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"Don't Read This!": Lemony Snicket and the Control of Youth Reading Autonomy in Late-Nineteenth-Century Britain

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“Don’t Read This!”:

Lemony Snicket and the Control of Youth Reading Autonomy in Late-Nineteenth-Century Britain

by

Brittany Allison Previte

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for Senior Independent Study

Supervised By

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ABSTRACT

This independent study investigates adult authority in youth literature in late-nineteenth-century Britain. Examining both sensational literature known as “penny dreadfuls” and the didactic magazines *The Boy’s Own Paper* and *The Girl’s Own Paper*, this project analyzes how rhetoric enforced middle class ideology outside of the classroom and shaped the youth reading experience. In an urbanizing, industrializing Britain, anxiety about social mobility ran high, and youth consumption of penny dreadfuls received suspicion due to their supposedly subversive content. This study argues that penny dreadfuls actually reinforced the social order, mirroring didactic literature in their construction of conservative adult authority. In order to demonstrate the similarity between these two forms, this project studies Lemony Snicket’s *A Series of Unfortunate Events* as a way to approach the adult narrator in late-nineteenth-century texts due to its exaggeration of both sensational and didactic narration styles. As Lemony Snicket’s hybrid narrator deconstructs adult authority through postmodern techniques, he reveals that youth reading autonomy remained a fantasy in late-nineteenth-century Britain.

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INTRODUCTION

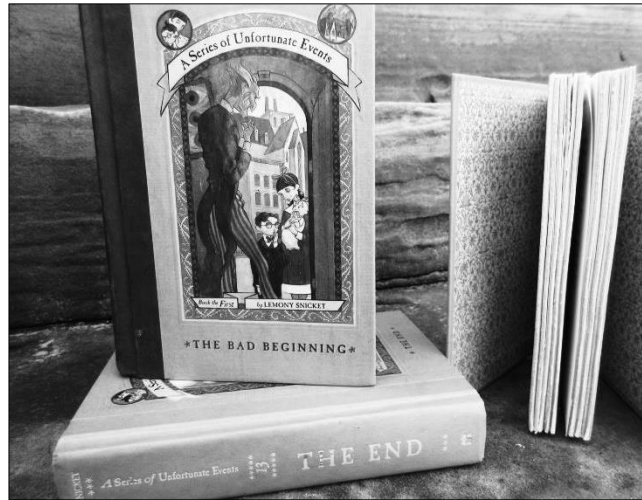


Figure 1. Three novels of *A Series of Unfortunate Events*. Photograph by Brittany Previte.

With jagged, uncut pages, stylized bookplates, and black-and-white illustrations that resemble woodblock prints, the books in *A Series of Unfortunate Events* look like they belong in another century. Written by Daniel Handler (pseudonym Lemony Snicket), this children’s series is published to encompass characteristics of nineteenth-century juvenile texts.¹ The author explains the design crafted by illustrator Brett Helquist and art director Alison Donalty, “We wanted them to look like they came out of someone’s dusty old library. We looked at dime novels and penny dreadfuls. The kind of stuff that carried literature in the Victorian era.”² Though the series takes place in an ambiguous setting, Handler calls the books “neo-Victorian” in their style. In addition to including nods to late-nineteenth-century fashion and technology, Handler adopts narrative devices of two popular forms of Victorian youth literature: the sensational

¹ Ambery Malkovich, *Charles Dickens and the Victorian Child: Romanticizing and Socializing the Imperfect Child* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 127.

² Daniel Handler, in Daniel Fierman, “Lemony Snicket Is the New Harry Potter,” *Entertainment Weekly*, May 24, 2002, accessed Jan. 27, 2016 <http://www.ew.com/article/2002/05/24/lemony-snicket-new-harry-potter>.

serials known as “penny dreadfuls” and the didactic literature that they rebelled against. Exaggerating the characteristics of these forms through parody, Handler’s odd permutation of Victorian youth serials provides insight into constructions of adult narration in children’s literature.

Using a postmodern, mock-Gothic playfulness, Handler argues that children’s literature is more often used as a way to control youth social processes than to encourage youth autonomy. Parodying both the melodrama of penny dreadfuls and the pedantic tone of didactic Victorian children’s literature, Handler’s work suggests that the two genres, which operated at odds in the late nineteenth century, are similar in their control of the youth reading experience. They both draw young readers in with fantasies—the former, a fantasy of escape in the form of sensational adventure; the latter a fantasy of empowerment that exaggerates a youth’s autonomy in growing up. Furthermore, as Handler uses Victorian children’s literature as a vehicle for criticism, he reveals that the same issues that divided the publishing industry for youth in the nineteenth century are still divisive today.

A Series of Unfortunate Events tells the story of the unfortunate Baudelaire orphans as they move from home to home, pursued by the villainous Count Olaf who intends to steal their enormous fortune. Though they face immeasurable treacheries at the hands of Count Olaf and his henchmen, the Baudelaires soon find that the true villains are the adults who attempt to shelter them from the world, and in so doing, place them in even greater danger. At the same time, Handler constructs a narrative of Gothic hyperbole, populating a world of eerie mansions with hook-handed crooks, austere adults, and of course, Count Olaf himself, whom the orphans recognize by the foreboding tattoo

of an eye on his ankle. In the process of normalizing these frightening settings and characters, Handler makes way for the true producers of anxiety in the narrative: adults like the orphans' guardian ad litem Mr. Poe, who spends more of the narrative coughing and ignoring the Baudelaires' cries for help than providing them with suitable guardians.

As the Baudelaires learn to rescue themselves independently of problematic adults, they are empowered by their use of reading and critical thinking skills. Handler shows the orphans leaving behind the well-meaning but ill-advised instruction of Mr. Poe as well as various mentors and guardians, complicating his parody of the didactic adult by raising serious questions about the role of reading as an adult presence in young people's lives. Writing from 1999 to 2006, Handler addresses the same problems children's literature authors faced in the nineteenth century: What responsibility does fiction have in shaping youth social processes? Can youth fiction be effectively used as a vehicle to instill morals and values? Should young people be sheltered from topics that might provoke fear? Will reading about violent content make youth violent?

In confronting these questions, Victorian writers for youth often constructed an adult presence in their work that mediated between youth and the text. I discuss *A Series of Unfortunate Events* as a way to begin a conversation about how the authority of the adult in youth literature is constructed, because Handler's work consciously deconstructs it. While the majority of this study focuses on nineteenth-century texts, the last chapter highlights how Handler's text offers insight into the narratives of its predecessors. Handler offers a unique view of how Victorian rhetoric operates by dissecting several key narrative devices that establish an adult authority to reinforce social ideology. Examining the historical context alongside an analysis of penny dreadfuls and didactic literature

demonstrates how the construction of the adult in texts for youth reveals deeper social issues. This study will investigate how questions about the facility of youth literature in forming young people caused anxiety among the Victorian middle class, and how that anxiety reveals tension in the British social order.

Handler's series is perhaps fated to parody Victorian children's literature because of the social prominence of youth reading habits in the late nineteenth century. Many scholars consider the years between 1865 and the 1920s the "Golden Age of Children's Literature" due to the innovation in texts for children and the creation of many writings now considered classics in the genre during this period.³ Reading shaped childhood in late-Victorian England. Youth were reading domestic handbooks, their Bibles, serials in the newspaper, adventure stories, classic novels, and increasingly, periodicals produced just for them. With the Education Act of 1870 and other education reform, more children were literate, widening the reading public particularly in the working class. This development coincided with decreased taxes on paper and cheap printing costs, allowing publishers to churn out more content each year. A booming publishing scene developed to meet the increased demand for a rapidly-expanding genre: children's literature.

Britain was anxious about the future—and children were the future. Besides a supposedly delinquent youth population⁴ and a growing concern about mass culture, the British Empire had much to worry about in terms of raising the next generation. Mass industrialization meant that the workforce required more skilled, and therefore educated, workers. Expanded voting rights allowed all adult males to vote, leading to fears about an

³ Perry Nodelman, *The Hidden Adult: Defining Children's Literature* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008), 273.

⁴ See discussion of juvenile literature and crime in Chapter One.

uninformed voting public. Competition both economically and politically with other nations, particularly rivals in Europe, spurred the desire to raise successful youths to continue to build the Empire. The obsession with the creation of useful citizens (and its flipside, the British fear of racial degeneracy), led back to youth.⁵ Reformers pointed to reports of high juvenile delinquency rates as indicators that the next generation of British citizens needed direct intervention to save the legacy of the Empire.⁶

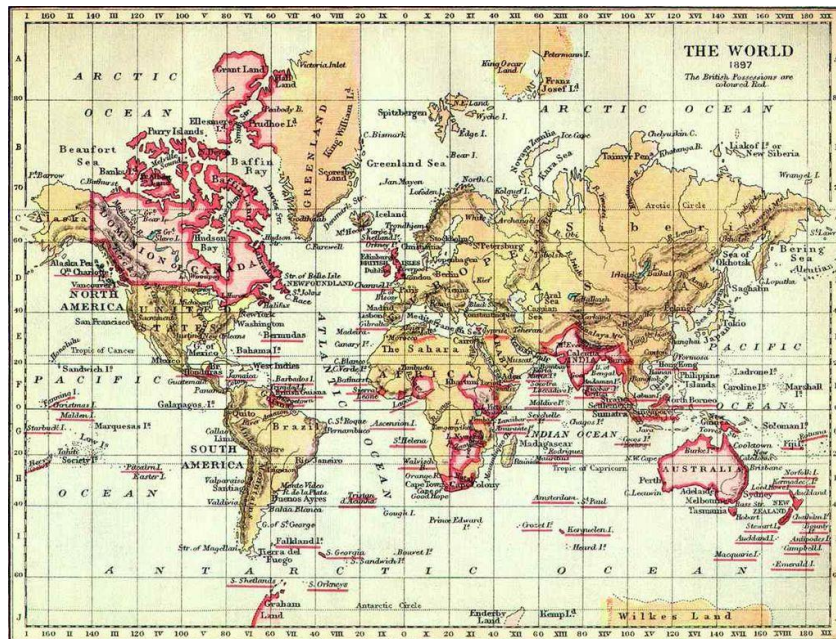


Figure 2. *The World in 1897*. The British Empire (marked in pink) in 1897. Cambridge University Library, Public Domain.

The context of empire added another layer of tension about the effect of literature on youth. Many reformers worried about crafting the citizens who would populate Britain’s numerous colonies around the world. Just as the Pure Literature Society’s 1872 report announced that it sent periodicals “of a pure and instructive character” to “India, Australia, etc.,” reformist societies shared the hope that the young British citizens spread

⁵ Stephanie Olsen, *Juvenile Nation: Youth, Emotions and the Making of the Modern British Citizen, 1880-1914*. (London & New York: Bloomsbury, 2014), 5.

⁶ *Ibid.*

throughout the globe would likewise reinforce the middle class ideology that drove the nation.⁷ As nationalism and empire remained rooted at the front of many British minds, imperialist tendencies within the nation shaped the idea of what the ideal British citizen looked like. The middle class emerged as the social “watchdogs” of the nation, mobilizing through reformist societies, schools, and churches in order to spread its values. In addition to being healthy, athletic, intelligent, educated, mannered, hard-working, Christian, and moral, citizens were supposed to be imbued with a British identity that could be exported to other countries and shared with the locals.

Several reformist societies argued that in order to create such citizens, children had to be trained—surrounded by positive influences both in and out of school. This training was important for the boys who could theoretically be traveling to colonies when grown, but also for girls, who would be responsible for raising and training the *next* generation of British citizens. The struggle to raise a generation capable of these feats was made more difficult by the threat of material that could be seen as a negative influence, generating concerns about youth reading material seen as formative in their development. For instance, the Religious Tract Society’s Report for 1879 described how “Judges, magistrates, schoolmasters, prison chaplains, and others were deploring the existence of the evil, and calling loudly for a remedy.”⁸ Pownell Harrison from the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge similarly viewed penny dreadfuls as a tangible attack on British society. He claimed that until education and “sound, clever and

⁷ Pownell Harrison, “Cheap Literature—Past and Present,” In *The British Almanac of the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge, for the Year of Our Lord 1873* (London: The Company Of Stationers, 1873), 79.

⁸ Samuel G. Green, *The Story of the Religious Tract Society for One Hundred Years* (London, England: The Religious Tract Society, 1899), 127.

attractive literature” replaced the popular pernicious reading, “this evil of modern civilization cannot be vanquished...It is a blemish in an otherwise magnificent picture of human progress.”⁹ The rhetoric of these reformist societies reveals a growing anxiety about the British middle class control of culture—particularly about their role in determining the texts consumed by the public.¹⁰

In the eyes of the middle class, which was growing in to the watchdog of Britain’s moral interests, the penny dreadful represented an attack on the country’s future as it purportedly corrupted the minds of young citizens. Penny dreadfuls, as youth studies scholar John Springhall writes, are “what most late Victorian and Edwardian juveniles actually *chose* to read.”¹¹ Rather than the moralistic, didactic, adult-approved texts their parents, schoolteachers, and pastors pushed at the youths, these stories captured the imagination with romanticized casts of swashbuckling pirates, dashing rogues, beautiful women, and otherwise colorful characters. Every plot was filled with adventure and far-fetched storylines, often featuring violence. The exploration narratives featured in many penny dreadfuls were particularly salient to the idea of an expanding British Empire, with young male protagonists traveling to far-off lands and executing deeds of unbelievable bravery. Penny dreadfuls marketed toward girls and women often contained romance narratives in which the maiden meets a handsome stranger or pursues a forbidden love.

⁹ Harrison, “Cheap Literature—Past and Present,” 79-80.

¹⁰ Since the eighteenth century, the middle class became the primary critics of literature in Britain, determining the classics and rejecting texts they deemed unsatisfactory. This social role was reinforced by the plethora of book clubs, review publications, and other institutions of literary judgment. See Pownell Harrison, “Cheap Literature—Past and Present,” In *The British Almanac of the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge, for the Year of Our Lord 1873* (London: The Company Of Stationers, 1873) and Richard Altick, *The English Common Reader*.

¹¹ John Springhall, *Youth, Popular Culture and Moral Panics: Penny Gaffs to Gangsta-Rap, 1830- 1996* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1998), 39.

This reading material was highly marketable (and sold cheaply for a penny). Theft and violence among youth was often ascribed to the reading of these penny dreadfuls because some viewed them as a strong negative influence as boys and girls attempted to mimic the behavior of the protagonists.

A moral panic about penny dreadfuls coincided with a middle class realization that “children’s fiction was a nearly universal tool of educators,” the tool with the power to reform youth and shape their moral and social values.¹² Evangelist groups like the Religious Tract Society (henceforth RTS) mobilized to produce texts that were considered wholesome reading, like their magazines *The Leisure Hour*, and more importantly for this study, *The Boy’s Own Paper (BOP)* and *The Girl’s Own Paper (GOP)*, which were both marketed toward young readers. Published to be entertaining as well as instructive, these texts represent a transformation of the didactic voice that pervaded children’s literature in the previous two centuries. Moving away from a pedantic tone, editors of the *BOP* and *GOP* constructed a friendly, accessible voice that retained didacticism while improving marketability. The adult writer now presented himself as the young reader’s “friend,” though still maintaining in-text authority through careful rhetoric. I will use these two widely read magazines as examples of “didactic” children’s literature, meaning texts produced to instruct children, provide adult guidance in leisure reading, and shape youth ideology. Characteristics of this form include a strong narrative presence often in the form of a first-person narrator, a juxtaposition of children

¹² J.S. Bratton, *The Impact of Victorian Children’s Fiction*, 19.

exhibiting ideal behaviors and children misbehaving, a desire to shield children from topics of violence, sexual content or impropriety, and a generally patronizing tone.¹³

While the term “children’s literature” is often used to encompass each of the forms I study—penny dreadfuls, didactic texts, and *A Series of Unfortunate Events*—I will refer to such works as “youth literature” because of the distinction I attempt to make between children and youth. For the purposes of this study, I view “youth” or “young people” as persons who are between the ages of 12 and 25. Less important than this numerical range is the stage in life to which I refer. Instead of looking at the “child,” who is younger than the audience for the literature I study, I am interested in those who are of an age to read independently, are outside of the nursery, and yet are not married or considered full “adults.” Today we might consider individuals of this age preteens, adolescents, or young adults, but in order to give a term that encompasses the audience I study, “youth” will be used.

In this study I also make several references to the “Romantic Child.” This term is a nineteenth-century conception of childhood inheriting the notions of children held by the Romantic poets: surrounded by nature, the child is innocent and pure from conception. By revisiting the child and ideas of childhood, adults are thought to have access to this innocent view of the world. While this study is concerned with youth and not the child from birth, the Romantic Child contextualized the nineteenth-century perception of the malleability of young people. If children are a pure beings—blank slates—the ideas and images that surround them could fill their unblemished minds. This

¹³ This is a simplification of these magazines’ characteristics; in Chapter Two I will discuss them more in-depth.

conception of childhood thus grants the penny dreadfuls great influence over the young person's mind, and didactic material the power to "correct" that influence.

Other terms that are useful in this project are "reading autonomy" and "reading resistance." Reading autonomy is a form of learning autonomy, a term that is used more widely in studies of education and sociology than in literature and history. Reading autonomy denotes the ability of individuals to read critically and independently, forming their own reading experience and interpretation of content. At times this reading autonomy is interrupted, as this study will show in examining penny dreadfuls and didactic magazines. In these moments, reader resistance comes into play. Readers might "resist" an authority within a text that interrupts reading autonomy, for instance, questioning the reliability of the narrator, reading out of order, or responding to the text in an interactive way.

As criticism of childhood and children's literature has become more prevalent in the past few decades, many scholars have studied the late nineteenth century as a critical period in their history. Today there is an abundance of critical work on the connection between the penny dreadfuls, didactic magazines, and the sociopolitical climate in which they operated.¹⁴ Kirsten Drotner's *English Children and Their Magazines* (1988) was one of the first scholarly treatments of juvenile magazines in Britain, alerting scholars to the dearth of attention given to the most popular form of reading material for nineteenth-century British youth. Drotner creates a compelling connection between developments in

¹⁴ For more on the history and development of penny dreadfuls as well as didactic magazines, see Robert J. Kirkpatrick, *From the Penny Dreadful to the Ha'Penny Dreadfuller: A Bibliographic History of the Boys' Periodical in Britain: 1762-1950* (London and Newcastle DE: The British Library and Oak Knoll Press, 2013), and Kevin Carpenter, *Penny Dreadfuls and Comics: English Periodicals for Children from Victorian Times to the Present Day: A Loan Exhibition from the Library of Oldenburg University, West Germany at the Bethnal Green Museum of Childhood* (London: Victoria and Albert Museum, 1983).

middle-class ideas of childhood and the ideology present in youth magazines that laid the groundwork for future study. Delving more deeply into the social context in which youth literature developed, many scholars such as Stephanie Olsen stress the concerns that affected the middle class focus on youth, such as the effects of urbanization and industrialization, gender roles, fears of racial degeneracy, and high infant mortality rates. Olsen's *Juvenile Nation: Youth, Emotions and the Making of the Modern British Citizen, 1880-1914* (2014) argues that raising and educating youth was a primary concern in Britain, causing anxiety about the types of entertainment they consumed.¹⁵ One other area of focus is the importance of youth in a time of Empire. Michelle J. Smith's book *Empire in British Girls' Literature and Culture: Imperial Girls, 1880-1915* (2011) contends that the rhetoric of Empire is deeply ingrained in girls' literature and other cultural areas, just as Patrick Dunae's article "Boys' Literature and the Idea of Empire, 1870-1914" (1980) does the same work for boys.

The study of penny dreadfuls has largely been in their social context, focusing on their role as mass entertainment and the ensuing panic as a revelation of class tension. Kevin Carpenter, writing prolifically on the form, links their common themes and characteristics to British middle class ideology. Carpenter's book *Desert Isles and Pirate Islands* (1984) defines common tropes and archetypes in the penny dreadful, pinning down the traits of the penny dreadful hero. However, Carpenter is one of the few scholars who dissect the language of penny dreadfuls; the majority of the field is focused on how this form fits into a wider social context. Patrick Dunae's analysis brings a more quantitative study to the field in articles like "Penny Dreadfuls: Late Nineteenth-Century

¹⁵ For more on youth literature and class, see Charles Ferrall and Anna Jackson, *Juvenile Literature and British Society, 1850-1950* (New York: Routledge, 2010).

Boys' Literature and Crime" (1979), examining circulation numbers, crime reports, and other data to demonstrate the popularity of penny dreadfuls and their association with criminality. Writing more recently, John Springhall has dominated the work on penny dreadfuls, viewing them as catalysts for what he calls a "moral panic" among the middle class.¹⁶ His book *Youth, Popular Culture and Moral Panics: Penny Gaffs to Gangsta-Rap, 1830-1996* (1998), as well as his articles on the perceived "pernicious" effects of penny dreadfuls, argues that when youth widely read sensational literature, the middle class grows anxious because it perceives the form as a threat to the social order.

The work on didactic magazines has flourished in the past few decades as well. While some works from the 1980's seem to exist merely to praise the *GOP* and *BOP* as influential periodicals, such as Wendy Forrester's work, *Great-Grandmama's Weekly* (1980) and Jack Cox's *Take a Cold Tub, Sir!: The Story of the Boy's Own Paper* (1982),¹⁷ the scholarly work beginning in the 1990's shows a deeper attention to the rhetoric at work in the magazines, and the social attitudes that fueled it. For instance, Terri Doughty, in *Selections from The Girl's Own Paper, 1880-1907* (2004) runs a commentary alongside reproduced *GOP* pages in order to comment on the context in which the text was produced, as well as to analyze the ways in which *GOP* authors used the magazine as an educational tool for girls.

¹⁶ For more on Springhall's connection between youth literature and moral panics, see John Springhall, "'Pernicious Reading'? 'The Penny Dreadful' as Scapegoat for Late-Victorian Juvenile Crime," *Victorian Periodicals Review*, Vol. 27, No. 4 (Winter, 1994), and "'Disseminating Impure Literature': The 'Penny Dreadful' Publishing Business Since 1860," *The Economic History Review*, New Series, 47, No. 3 (August 1, 1994): 567-84.

¹⁷ These texts, while more sentimental accounts than biographical sketches, still offer insight into the production of the magazines, information on their editors and writers, accounts of their history, and a collection of articles and illustrations reproduced in facsimile form.

Much of the scholarly analysis on the *BOP* and *GOP* today has to do with gender. Kimberley Reynolds, in *Girls Only? Gender and Popular Children's Fiction in Britain, 1880-1910* (1990), asserts that the separation of girls' fiction and boys' fiction during the rise of mass juvenile readership contributed to the way children perceived their identities. Reynolds' work paved the way for Kristine Moruzi's study of gender in *Constructing Girlhood through the Periodical Press, 1850-1915* (2012), which claims that concepts of girlhood in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries were actually developed through the rhetoric of magazines.¹⁸

Finally, there has been a recent turn in the field to the analysis of authorial and editorial authority. Diana Dixon's 1986 article established the premise that the adult voice governing youth periodicals dramatically changed over the nineteenth century from one of austere authority to an inviting friend. Since then, scholars have investigated this change with greater attention. Beth Rodgers investigates how rhetoric and marketing worked together to make the adult control more subtle in the *GOP* in "Competing Girlhoods: Competition, Community, and Reader Contribution in *The Girl's Own Paper* and *The Girl's Realm*" (2012). Similarly, Elizabeth Penner investigates the *BOP* in "The Squire of Boyhood': G. A. Hutchison and the *Boy's Own Paper*" (2014). Both of these scholars, among others, contend that while the editorial presence *appeared* to soften, the subtle rhetorical strategies these magazines used assured that adults still controlled content and the reading experience. However, some scholars argue against this thesis by claiming that the periodical genre allowed youth to resist that adult authority. Jenny Holt writes in "The Textual Formations of Adolescence in Turn-of-the-Century Youth

¹⁸ Chapter Two will examine didactic magazines as gendered texts, but my study is more focused on class than gender.

Periodicals: ‘*The Boy's Own Paper*’ and Eton College Ephemeral Magazines” (2002), for instance, that the *BOP* and other magazines became a center for subversive adolescent thought and adolescent creativity, resisting the adult attempts at control.

Applying the same analysis to penny dreadfuls as many scholars are doing to didactic magazines, I compare the construction of adult authority in both forms. I also expand the focus of my study from gender to class, which is a key dimension in the discourse surrounding didactic magazines and penny dreadfuls, but is at times overlooked in contemporary scholarship. In the first chapter, I will argue that penny dreadfuls and the moral panic they provoked are more indicative of anxiety about social mobility and youth education than about the actual content of these stories. The advertisements and narrative devices in these stories reveal a commercialized reading experience that challenges ideas of childhood, transforming youth from learners into consumers. Connecting the potentially subversive content in penny dreadfuls to juvenile crime, this chapter also includes contemporary criticism of the penny dreadfuls, revealing insight into middle class attitudes about the role of reading in a youth’s upbringing.

Because cheap sensational literature was often considered ephemeral and was discarded upon reading, its preservation is less comprehensive than other youth literature. I was fortunate to receive Copeland Funding in order to travel to the Cotsen Children’s Library at Princeton University for this project. There I examined several first editions of penny dreadfuls, including stories from the Aldine Publishing Company such as *Lady Kate: The Dashing Female Detective* and *Dean Dangerfield’s Desperate Game*. To supplement this research, I accessed online several penny dreadfuls including the infamous *Black Bess, or, The Knight of the Road*, and a serial published in the *British*

Boy's Paper titled *The Freebooters of the Ocean*. These sources allow me to investigate in the first chapter how sensational literature played into class tension in the late nineteenth century. Contemporary criticism of the penny dreadfuls will further my discussion of their potentially subversive content, including comments from Edward Salmon, a prominent young literary critic, and Pownell Harrison in the annual almanac of the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge.

In the second chapter I argue that the reactionary literature responding to penny dreadfuls became a phenomenon of their own, attempting to capitalize on the expansion of youth reading and reclaim the market for educational purposes. I study two magazines published by the Religious Tract Society, *The Boy's Own Paper* and the *Girl's Own Paper*, which I accessed in digitized form. Articles and illustrations from these sources offer insight into the ideology the Religious Tract Society attempted to impress upon young readers, and demonstrate how that ideology was enforced through constructions of adult authority. I contextualize these two magazines with other didactic materials I discovered while at the Cotsen Children's Library, including *Good Habits and Good Manners: A Book for Boys* and a manual on nutrition titled *Young Housekeepers: Blackie's Domestic Economy Readers No. V*.

Finally, the conclusion of this project reintroduces *A Series of Unfortunate Events* as a lens through which we might better observe adult authority in the Golden Age of Children's Literature. I comment on how Handler's parody of the sensational storytelling of penny dreadfuls and the pedantic tone of didactic magazines reveals a striking similarity in starkly different literary forms. While the series was published nearly two hundred years after the former literature I study, the books are highly interested in the

nineteenth-century youth reading experience. Examining postmodern elements such as metafictional intrusions, mock-Gothic tropes, and a problematic narrator, I will use Handler's stories to add dimension to the nineteenth-century conversation about how literature is entrenched in youth education—and in the very fabric of society.

My study will view penny dreadfuls and didactic magazines as evidence of a shifting social order in late-nineteenth-century Britain. The tension between these two forms reveals an anxiety about the prevalence of middle and upper class control of cultural values in an increasingly urbanized and populous society. Furthermore, this tension brings to light nineteenth-century concerns about raising youth and the influence of literature on their upbringing.

While I expected to find a lessening of adult authority within the penny dreadfuls—which caused a panic for potentially allowing youth to resist conforming to dominant social ideology—I find in this study a curious reassertion of the adult presence in sensational literature as well as didactic. *A Series of Unfortunate Events* as a postmodern youth text confirms this view of nineteenth-century adult authority. Allowing readers to deconstruct patronizing rhetoric, Handler shows by contrast the striking similarity between the *BOP* and *GOP* and the penny dreadfuls they allegedly combat. Using marketing strategies, narrative techniques, and clever rhetoric, for-profit businesses like the Aldine Publishing Company and reformist organizations such as the Religious Tract Society used this adult authority to influence young consumers. In their conscious and subconscious attempts to shape the youth reading experience and enforce ideology, penny dreadfuls and didactic magazines both construct their own version of adult textual authority, reaffirming middle class values.

CHAPTER ONE

PENNY DREADFULS: READER GRATIFICATION AND MORAL PANIC

Children were not supposed to be reading penny dreadfuls in the eyes of concerned moralists. Penny dreadfuls threatened adult authority because of their perceived existence outside the realm of adult surveillance.¹ Spending their pocket money autonomously, children gravitated toward these texts because they offered an escape—from the didacticism and authority of the adult world, but also from the monotony of daily life in a newly industrialized society. The unsupervised penny dreadfuls transformed into a subversive element in the eyes of Victorian moralists. Concerned parents, critics, magistrates, clergymen and educators attacked the behaviors contained in this mode of literature that they considered unsavory, such as the championing of unrealistic circumstances, violence, and disobedience; encouragement to girls to pursue romance; and in general, condoning any behavior outside of societal propriety. Crime reports often blamed theft and violence among youth on penny dreadfuls because critics viewed them as a strong negative influence.

Schoolboys and “young, wage-earning customers” formed the audience base of the penny dreadful.² Readership was wide: youth anywhere from ages 10-24 regularly purchased these publications. From the 1850s, publishers designated literature produced for this age group as “juvenile literature.”³ Other terms defined this audience. Though readers were slightly older than “children,” a term that conjured images of the nursery,

¹ Of course, writers and publishers of the penny dreadful constituted an adult presence, yet they were not the authorities governing the lives of their youth readers.

² Springhall, *Youth, Popular Culture and Moral Panics*, 3.

³ Ferrall, Charles, and Anna Jackson, *Juvenile Literature and British Society, 1850-1950* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 5.

moralists reacting to penny dreadfuls applied the Romantic notions of the innocent child of the early nineteenth century. The Romantics associated children with nature, born with inherent innocence—and thus able to be corrupted as pernicious material like the penny dreadful enters the garden. Another possible descriptor for this audience is the term “adolescent,” which has been in use since the 1830s.⁴ However, adolescence is more widely used when considering the sexual development of youth in their progression into the adult. For the sake of discussion in this chapter, I will refer to the audience of the penny dreadfuls as “juveniles,” “youth,” and “young people” because these terms refer to the readers’ age group without the implications of either adolescence or childhood.

Scholars have only recently begun to examine the penny dreadful in literary study. Springhall argues that the penny dreadful shaped youth culture in the nineteenth century, yet more importantly, revealed an anxiety about a shifting society as a middle class “moral panic” followed their popularity. Springhall notes that while “Routinely mentioned by nineteenth-century literature specialists in stark contrast to more elevated fiction, ‘penny dreadfuls’ are often excoriated but seldom read or critically discussed.”⁵ The growing trend of examining popular fiction in literary study, however, has brought the penny dreadful to the forefront. Kevin Carpenter in his examination of children’s periodicals found that the penny dreadful opened a new realm of escapism for young readers, which he links to the imperialist tendencies of Victorian Britain. Other notable scholars, such as Patrick Dunae and Robert Kirkpatrick, attempt to catalog the history of the penny dreadful and their economic influence. Experts in the field are beginning to

⁴ Ferrall and Jackson, *Juvenile Literature and British Society, 1850-1950*, 1-2. Ferrall and Jackson point out that though the term was in wider use since the 1830s, the idea of a transitional state between childhood and adulthood has existed for far longer, perhaps even as early as the early sixteenth century.

⁵ Springhall, *Youth, Popular Culture and Moral Panics*, 39.

realize how the penny dreadful shaped not only the minds of Victorian youth but also the face of wider culture as mass entertainment.

In examining the reading culture around the penny dreadfuls, it becomes evident that the social anxiety of the middle class that resulted from this reading stemmed more from a concern about a tenuous class hierarchy than from the literature itself. I will focus on several works that fit under the umbrella of the “penny dreadful,” including the widely read (and criticized) *Black Bess: Knight of the Road*, the serial story *The Freebooters of the Ocean* published in *The British Boys’ Paper*, and several volumes from the Aldine Publishing Company’s many libraries, including *Lady Kate: The Dashing Female Detective* and *Dick Dangerfield’s Dangerous Game* in order to discuss how these stories represented a new type of fiction that rattled society. Penny dreadfuls like these commodified the relationship between the reader and the text in their role as entertainment for the masses, yet simultaneously invigorated youth reading habits as they explored new fantastic worlds that defied their previous conceptions of society. The penny dreadful shocked a Victorian middle class that saw subversive ideas in its text, revealing an anxiety about children, class, literacy, and crime—issues that would determine the future of British society.

Writing to Sell: Penny Dreadfuls as an Enterprise

Penny dreadfuls commanded a strong presence not only as reading material, but also as a commercial industry. Print as a whole expanded rapidly in late nineteenth-century Britain due to widespread literacy, the repeal of taxes, technological advances, and an expanded reading public in urban environments. Springhall describes how this expanding mass market changed the face of popular culture: “Early Victorian showmen,

printers, publishers and performers, with their highly developed entrepreneurial sense, flourished precisely because they were alert to the opportunities for profit to be made from the provision of entertainment recently opened up in London and the expanding northern cities of the industrial transformation.”⁶ Publishers targeted juveniles as consumers for works like chapbooks⁷ beginning in the seventeenth century—what makes Victorian publishing for youth unique is the production and distribution of this entertainment on a mass scale in predominantly urban areas.⁸ The beginning of mass entertainment made the production of literature a profitable, commercial enterprise rather than its previous role as predominantly an art form through the eighteenth century.

Literacy and education, which became widespread during the course of the nineteenth century, opened the way for youth as consumers of this booming literature scene. Some scholars believe that literacy was almost universal before the Education Act of 1870, providing elementary schooling for children ages 5-13—Springhall suggests that this legislation in fact only filled in the gaps of children’s education rather than creating an entirely new class of readers.⁹ However, these growing literacy rates enabled publishers to secure juveniles as their consumer base, particularly in urban areas. The proliferation of new publications beginning in the 1840s offered youth a wider variety of choice in their reading, including penny dreadfuls.¹⁰ Instead of being limited to poetry read and recited in schools and any chapbooks they might come across independently,

⁶ Springhall, *Youth, Popular Culture and Moral Panics*, 6.

⁷ Chapbooks were cheaply produced booklets, featuring ballads, folktales and other stories, often accompanied by crude woodcuts.

⁸ Springhall, *Youth, Popular Culture and Moral Panics*, 6.

⁹ Springhall, “‘Penny Dreadful’ Publishing Since 1860,” 569.

¹⁰ In the 1840s-1850s, these works were called “penny bloods”; the term changed to “penny dreadfuls” in the 1860s.

youths now had the power to read selectively once they had access to this new material. Ultimately, young readers became the prime consumer of mass-produced texts when Britain became a literate public.

Urbanization and industrialization also contributed to the development of the young consumer base, as people migrated to the cities and found employment in an increasingly commercialized sphere. Small-scale production companies in London fostered a high demand for “boy labor,” seeking adolescent errand boys and workers who could be paid a lower wage than the increasingly expensive adult worker. Boys worked in warehouses, print shops, factories, shops, and offices doing unskilled work for decent compensation. These adolescents, “together with schoolboys, [were] the most insatiable readers of the ‘penny dreadful’ ”¹¹ due to their urban presence and their (albeit small) measure of disposable income. Springhall suggests that penny dreadfuls may have appealed to these readers also because they “held a vicarious appeal for young metropolitan readers seeking a romantic escape from uneventful daily lives.”¹² The unskilled work youth did in the cities often included monotonous, menial tasks such as sweeping floors. This made the morning walk to their jobs all the more exciting with the possibility of purchasing a new penny dreadful, borrowing one from a friend, or discussing the latest story in great vivid detail. Penny dreadfuls proved a social staple among male adolescents, the target audience for a growing market on Fleet Street.

The larger publishing companies such as the Newsagents Publishing Company succeeded in turning profits in this industry, yet small publishing houses experienced a large turnover as many ran for less than a year before being run out of business. Rather

¹¹ Springhall “‘Penny Dreadful’ Publishing Since 1860,” 569.

¹² *Ibid.*, 570.

than revealing a lack of demand for new publications, this trend indicates the intense competition between these companies. Fleet Street hosted hordes of new publishers, trying to churn out the next popular serial. The centralized publishers in London created a selling network that stretched into the streets frequented by the young urban workers. Springhall writes that Newsagents Publishing Company serials “sold like wildfire to children, teenagers, and some adults from small newsagents and stationers, tobacconists, lollipop and toy shops, sweetstuff vendors, and small chandler's shops.”¹³ The popularity of serials spanned the length of the nineteenth century and into the twentieth, forming a staple in mass culture.

Enterprising publishers saw penny dreadful publishing as an attractive enterprise not only because of the texts' popularity, but because of its commercial advantages. In London, a host of adequately-skilled writers (or less kindly, “cheap hacks”¹⁴) drove down the price of writing penny dreadfuls to a pittance. Advances in printing technology such as the development of faster printers made penny dreadfuls cheaper to produce.¹⁵ The repeal of paper duties such as the Stamp Act also cut costs of printing considerably: a paper ream cost half of what it did in the 1840s by 1860.¹⁶ The favorable conditions in London allowed the industry to boom as it had not in previous decades.

Publishers also turned to penny dreadful production because of this form's ability to build strong customer loyalty. Penny dreadful publishing offered a sense of security

¹³ Springhall, “‘Penny Dreadful’ Publishing Since 1860,” 572.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 571.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 569.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

because of their serial nature—publishers could forecast sales with some assurance.¹⁷ Finally, rather than selling one discrete text such as a novel, serial penny dreadfuls could stretch out the profits of one story by prolonging the end of the story itself, inserting tangential plots and irrelevant characters. The disdainful Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge—a group dedicated to providing easy access for the working classes to the higher strands of literature, in addition to scientific knowledge—commented, “The reader who follows the narrative from beginning to end will have expended the sum of eighteen or nineteen shillings in gratifying his curiosity for what is not worth five, as periodicals sell, and still less in a moral or literary sense.”¹⁸ Despite the society’s bias in condemning the serial texts, it does aptly emphasize the selling power of a single penny dreadful such as the 254-part *Black Bess; or, The Knight of the Road*. Publishers knew penny dreadfuls could turn profits from invested readers, and so they engineered the reading experience into an addictive, exhilarating exercise for the young consumer.

The Commercialized Reading Experience

Because of the context of its production, an analysis of the penny dreadful must be viewed in terms of the work’s commercial purpose. The interaction between publishers and authors with their readers as they attempted to expand and maintain their consumer base shaped the content, writing style and physical production of penny dreadfuls. Common strategies to produce sales included concluding weekly installments with “cliffhanger” endings, forcing readers to purchase the next chapter to satisfy their

¹⁷ Springhall, “‘Penny Dreadful’ Publishing Since 1860,” 572.

¹⁸ Pownell Harrison, “Cheap Literature—Past and Present,” In *The British Almanac of the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge, for the Year of Our Lord 1873* (London: The Company Of Stationers, 1873), 75.

curiosity about the fate of characters; offering prizes to those who first purchased the next installment; and encouraging cyclical reading patterns by promoting the next installment both within the text and in advertisements.

The Aldine Publishing Company represents one of the most industrious penny dreadful publishers in Britain with their efficient techniques. Formed in London in 1886 by Charles Perry Brown, Aldine commanded a place in the fiercely competitive market for decades, though for much of its run it struggled with financial difficulties due to a lack of circulation. Aldine’s main tactic was to reuse old material to save on production—it reprinted American works after extensive editing, capitalizing on the popularity of American stories of cosmopolitan New York City and the wild American West among British youth. British youth most knew Aldine for their “libraries,” that is, lines of novels gathered together under a marketable umbrella, like the “Boy’s Pocket Library,” which included a host of serials geared toward boys that were small enough to slip into a pocket on the way to work.



Figure 3. Proof covers of Aldine Publishing Co. “O’er Land and Sea” Library, 1890-91. From “Penny Dreadfuls, Newly Acquired,” Rare Books Collection, Princeton University Library.

Aldine's enterprise exemplifies the way text is transformed when produced for commercial gain. In the adaptation of American works for its libraries, Aldine recycled material constantly, editing the manuscript each time and losing more of the original tale. Carpenter describes the common practice of "a dime novel being butchered to fit in the 'O'er Land and Sea Library' (1890), chopped up again and given a new title for the Half-Holiday Library (1892), then mutilated further and served up with a different title in the Cheerful Library (1894)."¹⁹ The results of this "butchery" were stories that felt slapped together, with incongruous elements and plot lines that did not flow. The key point is Aldine's manipulation of text in a strategizing move to control youth consumer habits. Even as Aldine gutted stories and removed any possible literary merit these stories may have had, readers bought them because of Aldine's brilliant marketing strategies. Readers expected and relished a fast-paced narrative with exciting characters—elements that distracted them from slipshod storytelling, plot-holes, and a lack of continuity that could otherwise bog down a story—which might account for their continued readership. Aldine took advantage of the formulaic penny dreadful model and capitalized on the knowledge that their readers would remain loyal if this model was followed.

Commercial strategies became ingrained in the reading experience to the point that the narrative and Aldine's attempts to sell further content to the reader were one and the same. The first page of *Dean Dangerfield's Desperate Game* out of Aldine's "Tip-Top Tales" is a prose monologue about the increasingly chilly weather that caused a man's cold. A seamless transition reveals that the entire page was not the beginning of a narrative about Dean Dangerfield, but an advertisement for a common medicinal cure as

¹⁹ Carpenter, *Penny Dreadfuls and Comics*, 35.

the narrator exclaims, “it is a comfort to know that Mother Seigel’s Syrup will cure it no matter when it comes on.”²⁰ The reading experience of leisure thus transforms into one of commercial enterprise.

Another seamless integration of advertising appears in the cliffhanger. Ending each chapter of a serial with a twist of events, a perilous situation for the protagonist, or any tension-producing scene encourages readers to purchase the next section of the story. The narratives thus gain their structure from what will provoke the most advantageous sales. Rather than following one complete arc, Lady Kate’s story ends abruptly as she believes the man imprisoned on her evidence is innocent—a man with whom she is incidentally in love. Aldine adapted the story in such a way that readers anxious for a complete narrative would need to purchase the next volume. The narrator encourages his audience, “For these further adventures, we refer our readers to the next volume of the Aldine Detective Tales, entitled ‘The Dashing Female Detective; or, Lady Kate,’ ”²¹ Included within the prose of the story, this insertion does not single itself out as an advertisement, but smoothly transitions into a direct conversation with the reader. Metafictional intrusions in which the writer directly addresses the reader become part of the penny dreadful discourse, a discourse that does not make a distinction between spurring readers to continue to purchase material and the narrative itself.

Though this integration of commercial strategies and narrative voice succeeded in its subtlety, penny dreadful publishers did not shy away from employing more obvious selling tactics as well. Direct advertising in separate ads running alongside the story in

²⁰ *Dean Dangerfield’s Desperate Game*, in *Tip Top Tales* 225-232, inside cover.

²¹ *Lady Kate: The Dashing Female Detective*, The Aldine “Detective Tales” no. 54 (London: Aldine Publishing Company, 1890), 95.

bold, blocked-off letters and the use of prize lotteries were two common efforts to generate sales. An advertisement is included alongside the text of *Lady Kate: The Dashing Female Detective*, out of the Aldine Detective Tales, advertising the “ ‘O’er Land & Sea’ Library.” The ad runs, “This is the largest (containing more good reading), the Cheapest, and best twopenny library in the world. Each carefully written Volume is guaranteed to be a work of absorbing interest and of the highest Literary Merit.” The hyperbolized virtues of the “O’er Land & Sea” books such as “largest,” “Cheapest,” and “best” are reminiscent of the superlatives found in the narrative of the penny dreadful, like the description of Lady Kate’s adversary as “the greatest villain of the age, as well as the greatest monster.”²² Publishers believed that selling the next story was equally important to entertaining the reader within the one already purchased, and this is reflected in the reading experience.

Publishers also arranged prize lotteries to continue readership, in which the first readers to purchase a story would be entered in a lottery for some type of reward. For example, *The British Boys’ Paper*²³ ran an advertisement for “My Lady’s Novelettes” alongside the serial *The Freebooters of the Ocean*. With the purchase of No. 9 of the series, the ad declares, readers would receive a yellow ticket entering them into a lottery—the first five winners received monetary compensation, and then to the following winners the publishers would distribute “5 Silver Watches; 10 Silver Brooches; 20 Handsome purses with silver clasps; 20 pairs of Silver Earrings; 20 Beautiful Pocket-

²² *Lady Kate: The Dashing Female Detective*, 19.

²³ This paper was published in the same office as the Aldine Publishing Company (9 Red Lion Court, E.C.), yet it is unclear whether Aldine published this magazine.

Handkerchiefs, with fancy borders, and 20 pairs of Kid Gloves.”²⁴ The dazzling prizes described brought supposed luxuries within reach of readers who might not otherwise be able to afford them. This lottery in particular (distributing 100 prizes in sum according to the ad) provided a chance for a large number of the *British Boys’ Paper’s* expansive readership.

Though these selling strategies were effective, critics condemned them for misleading young readers in order to turn a profit, to say nothing of the corruption of the literary genre. The Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge writes that the lottery prizes “painted in language that an enthusiastic jeweler would scruple to use in describing the most elaborate and valuable articles in his lists, usually consist of inferior clocks, Brummagem watches, and sham jewelry.”²⁵ Instead of the exciting hyperbole of a glittering new silver watch, exaggeration turns into dishonesty for the critic. Language ensnares the young with catchphrases like “Handsome” and “Beautiful,” which for the Society is more offensive than buying readership. The Society also points out that entering the lottery is not even free—“Two stamps are required to be sent in with the ticket. These furnish the funds for the prizes and leave a trifling bonus to the impecunious publisher for his trouble.”²⁶ It was important for the Society to portray the publishers as “impecunious” and on the verge of ruin in order to construct the image of a greed-driven enterprise that would lead to no good. The readers, innocent children, become the victims in this, lacking the analytical ability to discern the perceived evil intentions of the publishing world.

²⁴ *British Boy’s Paper*, 815.

²⁵ Harrison, “Cheap Literature—Past and Present,” 71.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

The ways in which publishers cleverly encouraged continuing readership of the penny dreadful manifested not only in the reading experience, but also in the critical perception of the industry itself. The publishing world of Fleet Street grew into a definable center of suspicion for those concerned with youth reading patterns, recognizing that the industriousness of the publishers in their selling techniques transformed the reading experience from one of literary enrichment to one of commercialization. Readers were well aware of the pecuniary investment they made in reading these stories—dropping their hard-earned pennies into the hands of news agents—yet continued to buy the next installment of their favorite serial due to their entertainment value. The exciting writing style, fantasy-like escapism, and familiar heroes attracted these consumers and encouraged them to further immerse themselves in a culture of commercialized leisure.

Controlling the Reader: Familiarity and Fantasy

Penny dreadfuls are often characterized by their air of escapism. With protagonists rising above humble beginnings, finding daring adventures and defeating treacherous villains, readers can insert themselves into the role of these characters and enjoy the same experiences. Thus the penny dreadfuls become a collective fantasy of their readers. Springhall argues that this literature “reflects in coded melodramatic discourse the aspirations and fears of a class-, age- and gender-structured British society, while providing insights into the tastes, fantasies, and potential role models of the generations brought up on this literature of the streets.”²⁷ Publishers used these fantasies to their advantage, engineering characters to appeal to their purchasing audience.

²⁷ Springhall, *Youth, Popular Culture and Moral Panics*, 39.

Protagonists bore the responsibility of being role models as well as death-defying heroes, embracing the liminal space between plausibility and fantasy.

The fantasy of the ideal British boy was defined during this period, at the height of the British Empire when the production of strong, brave, upstanding citizens was more crucial than ever. As school stories such as Thomas Hughes' *Tom Brown's Schooldays* and the didactic magazines such as the *Boy's Own Paper* suggested one way of forming a boy—molding him through education, sport, religious instruction and aggressive nationalism—the penny dreadful found another. The penny dreadfuls suggested that the ideal boy was inherently born with a sense of “pluck” that defined him as uniquely British, in other words, a bright boy with a fighting spirit. Carpenter calls this construction the “perfect boy-hero,” who was “tough, dauntless, successful” and that “A strong arm, a steady hand, and a brave heart help the young adventurer far more than learning, reflection or intellect.”²⁸ Yet this boy is not ruled only by his fist, “in extremity he turns out to be a wise and responsible leader of men.”²⁹ Notably, these qualities were all inherent rather than learned. Though boys may reach maturity over the course of a penny dreadful, they already contained the most important qualities to define him as a hero at the start of the story.

Penny dreadfuls such as Aldine's line of Tip-Top Tales opened each story with a vivid character description to establish the presence of the boy hero. Readers were immediately faced with expressive imagery focusing on admirable physical traits that suggested mirroring personality traits. In *Dean Dangerfield's Desperate Game* for instance, the author introduces twenty-one year old protagonist Dare in terms of his

²⁸ Carpenter, *Desert Isles and Pirate Islands*, 12-13.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 12-13.

“splendid physique,” describing that he had “great, broad shoulders, and...the general appearance of an athlete” and that he “rode with the easy grace of a perfect rider.”³⁰ The author links a positive physical appearance with the acceptance of his peers, pairing the two in one breath. He writes, “Handsome he certainly was, and one, too, to win a man’s regard, as well as a woman’s love.”³¹ The masculine trait that stands out the most in this instance is the sense of Dare’s physical presence, a trope that many penny dreadful protagonists follow. Henry Hayward in *The Freebooters of the Ocean* is “lively proportioned, with an expansive chest, and manly elevated carriage.”³² Dick Turpin in *Black Bess* is “tall and muscular.”³³ With their large physical presence in the form of brawn, these characters command attention—the attention of fellow men, romantic love interests, and most importantly, the reader. The space taken up by Dare’s “broad shoulders” is rivalled only by the space of his large personality. Other characters must make way for these commanding individuals, who stand tall enough for young readers to look up to.

Defining the protagonist as the ideal British boy from the onset was in part a controlling mechanism for penny dreadful publishers. Rather than growing tired of reading hero after hero that was strong, brave, and dashing handsome, readers expected the trend. The protagonist was ideal because he retained just enough familiarity that the young reader could relate to him. For instance, Dare in *Dean Dangerfield’s Desperate Game* is by no means a rich man; he works hard on the farm his mother owns. Similarly,

³⁰ *Dean Dangerfield’s Desperate Game*, 1-2.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² “The Freebooters of the Ocean,” *The British Boys’ Paper* I, 46.

³³ Edward Viles, *Black Bess: or, The Knight of the Road*, 2.

though in the female sphere, Lady Kate in *Lady Kate: The Dashing Female Detective* had worked her way up from “a crossing-sweeper to a newspaper vendor, and from the latter to a telegraph operator, and from the last position she had gone into the Custom-house.”³⁴ Many of these occupations were held by the young readers of the penny dreadful. Heroes may be born with innate goodness and strength, but readers were still able to project themselves into the heroes’ shoes because of the humility that also went along with the penny dreadful protagonist. Boys and girls who wished to become Dare, or Dick Turpin, or even Lady Kate, viewed these figures as among their own, not out of reach. By defining the perfect hero, publishers appealed to the desire for escapism among boys who wished to attain these attractive qualities, and thus assured continued readership.

Another common attribute of the penny dreadful hero is a paradoxical association between crime and compassion. One common trope is the criminal with a heart of gold. Lady Kate in one of Aldine’s detective stories attempts to reconcile the contradictory nature of this character as she pursues a thief accused of murder named Arthur Everdell. The author writes of the demonstrative effect the criminal has on the female protagonist, “She had become hardened towards the human race, and now, alas! She had met a man who had given evidence of a grand generosity—a man possessed of a kind, good heart, a careless, indifferent fellow, who, as far as she could judge, had not a selfish thought in his head, and the man was a thief.”³⁵ Again in the description of a hero, Aldine relates his power in terms of his ability to affect others. Arthur captures the reader’s attention just as he captures Kate’s.

³⁴ *Lady Kate: the Dashing Female Detective*, 13.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 23.

With Kate, the author highlights Arthur's effect on her heart—a gendered emphasis that introduces the reader to the romance inevitably to follow. Even more dramatically, the author writes that “Kate Edwards trembled as she realized that in her inmost heart there burned a sympathy for the strange young man.”³⁶ The writer calls attention to Arthur's seemingly contradictory nature by emphasizing Kate's attraction to the thief. In this way the story evolves into a romance that embodies the fantasies of many young readers, but adds the tension of forbidden love as well. The forbidden, unresolved attraction between Kate and Arthur subverts the conventional narrative in which the respectable suitor wins the lady protagonist's heart in the end, the story culminating in marriage. Instead, Arthur's masculinity is tied to his criminal behavior—only a hero because of his good heart—and therefore no marriage, literal or otherwise, can occur at the end, and Lady Kate is left still baffled by her feelings at the conclusion. The penny dreadful was an escape into a world in which attraction between a respectable lady and a criminal could exist, but the fantasy is then checked by the impossibility of marriage.

One final fantasy penny dreadfuls fulfilled was the transcendence of class. Part of the fantasy of the perfect protagonist was his link with the upper class. Though most protagonists did not actually descend from an aristocratic family—or often a family of any means—they have qualities that are implied to be inherent in aristocratic lineage. This includes an emphasis on nobility, chivalry, access to the Classics, and a surprisingly sensitive side. Henry Hayward in *The Freebooters of the Ocean* as a past Harvard student is associated with education, but the author focuses less on the benefits of his schooling

³⁶ *Lady Kate: the Dashing Female Detective*, 23.

than his association with the qualities of a proper gentleman. Physically, “his complexion was as fresh and fair as a girl’s” and “His hair was a soft wavy brown,” two images of feminine softness that seemingly contradict his masculine qualities. Yet “His features were of a spirited and manly character, and possessed that indescribable grace and finish which the Greeks knew so well how to give to marble.”³⁷ This contradiction allows Henry to maintain the necessary image of a strong male hero while simultaneously embodying another aspect of the escapist fantasy, the desire to be a part of the elite of society. Likewise, Kate takes on the title “Lady” even though the author leads her character description with the sentence, “Kate Edwards was a waif.”³⁸ Kate is not actually affiliated with the aristocracy, yet she takes on characteristics of an elite upper class woman. These characters thus retain their lower class familiarity for the reader, but fulfill the fantasy of an upper class affiliation.

The fantasy of connection with the aristocracy is complicated by the issue of class in penny dreadfuls. As I argue later, the penny dreadful often showed the trajectory of a working class male hero challenging authority and the class system by defeating evil upper class figures. Edward Salmon, a prominent contemporary literary critic, wrote that penny dreadfuls repeatedly emphasized the heroism of a working class protagonist in contrast to the evils associated with wealth, such as greed and gluttony. In his article “What the Working Classes Read,” Salmon writes, “The same dish is served up again and again; and the surprising thing is that the readers do not tire of the ceaseless record of wrong-doing on the part of the wealthy.”³⁹ Readers fantasized about association with the

³⁷ “The Freebooters of the Ocean,” no. 46.

³⁸ *Lady Kate: the Dashing Female Detective*, 13.

³⁹ Edward Salmon, “What the Working Classes Read,” in *Nineteenth Century*, Oct. 1886, 113.

aristocracy, but simultaneously enjoyed their unsavory portrayal. We can reconcile this disjunction with the penny dreadful's main task of allowing the reader to escape into a world turned upside down. In elevating the working class and ridiculing the upper, penny dreadfuls subverted the structure that existed outside the pages.

Subverting the Social Order: An Issue of Class

Penny dreadful publishers were well aware of the fantasies of their young readers, and catered to these fantasies in allowing protagonists to transcend class and subvert the social order. Class is omnipresent within penny dreadful narratives and in the criticism the stories received. The unsavory treatment of upper class and middle class characters provoked anxiety in these classes about shifting class relations in Britain. The rise of the English working class in the early nineteenth century developed a class consciousness that pervaded the cultural life of the nation.⁴⁰ Though Raymond Williams argues that the idea of the “masses” is a construction fabricated by anxious upper classes, this construction became a scapegoat for the potential destruction of British societal standards.⁴¹ These “masses” became a visual and tangible force in London and other urban, industrialized areas where the population grew as urbanization formed an enormous host of unskilled laborers.

Moral reformers of the late nineteenth century projected their fears about the disruption in the intellectual life of the nation by portraying the increased population of voters, workers and readers as a rabble at a protest. Williams comments, “the traditional

⁴⁰ E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1964), 11.

⁴¹ Raymond Williams, *Culture and Society: 1870-1950* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1960), 298.

characteristics of the mob were retained in its significance: gullibility, fickleness, herd-prejudice, lowness of taste and habit. The masses, on this evidence, formed a perpetual threat to culture. Mass-thinking, mass-suggestion, mass-prejudice would threaten to swamp considered individual thinking and feeling.”⁴² Into this field of a supposedly easily-swayed reading public, enter the unrivaled increase in the publication of youth periodicals. The upper and middle class reading elite feared the effect of cheap literature due to its perceived perniciousness against a public that was not trained to be discerning in its literature. The anxiety about working class consumption of penny dreadfuls stemmed from a deep-seated anxiety about the social hierarchy, rather than merely the supposed moral repercussions of consuming this literature.

As the working class began to find its identity as workers congregated in urban centers such as London, the middle class formed an elevated class consciousness as well. During the course of the eighteenth century, the rising middle class began to concern itself with the formulation and conservation of culture. With the emergence of the novel and a growing number of societies devoted to the study of literature, reading as an aspect of cultural development came under close scrutiny. A hierarchy of literature formed as discerning critics decided which works ought to be considered “the classics,” and which ought to be avoided entirely. According to the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge, the middle class “converted into the reading public and were recognized as the real supporters and patrons of literature.”⁴³ In their role as cultivators of the reading culture of Britain, the middle class patronized progressive causes such as public

⁴² Raymond Williams, *Culture and Society: 1870-1950* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1960), 298.

⁴³ Harrison, “Cheap Literature—Past and Present,” 62.

education, increased child literacy, and the moral guidance of the working class. As reformers and watchdogs for the country's moral, cultural, physical and economic well-being, the middle class read in newspapers about the corrupting influence of these penny dreadfuls with the same tenaciousness with which the lower class read the stories themselves.

As mentioned above, one formative influence on the rise of the penny dreadful press was the increase in mass child literacy. The cause of the education reform that led to this increased literacy is relevant to a discussion of the moral panic about penny dreadfuls because it too is entrenched in issues of class. Fears about the masses and their supposedly easily-swayed nature compounded with fears of the Jacobin revolts of the late eighteenth century. The middle class began to take on the task of enforcing their values—of diligence, education, individualism, and industry—within the working class, and they would accomplish this through widespread education of the poor. The uneducated masses were a threat; “If, however, the millions could be herded into classrooms, if only for a brief time, they could be permanently immunized against Jacobinism, radicalism, subversion, blasphemy, atheism, and every other ill to which they were exposed by the east wind of social change” according to Richard Altick's assessment of the contemporary attitudes.⁴⁴

Though the idea of educating the masses seemed fairly progressive then, the middle class' dedication to the task was conservative in that it would preclude the masses from deviating from the previous order of society. Altick explains, “Not only would a little schooling safeguard men's minds against thoughts of rebellion; it would improve

⁴⁴ Richard Altick, *The English Common Reader: A Social History of the Mass Reading Public, 1800-1900* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), 141.

their morals and manners and eliminate the frightening threat of a rabble's replacing the well-behaved, dependable 'lower orders' of sturdy English tradition."⁴⁵ Education was a mechanism of enforcing class relations as much as—or perhaps more than—the actual merit of creating an informed public.

The judgment of literature based on the class it catered to grew stronger as texts for juveniles became polarized between the didactic texts and classic literature upheld by the middle and upper class, and the sensational literature read by working class adolescents. Several themes in the plots and characters of penny dreadfuls concerned the reading elite because of their perceived threat to the social hierarchy. First and foremost, critics disparaged the violence and criminal behavior celebrated by penny dreadfuls not only because it contrasted what was seen as decent British morals but also because it allegedly caused juvenile delinquency.⁴⁶ Other fears drove the denunciation as well, though critics may not have admitted them: the power of the working class over the publication market; the dramatic escapism in many penny dreadfuls, such as the portrayal of protagonists able to ascend the socioeconomic hierarchy; and the tongue-in-cheek subversion of authority in penny dreadfuls' tone and plot. While many penny dreadfuls did challenge the traditional order of society by drawing attention to these elements, the literature was far less subversive than the reading elite feared. I suggest that penny dreadfuls, by creating an outlet of escapism on the page, actually offer an image of a society where the social stratification is reinforced.

Serial literature such as the adventures of the penny dreadfuls provided a break from the monotony of an industrial working environment for adolescents. It opened a

⁴⁵ Altick, *The English Common Reader*, 142.

⁴⁶ See the following section for an in-depth study of this allegation.

new world in which young heroes could leave their home and profession, travel the world, become rich, and marry a beautiful woman—even if they were not from the upper echelon of society. Ferrall and Jackson point out that in this way juvenile literature of the late nineteenth century adopts aspects of the romance as Northrop Frye defines it:

revealing the innermost fantasies and ideals of a society. Frye writes,

The romance is nearest of all literary forms to the wish-fulfillment dream, and for that reason it has socially a curiously paradoxical role. In every age the ruling or social intellectual class tends to project its ideals in some form of romance, where the virtuous heroes and beautiful heroines represent the ideals and the villains the threats to their ascendance...Yet there is a genuinely 'proletarian' element in romance too which is never satisfied with its various incarnations and in fact the incarnations themselves indicate that no matter how great a change may take place in society, romance will turn up again, hungry as ever...⁴⁷

Here class becomes the governing factor in the construction of the penny dreadful world. Even in texts written for a primarily working class audience, the ideals of upper class culture permeate the culture—yet are contradicted by an undercurrent of social dissatisfaction. As the romance was popular in elite fiction, that it dominated the penny dreadful seems unthreatening. I argue that it is the somewhat subversive content of the wish-fulfillment fantasy that romance lent the penny dreadful that generated anxiety, such as the audacity of the dashing heroes, the aforementioned violence and crime, the rising of the protagonist in wealth and social class, and the general mockery of traditional authority figures.

In terms of the most alarming of penny dreadfuls, *Black Bess, or, A Knight of the Road* stood at the pinnacle of 1860s reading. Featuring Dick Turpin, an English highwayman in the 1730s, this 254-part story romanticized the criminal as a Robin Hood figure, known for his daring exploits as much as his heart of gold. The author of this

⁴⁷ Frye 186, qtd in Ferrall and Jackson, *Juvenile Literature and British Society*, 40.

serial Edward Viles focuses on class in the contrast between the gallantry of Dick, a butcher's son, and the greed of the wealthy from whom he steals. Carpenter comments, "Certainly Dick Turpin is presented as morally superior to the ruling classes, who—and this has its own tradition in the penny dreadful—are invariably characterized as self-seeking, besotted fools."⁴⁸ Viles offers the fantasy of a virtuous criminal of low birth who has no interest in ascending the class hierarchy, whose natural enemy becomes the aristocrat full of vice.

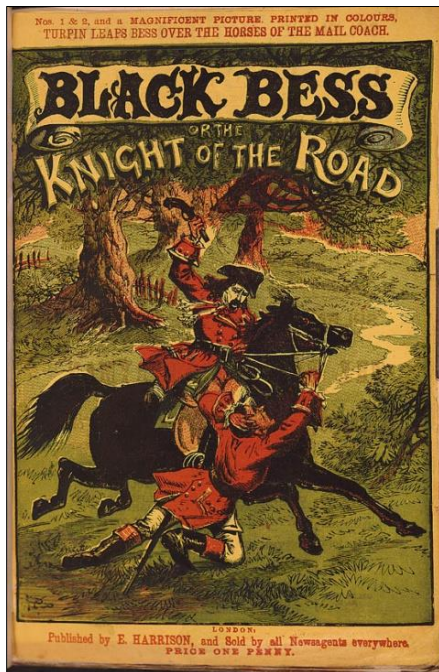


Figure 4. Cover of *Black Bess, Or The Knight of the Knight of the Road*, est, 1866-68. British Library, Public Domain.

difficulty the ex-mayor faces in this surveillance, explaining, "The quantity of fat upon his face prevented his opening [his eyes] to any great width."⁵¹ The ex-mayoreess, also

While robbing the ex-mayor of London in the opening chapter of the series, Dick is insulted by the "ex-lady mayoress," who calls him an "ill-bred, low brought-up son of a parish."⁴⁹ Viles uses humor to defuse this insult with his contrasting description of Dick's gallant, gentlemanly dress and the unflattering description of the mayor and his lady. While the ex-mayor exudes "pomposity and arrogance," his chief flaw is his greedy nature—he spends the majority of the scene eyeing the golden cup he received as tribute to his term in office.⁵⁰ Viles describes the

⁴⁸ Carpenter, *Penny Dreadfuls and Comics*, 28.

⁴⁹ Viles, *Black Bess*, 3

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

embodying unsavory qualities, is “thin and waspish, with a vinegar-looking countenance, and a particularly shrill, sour, disagreeable voice.”⁵² Her chief character trait seems to be her sharp, vulgar tongue, which calls her husband, among other things, “idiot” and “stupid.”⁵³ Viles hyperbolizes his characterization and imagery in order to turn these two into caricatures to be mocked.

Viles’ depiction of these aristocrats in terms of their vice is subversive in that it elevates Dick in contrast, though they are members of a respectable position and he is a criminal. Dick treats the ex-mayor and ex-mayoress with the grandest of manners, greeting them with the phrase “A nice evening after the rain, your lordship” even as he brandishes a pistol in the carriage.⁵⁴ Viles also writes how “Dick lifted his hat and made a most elaborate bow as he concluded his reply.”⁵⁵ Dick’s grandiose, exaggerated exemplification of aristocratic etiquette challenges the insult that he is “low bred” in relation to the ex-mayor and his wife. Yet this scene is made more complex with the revelation that the ex-mayoress was not always a lady. Ironically, even as she insults Turpin’s lineage, the ex-mayoress came from humble beginnings from the “fishmongers in Fore-street.”⁵⁶ Her vulgar language fits in acutely with her husband’s vices of greed and gluttony, and so it could be concluded that Viles is not attempting to single out her birth as the root cause of her unsavoriness. Instead—perhaps even more subversive of an idea—Viles is asserting that virtue and vice are not dependent on class, but on character.

⁵² Viles, *Black Bess*, 3.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 4.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 3.

This is where the penny dreadful becomes particularly subversive: its protagonists transgress against traditional ideas of class virtue. Whether they are of noble birth or a waif on the streets, characters are judged by narrators who examine their actions rather than their class status. Viles, by idealizing a protagonist like Dick Turpin in juxtaposition with a critical view of upper class figures, allows the reader to place himself on the moral high ground with Dick even as he belongs to a social class that does not command the moral high ground in Victorian societal values. Viles' discussion of Dick's morals, such as how, "generous and free himself by nature, he detested avariciousness in others,"⁵⁷ suggests that the generosity of a highwayman is just as important as upper class ideals such as chastity, honor, and modesty.

In addition to mocking the authority of the upper classes, with a subversive tone Viles and other penny dreadful writers ridiculed literature marketed toward upper youth. In *Black Bess* Viles develops a tongue-in-cheek narratorial voice that contrasts with the polished, didactic tone of traditional children's primers and critically-accepted magazines. The author achieves this by not only employing a sardonic tone and verbal irony within the text, but also by creating the previously stated implausible world that breaks with accepted literary conventions in print such as realistic characterization and plot. Carpenter writes how the penny dreadful "consisted of wild and anarchic fiction, a strange mixture of breathless adventure, crude sensation and pure melodrama, a fiction which mocked the carefully contrived air of authenticity in the boys' books put out by respectable publishers."⁵⁸ The act alone of creating a fantasy world that catered to the young reader rather than to the sensibilities of the realistic adult world set penny

⁵⁷ Viles, *Black Bess*, 5.

⁵⁸ Carpenter, *Desert Isles and Pirate Islands*, 13.

dreadfuls apart; the ridicule of “respectable” texts was more than an entertaining aside—it was a defacing of traditional authority.

The caricatures in *Black Bess* and the wild escapades serve to usurp authority and create a thrilling, romanticized space of freedom for young readers that is driven by humor. Carpenter sums up the serial, “Dick Turpin spends his time rescuing damsels in distress, cutting down friends from Tyburn Tree (classic last-minute rescues), robbing the rich, and generally waging war on lecherous aristocrats, corrupt magistrates, and the poltroonish dragoons set out to capture him.”⁵⁹ The police pursuing Dick as he steals the ex-mayor’s cup, for instance, appear incompetent at best. As they shoot at the fleeing Dick, their pistol shots “whistled harmlessly about and around him,” revealing both Dick’s superhuman abilities and the police officers’ ineffectiveness at capturing the highwayman.⁶⁰ The officers cease to command authority and begin to appear ridiculous. Viles also mocks the authority figure of the ex-mayor through slapstick humor as Dick vaults himself across the road toward his horse Black Bess. After he “sprang like a harlequin,” through the carriage, Dick sustains no injury because “The soft, fat body of the ex-mayor broke the violence of his fall.”⁶¹ The imagery of the “soft, fat body” is humorous in its mockery of an ex-mayor when combined with Dick’s antics. Instead of a dry account with a moral or religious message, Viles caters to his young readers by providing a farcical scene for enjoyment rather than mental elevation.

While many penny dreadfuls did, as Carpenter points out and Viles exemplifies, portray the elites of society as objects of ridicule, perhaps more subversive was a subtler

⁵⁹ Carpenter, *Penny Dreadfuls and Comics*, 27-28.

⁶⁰ Viles, *Black Bess*, 4.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

message about social mobility. As new factories, railways, canals, and businesses launched in industrializing London and urban centers like Leeds and Manchester, even lower middle class entrepreneurs could aspire to upward social mobility through financial success. Turning the tables on the idea that power was inherited through old family lines and through land, a new British mindset posited that if one was enterprising, had a strong work ethic, and was frugal in both money and behavior⁶², he or she could rise in station. Had the penny dreadfuls portrayed stories of middle class protagonists rising in status, perhaps the content would not have ruffled as many feathers among critics. Yet publishers catered to an audience of working class boys who would like nothing more than to engage with the fantasy that they too could rise in wealth and position. Thus publishers like Aldine featured stories of heroes from humble beginnings transgressing the role they may be relegated to in reality and allowing them to become professionals, landed gentlemen and millionaires in an alluring, though implausible dream-world.

Aldine's Detective Tales no. 54, *Lady Kate: The Dashing Female Detective*, adapted from an American story, features such a transformation in its titular character, as she rose from an orphan child to an expert, well-paid detective and respected lady. The narrator states that the protagonist Kate "was a self-made girl...It had been proven that women of spirit can fit themselves for almost any vocation in life, and Kate Edwards was just one of the sort named."⁶³ Most notable about this spirit is her desire to rise in her occupational status. Before her apex as a detective, "she had graduated from a crossing-

⁶² The middle class sought to improve the working class' lot beginning in the early nineteenth century by encouraging them to prune away wasteful acts such as drinking, gambling, and sexual activity.

⁶³ *Lady Kate: the Dashing Female Detective*, 13. For the sake of current discussion I will not dwell on the importance of Kate's gender here, yet the changing roles of women, particularly in America, are salient to this topic as well.

sweeper to a newspaper vendor, and from the latter to a telegraph operator, and from the last position she had gone into the Custom-house.”⁶⁴ Aldine was writing to an audience made up of street-sweepers, newspaper boys and telegraph operators. To return to Ferrall and Jackson’s discussion of juvenile fiction as a wish-fulfillment romance, Kate’s rise thus becomes a shared fantasy with the reader. Readers could overlook the implausibility of her occupation in the face of her gender, class, and financial status, and celebrate the character as a role model.

The description of the protagonist in the title of the work, “Lady Kate,” elevates her to an almost aristocratic status. She is a “Lady,” having “managed to educate herself, and had picked up many lady-like accomplishments” even as she “knocked about New York” as a child and adolescent.⁶⁵ The juxtaposition of “lady-like accomplishments,” with an elevated tone of refinement, with the more prosaic jargon “knocked about” illuminates the liminality of Kate’s status. She is unquestionably a lady in the eyes of the narrator, yet she is relatable to a working class audience because of her past. Kate’s aristocratic leanings are subversive particularly in her birth status. The narrator describes her as “a waif” who “had been placed by her parents, whoever they were, in a charitable institution.”⁶⁶ The parenthetical positioning of the phrase “whoever they were” displays the disregard the narrator has for Kate’s parentage. In this way the text suggests that parentage and lineage have little to no bearing on a person’s worth—a subversive idea to a society that had been governed by landed elites for centuries and was only in the past few decades recognizing worker’s rights. Kate becomes an aristocrat among the working

⁶⁴ *Lady Kate: the Dashing Female Detective*, 13.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

class—and more importantly, a pawn of publishers who recognize that this fantasy of social mobility is profitable in both its attractiveness to buying readers and in its scandalousness to the general public (which would lead to sales based on notoriety).

It is unlikely that penny dreadful writers actually attempted to subvert the social structure, or that their readers used the serials as fuel for a revolutionary fire. In fact, most publishers of the penny dreadfuls were thoroughly middle class—attempting to turn a profit while the industry boomed. Dunae rationalizes, “penny dreadful writers of the 1870s were scarcely committed to popularizing radical ideas or raising social consciousness....the works of most of the authors were intended as entertainment, pure and simple.”⁶⁷ The usurping of authority that penny dreadfuls featured sold because it created a fantasy environment in which working class adolescents could project the desires that could not be actualized in reality. Escapism became a salutary outlet for these youths: the writing of these stories about adventures they would never have formed a controlling construction. Penny dreadfuls therefore enforced the traditional order, encouraging youth to marshal any transcendence of authority into the act of reading an escapist plot rather than becoming acts of subversion themselves.

Reading into Juvenile Crime

Even if the penny dreadful writers were not attempting to subvert the traditional order with their transgressive protagonists and unsavory treatment of the aristocracy, the presence of the violent content and criminal activity they supposedly endorsed angered critics sufficiently. Believing that youth would read the exploits of the thieves, pirates,

⁶⁷ Patrick A. Dunae, “Penny Dreadfuls: Late Nineteenth-Century Boys’ Literature and Crime,” *Victorian Studies* 22, no. 2 (January 1, 1979), 142.

highwaymen and rogues that populated the penny dreadful and mimic these behaviors, concerned reformers pointed toward the rising rates of juvenile crime as an indication of this literature's pernicious influence. The suspicion about the practice of reading penny dreadfuls reveals an anxiety about the impressionable minds of (particularly working class) youth that led to the ideology that young people ought to be sheltered from potentially harmful material.

Concerned parents, schoolteachers, clergymen, journalists and magistrates argued that the presence of criminal activity in these stories was dangerous because of its use as sensationalism instead of its use in teaching a moral lesson. Edward J. Salmon, a prominent literary critic, wrote in 1886 that in the penny dreadfuls "Every social misdemeanor is called in to assist the progress of the slipshod narrative. Crime and love are the essential ingredients."⁶⁸ More specifically, the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge argued, penny dreadfuls were dangerous because they "make heroes of the lowest criminals, and exalt offences against the law, and deeds of daring in the evasion of the law, into heroic exploits."⁶⁹ The Society saw protagonists like Dick Turpin, with whom the reader cheered as he narrowly escaped from the police yet again, as a distorted role model that would lead youth down an immoral path. The criminal activity was bad enough—the transgression of authority was worse.

By reading penny dreadfuls and idolizing their miscreant protagonists, youths were supposedly at risk for adopting the same behaviors they read about. Springhall writes of the mainstream thought of the 1860s,

⁶⁸ Edward J. Salmon, *What the Working Classes Read*, 112-13.

⁶⁹ Harrison, "Cheap Literature—Past and Present," 71.

A reductionist cause-and-effect argument that impressionable youth would necessarily imitate criminal acts...fictionalized in weekly serials was commonplace in this period. In part this was a Platonist paradigm of art influencing life inherited from the eighteenth century but it was also a Victorian middle-class panic reaction to supposedly rising urban crime rates, coincident with a vast outpouring of cheap entertainment for the new proletariat.⁷⁰

The idea of an easily-swayed mass public⁷¹ concerned those middle class individuals who sought to ensure that a strong sense of morality, and not a life of crime, became imbued in the minds of the young. Even with increased education for the young, these reformers believed that adolescents were incapable of discerning right from wrong when led astray by enterprising publications.

The Society for Diffusion of Useful Knowledge warned against the tactics of writers like Edward Viles as he continued to publish accounts of Dick Turpin's exploits. Viles, the Society argued, is able to warp representations of lawfulness and depravity by elevating Dick to a hero,⁷² "and by enlisting the sympathies of their youthful readers with the individual and his career, thus blind the moral sense to a true perception of the iniquity and consequences of criminal offending."⁷³ The Society, like other reformers, transforms the "youthful" reader into an innocent, malleable object on which publishers preyed—to the detriment of society. The convincing literature becomes an obscuring one, changing the young reader's mind permanently by mangling moral, Christian, righteous values and allowing the reader to believe there are no consequences for thievery or violence. The Society goes on to write, "The villainy and courage [in *Black*

⁷⁰ John Springhall, "'Pernicious Reading'? 'The Penny Dreadful' as Scapegoat for Late-Victorian Juvenile Crime," *Victorian Periodicals Review*, Vol. 27, No. 4 (Winter, 1994), 330.

⁷¹ This is the same public that is vilified by the new fears of the masses as mentioned above.

⁷² Harrison emphasizes that "Boy-criminals have confessed their "hero-worship" which the novels taught them..." "Cheap Literature—Past and Present," 72.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 71.

Bess] are so insidiously blended that a youthful mind would fail to observe the distinction, and rather be led to admire both in conjunction.”⁷⁴ Though youth were now educated enough to be literate, the Society believed they were not educated enough to discern good from evil when these values were so sneakily intertwined in a penny dreadful. Penny dreadfuls provided a warped view of the world, where highwaymen had hearts of gold and respectable aristocrats had greedy souls.

Black Bess, featuring a tale of a highwayman, received a large proportion of the criticism of the penny dreadful. For the Society of the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge, *Black Bess* was perfect for “illustrating the evil influence which this class of novel wields over the youthful imagination by drowning the moral sense in the interest excited for the criminal hero.”⁷⁵ The Society took particular issue with the protagonist himself because, as stated above, he reversed the traditional values of good and evil and thus disrupted societal stability. Carpenter explains his transformation from the true Dick Turpin of the eighteenth century into the highwayman the penny dreadful romanticizes: “The short, dumpy, balding butcher's assistant, horse-thief and robber, renowned for his brutal methods of torture, became a gay blade with magnificent mustachios, a bold and daring highwayman, a gentlemen of the road, a protector of the weak and oppressed.”⁷⁶ Viles, according to the Society, true to his pernicious craft, endeavors to paint the criminal in the most advantageous aspect” in Dick’s every action, including his escape from execution.⁷⁷ Likewise, in an analysis of the first chapter of *Black Bess*, the Society dwells

⁷⁴ Harrison, “Cheap Literature—Past and Present,” 72.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Carpenter, *Penny Dreadfuls and Comics*, 28.

⁷⁷ Harrison, “Cheap Literature—Past and Present,” 74.

on Viles' celebration of Dick's disruption of authority, commenting that "the agents of law are repeatedly foiled, and that the reader is expected to rejoice at the hero's escapes."⁷⁸ The problem was not only the presence of such subversive behavior, but the depiction of criminal activity as exciting and heroic. The Society describes Viles as a sensationalist who brainwashes the young by distorting their conception of right and wrong at a formative time in development.

Adults feared the blurred line between right and wrong in the penny dreadful led to the same in reality, with boys committing crimes and girls running off with strangers because their minds had been distorted by the sensational literature. Magistrates and police officers latched on to the idea that penny dreadfuls were the source of juvenile crime, attributing many thefts to the accused's reading material. The Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge notes how "police records continually demonstrate" that the penny dreadfuls inflamed boys to act—removing some accountability from the accused, and placing it on the source of the supposed corruption.⁷⁹ The Society includes in its 1873 almanac a section on these police records in order to demonstrate the widespread nature of this influence: in one case, nineteen year old Purdue was arrested after masking himself as a highwayman and robbing "highly respectable" people at gunpoint.⁸⁰ From a girl with whom Purdue was associated, the police obtained copies of *Black Bess* and *The Black Highwayman*, along with an illustration titled "The Black Highwayman and Captain Hawk Rescuing the Countess of Blacklake."⁸¹ Purdue

⁷⁸ Harrison, "Cheap Literature—Past and Present," 73.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 72.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 76.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

supposedly wore a mask similar to one in the illustration, and told his victims that “Captain Hawk” had stopped them. The police report highlights a somewhat fantastical image of the supposed “Captain Hawk” by vilifying the material he read. Accounts like this inundated police reports, linking the reading of the penny dreadful with (often violent) crimes.

The Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge also demonstrated how widespread the penny dreadful endemic was by focusing on how it affected youths of all classes. In the 1873 almanac the Ordinary of Newgate is quoted describing the “lads of refined features, smooth hair neatly arranged, well clothed, well mannered, and having a thorough acquaintance of the books which they have been directed to bring to the service.”⁸² The Ordinary emphasizes class by juxtaposing the imposing nature of Newgate with the soft, quiet manner of the well-educated, most likely middle class and upper middle class boys. The Ordinary also casts a concern for religion with these boys—though they have a thorough acquaintance of the Bible for services, the relationship they have with quite another form of literature influences them as well. In the passage, the presence of this sort of boy is “unusual” to Ordinary, leading him to inquire about the nature of their crimes. He concludes, “all these boys, without one exception, had been in the habit of reading those cheap periodicals which are now published for the alleged instruction of the youth of both sexes’.”⁸³ The hyperbolic “all” underscores the mainstream idea that boys of all sorts were universally reading pernicious material to a corrupting end. Thus the criticism of the sensational nature of penny dreadfuls became

⁸² Harrison, “Cheap Literature—Past and Present,” 76.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 76-77.

sensational itself. The concern about youth reading can be described as nothing less than a panic.

Because of the exorbitant number of police reports linking juvenile crime with penny dreadfuls, the act of reading itself became linked with suspicion. Ironically, while in the early-nineteenth-century reformers believed illiteracy caused juvenile crime, it was the practice of reading that purportedly caused juvenile crime in the late-nineteenth century. Springhall describes how, “among street boys, reading had become an almost criminal pastime.”⁸⁴ This was not a view limited to a small group of middle class reformers; according to Carpenter this was

...[a] general agreement amongst teachers, clergymen, magistrates and journalists that the penny dreadful glorified crime; that its boy-readers were tempted toward a life of degradation and theft; that the amount of this garbage on the market was enormous; and that some kind of suppression should be placed upon these publications. These were received truths, and few people actually bothered to examine the story-papers they assailed with such fury.⁸⁵

The lack of firsthand examinations of the penny dreadful before decrying it characterized the general reaction to this literature. There was no dearth of articles in daily newspapers alerting readers to the harmful effects of the penny dreadful on youth, nor in police reports detailing the same. The panic grew mostly from second-hand accounts, with few critics of the penny dreadful actually reading them.

The lack of justification for their arguments led writers like Viles to condemn his critics on the grounds that they had not even read the work they blamed for corrupting youth. In the preface to his 1866 reprinting of *Black Bess*, Viles claims that if those who have criticized without reading were to peruse his text, “An entire change of opinion will

⁸⁴ Springhall, “Pernicious Reading’?” 345.

⁸⁵ Carpenter, *Penny Dreadfuls and Comics*, 5.

be the result; because in no place will vice be found commended and virtue sneered at; nor will any pandering to sensuality, suggestions of impure thoughts, or direct encouragement to crime be discovered.”⁸⁶ In a way Viles is not wrong—though Dick robs, he only stops the morally depraved rich, and he never pursues violence against the innocent. The chief complaint against the serial that holds up is that Viles perverts the status quo of authority and morality by assigning virtuousness to a highwayman and incompetence and cruelty to police officers and aristocrats. Dunae notes that during the rare cases when publishers and writers attempted to justify their publications, “they usually claimed that their tales were intended not to romanticize crime but to reveal the inequities of contemporary society.”⁸⁷ However, it is important to note that penny dreadful writers did not write to popularize radical ideas or subvert the social order, but to entertain, and therefore profit. The penny dreadfuls may have included radical material, but that did not mean they had radical intention.

Critics did not feel penny dreadful publishers and writers could offer a suitable defense for their works. The Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge found the attempts of Viles and other writers to “justify themselves” wanting, yet believed that the authors felt a need to defend their material due to the prosecution they now faced.⁸⁸ Describing a response from Viles about his serial, the Society writes, “The celebrated author of ‘Black Bess’ evidently smarting under the heavy strictures passed upon his degenerate branch of the literary profession, has made a violent show of taking up in its

⁸⁶ Viles, *Black Bess*, Preface.

⁸⁷ Patrick Dunae, “Penny Dreadfuls: Late Nineteenth-Century Boys’ Literature and Crime,” 141.

⁸⁸ Harrison, “Cheap Literature—Past and Present,” 72.

defense.”⁸⁹ Never missing a chance to disparage someone associated with the production of a penny dreadful, the Society focuses on the “degenerate” nature of the literature as well as the “violent” response Viles gave. Thus the Society transfers the perceived wickedness of the text onto the author himself as perpetrator of his own crime: writing.

Viles stands out because he did protest what he considered the unfair treatment of his work. Not understanding how his writing could be so misinterpreted, he points out the ridiculousness of his critics’ claims with humor. He jokes that youths could not actually re-enact Dick Turpin’s exploits in the story “until Railways are swept away, and Stage Coaches [are] replaced on our High-roads—until, in fine, the present state of things is changed to what it was a century and a half ago.”⁹⁰ Would-be highwaymen could not participate in the robbing of stage coaches in Robin Hood fashion because the modernization of the last century had rendered figures like Dick obsolete. The penny dreadful for Viles represented an escapist fantasy that romanticized an adventurous figure, meant to enthrall readers, but that was impossible to replicate. In fact, Viles writes, “If anyone is weak-minded enough to be carried away by the idea that a highwayman’s career as depicted in these pages can be played in reality at the present day, he must be imbecile indeed.”⁹¹ Viles’ rare defense of his work ironically brings a sense of rationality that contrasts with the sensational moral panic: he points out the ludicrousness of the widespread, unfounded attribution of crime to literature.

Scholars conclude that penny dreadfuls were far less subversive, and far less crime-inducing than Victorian reformers would have liked to believe. Dunae, relating

⁸⁹ Harrison, “Cheap Literature—Past and Present,” 72.

⁹⁰ Viles, *Black Bess*, Preface.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

back to the role of the penny dreadful as escapism, argues that “it is unlikely that the [penny] dreadfuls were principally responsible for juvenile delinquencies; in fact, the literature may even have had a cathartic effect, since most evidence—recent and contemporary—actually points to a decrease in juvenile crime during the last quarter of the nineteenth century.”⁹² In addition, the possibility remains that youth accused of crimes took advantage of the panic about the penny dreadful and used the literature as an excuse for their crime, which would account for the disproportionately large number of juvenile crimes attributed to reading. Springhall agrees, writing that “If Victorian critics and moralists had taken the trouble to examine the publications...without prejudice, they would have discovered that far from recommending the values of a criminal or oppositional subculture, their point of view was consistently aligned with support for the established order.”⁹³ In the penny dreadful, good still triumphs over evil as the villain is outwitted by virtuous, brave hero, and the heroine remains chaste in the end as she narrowly escapes from the many dangers seeking to corrupt her. The hero may have been a highwayman, or a pirate, yet the underlying messages of the serial did not go against the grain of a traditional moral narrative.

Even the presence of violence was far less subversive than critics presumed. As the decades in which penny dreadfuls dominated the reading culture wore on, Dunae notes, violence became more acceptable to publish in a magazine for youth because it was politicized in a palatable way. New papers, such as Alfred Harmsworth’s half-penny magazines that appeared in the 1890s, attempted to set themselves above the dreadful yet contained the same amount of violence. The difference was the lack of subversion of

⁹² Dunae, “Penny Dreadfuls: Late Nineteenth-Century Boys’ Literature and Crime,” 150.

⁹³ Springhall, ““Pernicious Reading?”” 346.

authority: “model heroes pitted themselves not against bumbling headmasters, corrupt excise officers, or brutal policemen—staple villains of the old [penny] dreadfuls—but against savage tribesmen, the Kaiser, or other of the Queen's enemies.”⁹⁴ When channeled into a constructive end, like encouraging boys to think about violence in terms of defending their home or conquering in the name of the Empire, critics condoned the violence. This period shows that “themes expressed in the old [penny] dreadfuls had been tamed, politicized, and redirected to serve the needs of the empire. Overall, though, the spirit of boys’ literature changed less between 1870 and 1900 than did conservative attitudes.”⁹⁵ Violence became acceptable because it did not seek to disrupt the status quo, but to support the widespread pride in the British Empire and the popular idea of muscular Christianity.

Penny dreadfuls were designed to be sensational and escapist because this kind of writing sold, and publishing these stories was about profit. In the fantastical stories that this industry produced, it was only natural that the material be at least a bit inherently subversive. The very fantasies of youth readers hinged upon escaping from their lives, reading about protagonists from humble beginnings defeating the privileged, because it allowed them to insert themselves into those narratives. Yet this subversion of authority was ephemeral as the class hierarchy was reinstated by the time a reader put down a penny dreadful. The penny dreadful created a space for youth and their fantasies, but as it did so it became clear that even this escape was firmly under control by adults.

Publishers knew how to captivate readers through a manufactured experience.

While some penny dreadful writers like Viles did spin an exhilarating tale, the fact

⁹⁴ Dunae, “Penny Dreadfuls: Late Nineteenth-Century Boys’ Literature and Crime,” 149.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 150.

remains that most of the penny dreadfuls mechanically published youth fantasies in order to continue readership and turn profits, serving as but another mode in which adults controlled the reading experience. Whether the penny dreadful empowered youth or merely represented another form of adult control, the literature did revolutionize youth reading by recognizing the juvenile consumer as the most important market for leisure reading. Because of the exorbitant number of penny dreadfuls created in the late nineteenth century, youth were able to exercise their own autonomy over their reading material simply because it was available. The moral panic that penny dreadfuls created questioned the ability of girls and boys to make their own choices about reading. According to the worries of a reformist, if youth made the wrong choice—to read sensational literature—they could be corrupted, and so they had to both be taught to select wholesome literature, and be provided with viable alternatives to the penny dreadful. Youth were at risk, and middle class reformist Victorians believed they had to act.

CHAPTER TWO

THE *BOY'S OWN* AND THE *GIRL'S OWN*: RECLAIMING YOUTH READING

By the close of the nineteenth century, the vast popularity of penny dreadfuls among young readers caused nearly as much anxiety for Victorian moralists as a bicycle-riding suffragette would in a few years. Many middle class social organizations believed they needed to respond to penny dreadfuls in order to combat corruption of youth and widespread juvenile crime. As boys and girls had more freedom to spend their pocket money on cheap, widely available reading material, conservative publishers worked instead to produce morally instructive, inoffensive texts that would keep children away from what they viewed as trashy, sensational penny-dreadfuls.

Reactionary literature¹ hit the market beginning in the 1870s as a response to the penny dreadfuls children read. Moralists attempted to elevate youth reading habits and reclaim their tenuous innocence. On January 19, 1879, The Religious Tract Society published the first edition of the *Boy's Own Paper* after concluding that one of the main reasons young people drifted toward penny dreadfuls was that they had no suitable alternative reading. This paper's initial success in both circulation and critical acclaim encouraged the RTS to publish its counterpart the *Girl's Own Paper* in 1880.² Intending to shine as beacons of refined literature among numerous other publications, the *BOP* and *GOP* delighted readers with fictional serials, contests, poetry, and features on hobbies, and also in the case of the *GOP*, articles on domestic life and fashion advice. Self-

¹ This literature is "reactionary" both in that it favored a conservative return to values from a perceived earlier state of society, and in that it was a reaction to another type of literature.

² Jack Cox. *Take a Cold Tub, Sir!: The Story of the Boy's Own Paper*. (Guildford, Surrey, England: Lutterworth Press, 1982), 9.

cultivation, of mind, body, and manners, was one of the most widely discussed issues—how not only to be an intelligent young person, but also how to be one useful to the British Empire.

By encouraging boys and girls to take their own education into their own hands, these magazines would appear to be an empowering force, asking readers to think for themselves and mold them into the adults they wanted to be, an idea I will examine in this chapter. The apparent independence the RTS offered proves false when under scrutiny. Believing that they autonomously chose their own reading material, formed good habits and refined taste, and educated themselves, the young readers of these didactic papers actually assimilated into the RTS' structured ideology. This chapter will study how the *BOP* and *GOP* prevented reader resistance through clever rhetoric and marketing, though the periodical creates more opportunity for reader resistance than other genres. Editors employed some of the tactics of penny dreadfuls to encourage continued readership and establish adult authority, but still improved upon their own rhetorical strategies, such as warning youth about the urgency of self-education, establishing a familiar and friendly editorial presence, and organically incorporating self-praise of the magazines.

The audience for the *BOP* and *GOP* consisted of slightly different age groups. In the late nineteenth century, the term “girl” held a connotation of a much older figure than today. Kristine Moruzi in her studies of Victorian girlhood defines it as the stage when a female is out of school, but is not yet married—typically from ages 15-25.³ The *GOP* addressed those who had obtained some education and were seeking to make themselves

³ Kristine Moruzi. *Constructing Girlhood through the Periodical Press, 1850-1915* (Farnham and Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2012), 9.

marriage-ready by enhancing their qualities. The *BOP* concerned itself with schoolboys, reaching a somewhat younger audience, though it also had a following with youths out of school and working their first jobs. Both periodicals boasted of catering to all classes of boys and girls, offering a cheap weekly in addition to a more expensive monthly edition. However, middle-class boys and girls made up the majority of readers.

These magazines represented a reaction to the moral panic that followed the penny dreadful, but more importantly, they stood on their own as a new type of discourse for young readers. The didactic *BOP* and *GOP* aimed to mold youth into the sort of readers who would *choose* not to read penny dreadfuls because they came to the realization that their own self-cultivation was more important than entertainment. Initiated into *BOP* and *GOP* ideology, readers actively participated within the periodicals' community of readership by following serial stories, writing in to the editor, competing for prizes, and educating themselves with instructional articles. The ideas of two cultural Marxist thinkers, Louis Althusser and Antonio Gramsci, are useful in understanding how editors weakened the potential for reader resistance and suggested to youth that they maintained autonomy as they conformed to *BOP* and *GOP* norms. I apply these two thinkers' ideas about how a ruling group shares "ideology" (defined below) with the rest of the populace to the question of how adults share ideology to children.

Althusser and Gramsci both operate under Karl Marx's definition of ideology as "that which makes us experience our life in a certain way and makes us believe that that way of seeing ourselves and the world is *natural*."⁴ Althusser believes that ideology is created by "state apparatuses," which include social institutions such as the law, the

⁴ Bertens, *Literary Theory: The Basics*, 2nd ed., (London, England: Taylor & Francis, 2010), 66.

media, organized religion, and the educational system. He argues that “subjects” are unaware of the ways ideology governs their lives, believing in their autonomy as individuals.⁵ Taking the *BOP* and *GOP* as producers of ideology, young readers can be understood as participants who acknowledge their ability to make autonomous decisions even as adult editors subliminally, and at times, subconsciously, limit readers’ options to ones favorable to RTS principles. In Althusser’s model, the creators of ideology are as blind to its governance of their lives as the subjects who subscribe to it. Therefore, *BOP* and *GOP* editors might take the values they offer to young readers for granted. The rhetorical techniques I describe below could then be considered subconscious constructions.

However, Gramsci is less sure of the ignorance of both parties. Gramsci describes a cultural hegemony, or a “ruling set of beliefs and values” that control the majority through “consent” rather than through “coercive power.”⁶ This ruling force obtains consent from the masses “by the prestige (and consequent confidence) which the dominant group enjoys because of its position and function in the world of production.”⁷ Gramsci’s model is useful when considering the relationship between the adult writer and the young reader because adults become cultural hegemony when they exclusively produce texts, relying on the “prestige” from their roles as elders and producers to gain reader consent. Adults, specifically the editors and writers like those of the *BOP* and *GOP*, used the periodical as a way to enforce contemporary ideology on youths. Though

⁵ Bertens, *Literary Theory: The Basics*, 66-67.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 68.

⁷ Antonio Gramsci, “Hegemony,” in *Literary Theory: An Anthology*, ed. Julie Rivken and Michael Ryan, 2nd ed. (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 673.

this was common in an educational setting, the RTS' administration of ideology in their periodicals was unique because it entered what was theoretically a youth leisure activity.

Althusser and Gramsci diverge on their views about the potential for dissent.

Althusser contends that because producers as well as consumers are oblivious to the work of ideology, the masses will not actively attempt to subvert it. In contrast, Gramsci argues that though the governing ideology cannot be escaped entirely, it can be undermined with resistance. The ideology enforced in the *BOP* and *GOP* operates on several levels: first, the RTS' conscious attempt to mold youth social processes and reading habits follows Gramsci's model in that there is the possibility of resistance, yet the adult authority uses its status to overcome it through consent. Second, Althusser's model in which the producers as well as the consumers are unaware of the ideology formed around them is exemplary of the engrained middle class, nationalist sentiments that often operated in British public discourse. The legacy of empire; the belief that British youth were inherently better than those around the globe; the nationalism that suggested the next generation of Britain needed to be mentally and physically prepared to propel the empire into the future; the panic over whether youth subscribed to values such as hard work, Protestant morals, temperance and propriety; these all were so embedded in their culture that the ideology molding youth in the *BOP* and *GOP* defies resistance in that it appears to be the natural state of society. Both Gramsci and Althusser's definitions of ideology offer different interpretations as to how the RTS controlled youth through these influential periodicals.

The RTS was concerned not only about exporting British morality to the country's ever-growing colonies, but also about the battle for the moral upbringing of

working-class children at home.⁸ Though a mere 16 pages published every week, the *BOP* and *GOP* became a social phenomenon that contended it could change the youth culture, and in turn, affect the type of citizen readers would become as adults. The editors of these papers, Charles Peters of the *GOP* and George Hutchison (acting) editor of the *BOP*,⁹ created an editorial presence that had a sweeping effect on youth readers. Kirsten Drotner describes how during his tenure, “[Editor] Charles Peters clearly endorsed a middle-class elevation of women's cultural mission.”¹⁰ The RTS recruited these men to spread evangelical messages to youth in line with the other publications of the group, but Peters and Hutchison operated under the contemporary belief that girls and boys would not read material they found boring. The didactic magazines had to draw readers away from their much-loved penny dreadfuls, and so they had to be just as entertaining. Peters and Hutchison therefore worked to draw in readers through exciting narratives and articles relevant to youth interest—and developed many of their own strategies for reader control, as I will later demonstrate.

At the height of the British Empire, the ideals of the elevation of state and the development of useful citizens governed the material published in children’s periodicals. Richard Noakes summarizes the findings of many scholars when he writes that children’s literature often “promulgated ideas about empire, race, masculinity and war.”¹¹

⁸ Kirsten Drotner, *English Children and Their Magazines: 1751-1945* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1988), 126.

⁹ Peters was editor from 1880 to 1907. Though the RTS instated James Macaulay as editor at the *BOP*’s inception, Hutchison was the “guiding genius” from 1879 to 1912 according to Cox, while Macaulay was more of a supervisor who spent most of his time working with the RTS’ other publications.

¹⁰ Drotner, *English Children and Their Magazines*, 150.

¹¹ Richard Noakes. “*The Boy's Own Paper* and Late-Victorian Juvenile Magazines,” in *Science in the Nineteenth-Century Periodical: Reading the Magazine of Nature*, G. Cantor, G. Dawson, G. Gooday, R. Noakes, S. Shuttleworth, and J.R. Topham (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004.) *Open Research Exeter*, 160.

Language, content and authorial control all reinforced imperial ideas of state and citizenship. Kirsten Drotner writes that during this period, “imperialist expansion reinforced middle-class concerns with working-class children’s moral well-being, and then a growing number of lower-middle-class juveniles were to find their precarious positions in the social fabric.”¹² Thus the late nineteenth century’s imperialistic tendencies abroad manifested domestically with the drive to raise the next generation of Britain. The imperialist attitudes that governed the children’s periodical scene told children that it was their duty to develop themselves, using a process of “self-culture,” into accomplished, morally driven adults. The church, which had previously governed the moral guidance of the next generation, still wielded considerable influence—The RTS was in fact an evangelical institution focused on reform and spreading the Christian message—but it was the idea of State that led the charge for children’s indoctrination through their literature.

Schools could educate youth on the importance of developing oneself for Empire, but beyond the watchful gaze of the schoolroom, supposedly delinquent ideas and moral depravity threatened to invade. Periodicals filled this gap as a more palatable form of adult presence in reading than their primers, but more wholesome than the pernicious penny-dreadfuls. The *GOP* and *BOP* formed relationships with readers, ensuring that youths would continue to buy the latest issue, and therefore read instructive material that would be good for their development. The *GOP* and the *BOP* cemented this editorial/reader relationship through rhetoric, cyclical reinforcement, advertising techniques, and the establishment of authority. Through this hierarchical relationship, the

¹² Drotner, *English Children and Their Magazines*, 126.

RTS hoped to control youth reading patterns and guide boys and girls toward useful citizenship, and away from the evils of unsupervised, sensational literature.

A Hero Amidst the Masses: The *BOP* and *GOP* and Class Division

The Religious Tract Society portrayed the publishing of the *BOP* and the *GOP* as nothing less than a heroic feat. In this narrative, the society contends that it, as the lone voice in a dark world filled with pernicious sensational literature—and men too hesitant to do anything about it—fought for the welfare of British youth by publishing their magazines. In *The Story of the Religious Tract Society for One Hundred Years*, Samuel G. Green describes the society’s agonizing debate over the creation of such a periodical. Writing in 1899 as the secretary of the organization, Green characterizes the origins of the *BOP* and *GOP* as the fulfillment of a moral obligation. He writes that an RTS committee realized the “terrible necessity of a publication which might to some extent supplant those of a mischievous tendency,” yet acknowledged that an openly religious text would “have been to defeat the object in view” because young readers would not be lured in by sermons. Ironically, the caveat put this need outside of the “scope of the Society’s operations” as a religious society.¹³ Green next narrates the heroism of the committee, which ultimately realized that it remained their responsibility to take on the “enterprise from which others shrank.”¹⁴ This story, told in RTS’s annual report as well as periodical catalogs, attempts to elevate the *BOP* and *GOP* from the penny dreadfuls by claiming their intentions were pure, and came from a dire societal and cultural need.

¹³ Samuel G. Green, *The Story of the Religious Tract Society for One Hundred Years* (London, England: The Religious Tract Society, 1899), 127.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

Containing language salient to middle class, Victorian reformist values, the narrative of a new wholesome class of literature for children could be viewed as yet another marketing tactic publishers used to promote readership.¹⁵

As editors Charles Peters and George Hutchison elevated their magazines from what they viewed as the dredges of other weeklies, they complicated the issue of class among youth. They constructed the ideal (middle class) British boy and British girl reader according to their principles, catered to these projected figures in tone and content, and encouraged those who did not already conform to *BOP* and *GOP* standards to do so. Consequently, the *BOP* and *GOP* entertained youth and played upon growing nationalism, became a staple of British youth culture, and were welcomed in thousands of homes by parents equally as by young people. Yet these publications also more stringently divided youth into classes by claiming that their material was better suited for a sheltered middle class audience than sensational literature. By elevating themselves, these magazines subliminally separated middle class youth from lower class youth, who were stereotypically more drawn to penny dreadfuls. However, in their quest for readership, the *GOP* and *BOP* were less unlike penny dreadfuls than the RTS imagined.

Though early editors avoided sermons in the *BOP* and *GOP*, they preached conformity through their rhetoric. The editorial voice called for the creation of distinct communities of boyhood and girlhood: all of its readers subscribed to this group and were linked in their vast numbers as belonging to the *BOP* or *GOP* community. To solidify this idea, the periodicals used phrases such as “our readers,” “our boys,” and “our girls.” Editors and the writers addressed readers with an informal “you,” forging a relationship

¹⁵ I do not doubt the RTS’ moral intentions here; I merely note the effectiveness of this narrative in selling magazines.

between reader and magazine. This method of addressing youth also placed the reader in the shoes of the “British” boy or girl—one who respected authority, strived to become a useful member in society, and was overall a receptive student willing to take advice from editors. This use of rhetoric unified readership, important in a business where building a subscription base was essential—but it also projected the idea of a unified group of boys and girls aspiring to the same ideal of British youth.

Borrowing from penny dreadful publishers’ strategies, editors used participation initiatives to solidify these communities of boyhood and girlhood. Readers enjoyed contributing to competitions, polls and correspondence for the magazine, engaging in a discourse that linked them with the magazine and with other readers. The “Correspondence” page was always full of answers to readers’ individual questions, written in terse, specific advice addressed directly to the young person who wrote in. Competitions answered hopeful submissions with admonishing critiques written about the ideal qualities of the best handwriting or embroidery. In an examination of the competing girlhoods of the *GOP* and *Girl’s Realm*, scholar Beth Rodgers describes these competitions as enforcing the hierarchal order of editor to reader.¹⁶ The editor had the authority to dictate what constituted a “good” essay submission, for example, lauding the writer for her excellent penmanship rather than remarking other qualities. Readers jointly sought to be involved with the magazine and gain access to the editor’s attention, and were thus joined in this community of striving to make their voices heard.

Though the readers of the *BOP* and *GOP* were diverse, the magazine’s discourse did not aim to be all-inclusive. It did make an effort to include content for and featuring

¹⁶ Beth Rodgers, “Competing Girlhoods: Competition, Community, and Reader Contribution in *The Girl’s Own Paper* and *The Girl’s Realm*.” *Victorian Periodicals Review* 45, Fall 2012, 283.

working class boys and girls, including profession-related articles and contests, and acknowledging the fiscal limitations many readers were working with.¹⁷ However, the majority of content assumed a middle class audience—or at least their values—that was predominantly white, Protestant, and living in England. Children were living all over the world at the height of the British Empire, and the periodicals’ readership reflected the widespread population. In fact, missionaries often used the *BOP* and *GOP* in order to introduce local youth to British culture.¹⁸ Articles reflected the wide reach of the British Empire, but their treatments of colonial life were written as far-away snapshots, interesting to readers but not relevant to the “typical” *GOP* girl, according to Rodgers. She states that the *GOP* did not sufficiently reconcile the problematic conflicting ideologies of modernity, class, nationality and gender. Penner notes that, though Hutchison encouraged foreign readers (British subjects overseas as well as local youth) to participate in the *BOP*’s competitions, they “must write in English and take a chance—a poor one—with our British Boys.”¹⁹ While others were invited to participate, in short, Hutchison and other editors published primarily for middle class, domestic, white British youth. In this way the *BOP* and *GOP* fostered a somewhat fractured community, despite their projection of unity.

In order to court the middle class audience, the RTS strived to establish itself above the petty tactics and sensationalism that characterized much of the youth publishing industry. Yet the *BOP* and *GOP* marketing strategies bear a striking

¹⁷ Terri Doughty, ed. *Selections from the Girl’s Own Paper, 1880-1907* (Peterborough: Broadview Press, 2004.), 103.

¹⁸ Elizabeth Penner. “‘The Squire of Boyhood’: G. A. Hutchison and the Boy’s Own Paper.” *Victorian Periodicals Review* 47, no. 4 (2014): 631-647. <https://muse.jhu.edu/> (accessed January 11, 2016), 641.

¹⁹ “Correspondence,” 80, in Penner, “‘The Squire of Boyhood,’ ” 641.

resemblance to those of penny dreadful publishers. Though the RTS did not launch their magazines in the pursuit of profits, Kirsten Drotner notes that *BOP* and *GOP* “editors were clearly not blind to the market mechanisms of publishing.”²⁰ Publishing’s fierce, competitive market meant that in order to survive, the RTS’ publications had to sell themselves as well as the penny dreadfuls—adopting a few of their marketing tricks. The *BOP* and *GOP* “exploited the serial format”²¹ in both fiction and nonfiction, encouraging readers to obtain the next issue for a continuation of an action-packed story or instructions on a cricket technique. Other techniques included stimulating reader contribution through contests, placing the most exciting content with dramatic illustrations on the first page of each issue, and recruiting well-known adventure story writers to contribute to the magazines, such as W.H.G. Kingston, R.M. Ballantyne, and Jules Verne.²²

Despite their drive for higher circulation, the *BOP* and *GOP* took great pains to separate themselves from sensational literature with their belief that more was at stake in gaining readership than turning a profit. Though they preferred that youth read the *GOP* and *BOP*, editors also endorsed other reading that critics deemed appropriate—spending valuable column space to do so, in the name of filling youth’s hands with “elevated” literature instead of penny dreadfuls. Editors Peters and Hutchison strived to enlighten young readers and their parents about the choices they should be making regarding reading, serving as literary critics in addition to their editorial roles. They endorsed

²⁰ Drotner, *English Children and Their Magazines*, 124. Drotner goes on to point out that much of the magazines’ profits went toward orphanages, ragged schools, and missionary work abroad, which adds to hesitation in equating the RTS and its publishing schemes to the enterprises of penny dreadful publishers.

²¹ Noakes, “*The Boy’s Own Paper* and Late-Victorian Juvenile Magazines,” 158.

²² Penner, “‘The Squire of Boyhood,’” 636-37.

morally and intellectually acceptable material—which often included their own magazines. Moruzi wrote that through this practice, “The reading culture of the period was created and reinforced through the periodical press.”²³ By promoting themselves to their readers as purveyors of constructive material, these periodicals continually reinforced their audience base.

Hutchison and Peters catered to the RTS and to those concerned with youth reading culture by encouraging the cyclical purchase of the magazines. Noakes writes, “judging by the frequency with which he published praise of the *BOP* from parents, teachers and clergymen, Hutchison was keen to demonstrate that his formula for fighting ‘pernicious trash’ was achieving its desired effect.”²⁴ Editors often employed the marketing technique of printing endorsements from respected authority figures, from pleased parents, or more uncommonly, from satisfied young readers. Readers rarely heard boys’ voices in the *BOP* Correspondence section because the magazine published only the editor’s response, not the boys’ inquiring letters. However, some boys’ correspondence that heartily endorsed the magazines did make the cut. One “A.B.”’s letter to the *BOP* reads as an advertisement for the periodical itself:

Many thanks for your last tale of ‘My Doggie and I.’ My mother happened to see the month’s *Boy’s Own Paper*, and her eye happening to catch the tale, she forthwith began to read it, and was so interested in it that I had to look up the preceding months in which the tale appeared. The result of this is that I am to have the *Boy’s Own Paper* given to me every month, and at the end of the volume the binding will be paid for, as it is *such an interesting book*.²⁵

This letter not only contains a boy’s endorsement of the *BOP* as “*such an interesting book*,” but also a mother’s interest and ensuing endorsement. Though aimed at juvenile

²³ Moruzi, *Constructing Girlhood*, 11.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ A.B., “Correspondence.” *The Boy’s Own Paper* 3, September 17, 1881, 807.

boys, the *BOP* captivated an adult woman according to A.B. The editor's inclusion of the letter emphasizes the supposed universal recognition of the magazine's excellence, continuing the narrative of the *BOP* as a gem in the rough.

The more readers consumed the *BOP* and *GOP*, the more they were inclined to further purchase the magazines. Not only did the magazine publish endorsement and praise from outside readers, it also praised itself within its own stories. In one fictional tale by contributor Paul Blake, two boys attempt to fly using a kite they read about in the *BOP*. Blake writes of how they waited for the latest issues, in one instance meeting “the train which was to bring the anxiously expected No. 94.”²⁶ The boys “devoured eagerly the article on kites against horses” and “found how their highest dreams had been made realities, and although they felt some disappointment at discovering they would not be the first who had made monster kites and travelled by them, they were consoled by remembering that the next week they would learn how to emulate the deeds of the former generation, instead of having to waste time in experiments.”²⁷ Here Blake characterizes the *BOP* as an exciting element of boys' lives—the highlight of each week. Blake portrays the *BOP*'s content as extremely relevant to the boys' lives (and to their “highest dreams”), and as extremely useful (they would not have to “waste time in experiments” because the information would be imparted to them from the knowledgeable *BOP*). Catering also to parents with the boys' awe of the “deeds of the former generation,” this story encouraged future purchase by adults who wanted to instill respect in their children.

As opposed to penny dreadfuls, which were printed on cheap paper and discarded each week, the *BOP* and *GOP* used high-quality paper and color plates even in their

²⁶ Paul Blake, “Kite-Flying Extraordinary,” *The Boy's Own Paper* 3, September 17, 1881, 819.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

weekly editions in order to create a lasting product.²⁸ Scholar Elizabeth Penner views this decision as but one way that George Hutchison, arguably the most influential editor of the *BOP*, attempted to define the *BOP* as a permanent presence in British youth culture as opposed to ephemeral penny dreadfuls. Hutchison also fought to keep advertisements out of his magazine—except on the weekly wrapper, which would be discarded²⁹—because he believed they deprived readers of valuable content by taking up space that could otherwise contribute to “permanent interest and value.”³⁰ Though publishers commonly reprinted serial stories (or repurposed them from other periodicals like the Aldine Publishing Company’s notorious “libraries”), under Hutchison’s regime the *BOP* did not republish stories, but provided new material each week. Hutchison’s high standards incurred considerable cost, yet the *BOP* still sold at one penny weekly in order to be accessible to young readers.³¹

Despite its accessible price, the *BOP* and *GOP* promoted what Penner calls a “hierarchical pattern of consumption” among British youth by dividing the way young people viewed leisure reading.³² One reason middle class Victorians condemned penny dreadfuls was their ephemeral sensationalism—a boy might read a violent adventure story and then discard it after speeding through the plot, as opposed to savoring and reflecting on an endorsed classic on a bookshelf. The editions of the *BOP* and *GOP*

²⁸ Penner, “‘The Squire of Boyhood,’ ” 639.

²⁹ These advertisements were carefully selected from reputable businesses that followed RTS principles. Penner, “‘The Squire of Boyhood,’ ” 639.

³⁰ “Correspondence,” *Boy’s Own Paper* 721 (November 5, 1892), 95, in Penner, “‘The Squire of Boyhood,’ ” 639.

³¹ Surprisingly, it was not until the turn of the century that the *BOP* had to rely on RTS’s financial subsidy. Penner, “‘The Squire of Boyhood,’ ” 640.

³² Penner, “‘The Squire of Boyhood,’ ” 638.

published weekly satisfied “immediate curiosity” according to Penner, but the monthly and annual editions “represented a more refined version of reading aimed at middle-class families.”³³ Because of the negative association with penny dreadfuls, parents viewed books with less suspicion than ephemeral magazines. The *BOP* and *GOP* often encouraged readers to bind weekly copies for a low fee—though their own publishing houses did not offer such services, the papers were happy to suggest local businesses who would—and therefore keep the magazine in the youth’s accessible reading material. In an article advising girls how to form their personal libraries, for instance, James Mason encourages girls to add the *GOP* to their bookshelf. He writes that “every girl should by this time have had the numbers or parts of the first volume of the *Girl’s Own Paper* bound up, so that they may not become dirty and untidy-looking.”³⁴ The process of binding the weeklies not only transformed the *GOP* into a respectable book, it gave it new life as a reference book that could continue to guide the reader toward *GOP* standards.

Middle-class readers tended to subscribe to the monthly editions for this purpose, expanding their education through their leisure reading. Mason argues, “Every girl who is not extravagant, and who wishes to make the best use of her paper, should have the ‘Annual’ already on her bookshelf, so that, with the aid of the index, she might be able to refer to any information that has already been printed relating to matters requiring immediate attention.”³⁵ Mason tells girls that the *GOP*’s permanent place on their

³³ Penner, “‘The Squire of Boyhood,’ ” 638.

³⁴ James Mason, “How to Form a Small Library,” *The Girl’s Own Paper* 2, October 2, 1880, 7, in *Selections from the Girl’s Own Paper, 1880-1907*, edited by Terri Doughty (Peterborough: Broadview Press, 2004), 59.

³⁵ Mason, “How to Form a Small Library,” 59.

bookshelf will be conducive to their education. Its function as a pseudo-encyclopedia as well as its bound form encouraged youth to regard the *BOP* and *GOP* not as an ephemeral periodical, a genre that traditionally allows for authorial instability,³⁶ but as a book that retains permanent value and respectability. In essence the RTS reclaimed the periodical genre for middle class youth by creating the distinction between superior reading in the *BOP* and *GOP*, and the liminal, ephemeral penny dreadfuls.

The Fantasy of “Self-Culture”

Youth consumption of reading material had the power to transform the moral identity of the next generation, according to middle class reformers. Unitarian reformer Frances Power Cobbes’ 1888 article in the *Fortnightly Review* summarizes the anxiety surrounding the moral training of youth. She writes that children are strongly shaped by the ideas and feelings they are surrounded by, which she calls the “contagion of emotions.”³⁷ In short, Cobbes and others believed that the glorification of crime or the excitement of rebellion in penny dreadfuls would inevitably corrupt youth. This view of affective emotions relates the contemporary idea of how children’s character—and thus the next generation’s character—would be shaped. No task was more important, therefore, than making sure the reading material accessible to youth was wholesome, and thus creating a wholesome generation.

The RTS intended to convince youth to take responsibility for their own moral improvement. As Stephanie Olsen argues, “This was not about simply imposing the will

³⁶ See Holt, “The Textual Formations of Adolescence in Turn-of-the-Century Youth Periodicals,” 65.

³⁷ Frances Power Cobbe, “The Education of the Emotions.” *Fortnightly Review*, May 1865-June 1934 43, no. 254 (02, 1888): 223-236, *ProQuest*.

of adults and experts from the top down, but an attempt to engage the child and, through the process of reflection in his/her own reading, to have the child become a direct (if limited) agent in his/her own moral development.”³⁸ Both the *GOP* and *BOP* encouraged boys and girls to take responsibility in shaping themselves, a practice they called “self-culture.” Like other nineteenth-century texts, these magazines used the term “self-culture” as a mode of developing oneself in the arts and other refinements, but they tacked on the idea that this process should occur during youth. After all, shielding youth from penny dreadfuls would not be necessary if readers were concerned for their own moral development. The premise of self-culture seemed to grant youth autonomy in forming their own character. However, the content and style of the magazines imposed limitations that suggest youth did not actually exercise the power they supposedly had. Editors encouraged youth to form their own habits—if these habits fit under the teachings of the *GOP* and *BOP*.

Moralists viewed penny dreadfuls as particularly pernicious to girls and boys because they were reading them during the formative years of their teens, when they were considered easily impressionable. The handbook *Good Habits and Good Manners: A Book for Boys* warns young readers that “The later life of the man is coloured and influenced by the reading and meditation of the boy, and it is of infinite importance to our future happiness that our choice of books, in youth, should be determined upon correct principles.”³⁹ In a similar sentiment for girls, Gordon Stables, contributor to both the *GOP* and *BOP*, imparts a sense of urgency in the shaping of one’s character when he

³⁸ Stephanie Olsen, *Juvenile Nation: Youth, Emotions and the Making of the Modern British Citizen, 1880-1914* (London & New York: Bloomsbury, 2014) 4.

³⁹ *Good Habits and Good Manners: A Book for Boys* (London: Frederick Warne & Co., ca.1890), 39.

writes, “Whether or not happiness is to be her lot therein depends to a very great extent on what she does and what she learns while still in her younger teens.”⁴⁰ Anxiety about tarnishing the purity of the Romantic child⁴¹ translated into anxiety about the potential for corrupting habits among girls and boys in their teens. If ill-formed in early life, these writers claimed, youth could not aspire to great personal character; however, if girls and boys devoted themselves to their self-culture from a young age, it would carry them through the rest of life as upstanding citizens.

After examining several serial stories in the *GOP*, noting how the protagonists reach their happy endings through self-culture, Drotner concludes, “Personal improvement constitutes the main fictional theme in the Girl’s Own Paper.”⁴² The main task of the female protagonist is to develop herself into a virtuous, healthy, helpful and compassionate individual. She often ends her tale with a sense of finality by marrying, settling down as someone’s caretaker, or passing away. Drotner identifies two key archetypal protagonists, writing, “one is the good girl who exudes her benevolent influence in the reformation of others; the other is the willful girl who matures by eventually mastering her adversities.”⁴³ The attainment of “goodness” is inevitable for the female protagonist. Writers control the reading experience because of this inevitability in two main ways. First, readers know that all paths lead to righteousness for the protagonist, and so the *GOP* seeks to cement the assumption that girl readers will

⁴⁰ Gordon Stables, “To Girls in Their ‘Teens,’ ” *The Girl’s Own Paper*, November 5, 1904, in *Selections from the Girl’s Own Paper, 1880-1907*, edited by Terri Doughty (Peterborough: Broadview Press, 2004.), 53.

⁴¹ See Introduction for a discussion of the idea of the Romantic child and its prominence among the Victorian middle class.

⁴² Drotner, *English Children and Their Magazines*, 158.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

likewise inevitably find their inner goodness by reading. Second, the inevitability rules out all other outcomes for character development, removing spontaneity or reader prediction. While plot events may be surprising at times in a watered-down version of the penny dreadful, the protagonists unfailingly exude goodness by the end of the story.

Kathleen Crofton, the protagonist of the serial “Wild Kathleen” represents Drotner’s willful girl who matures through self-culture—in this case, her attention to religion. The title of the serial suggests that the protagonist is a force to be tamed; and indeed “Wild Kathleen” focuses mainly on the girl’s transition from a rowdy girl from Ireland into a refined English flower. The opening chapter exaggerates Kathleen’s “wild” tendencies, describing a “saucy” and “mischievous” girl.⁴⁴ The author⁴⁵ describes Kathleen’s wardrobe in contrast to her friends Dorothy and Angela, who wore “delicate pink and white cotton dresses, black crossover capes, and round white hats,” who were in “dainty contrast to that queer Kathleen, who chose to proclaim her nationality by a gingham dress of the most vivid green that Sackville-street, Dublin, could provide her with.”⁴⁶ The author stresses the divide in nationality between the English girls and the Irish, playing on stereotypes even as the writer elevates the ideal of the proper, already self-cultured, English girl. Even more shocking than her appearance is Kathleen’s rowdy behavior. As the girls are on a leisurely walk, Kathleen produces “a series of ringing shouts.” A stranger who happens upon the group when Kathleen leads them astray wonders about her mother who is “letting her madcap daughter run wild like this.”⁴⁷

⁴⁴ “Wild Kathleen,” *The Girl’s Own Paper* 1, no. 9, February 28, 1880, 142.

⁴⁵ This author is not named in the text, though is described elsewhere as the author of the “Aggravating School-Girl.”

⁴⁶ “Wild Kathleen,” *The Girl’s Own Paper* 1, no. 9, February 28, 1880, 142.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 172.

However, the most reprehensible trait Kathleen possesses is her “saucy independence.”⁴⁸ The author thus sets up the story as one of personal improvement—as Kathleen has much “improving” to do—and in so doing, condemns the behavior Kathleen exhibits in the beginning of the story.

The taming of a “wild” girl represents but one way in which the *GOP* controlled the “self-culture” practice. Writers shaped girls’ autonomy in forming themselves by defining the ideal girl according to their standards, typically encouraging girls toward more conservative demeanors. Terri Doughty in her *Selections from the Girl’s Own Paper* summarizes that “the fiction in *The Girl’s Own* was reactionary, working to absorb and tame rebellion.”⁴⁹ This returns us to Althusser’s discussion of ideology. Readers encounter the unconscious construction (and exaltation) of the ideal girl as female protagonists settle into subject positions that reaffirm the social hierarchy and conservative values. The *GOP* verbally suggests that girls have the autonomy to define themselves as they mature, yet this empowerment is but an illusion as the *GOP* simultaneously limited the construction of self-culture. Kathleen had the freedom to mature, yet fell into the inevitability of evolving into the same stringently virtuous protagonist that characterizes the *GOP* archetype.

The Garden Analogy

Several strategies aided in the *GOP*’s mission to suggest that self-culture was an empowering process. The *GOP* used analogy in particular to reinforce the illusion of autonomy girls had in shaping themselves. The *GOP* compared the culturing of oneself to

⁴⁸ “Wild Kathleen,” *The Girl’s Own Paper* 1, no. 9, February 28, 1880, 172.

⁴⁹ Doughty, ed. *Selections from the Girl’s Own Paper*, 8.

growing a garden in order to impress notions of a slow, nurturing, formative process of self-culture. This analogy communicated a lasting responsibility that girls needed to tend over many years, as well as made the process of self-culture an attractive one that yielded symbolically beautiful results.

The *GOP*'s rhetoric of self-culture found its roots in nature. As the Americans across the Atlantic mythologized the idea of the Western wilderness, Victorians and later Edwardians romanticized the idea of their girls as gardens in the context of an increasingly urban, industrialized world. In the *GOP* images accompanying articles often included flowers, vines, trees and other garden scenery. Drop-caps and folios sported lines of ivy and floral flourishes in keeping with the design scheme. The analogy is also omnipresent in language, such as in titles like "Some Marriage Thorns and How to Avoid Them."⁵⁰ Comparing a girl's life to a carefully tended garden, the *GOP* romanticized the



Figure 5. *Aspiration*, in the *Girl's Own Paper* January 7, 1899, in *Selections from the Girl's Own Paper, 1880-1907*, edited by Terri Doughty (Peterborough: Broadview Press, 2004), 72.

proper girl as a figure who could tend herself into a beautiful bloom inward and out.

The illustration titled "Aspiration" accompanying Lily Watson's article "Self-Culture for Girls" features a girl at the forefront of a meadow, clutching her heart and staring off into the distance of nature's majesty. In the article, Watson compares a girl's nature to a garden which must be cultivated. The ideal

⁵⁰ Countess de Boerio, "Some Marriage Thorns and How to Avoid Them," *The Girl's Own Paper* 14, August 26, 1893, in *Selections from the Girl's Own Paper, 1880-1907*, edited by Terri Doughty (Peterborough: Broadview Press, 2004.), 48.

garden, she makes the analogy, “is taken in hand and cultivated, not by a mechanical ignorant gardener, but by someone who understands the capacities of the soil...there is everything by turn that is beautiful in its season...all that the garden can produce for delight in the eye or for food is there.”⁵¹ What is most interesting here is the agent of the gardening: it is the girl herself. She is responsible for continuing her education, making her own choices and developing into the garden that she designs. The *GOP* stresses that her future is in her hands—yet simultaneously defines that future by determining what the image of a garden should look like.

Specific limits to the girl’s autonomy contradict the illusion of empowerment under closer examination of this analogy. First, *GOP* writers communicate that the product of a woman’s work to culture herself must yield fruit. Watson’s statement that the garden has every “produce for delight in the eye or for food” parallels the idea of a woman as provider.⁵² The concept of future bounty is crucial here. According to the goals of the *GOP*, girls were meant to grow a garden now, to be reaped when they came of age as citizens of the Empire. Olsen argues that in late nineteenth century Britain, girls were “primarily seen as future mothers, were to be physically healthy and morally equipped to take on their future roles of raising young Britons as moral guides and educators of ‘Britishness.’”⁵³ The “future” Olsen describes relates how readers were meant to view the garden. Women were providers, to be sowing habits of learnedness, societal manners, domestic skillfulness, and most importantly, moral character. These fruits would then feed the next generation of British families.

⁵¹ Lily Watson, “Self-Culture for Girls,” *The Girl’s Own Paper* 20, January 7, 1899, *Selections from the Girl’s Own Paper, 1880-1907*, edited by Terri Doughty (Peterborough: Broadview Press, 2004.), 73.

⁵² Watson, “Self-Culture for Girls,” 73.

⁵³ Olsen, *Juvenile Nation*, 5.

Fictional stories that use the nature analogy reveal the same aims as advisory articles to grow girls into one particular type of garden. The ever-wild Kathleen's original description suggests an unkempt wilderness. The author writes, "the wavy masses of her golden red hair were crowned by a hideous brown mushroom hat, bare of trimming, excepting as it was now stuck all round with every imaginable kind of twig, leaf, and plant, or flower."⁵⁴ Kathleen is literally covered in nature, and the chaos of it all overwhelms her appearance. Rather than a neat garden with selectively chosen plants, Kathleen's plot is anarchic, with "every imaginable kind" of flora in her hair. The author also distinguishes between refined and unrefined tastes with Kathleen's "hideous brown mushroom hat." Mushrooms do not often belong in a tended garden, and the author censures Kathleen's irregular style. In this way the author uses the gardening analogy to suggest that Kathleen is in the current state of an ungroomed wilderness, and foreshadows that the ensuing story will be about her refinement into a proper garden.

However, even Wild Kathleen is able to tend to her garden sufficiently by the end of the serial, upholding the trend of the inevitability of the protagonist's beneficial self-culture. As Kathleen grows ill at the end of her story, the author mourns her death with the analogy of a flower. One character says dolefully, "Ye have seen that our dear, sweet flower, Kathleen Crofton herself, is fading away."⁵⁵ Instead of an overgrown garden, Kathleen herself is a delicate flower. The author continues this comparison with the reply, "It seems to me that it always is just those bright and brilliant ones that do go off early."⁵⁶ The double meaning of this sentence continues the analogy: Kathleen was

⁵⁴ "Wild Kathleen," *The Girl's Own Paper*, 142.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 584.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

“bright and brilliant” in that she was beautiful and passionate—and possibly too wildly vibrant for this world— just as a flower that is “bright and brilliant” might be the most short-lived in the garden.

But what groomed Kathleen into a beautiful flower? The author stresses her faith as the defining characteristic that reveals her character growth. On her deathbed, while reading the Bible verse “Let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely,” Kathleen exclaims, “I was athirst...But now! Light and life—light and life.”⁵⁷ The “water,” with its Biblical connotation of rebirth, can also serve as a connection to nature. Flowers need to be watered, and Kathleen received the spiritual waters that transformed her from wilderness into a flower. The author replaced a saucy, impatient, mischievous girl with a wise and calm, spiritual woman.

To demonstrate the extent of Kathleen’s hard-earned maturity, the author uses the contrast of delicate flowers with Kathleen’s initial wildness. In the final chapter of the serial, the author writes that Kathleen’s “care had even provided that the borders near the house [of her friends] should have tender, bright lines of crocuses and snowdrops.”⁵⁸ Both crocuses and snowdrops are small, delicate flowers, and those features are associated with Kathleen’s features as she was the one to tend them so carefully. Likewise, in another instance the author writes that Kathleen’s father insisted on being the one to transplant the flowers because “His little Leena had planted the bulbs, tended them, thought of them,” furthering the image of a patient, nurturing Kathleen.⁵⁹ There are no more wild twigs and mess of wildflowers here. Kathleen is no longer associated with the

⁵⁷ “Wild Kathleen, *The Girl’s Own Paper*, 584.

⁵⁸ *Ibid*, 622.

⁵⁹ *Ibid*.

overgrown natural world, but the careful tending of gardens. The author uses the nature analogy to tame Kathleen, showing girl readers the beauty that self-culture can entail—and the necessity of pruning the wilderness back to attain it.

Therefore, if the girl's culture was a garden, she was responsible for pruning out the influences that might endanger it—particularly the material she read. The feeling that the “girl” years, about ages 15-25, were a formative time for a female placed responsibility on *GOP* to encourage girls to develop the *right* sort of culture, to read the *right* sort of material. One article dictates, “if the woman will be what the girl now is, this time, which is essentially one for settling habits, cannot be anything less than the most important in life. If the girl spends it in thoughtless idleness and discontented trifling, the result will be seen in the character of the woman.”⁶⁰ The idea of a girl responsible for tending to her own metaphoric garden is enforced by the illustration facing the article, a young woman carefully examining a fruit from a growing tree. *GOP* authors stressed that laziness must be pruned, so must bad habits, and instead the fruits of domestic bliss ought to be sown. Stables admonishes, “If, then, girls, you spend your idle moments in reading novels, nearly all of which give pictures of social life which are as unreal as the scenes of modern drama, and if you base your notions of your coming life on these, I can only say, God pity and help you!”⁶¹ Stables censures girls who read unrealistic “novels,” perhaps in reference to the penny dreadfuls and dime novels that the *GOP* sought to combat.

The contrast of the ideal girl, then, was one with a wilderness for a mind.

Unruliness, empty-headedness, and bad taste were just a few of the qualities the *GOP*

⁶⁰ Author of ‘How to Be Happy Though Married,’ ‘Between School and Marriage,’ *The Girl's Own Paper* 7, September 4, 1886, in *Selections from the Girl's Own Paper, 1880-1907*, edited by Terri Doughty (Peterborough: Broadview Press, 2004.), 65.

⁶¹ Stables, “To Girls in Their ‘Teens,’ 53.

condemned. As the juvenile periodical press boomed, girls had their choice of what to read, creating the potential for weeds to grow in carefully tended gardens. Mrs. Molesworth warns, “Weeding out always is effected in time, it is true, but the ever-increasing mass of publications renders it more and more difficult.”⁶² In the meantime, Molesworth suggests that the potential for improvement or harm to a girl’s garden rested squarely with her reading material. Penny dreadfuls thus constituted a threat to the young girl, and the *GOP* attempted to communicate the dangers such “pernicious” material might have on their self-culture. James Mason writes in the *GOP* about constructing a girls’ library, “A girl becomes a reflection of the graces of her favorite authors.”⁶³ Part of a reader’s autonomy is in the selection of her own reading material. The *GOP* posited that the freedom to choose between the masses of periodicals on the market called for a high level of responsibility in the young consumer. The RTS hoped that by impressing upon girls the gravity of the choice one must make in reading material, girls would make conscious choices to pursue authors that critics deemed worthy of their attention.

The Food Analogy

Instead of encouraging boys to grow a garden, which was a feminine domain, the *BOP* used the popular analogy of keeping a healthy body to impress the importance of selecting proper reading material. The *BOP* counseled boys in improving their character to watch what they put into their bodies, both physically and mentally. This returns us to Cobbes’ “contagion of emotions”—suggesting that boys and girls are like sponges,

⁶² Mrs. Molesworth, “On the Use and Abuse of Fiction,” *The Girl’s Own Paper* 13, April 16, 1892, 453, in *Selections from the Girl’s Own Paper, 1880-1907*, edited by Terri Doughty (Peterborough: Broadview Press, 2004.), 67.

⁶³ Mason, “How to Form a Small Library,” 58.

soaking up the information they find in periodicals. Jenny Holt, examining cartoons from the *BOP*, concludes that “the idea of adolescent literary consumption” is “subliminally linked” with “the issue of physical consumption.”⁶⁴ For instance, reviewers of the *BOP* commented that the magazine contained “healthy fiction,” as opposed to the “penny packets of poison.”⁶⁵ Food consumption, a salient topic because of the concern with raising a healthy next generation for the Empire, became the focus of several illustrations, which Holt dissects. She argues that these illustrations “warn that both excessive eating and inappropriate reading cause sickness.”⁶⁶ What boys put into their bodies shaped their character, according to contemporary science. The *BOP* used the equivalent of a scare tactic to warn boys that reading pernicious material would indeed make them overweight, unhealthy individuals.

The *BOP* was not alone in linking reading with food. In other boys’ periodicals, as well as handbooks for boys, writers stressed wholesome reading as equally important to wholesome eating. Multiple contemporary sources used Francis Bacon’s quotation about reading discerningly as a platitude, which states,

Some books are to be tasted, others to be swallowed, and some few to be chewed and digested: that is, some books are to be read only in parts, others to be read, but not curiously, and some few to be read wholly, and with diligence and attention. Read not to contradict and confute, nor to believe and take for granted, nor to find talk and discourse, but to weigh and consider.⁶⁷

This quote’s popularity is significant because of its implication that boys have reading autonomy, which here means the ability to choose the content of their reading, and to

¹⁴ Jenny Holt. “The Textual Formations of Adolescence in Turn-of-the-Century Youth Periodicals: ‘The Boy’s Own Paper’ and Eton College Ephemeral Magazines,” *Victorian Periodicals Review* 35, Spring 2002, 71.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ Holt, “The Textual Formations of Adolescence,” 71.

⁶⁷ Francis Bacon, in *Good Habits and Good Manners*, 39-40.

choose how they read that material. Bacon's emphasis on his instruction to readers to "weigh and consider" endorses readers as intellectuals who are capable of independently processing reading content and applying independent judgment.

However, the RTS and other moralist writers for boys did not actually intend for boys to freely choose their own reading material—they wanted boys to make the choices their parents, pastors, and teachers would deem correct. Middle class critics, who were extremely influential in contemporary discourse on children's reading,⁶⁸ established a system dividing books and periodicals into two categories: "wholesome" and "pernicious."⁶⁹ By elevating one type of boys' literature and declaring it the desired social norm, critics developed an ideology in line with Gramsci's idea of a cultural hegemony. Gramsci believed in "the domination of a set of ruling beliefs and values through 'consent' rather than through 'coercive power.' ...usually a large majority of a nation's citizens has so effectively internalized what the rulers want them to believe that they genuinely think they are voicing their own opinion, though there is always room for dissent."⁷⁰ The RTS and others realized from selling figures that attempting to preach to boys was not effective; forcible coercion of reading would drive boys further toward the "pernicious" literature. Instead, the editors of the *BOP* used language like Bacon's that attractively offered them autonomy, attempting to make boys internalize beliefs and values such as discerning judgment in literature.

⁶⁸ See Marjory Lang, "Childhood's Companions: Mid-Victorian Children's Periodicals and the Critics," in *Victorian Periodicals Review*, Vol. 13, No. ½ 1980, 17-31.

⁶⁹ Patrick A. Dunae, "Boys' Literature and the Idea of Empire, 1870-1914," *Victorian Studies* 24 no. 1, 1980. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3826881>," 106.

⁷⁰ Bertens, *Literary Theory: The Basics*, Third Edition, 75. **As mentioned above**, the difference between Gramsci's and Althusser's ideas about ideology is the larger opportunity for dissent in Gramsci's model.

Much as the girls were taught to weed their gardens, boys were taught to eat with caution. Articles in the *BOP* utilized the food and reading analogy by exemplifying “good” food and reading, as opposed to “bad.” *BOP* writer Frederick Gale advises boys, before a cricket match, to “Eat a good mutton chop for breakfast, and if you can do so with an appetite you may be sure that your nerves and digestion are all right.”⁷¹ The article “Odd Bits by an Odd Fellow” echoes the sentiment, writing of words instead of mutton, “Boys, if you can’t write poetry, or even make good verse, at all events read it.”⁷² The consumption of positive material, like a good mutton chop or good poetry, was supposed to have a positive effect on boys simply by being in boys’ systems. The *BOP* stressed simultaneous purity of mind and body, writing on nutrition as often as instructing on literature.

Even within serial stories, authors took pause to instill good habits, such as R. M. Ballantyne’s intrusion in the serial “My Doggie and I” to state that he finished his meal with “water, which is [his] favourite beverage.”⁷³ Promoting water over alcohol and more caloric choices paralleled the *BOP*’s endorsement of pure literature as opposed to the allegedly polluted penny dreadfuls. Similarly, the handbook *Good Habits and Good Manners* instructs boys, “do not read ‘sensation novels;’—do not drink the fiery drams which stir up a jaded appetite,” equating penny dreadfuls with alcohol.⁷⁴ By associating “wholesome” literature with good digestion and “pernicious” with stomachaches, the *BOP* tried to make the choice clear for boys forming their self-culture.

⁷¹ Frederick Gale, “Cricket Homilies,” *The Boy’s Own Paper* 3, August 27, 1881, 772.

⁷² “Odd Bits By an Odd Fellow,” *The Boy’s Own Paper* 3, September 3, 1881, 790.

⁷³ R.M. Ballantyne, “My Doggie and I,” *The Boy’s Own Paper* 3, no. 99, December 4, 1880, 150.

⁷⁴ *Good Habits and Good Manners*, 40.

Good Habits and Good Manners appealed to boys' intellect and good nature to mold boys into forming "correct" habits. Extending the food analogy to include digestion, the handbook's author writes, "I have met with great readers who knew nothing; book-gluttons, who devoured, but neither digested nor relished their food."⁷⁵ This quotation links back to the idea of self-culture—not only must boys learn to be discerning in their *choice* of reading material, they must be conscious of *how* they read it according to this author, lest they be termed the sinful "gluttons" described. *Good Habits and Good Manners* states that only by digesting the food properly would boys benefit from their reading. This view produces anxiety by suggesting that at such a formative period of their lives, boys had to be attentive at all times to the material they consumed, because the sort of man they would become rested squarely with the habits and choices they made as youth.

Persuading youths that reading bad material would harm their bodies and minds, the *BOP* and *GOP* sought to train girls and boys to stay away from pernicious material like penny dreadfuls. This suggests that they had some degree of autonomy in choosing their own reading material—a statement that is revealed to be an illusion if considering Althusser's view of ideology. Following Althusser's logic, the choice offered to youth about reading material is genuine, yet is circumstantial because of the RTS' position as constructor of the ideology that discerns "good" literature from "bad." The choice transforms into one not of personal preference, but into the decision between adhering to known and believed ideology (the RTS' categorization of texts) and deviating from the ideology—which Althusser contends would only happen if a competing ideology was at

⁷⁵ *Good Habits and Good Manners*, 44.

work. Althusser writes, “every ‘subject’ endowed with a ‘consciousness’ and believing in the ‘ideas’ that his ‘consciousness’ inspires in him and freely accepts, must ‘act according to his ideas’...If he does not do so, ‘that is wicked.’”⁷⁶ This means that as the boys and girls reading these magazines subscribed “freely” to their ideology, they then made choices that operated within that ideology—otherwise, they would be going against their very nature in an act that is “wicked.” Therefore, youth could form their own habits, and choose their own books, yet the RTS subliminally made their choices for them by distinguishing for them the choices they ought to make. In the end, the didactic tone the RTS tried so hard to avoid in its magazines gave way to an illusory empowerment of the youth reader. The fantasy of self-culture and reading autonomy established authority over young readers, assuring youth that their choices were their own and that the editors, as their mentors in self-culture, knew best.

Reclaiming the Periodical: Establishing Editorial Authority

The Religious Tract Society wanted boys and girls to form their own reading autonomy and self-culture, yet still wanted to shape these individual processes. This authority over the reading experience was a consciously constructed one, with editors attempting to exert just enough control over the reading experience to lead youth to the “right” path, but still allow them the idea of freedom—using rhetoric to draw readers into constructed ideology, not unlike Gramsci’s model. In order to enforce their ideology, the *BOP* and the *GOP* operated at odds with their genre. Because these texts were periodicals and not handbooks, readers affected weekly content by corresponding and participating

⁷⁶ Louis Althusser, “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes toward an Investigation)” in *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, trans. B. Brewster (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1971), 167-68.

with the magazines in addition to posing other potential disruptions to editorial authority.⁷⁷ The readers' resistance could take several forms, such as redirecting discourse on topics youth wanted aired in the correspondence section,⁷⁸ or reading articles selectively and thus avoiding the magazine's attempt at a cohesive message.

Depending on the model of ideology one applies, reader resistance could appear more or less futile. Althusser's version of ideology would suggest that because the readers (in addition to the editors) do not realize ideology is at work, they do not consciously attempt to resist it. To act in a way that is not in accordance with the ideology they operate under would be an alien, "wicked" behavior.⁷⁹ With Althusser, believing and acting upon ideology is the default position because the construction and enforcement of ideology is invisible. However, Gramsci's model of ideology more accurately depicts issues at work in the periodical genre. In his perspective, young readers would *consent* to the ideology at work by deferring to those in power—the adult. Because of the need for consent, Gramsci's model suggests there is a choice to be made in subscribing to ideology, though it is often a subconscious one. The presence of choice opens the possibility of resistance, forcing creators of ideology like the RTS to make their content attractive to the consumer.

In "Open and Closed: the Periodical as a Publishing Genre," Margaret Beetham argues that the periodical "characteristically resists closure and...consequently we should

⁷⁷ In contrast, young people might have been reading primers or instructional handbooks written with a singular author's voice.

⁷⁸ Such as girls' interest in improving their appearance, which the "Correspondence" section of the *GOP* called "frivolous." "To Our Correspondents," *The Girl's Own Paper* 1, August 7, 1880, in *Great-Grandmama's Weekly: A Celebration of The Girl's Own Paper 1880-1901*, by Wendy Forrester. (Guildford and London: Lutterworth Press, 1980), 153.

⁷⁹ Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses," 168.

understand it as allowing its readers the possibility of alternative or even subversive readings.”⁸⁰ In examining texts for children, scholars have considered magazines especially conducive to autonomous reading for youths. Holt argues of the *BOP* and various publications at Eton College, “The periodical format provides an ideal space for adolescents to examine and deconstruct ideas of identity, textuality, and authority. It is generically ephemeral, liminal and unstable in identity, subverting orthodoxies associated with the concept of ‘text.’ ”⁸¹ Interaction with the *BOP* and *GOP* through correspondence and contests gave boys and girls a sense of agency in their reading experience.

Yet the RTS, following a wave of concern for youth welfare and development, resisted the subversive potential of the genre as the society attempted to provide wholesome reading. As mentioned above, the *BOP* and *GOP* avoided the ephemeral and open nature of periodicals to some extent by introducing their magazines as permanent texts bound into books. More importantly, Peters and Hutchison established a strong editorial presence that, while more approachable than decades earlier, still established strong authority over their readers. The *BOP* and the *GOP* embarked on a very clear mission to create an editorial identity that transcended the need to cater to readers. This editorial voice refocused discourse on topics the magazine viewed as enriching, established the magazine writers as authoritative influences in their readers’ lives, and composed an identity that took on a didactic role as mentor or schoolteacher.

⁸⁰ Margaret Beetham, “Open and Closed: The Periodical as a Publishing Genre,” *Victorian Periodicals Review* 22 No.3, 1989, 96–100. Beetham adds a reservation that this issue needs qualifying because it ignores the structure that time of publication (ie Sunday mornings) builds, yet still contends this view is potentially useful.

⁸¹ Holt, “The Textual Formations of Adolescence in Turn-of-the-Century Youth Periodicals,” 65.

The editorial voice gained authority from the reader's assumed naiveté and vulnerability to outside influences. The *BOP* and *GOP* provided counsel and information to which readers would not otherwise have access. Drotner writes, "Few late-Victorian and Edwardian mothers seem to have acted as counselors or confidantes, helping to solve their daughters' key conflicts. Only a minority of women were able to pass on advice culled from personal experience on how to tackle problems at school, how to choose the right kind of career, or how indeed to reconcile the contrary demands of work and marriage."⁸² Girls reading the *GOP* benefited from the worldly knowledge of the periodical's contributors. Drotner describes readers as naive participants, trusting their magazines to guide them. With girls hungry for advice, the *GOP* sold well and was privileged with readers that subscribed to its ideology.

The paternalistic framework of the 1880s, in which the desire to build a strong and moral population manifested in a community attempt to guide youth, assumes youth were malleable. Drotner treats them as so, assuming readers had little exposure to knowledge with which to temper the hold the editor had over them. She continues, "the alleged applicability of the various topics consoled insecure readers who knew little about the world lying beyond the confines of home and possibly school."⁸³ Cox agrees that these periodicals served uninformed readers, searching for answers and consolation. He notes that many readers were "in urgent need of adult advice. Diffident about speaking freely to parents and older relatives, hesitant about approaching schoolmasters,

⁸² Drotner, *English Children and Their Magazines*, 136. The role of mothers as informers could be categorized as a contemporary view. Drotner's point is that the girls did not receive important information at home, and so the *GOP* filled this vacuum.

⁸³ *Ibid.*

clergymen and doctors, they turned to the *BOP* with touching confidence.”⁸⁴ The *BOP* filled a role that boys needed—one outside their personal sphere of adults, but one that maintained the authority of their parents. Both of these authors assume the naiveté and ignorance of young readers, supposing they had little access to the knowledge within the periodicals’ pages. It is unclear whether readers truly relied on—or subscribed to—these magazines so universally, but from the inquiries in the Correspondence sections, we can see that a vast number of readers did trust the editors with their problems.

Editors and writers needed to create a semblance of trust with the reader in order to develop their role as credible sources of information and counsel. One important step in establishing the reader’s trust of a magazine was the construction of the individual

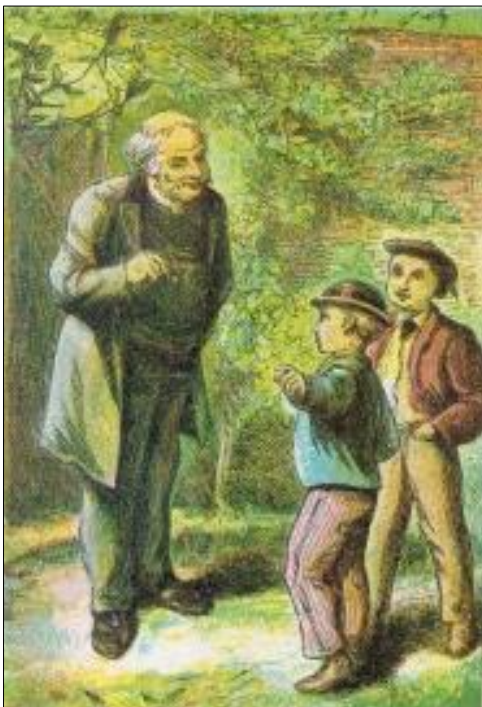


Figure 6. Illustration from *Good Habits and Good Manners* (London: Frederick Warne and Co., 1869), Title Page. University of Pennsylvania Libraries.

writer’s ethos. Precedence expected boys and girls to respect their elders knowledgeable; in this case, editors and writers believed seniority in age brought with it experience young readers ought to respect. Many stories in the *BOP* feature older men who recount stories of their younger days.

Other youth books and periodicals followed this trend. The title page of the instructional book *Good Habits and Good Manners*, for instance, includes an illustration that features an older, balding man leaning over two small boys, seemingly imparting friendly advice. The man

⁸⁴ Cox, *Take a Cold Tub, Sir!*, 69-70.

appears respectable, wearing a waistcoat, and amiable, with a smile.⁸⁵ His age symbolizes years of experience in forming his own good habits and manners, and shows him thus qualified to share his knowledge with young boys. The introduction of the book focuses on establishing the trust of the reader by praising the book's depth of knowledge in the areas featured, stating that "The youthful reader may, therefore, turn to these pages without apprehension."⁸⁶ The *BOP* and *GOP* likewise worked hard to ensure that readers did not question the writer's ethos, and that they take the knowledge imparted for granted.

However, ethos, or the establishment of the editor as a credible source of information, was not the main issue in establishing trust. Instead, I argue that the greatest hurdle for the *GOP* and *BOP* in holding the respect of their readers was constructing an authoritative voice with whom readers could identify. Drotner points out the delicate balance between the RTS' desire to shape youth and their education, and the need to hold readers' interest. She writes, "many readers would object to any sign of overt authority in their leisure reading. Covert paternalism, though, still balanced youthful intimacy in the advice given to correspondents."⁸⁷ The *BOP* and *GOP* concealed paternalistic authority over the reader by encouraging youth to trust the magazines as confidantes. Cox reports in his perusal of past issues of the *BOP*, "Reading between the lines of Answers to Correspondents, it seems as if their sad, ingenuous, hopeful letters spoke of personal problems at school or home, worries about health, difficulties faced in their everyday

⁸⁵ *Good Habits and Good Manners*, title page.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, iv.

⁸⁷ Drotner, *English Children and Their Magazines*, 127.

working lives.”⁸⁸ The *BOP* sought to be a boys’ friend, if one positioned above him in a hierarchy.

Establishing this “friendship” with the reader (a relationship more akin to one might have with a favorite uncle rather than a school friend) meant writers needed to exude a certain amount of familiarity with their readers. Magazines managed this well with repeating contributors, using the device of repeated exposure to establish relationships with readers. Bylines introduced authors not only by name, but also by the other stories they had written. For instance, the story “The Nephew and the Uncle” introduces the writer Ascott R. Hope as the “Author of ‘The Amateur Dominic,’ ‘Adventures of a Boston Boy,’ etc.”⁸⁹ This establishes the writer’s ethos as one who has written successful stories, but also allows readers to easily follow their favorite writers and therefore become more familiar with their work.

Writers themselves created familiarity with a similar device, conversing directly in their story with past readers to imply that through the shared experience of the story, there is at least an acquaintance formed, if not a full friendship. Hope writes in “The Nephew and the Uncle” that when faced with unruliness as a schoolmaster, “Readers who recall my mishaps as an Amateur Dominic may well ask how I managed to keep my head above these troubled waters.”⁹⁰ The practice of recalling “mishaps” returns the reader to reminiscing about the pleasure derived from humor in Hope’s previous story. The word “mishaps” is also mildly self-deprecating, making Hope more personable. Finally, Hope assumes that past readers, due to their past reading experience, have formed a strong

⁸⁸ Cox, *Take a Cold Tub, Sir!*, 70.

⁸⁹ Ascott R. Hope, “The Nephew and the Uncle,” *The Boy’s Own Paper* 3, no. 99, December 4, 1880, 145.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 147.

enough bond with him that they are concerned for his welfare and ability, “keeping [his] head above troubled waters.” In this way Hope establishes familiarity through a process as simple as repeated exposure.

With serial writers many years their readers’ senior, editors were concerned that boys would not be enthusiastic about reading the reflections of older men. The self-deprecating humor that Hope displays is a common remedy to this issue, because it allows readers to laugh at the writer’s expense—yet this self-deprecation is balanced with a strongly-established ethos so that readers would have no cause not to take writers seriously. In his serial “My Doggie and I,” an autobiographical narrative about rescuing a dog in the beginning days of his practice as a doctor, R. M. Ballantyne constructs an identifiable and likeable persona from the very opening paragraphs. Ballantyne writes that his sister’s praise of her baby makes no sense because the child “differs in no particular from ordinary babies...whereas my doggie is unique, a perfectly beautiful and singular specimen of—of—well, I won’t say what, because my friends usually laugh at me when I say it, and I don’t like to be laughed at.”⁹¹ Ballantyne opens with humor by poking fun at his sister and her baby, then focuses on portraying himself as a personable figure with an anecdotal quip about his friends. Ballantyne invites readers to share humor at his expense by pointing out the ridiculousness of his admiration for his “doggie” in his statement that his friends laugh at him for it. Lastly, Ballantyne offers himself as a friend by confiding in the reader that he does not like being laughed at, a feeling that young readers presumably share.

⁹¹ Ballantyne, “My Doggie and I,” *The Boy’s Own Paper*, 148.

The first person form allows writers to comment seamlessly within the narrative to establish this familiarity. Metadiscourse reminds the reader of the authored nature of the text, establishing the writer as a storyteller as well as a friend. Interrupting the end of the first chapter of “The Nephew and the Uncle,” Hope uses metadiscourse by referring to the story he writes as a “narrative.” Hope writes, “People tell me I am a very garrulous story-teller; and as usual I have this time been so long about introducing my characters and describing the situation that I must take breath to begin a new chapter before fairly plunging into the full current of my narrative, which, I can assure the gentle reader meanwhile, will be a most moving and eventful one.”⁹² Hope promises readers that the serial will pick up in excitement, encouraging further readership. The phrase “take breath” attaches a storytelling feature to the serial more similar to the oral tradition than the written one, implying that Hope is speaking directly to the reader rather than writing on a page, a point that is also solidified by his self-description as “garrulous.” Hope calls attention to his own writing (or speaking) style with more self-deprecating humor. He therefore establishes familiarity by conjuring an image of him telling the story as one’s elder friend or relative might, though he brings readers out of the narrative to do so with a metafictional technique.

Fictional stories lent themselves to establishing authorial familiarity because writers could construct a personable voice as first person narrators.⁹³ However, the *BOP* and *GOP* published many instructional nonfiction articles weekly as well, including writing on subjects like science or health. Just like the fictional serials, these articles had

⁹² Hope, “The Nephew and the Uncle,” *The Boy’s Own Paper*, 147

⁹³ Stories that were not written in first person often had a charismatic, close third person narrator that interceded within the text, creating the ambiance of a first person perspective nevertheless.

to be entertaining enough to attract the young reader. Diana Dixon claims that between 1824 and 1914, publishers catered to youth's desire for amusement in reading as a reflection of the public's changing attitudes toward children. The nineteenth century was a pivotal reassessment of the concept of childhood, with the "recognition that a child was an entity in his own right whose favour had to be courted."⁹⁴ This was part of a larger movement in juvenile publishing in which publishers of didactic content for children realized that in order to compete with penny dreadfuls and other more exciting content, they would need to likewise produce engaging material in order to compete.

Publishers began to alter primers by adding more engaging fictional short stories, watering down religious material to more secular moral messages, and adding eye-catching illustrations. One handbook advising girls about health and nutrition, for instance, was written as a narrative about May Meredith, a young girl who happens to be very curious about her health. May spends the book conveniently encountering circumstances that prompt conversations about science. The publishers Blackie & Son include a disclaimer in the preface explaining their decision to write the handbook in a form similar to a novel, stating that "While the narrative has been preserved, as tending to sustain the interest of the young readers over what would perhaps be in other forms a somewhat unattractive subject, it is hoped that the scientific accuracy has not in any way been sacrificed."⁹⁵ Publishers realized that form and genre greatly affected its reception among young readers, but more importantly, this shift signified the changing public attitude that now recognized youth as consumers to be courted.

⁹⁴ Diana Dixon, "From Instruction to Amusement: Attitudes of Authority in Children's Periodicals Before 1914," *Victorian Periodicals Review* 19 no. 2, 1986: 63–67. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20082203>.

⁹⁵ *Young Housekeepers: Blackie's Domestic Economy Readers No. V*. (London: Blackie & Son, Limited, 1895), Preface.

Reporting similar findings in scientific articles in the *BOP*, Richard Noakes reports that contributors “seem to have shared a fundamental belief that they were pedagogues, moral guides, and entertainers. They tried to avoid what Gordon Stables called the ‘break-jaw Latin’ words and other details that would remind readers of the class-book and schoolroom, and developed other textual strategies for showing that learning about and practicing science would improve their knowledge, character and leisure time.”⁹⁶ Contributors used strategies like relating boys’ favorite leisure activities to science. One 1881 article by J. Harrington Keene accomplishes this by examining fly-fishing. He opens with the sentence, “It is not my intention to trouble my readers with a scientific treatise on the habits, classification, etc., etc., of the various flies imitated with success as to ultimate results by the fly-fisher.”⁹⁷ By including a disclaimer about his intention to educate (and thus being cautious about seeming pedantic or boring his readers), Keene then has license to do just that—he educates about the biological merits of various flies, relating them to fly-fishing. Keene exudes accessibility from the opening of his article, establishing his authority while simultaneously dispelling resistance from readers who might otherwise be repelled by didactic content.

Nowhere did the editors work harder to establish authority than in the “Answers to Correspondents” (or “Correspondence”) section. The editorial voice of the *GOP* and the *BOP* answering the hundreds of letters posted each week ranged from a friendly sense of fellowship, speaking to “our girls” or “*Boy’s Own* boys,” to an admonishing one, chastising the writer for poor spelling or frivolous content. Peters and Hutchison presumably facilitated the answers to these letters in keeping with the tone of the

⁹⁶ Noakes, “*The Boy’s Own Paper* and Late-Victorian Juvenile Magazines,” 160.

⁹⁷ J. Harrington Keene, “Fishing-Tackle and How to Make It,” *The Boy’s Own Paper* 3, July 2, 1881, 638.

magazine, though contributors like Dr. William Gordon Stables provided answers to questions requiring specialization such as medical information or advice about raising pets.⁹⁸ No matter the topic, the editor had an answer that was resolute and authoritative. The correspondence section worked to bring an adult authority into the text. In doing so the magazines created a place for young readers to find advice from an adult source outside of their parents, ministers, and schoolteachers.

One evident way the editor asserted his authority is by setting the agenda in the correspondence section. By selecting which letters would be answered in the limited space available, the editors determined the content of the paper. This seems common sense—those producing the magazine would choose what is published—however, the *GOP* and *BOP* constantly assert that their mission is to cater to the needs of their readers. In the first issue of Volume 14, the *BOP* included a poem looking forward to another year of publication and reasserting its goal. The editor refers to the publishing of the paper as a “grave responsibility,” and exclaims at “How many wants our magazine / Is called on to supply; / What various tastes, ‘tis quickly seen, / We needs must satisfy.”⁹⁹ The mention of “wants” implies that the boys reading the magazine influence the paper’s content by bringing their own interests to their readership. Indeed, many articles refer to their inclusion due to the popular demand for them.

However, editors strictly limited the content they featured. An editorial addressed “To Our Correspondents” in the *GOP* explained the type of letters that would not be published. The editor comments that some letters that are sent are “frivolous, and prove the writers to possess an undue anxiety as to their personal appearance, as, for instance,

⁹⁸ Cox, *Take a Cold Tub, Sir!*, 61.

⁹⁹ “Prologue,” *The Boy’s Own Paper* 14, October 3, 1891, 16.

questions on the complexion, figure, colour of the hair, &c.,” and goes on to explain that they will “remain unanswered, as being contrary to the aims and objects of the paper.”¹⁰⁰ Acceptable letters were ones that requested information “that would be of real service, relating to education, domestic economy, work, recreation, and other subjects,” or ones from “any anxious and troubled soul” who asked for “counsel and advice.”¹⁰¹ Girls were concerned about their appearance, according to the editorial, yet information on that topic would not be of “real service” according to the *GOP*. Though the issue of personal appearance is gendered, the editor likewise wrote off boys’ letters in a *BOP* editorial as “frivolous,” though more often male correspondents were chastised for asking redundant questions answered in previous issues.¹⁰² The letters editors answered instead focused on more acceptable topics, in the *GOP* often sorted under umbrella terms such as “Educational,” “Art,” and “Housekeeping,” and in the *BOP* on subjects like keeping animals and staying in good health.¹⁰³ Readers thus had their requests refocused onto topics the editors deemed more worthwhile. The editors’ control of the content centered the discourse on their terms.

Another way these periodicals established themselves as centers of authority is by controlling whose voice was heard. Rarely did the readers’ letters make it into the magazines; the editor printed only his response. Thus, one of the most interactive spaces in the periodical, the “Answers to Correspondents,” became unbalanced in opinion and

¹⁰⁰ “To Our Correspondents,” *The Girl’s Own Paper* 1, August 7, 1880, 763, in *Great-Grandmama’s Weekly: A Celebration of The Girl’s Own Paper 1880-1901*, by Wendy Forrester. (Guildford and London: Lutterworth Press, 1980), 153.

¹⁰¹ “To Our Correspondents,” 153.

¹⁰² “Notice to Correspondents,” *The Boy’s Own Paper* 14, October 3, 1891, 16.

¹⁰³ Wendy Forrester, *Great Grandmama’s Weekly, A Celebration of The Girl’s Own Paper 1880-1901* (Guildford and London: Lutterworth Press, 1980), 150.

expression in favor of the editor. Readers who wrote in become merely initials or pseudonyms like “Nervous,” and “Constant Reader,” not writers or initiators of dialogue.¹⁰⁴ Holt’s statement of the part boys played in periodical discourse becomes true in this instance: “The adolescent’s role is as listener, not actor or speaker.”¹⁰⁵ On one rare occasion in the *BOP*, the lone letter quoted from in the correspondence section is from “Mr. Faed, the well-known member of the Royal Academy.”¹⁰⁶ Mr. Faed’s letter compliments the *BOP*, saying “It is the most useful and interesting of all the publications we have for the rising generation and certainly a marvel of cheapness.”¹⁰⁷ Hence the only voice apart from the editor’s that receives space in the magazine is that of an esteemed adult.

Finally, the images establishing the identity of the paper itself establish adult authority over the reader, positioning the paper as a guiding influence in the reader’s life. Cartoons accompanying the “Answers to Correspondents” section in both the *BOP* and *GOP* suggest ways that the reader could think of the editor’s responses to letters. In the *GOP*, one illustration pictures a woman with a rod, presumably a schoolteacher or a governess, pointing to a sign listing the rules for letter submission. Listed in Roman numerals, these rules set guidelines such as “III. The Editor reserves the right of declining to reply to any of the questions.” The woman has her eyes downcast as she demurely points out the rules, leading readers in a quiet lesson. The images of education follow the

¹⁰⁴ “Correspondence,” *The Boy’s Own Paper* 14, October 3, 1891, 16.

¹⁰⁵ Holt, “The Textual Formations of Adolescence in Turn-of-the-Century Youth Periodicals,” 69.

¹⁰⁶ “Words of Cheer,” *The Boy’s Own Paper* 13, October 2, 1890, 15.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

magazine's stated goal of being educational, and suggest that the paper sees itself as another figure similar to a schoolteacher.

In a more exciting cartoon above a correspondence section of the BOP, a boy dashes away on a horse after leaving a mail sack titled "Answers" for the cheering readers behind him. The answers seem to come from a far-off place, Pony-Express-style, suggesting that the editor is separated from the reader—to the point that the letters are delivered by a third party in the form of a boy. The readers in the illustration appear anxious for their answers, building the editor into an idolized fount of knowledge. Readers of the magazine thus view the answers to their questions as benevolent gifts from the magazine's creators. Readers are encouraged to send letters and interact with the text, yet their agency is problematized by the distant authority of editorial forces.

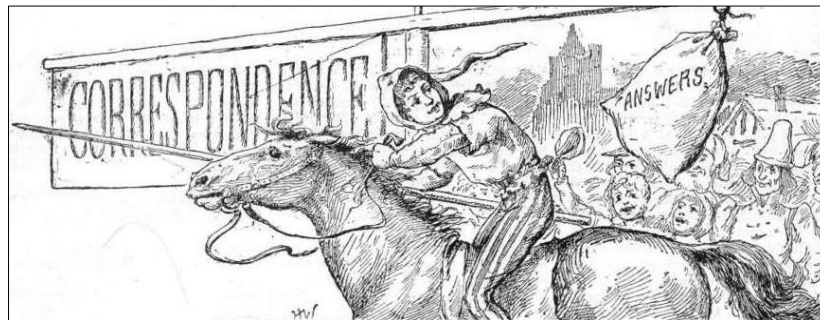


Figure 7. "Correspondence" from *The Boy's Own Paper*, October 3, 1891.

Enthusiastic participation by readers matched the friendly editorial and authorial personas in the *GOP* and *BOP*. Yet this idyllic discourse between adult writer and youth reader is complicated by absolute editorial authority. Despite the "open" nature of the periodical genre, Peters and Hutchison reasserted adult control over the text by playing upon new ideas about young people and their reading choices. Against the backdrop of a public that recognized that youth needed entertainment rather than instruction, the RTS sought to provide both. Young readers, drawn in by a convivial editorial voice, believing

in their own autonomy, responded to didactic material because the magazines packaged it as amusement.

I have argued that the *GOP* and the *BOP* attempted to control youth reading by offering an alternative to the penny-dreadfuls, an alternative that constantly shaped youths' reading patterns and self-development through its rhetorical strategies. These periodicals provided a place outside of school and home where "adolescent literacy could be contained and controlled," as editors asserted their authority, developed a relationship as mentor to the reader, established a community, and encouraged cyclical reading patterns.¹⁰⁸ A view of the larger picture reveals a British public that was anxious about raising the next generation, and so lauded these periodicals for their efforts to do so. But were they successful? The high circulation numbers (several scholars deem the *BOP* and *GOP* the most popular magazines for adolescents in the late 1880s) would suggest that the magazines succeeded in at least finding their way into the hands of readers.¹⁰⁹ The high level of participation, particularly in the Correspondence sections, likewise suggests that these readers were engaged by the magazines' content. However, the unique position of the *BOP* and *GOP* as weekly didactic periodicals with a diverse readership made the seemingly tight control over their readers weaker than expected.

To some extent the strong control the *BOP* and *GOP* exercised over their readers had to overcome its genre. Holt's argument that magazines contain texts that are "ephemeral" and "liminal" due to the nature of weekly production accurately describes the *BOP* and *GOP* because these periodicals were disposed of more quickly than handbooks previous children would have read—causing editorial control to be likewise

¹⁰⁸ Holt, "The Textual Formations of Adolescence in Turn-of-the-Century Youth Periodicals," 65.

¹⁰⁹ Drotner, *English Children and Their Magazines*, 115.

ever-shifting. The RTS' publishing of annual versions of the periodical and transforming it from the ephemeral periodical into a book does make a case against this hypothesis. Yet the serial nature of the text at least provided for the changing editorial voice—though they maintained the same core values, editors published new content and styles every week, allowing for a shifting text that had a likewise shifting relationship with their readers.

The form of a periodical inherently subverts control over the reader. Moruzi argues that the magazine as a genre allows readers to escape didacticism. She writes, “The periodical opens up places for resistance in the spaces between the articles, within the correspondence sections (although a degree of editorial control remains through the selection of correspondence), and in the autonomy a reader can exercise in selecting whether to read an article and in what order she chooses to read those articles.”¹¹⁰ Readers could read periodicals like the *BOP* and *GOP* at their discretion, allowing them more control than a novel or handbook. Finally, as Drotner points out, the very nature of a periodical warrants the need for multiple authors. Though the editor operated as a guiding force that maintained the same core values celebrated by the RTS, cycling authorship in serial stories, advice columns and more meant that readers faced many different voices—including ones that at times disagreed, if subtly. Drotner writes about the *GOP* that “clear contradictions appeared to the conscientious reader going through the advice given in a single issue or volume.”¹¹¹ This fractured identity meant that readers did not look to one unified voice for guidance, like a parent, pastor, or teacher, but read a collection of voices spearheaded by the editor.

¹¹⁰ Moruzi, *Constructing Girlhood*, 15.

¹¹¹ Drotner, *English Children and Their Magazines*, 152.

The fantasy of self-culture and the construction of adult authority within the text were crucial controlling mechanisms. The potential for reader resistance in periodicals (widely pointed out by Moruzi, Drotner, Holt and Dixon) forced the *BOP* and *GOP* to cleverly use rhetoric to avoid such resistance. Returning to Gramsci's idea of cultural hegemony, in this instance the RTS takes on the same role as the bourgeois hegemons. As they publish informative stories for young readers, they dictate ideology by suggesting that their cultural and moral values are the norm of society. Peters and Hutchison reclaimed the weekly youth paper from penny dreadful publishers, and rewrote the ideology that subliminally governed young minds: suggesting that girls be less frivolous and less prone to romance, that boys channel any violent tendencies for the good of the Empire and study their Bibles, and that young people respect the adults in their lives, support their country, and form themselves into model citizens.

The imperialist and social reforming ideals of late nineteenth century Britain pervaded the voice and rhetorical strategies of these periodicals. They became a space to raise youth at a time when the idea of what a child was changed drastically, and at a time when raising these children was never more crucial in the eyes of the state. The *BOP* and *GOP* competed against the most popular penny dreadfuls, and often won in circulation battles. Peters' and Hutchison's strong editorial control, made more palatable by using didactic material as entertainment, set a precedent for the authoritative adult presence common in youth literature. The best way to see the hopes and fears for the next generation is in how children are raised, and as for British children in the 1880s, they were raised by the *BOP* and the *GOP*.

CHAPTER THREE

EXTRACTING THE ADULT: LEMONY SNICKET AND HYBRID NARRATION

Because of its attention to contemporary youth reading autonomy in conjunction with its parody of Victorian writings, *A Series of Unfortunate Events* offers a glimpse into the role of the adult in youth literature, both in the nineteenth century and today. Daniel Handler exaggerates the characteristics of penny dreadfuls and didactic texts through parody, and it is this hyperbolism that clearly demonstrates how these types of literature operate. This chapter will examine the metafictional narration style in *A Series of Unfortunate Events* and investigate how the adult presence functions in a series that hybridizes didactic and the sensational narration. As Handler shows the adult authority at work, I find similarities between the two styles. While the didactic and sensational narrators claim different motives—one to teach, one to entertain—Handler’s hybrid narrator Lemony Snicket reveals a common attempt toward control.

Youth do not typically write youth literature. While an elementary idea, I stress it here because it is the basis of the question of the adult presence in youth literature. Adults construct texts for youth, and hence it follows that the resulting texts embody not necessarily what the child might need from a text, but what an adult *thinks* the child might need, or, as some scholars suggest, what the *adult* needs. Reynolds claims children’s literature has always had tension between “what children want to read and what adults think they ought to read.”¹ Nodelman suggests, “the issue is still centrally about what adults desire for children—want them to know and not know, want them to

¹ Kimberley Reynolds, *Children’s Literature*. 2nd ed (Tavistock, Great Britain: Writers and Their Work, 2012), accessed January 19, 2016, ProQuest ebrary, 69.

be. What adults believe is good for children is essentially what is good for adults.”² This statement holds true for didactic texts intended to shape the ideology of young readers, but does it for penny dreadfuls?

Following John Stephen’s thesis that “all art, including literature for children, is saturated with the ideology and world-view of those who produce it,” penny dreadfuls must contain the ideology that shapes the youth subconscious.³ In Chapter One, I argue that penny dreadfuls, while considered to be subverting the social order, actually reinforced the ideology that in turn reinforced a hierarchal society and a culture ruled by middle-class values. This chapter will demonstrate that similar to didactic narration, sensational narration establishes adult authority. Like didactic texts, sensational narration situates the reader in a hierarchy in which the adult constructs textual reality, and the youth accepts the reality presented.

The Postmodern and the Emergent Paradigm

In order to identify how adult authority works, it is useful to examine its foil. Handler suggests that the antithesis of strong adult narratorial control is the empowerment of the young reader. However, Handler is not alone in this argument; scholars see a recent trend in youth literature toward establishing youth reading autonomy. In *Humor in Contemporary Junior Literature*, Julie Cross speaks of the “emergent paradigm” in children’s fiction, which is a developing sociological concept that encompasses “ideas about children’s rights to self-determination, participation, and

² Perry Nodelman, *The Hidden Adult: Defining Children’s Literature* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008), 158.

³ John Stephens, in Lawrence R. Sipe, “Children’s Response to Literature: Author, Text, Reader, Context,” in *Theory Into Practice* 38, no.3: 120, *Sociological Collection, EBSCOhost* (accessed February 13, 2016), 7.

autonomy, and implicit in this is a faith in children's abilities and competencies."⁴ A *Series of Unfortunate Events* moves toward the emergent paradigm in order to subvert common constructions of authority in youth literature that have existed for centuries. By encouraging children to think critically about the credibility of the traditionally didactic narrator, the theatricality of penny dreadful melodrama, the restriction of information by adult narrators, and the constructed nature of text (as exposed by metafictional elements), Handler recognizes youth reading autonomy as a point of resistance against adult textual authority.

The postmodern is a crucial mechanism in developing youth reading autonomy because it disturbs the faith young readers put in texts. In contrast to children, adults are better able to deal with the unsettling nature of the postmodern because they have stronger personal constructions of reality. Karen Coats explains, "The adult tends to approach the text with an eye toward whether it matches his version of reality (in which case it is true or insightful) or doesn't (in which case it is false or wrongheaded)"—yet the child is still developing her sense of reality, and looks to the text as a truth.⁵ Therefore, "the child is much more vulnerable to the vicissitudes of language than is the adult."⁶ By disrupting faith in the truth of text, Handler's use of the postmodern has a profound effect on the youth reading experience, shattering the illusion of texts as "safe" or "true."

Handler harnesses this use of the postmodern to move toward the emergent paradigm, encouraging youth reading autonomy. Cross writes, "This postmodern

⁴ Julie Cross, *Humor in Contemporary Junior Literature* (New York: Routledge, 2011), 16.

⁵ Karen Coats, *Looking Glasses and Neverlands : Lacan, Desire, and Subjectivity in Children's Literature* (Iowa City, Iowa: University of Iowa Press, 2007.), accessed January 19, 2016, ProQuest ebrary, 163.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 162.

depiction of how truth and reality are constructed may encourage young readers to read interpretively and reflect more critically...this mix of fiction and ‘reality,’ then, may lessen authorial power and potentially ‘empower’ child readers, as they are forced to act as interpreters of the action, using their own discrimination.”⁷ Bullen extrapolates Cross’ statement to suggest that in addition to establishing distrust of the adult narrator, Handler invites readers to question adult institutions of authority such as the reliability of the press and the administration of justice by law enforcement—and most importantly, the adult characters who put the Baudelaires in danger.⁸ Bullen contends that in “calling into question adult agency and power, the series may in fact position the child reader to assume a more agential and empowered attitude to a difficult world.”⁹ This series therefore demonstrates how the postmodern might challenge youth trust in text, but also how this process could lead youth to question the ideology that adult texts enforce. The potentially subversive reading experience the middle class worried about in the nineteenth century, then, has a strong presence in the late twentieth.

Handler creates this subversive quality from the postmodern using metafiction, particularly through his pseudo-autobiographical narrator. Handler’s narrator “Lemony Snicket” claims to be chronicling the misfortunes of the Baudelaire orphans even as he is on the run from unknown forces. Snicket periodically interrupts the narrative to define words, remind readers of previous plot points, tell the reader of his latest whereabouts, or tangentially philosophize about the situation the Baudelaires face. This narrator is both

⁷ Cross, *Humor in Contemporary Children’s Literature*, 182.

⁸ Elizabeth Bullen, “Power Of Darkness: Narrative And Biographical Reflexivity In *A Series Of Unfortunate Events*,” in *International Research In Children’s Literature* 1.2 (2008), MLA International Bibliography, accessed February 16, 2016, 8. Interestingly, the press and the law are two institutions Althusser considers producers of ideology.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 12.

pedantic and accessible, humorous and dreary—combining elements of several narration styles, including the didactic, sensational, Gothic, and satirical. In this way Handler creates a hybrid narrator that problematically attempts to teach the reader as well as to sensationalize an already melodramatic tale. Even more problematically for the reader, Handler’s narrator adopts a sarcastic tone, is mildly rebellious, and does his best to undermine traditional narration by obtrusively calling attention to the (often arbitrary) constructed nature of texts.

Drawing from qualities I observe to be at work in the *GOP* and *BOP*, I define the didactic narrator in terms of its instructional intent (in knowledge, morals or behavior), its patronizing tone, its claim (often based on the premise of superior age and experience) to more knowledgeable than its reader, its division of the world into “right” and “wrong” choices, and its desire to make the above qualities more palatable to the reader by establishing some level of familiarity. The didactic narrator demonstrates most clearly the placement of the adult over the young reader in a hierarchy.

Children’s literature scholar Sara Austin argues that didactic narration limits youth reading autonomy because of its stringent adult authority. She explains, “Didactic literature rewards the good and punishes the bad within the text, allowing adults to explain the correct moral choice and leaving the reader no agency. While the child in each story is allowed to make moral decisions, didacticism reinforces the absence of choice for the reader.”¹⁰ The illusion of choice exists in the fictional characters’ choices, but no such choice is available to the reader. The reader must frame their ideology and decision-making within the confines of the adult-controlled world.

¹⁰ Sara Austin, “Performative Metafiction: Lemony Snicket, Daniel Handler and *The End of A Series of Unfortunate Events*,” *The Looking Glass: New Perspectives on Children's Literature* 17, no. 1 (2013), 2.

I argue sensational narration often does the same work. The sensational narrator, as I observe from penny dreadfuls discussed in Chapter One, develops the melodrama in the narrative by consistently insisting on the gravity of each storyline: each adventure is the greatest of its age, and each story is more far-fetched than the last. While less intuitively hierarchical, the sensational narrator creates adult authority when it claims control over the story it has already proclaimed all-important. Through omniscient knowledge, access to convoluted storylines, and repeated archetypes, the sensational narrator generates authority over the text and therefore the reader. I will demonstrate how Handler's hybrid narrator uses elements of both didactic and sensational narrators, exposing their similar function to establish adult authority.

The Sensational Narrator and the Penny Dreadful

In reading penny dreadfuls, the reader often operates under the assumption that the narrator is omniscient. Though they do not work nearly as hard to establish their authority as a didactic narrator might, sensational narrators assume they already have the reader's trust, and support this assumption with references to the omniscient "we" that often represents the narrators. These narrators have access to every aspect of importance to the narrative and can therefore take an authoritative stance in controlling information to the reader and teasing the reader with foreshadowing. For example, in *Lady Kate: The Dashing Female Detective*, the narrators declare about a trial critical to the plot, "It will not interest our readers to have us record all the proceedings; it is sufficient to state that the charge of attempted murder was supplemented by a charge of actual murder, and the

prisoner was held on the latter charge to await the action of the grand jury.”¹¹ Here it is for the narrator(s) to determine what information “is sufficient,” and take the initiative to determine what content will or will not “interest [their] readers.” Of course, writers inherently determine the agenda in the text; they choose the content to focus on or ignore. The sensational narrator establishes authority by *calling attention* to this process, breaking from the flow of the narrative to point out their power with a reference to “our readers” or some other metafictional intrusion. As they signal their control of the information that is presented and not presented, the narrator claims ownership of the story.

Another way the sensational narrator establishes authority is the use of forthright foreshadowing. There is an almost fatalistic aspect to the penny dreadful narrative, in which the narrator knows how the story will end—particularly, the fate of each character—and is able to taunt the reader with this knowledge. After Lady Kate sees Arthur Everdell’s portrait and admits she could fall in love with the thief, the narrator interjects, “The beautiful female detective little dreamed how much fate there was in her muttered declaration. She little dreamed how in time to come she would be brought face to face with her words, through a fearful ordeal she would be called upon to pass.”¹² The narratorial intrusion into the story reminds the reader that the narrator already knows how Lady Kate’s tale will play out. By hinting about the “fearful ordeal” and the possible romance between Lady Kate and Everdell, the narrator generates excitement about future plot events and anxiety about when the narrative will reach those events. The

¹¹ *Lady Kate: The Dashing Female Detective*, The Aldine “Detective Tales” no. 54 (London: Aldine Publishing Company, 1890), 95.

¹² *Ibid.*, 8

foreshadowing entices the reader to read on, trusting the narrator will reveal the promised knowledge—eventually.

Handler challenges the power of narratorial foresight by ridiculing its melodrama and suggesting that the fatalistic aspect of narration comes with damaging implications. In *The Penultimate Peril* in particular, Handler ramps up the suspense but denies the reader the release of the resolution for a prolonged period. As Violet, Klaus and Sunny visit the Hotel Denouement in the penultimate volume of the series, they wait for the resolution the previous books have promised. The children expect a final confrontation between the V.F.D. (the mysterious organization to which the Baudelaires' parents belonged) and the villains that oppose them. Snicket slows the narrative to a crawl, waiting for the meeting of the two forces, and detailing the confusion and impatience of the Baudelaires. Finally the suspense is realized when the Baudelaires find themselves in a standoff with Count Olaf, who is armed with a harpoon gun. The harpoon gun drops to the floor, and Snicket recounts, “and in this instant the penultimate harpoon was fired...and struck someone a fatal blow.”¹³ The “fatal” harpoon generates anxiety, and the ambiguity of “someone” heightens this mood. Yet the victim is not revealed until the next page—instead, Snicket sidetracks the narrative with an account of Mr. Poe, the most mundane and irritating character of the series.

Mr. Poe as the orphans' guardian ad litem blunders through each plot, unfailingly placing the Baudelaires in the care of an inappropriate—or even dangerous—guardian. Snicket recounts how the banker disrupts this scene, wearing a “bewildered expression”

¹³ Lemony Snicket [Daniel Handler], Brett Helquist, illustrator, *The Penultimate Peril* (New York: HarperCollins, 2005), 233.

and “pajamas with drawings of money all over them.”¹⁴ Mr. Poe cuts a pathetic figure in Snicket’s description, a confused insertion into a scene where he does not belong.

However, that does not stop Snicket from delaying the action, redirecting the narrative to Mr. Poe, and asserting, “it was not his destiny to be slain by a harpoon, at least not on this particular evening.”¹⁵ The idea of the mundane Mr. Poe having any sort of a “destiny” provokes humor as Handler juxtaposes the pajama-wearing banker and the fatality of the harpoon gun. Handler parodies sensational narrators who foreshadow the “destiny” of characters by subverting the technique to create humor instead of melodrama. Ultimately, Handler uses the frustration Mr. Poe brings to the narrative to highlight the immense power of the narrator—Snicket can focus on the most insignificant character because he has the agency in revealing the story. Handler foreshadows an insignificant character’s fate to demonstrate the power readers invest in the narrator. Readers trust that the narrator will deliver on his unspoken promise to relieve the anxiety of suspense and reveal the events in the protagonists’ journey. By disrupting that trust, Handler shows that Snicket—and thus other narrators—are not to be trusted.

For all of his power to relate the events of the narrative, Snicket is a case study in Handler’s assertion that the narrator is ultimately vulnerable. Snicket knows each of the events in the Baudelaire’s story from his “research,” yet it is understood that this is a burden more than a privilege. Snicket interrupts his narration to relate his tears and agony upon learning about events in the Baudelaire story. Despite this distress, Snicket feels it is his “duty” to follow the story to the end. The fatalistic aspect of the penny dreadful narrative becomes a curse: Snicket alleges that he cannot change the course of events,

¹⁴ Snicket, *The Penultimate Peril*, 232.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 233.

interjecting, “But I can’t erase this day, any more than I can write a happy ending to this book, for the simple reason that the story does not go that way.”¹⁶ Snicket does not want to tell the reader the sad fate that meets Violet, Klaus and Sunny at every turn, yet just as the characters are bound to their destinies, so is he fated to do so. Handler exposes both how the sensational narrator’s fatalism robs the reader of agency, and how the narratorial authority constructed by that fatalism implicates the sensational narrator.

In addition to his parody of the sensational narrator, Handler exposes how penny dreadfuls construct adult authority through plot events and characterization. Perhaps the best-known characteristic of the penny dreadful is its convoluted storylines. Long-lost twins, *dei ex machina*, multiple storylines conveniently converging at once, these are the storytelling devices that allowed penny dreadful writers to keep readers reading and to continue serials even after their protagonists apparently die. Handler parodies this device by exaggerating plot events and character backstories, such as that of Friday, an islander the Baudelaires meet in *The End*. The young girl tells the Baudelaires, “My mother and father took an ocean cruise while she was pregnant, and ran into a terrible storm. My father was devoured by a manatee, and my mother was washed ashore when she was pregnant with me.”¹⁷ Handler disrupts the trust of the reader in the story by suggesting problematic events such as the absurdity of being “devoured” by a nonviolent manatee. While this story is nearly impossible, neither Snicket nor the Baudelaires question Friday’s origins. Handler points out that the young reader inherently trusts the narrator’s version of events, yet the narrative might operate in untruthful ways.

¹⁶ Lemony Snicket [Daniel Handler], Brett Helquist, illustrator, *The Vile Village* (New York: HarperCollins, 2001), 136.

¹⁷ Lemony Snicket [Daniel Handler], Brett Helquist, illustrator, *The End* (New York: HarperCollins, 2001), 62.

Handler's exposing of the far-fetched storylines ranges from the subtle to the blatant. In one of the most transparently parodic moments of the series, Klaus declares, "What we need...is [*sic*] deus ex machina." After defining the term for his siblings, Klaus goes on,

"We need to rescue two triplets from the clutches of a villain, and solve the sinister mystery surrounding us, but we're trapped in the filthiest cell of the uptown jail, and tomorrow afternoon we're supposed to be burned at the stake. It would be a wonderful time for something helpful to arrive unexpectedly." At that moment there was a knock on the door.¹⁸

The knock on the door, of course, is the deus ex machina, which is comprised of a loaf of bread and a pitcher of water that allows the Baudelaires to make their escape from jail.

Handler's facetious use of metafiction explicitly shows how the narrative can rescue itself after accidentally working itself into a corner. Handler proves the narrative as fallible, suggesting that readers rely on the omniscient truth of the narrator when they should be discerning.

Just as Handler's style disrupts faith in the narrative, it also disrupts faith in the ordered world through its parody of the black and white moral landscape defining the penny dreadful. In order to avoid the quagmire of moral grayness, penny dreadful writers often situate protagonists and antagonists on the very opposite sides of the spectrum. In *Lady Kate: The Dashing Female Detective*, the protagonist is introduced as "a smart, brave, enterprising, beautiful, virtuous young woman, born with great natural talent and wonderful energy of character."¹⁹ The narrator blatantly states her heroic qualities and settles her clearly on the winning side. In stark contrast, after an encounter with the antagonist, the narrator describes that "in [Lady Kate's] mind she felt satisfied that she

¹⁸ Snicket, *The Vile Village*, 177.

¹⁹ *Lady Kate: the Dashing Female Detective*, 13.

had come upon the greatest villain of the age, as well as the greatest monster.”²⁰ The hyperbole created by the repeated “greatest” shifts the narrative toward melodrama. The stakes for Lady Kate to solve the mystery feel artificially heightened because of the statement that the villain is the most villainous, most monstrous person of Lady Kate’s time—particularly because the reader can rest assured that the next in the series would *also* contain the “greatest villain” Lady Kate would ever face.



Figure 8. Illustration of Count Olaf in *The End*, egotistically renaming a ship after himself.. Brett Helquist, *The End* (New York: HarperCollins, 2001).

By featuring a problematic villain and problematic heroes, Handler disrupts the ordered world and plays on reader anxiety. Elizabeth Bullen aptly describes Count Olaf as a “sadistic, theatrical villain” in the tradition of the Gothic genre.²¹ Handler plays with this archetype by enacting the characteristics of the antagonist quite literally. Not only does he perform in a theater troupe and wear many costumes to disguise himself and his schemes, Olaf is also sadistic to the point of comedy. After kidnapping the judge Justice Strauss as a hostage, for

instance, Olaf “ripped the tape off her mouth very slowly, so it would sting as much as possible.” Snicket describes the “wicked smile” on the villain’s face as he does so.²² In another passage, when Olaf describes his dream car, he states that he wants “Something with a powerful engine, so [he] can drive faster than the legal limit, and an extra-thick

²⁰ *Lady Kate: the Dashing Female Detective*, 19.

²¹ Bullen, “Power Of Darkness: Narrative And Biographical Reflexivity In *A Series Of Unfortunate Events*,” 9.

²² Snicket, *The Penultimate Peril*, 304.

bumper, so [he] can ram into people without getting all scratched up!”²³ Here Handler construes Olaf’s evil as ridiculous. The hyperbolic evil Olaf embodies almost defies logic—he acts evil not because it will help him achieve an end, but just for the sake of being evil. Handler underlines this point with his use of mundane examples of evil that are relevant to the readers’ world, such as sadistically removing tape and speeding. Handler’s use of hyperbole demonstrates how archetypes govern the penny dreadful, separating for the reader the “good” characters from the “bad,” creating a moral world with limits the adult defines. By shining light on this structure, Handler’s text rejects the idea that readers ought to take the sensational narrator’s view for granted—and suggests that readers think critically instead.

The Didactic Narrator

Handler’s narrator adds didacticism to the sensational narrator, suggesting that this form of authority, which often takes on the tone of a teacher or other mentor, also signals an adult construction of power. Playing with the idea that reading didactic magazines would encourage good behavior and form good habits in youth, Snicket condones and even endorses naughtiness. Snicket interrupts his narration of the Baudelaire’s story to impart advice for youth readers, but these asides often suggest rule-breaking or going against common moral guidelines. Snicket argues that “sometimes it is useful and necessary to” argue, though it is “never pleasant.”²⁴ Handler disrupts the pedantic tone that traditionally constructs adult authority by presenting Snicket as a

²³ Snicket, *The End*, 10.

²⁴ Lemony Snicket [Daniel Handler], Brett Helquist, illustrator, *The Ersatz Elevator* (New York: HarperCollins, 2001), 68.

pragmatist. Snicket acknowledges that the world is too varied to ask readers to apply a universal moral code in their lives, and modifies his advice.

The narrator backs himself up with the anecdote, “Just the other day, for example, it was useful and necessary for me to have an unpleasant argument with a medical student because if he hadn’t let me borrow his speedboat I would now be chained inside a very small waterproof room.”²⁵ Again Handler models didactic content by employing anecdotal evidence to establish his ethos and therefore his credibility to impart advice, much as the *BOP* writer Ascott R. Hope does in “The Nephew and the Uncle.” However, Snicket’s account is absurd—it does not expect the reader to believe the account. Handler prepares the reader to expect that the argument is about a clinical topic when Snicket speaks of a “medical student,” but disrupts this too by spinning the anecdote to focus instead on another narrow escape from Snicket’s mysterious enemies. In exceptional circumstances, Snicket argues, you ought to break the rules, contradicting the didactic model of giving advice in absolutes, such as “it is never acceptable to argue.”

Handler develops the relationship between the didactic narrator and the young reader in a similar way to *BOP* writers and other Victorian didactic writers. Returning to Diana Dixon’s thesis that over the course of the nineteenth century, “The editor’s authority perceptibly changed so that he became a friendly familiar figure rather than the remote and stern authoritarian instructor,” I suggest that Handler parallels Victorian attempts to familiarize the narrator to the reader, but furthers the tactic to transcend familiarity and move toward identification.

²⁵ Snicket, *The Ersatz Elevator*, 68.

Snicket establishes familiarity by identifying with the reader in an almost conspiratorial manner. While he never speaks specifically of the reader's parents, Snicket appears to see the world in terms of a binary between himself and his readers, and the adults that attempt to impose traditional authority. Handler repeats the word "you" many times to solidify Snicket's relationship with readers, often relating the events in the Baudelaires' lives to their own. He writes in *The Penultimate Peril* as the Baudelaires attempt to move undetected around an angry mob, "If you've ever wanted one more cookie than people said you could have, then you know how difficult it is to move quickly and stealthily at the same time, but if you've had as much experience as the Baudelaires in dodging the activities of people who were shouting at you, then you know that with enough practice you can move quickly and stealthily just about anywhere."²⁶ The ambiguous "people" can be substituted by any adult figure that has authority in the reader's life. Snicket relates an everyday situation, like a child sneaking an extra cookie, and compares it to a dangerous situation that the Baudelaires face. Handler thus elevates the youth reader's experience to put it on par with his protagonists', and in doing so he condones forbidden behavior—but most importantly, he suggests that Snicket is an ally against the adult authority despite his being an adult himself.

Another way Handler subverts adult authority is by admitting the shortcomings and subjectivity of his narrator. As Handler shows that the sensational narrator is vulnerable, he shows the didactic narrator is not only subjective, but fallible. Snicket is known for his in-text definitions, which parody didactic texts teaching vocabulary. However, instead of simply relaying the denotation of a word, Snicket defines each word

²⁶ Snicket, *The Penultimate Peril*, 299.

or phrase subjectively, applying it contextually to the Baudelaires' situation. Thus in some cases his definitions have little to do with the denotative meaning of a word.

Handler opens a chapter with an allusion to the popular 1955 children's novel *Beezus and Ramona*, recounting a passage when "the heroine of a book much more suitable to read than this one spends an entire afternoon eating the first bite of a bushel of apples. But even this anarchic little girl—the word 'anarchic' here means 'apple-loving'—never tasted a bite as wonderful as the Baudelaire orphans' first bite."²⁷ The word "anarchic" of course has nothing to do with loving apples. However, Handler points out that in this context, "anarchic" *does* mean "apple-loving" because that is the quality that makes Ramona Quinby defy unspoken rules of eating apples and chaotically eat only the first bite. For readers as well-read as Klaus Baudelaire (or those who look up "anarchic" in a more objective dictionary), the subjectivity of Snicket's language becomes apparent. Through his subjective definitions Handler argues that language is relative, meaning that "anarchic" *can* mean "apple-loving" here, though it can mean "without rule or government" elsewhere. Handler's text asks readers to think critically about language and about the narrator who is presenting a subjective view of that language.

Handler goes further than suggesting narrative subjectivity and admits that Snicket, and therefore his narration, is fallible. Handler presents the entire series as a frame narrative in which Lemony Snicket is recounting the clues he found in following the Baudelaires' trail, satirizing the Gothic trope present in many penny dreadfuls. However, sometimes Snicket admits that he falls short in tracking down the story. After

²⁷ Snicket, *The End*, 283.

the Baudelaires refuse a taxi ride with a mysterious stranger, Snicket is conflicted about how he interprets their decision. He states that even after “months of research,” “many sleepless nights,” and “many dreary afternoons spent in front of an enormous pond, throwing stones,” he still has “no way of knowing if the Baudelaires should have been sad or relieved to see him go either.”²⁸ Snicket confesses that there are gaps in the narrative because of the constructed nature of text—the narrator is not omniscient; he is actually quite fallible.

Almost defensively, Snicket next recounts the facts he *does* know in the long sentence, “I do know who the man was, and I do know where he went afterward, and I do know the name of the woman who was hiding in the trunk, and the type of musical instrument that was laid carefully in the back seat, and the ingredients of the sandwich tucked into the glove compartment.”²⁹ The polysyndeton emphasizes the vast knowledge Snicket possesses, but it also reveals his vulnerability. By revealing his research methods and admitting he only has access to a part of the story, Snicket undermines the assumption that the narrator is in control of the story—he suggests instead that the story exists in some form out of his limited purview. Handler solidifies this point with Snicket’s confession at the end of the lengthy list of what he does know, “...but I cannot tell you if the Baudelaires would have been happier in this man's company...There is no way of knowing.”³⁰ Snicket’s last admission generates anxiety. If adults are meant to hold all the answers, and the adult narrator is meant to be omniscient, then Snicket’s

²⁸ Snicket, *The Penultimate Peril*, 250-51.

²⁹ Ibid. The list continues with several more examples, showing the polysyndeton more clearly; for the sake of space I shorten it here.

³⁰ Snicket, *The Penultimate Peril*, 252.

defeatist attitude contrasts in a haunting manner. Handler challenges the reader's faith in the narrator's knowledge, and therefore the faith in narratorial authority.

The Hybrid Narrator

Though they use different tactics to establish and demonstrate their authority, the sensational and didactic narrators work in similar ways to solidify narrative control. I have outlined several distinct ways sensational and didactic narrators operate, yet there is considerable overlap between the two in *A Series of Unfortunate Events*, even within some examples I provide. What makes Handler's narrator intriguing is the unification of these narration styles, because this hybrid narrator demonstrates the parallels between the two. As he parodies both penny dreadfuls and didactic texts, Handler creates a seamless commentary about how narratorial authority functions.

Through Lemony Snicket's hybridity, Handler suggests that forms of authorial control all reach the same end. Just as the didactic narrator imparts knowledge that pertains to the world outside the text, the sensational narrator as omniscient storyteller reveals information within the world of the text in order to build suspense and keep readers in thrall. In addition to subjectively defining difficult words, Snicket often sidetracks to define literary terms or unpack common idioms. In the twelfth book, *The Penultimate Peril*, Snicket pauses the action to show the distinction between denouement and closure. He states,

Usually the denouement of a story is not the last event in the heroes' lives, or the last trouble that befalls them. It is often the second-to-last event, or the penultimate peril. As the Baudelaire orphans followed the mysterious man out of the hotel and through the cloud of steam to the edge of the reflective pond, the

denouement of their story was fast approaching, but the end of their story still waited for them, like a secret still covered in fog.³¹

Beginning with a didactic tone that reads like a textbook, Handler seamlessly shifts the narratorial voice to describe another type of knowledge—that held by the omniscient observer of the Baudelaire's tale.

In this example, Handler acknowledges the suspense sensational narrators are able to maintain. The phrases “the denouement of their story was fast approaching,” and “the end of their story still waited for them” anticipate future events in the story that only the narrator can access. As noted above, the reader must continue to engage with the text in order to relieve the suspense such a narration creates. Handler dwells on enigmatic elements in his commentary through visual imagery and analogy, writing of “the cloud of steam,” “the mysterious man,” and “a secret still covered in fog,” all of which suggest the dense mysteries that the narrator keeps hidden from the reader.

Handler overlays the power of the sensational narrator with a didactic tone, and here we can see the convergence between the two styles. Snicket prefaces this passage with a tangent about the denouement of stories, explaining plot structure through stories like “Goldilocks and the Three Bears” and “Snow White.” This passage thus becomes the conclusion to a lesson, with Snicket as schoolteacher. The impersonal phrase “the heroes’ lives” and the following pronoun “them” separates the readers from the action of the plot and places them instead on a theoretical plane, considering the Baudelaires’ story as a work of fiction. Handler integrates the didactic frame prefacing this passage and the tone that accompanies it into his sensational narrative. Both narrative styles rely on metafiction to generate adult authority: the sensational suggests the narrator has

³¹ Snicket, *The Penultimate Peril*, 177.

foreknowledge of a story, and the didactic comments intrusively about the nature of stories themselves. The didactic narrator can predict plot events using exterior knowledge of typical plot trajectories, while the sensational narrator declares that he alone has interior knowledge of the story. By combining the styles, Handler's work shows that while they use metafiction in different ways, both achieve the same effect in establishing narratorial control.

Finally, Handler's series highlights the same similarity of control in nineteenth-century marketing techniques as it does with narration styles. One tactic both didactic and sensational narrators use is metafictional self-endorsement, meaning signals within the text that encourage continued readership, such as advertisements, direct calls to the reader within the narrative, and self-praise. While supposedly working with different motives—the penny dreadfuls meant to sell, the didactic magazines meant to instruct—both engage in marketing practices that intend to continue reader consumption at all costs. As previously discussed, the Aldine Publishing Company loved the cliffhanger, just as the *BOP* and *GOP* published self-endorsements nearly every week to encourage subscriptions. Handler plays with the opposite approach by using reverse psychology, warning readers not to read *A Series of Unfortunate Events* at all costs due to its sad and disturbing content. At the beginning of each installment, Snicket pleads with the reader to put down the book, such as his admission in *The Ersatz Elevator*, “if I were you I would drop this book right out of your two or more hands and curl up with a dictionary instead.”³² At times this pleading becomes an order, as in the middle of *The Vile Village*:

³² Snicket, *The Ersatz Elevator*, 3.

“If you have reached this far in the story, you must stop now.”³³ By continuing on in the story, the reader inevitably disobeys the narrator—thus Handler’s reverse psychology creates a reading experience that celebrates reader resistance generated just from the act of reading.

This phenomenon is more complicated when examined in the historical context of penny dreadfuls. As noted in Chapter One, critics reviled these sensational texts, youth were often forbidden to read them, and those who did read them were regarded with suspicion. Thus when Handler purposefully adopts characteristics of the penny dreadful, he adds another reason for readers to be supposedly wary of picking up his work. Austin writes that “In giving the books the appearance of a penny dreadful, Handler...draws a parallel between his books and those condemned of years past. The appearance of the books mirrors Snicket’s warnings not to read them, casting the books as something forbidden, yet desirable, like the Tree of Knowledge.”³⁴ Handler tempts the reader into reading the text by suggesting there is content in them that their parents might not want them to read—a temptation that might also explain part of the attraction of penny dreadfuls for nineteenth-century youth.³⁵

What Handler’s text is doing here—as really, the entire series does—is asking the reader to think critically, and make decisions. He tells the reader to put down the text with the full expectation that the reader will disobey the narrator. Handler creates the

³³ Snicket, *The Vile Village*, 214.

³⁴ Austin, “Performative Metafiction: Lemony Snicket, Daniel Handler and *The End of A Series of Unfortunate Events*,” 3.

³⁵ It is important to remember also that Handler is also operating in a commercially-driven environment. The cover design and other marketing aspects of the series were created in conjunction with designer Alison Donalby and others affiliated with HarperCollins. Fierman, “Lemony Snicket Is the New Harry Potter.”

illusion of choice, but this fantasy is not like the fantasy of autonomous self-culture in the *BOP* and *GOP*, or the fantasy of social mobility in the penny dreadful. By encouraging the choice that contradicts what an obvious adult authority instructs, Handler paves the way for future resistance to the adult narrator. The devices I examine above—narratorial subjectivity and untrustworthiness, hyperbolized morality, encouragement toward naughtiness—all instigate suspicion toward the narrator, developing reader resistance and the reading autonomy it accompanies. Austin explains, “Handler’s text is so untrustworthy that the reader must think about every aspect of the reading and [develop] critical ability and autonomy.”³⁶ In creating an unreliable narrator, Handler drifts toward the emergent paradigm, recognizing young readers as thinkers as well as consumers.

The real subversive content that nineteenth-century critics feared penny dreadfuls contained lives on in Handler’s series. The hybrid narration, generated through parody, encourages youth to challenge the status quo by resisting adult authority. Handler refuses to shelter children from difficult choices, and presents a world colored by relatives rather than absolutes. This analysis exposes that despite the different styles of narration, adult constructions of authority in youth literature operate similarly because they achieve the same effect in establishing a hierarchy in which the adult controls knowledge, and the young reader loses agency. Handler’s metafiction transfers the authority traditionally vested in the narrator to the young reader, reordering the hierarchy and developing youth reading autonomy.

³⁶ Austin, “Performative Metafiction: Lemony Snicket, Daniel Handler and *The End of A Series of Unfortunate Events*,” 1.

CONCLUSION

I began this study intrigued by the vocal criticism of penny dreadfuls, wondering why what seemed like such innocuous texts raised so many concerns about youth. I expected to find subversive qualities in these texts that would show a disruption of the hierarchy of an adult writing to a young reader, a reason that might explain the anxiety about the circulation of these sensational texts. Instead, I found a reinforcement of the authority and ideology present in didactic texts. If the pernicious material imagined to be in penny dreadfuls did not actually exist, the anxiety needed to be accounted for in some other way. I offer the issue of class as one explanation—the tension in an increasingly mobile society centralizing into the highly visible scapegoat of the penny dreadful. Yet class is but one dimension in this complex issue, and questions remain about the contemporary perception of the penny dreadful as well as the contexts that produced that perception.

My study of the *BOP* and *GOP* confirmed my hypothesis that penny dreadfuls construct adult authority similarly to didactic texts. As I examined the process through which editors and writers established dominance in a hierarchy over the reader, I realized that there was a gap in our understanding of how young readers *responded* to this authority. This study focuses on the processes within the text, yet does not fully consider the response from young readers. As I mention in Chapter Two, some scholars suggest that the ephemerality of the periodical genre made reader resistance possible in didactic magazines. I hypothesize that because of their serial nature, penny dreadfuls might offer the same opportunity for resistant readings by youth. Future study might examine the

reader response to these texts and question the effectiveness of the processes that establish adult authority that I define in this project.

As I investigate notions of adult authority in youth literature and what that authority reveals about contemporary social attitudes, *A Series of Unfortunate Events* lingers in the background. If nineteenth-century children's literature is about structure, then Handler's main aim is to disassemble that structure. Over the course of the series, Handler not only undermines the reader's faith in the adult narrator and the incompetent and/or evil adults surrounding the Baudelaires, but in adult institutions, "most notably the capacity of the law to ensure justice for the children and the press to report the truth."³⁷ Handler rattles the sense of security the adult narrator creates, suggesting through postmodern techniques that texts are not safe, and neither is the world. The author forces the reader to think critically and become almost as skeptical as the cynical Lemony Snicket himself.

Even as we deconstruct the adult presence in children's texts, we must be careful not to impose twenty-first-century views of childhood and narrative on the Victorians. It would be a mistake to claim that Handler is an example of enlightened children's literature author, deconstructing adult authority where nineteenth-century writers formed it. In fact, several late-Victorian writers such as Lewis Carroll introduced satirical texts for youth, parodying the adult authority in other contemporary texts. I use the twentieth-century example of *A Series of Unfortunate Events* because it hints at the legacy of the adult authority since the first explosion of the youth publishing industry. In the past two centuries, the adult authority in texts has reassured readers of the power and truth of text,

³⁷ Bullen, "Power Of Darkness: Narrative And Biographical Reflexivity In *A Series Of Unfortunate Events*," 8.

imparted knowledge about every subject under the sun, and carried a suspension of disbelief through fantastical storylines. *A Series of Unfortunate Events* reminds us that the basis for twenty-first century children's literature was formed in the nineteenth.

ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary Sources

Aspiration. The Girl's Own Paper, January 7, 1899. In *Selections from the Girl's Own Paper, 1880-1907*, edited by Terri Doughty, 72. Peterborough: Broadview Press, 2004.

This illustration on the front page of No. 993 of the *Girl's Own Paper* features a girl in a meadow, her eyes elevated toward the sky and her right hand over her heart. It accompanies the article "Self-Culture for Girls," by Lily Watson. The emphasis on nature and its shaping effect is evident from the flowers in the foreground, and the contrast of the trees with the girl's bright dress. The girl is in harmony with nature. "Aspiration" is a demonstration of the association of self-culture with nature.

Author of the "Aggravating School-Girl." "Wild Kathleen." *The Girl's Own Paper*, February 28, 1880.

This serial features a "wild" protagonist from Ireland named Kathleen. Kathleen's story is one of coming-of age, focusing on Kathleen's initial messy presentation and rude ways, and how she transforms into a cultured and sweet lady—one whom everyone mourns when she passes away. I analyze Kathleen's coming of age as an example of self-culture in the *GOP*, investigating in particular the author's metaphor of Kathleen growing from a wild overgrowth to a delicate flower in the context of the *GOP*'s analogy that compares gardening with self-cultivation.

Author of "How to Be Happy Though Married." "Between School and Marriage." *The Girl's Own Paper*, September 4, 1886. In *Selections from the Girl's Own Paper, 1880-1907*, edited by Terri Doughty, 65. Peterborough: Broadview Press, 2004.

This article details the crucial point in a girl's life (between school and marriage), and stresses its formative importance on the rest of a girl's life. It encourages girls to spend these years developing their "usefulness" by obtaining skills that will help them intellectually, domestically, and in some cases, will help them in the workplace. This author counts on the hierarchy of author over reader and appeals to the author's ethos of age, being older and therefore more experienced than readers. The article also demonstrates the stress the *GOP* placed upon the period of time spent in girlhood.

Ballantyne, R.M. "My Doggie and I." *The Boy's Own Paper*, December 4, 1880.

R.M. Ballantyne's serial recounts the narrator's (potentially the writer's) years starting out as a doctor, centered around the endearing "doggie" he rescued. Using a first-person narrator, Ballantyne offers a friendly, at times self-deprecating tone to construct an accessible persona for his young readers. Ballantyne's work reflects the nineteenth-century trend of writers dressing up didactic content by

offering themselves as sociable narrators rather than authoritative teachers in order to draw in young audiences.

Cobbe, Frances Power. "The Education of the Emotions." *Fortnightly Review*, May 1865-June 1934 43, no. 254 (02, 1888): 223-236. *ProQuest*.

Frances Power Cobbe writes an influential article about childhood development. She suggests that children were easily influenced by the moods of their parents, and the content they were surrounded with—in essence, they were like sponges. This article raised concerns about the effect of mass printing on children, because some believed, as per Cobbe's point, that children would soak up the immoral ideas in literature like the penny dreadfuls of the day.

Countess de Boerio. "Some Marriage Thorns and How to Avoid Them." *The Girl's Own Paper* August 26, 1893. In *Selections from the Girl's Own Paper, 1880-1907*, edited by Terri Doughty, 48. Peterborough: Broadview Press, 2004.

Countess de Boerio's article advises young wives how to have a happy marriage and avoid some troubles that could typically complicate a marriage. Most of interest for my research is her use of metaphor in the title of the article, substituting "troubles" for "thorns." This figurative language follows the idea the *Girl's Own Paper* reinforced, that girls and women are metaphorically grooming their own garden (self-culture) and the thorns represent yet another obstacle for these women to remove from their lives.

"Correspondence." *The Boy's Own Paper*, October 3, 1891, 16.

Readers of the *BOP* receive answers to their previously mailed questions in this section. Inquiries range from the selection of pets to medical advice. The editor speaks with a didactic, sometimes critical tone (yet retains his humor), chiding some boys for their poor handwriting or silly questions. "Correspondence" exhibits the editorial voice of the didactic narrator. In addition, it shows the concerns and interests boys had in 1891. The section also includes an illustration (*Correspondence*) of a boy delivering mail to a group of anxiously awaiting readers. The image suggests that the *BOP* portrayed itself as an exciting installment in its audience's lives.

Correspondence. *The Girl's Own Paper*, May, 2, 1891. In *Great-Grandmama's Weekly: A Celebration of The Girl's Own Paper 1880-1901*, by Wendy Forrester, 158. Guildford and London: Lutterworth Press, 1980.

This illustration in the "Correspondence" section shows a schoolteacher holding a rod up to an easel containing the rules of submitting letters to the *GOP*. The depiction of the woman as a schoolteacher lends itself to the idea of the *GOP* as a didactic magazine. This idea reinforces an editor/reader hierarchy by claiming the editor's knowledge supersedes that of the reader, and thus the editor is imparting knowledge like a schoolteacher.

“Dean Dangerfield's Desperate Game” (no. 226). In *Tip Top Tales* 225-232. London: Aldine Publishing Co., Ltd.[189-?] Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton University. Used by permission of the Princeton University Library.

This penny dreadful, published by the Aldine Publishing Company, features a typical adventure tale of the genre. It is set in the American West, focuses on an attractive and athletic hero named Dare, and uses sensational plotlines such as prison escapes, star-crossed romance, and inevitable retreats into the wilderness. In the story, Dare needs to save his family’s farm and fortune when their agent Lloyd Lucas, who defaulted their loans, disappears. Dare becomes entangled in the law during his quest to find Lucas, being falsely accused of murder, and finds love with Anita Dangerfield, the sister of the true culprit Dean Dangerfield. This story follows many tropes of the traditional penny dreadful and is a representative of Aldine’s stories in my research.

“The Freebooters of the Ocean.” *The British Boys’ Paper*, Issues 46-52. *Nineteenth Century Collections Online*. Accessed Sept. 28, 2015.

This 1889 serial published in *The British Boys’ Paper* features a gang of freebooters and the young, poor student Henry Hayward who attempts to curb their insolence. Notably, the freebooters are described as educated gentlemen, whereas the protagonist is the son of a poor clergyman. This centers the story around class and issues of poverty. I use this story to examine archetypes in penny dreadfuls. Pulling from the tradition of romantic novels, these stories contain many archetypes characteristic of the popular serial, such as the mysterious handsome adventurer, the beautiful blushing woman, and the fearless, lovely girl who defies gender norms. Though published in London, it is set in Boston and New York, following the trend of a fascination with American settings.

Good Habits and Good Manners: A Book for Boys. London: Frederick Warne & Co., ca.1890. Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton University. Used by permission of the Princeton University Library.

This book is a handbook of etiquette for boys. Using rhetorical techniques common to nineteenth-century youth primers, this book has a friendly narrator who imparts wisdom in line with middle class ideology. The book also contains a chapter about boys’ reading habits that sheds light on how adults often demarcated “good” literature and reading habits from poor ones as they instructed youth to form preferred reading habits.

Green, Samuel G. *The Story of the Religious Tract Society for One Hundred Years*. London: The Religious Tract Society, 1899.

Samuel G. Green provides a history of the Religious Tract Society in this primary source. While providing useful historical detail about the RTS, this source is even more helpful in deepening my understanding about the motives of the RTS in producing their periodicals. This book contains evidence of the concerns the RTS

had about the state of youth, as well as exemplary Evangelist rhetoric that sets up a narrative of the RTS as heroes among publishers.

Harrison, Pownell. "Cheap Literature—Past and Present." In *The British Almanac of the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge, for the Year of Our Lord 1873*, 60-81. London: The Company Of Stationers, 1873.

The Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge, known for its attempt to provide access to "higher literature" as well as scientific knowledge for all, included this chapter as part of their 1873 almanac. Pownell Harrison uses *Black Bess* as a demonstrative example of how pernicious literature is corrupting youth and encouraging juvenile crime. The author emphasizes differences in class as he explains how the working class' education needs to be elevated in order to steer it toward a more "cultured" consumption of literature. Harrison also alleges that the penny dreadful industry was declining in subscriptions and financial soundness, yet fails to convince beyond the supposed calculations of an amateur statistician. This piece displays a middle class patronizing view of literature and offers one example of a society's attempt to remedy what they saw as an ill against the literary community.

Hope, Ascott R. "The Nephew and the Uncle." *The Boy's Own Paper*, December 4, 1880.

This serial is about a man who becomes a schoolmaster at the same school his young uncle attends. Employing a first-person narrative style, this story is exemplary of the use of a personable narrator in the *BOP*. I relay in my argument how this narrative style is an effective rhetorical technique that reveals the larger trend in nineteenth-century youth literature of writers and editors fashioning themselves more approachable authorities within the text.

"Lady Kate: The Dashing Female Detective" (no. 54). In *The Aldine Detective Tales*. London: Aldine Publishing Co., Ltd.[189-?] Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton University. Used by permission of the Princeton University Library.

Centered on the self-made detective Lady Kate, this story depicts a romance and a crime novel in one. Kate falls in love with Arthur Everdell even as she tries to track down a man that looks just like him, who is accused of murder. Class and gender both play a large role in this story, as Kate was actually born a poor orphan, and worked her way up in a men's profession—characterized as a near-flawless detective.

Mrs. Molesworth. "On the Use and Abuse of Fiction." *The Girl's Own Paper*, April 16, 1892. In *Selections from the Girl's Own Paper, 1880-1907*, edited by Terri Doughty, 67. Peterborough: Broadview Press, 2004.

Mrs. Molesworth, a prominent novel writer for girls, calls for the evaluation of literature to "weed out" that which should be pruned. Interestingly, Molesworth notes that there are "good" books, but there are also books that are good "for us," meaning that she is emphasizing individually suited reading. This complicates the narrative of a universal organization of books on a "good" and "bad" spectrum.

She stresses that reading fiction ought to be looked upon as recreation, and warns against centering reading as anything that could take up an inordinate amount of time. In one sense, Molesworth calls upon girls to think for themselves, and not to follow the crowd by reading the latest popular tome. Yet in another, she is limiting, asserting that there are many, many poor books to be avoided, and that girls should call upon adults for guidance on what is a suitable book.

“Notice to Correspondents.” *The Boy’s Own Paper*, October 3, 1891, 16.

This short editorial comment before the Correspondence section explains why some boys’ letters go unanswered. Like the *GOP*’s similar editorial statements (see “To Our Correspondents”), the editor condemns redundant letters, and calls some questions “frivolous.” The comment is an example of the instructive nature of the editor, and the editor’s role as gatekeeper of information in his decision of which questions to answer and publish.

“Prologue,” *The Boy’s Own Paper*, October 3, 1891, 16.

This poem opens another volume of the *BOP*, looking forward to another year of publication and reasserting the *BOP*’s goal. The poet claims that the paper exists to cater to the wants and needs of its boy audience and to enrich their lives. Six rhyming stanzas promises boys that the *BOP* will have its best volume ever, and will continue to strive to improve. This example demonstrates the message the *BOP* sent to its readers in claiming that readers drove the magazine’s content. The editorial/reader hierarchy complicates this fantasy by placing the editor’s content preference over that of the readers’.

Salmon, Edward G. “What Girls Read.” In *The Nineteenth Century: A Monthly Review*, October 1886: 515-29.

Edward G. Salmon, a prominent literary critic, examines the reading scene for girls in this article. He includes a study of what girls were supposedly reading, naming the top writers and periodicals and including a survey of what girls read. Though girls had been enjoying a proliferation of new literature being written for them, Salmon writes, their books are not as exciting as those written for boys because of the subject matter. While boys’ stories are written about battles and daring adventures, girls have to make do with domestic scenes. One purpose of this article seems to be to provide a list of recommended authors and works to give to young girls, based upon the number of authors and works mentioned within the text. Salmon singles out the *GOP* as one of the only periodicals worthy of commendation, and vehemently decries the penny dreadfuls that were popular in the market. This work is a widely-cited piece of insight into both the reading material girls tended to read and the opinions of those who were recommending material to girls. However, Salmon’s work must be used with caution because of his circumstantial survey results.

-- "What the Working Classes Read." In *The Nineteenth Century: A Monthly Review*, July 1886: 108-117.

Similar to his article on "What Girls Read," Salmon surveys what the working class reads for leisure and entertainment purposes. Salmon uses the popular rhetoric of decrying the penny dreadful as poisonous to the mind, like rotting food. Salmon's article is particularly interesting in its underlining of class: he points out that one danger of the working class reading penny dreadfuls is the subversive content they feature, declaiming their unsavory portrayal of upper class characters. I use this primary source to examine attitudes among literary critics about class as well as to offer more dimension in my study of the supposed subversiveness of the penny dreadful.

Snicket, Lemony [Daniel Handler]. Brett Helquist, illustrator. *The End*. New York: HarperCollins, 2006.

This is the final book in *A Series of Unfortunate Events*, and it retains Handler's playfulness from the beginning of the series. Handler parodies far-fetched penny dreadful storylines with the accounts of villagers on the island where the Baudelaires are shipwrecked. In addition, this book questions adult authority as the Baudelaires challenge the leader of the island and attempt to make their own choices.

---*The Ersatz Elevator* New York: HarperCollins, 2001.

The sixth installment of *A Series of Unfortunate Events*, this book follows the formula of its predecessors in plot and style. In this story Mr. Poe gives custody of the Baudelaires to a new guardian (in this case, Esmé and Jermoe Squalor), and face a number of unfortunate circumstances and mistreatment as they attempt to escape from Count Olaf. The opening passage contains Handler's obligatory command to the reader to stop reading the volume, a technique playing off of the forbidden nature of penny dreadfuls and the didactic admonishing against reading certain texts.

---*The Penultimate Peril*. New York: HarperCollins, 2005.

The penultimate book in *A Series of Unfortunate Events*, this book uses the reader's frustration to create suspense as the audience awaits the final confrontation between good and evil. Handler exposes the power of the narrator by showing how writers elevate themselves from the reader by setting the agenda in relating the plot.

---*The Vile Village*. New York: HarperCollins, 2001.

The seventh book of *A Series of Unfortunate Events* follows the Baudelaire orphans as they are placed in the custody of a town called V.F.D. Handler plays with the penny dreadful plot device *deus ex machina* in this installment, offering one when the Baudelaires need it most—after Klaus Baudelaire defines the term for his sisters.

Stables, Gordon. "To Girls in Their 'Teens,'" *The Girl's Own Paper*, November 5, 1904. In *Selections from the Girl's Own Paper, 1880-1907*, edited by Terri Doughty, 53. Peterborough: Broadview Press, 2004.

Gordon Stables, a prominent contributor to both the *GOP* and *BOP*, writes a column of advice for girls reaching their teens. He admonishes the "New Girl" and her behavior, calling on girls to instead focus their minds on becoming the ideal wife and woman, skilled in household duties and educated in intellectual thought. This article is a work representative of a common *GOP* theme encouraging girls to form their own self-culture at this formative time in their lives.

"To Our Correspondents," *The Girl's Own Paper*, August 7, 1880. In *Great-Grandmama's Weekly: A Celebration of The Girl's Own Paper 1880-1901*, by Wendy Forrester, 153. Guildford and London: Lutterworth Press, 1980.

The editor comments in the weekly correspondence section, explaining the reasoning behind the answering and publication of readers' correspondence. He explains that many girls ask repetitive questions, do not provide an efficient and suitable pseudonym, or ask questions that are "frivolous" and are therefore left unanswered. The editorial closes with the reaffirmation that the *GOP* welcomes questions from girls regarding practical advice or counsel. This editorial, by laying out the terms that would govern the correspondence section, demonstrates the editor's control of the content.

Viles, Edward. *Black Bess: Or, the Knight of the Road: a Tale of the Good Old Times*. London: E. Harrison, 1866. Hathi Trust.
<http://hdl.handle.net/2027/uiuo.ark:/13960/t5db8pt0d>

This popular penny dreadful is most remembered for its main character Dick Turpin, who is a reimagining of an eighteenth century highwayman. Viles romanticizes Dick as a hero, a Robin-Hood-like figure who disrupts the social order by defying the authority of the pursuing police and by mocking the aristocracy. Because of this subversive character, Viles' tale is helpful in understanding issues of class and defiance of authority in penny dreadfuls. The preface to this story, in which Viles states that he is not endorsing criminal activity, is also an interesting dimension in my argument that penny dreadfuls were not as subversive as critics feared.

Watson, Lily. "Self-Culture for Girls," *The Girl's Own Paper* January 7, 1899. In *Selections from the Girl's Own Paper, 1880-1907*, edited by Terri Doughty, 73. Peterborough: Broadview Press, 2004.

This article is the first in a series encouraging girls to further themselves intellectually, physically, and emotionally by attempting to attain "self-culture," which Lily Watson defines. This idea of self-culture summarizes the ideal *GOP* girl that the *GOP* encouraged girls to emulate. Watson's use of nature metaphors

and her focus on the merits of culture embody the rhetoric I am studying as I examine the *GOP*'s quest to contain girls' reading habits.

"Words of Cheer." *The Boy's Own Paper*, October 2, 1890, 15.

Closing the "Correspondence" section, this note quotes from a letter by Mr. Faed of the Royal Academy. Mr. Faed praises the *BOP* as worthy reading material for boys. Most importantly, this inclusion illustrates the hierarchy of readership. Boys' voices are seldom heard in the *BOP*, but adult voices dominate even in the Correspondence section. The only voice apart from the editor's that receives space in the magazine is that of an adult.

Young Housekeepers: Blackie's Domestic Economy Readers No. V. London: Blackie & Son, Limited, 1895, Preface. Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton University. Used by permission of the Princeton University Library.

This handbook demonstrates the nineteenth-century turn toward more familiar and approachable didactic material for children. Using the narrative of May Meredith and interest in health, this text instructs youth about healthy habits and nutrition while remaining entertaining. I use this work as evidence of the shift that is also evident in the *GOP* and *BOP*, with writers attempting to make didactic material more appealing to youth in order to compete with sensationalized serials.

Secondary Sources

Althusser, Louis. "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes toward an Investigation)." In *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*. Trans. B. Brewster. New York: Monthly Review Press, 1971.

Louis Althusser, a cultural Marxist, offers a model of ideology that offers insight into my study of how the Religious Tract Society enforced their ideas. In his perspective, ideology is constructed by state apparatuses (a term I append to the RTS) that are so immersed in ideology themselves that neither the constructors nor the subjects of ideology are aware of its work. Althusser argues that subjects of ideology act according to that ideology as a default. This is due to ideology's silent presence in people's lives, part of its subjects' lives without their being aware of it. This thesis offers dimension in understanding why readers potentially did not challenge the *BOP* and *GOP*, suggesting readers would not challenge the ideology they took for granted.

Altick, Richard. *The English Common Reader: A Social History of the Mass Reading Public, 1800-1900*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957.

Richard Altick, a literary scholar known for his work in Victorian Studies at The Ohio State University, examines the practice of reading in nineteenth-century Britain, focusing on its social implications in an industrializing capitalist society

as well as the growing democratization of print. One important facet of reading Altick studies is the expanding education at the elementary level and beyond. Altick argues that reading as a class issue in this context, with upper classes anxious about the “masses” amidst an increasingly democratic publishing industry. I use Altick’s work to help contextualize the anxiety about the popularity of penny dreadfuls, showing how reading itself became an object of suspicion when performed by the working class.

Austin, Sara. “Performative Metafiction: Lemony Snicket, Daniel Handler and *The End of A Series of Unfortunate Events*.” *The Looking Glass: New Perspectives on Children's Literature* 17, no. 1 (2013).

Sara Austin is a children’s literature scholar from Kansas State University. Her article argues that *A Series of Unfortunate Events* uses metafiction to connect to didactic children’s texts from previous centuries. Austin claims that Snicket challenges the reader’s trust in the narrator through an extra-textual persona, commentary on moral relativism, allusions, formulaic storylines, and parody. I build on several of Austin’s claims in order to argue that Snicket’s metafictional aspects disrupt adult authority.

Beetham, Margaret. “Open and Closed: The Periodical as a Publishing Genre.” *Victorian Periodicals Review* 22, no. 3. [Research Society for Victorian Periodicals, Johns Hopkins University Press]: 96–100. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20082400>.

Margaret Beetham is a periodical scholar at the University of Salford, specializing in nineteenth-century women’s periodicals. Beetham’s influential article argues that the periodical is a unique genre that opens the way for reader resistance. Examining various characteristics of the periodical that allows for this resistance, Beetham set the stage for other scholars, such as Jenny Holt, to transfer this view of the periodical to the children’s magazine. I use this article as an explanation for why the *BOP* and *GOP* had the potential for reader resistance and thus why editors had to apply consistent rhetorical strategies to avoid challenges to their authority.

Bertens, Johannes Willem. *Literary Theory: The Basics*. Second ed. London, England: Taylor & Francis, 2010.

This handbook offers a succinct summary of literary criticism, lending key information in particular to my study of Louis Althusser’s and Antonio Gramsci’s ideas. In addition to providing a helpful bibliography of thinker’s works, Johannes Bertens’ book provides a clear summary of their ideas and examples of application to deepen understanding.

Bullen, Elizabeth. "Power Of Darkness: Narrative And Biographical Reflexivity In A Series Of Unfortunate Events." In *International Research In Children's Literature* 1.2 (2008): 200-212. MLA International Bibliography. Accessed February 16, 2016.

Elizabeth Bullen, a professor of literary studies and children's literature at Deakin University, argues in this article that *A Series of Unfortunate Events* offers young readers a chance to read reflexively, meaning that they can apply aspects of the narration to their own lives. Bullen suggests that Handler achieves this through his metafiction and his desire to challenge young readers with material sometimes considered too dark for youth. I build upon Bullen's thesis in my discussion of youth reading autonomy by suggesting that metafiction achieves the move toward youth reading autonomy by deconstructing the adult narrator's power.

Carpenter, Kevin, Universität Oldenburg, and Bethnal Green Museum of Childhood, eds. *Penny Dreadfuls and Comics: English Periodicals for Children from Victorian Times to the Present Day: A Loan Exhibition from the Library of Oldenburg University, West Germany at the Bethnal Green Museum of Childhood, June 2-October 2, 1983*. London: Victoria and Albert Museum, 1983.

This work catalogs an exhibition of penny dreadfuls and comics from Britain. In addition to highlighting some of the key publications of the late nineteenth century, this work is a valuable resource due to its knowledgeable commentary by editor Kevin Carpenter, a professor at Oldenburg University and an expert on the penny dreadful. Carpenter includes a section devoted to "Outlaws and Criminals as Heroes," a topic salient to a study of sensational literature tropes. Though Carpenter's work is informational and intends to showcase material rather than analyze it, this catalog provides important highlights of the penny dreadful's history.

---. *Desert Isles and Pirate Islands: The Island Theme in Nineteenth-Century English Juvenile*

Fiction: A Survey and Biography. Frankfurt Am Main: Verlag Peter Lang, 1984.

Kevin Carpenter's book studies juvenile fiction adventure stories set in island environments, but his study includes archetypes that govern much of nineteenth century sensational serials. I use his definition of the idealized British male protagonist in my argument that this construction is part of a fantasy that controls the youth reading experience.

Coats, Karen. *Looking Glasses and Neverlands : Lacan, Desire, and Subjectivity in Children's Literature*. Iowa City, Iowa: University of Iowa Press, 2007. Accessed January 19, 2016. ProQuest ebrary. Annotation. (112)

Karen Coats, a professor of English at Hollins University, examines the psychology behind the interaction between narration and children in this book. In her discussion of metafiction, Coats claims that children are more vulnerable to

metafiction's disorienting nature because they are more likely to trust the narrator's words as reality than adults. This argument is useful in understanding how metafiction works for young readers in deconstructing adult authority.

Cox, Jack. *Take a Cold Tub, Sir!: The Story of the Boy's Own Paper*. Guildford, Surrey, England: Lutterworth Press, 1982.

Jack Cox, who served as editor of the *Boy's Own Paper* from 1946-1967, and editor of the *Boy's Own Annual* from 1964-1979, penned this narrative of the creation and run of the iconic boy's periodical. Including many facsimiles of the original magazine, this book describes the content, editors, prominent contributors, and character of the *Boy's Own Paper*. The chapter "In the Highest Interest of Our Correspondent," about the nature of the Correspondence section, is particularly enlightening as to the relationship between editor and reader. Being a figure who was instrumental in shaping the magazine's run, Cox is somewhat sentimental about the paper as he argues that the *Boy's Own* became a social phenomenon that shaped boys' lives for nearly a century.

Cross, Julie. *Humor in Contemporary Junior Literature*. New York: Routledge, 2011.

Julie Cross, a scholar from the University of Roehampton, studies humor in youth literature and argues against the previous belief that there is a binary between simple and complex humor in stories for young readers. Cross claims that humor operates in diverse contexts, and that humor often allows readers to move toward the emergent paradigm by recognizing their autonomy in reading and reflexively identifying with texts. I use her book, particularly her discussion of postmodern humor, as one explanation as to how *A Series of Unfortunate Events* builds youth reading autonomy.

Dixon, Diana. "From Instruction to Amusement: Attitudes of Authority in Children's Periodicals Before 1914". *Victorian Periodicals Review* 19, no. 2, 1986. [Research Society for Victorian Periodicals, Johns Hopkins University Press]: 63–67. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20082203>.

Diana Dixon illustrates the change in editorial presence in the nineteenth century youth periodical. During the course of the century, editors constructed their identity to be less apparently authoritative and more friendly and approachable. Dixon's article supports my analysis of *GOP* and *BOP* editors and writers as familiarized adults, which is a key point in my argument that these magazines used the rhetorical strategy of a kindly narrator to control readers and prevent reading resistance.

Drotner, Kirsten. *English Children and their Magazines: 1751-1945* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1988)

Kirsten Drotner is a Professor of Media Studies at the University of Southern Denmark. This study of English children's magazines spans from the beginning of juvenile magazines in the mid-eighteenth century to 1945. Drotner examines social history as a context for the rise and fall of these magazines, and argues that

the magazines give an important glimpse into understanding popular British culture through history. Drotner's chapter "Commercial Morality for Adolescent Girls and Boys, 1870-1918" offers an excellent explanation of the effect the mass printing culture in mid-nineteenth century Britain had on the production of juvenile literature. Another aspect of Drotner's work that is particularly illuminating is her focus on the economic aspects of the children's magazine market. Drotner argues that though reformers such as the Religious Tract Society attempted to effect social change through publication, their goal first and foremost was to maintain a profitable magazine run, which affected the production of the magazine in tying it to commercialism.

Doughty, Terri, ed., *Selections from The Girl's Own Paper, 1880-1907* (Peterborough: Broadview Press, 2004).

Terri Doughty is a professor of English at Vancouver Island University. Doughty's collection gathers a diverse mix of the content of the *Girl's Own Paper* in the time period I am studying, offering commentary. While her sources must be understood as subjective due to Doughty's editorial work, pages are reproduced as facsimiles, rendering the material as close to the original as possible. Doughty organizes the content in manageable sections like "Work," "Self-Culture," and "Independent Living." Her commentary and reasoning for including the articles she selected is useful in revealing the text's context and larger ideas. Though not as valuable in several ways as studying the original documents, reading the reproduced articles in an organized manner helps me to see themes emerge more quickly. The years spanning the turn of the century show the development of the icon of the "New Girl." In addition, the emphases the editors placed on instruction for girls is even more evident.

Dunae, Patrick A. "Boys' Literature and the Idea of Empire, 1870-1914." *Victorian Studies* 24, no.1 (Autumn, 1980): 105–21. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3826881>.

In this article, Patrick Dunae, a professor of history at Vancouver Island University, focuses on the ideology that the *BOP* and other boys' papers relayed in the late-nineteenth-century. Examining the casual incorporation of "Empire" in youth magazines, Dunae concludes that such fiction promoted imperialism among youth and inspired patriotism, channeling the violence and mischievous rebelliousness characteristic of penny dreadfuls into didactic texts. Dunae's text is salient to my second chapter due to its focus on the stratification of youth literature. Dunae shows the division between "wholesome" and "pernicious" material, an idea that contextualizes the rise of the *GOP* and *BOP*.

---. "Penny Dreadfuls: Late Nineteenth-Century Boys' Literature and Crime." *Victorian Studies* 22, no. 2 (January 1, 1979): 133–50. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3826801>.

Patrick Dunae examines penny dreadfuls in their supposed role as instigators of juvenile crime. He investigates several criminal trials in which the prosecutors linked the consumption of penny dreadfuls to criminal action, also noting specific periodicals that were most often charged as the inciting literature. Dunae argues

that these cases tell us less about the link between literature and crime, and more about the adult middle class' impressions on working class youth culture and the moral panic this literature produced among them. Dunae supports this well with his focus on middle class reform efforts. His emphasis on the middle class reactions accounts for the somewhat abrupt conclusion that penny dreadfuls actually endorsed the established order.

Ferrall, Charles, and Anna Jackson. *Juvenile Literature and British Society, 1850-1950*. New York: Routledge, 2010.

Charles Ferrall and Anna Jackson's book contextualizes what it was to be a nineteenth-century "adolescent" or "juvenile." I use the definitions in this work as a basis for my definition of "youth." Examining a wide range of juvenile literature in late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century Britain, this book covers both popular sensational stories and didactic content. More importantly, the book offers an interpretation of the adolescent psyche and how it interacted with literature at a liminal time for British youth.

Fierman, Daniel. "Lemony Snicket Is the New Harry Potter." *Entertainment Weekly's EW.com*. *Entertainment Weekly*, May 24, 2002. Accessed Jan. 27, 2016.

Daniel Fierman's news article on Daniel Handler and the success of his series, *A Series of Unfortunate Events* offers insight into the publishing process of the books. Fierman reveals *ASOUE*'s beginnings as adult fiction, and also focuses on the Victorian and Gothic aspects of Handler's work. Providing direct quotes from Handler as well as illuminating contextual details about the books, Fierman's article is helpful in understanding the root of Handler's inspiration and stylistic choices.

Forrester, Wendy. *Great-Grandmama's Weekly: A Celebration of The Girl's Own Paper 1880-1901*. Guildford and London: Lutterworth Press, 1980.

Wendy Forrester compiles a glimpse of the *Girl's Own Paper* for the first twenty years of its publication. While not a scholarly analysis of the periodical, it characterizes and compiles a useful selection of articles, illustrations and magazine ephemera that inform about the character of the magazine and of its editors. Forrester praises the magazine as an influential institution for girls, and focuses her work on highlighting the instructive and culturally enriching content the magazine provided. It lacks information about circulation, readership and editorial policy, yet it does include a lavish view of the world in which the magazine operated.

Gramsci Antonio. "Hegemony," in *Literary Theory: An Anthology*. Ed. Julie Rivken and Michael Ryan, 2nd ed. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2004.

Antonio Gramsci's idea of hegemony in this excerpt builds upon and offers a counterpoint to Althusser's ideas about ideology. Gramsci writes that the masses consent to subscribe to ideology because they are deferring to a respected

authority (the “hegemons.” This model offers the potential for resistance because the subjects of ideology need to accept the hegemon as able constructors of that ideology. For the purposes of my study, I categorize the RTS as hegemon that enforces middle class moral ideology in their magazines. Gramsci’s ideas are in dialogue with Althusser’s in my project, both offering versions of ideology that could explain the methods and successfulness of the *GOP* and *BOP*.

Holt, Jenny. “The Textual Formations of Adolescence in Turn-of-the-Century Youth Periodicals: ‘The Boy's Own Paper’ and Eton College Ephemeral Magazines.” *Victorian Periodicals Review* 35, Spring 2002.

Jenny Holt, a professor of English at Meiji University, examines how the periodical genre (specifically, the *Boy's Own Paper* and various Eton College magazines) became a representation of adolescence in late Victorian England. She argues that while papers like the *Boy's Own Paper* were didactic in nature and attempted to control youth literacy patterns and behavior, the nature of the periodical as a genre allowed for reader autonomy. Adolescent readers could deconstruct the text through various means and avoid the editorial control impressed by publishers. Therefore, the periodical genre became a space for subversive adolescent thought and adolescent creativity against the conservative ideals of publishers/editors such as those from the Religious Tract Society.

Kirkpatrick, Robert J. *From the Penny Dreadful to the Ha'Penny Dreadfuller: A Bibliographic History of the Boys' Periodical in Britain: 1762-1950*. London and Newcastle DE: The British Library and Oak Knoll Press, 2013.

Robert Kirkpatrick, who has compiled several bibliographies of boys’ fiction, attempts to tell the history of the “penny dreadful” in one comprehensive volume. To Kirkpatrick’s credit, he is able to highlight the most important publications of the 18th to 20th centuries, also including an informative introduction with an analysis of the style and content of these publications as well as a study of the criticism they provoked. Most notably, Kirkpatrick includes appendices with alphabetical and chronological entries of the penny dreadfuls, making this book a valuable resource for research. Kirkpatrick’s study is inherently useful to a study of boys’ periodicals because of the wealth of information he has compiled, yet the usefulness of this volume highlights its missing counterpart in the study of girls’ publications.

Lang, Marjory. “Childhood's Champions: Mid-victorian Children's Periodicals and the Critics.” *Victorian Periodicals Review* 13, 1/2 (Spring-Summer, 1980): 17-31. <http://0-www.jstor.org.dewey2.library.denison.edu/stable/20081920>.

In this article Marjory Lang surveys the importance of book critics as judges of taste and morality in the children’s publishing market. Lang contextualizes critics within the backdrop of Victorian views of children inherited from the Romantics, as well as within the Victorian ideology that literature was capable of great good or great harm, particularly for children. Lang attributes to critics the shift toward

more entertaining, yet largely moralist children's texts in the children's literature genre, which leads to her argument that studying critics in the mid-Victorian era offers a significant insight into attitudes toward children and children's reading. Lang's article effectively demonstrates the crucial role of critics, whom I see as an integral part of the reaction against penny dreadfuls and the creation of moralist papers like the *BOP* and *GOP*.

Moruzi, Kristine. *Constructing Girlhood through the Periodical Press, 1850-1915*. Farnham and Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2012.

Kristine Moruzi, a research fellow and lecturer at Deakin University, explores the concept of girlhood in girls' periodicals in the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-centuries. In the context of a growing print culture as a result of reduced printing costs, a reading culture flourished among girls, who had rising literacy rates and better education. Rather than relying on a single definition of girlhood endorsed by these periodicals, Moruzi contends that magazines produced conflicting images of girlhood—and attempted to reconcile them with the unification of a collective readership. Moruzi investigates six major girls' periodicals, the *Monthly Packet*, the *Girl of the Period Miscellany*, the *Girl's Own Paper*, *Atalanta*, the *Young Woman*, and the *Girl's Realm*. Using close readings of the content of these magazines such as advertisements, responses to readers, and short stories, she discusses the models of girlhood championed by the periodicals that girls were meant to aspire to, like the "educated girl" of the *Atalanta* and the "healthy girl" of *Girl's Own Paper*. This book stands out because it focuses on periodicals rather than the novels that have had more academic attention, and because of the depth of its surveys (and surprising breadth) of the major girls' periodicals of the period.

Noakes, Richard. "The Boy's Own Paper and Late-Victorian Juvenile Magazines." In *Science in the Nineteenth-century Periodical: Reading the Magazine of Nature*, by Geoffrey Cantor, Gowan Dawson, Graeme Gooday, Richard Noakes, Sally Shuttleworth and Jonathan R. Topham, 152-171. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004.

Richard Noakes, a senior lecturer at the University of Exeter, offers a case study of science included in the *Boy's Own Paper* for the first five years of its publication, arguing that the magazine can illustrate the mass consumption of the sciences in late Victorian England. Using scientific articles from the *Boy's Own Paper*, Noakes reveals how the periodical attempted to improve circulation by attracting readers with scientific content, one of many tactics that other magazines employed. Noakes argues that the *Boy's Own Paper* was unoriginal in its quest to pull boy readers away from the penny dreadfuls and toward what some publishers viewed as wholesome material.

Nodelman, Perry. *The Hidden Adult: Defining Children's Literature*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008.

Perry Nodelman is a renowned children's literature scholar and professor at the University of Winnipeg. His book *The Hidden Adult: Defining Children's Literature* identifies the adult presence in children's literature and questions how it affects the youth reading experience. I place his argument that children's literature often embodies what the adult needs rather than what the young reader needs in the context of the issue of adults enforcing middle class ideology in nineteenth-century children's literature.

Olsen Stephanie. *Juvenile Nation: Youth, Emotions and the Making of the Modern British Citizen, 1880-1914*. London & New York: Bloomsbury, 2014.

Stephanie Olsen focuses on the concept of "informal education" in raising the modern British citizen. This shaping influence was taught by parents, religious institutions, voluntary associations, and most importantly for my research, the periodical press. Olsen examines how, at a time when childhood development was revisited as a concept and the idea of adolescence emerged, informal education attempted to train boys and girls emotionally as well as physically and mentally for the good of the Empire. This source, in its analysis of the construction of the modern British man, focuses heavily on development through boyhood. In the process, Olsen somewhat neglects girlhood and the way it was constructed. Nevertheless, this source is an important study of the way informal education shaped the next generation using means such as children's periodicals like the *Boy's Own Paper*.

Penner, Elizabeth. "'The Squire of Boyhood': G. A. Hutchison and the Boy's Own Paper." *Victorian Periodicals Review* 47, no. 4 (2014): 631-647. <https://muse.jhu.edu/> (accessed January 11, 2016).

Writing specifically about the *BOP* editor George Hutchison, Elizabeth Penner, a scholar from De Montfort University, demonstrates the new techniques Hutchison and other nineteenth-century editors of youth magazines used to make didactic material more entertaining and thus appealing for youth. Her attention to specific marketing strategies is useful to my argument about competition with the penny dreadfuls. More importantly, Penner's argument that Hutchison wanted the *BOP* to exist as permanent, "closed" texts rather than ephemeral magazines is a key part of my argument that this division is linked to class.

Reynolds, Kimberley. *Children's Literature*. 2nd ed. Tavistock, Great Britain: Writers and Their Work, 2012. Accessed January 19, 2016. ProQuest ebrary.

Kimberly Reynolds, a professor of children's literature at Newcastle University, agrees with Perry Nodelman's argument that children's literature often reflects adult needs rather than the needs of the young reader. Reynolds places a high importance upon sociological ideas about childhood in this book, because she believes that adult ideas about childhood influence the literature they produce for

youth. This book is useful in understanding the adult's role in perpetuating ideology in youth literature.

--- *Girls Only? Gender and Popular Children's Fiction in Britain, 1880-1910*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990.

Reynolds asserts that the separation of girls' fiction and boys' fiction during the rise of mass juvenile readership (beginning in the 1880s) contributed to the way children perceived their roles and identities. Specifically, girls had the role as the "angel of the house" reinforced, while boys focused on the heroism and bravery of the characters in boys' stories. Reynolds extends this thesis by stating that this divide formed the basis for the division in children's books today. The author first orients her argument in historical context, explaining the state of Victorian/Edwardian literacy and education for children. The first two chapters dwell on the questions of education, class, and sexuality and how it framed the reading of children's literature by boys and girls. The latter part of the book is separated into boys' fiction and girls' fiction, with first a chapter on each sex's reading habits, and then a chapter that goes deeper into novel authors and the *Boy's Own Paper* and the *Girl's Own Paper*.

Rodgers, Beth, "Competing Girlhoods: Competition, Community, and Reader Contribution in The Girl's Own Paper and The Girl's Realm." *Victorian Periodicals Review*, 45, no. 3, Fall 2012; 277-300

Beth Rodgers, a professor of English at Aberystwyth University, argues that though the *Girl's Own Paper* and *The Girl's Realm* were somewhat exclusive and limiting, they nevertheless remained a strong force of community for their readers. Though it failed to properly address those living abroad and those of lower classes, the *GOP* attracted readers with a universal concept of accomplished girlhood. Readers enjoyed participating in competitions, polls and correspondence for the magazine, raising a discourse of girlhood. Rodgers states that the *GOP* did not sufficiently reconcile the problematic conflicting ideologies of modernity, class, nationality and gender. From her tone it can be inferred that she is dubious of the *GOP's* actual valuation of the girl's contributed content—hinting instead that it was the goal of the magazine to create a unified, homogenized readership.

Smith, Michelle J. *Empire in British Girls' Literature and Culture: Imperial Girls, 1880-1915*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2011.

This critical source joins a long line of texts analyzing the presence of imperialism and its ideals in British children's literature in the late Victorian, early Edwardian eras. Michelle Smith, a scholar from Deakin University, is original in that she focuses on girls' literature, an area previously understudied. She argues that print culture played a role in constructing the "ideal" girl during this period, showing girls how they could become useful citizens abroad and at home. Her chapter "Shaping the 'Useful' Girl: The *Girl's Own Paper*, 1880-1907" supports my argument that the *GOP* encouraged girls to develop their own self-culture as a means to create useful citizens.

Springhall, John. *Youth, Popular Culture and Moral Panics: Penny Gaffs to Gangsta-Rap, 1830-1996*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998.

This book addresses the “moral panics” that occurred in Britain and America with developments of popular culture that disrupted societal values and supposedly incited juvenile crime. Springhall, a scholar from the University of Ulster, argues that society constructs cultural values (often during these moral panics) by establishing a hierarchy of what is “respectable” and what is not. Most relevant to my research, Springhall includes chapters on the economic commercialization of juvenile literature and how the penny dreadful became a scapegoat for juvenile crime. Springhall mostly manages to avoid the trap of equating 19th century British societal trends with 20th century American ones by separating these issues into different chapters, and relating them only in the sense that both contain moral panics.

--- “‘Disseminating Impure Literature’: The ‘Penny Dreadful’ Publishing Business Since 1860.” *The Economic History Review*, New Series, 47, No. 3 (August 1, 1994): 567–84. doi:10.2307/2597594.

John Springhall examines penny dreadfuls from an economic standpoint rather than a cultural one in this article. He argues that the juvenile publishing industry centered on Fleet Street became an important entrepreneurial area in the second half of the 19th century. Examining the business practices of these publishing ventures, he discovers that creativity was almost always subordinated to corporate management, concluding that the penny dreadful business was more important than the craft. Springhall notes the limitations of his study by admitting that there is a lack of surviving evidence for small or short-lived businesses. However, there is no dearth of information on the larger companies such as the Amalgamated Press, and so Springhall is able to draw strong conclusions from their success.

--- “‘Pernicious Reading’? ‘The Penny Dreadful’ as Scapegoat for Late-Victorian Juvenile Crime.” *Victorian Periodicals Review*, 27, no. 4 (Winter, 1994), 326-349. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20082795>.

Examining the criminalization of penny dreadfuls in Victorian views, Springhall claims that the condemnation of this genre was fundamentally class-based. Springhall also significantly points out that many Victorian critics of penny dreadfuls had unfounded fears that penny dreadfuls would lead to social unrest because of their rebellious characters and plotlines—arguing instead that the penny dreadfuls actually had surprisingly conservative leanings. This article effectively supports my point that the criticism of penny dreadfuls stemmed from class anxiety, as well as furthering my argument, also found in Patrick Dunae’s work, that penny dreadfuls were not as subversive as critics feared.

Stephens, John. In Lawrence R. Sipe, "Children's Response to Literature: Author, Text, Reader, Context." In *Theory Into Practice* 38, no.3: 120. *Sociological Collection, EBSCOhost*. Accessed February 13, 2016.

John Stephens, a professor of English at Macquarie University and children's literature scholar, claims because adults produce texts for children, texts for children are created with adult ideology inherently. This claim is important in viewing children's literature as whole in my research because it suggests that the adult presence is subtly present in every text produced for children—even fictional stories—just as ideology is.

Thompson, E.P. *The Making of the English Working Class*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1964.

The historian E.P. Thompson's most influential work, written when he was a scholar at The University of Leeds, describes the emergence of the English working class and the class consciousness that developed in England in the nineteenth century. This class consciousness became a crucial part of English identity, and made the working class a defined group that drew attention from middle class reformers.

Williams, Raymond. *Culture and Society: 1870-1950*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1960.

In this influential book, Raymond Williams, a scholar of cultural studies, redefines how we look at culture and its social and historical effect. He examines the view of culture and how it was defined throughout the past few centuries. Most relevant for my research, Williams relates the idea of the masses that arose in the wake of the emergence of the working class. Because of a heightened sense of class consciousness, traditional fears of the "mob" developed into fears of the "masses" when the working class became more clearly defined. Mass printing culture added to this anxiety by raising fears that the masses would be easily morally swayed by the abundance of penny dreadfuls on the market.