Transatlantic *Little Women*: Louisa May Alcott, the Woman Writer and Literary Community

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Louisa May Alcott’s *Little Women* (1868-9) has traditionally been conceived as “the American myth”;¹ a text that embodies the white, middle-class ideologies that have come to be associated with a post-bellum domestic idealism.² As Barbara Sicherman has demonstrated, this reading is intrinsically problematic. Assuming a “universality of female experience and a single mode of reading,” this approach positions Alcott’s novel as a straightforward representation of an instantly recognisable, innate “Americanness” that embodies a universal standard of domesticity.³ My purpose in this essay is to problematise this nationalistic focus by placing *Little Women* within a dynamic of transatlantic exchange, arguing that the novel’s national characteristics are defined, and conferred, through a series of encounters with its transnational literary precedent.⁴ For this purpose, I focus on the complex but readily available figure of the female writer, emphasising how Alcott’s semi-autobiographical depiction of authorship, embodied in her character Jo March, should be conceived as part of a wider dialogue which saw writers consistently respond to, adapt or invoke representations of the author from across the Atlantic. By placing Alcott in dialogue with writers such as Fanny Fern, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Charles Dickens and Elizabeth Gaskell we can look at how fictitious representations of community come to mirror, reflect and comment on the larger historical community of which they are a part. This essay demonstrates how Alcott’s relationship with a transatlantic community acts as both a productive methodology and a critical tool that allows her to comment upon the gendered discourses that support and limit the cultural import of the ambitious female author. It is through this complex comparative framework, I will argue, that Alcott is able to affirm her model of the American domestic aesthetic, the result of a series of turbulent, experimental adaptations and narrative disruptions.

Beginning her writing career in the late 1850s, Louisa Alcott inherited a series of cultural paradigms that both facilitated her entry into the literary marketplace and defined her creative output. From the 1820s onwards, the United States’ publishing industries expanded on an unprecedented scale, with

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technological advancements and the introduction of sophisticated marketing systems fuelling and fulfilling the demand for mass-produced popular, accessible fiction. This market became the realm of the female, domestic author. Related to both the “popular” and the “everyday,” this kind of domestic fiction, as popularised by writers in the antebellum period such as Catherine Sedgwick, Susan Warner, and Harriet Beecher Stowe, was predicated upon the traditional middle-class values of morality, domesticity, and sentiment associated primarily with female sensibility. As a writer of the transitional period Alcott relied upon these traditional, domestic frameworks to facilitate her entry into the literary market place. The favourable critical response to Little Women typically reflected these critical paradigms, with publications like The Galaxy invariably focusing upon Alcott’s accurate, and sensitive portrayal of family life: “The incidents are those of everyday child-life; the talk is natural and childlike; the narrative is lively, and the moral teaching conveyed in a manner to make a lasting impression on the children who read the book.” The readily accessible trope of domestic community therefore provided the means by which Alcott could achieve financial and commercial success, while also establishing a framework in which she could explore her position as an ambitious female author within a developing American literary system.

However, for a writer such as Alcott, the antebellum domestic tradition also severely limited the cultural significance of her literary production. Criticism of domestic fiction relied upon a pervasive rhetoric that drew parallels between popularity and aesthetic deficiency. In his often cited letter to William Ticknor in 1855, Nathaniel Hawthorne gives substance to this cultural debate:

America is now wholly given over to a d----d mob of scribbling women and I should have no chance of success while the public taste is occupied with their trash – and should be ashamed of myself if I did succeed? 8

Through his reliance upon a gendered rhetoric of commodification, Hawthorne casts the works of popular female authors as aesthetically deficient commodities; products of a newly emerging consumer led culture. He distinguishes between “the trash” of mass-market production and his own literature, distancing his work from a popular culture by imagining his literary labour as an artisan, independent enterprise. In discriminating between two conceptualisations of authorship, Hawthorne demonstrates what Susan Williams argues is a deliberate distinction between the terms “writer” and “author” on behalf of the nineteenth-century literary critic in which women’s domestic, realistic “writing” becomes the negative standard by which to define the professionalised, male category of
“authorship.” A writer such as Louisa May Alcott, therefore, found herself in a double-bind: with her commercial and critical success dependent upon her conformance with middle-class domestic values, this achievement similarly compounded her failure as a serious, professional “author.” The female writer in the nineteenth-century United States, then, represented an unstable figure whose identity was continually debated, as the limitations and possibilities of female authorship as a credible employment were explored.

These paradigms of gendered writings that informed the prevalent cultural stereotypes of the woman writer in the United States were also at work in British literary culture. John Stuart Mill’s assessment of the female artist as an “amateur,” whose subjugation to domestic responsibility positioned them in ideological opposition to her professional male counterpart, was reflected in the discourse of many anxious female commentators. In February 1850, in a letter to the artist Eliza Fox, writer Elizabeth Gaskell attempted to justify female artistry as a legitimate employment for women. Positioning art as a cathartic practice that harmonises between domestic responsibility and writerly ambitions, she states:

One thing is pretty clear, Women, must give up living an artist’s life, if home duties are to be paramount. It is different with men, whose home duties are so small a part of their life. However we are talking of women. I am sure it is healthy for them to have refuge in the hidden world of Art to shelter themselves in when too much pressed upon by daily small Lilliputian arrows of peddling cares; it keeps them from being morbid.

This “hidden world of art” is justified as a personal refuge that offers itself as a cure for a morbid fascination with trivial “Lilliputian” concerns. Becoming, in effect, a cathartic, necessary activity for women trapped by their domestic responsibilities, this hidden art paradoxically justifies the female artist’s excursion into the professional literary marketplace. In *Folly as it Flies* (1868), American writer Fanny Fern articulates similar concerns. Affirming art as a necessary practice born out of a frustration with homely duty, she calls to her discontented readers: “Write! Rescue a part of each week at least for reading, and putting down on paper, for your own private benefit, your thought and feelings.” In presenting writing as an acceptable method of self-expression, successful authors Fern and Gaskell affirm the private, everyday traditions of domestic writing by using these established cultural paradigms to structure their own forays into the publishing industry. However, as Gaskell implies, this justification also provides the tools of its own critique. In affirming the “peddling cares” of the everyday as *the* impetus for writing, women necessarily “give up living an artist’s life,” affirming their
role as literary amateurs. The dual facets of a female artist’s experience, balancing artistic and domestic responsibility, as Gaskell later noted in her biography *The Life of Charlotte Brontë* (1857), are, at best, “difficult to be reconciled.”

It is in this context that the exploration of writing within *Little Women* should be located. Alcott relies upon a dialogue with a transatlantic literary precedent to expose and explore the paradoxes of domestic fiction, creating, in turn, a mode of experimentation on which her particular brand of domestic fiction is predicated. This becomes evident in Alcott’s explicit adaptation of her British literary precedent, as the March sisters transform Charles Dickens’ *The Pickwick Papers* (1836-1837) into an amateur literary production. Constructing a weekly newspaper entitled the “Pickwick Portfolio” to which each sister contributes her own small portion of “original tales, poetry, local news, [and] funny advertisements,” they translate Dickens’ satiric representation of a masculine authorial community into a domestic setting: from announcing the sad disappearance and presumed loss of the beloved pet Mrs Snowball Pat Paw, to describing with a humorous solemnity the “sad accident” that led “Mr. Pickwick” to fall head-first into a tub of water. Mr. Pickwick’s desire to uncover “truths,” to travel the land in order to collect experience, his desire to contribute his findings in writing in pursuit of these objectives, is transformed into a structuring mechanism to contain and express what are decidedly female preoccupations – from shopping excursions to cooking lessons. In this vein, the girls compile a helpful “Hints” section, where, like Dickens, they humorously affirm their character’s faults:

If S.P. didn’t use so much soap on his hands, he wouldn’t always be late at breakfast. A.S. is requested not to whistle in the street. T.T., please don’t forget Amy’s napkin. N.W. must not fret because his dress has not nine tucks.

Using the authority imbibed from Dickens’ critical method, the girls create a female literary community that is used to assess their domestic responsibilities and their individual foibles; Jo March’s alter-ego “A[ugustus] S[nodgrass],” for example, is openly condemned for “his” decidedly unfeminine “whistling in the street,” while parallels between Dickens’ sensational poet and Jo’s own equally sensational reading and writing habits are invoked. In being the subject rather than being the object of critique, like their Pickwickian counterparts, the girls affirm the dynamic model of creative experimentation that encourages each of the sisters to construct their own critical narrative and the model of supportive female community it promotes. The March sisters’ model of imaginative, independent authorship, therefore, reflects in microcosm Alcott’s wider engagement with a
transatlantic literary community, as she adapts her textual precedent in order to explore alternative models of authorship, and to affirm, and support, her method of creative experimentation.

This process is also in evidence in Alcott’s unusually detailed depiction of her protagonist’s writing process. Unlike the Charlotte Brontë of Gaskell’s biography whose writing is consistently subordinated to domestic duty, Jo March’s creative fervour is allowed to develop, relatively unchecked by any narrative framing. In her “garret,” a space that is ambiguously constructed as an extended part of the house, and yet a definitively separate, private area, Jo allows her “vortex” to take hold:

When the writing fit came on, she gave herself up to it with entire abandon, and led a blissful life, unconscious of want, care or bad weather, while she sat safe and happy in an imaginary world, full of friends almost as real and dear to her as any in the flesh. Sleep forsook her eyes, meals stood untested, day and night were all too short to enjoy the happiness which blessed her only at such times, and made these hours worth living if they bore no other fruit. The divine afflatus usually lasted a week or two, and then she emerged form her ‘vortex’ hungry, sleepy, cross or despondent (211).

In her literal and imaginative refuge, Jo March discovers what Gaskell would term “a hidden world” of art. As with Gaskell’s metaphor, this practice is both predicated upon domestic responsibility, as well embodying a symbolic removal from it. In her creative absorption, Jo finds an alternative model of community, “an imaginary world, full of friends almost as real and dear as any in the flesh” in which she is able to lead a “safe,” “happy” and “blissful life.” This alternative reality, therefore, offers itself as a spectre of domesticity, as the values of friendship, comfort and stability on which the domestic community is predicated, are re-imagined to create a “safe” illusionary alternative in which the female author can prosper, paradoxically removed from the centre of everyday life. Alcott, therefore, domesticates the process of writing, enabling it to reflect, rather than undermine the values that legitimate a woman’s literary activity.

The safety and happiness of this illusionary community, however, is problematised by Jo’s creative “vortex.” A word that Alcott used to describe her own flurry of creative activity, the term was often applied in the nineteenth-century to literary production in order to articulate the disordered, absorbing whirlwind of the creative process. For Ralph Waldo Emerson, importantly, it distinguished between the ordered process of manufacturing art on a mass scale, and the unique creative process that defines works of individual genius, or the
“Self-Reliant” man. This series of introspective musings that came to define the transcendental experience become the object of Alcott’s satire in *Transcendental Wild Oats* (1873). Critiquing the impracticality of “the vortex” as an isolating, self-indulgent practice practised by the men of her fictional commune, Alcott depicts the detrimental effect these fanciful wanderings have upon those denied the space and time to indulge in their own musings: specifically, the women. As a disruptive, all-absorbing, individualised process, Jo’s “vortex,” then, can be interpreted in a similar vein. Disturbing rather than promoting the communal values on which her writing is predicated, her creativity manifests itself in her inability to eat, sleep or participate in any form of everyday activity as she allows her “genius” full scope “to burn” (211). Alcott’s critique here is explicit. Relying upon a traditional motif of gendered authorial production, she positions Jo’s absorption in her writing as injurious to her personal health and temper, while being ultimately unproductive. The passage culminates in a mocking tone that satirises the young writer’s sense of a “divine afflatus,” revealing all energy of the creative flurry has been in vein, as she emerges from her isolation “hungry, sleepy, cross or despondent.” Within this short passage, then, Alcott holds in a tension a traditional conceptualisation of gendered authorial practice that she uses to condemn her protagonist’s wilful isolation, with representations of writing as a cathartic, necessary practice. Jo, therefore, acts out in microcosm the paradoxes at the centre of this transatlantic dialogue, while affirming a model of creative experimentation which the narrative cannot easily dismiss.

However, as productive as Alcott’s adaptation of communal models of authorship proves – as epitomised in “The Pickwick Portfolio” – it is in her disruptions and dismissals of these inherited narratives that her critique of the American marketplace becomes evident. Her transatlantic framing, therefore, becomes a critical device which exposes the limitations of American literary models for young ambitious female writers. This is reflected in the systematic examination of literary genre as Jo, with her customary spirit, progressively attempts, and dismisses the models of authorship available to her: beginning with the sensational tale. In the period Alcott in which was writing, the phenomenon of sensational fiction, as represented in the texts of British authors Mary Elizabeth Braddon and Wilkie Collins, was capturing the imagination of audiences on both sides of the Atlantic. This kind of literature, constructed by both men and women, was read by a largely middle-class audience and soon became renowned for its dramatic, emotive, and shocking content, while often being tempered with an overt moral tone. Alcott’s exploration of this generic model, in contrast, is contextualised by its relationship to an earlier, specifically American form of
sensational tale, as epitomised by the illustrated newspaper. Given a copy of such a pictorial sheet by “a studious-looking lad,” Jo’s interest is captured by the melodramatic illustration of an Indian in full war costume tumbling over a precipice with a wolf at his throat, while two infuriated young gentlemen, with unnaturally small feet and big eyes, were stabbing each other close by, and a dishevelled female was flying away in the background, with her mouth wide open (213).

While Alcott leaves this particular newspaper unidentified, she relies upon her audience recognising an image typical of the genre’s traditionally dramatic character, representing through her lurid image the gender and racial stereotypes depicted by illustrated publications such as Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Newspaper and Frederick Gleason and Marturin Murray Ballou’s The Flag of Our Union in the antebellum period. Choosing to focus upon a highly-gendered model of sensational fiction that historically did not attract many contributions from white, middle class women writers, Alcott places Jo in a precarious position, in which both her class and gender identity are threatened.19

Her search for exotic material for her sensational thrillers leads her further from home, hunting newspapers for accidents, incidents and crimes; she excited the suspicion of public librarians by asking for works on poisons; ... She thought she was prospering finely; but, unconsciously she was beginning to desecrate some of the womanliest attributes of a woman’s character. She was living in bad society; and imaginary though it was, its influence affected her, for she was feeding heart and fancy on dangerous unsubstantial food, and was fast brushing the innocent bloom from her nature by a premature acquaintance with the darker side of life, which comes soon enough to all of us (275).

Jo’s creative vortex is once again characterised by her unhealthy relationship with an illusionary community. Despite her belief that she is “prospering finely,” her single-minded exploits lead her into an imaginary “bad society,” gorging on the “dangerous and unsubstantial food” of criminal exploits. Within this sensationalist context, the lack of sustenance that characterised her creative experiences in the garret is transformed into an Edenic experience in which Jo tastes the forbidden fruit that taints her “innocent bloom.” In her abandonment of the familial community in favour of this imaginary society, she inevitably “desecrate[s] some of the womanliest attributes of a woman’s character” – the repetition of the noun as adjective merely serves to enhance Jo’s wayward behaviour – both turning her back on domestic responsibility, and contributing to a genre that is defined in
opposition to traditional constructions of female authorship. It is fitting, then, that the culmination of Jo’s foray into sensation fiction sees the subordination of her feminine identity to that of the newspaper to which she contributes. Imagining the words “Weekly Volcano” emblazoned across her head, Jo becomes defined by her unstable, explosive, unfeminine literary activities. This specifically American, sensationalist model of fiction is unable to support Alcott’s ambitious heroine. Unlike *The Pickwick Papers*, this masculine model of authorship is represented as neither pertinent nor relevant, a static conventional method that offers nothing to the ambitious female author.

While Alcott’s critical assessment relies upon the strictly gendered conventions of the sensationalist narrative, her critique also indicates that the intrinsic problem with the genre is its aesthetic inferiority. In her endeavours Jo is likened to the figure of popular sensational writer E.D.E.N. Southworth, who is reincarnated in *Little Women* as S.L.A.N.G. Northbury. Parodying Southworth’s appeal to a low-brow or “slang” culture, Alcott belittles both her subject matter and her financial and literary success – “she knows just what folks like, and gets paid well for writing it” (213). In echoing the words of Nathaniel Hawthorne as he reluctantly praises and describes the bestselling writer, the narrator relies upon well-established understandings of gendered “popular fiction” as easily produced, commodity texts that appeal to an expansive, cross-class audience. The newspaper fiction Jo peruses, and attempts to write, is classified in this vein. In her reading she encounters the “usual labyrinth of love, mystery and murder, for the story belonged to that class of light literature in which the passions have a holiday” (213). This genre is problematic as it relies less upon the turbulent, independent creative processes of the “vortex” than upon the replication of “light” literary tropes. Alcott positions the literature through which Southworth made her fortune as a lesser cultural product, which proves to be inappropriate literary model for a female writer seeking to articulate her feminine sensibilities. Jo, Alcott implies, can do better.

After her failed attempt at the highly-criticised sensational style, she tries her skills at other genres available to American women writers: moral literature, and children’s writing. In her desire to create some form of marketable fiction, Jo turns to British literary precedents: Maria Edgeworth, Hannah More and Mary Martha Sherwood. Rather than translate their didactic works into a contemporary American present, however, Jo reproduces kind of “the stiff and cumbrous costume of the last century” that is neither appropriate to a young writer who has a penchant for “lively fancy and girlish romance” (281) nor has an audience within mid-century United States. When the didacticism of the eighteenth-century
moral sermon proves to be unsuccessful, Jo turns her hand to children’s fiction. In what is an interesting self-reflexive moment, Alcott mocks the traditions of her chosen genre:

The only person who offered enough to make it worth her while to try juvenile literature, was a worthy gentleman who felt it his mission to convert all the world to his particular belief. But as much as she liked to write for children, Jo could not consent to depict all her naughty boys as being eaten by bears, or tossed by mad bulls because they didn’t go to a certain Sunday school, nor all the good infants who did go, of course, as rewarded with by every kind of bliss, from gilded gingerbread to escorts of angels, when they departed this life, with psalms or sermons on their lisping tongues (281).

Alcott satirises the apocalyptic tone of juvenile fiction; frightening children with images of “being eaten by bears, or tossed by mad bulls,” or rewarding them with futile gifts such as gingerbread, these moral tales offer no room for creative experimentation. The fixed narrative structures imbibed from religious moral codes, and out-moded British eighteenth-century didactic fiction, act as a negative influence upon Jo’s imagination. In exploring the debilitating effect of Europe upon the American literary consciousness, Alcott participates in a debate that had been a source of anxiety for many authors of the antebellum period. The “tapeworm of Europe,” in Emerson’s words, was seen as a parasite in the native imagination, creating a culture of imitation that inevitably led to the production of aesthetically inferior products while stifling the development of an intrinsically American literary identity. In this instance, Alcott applies British literary models to emphasise both the repressive influence of a European precedent, while also affirming the lack of dynamic models of authorship available to the mid-century female writer in the United States. Both static and inaccessible, the exacting moral tale for young children and the didactic fiction aimed at adults are neither relevant nor dynamic literary forms; but, Alcott implies, neither is there a viable, adaptable American alternative. Jo is, therefore, forced to “cork-up her inkstand.” Forced to choose between desecrating one’s womanly character, moral sermonising, or depicting little boys being torn up by bulls, her decision is depicted as the only correct one.

It is, however, in this pivotal moment of failure in which no experimentation is possible in which both Alcott and Jo “find their style at last” (340): their solution, to affirm the process of experimentation. Returning home after the death of her younger homely sibling Beth, Jo attempts to take up her mantle but is unable to find any satisfaction in her domestic duty. The narrator states:
Now, if she had been the heroine of a moral story-book, she ought at this period of her life to have gone about doing good in a mortified bonnet, with tracts in her pocket. But you see Jo wasn’t a heroine; she was only a struggling human girl, like hundreds of others, and she just acted out her nature, being sad, cross, listless or energetic as the mood suggested (339).

In positioning her protagonist as a form of anti-heroine, Alcott deliberately distances her literary creation from the stock conventions of “moral story-book” fiction. In affirming Jo’s individuality, however, she paradoxically places her juxtaposition with “hundreds of other” young women, disappointed in their ambitions. It is in this “struggle,” this process of experimentation, that the key to literary success is located. It is no accident that Alcott’s use of rhetoric here draws parallels with the description of the “vortex.” The tumbling list of emotions that characterise the creative process cannot be controlled so as to be clothed in a “mortified bonnet,” nor can they be contained by heroic narrative conventions. Jo’s creative failures, therefore, become her successes. Demonstrating the inapplicability of the sensational, juvenile and moral fiction to the American marketplace, Jo’s work is the culmination of her series of experiments, a critical assessment of her own placing within the literary system. Her commercially and aesthetically successful “little story” is a narrative formulated from experimentation with narrative, affirming the model of adaptation and community as established by “The Pickwick Portfolio” – a work inspired by familial values and a negotiation with a British literary precedent. It is through Little Women’s complex double-framing, through Jo’s ultimate successful failure, that Alcott is able to affirm her own brand of American domestic aesthetic, predicated upon the dynamic processes of critical experimentation promoted by, and sustained in, the novel’s transatlantic encounters.

In describing their works as “humble wanderers” within a “charitable world” (340), both Alcott and Jo are guilty of belittling their literary achievements; these “wandering” narratives insist upon being read within an expansive, transnational framework. Acting as a framing device by which myths of feminine creativity are disseminated, Alcott’s engagement with a transatlantic community provides a comparative model against which an American alternative is juxtaposed, while concurrently instilling a model of creative adaptation in which the female “vortex” can operate. Only in exploring Alcott’s specific depiction of the female writer, her adaptations and dismissals of traditional generic types, can we uncover what is her implicit critique of the opportunities afforded to women writers within the American marketplace, and her affirmation of her own experimental, and eminently successful, literary project.
Endnotes


4 In this approach I am indebted to the recent work of Paul Giles and John Carlos Rowe who explore the transnational implications of nineteenth-century American literature. Adopting the term ‘transnational’ to refer to the rapid circulation of ideas, labour and capital that transcend national boundaries, preserving their integrity but also disrupting their stability, Rowe argues that it is impossible to dispense with the ‘national’ in pursuit of the ‘transnational’. Placing emphasis on movements across spaces, upon transcending ideological boundaries, a critical transnational paradigm can, therefore, potentially reveal inconsistencies and incoherencies within any single defined entity (See John Carlos Rowe, “Nineteenth-century U.S. Literary Culture and Transnationality,” *PLMA* 118 [2003]: 77; and Paul Giles, *Transatlantic Insurrections: British Culture and the Formation of American Literature, 1730-1860* [Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 2001], 62). Conversely, the nation, or the region, as a concept, destabilises the processes of globalisation, emphasising the specific cultural context of a given place, while asserting what can be counter-hegemonic practices. The dual focus of a transnational framework, therefore, enables spatial boundaries to be interrogated, negotiated and upheld as the specific location and wider cultural context are brought into dialectical contention. A transatlantic paradigm, acting as a geographically specific example of transnational concept, works in a similar fashion. Reading *Little Women* within the context of its transatlantic cultural context, then, has the effect of emphasising the literal and ideological boundaries that define Alcott’s conceptualisation of national difference, and the issues of female authorship that prove a pertinent subject on both sides of the Atlantic. In her simultaneously specific and expansive focus, Alcott is able to offer a critical commentary on the gendered hegemonies that define experience of the professional woman writer. For more on the culture of exchange between Britain and the United States see Lawrence Levine, *Highbrow/lowbrow: The Emergence of Literary Hierarchy in America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990). For a concise summary of all Alcott’s literary sources in *Little Women* see Jesse Crister, “Alcott’s Reading in *Little Women*: Shaping the Autobiographical Self,” *Resources for American Literary Study* 20.1 (1994): 27-36.


6 Both Naomi Sofer and Richard Brodhead argue persuasively that Alcott’s career from the 1850s- 1880s is particularly significant in demonstrating the historical and ideological gap between the era of popular fiction and the move towards a high-brow literary product at the end of the nineteenth-century. See especially Naomi Sofer, *Making the America of Art: Cultural Nationalism and Nineteenth-century Women Writers* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2005) 5-9; and Richard Brodhead, *Cultures of Letters: Scenes of Reading and Writing in Nineteenth-Century America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 74, 80.


9 For more on the relationship between Nathaniel Hawthorne, working class culture and mass production see Michael Newbury, Figuring Authorship in Antebellum America (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1997).


14 For a further discussion on how this justification informs Gaskell’s own social reform novels such as Mary Barton (1848), North and South (1853-54), see Alexis Easley, First Person Anonymous: Women Writers and Victorian Print Media, 1830-1870 (Surrey: Ashgate, 2004).


17 Louisa May Alcott, Little Women, ed. Anne K. Phillips & Gregory Eiselein (New York: Norton, 2004), 89. Further references will be indicated parenthetically in the text.


19 There were far fewer female authored sensational texts than male texts at mid-century, women preferring the more socially acceptable and readily available sentimental literary mode. See Shelley Streeby, American Sensations: Class, Empire, and the Production (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).

Bibliography


