated to Rome, then Lombardy and later Brittany. Two-thousand years and six generations later, the family relocated to England, where readers eventually encounter them. As Aaron Worth explains, the sherd functions as "a kind of compressed embodiment of the Western imperial impulse…constantly on the move, not only traversing actual territory but also moving metaphorically, through linguistic drift, corruption, translation, and transcription" (58). This point is supported by Vincey's linkage of his ancestors to major historical figures: Charlemagne, Edward the Confessor, and William the Conqueror. We might think back, here, to Edison's celebration for the phonograph's ability to record our Washingtons. Writing has successfully recorded important national figures for centuries, long before the phonograph. Vincey's account of his lineage follows the Editor's model of identifying an original founder and event (Kallikrates and his flight with Amenartas) that then precipitates a chain of actions (the encounter with Ayesha, Kallikrates's death, and Amenartas's pledge of vengeance that carries down the family line).

Vincey's story prepares the way for the novel's guiding impulse, which is that past writing can influence future behavior. Children inherit the written debt/charge (avenge Kallikrates's death) from their parents—which they in turn discharge by passing it on to their own children. Leo eventually succeeds in fulfilling this pledge (in essence avenging himself, since he is, if Ayesha is to be believed, Kallikrates reincarnated). However, before he can complete the pledge, Holly must follow a series of steps that Vincey writes out: Holly must swear to be Leo's guardian; deposit Leo's inheritance in a trust; educate him in Greek, higher Mathematics, and Arabic; and deliver the contents of an iron chest to him on his twenty-fifth birthday. Vincey concludes his portion of the narrative by directing Holly to "follow my directions to the letter" (45). More than just a common-turn-of-phrase, Vincey's directive refers to the sequential instructions he has written for Holly on how to raise Leo so that the boy will be prepared to undertake the preserved family quest, underlining once more the ability of texts to dictate future action.

Throughout *She*, writing functions as an access point to the past that also then reaches into the future. Based on aspects of the writing (such as its language and the objects upon which it is inscribed), we can date it and in turn, the writers. The iron chest, which contains varieties of writing from the Vincey family, functions as a time capsule that brings the written and human past into the present, where it will motivate behavior. On Leo's twenty-fifth birthday, he, Holly, and their servant Job open the chest that—like *She*—is a nesting egg and requires a set of three keys that Vincey left behind. The iron chest, which Holly opens with "a comparatively modern key," contains an ebony case that he unlocks with "an exceedingly ancient" key. Inside this case, Holly discovers a silver casket for which he uses the key "entirely unlike anything of the sort that we had ever seen before….It was more like a model of some antediluvian railway key than anything else" (54). As the keys signal, each box takes us further into the past. The juxtaposition of "antediluvian" with "railway" (a nineteenth-century invention) further underscores the link between the past and present. While the written contents within the silver casket are ancient (dating back to Amenartas), their charge remains active (as Amenartas's call for retribution has not been fulfilled).

Holly's emphasis on the materiality of the writing in the casket (such as the parchment it is preserved upon) makes a case for the importance of form to archival preservation. He analyzes the style of the writing, along with the materials on which it survives, to conjecture about the histories of the items he pulls from the casket. His approach underlines that writing is a record not just for what it says but also for its materiality.[55] The first two items Holly pulls out of the casket, a letter and a parchment with a "Translation of the Uncial Greek Writing on the

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[55] Writing in *She* shows itself to be more conversational about its origins than Socrates acknowledges in Plato's *Phaedrus,* likely because characters in *She* pay attention to both the materiality and content of writing. When it comes to textual preservation, archivists must likewise take materiality and content into account.

Potsherd," bear Vincey's handwriting and are quickly set aside for older materials. Holly recounts:

> Then followed another ancient roll of parchment, that had become yellow and crinkled with the passage of years. This I also unrolled. It was likewise a translation of the same Greek original, but into black-letter Latin this time, and appeared to me from the style and character to date from the end of the fifteenth, or perhaps middle of the sixteenth, century. Immediately beneath this roll was something hard and heavy, wrapped up in yellow linen, and reposing upon another layer of the fibrous material. Slowly and carefully we unrolled the linen, exposing to view a very large but undoubtedly ancient potsherd of a dirty yellow colour! This potsherd had in my judgment, once been a part of an ordinary amphora of medium size. For the rest, it measured eleven inches in length by ten in width, was about a quarter of an inch thick, and densely covered on the convex side that lay towards the bottom of the box with writing in the later uncial Greek character, faded here and there, but for the most part perfectly legible, the inscription having evidently been executed with the greatest care, and by means of a reed pen, such as the ancients often use. (55)

Both in the materials (letter, parchment, sherd, reed pen) and in the languages that are represented (English, black-letter Latin, uncial Greek) we move backward in time. Holly endeavors to locate the items based on their physical dimensions and style, particularly with the writing he finds on the sherd. He frequently comments on its appearance; Lionel Vincey has a "bold-modern looking signature" (61), while Dorothea Vincey's writing was "painted obliquely in bright red on the space not covered by the uncial, and signed in blue paint" (60). The accumulation of minute details serve both to create a mental image of what the sherd looks like and also to impress more deeply the quantity and variation in the writing.[56] Even without reading the contents, these “extraordinary relic[s] of the past” (62) yield information about their time and place of origin. This information is speculative, though, as underlined by Holly’s repeated qualifications of “appeared to me” and “in my judgment.”

Even the Editor from the introduction participates in this speculative retro-dating, but he relies upon content to do so. The sherd contains a number of inscriptions dating back to Amenartas that have been added by members of the Vincey household. When speaking of the last entry, Holly determines “by the style of the writing” that it was “made by some representative of the family in the middle of the eighteenth century. It was the well-known quotation by Hamlet, ‘There are more things in Heaven and earth than are dreamt of in your philosophy Horatio’” (63). To Holly’s conjecture, the Editor adds the following as a footnote: “Another thing that makes me fix the date of this entry at the middle of the eighteenth century is that I have an acting copy of ‘Hamlet,’ written about 1740, in which these two lines are misquoted almost exactly in the same way, and I have little doubt that the Vincey who wrote them on the potsherd may have heard them so misquoted at that date” (63). The Editor’s addition illustrates both how texts can be matched up against one another in order to establish timelines and also how the process of dating is collaborative.[57] His use of “another thing” underscores that he is working with Holly, using his own knowledge of written materials from the period to contribute to Holly’s assessment and speculation, much as readers should also be doing. This collaborative dimension echoes Walter and Marian's joint project of textual accumulation and decryption in *The Woman in White*.

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[56] In the “first edition of H. Rider Haggard’s *She* to appear in book format,” Haggard included photographic facsimiles of the imitation sherd “that Haggard’s sister-in-law, Agnes Barber, made for him (Brantlinger, “Note” xxxvii). The inclusion of the photograph adds even more veracity to the conceit of the novel and, I argue, further speaks to the narrative impact of joining old and new media forms together (see Appendix: Fig. 3). The physical sherd that Barber commissioned now resides in the Norwich Castle Museum.

[57] Another instance of texts functioning as a key to corroborating information occurs when Holly claims, “[a] few of the Roman names inscribed upon the sherd I have actually since found mentioned in history and other records” (62).

In addition to signaling their own histories, the written artifacts also resurrect the writers who inscribed their names upon them, which helps to reconstruct the Vincey family timeline. In the letter Holly pulls out of the casket, Vincey (the letter's author) address Leo. He writes:

> When you open this, if you ever live to do so…I shall have been long enough dead to be absolutely forgotten by nearly all who knew me. Yet in reading it remember that I have been, and for anything you know may still be, and that in it, through this link of pen and paper, I stretch out my hand to you across the gulf of death, and my voice speaks to you from the unutterable silence of the grave. Though I am dead, and no memory of me remains in your mind, yet am I with you in this hour that you read. (56)

While Vincey's human life has ended, he inhabits a new, almost supernatural existence through his writing. Via pen and paper, he overcomes human memory, which, he predicts, has forgotten him even in the comparatively short recent past of twenty years (Vincey died when Leo was five). How much more necessary, then, to have the writing on the sherd, which preserves the memory of a line of Vinceys dating back to fourth century B.C.E. The convex side of the sherd is "covered from top to bottom with notes and signatures in Greek, Latin, and English. The first in uncial Greek was by Tisisthenes, the son to whom the writing [Amenartas's instructions on the sherd that call for her son, and if not him than his descendants, to avenge Kallikrates] was addressed. It was, 'I cannot go. To thee, my son Kallikrates'" (61). Following this original signature was a list of names, each of which signifies a family member who inherited and then passed on Amenartas's charge. These names progress from "uncial and cursive character" (61) Greek to Latin and English, with occasional references to location that track the family's migrations and the linguistic evolution of their name from "Vindex" or "the Avenger" to "DeVincey" and then "the plain, modern Vincey" (61). The oral history that Vincey first relays to Holly (and by extension, readers) is essentially re-presented to readers by the written artifacts. Although Holly originally doubted the truth of Vincey's claims, he becomes wholly convinced upon reading the sherd. Writing does more than just preserve the Vincey timeline, then; it also acts as a kind of guarantor.[58] In his letter to Leo, Vincey refers to the writing on the sherd as "hereditary proofs" of the "origin" (57) of his attempts to find Ayesha. Meanwhile, Holly uses the entries written on it to "absolutely prove" (64) that the Vincey family dates back to the fourth century B.C.E., which once more speaks to the perceived authenticity that attends writing over other forms of communication.

The occasional gaps in the Vincey timeline are the result of written materials that did not survive, underlining the loss of human history that accompanies textual destruction. The date of the relocation of the Vincey family to Rome is "for ever lost, for just where it had been placed, a piece of the potsherd is broken away" (61). A break in the written history leads to a break in the human one.[59] Fortunately, the Vinceys made a number of preservation efforts to protect the written artifacts so that they could be transmitted through the generations. The ebony box that housed the silver casket "was actually in parts commencing to crumble away from age" (54); the nesting egg structure of the boxes, then, with the iron box on the outside, acted to preserve the contents therein. And with the sherd, Holly points out that "in some remote age this wonderful fragment had been broken in two, and rejoined by means of cement and eight long rivets" (55). While the cement mixture used today, Portland cement, was invented until the middle of the nineteenth century (by an Englishman), Egyptians and Romans each developed their own natural cement centuries prior (Mayfield 5), which, given the Vinceys' timeline, makes it impossible to place when that particular preservation effort occurred. Regardless of the timing, once more *She* emphasizes the physical conditions required for preservation.

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[58] One exception to bear in mind is that writing can also lie. Holly acknowledges this possibility implicitly in a footnote midway through the novel, when he observes "that Ayesha's account of the death of Kallikrates differs materially from that written on the potsherd by Amenartas" (252). The writing on the sherd claims that Ayesha killed Kallikrates with her magic, while Ayesha maintains that she stabbed him with a javelin. Kallikrates's body, which Ayesha preserved and showed to Holly, bore a stab wound, which Holly mentions "seems conclusive, unless, indeed, it was inflicted after death" (252).

[59] In the absence of written documentation, future readers are left to speculate based on what we know from the rest of the archive. This is demonstrated when Vincey tracks his lineage: "the family migrated to Rome under circumstance of which no trace remains, and here, probably with the idea of preserving the idea of vengeance which we find set out in Tisisthenes [the son of Kallikrates and Amenartas], they appear to have pretty regularly assumed the cognomen of Vindex, or Avenger" (43). Their name stabilized upon their arrival in England, with Vincey being "the final corruption of the name after its bearers took root in English soil" (43).

An equally important preservation effort is translation, which renders texts legible to a larger audience and creates a copy that can act as a safeguard against damage to the original. For instance, with regards to some of the writing on the sherd, Holly affirms that "had it not been for the transcript of them executed by Vincey, I should not have been able to read, since, owing to their having been written on that portion of the tile which had, in the course of ages, undergone the most handling, they were nearly worn out" (61).[60] Within the silver casket, there is both Vincey's English translation of the uncial Greek along with his ancestor's black-letter Latin translation of the same text. The potentially repetitive translations suggest, much like the Rosetta Stone does, the need to both continually update writing with current languages and also to retain all translated versions so that there is a key to reading languages that have been forgotten.[61]

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[60] Like *Romola*, *She* asks who can be a translator. Ayesha shows herself extremely adept at reading dead languages (largely because they were alive when she first learned them), and Holly also has some proficiency. With regards to the uncial Greek, he remarks: "I took up the potsherd and commenced to read the close uncial Greek writing on it, and beautiful Greek it is to have been written by an Egyptian born [Holly is referring to Amenartas]. The English translation was, as I discovered on further investigation, both accurate and elegant" (60). The fact that Amenartas was writing in uncial Greek also suggests her skill with multiple languages

[61] In fact, the British press was undergoing its own typographical recovery in the nineteenth century. The uncial character that strikes Holly's notice was only successfully introduced as a printed type in the late nineteenth century. In 1875, *The Academy* published a notice to announce the book *Ancient Greek Inscriptions of the British Museum*, which was printed with uncial type; the notice assumed this type was "new in this country, and deserves attention" (Barlow 120). A submission by W.S. Barlow in the next issue corrects this error, and explains that Julian Hibbert attempted to introduce the type in 1827 "purely as a typographical experiment" (Barlow 121). Barlow writes, "There were many glaring imperfections in his type; indeed, [as] in his preface to the Orphic Hymns he very candidly says…but still the credit of introducing the uncial characters must clearly be due to Mr. Hibbert" (121). Different

In addition to advocating for textual preservation through the conservation of the original materials, *She* also entertains the possibility of re-packaging writing. Leo takes the oldest example of writing in the casket, “a small chocolate-coloured composition scarabœus” (55), and “insist[s] upon having [it] set in a massive gold ring, such as is generally used for signets” (140). Leo’s updating of the scarabœus turns into a significant plot point. When Ayesha first sees it, she rightly suspects it is Kallikrates’s, but she ultimately rejects that possibility since his was not set in a ring. Ayesha’s confusion over the scarabœus—a marker of a person’s heritage—calls attention to the linkage between preservation format and the object’s identity, a key issue with digital archives today. Derrida argues that the structure of an archive shapes what can be preserved (17), and James Mussell cautions, “Digitization always represents a transformation of the source material and it is essential that the users of resources can understand how material has changed in its passage from the shelf to the screen" (1). *She*’s serialization in *The Graphic* forces readers to consider the scarabœus’s original appearance; its central placement on the page and as well as its distinctiveness from the Roman letters around it cause it to stand out even before readers begin reading (see Appendix: Fig. 4 for close up).

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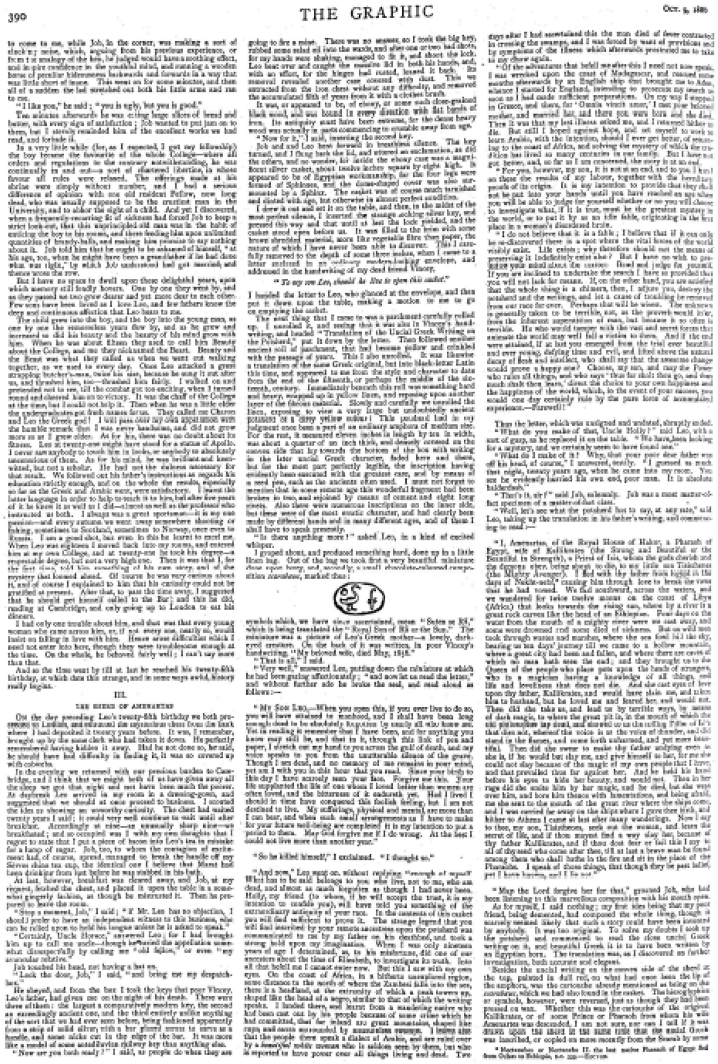
typefaces and fonts capture styles of writing that pre-date the printing press, but as *Romola* demonstrates, they are imperfect copies.



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The fact that the scarabœus interrupts Holly's sentence further calls attention to it. Instead of describing the symbols, Holly asks readers to note them for themselves by placing the rendering after the clause "marked thus:". Following the inset depiction, Holly doubly translates the symbols into "Suten se Rā" and "Royal Son of Rā or the Sun" (56), making the ancient visual writing legible to Anglophone readers.[62]

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[62] One of the major differences between the serialized installments of *She* and the first volume edition occurs in this section. In the printed edition, Rider Haggard couples the pictorial rendering on the scarabœus with pages of facsimiles of the black-letter Latin and uncial Greek characters. With the added visual renderings, the book further impresses the evolution of writing styles upon readers.

The writing on the sherd acts like a compass and directs the chain of events that succeeds it. In the uncial Greek character on the sherd, Amenartas recounts her history with Kallikrates and also calls for vengeance. She writes, “Now I say to thee, my son, Tisisthenes, seek out the woman [Ayesha], and learn the secret of life, and if thou mayest find a way to slay her, because of thy father Kallikrates, and if thou dost fear or fail this I say to all of thy seed who come after thee, till at last a brave man be found among them” (60). Amenartas’s injunction, spoken in the present tense, compels Leo to travel (though he does so more out of curiosity than a desire for justice); her description of the African landscape then facilitates his arrival at the correct location.[63] In other words, the preservation of the sherd motivates and facilitates future actions; had the sherd not survived in the condition in which Holly and Leo found it, the ensuing events never would have happened. Ayesha even repeatedly credits Amenartas with unknowingly being the cause of reuniting her and Kallikrates (in the form of Leo), a cautionary reminder that writers are unable to predict the effects their writing may have in the future.

At the beginning of *She*, readers are presented with an abundance of writing that has been preserved to three effects: 1) it records a history that spans two-thousand years, 2) it compels action on the part of its present-day readers (Holly, Leo, and Job), and 3) it models different strategies for successful preservation efforts across time and place.[64] Gillian Beer recognizes cultural memory (expressed through “record and language, through tools and machines”) as an evolutionary form for the reason that "futures are built and change is released" via it (xx). What goes into the archive is important for what it yields later on.

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[63] For an analysis of the function of speech acts in novels, see Mario Ortiz Robles’s *The Novel as Event*.

[64] Whereas writing in *She* is a stable record that is capable of preserving and transmitting information across time, human memory is not. Ayesha describes the shortcomings of human memory using the rhetoric that Holly previously assigns to writing. In her description of the human life cycle, she explains that “all we who live have thus lived before; nor is the very shape that holds us a stranger to the sun! Only we know it not, because memory writes no record [….] sleep [by which Ayesha means the death before reincarnation] in mercy hath blotted out the tables of our mind” (217). Only writing in *She* proves capable of creating a record that successive generations (the Vinceys, Holly, the Editor, and us the readers) can use. Even Leo, who ostensibly lived the events recorded on the sherd, is unable to recall or communicate any information about his past self, Kallikrates.

Writing Civilization

Rider Haggard presents writing, as other Victorians had before him, as a marker of civilization; characters who are extremely literate (usually in more than one language) and who show an interest in textual preservation are presented as the most civilized, while the reverse is also true. Given the text-heavy focus of the first two installments, the disappearance of any mention of writing in installments three to six stands out. What has changed? In those sections, Holly recounts his, Leo's, and Job's perilous voyage through Africa that results in their rescue/capture by the cannibalistic Amahagger population. The Amahagger host Holly and company under Ayesha's instructions, though readers have not met Ayesha yet (at this point, she is only known to readers as *She-who-must-be-obeyed*). The lack of writing in this section could be a commentary on the savagery of the Amahaggers, who speak "bastardized Arabic" are infamous for their "hot pot" custom, which entails boiling water in a pot that they subsequently overturn and secure to the head of strangers before eating them (Holly, Leo, and Job witness the custom when an African guide they had with them is murdered by it). Writing returns in the text—both in terms of the metaphors Holly uses to describe Nature and life, and also in the hieroglyphics he finds in the caves of Kôr (where Ayesha lives)—just before we encounter Ayesha.[65] This return signals writing's role in uniting Ayesha and Leo. It further gestures to

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[65] The hieroglyphics Holly identifies in the cave predate any civilizations he knows. He explains that "the pictures were columns of stone characters or a formation absolutely new to me; at any rate they were neither Greek nor Egyptian, nor Hebrew, nor Assyrian—that I can swear to. They looked more like Chinese than anything else" (134). As Ayesha later reveals, they were inscribed by the people of Imperial Kôr, an ancient kingdom that disappeared well before even Ayesha's time. In fact, it is only through an inscription left by the last survivor of Kôr, which Ayesha, having found the key, can translate, that we even know about the people (172).

Ayesha's advanced learning. In contrast with the barbaric Amahagger, Ayesha is fluent in multiple languages, including dead ones.

Ayesha represents the pinnacle of human evolution; she is physically un-aging, extremely intelligent and articulate, and unparalleled in beauty and strength. More than that, she also typifies mastery of nineteenth-century new media. With the aid of a philosopher, she discovered the location of "the very womb of the Earth, where she doth conceive the Life that ye see brought forth in man and beast—ay, and in every tree and flower" (256), in other words, the origin point for life. By standing in the fiery Pillar of Life—which operates with the regularity of a machine and resembles a "primal zoetrope—the popular optical device and ancestor of the modern cinema" (Worth 55)—and sucking in the flames, Ayesha gained her aforementioned attributes.[66] By evoking the zoetrope in this moment, *She* creates a chicken-egg effect. Do we create machines or have they created us? In either scenario, Ayesha's "sucking in" suggests that she is absorbing the essence of the medium. As a result, she gains the ability to "photograph upon the water what was actually in the mind of some one present," including events from her past (201). In other words, Ayesha has become a living recording device. A human at the peak of advancement is thus portrayed in *She* as exhibiting the traits of the nineteenth-century's newest media. The unsettling question that follows the achievement of perfection however, is what comes next? The destabilizing answer Ayesha promises is world domination, including the explicit overthrow of Queen Victoria (231, 255). Unfortunately for Ayesha, in keeping with other fin-de-siècle novels and nineteenth-century evolutionary debates, *She* allows for the possibility of degeneration.

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[66] Even just being near the fiery Pillar infuses Holly, Leo, and Job with a new vitality that gestures to Ayesha's advanced state of being since she has fully absorbed the fire. Holly describes the sensations of "divine intoxication" for readers: "I know that I felt as though all the varied genius of which the human intellect is capable had descended upon me. I could have spoken in blank verse of Shakespearean beauty, all sorts of great ideas flashed through my mind, it was as though the bonds of my flesh had been loosened and left the spirit free to soar to the empyrean of its native power" (257-258). Holly's words indicate his perception of a human at full capacity; he is as close to the divine as he shall get without actually becoming a god. The nod to Shakespeare again underlines writing's being an indicator of advanced evolution.

Ayesha's imperialistic ambition and sudden turn of fortune has led to readings of the novel as expressing anxiety over the decline of the British Empire;[67] however, the close coupling of Ayesha with new media expresses a different kind of anxiety. Is there a point when new media can have dangerous, unintended consequences? Ayesha explicitly and regularly explains that she is not truly immortal, that she will cease when nature does (according to Ayesha, even nature will not continue forever). Death comes sooner than she anticipates, however, when she re-enters the fiery Pillar of Life, partly to assuage Leo's fears and partly to be reborn (she seeks to remove the bitterness she has carried around with her due to entering the fire the first time with feelings of hatred for Amenartas). Instead of evolving further, or even remaining in a static state, the opposite happens. As Holly speculates, "[T]he frame [Ayesha's body] once charged with the marvelous virtue could bear no more, so that were the process repeated—it mattered not at what lapse of time—the two impregnations neutralised each other, and left the body on which they acted as it was before it ever came into contact with the very essence of Life" (264). Ayesha devolves, returning to the state of evolution she was at two-thousand years prior, though Holly's description of the scene suggests an even older state of degeneration; she ceases to look human and gradually comes to closer resembling a hodgepodge of animals. He recollects the change:

> I faint even as I write it in the living presence of that terrible recollection—she *was* shrivelling up; the golden snake that had encircled her gracious form slipped over her hips and fell upon the ground; smaller and smaller she grew; her skin changed colour, and in place of the perfect whiteness of its lustre it turned dirty brown and yellow, like an old piece of withered parchment. She felt at her bald head: the delicate hand was nothing but

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[67] See Andrew Smith.

> a claw now, a human talon like that of a badly-preserved Egyptian mummy, and then she seemed to realise what kind of change was passing over her, and she shrieked—ah, she shrieked!—she rolled upon the floor and shrieked! (261)

And when she is deceased moments later, he refers to her body as "the hideous little monkey frame, covered with crinkled yellow parchment, that had once been the glorious *She*" (264). The double comparison of Ayesha to "crinkled yellow parchment" at this pivotal stage of devolution further invites a comparison of the evolutionary cycles of writing and humans in the novel. In fact, the comparison unites the two cycles via the animal: both humans and parchment paper are derived from animals. Moreover, taking Ayesha as a stand-in for new media, this scene also suggests the endurance of older forms (the parchment).

In *She*, new media proves shockingly unstable; when Ayesha—its representative—dies unexpectedly, she takes with her the images of human life that she recorded and could project while alive. The only lasting, time-tested form for recording human life in the novel is writing. Readers learn via inscriptions a great deal about the people of Kôr who lived and died thousands of years before Ayesha's lifetime. The people of Kôr are described as highly advanced in chemistry (they were able to perfectly mummify and preserve their deceased so that they still resembled their living selves when Holly saw them), architecture/engineering (they built their kingdom by carving passages into and around a series of caves), and philosophy (they have a veiled statue of Truth that explores questions about life). Inscription is the only form of communication that can reliably record, and for that reason, the novel argues, we must actively think about how best to collect and preserve writings. Even though, as *Romola* has also shown, old media are resilient, human use can lead to their deterioration or, as *The Woman in White* illustrates, their corruption. While discussing Kôr's preservation, Holly notes:

> In connection with the extraordinary state of preservation of these ruins after so vast a lapse of time—at least six thousand years—it must be remembered that Kôr was not burnt or destroyed by an enemy or an earthquake, but deserted, owing to the action of a terrible plague. Consequently the houses were left unharmed; also the climate of the plain is remarkably find and dry, and there is very little rain, the result of which is that these relics have only to contend against the unaided action of time, which works but slowly upon such massive blocks of masonry. (235)

The absence of human conflict and the favorable environment combine to preserve the ancient civilization.

Over the course of *She*, we witness stages in the development of humans (from the Amahagger to Ayesha) and writing (in terms of both the materials used to produce it and also its style, language, and legibility). While human evolution is shown to have a cap, writing extends into an undetermined future so long as generations are active in their attempts to maintain and update as necessary. Preservation—of bodies, grudges, and texts—drives action as characters behave according to the information they inherit. In a final letter to the Editor, Holly reveals that he and Leo have decided to amend their initial resolution and instead leave the decision of when to publish *She* to the Editor's discretion. This change of mind occurs on account of their decision to undertake a journey to Central Asia from which they may never return. In anticipation, then, he has sent the Editor *She* so that the world may have the record, even if they do not survive. While Holly does explicitly mention the purpose for their journey, he intimates that the Editor may guess after reading the manuscript; the implication is that they hold out hope that perhaps Ayesha will be reborn, as Kallikrates was (37).[68] This concluding specter of new media's resurgence serves as a reminder that media questions are never settled permanently; forms of communication have always and will continue to undergo developments, as our own media revolution testifies. The manner in which written texts are preserved in *She* gives us a way to think through what we should be careful to preserve in the transition from written and print to digital forms.

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[68] From 1904-1905, Rider Haggard continued the narrative and provided *She*'s first serialized sequel, *Ayesha: The Return of She*. Two more sequels would follow *Ayesha*, but this is the only continuation to include Holly, Leo,

Conclusion: Material Preservation

In his seminal formulation of the archive, Jacques Derrida emphasizes the social responsibility present generations have to maintain collections for the future, but this is an increasingly difficult task with digital archives. Marlene Manoff points out that "in the print world, publishers do not have the ability to remove articles from the archive once they have distributed copies of a paper journal….In the digital world, publishers and database vendors may deprive future researchers of access to the full record simply by deleting any material they deem objectionable or erroneous" (13). Online archives are susceptible to invisible edits. Whereas a torn or blackened-out page in a book can be spotted, a missing webpage or otherwise altered content might not leave an immediately visible trace. Unlike with print collections—for which we have centuries of preservation experience—we do not yet have a time-tested infrastructure for digital archives. However, as Kathleen Fitzpatrick and Matthew Kirschenbaum both warn, we do not have centuries to develop preservation methods. Brianna Marshall, the Digital Curation Coordinator at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, explains that for university archivists, this question of how best to preserve is contingent upon what they predict future scholars will require for their work. Is content sufficient or will they need to be able to interact

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Ayesha, and the Editor. The subsequent narratives are driven by events in Ayesha's life, including her meeting with Alan Quartermain, the protagonist of *King Solomon's Mines*.

with the original form? They ask, as this dissertation has asked, what information is conveyed—or lost—because of form?

The ability of older texts to function in *She* not only as records but also as stimuli for future events underlines the continued importance of textual creation, as well as the need for an architecture to ensure the long-term storage of written forms, even during a period of new media development that promises rapid (re)production. The two most effective approaches for preservation that *She* offers include maintenance of both the content (as seen with the repeated translations of the sherd) and the environment (as seen with Kôr and the cement that was added to conserve the sherd's integrity). In depicting these two methods, Rider Haggard anticipates popular approaches currently being deployed by digital archivists for electronic texts. Migration moves intellectual content into a successor format, while its counterpart emulation preserves the hardware and software so that users can interact with the content in its original format. While these methods are usually treated as an either-or decision today (on account of expense and sustainability), *She* cautions that both are necessary, otherwise we risk losing valuable information. A third model for preservation that *She*, *The Woman in White*, and *Romola* all promote is a collaborative approach, and it is this strategy that holds the most promise for digital preservation.

Collaboration in *She* is demonstrated via the shared construction and maintenance of the family archive across thousands of years and locations. The archive is then opened up to the broader public with the circulation of Holly's manuscript. With computers, collaboration often takes the shape of shared, open-source resources online. One danger of digital media, however, is that they are difficult to regulate, a trait they share with their textual predecessors.[69] In *The*

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[69] Electronic texts also face the material risks of file corruptions, hardware malfunctions, and format obsolescence, three challenges to preserving digital media long-term.

Woman in White, Sir Percival intercepts writing in sand that signals Anne Catherick's intended rendezvous with Laura Fairlie. In *Romola*, Savonarola's handwriting identifies him as the writer of a subversive letter that ultimately leads to his imprisonment and execution. In the Coda, I will push this thread further by considering how the transition from pre-print and print to digital forms affects how we access, curate, and preserve old and new media alike.

CODA

From Books to Bytes: Old Content, New Platforms

For *She*'s protagonists, the materiality of the sherd testifies to the authenticity of the centuries-old story of Kallikrates, Amenartas, and *She-who-must-be-obeyed*. In fact, it is seen as such a marker of proof, that when the novel's alleged author, Ludwig Horace Holly, sends the *She* manuscript to an Editor for publication, he includes the sherd with it. While non-fictional readers of *She* do not have access to this alleged artifact in its original form, the Editor includes photographic facsimiles at the beginning of the novel (Appendix: Fig. 3).[70] Offering a snapshot of the front and back of the sherd, these facsimiles corroborate Holly's textual description. But does the photographic surrogate—yet another nineteenth-century new media invention—instill the same confidence in narrative authenticity as the older piece of pottery does? What are the effects of stripping color from the photographs, as modern re-printings do?

The collision of material forms in *The Woman in White* (1859-1860), *Romola* (1862-1863), and *She* (1886-1887) brings to the fore the assumptions characters—and readers—bring to texts based on their materiality, as well as best practices for reading, evaluating, and preserving them. For George Eliot's Bardo di Bardi, the printing press inaugurated a new culture of textual production and consumption, the emergence of which might, at first glance, seem promising. Increased production speed meant that texts could have a new kind of immediacy, with pamphlets on current topics printed quickly and at scale. The press also offered an alternative method of preservation for textual content, one that moved away from the conservation of the text's original form; in the time it takes to create one handwritten manuscript, we could have hundreds of printed copies. However, as *Romola*, *The Woman in White*, and *She* all ask, what might be lost in the transfer from one material form to another, and how do we evaluate the information from the text accordingly? These questions are increasingly pressing for twenty-first century scholars to address as we not only create new digital content, but also transform older media via digitization. In this Coda, I shall take a cue from the Victorians and consider how our methods of textual engagement might and should change as our digital corpora expand beyond the realm of close reading alone.

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[70] H. Rider Haggard actually commissioned his sister-in-law to create a replica sherd to use for the facsimiles for the first appearance of *She* in book form (Saler 70). The original serial installments did not contain facsimiles.

The Victorian print and new media explosion precipitated a crisis in preservation. There was a surplus of textual forms, limited physical space, and an anticipated future readership with unknown requirements. An 1869 article in *The Daily News* outlines the dilemma:

> We all know thousands of books which are now issued, which are beneath contempt. We are even ashamed to see them lining our trunks. Still, it is right that the British Museum should preserve copies of them. One day they may be of use—as recording some out-of-the-way fact, indicating some curious trait of manners, or preserving the link which may enable the philologist to trace the history of a word. Nearly every volume published two hundred years ago has now an exceptional value. ("Foreign" 4)

Advocating for the preservation of all books, regardless of their current public estimation, the writer imagines scenarios where futures readers may derive unexpected information from them. While this information the writer imagines is content based, history of the book scholars (as well as the three case studies in this dissertation) have long demonstrated the important insights into culture that can be gleaned from the materiality of books as well. In addition to posing a storage problem for the real, if mundane, issue of available space, the mass quantity of books also challenges traditional curation standards. If every text should be saved because of the potential value of an unknown attribute it contains, how shall it be grouped in the larger collection so that it is discoverable? An 1869 article in *The Daily News* echoes the growing concern that traditional methods were reaching capacity: "A man may take a good constitutional walk every day in hunting for half-a-dozen books in this enormous catalogue [held by the British Museum], which of itself fills about 1,000 volumes" ("Foreign" 5). As I discussed in Chapter 2, Bardi's manuscripts are systematically arranged in his library according to their relation to other texts in the archive. In part because of their slow production, Bardo only has to contend with a comparatively small selection of texts that he, through his education, has hand-curated for scholastic value. But Bardo's fifteenth-century methods fail when we turn to the Victorian print explosion and need to apply them at scale, prompting the need for new categorical systems to manage the accelerated output for both short- and long-term use.[71]

To aid in the parsing of printed texts, we have developed textual apparatus that enable us to glean information relatively quickly about both the text before us and its relation to a larger archive. Readers of scholarly print editions are familiar with the requisite "A Note on the Text" that precedes the actual text in question. While said note varies in length, its placement and import are constants: a reader learns (if she pauses to read the page) how the editor has and has not altered the text before her. In the note for the Broadview edition of *Lady Audley's Secret*, Natalie Houston explains that "collations have been made of the text of the *Sixpenny Magazine* serial, the first edition, and the seventh edition revised…..Obvious errors have been silently corrected, but Braddon's hyphenation and spelling choices have been preserved" (33). Houston provides the reader with the source texts that comprise the composite scholarly edition, and she highlights her deference to Braddon's original writing. The admission that "obvious errors have been silently corrected"—a recurring sentence in such notes—vaguely indicates a level of mediation that readers will not be able to detect without much effort on their part.[72] This silent correction is not altogether troublesome (except, perhaps, for book historians who aim to compare printer errors) since the errors are typographical in nature and not generally of value to readers' interpretations of the text. With print editions, apparatus are in place that both give a glimpse into the larger history of a text and also remind readers that our encounters with the text are mediated. The editorial standards for digital editions, however, are still being worked out.

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[71] Jennifer Howard explains in *The Chronicle of Higher Education* that while books in a library are likely to survive so long as there is a physical space for them, the same is not true for born-digital texts (texts that are not just disseminated by digital means but that originate through them as well) and any work that includes a digital component. She writes, "The technological advances that make digital-humanities work possible also put it at risk of obsolescence, as software and hardware decay or become outmoded. Somebody—or a team of somebodies, often based in academic libraries or digital-scholarship centers—has to conduct regular inspections."

Although they might look identical to the original, *She*'s photographic facsimiles are not perfect replacements for the sherd itself; some information is inevitably lost in the transformation, and the kinds of interactions we can and should have with the sherd change as a result. Similarly, digital texts are not perfect surrogates for their analog counterparts, and in order to engage with them responsibly, we require a "Note on the E-Text." At the 2016 Modern Language Association Conference, Ryan Cordell—in a panel sponsored by the Bibliography and Scholarly Editing Forum—used the *Lewisburg Chronicle*'s printing of "The Raven" to argue for a more robust description of digitized texts. He maintains that we need to "[account] for the source, technologies, and social realities of their creation in way that make their affordances and limitations more readily visible and available for critique." Such documentation is especially crucial for informed database searches. The results that emerge from even a basic keyword search are dependent upon the quality of the software used for digitization; optical character recognition (OCR) software—which is responsible for converting printed texts into machinereadable texts—varies significantly and could lead to skewed returns and by extension, false interpretations. As Cordell points out, a search for "Quoth the Raven" would result in zero returns in the *Chronicling America* database despite the fact that the database does contain Poe's poem. Due to OCR errors, the computer reads the famous line as "Q i-jtb the Raven." OCR, Cordell posits, should be thought of as a compositor; it (like *Romola*'s printers) is prone to error. But whether or not we are aware of the frequency of such errors and how their frequency delimits our interpretations depends on how they have been foregrounded for readers and whether we develop practices for understanding the digitization process.

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[72] Here, digital tools may be of some assistance. *Juxta*, a textual collation tool developed at the University of Virginia, provides side-by-side visualizations of texts that highlight moments of change, allowing readers to see at a glance where derivations have occurred.

Modern technology has made textual information simultaneously more accessible and buried, more open to distribution and distortion, than ever before. The current digital revolution's indebtedness to prior print forms is reflected in the terminology associated with electronic reading. We *scroll* through *pages*, save *bookmarks*, and store *documents* in *folders*. A quick survey of early word processors reflects a similar trend: Electric Pencil (1976), WordStar (1978), WordPerfect (1979), WriteNow (1984). These examples underline that analog methods still structure how we think about sorting through electronic texts, sometimes to our detriment. N. Katherine Hayles observes that:

> print-based scholars increasingly compose, edit, and disseminate files in digital form without worrying too much about how digital text differs from print, so they tend not to see the ways in which digital text, although superficially similar to print, differs profoundly in its internal structures, as well as in the different functionalities, protocols, and communicative possibilities" (6).

Ryan Heuser and Long Le-Khac likewise note that "[a]s humanists, we believe we are trained as expert readers, able to read almost any kind of text closely, deeply, and critically", but with digital humanities work, we encounter “a radically new kind of text, a different kind of evidence” (79). This evidence—produced with computational methods—requires that we first transform our printed materials into digital ones, which in turn invites us to (re)interrogate, much as Walter Hartright does in *The Woman in White*, the assumptions and reading styles we associate with those forms, as well as the unique affordances each offers.

Unprecedented access to the literary archive online has called into question our pre-existing standards for evidence, as well as the many material forms our future scholarship might take. Dan Cohen summarizes this debate when he asks, “Should we be worrying that our scholarship might be anecdotally correct but comprehensively wrong? Is 1 or 10 or 100 or 1000 books an adequate sample to know the Victorians?” Franco Moretti famously maintains that “if we set today’s canon of nineteenth-century British novels at two hundred titles (which is a very high figure), they would still be only about *0.5 per cent* of all published novels” (66). To account for the other 99.5 per cent, Moretti argues that literary scholars must turn from traditional close reading to “sampling; statistics; work with series, titles, concordances, incipits….[and] ‘trees’” (67). In “The Slaughterhouse of Literature,” Moretti enacts his argument and draws tree graphs in an effort to explain why Sherlock Holmes became a bestseller while a large number of other detective attempts failed, falling out of popular circulation. Through a careful graphing of the “clue” as a formal device, Moretti formulates a connection between the function of the clue in a novel and that novel’s success on the market. Detective novels that have necessary, visible, and decodable clues faired better commercially than those that did not. Morretti’s trees illustrate one way in which we might, to borrow from Stephen Ramsay, “deform” texts—turn them into something other than printed words. Moretti is neither the first nor only literary theorist to push away from close reading. Positioned as outmoded or insufficient, close reading has come under attack. Mary Poovey has declared its imminent death, while Sharon Marcus and Stephen Best have championed surface reading as an alternative. Close reading's most pitted rival (in conversations, if not truly in practice), however, is distant reading, the methodology driving digital humanities research forward.[73] Through distant reading, scholars can speak to the larger archive of literary history, addressing the ethical dilemma that attends only analyzing the comparatively small percentage of texts that close reading allows.

Distant reading has been framed as one way to surpass the limitations that accompany the focused reading of a few texts, but an outright rejection of close reading undercuts the promise of computational criticism. While distant reading can signal large-scale patterns that close reading cannot capture, close reading contributes the nuanced analysis distant reading omits. What we need to do as critics is learn how to pivot between the two, a challenge the Victorians were themselves working through in order to grapple with their own information revolution. The critique of drawing conclusions from distant, statistical readings alone is not unique to the twenty-first century. During Chartism, Thomas Carlyle declared, "Tables are like cobwebs, like the sieve of the Danaides; beautifully reticulated, orderly to look upon, but which hold no conclusion. Tables are abstractions, and the object a most concrete one, so difficult to read the essence of" (B2). Carlyle's critique underlines Victorian skepticism surrounding abstract information and its assessment; yet, as this project has shown, the nineteenth-century explosion of print and new media required that readers reimagine strategies for curating and preserving information from across a range of texts. In "The Past and Future Lives of Writing in Victorian Fiction," I have highlighted three fictional readers who model how to balance reading in the aggregate while also attending to the material forms of the texts. Walter Hartright, Romola di

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[73] Reading literature in the aggregate has many labels: "distant reading" (Moretti), "quantitative formalism" (Moretti), "algorithmic analysis" (Ramsay), "macroanalysis" (Jockers), "scalable reading" (Mueller), and "iterative criticism" (Hope and Witmore), to name a few.

Bardi, and Ludwig Horace Holly move back-and-forth between hyper-focused readings of single narratives and attention to the overarching material collection to which they belong; the distant movement enables patterns to emerge that might otherwise have remained hidden, while the close examination gives them a lens through which they can evaluate those patterns. One strategy that Victorians imagined for comprehensive reading but were not yet technologically capable of enacting was, in fact, computer-assisted distant reading.

Victorians theorized distant reading long before technology made it possible (though Charles Babbage's work on the Analytical Engine was well underway). In response to the massive outpouring of print and information in the century, an 1869 article in London's *The Daily News* provocatively posits:

> Must we not pit the historians of the future if they should at any time be so conscious as to turn over the mountains of waste paper which are now being shot by carloads into the Museum? Human eyes and human hands cannot possibly work through a century of such agglomeration. The human mind will despair, perhaps, of power to deal with the illimitable mass. May we hope that when things come to such a crisis, human labor of the literary sort may be in part superseded by machinery? Machinery has done wonders, and when we think of what literature is becoming, it is certainly to be wished that we could read it by machinery, and by machinery digest it. ("Foreign" 5)

Over a century before Moretti's coinage and widespread computers, Victorians conceived of machine reading, and they did so in response to an ever-expanding corpus that challenged existing curation and preservation standards. The mid-to late nineteenth century—which laid the groundwork for digital humanities with computing pioneers Ada Lovelace and Charles Babbage and the development of statistics—also stands to benefit, perhaps more than any prior century, from distant reading. Victorian authors are famously prolific, both in terms of novel production and length. How would our reading of Mary Elizabeth Braddon as an author or sensation fiction as a genre change if we expanded our readings of a handful of her novels to include all 54, along with 23 of Wilkie Collins's and 49 of Ellen Wood's? What could a distant reading of full runs of periodicals from England and India tell us about social, commercial, or political interests of publishers and consumers? To address these questions we must transform texts from printed words on a page to a series of numbers on a computer screen.

While digital humanists often refer to reading at macro levels to advocate for using computational methods, these same methods can also inform our readings at the micro scale as well. Applying computational methods to small corpora can signal subtle, overlooked formal and linguistic patterns. For example, in *Computation into Criticism: A Study of Jane Austen's Novels and an Experiment in Method*, John Burrows performs a quantitative reading of Austen's use of function words. He begins with the provocation:

> It is a truth not generally acknowledged that, in most discussions of works of English fiction, we proceed as if a third, two-fifths, a half of our material were not really *there*. For Jane Austen, that third, two-fifths or a half comprises the twenty, thirty or fifty most common words of her literary vocabulary...Eight personal pronouns, six auxiliary verb-forms, five prepositions, three conjunctions, two adverbs, the definite and indefinite articles, and four other words ("to", "that", "for" and "all")...almost always find their place...among the thirty most common words of each novel. (1)

While an analysis of function words might, at first thought, seem trivial (we tend not to think of Austen as an important writer because of her use of "the"), Burrows demonstrates that such a study highlights Austen's considerable range of dialects for her characters.[74] In addition to revealing character attributes, algorithmic criticism can also highlight generic patterns. Jonathan Hope and Michael Witmore have applied computational linguistic analysis to William Shakespeare's corpus to "*make genre visible on the level of the sentence*" (360-361). According to Hope and Witmore, "[T]he intensive definitions we use to discriminate plays into groups—'comedies end in marriage,' for example, or 'the mood of these plays is similar'—can be tracked through a set of linguistic operations that take place in parallel to these perceptions but cannot themselves be consciously attended to. Nor, we would add, can one be reduced to the other" (361). With text-tagging software and statistical models, Hope and Witmore tracked word strings across Shakespeare's 38 plays and identified the linguistic combinations most frequent in each genre. Comedies, for example, contain greater amounts of first-person pronouns and self-disclosure words; meanwhile, words that reference the physical world and authority figures are comparatively absent in the genre. Importantly, the patterns Burrows and Hope and Witmore identify are not rigid and absolute. Outliers exist and beg to be addressed. *Othello* follows the linguistic pattern Hope and Witmore identify as comedic, despite the play's tragic ending. To account for the statistical finding, the researchers return to traditional close reading methods, ultimately describing the comedic lead-up as an instance of structural irony that serves to make the ending more unexpected and tragic for the audience. Rather than providing *the* answer or definitive account of literature, then, computational methods call attention to patterns that in turn challenge humanist scholars to return the texts themselves and traditional close reading methods.

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[74] Authorship attribution studies also rely on function words as indicators of authorial habits. For an overview of work on authorship attribution, see Hugh Craig and Arthur Kinney's edited collection *Shakespeare, Computers, and the Mystery of Authorship*. In "The Rarer they are, the More there are, the Less they Matter," David Hoover offers a compelling rebuttal to Brian Vickers's claim that rare words (as opposed to most the frequent ones) would likely produce better results.

Returning to the texts themselves sometimes means more than transitioning from numbers back into words. It can also mean returning to the pre-digital form of the texts and recovering the information—whether if be size, weight, color, accompanying illustrations or texts—that are lost in the transformation. Robert Darnton's influential "communications circuit," a diagram that charts the life cycle of books according to the various agents (authors, printers, publishers, shippers, readers) who are involved, has recently been updated to account for digitization. In the new model, Adriaan Van Der Weel emphasizes that digitization can affect any and all parts of the circuit, sometimes obscuring the effects of the transition from print to digital.

The digital realm/domain/space has, in practice, functioned as exactly that: a territory with its own language, customs, citizens, and gate-keeping.[75] Media theorist Lev Manovich observes that there is even an "evolution paradigm [that] applies the metaphor of evolution theory to the generation of images, shapes, animations, and other media data" (67). This rhetorical casting of digital media as living, evolving entities might, at first glance, suggest that they are self-regulating. But, in fact, there is not a natural system at work. Humans write the code and build the machines that run it, and humans need to remain vigilant with how the digital space is constructed, populated, and maintained. Following the lead of *The Woman in White*, *Romola*, and *She*, I argue that we must not privilege or bifurcate production and dissemination as issues exclusive to new media and preservation as a concern only for older media. Instead, we must put them into conversation to learn from older media, making a case for its continued importance in our archives and in the way we understand emerging textual forms.

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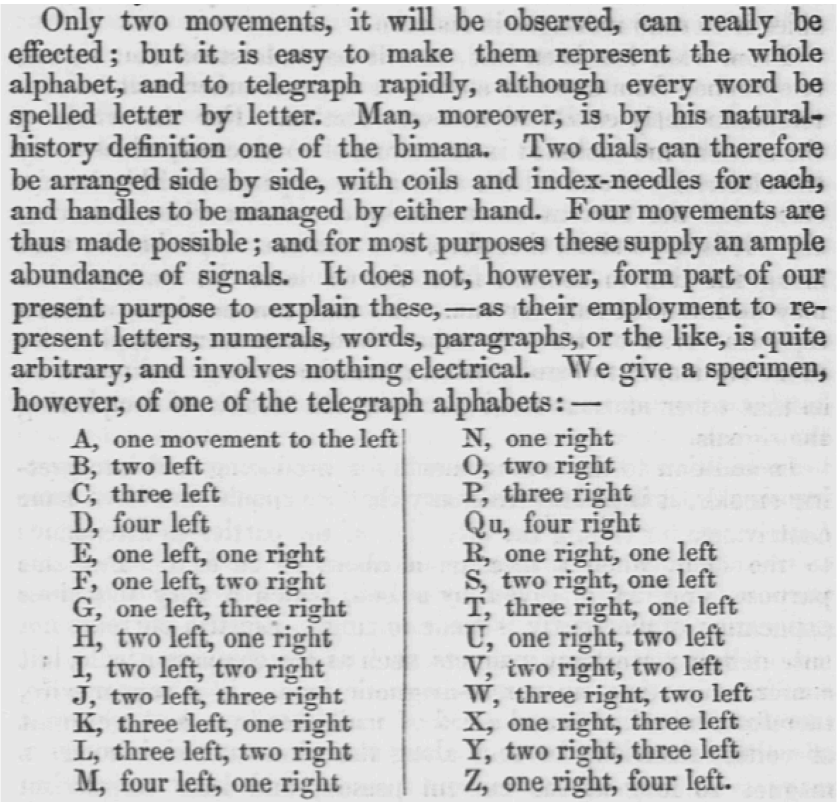
[75] In recent years, two categories have become popular for distinguishing the digital's inhabitants: "digital natives" and "digital immigrants." Marc Prensky coined the phrases to delineate the younger generations that been "born into the digital world" (1) and for whom thinking digitally is ingrained and the older generations that have learned to adapt but cannot fully assimilate (2). Prensky uses the distinction to argue that higher education needs to change in order to account for this newer generation of students who are, in his estimation, already digitally literate by the time they enter college. His assumption, however, is flawed in that it assumes digital literacy does not have to be taught, not to mention that it also short shrifts the digital immigrants who, in his account, will always have "their 'accent'" (2). Countering Prensky, C. Brown and C. Czerniewicz demonstrate in their research on South African higher education that digital competency is dependent more on access to and practice with digital media.

APPENDIX

Fig. 1: One telegraphic alphabet
(from Wilson, "Electric Telegraph" 463)

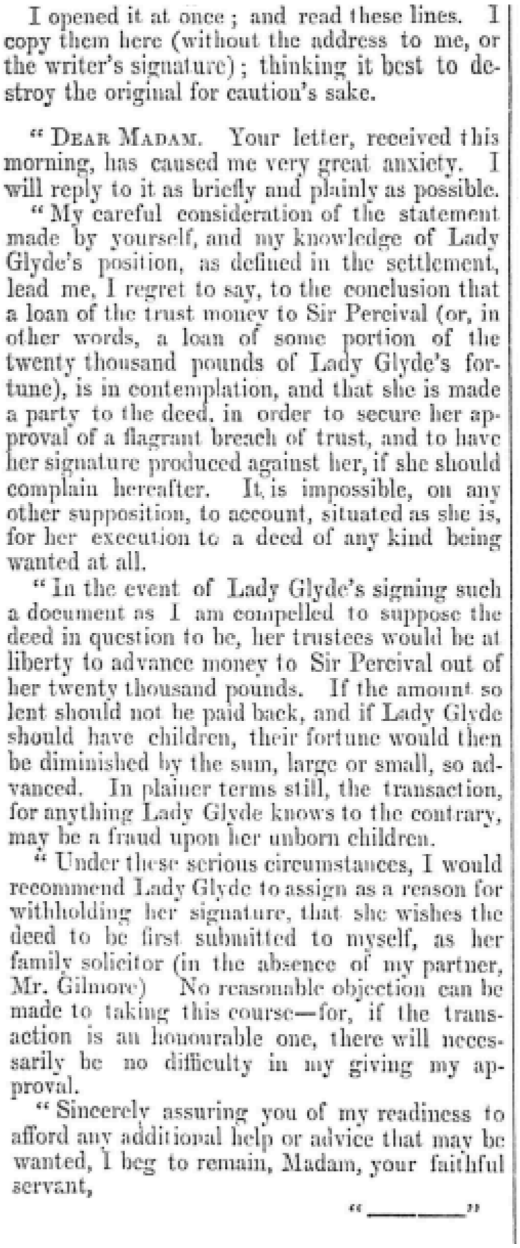


Only two movements, it will be observed, can really be effected; but it is easy to make them represent the whole alphabet, and to telegraph rapidly, although every word be spelled letter by letter. Man, moreover, is by his natural-history definition one of the bimana. Two dials can therefore be arranged side by side, with coils and index-needles for each, and handles to be managed by either hand. Four movements are thus made possible; and for most purposes these supply an ample abundance of signals. It does not, however, form part of our present purpose to explain these,—as their employment to represent letters, numerals, words, paragraphs, or the like, is quite arbitrary, and involves nothing electrical. We give a specimen, however, of one of the telegraph alphabets:—

A, one movement to the left
B, two left
C, three left
D, four left
E, one left, one right
F, one left, two right
G, one left, three right
H, two left, one right
I, two left, two right
J, two left, three right
K, three left, one right
L, three left, two right
M, four left, one right

N, one right
O, two right
P, three right
Qu, four right
R, one right, one left
S, two right, one left
T, three right, one left
U, one right, two left
V, two right, two left
W, three right, two left
X, one right, three left
Y, two right, three left
Z, one right, four left.

Fig. 2: Mr. Kyrle's letter to Marian, with the removed address and signature
(from Collins, *The Woman in White, All the Year Round* 478)



I opened it at once; and read these lines. I copy them here (without the address to me, or the writer's signature); thinking it best to destroy the original for caution's sake.

"DEAR MADAM. Your letter, received this morning, has caused me very great anxiety. I will reply to it as briefly and plainly as possible.

"My careful consideration of the statement made by yourself, and my knowledge of Lady Glyde's position, as defined in the settlement, lead me, I regret to say, to the conclusion that a loan of the trust money to Sir Percival (or, in other words, a loan of some portion of the twenty thousand pounds of Lady Glyde's fortune), is in contemplation, and that she is made a party to the deed, in order to secure her approval of a flagrant breach of trust, and to have her signature produced against her, if she should complain hereafter. It is impossible, on any other supposition, to account, situated as she is, for her execution to a deed of any kind being wanted at all.

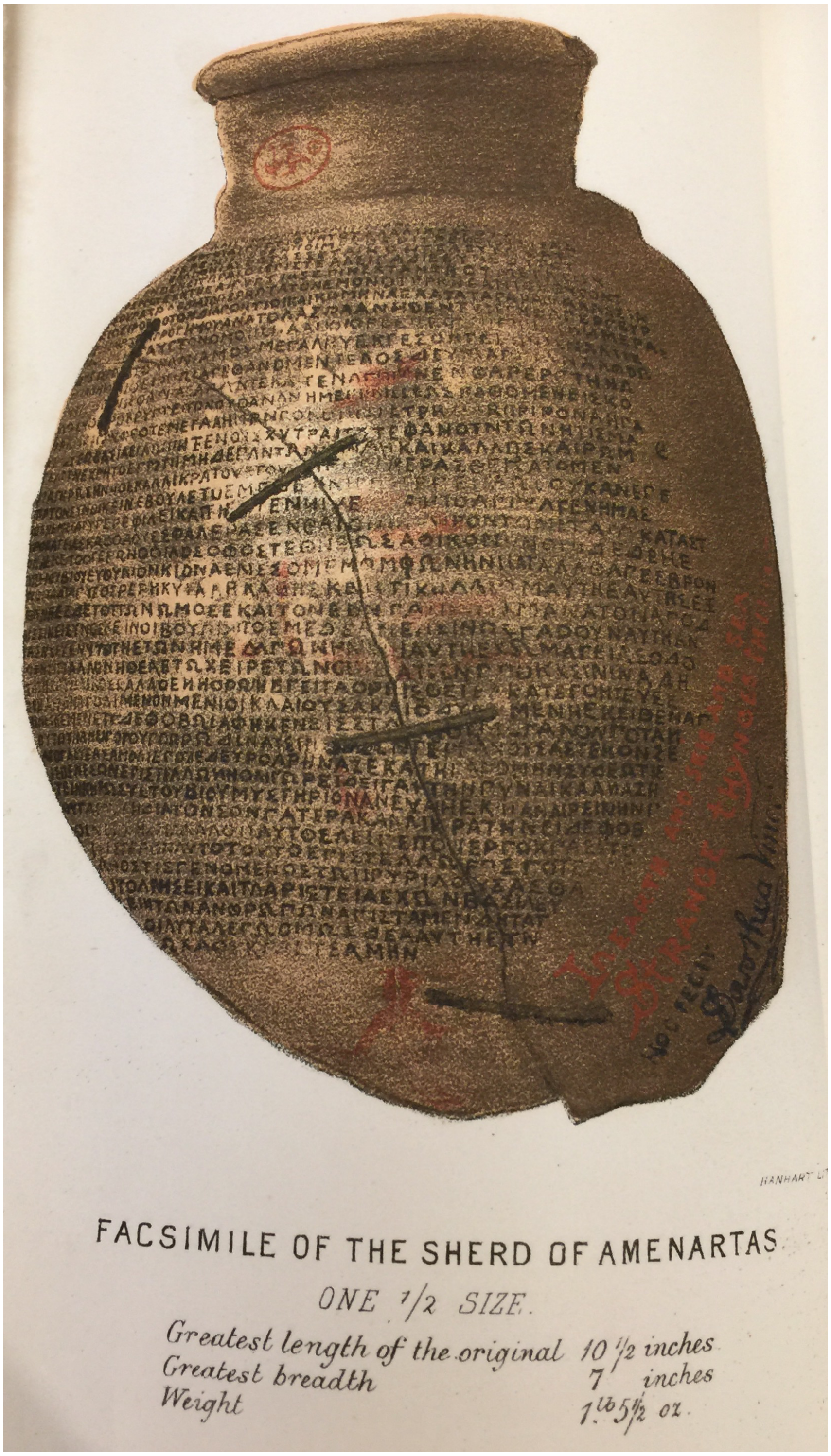
"In the event of Lady Glyde's signing such a document as I am compelled to suppose the deed in question to be, her trustees would be at liberty to advance money to Sir Percival out of her twenty thousand pounds. If the amount so lent should not be paid back, and if Lady Glyde should have children, their fortune would then be diminished by the sum, large or small, so advanced. In plainer terms still, the transaction, for anything Lady Glyde knows to the contrary, may be a fraud upon her unborn children.

"Under these serious circumstances, I would recommend Lady Glyde to assign as a reason for withholding her signature, that she wishes the deed to be first submitted to myself, as her family solicitor (in the absence of my partner, Mr. Gilmore) No reasonable objection can be made to taking this course—for, if the transaction is an honourable one, there will necessarily be no difficulty in my giving my approval.

"Sincerely assuring you of my readiness to afford any additional help or advice that may be wanted, I beg to remain, Madam, your faithful servant,

"———"

Fig. 3: Facsimiles of the sherd, included in the first novel edition of *She*
(my photographs, courtesy of the Yale Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library)

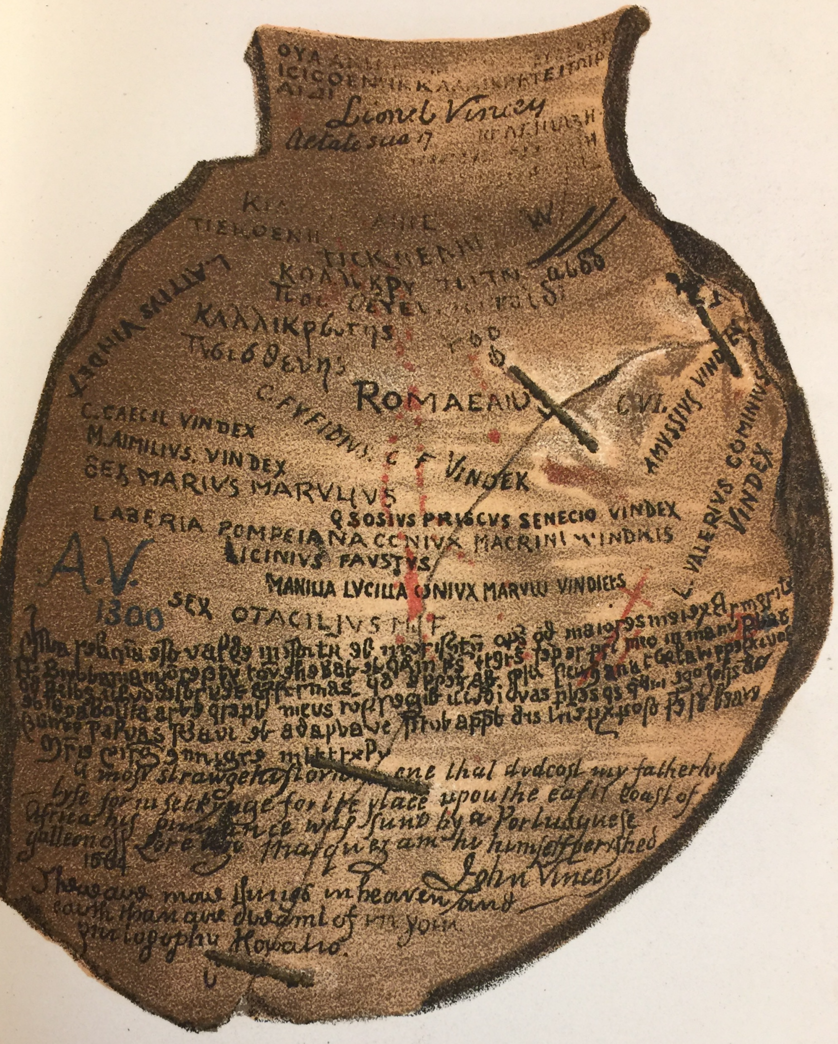


HANHART LITH

FACSIMILE OF THE SHERD OF AMENARTAS

ONE 1/2 SIZE.

Greatest length of the original 10 1/2 inches
Greatest breadth 7 inches
Weight 1 lb 5 1/2 oz.



Lionel Vincey
Aetate sua 17

ROMAEAU

C. CAECIL VINDEX
M. AIMILIVS. VINDEX
SEX MARIVS MARVLLVS
C FVFIDIVS. C F VINDEX
Q SOSIVS PRISCVS SENECIO VINDEX
LABERIA POMPEIANA CONIVX MACRINI VINDICIS
LICINIVS FAVSTVS
MANILIA LVCILLA CONIVX MARVLLI VINDICIS
SEX OTACILIVS M F
AMVSSIVS VINDEX
L. VALERIVS COMINIVS VINDEX

A.V.
1800

A most strawnge historie, one that did cost my father his lyfe for in seekynge for the place upon the east coast of Africa his pinnance was sunk by a Portugueze galleon off Lorenzo Marquez and he himself perished
1804
John Vincey

There are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in your philosophy Horatio.

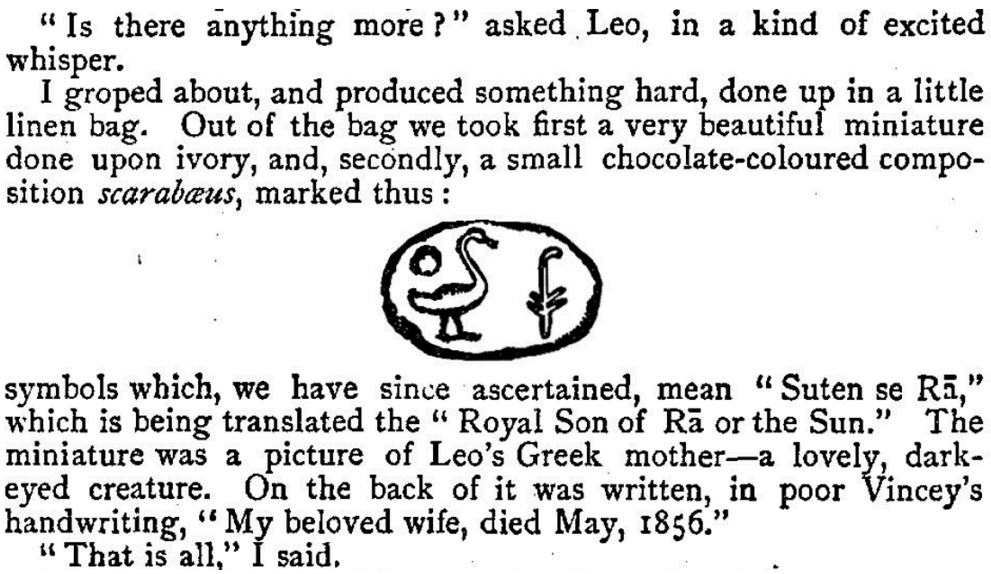
HANHART LITH.

FACSIMILE OF THE REVERSE OF THE SHERD OF AMENARTAS

ONE 1/2 SIZE

Fig. 4: Hieroglyphics in *She*

(from Rider Haggard, *She*, *The Graphic* 390)



"Is there anything more?" asked Leo, in a kind of excited whisper.

I groped about, and produced something hard, done up in a little linen bag. Out of the bag we took first a very beautiful miniature done upon ivory, and, secondly, a small chocolate-coloured composition *scarabæus*, marked thus:

symbols which, we have since ascertained, mean "Suten se Rā," which is being translated the "Royal Son of Rā or the Sun." The miniature was a picture of Leo's Greek mother—a lovely, dark-eyed creature. On the back of it was written, in poor Vincey's handwriting, "My beloved wife, died May, 1856."

"That is all," I said.

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