

## INTRODUCTION

In the second half of the nineteenth century British art and literature were largely shaped by the prismatic influence of Pre-Raphaelitism.<sup>1</sup> *Fin-de-siècle* Aestheticism, New Realism and Decadence can, to a certain extent, be seen as the variegated outgrowths of Pre-Raphaelitism as it was reworked and inflected by artists and writers reacting both to experimental continental trends – such as French *l'art pour l'art*, Impressionism, Naturalism and Symbolism – and to an increasingly commodified British cultural market which they denounced yet at the same time enacted.<sup>2</sup> Even though only a handful of female artists and writers of this period are remembered today, women actually dominated the novel market in Victorian England, where they were popularly and critically acclaimed,<sup>3</sup> while the number of professional female artists more than doubled in the second half of the century.<sup>4</sup> Even as the Victorian debate on the ‘Woman Question’ reached a peak in the final two decades of the century, the increasing relevance of women artists to the new literary world and cultural sphere came to the fore with greatest force in the late 1880s and the 1890s, crystallizing around the controversial figure of the ‘New Woman’ in the mid-1890s and leading to a proliferation of novels and short stories exposing the ideology that enabled Victorian women’s oppression.<sup>5</sup>

In Sally Ledger’s estimation, New Woman fiction is ‘a body of literature that remains one of the most remarkable features of fin de siècle culture’.<sup>6</sup> But far from being homogenous, New Woman fiction was as diverse and contradictory as the New Woman herself. In fact, one might argue with Lyn Pykett that ‘*The New Woman* did not exist’: “New Woman”, both in fiction and in fact, was (and remains) a shifting and contested term. It was a mobile and contradictory figure or signifier<sup>7</sup> used to designate both feminists and anti-feminists; women who promoted sexual chastity and those advocating sexual freedom; authors who defended marriage and motherhood but also those who rejected both; women who campaigned for female suffrage and women who argued against it; those who published didactic and openly political texts as well as those producing subtle pieces primarily concerned with the aesthetics of writing.<sup>8</sup>

While critics of New Woman writing in the 1990s tended to focus on the more overtly feminist, sometimes propagandist, prose of the period, this last decade has turned to less vocal, more conflicted women writers, poets and novelists, whose works broach New Woman themes but from an aloof, highly literary angle, foregrounding aesthetic issues and complex gendered perspectives on Pre-Raphaelitism, New Realism, Aestheticism and Decadence. Leaving behind the idealism and morality of mid-century realism, these Aesthetic writers questioned conventional notions of beauty and/as femininity<sup>9</sup> and explored daring themes, while experimenting with new forms capable of conveying their sense of the fissured and the sombre. For Elaine Showalter, these 'daughters of decadence' provide 'the missing links between the great women writers of the Victorian novel and the modern fiction of Mansfield, Woolf, and Stein'.<sup>10</sup>

Indeed, the corpus of British Victorian *fin-de-siècle* studies has been greatly expanded in this last decade by researchers who have rediscovered the work of these non-canonical Aesthetic female writers.<sup>11</sup> After being out of print for nearly a century, more and more of their works are being reissued, generating increasing interest and a new awareness of the powerful originality of the literature produced by these neglected late-Victorian authors. Moreover, critical studies have brought home the realization that amongst these writers, some were both successful with the public and admired in the intellectual and literary circles of their times, befriending, rivaling, influencing and inspiring those whom literary history now regards as the foremost cultural icons of the turn of the century – authors such as Oscar Wilde, Henry James or Thomas Hardy. Studying networks of influence, sociabilities and the critical reception of the works of 'Vernon Lee' (Violet Paget), Mrs Humphry Ward, Rhoda Broughton, Alice Meynell, Ada Leveson, Elizabeth Pennell, 'Michael Field' (Katharine Harris Bradley and Edith Emma Cooper), 'Graham R. Tomson' (Rosamund Marriott Watson), 'Ouida' (Maria Louise Ramé), Florence Farr, Ella Hepworth Dixon, 'Elizabeth von Arnim' (Mary Russell), 'John Oliver Hobbes' (Pearl Mary Teresa Craigie), 'Lucas Malet' (Mary St Leger Kingsley Harrison) and many others<sup>12</sup> reveals indeed that these women authors were not secondary luminaries but the competitors and friends of their now more famous male colleagues. In other words, the critical categories and canonical texts that historiography has retained do not appear to correlate with the lived experience of the late-Victorian and Edwardian readers and critics, and thus fail to capture the full complexity of the cultural, literary and artistic efflorescence of the 1880–1920. A radical remapping of the late-Victorian literary scene is currently under way, to which this book hopes to make a contribution. Indeed, for critic Talia Schaffer, recovering the works of these 'forgotten female Aesthetes' is important for a more complete understanding of the transition between the generation of George Eliot and that of Virginia Woolf, from late-Victorian Realism, Aestheticism and Decadence to

Modernism. One such important bridging female literary figure is 'Lucas Malet'. Indebted to Naturalism *and* Aestheticism, Malet had to negotiate her place, originally as a female pictorial artist, then as a woman novelist, at the turn of the century. Her work, which anticipates,<sup>13</sup> belongs to and moves beyond New Woman fiction, interestingly crosses and connects a number of contexts and influences, thereby offering a unique insight into the processes of transition and poetic transformation at work in proto-Modernism.

In her aptly entitled essay, 'Malet the Obscure', Schaffer asks:

Who was Lucas Malet (Mary St. Leger Kingsley Harrison)? Depending on how we answer this question, we can produce two very different accounts of the history of women's writing after George Eliot. In the usual description of the period 1870-1910, there is no such novelist as Lucas Malet, and the literary landscape is completely populated by men ... But a literary critic who lived during the period saw the literary scene quite differently. In the view of Janet E. Courtney (*née* Hogarth), Lucas Malet was one the leaders of a golden era of women's writing<sup>14</sup>

Janet E. Courtney was not alone in her estimation. In the late 1890s, the Decadent poet Ernest Dowson wrote to his friend Arthur Moore that 'Indeed I have come to the conclusion that save Meredith, Hardy, Olive Schreiner & Lucas Malet it is safest to ignore English fiction'.<sup>15</sup> As for critic William Leonard Courtney, he called Malet 'a strong, true, consistent artist, and, if I am not mistaken, posterity will acclaim her, among the ranks of our contemporary women writers, as one of the greatest'.<sup>16</sup> Actuated by a compelling 'inward necessity',<sup>17</sup> 'Lucas Malet' started writing in the late 1870s. Her publishing career spans the entire period between 1882 until her death in 1931, with her experimental style shifting from Aestheticism to Naturalism, from Decadence to Modernism. Importantly, even though she showed herself a fundamentally Aesthetic writer in her attention to form, beauty and the sister arts, Malet was equally dedicated to observation and a follower of the French school of Naturalism from the start, which explains why so many of her novels were considered scandalous. As a result, her style is powerful and innovative and her voice is strong and lucid. Despite chronic bouts of depression and ill-health, and growing financial difficulties after 1905, she managed to lead a cosmopolitan, independent life and to produce an impressive oeuvre which comprises seventeen novels, several of which became bestsellers, two collections of short fiction, many short stories, a children's tale, play-scripts and miscellaneous other pieces, amongst them two landmark essays: 'The Progress of Women in Literature' (*Universal Review*, 1888) and 'The Threatened Re-Subjection of Women' (*Fortnightly Review*, 1905).

Born in 1852 into the famous literary family of the Kingsleys, she was the second daughter of the Anglican novelist Charles Kingsley, the niece of authors Henry Kingsley, George Kingsley and J. A. Froude, the cousin of the African

explorer Mary Henrietta Kingsley and by far the most successful of the Kingsleys in her lifetime.<sup>18</sup> A talented artist, she was initially trained as a painter at the Slade School of Art in London, in the early 1870s, with Evelyn Pickering (later De Morgan),<sup>19</sup> during the ferment of late Pre-Raphaelitism and early Impressionism. But her career in the visual arts was cut short in 1875 when her father died and she became engaged to his curate, Reverend William Harrison, in 1876. Her marriage was an unhappy one and the Harrisons separated a few years later. Although she was apparently never tempted to go back to painting as a profession, and even though she never wrote art criticism as such, Mary Kingsley Harrison's appreciation for the pictorial arts remained keen throughout her life. She shared this interest with her close friend, the celebrated and prolific art critic Julia Cartwright Ady (a specialist of the Italian Renaissance and a friend to many contemporary British and French artists) and her sister Rose Kingsley who wrote extensively on French art, graduated from the Beaux-Arts in Paris and was awarded the title of 'officier de l'instruction publique' in recognition of her influence in spreading knowledge of French art.<sup>20</sup> Kingsley Harrison's large circle of acquaintances and friends included artists and art critics as well as novelists, dramatists and poets, among whom we find Marie Belloc Lowndes; E. F. Benson; Bernard Berenson; Rhoda Broughton; the Burne-Joneses; Pearl Craigie; Maud Cruttwell; E. M. Delafield; Evelyn and William De Morgan; Dostoyevsky's daughter; Constance Ffoulkes; Roger Fry; Robert Hichens; Thomas Hardy; Mrs Humphry Ward; Violet Hunt; Henry James; Vernon Lee; Alice and Alfred Meynell; Joseph Pennell; Alice Perrin; Dorothy Richardson; Romain and Madeleine Rolland; the Rossettis; William Rothenstein; Anne Thackeray Ritchie; Elizabeth Von Arnim; Hugh Walpole; Theodore Watts; and Margaret Woods.<sup>21</sup>

The point of departure of this monograph lies in the recognition that Malet's engagement with the visual arts forms an intricate part of her writing. Whether the initial impulse may have originated in the early emphasis her father laid on visual observation in her childhood,<sup>22</sup> or in the author's thwarted career as an artist, is ultimately of little consequence. More interesting, I shall argue, is her sustained *tactical* use of visual tropes, colour, paintings and artworks throughout her fiction: the novelist's pictorial praxis and artistic culture are utilized consciously as vantage points wherefrom to make her writing an intervention in the field of representation. This monograph contends that the author capitalized on her artistic connoisseurship to introduce de-familiarizing concepts, techniques and references taken from the pictorial arts that contributed to eroding and redefining the novel. Further, it examines how Malet's novels use, critique and subvert visual works known to her contemporaries to challenge her readers' representations and the pictures' meanings, as well as to create interstitial spaces of expressive literary freedom. The guiding thread of the argument developed in

this volume is that the language of art and actual artworks are used by Malet as an affirmation of her own creativity, as a method for disrupting narrative structure, conveying dislocated points of view and corroding accepted representations of social roles. The irruption of visuality into textuality introduces difference, dissent, friction, resistance and provides sites of heightened emotional and stylistic tensions within the novels. On the one hand, the paintings alluded to work against linearity of plot and create subtle harmonic and aesthetic effects which accord well with the formalist principles laid out by the Aesthetic Movement (and further explored by the subsequent Modernist literary avant-garde). On the other hand, Malet's novels constitute an aesthetic and political reflection on ocular agency, visibility, spectatorship, the gender of the gaze, alternative subjectivities, creativity, the unsaid, and visual/textual interactions. Following Schaffer's insightful analysis of the rich visuality of Malet's writing as a strategy of concealment<sup>23</sup> devised to introduce daring subject-matter and articulate unmentionable truths, I propose that Malet's recourse to the visual and the pictorial is therefore not so much a 'strategy' *per se* as a 'tactic', in Michel de Certeau's sense of the word. In *The Practice of Everyday Life*, Michel de Certeau draws a distinction between *strategy* and *tactic*: for the French theorist 'strategy' is a form of regulated behaviour that carries out a goal set by an authority which perpetuates itself through the actualizations of such a strategy, whereas the term 'tactic' is reserved for a form of re-appropriation of the strategy's rules and potentialities, in order to open spaces of freedom, non-conformity and otherness which help momentarily to escape the grip of the system.<sup>24</sup> By exploring Malet's intricate intermedial poetics, and its evolution over the fifty years of her literary career, this study analyses Malet's *tactical* use of the visual as an intervention in the representation of the gendered, class-bound, racialized Other.

Naturally, Lucas Malet was one of many writers who reflected on and reacted to an increasingly visual culture marked by the rapid expansion of the art market, the dramatic rise in the number of exhibitions and the explosion of the illustrated press, as well as of art periodicals and art criticism in the last two decades of the century. Moreover, since the 1850s, painting had become a battleground for virulent public debates not just about the nature and social function of the work of art, but also about the role of women in the arts, especially the vexed issue of female access to art education and exhibition venues. Deborah Cherry has argued that painting in the second half of the nineteenth century was therefore 'shaped by and understood within a visual culture in which art collided with politics, visual representation with political representation.'<sup>25</sup> Indeed, agitation for female suffrage was ongoing in the second half of the nineteenth century and the early twentieth century, especially after John Stuart Mill's presentation of the first female suffrage petition to Parliament in 1866 and again after the electoral Reform Acts of 1867, 1884 and 1918. Interestingly, Cherry's study *Beyond the*

*Frame* shows that British women artists were the most active female militants in this public debate in the 1860s. Her emphasis on the close connections between Victorian feminism and visual culture helps understand why visual poetics and pictorial framing may have seemed to Malet especially apposite tools in her re-definition of social relations, knowledge, power dynamics, female subjecthood and women's visibility. Malet's literary reflection on visual culture and the representation of womanhood is indeed tied up with political issues, militancy and the rise of feminism. Her texts generate new ways of interpreting paintings, while demonstrating how art making and viewing never take place in a neutral realm but always in a social context rife with political, sexual, racial and class antagonisms.

Stylistically, Malet was one of a number of innovative novelists writing under the influence of Paterian Aestheticism's controversial emphasis on aesthetic pleasure, the autonomy of art and the necessity for a personal response in the viewing and interpreting of fine art – Walter Pater's so-called 'subjective' criticism.<sup>26</sup> However, as Linda K. Hughes has highlighted, *female* Aesthetes were necessarily in a paradoxical position:

If 'aesthete' implies a commitment to the unity of the arts, cultural authority (in the form of taste), and, as with Wilde, 'advanced' political and artistic views superior to those of the bourgeois herd, 'female' invokes domestic duties and cultural marginality, as well as the internal contradictions that constituted Victorian feminine subjectivity.<sup>27</sup>

Talia Schaffer further elaborates:

The female aesthetes were constantly trying to reconcile competing notions of identity – being female yet being aesthetic; living like New Women while admiring Pre-Raphaelite maidens; trying to be *mondaines* (Ouida's term for cosmopolitan female dandies) but also emulating Angels in the House. The conflicting roles were staged in their novels and manifested in their public reputations. The female aesthetes' anxiety about their own femininity led them to develop self-defensive literary techniques designed to baffle the intrusively curious reader. In that respect, their gender politics motivated their literary productions, and ... some of these deliberately oblique styles were direct precursors of modernist innovations.<sup>28</sup>

Like other *fin-de-siècle* female Aesthetes, Malet elected to write Aesthetic prose because Aestheticism gave her 'a language complex enough to express [her] characteristically ambivalent, sophisticated, and intellectual views.'<sup>29</sup> But she was also one of those female artists who, in the words of Elaine Showalter, felt compelled to 'purge aestheticism and decadence of their misogyny and to rewrite the myths of art that denigrated women.'<sup>30</sup> So, predictably, her engagement with art and (new) womanhood was an embattled one. Her choice of pseudonym may be interpreted as encapsulating her initial conflicted vindica-

tions. With 'Lucas Malet' she asserted her ambitions as a serious professional, maintaining for a while<sup>31</sup> the readers' illusion of the novelist as a male *auctor*<sup>32</sup>; yet her own later justification of her *nom de plume* conversely emphasized her desire to honour her female lineage and downplay the paternal literary heritage, as her pseudonym combined the last names of her grandmother, Mary Lucas, and her great-aunt Malet.<sup>33</sup> A similar apparent contradiction arises when one considers that, though she lived the independent, cosmopolitan life of a New Woman, rejecting marriage and motherhood, Malet never claimed to be writing New Woman novels, nor did she embrace the suffragist movement or other public causes concerning the rights of women – which is probably why she never appears in critical accounts of New Woman fiction.<sup>34</sup> However, her complex novels arguably constituted subtle but powerful literary feminist interventions promoting equal rights and opportunity, supporting the struggle against the Contagious Diseases Acts and the reform of male sexuality, and advocating the cause of Socialist feminism with its challenge of war and inequalities of class. Yet another instance of Malet's ambivalent approach to art and womanhood may be found in her novels' obsessive re-assessment and re-working of the figure of the Madonna in literature and the arts, not as a selfless Victorian Angel in the House but as a captivatingly graceful icon of social rebellion – as 'Our Lady of Victorian Feminism' to use Kimberly VanEsveld Adams's phrase.<sup>35</sup> In fact, characteristically, Malet's fiction often stages confrontations between 'the liberated, witty, urbane, strong New Woman and the gracious, lovely Angel in the House/Pre-Raphaelite lady', in an attempt to 'forge a compromise identity' and to '[work] through [her] own indecisiveness about women's proper role'.<sup>36</sup> A thoughtful reconsideration of Malet's works will therefore involve a critical approach based on the crucial distinction made by Talia Schaffer and Kathy A. Psomiades between New Woman discourse as 'a mode ... particularly suited to the work of overtly political writers' and the style of female Aesthetes who 'followed high-literary rather than journalistic models, because they were attracted to Pre-Raphaelite notions of beauty'.<sup>37</sup>

While her contemporaries admired Malet's writing style and breadth of vision, it appears that her specific views on the paintings she reacted to or challenged in her novels were not much heeded by reviewers. Critics occasionally compared her style to that of the painter Diego Velasquez;<sup>38</sup> the art students of the Slade School loved her depiction of artistic life;<sup>39</sup> but most reviewers failed to comment on Malet's critique of specific visual works and painterly styles. This should not surprise us. Even though women's participation in the professional criticism of art grew in the second half of the nineteenth century, as Claire Richter Sherman, Adele M. Holcombe and, more recently, Meaghan Clarke have shown,<sup>40</sup> the general perception at the *fin de siècle* was still that art supposed a level of education, a scope of experience and a degree of public exposure which

very few women could achieve or consent to.<sup>41</sup> Moreover, as art historian Pamela Gerrish Nunn remarks, the standard forms of art criticism, i.e. the regular published commentary and the public lecture, were associated with masculinity and the figure of the Victorian sage, so that overall 'the Victorian art critic's voice as a public noise can be generalized as a male voice, and those individual critics whose voices have been distinguished from the chorus by later generations – including John Ruskin, Philip Gilbert Hamerton, Frederic George Stephens, William Thackeray – were all men.'<sup>42</sup> However, the art historian explains,

many women, through personal interest in cultural matters, carried on a private discussion of art, such as is to be found in correspondences, memoirs, auto/biography and oral recollections. This was an important part of certain – educated, privileged – women's discourse, but falls outside the term 'art criticism' as patriarchally defined. Culture was a field assigned in some ways to women to mind, as part of their task of sweetening the world for men, and in other ways forbidden to women, as part of what was too difficult and worldly for them to handle without men's mediation or management.<sup>43</sup>

In spite of this, Gerrish Nunn and, more recently, Hilary Fraser contend that several Victorian women's contributions should be considered as veritable art criticism. However, Gerrish Nunn warns that

To see them, though, we have to reappraise the term 'art criticism' and the figure of the art critic. Art criticism occurred in a multiplicity of forms and fora, of which the standard version – writer and/or public speaker expressing opinions in newspapers, periodicals, books and lectures – was only one. A picture of art criticism in Victorian Britain which seeks to include women will include additional models of art criticism and the art critic, so as to allow, for instance, Vernon Lee's novel *Miss Brown* (1884) to stand beside, say, Ruskin's *The Stones of Venice* (1851–3) or *The Times*' reviews of the annual exhibitions under the heading 'art criticism'.<sup>44</sup>

Significantly, Vernon Lee was severely castigated for satirizing the sexual politics of Pre-Raphaelitism in what was perceived by her contemporaries as a *roman à clefs*. With the publication of *Miss Brown*, Lee alienated many of her (male) artistic and literary friends and subsequently resolved never to write another novel in her life.<sup>45</sup> Perhaps it was fortunate that Lucas Malet chose to make her own references to artworks and artists more diverse, more veiled and less exclusively national: they caused no British artistic feathers to be ruffled, attracted less notice from reviewers and thus did not detract in their eyes from her reputation as a novelist of talent. Be that as it may, this monograph demonstrates that Malet's deployment of a complex visual poetics was an innovative attempt to use visual form as a major novelistic shaping tool. On this count, she stands as a precursor of Modernist fiction since, as Rachel Teukolsky reminds us, Modernist novelists typically rejected traditional narrative structures in favour of

‘alternative means of aesthetic ordering’ which gave the novel ‘a new and visible concreteness.’<sup>46</sup> The present volume intends to show that the Modernists were in fact building on techniques and tactics which had been uniquely explored by late-Victorian Aesthetic novelists such as Malet.

Even though this volume refers to many novels and essays by Malet, I have chosen to focus on four novels, because close, detailed, textu(r)al scrutiny is essential to bring out Malet’s subtleties in relation to her artistic and literary predecessors or contemporaries. However, I have been careful to select novels that span the entire career of the author, in order to give a sense of the development of her style. The opening chapter focuses on *Mrs Lorimer: A Sketch in Black and White* (1882) and provides the first scholarly analysis of Malet’s first novel. In *Mrs Lorimer*, I argue, the notion of ‘sketching’ is central to the author’s experimental writing technique and serves as Malet’s trope to reconceptualize the novel and to model the complexity of modern woman. Both an early New Woman novel and an Aesthetic text, *Mrs Lorimer* works against various conventional representations of women and the narrative styles they entail. The Whistlerian subtitle is used as a point of departure for an analysis of Malet’s appropriation and subversion of James Whistler’s haunting *Symphony in White, No.1: The White Girl* (1862) which the novel ultimately reconfigures, in an attempt to keep form, images and significations open, in a perpetual state of emergence and inchoateness.

Chapter 2 focuses mostly on *The Wages of Sin*, Malet’s 1890 masterpiece and first bestseller. Previous analyses of this novel have focused on its controversial approach of licit and illicit love, neglecting to comment on the fact that this is also fundamentally a novel about two artists and how gender affects their art and their lives. Written three years after Emile Zola’s novel on male creativity, *The Masterpiece* (1886), Malet’s novel is an unprecedented attempt at exploring the art world from a strong, positive female painter’s perspective. I argue that Malet’s characterization of her central female artist was influenced by painters Rosa Bonheur and Marie Bashkirtseff, and that her depiction of the crippling yet empowering aspects of genius constitutes an original representation of male and female creativity. Stylistically, ekphrasis plays a major role in this novel, as a secondary counter-discourse on the pictorial representation of women by male artists of the time, in particular Edouard Manet’s *Luncheon on the Grass* (1862–3) and *Olympia* (1863), and on other paintings by rural Naturalists such as Jules Bastien-Lepage and his British follower George Clausen. Finally, the chapter demonstrates that, while *sketching* was the major unifying trope in *Mrs Lorimer*, *The Wages of Sin* points to an aesthetics of the *miniature*. This inscribes the author in the female literary tradition of Jane Austen, Charlotte Brontë and George Eliot. But Malet’s art of the miniature also constitutes an attempt to update Austen, Brontë and Eliot for a proto-Modernist generation.

Chapter 3 looks at Malet's most famous Decadent bestseller, *The History of Sir Richard Calmady* (1901). It is indebted to the recent studies in the cultural representation of disabled people – in particular the work of Rosemarie Garland-Thomson, David T. Mitchell, Sharon L. Snyder and Lennard J. Davis. The chapter focuses on the material, discursive and aesthetic production of physical, cultural, sexual and textual deviance. *The History of Sir Richard Calmady* represents Malet's most conscious distortion and deformation of the matrix of the *fin-de-siècle* novel. It is a hybrid text whose form and themes grapple with the notions of normality and abnormality. The chapter explores the significance of Velasquez's art at the turn of the century, in order to highlight the crucial role played in the novel by the Spanish artist's dwarf painting and its gaze. The unfamiliar body of the text is examined in tandem with the corporeal otherness of the two main protagonists, so as to show how the disabled body serves as a symbolic vehicle for the author's cultural critique.

Chapter 4 takes us to the last years of Malet's career by looking at one of Malet's post-war novels, *The Survivors* (1923). In this novel about writing, Malet's earlier visual styles and themes mature to generate a true Modernist text characterized by the dismemberment of narrative and the author's experimentation with shifting viewpoint and free form. Building on Martin Jay's important study of visuality in the early twentieth century, this chapter contends that Malet's Modernist aesthetic practice was influenced by the changing visual culture of the early twentieth century. This novel indeed refines the late-Victorian and Modernist arts of montage in order to perform a critique of the post-war malaise. In a spirit not unlike Lytton Strachey's *Eminent Victorians* (1918), the author thus settles some scores with her Victorian legacy and does away with deep-seated Victorian icons of femininity and womanhood. In so doing, this post-war novel contributes to the emergence of Modernist female writing and to the reconfiguration of modern female authorship.