Title of Paper: *The Doctor’s Wife: Criminal/Justice*

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Abstract:

This paper investigates the ways in which the legal system affects the reading choices of Isabel Sleaford, as well as her marriage to George Gilbert and her subsequent fascination with Roland Lansdell. While much is often made of the effect sensation fiction has on Isabel’s choices, the atmosphere of crime and criminality in which she is steeped unwittingly has an equal effect on the novels she reads. Isabel (and Roland) are just as strongly affected by the written word of the law as they are by their tastes in reading material, and it is this collision between the law and the sensation novel that has disastrous effects on Isabel’s marriage to George and on Roland’s life, as well.

Keywords: Mary Elizabeth Braddon; The Doctor’s Wife; Crime; Sensation Fiction; Reading; Novels; Law; Justice; Isabel Sleaford; Roland Lansdell

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Mary Elizabeth Braddon’s *The Doctor’s Wife* (1864), is arguably one of the least “sensational” of her works, and Lyn Pykett notes that it “is a self-consciously literary novel in both conception and execution” (viii). Yet, despite Braddon’s intent, *The Doctor’s Wife* bears many of the same hallmarks as her sensation novels. There is adultery, villainy, and thievery, as well as betrayal, blackmail, and murder. While much has been made, even by Braddon herself, of her desire to craft a novel that imitated Gustav Flaubert’s *Madame Bovary* (1856), the difference lies in the heroine’s choices (Pykett viii). Emma Bovary engages in several extra-marital affairs, whereas Isabel Sleaford does not, and, as Catherine Golden observes, “Isabel’s often-noted avoidance of sensuality dramatically divorces Braddon’s novel from Flaubert’s original” (37). Narin Hassan contends that this divide illustrates that “Braddon’s is a novel of choices, which present two very different men, and traces the protagonist through the difficult path of marrying one man, desiring another, and never achieving the life that fictional romances outlined for her” (71). The “two very different men” are Isabel’s husband, the country doctor George Gilbert, and the exotic neighbor, Roland Lansdell. George adheres to rules and laws (and expects his wife to do the same) whereas Roland encourages Isabel to read as much fiction as she desires and to obey only the laws she finds acceptable. Isabel’s notions about marriage are formed by consumption of vast quantities of fiction, which makes poor George seem like the most boring husband in the world and Roland appear to be the exciting lover who can rescue her from her pedestrian life. To complicate the sensation fiction issue, one of the main characters is Sigismund Smith, a writer of sensation novels. Consequently, Braddon’s attempt at realism, while inspired in many ways by *Madame Bovary*, is always linked with her sensation fiction, either because of characters like Sigismund, or Isabel’s reading habits, or because of the choices Roland and Isabel make. These myriad purposes culminate in a novel that is constantly pulled between the realist and sensation fiction genres, and the resulting tension is never successfully resolved. As Tabitha Sparks writes, “Braddon’s multi-faceted but ultimately confused compendium of three types of popular Victorian literature, sensationalism, sentimentalism, and realism make *The Doctor’s Wife* an extraordinary document of the competing epistemologies at work in 1860s fiction” (198).

This purportedly literary text starts off predictably enough: Isabel Sleaford marries George Gilbert, a country doctor whom she does not love. Swept away by her all-consuming passion for novels, she quickly tires of the ordinariness of married life and falls for the more dashing Roland Lansdell. Isabel and Roland’s story at first appears to be a cautionary tale against the dangers of reading—fiction, it seems, enables a weak-minded woman with few domestic accomplishments or propensities to feed her novel habit, thereby distracting from the life she has chosen. Bored by George, a man she considers her intellectual inferior, she is entranced by Roland, the dashing hero who provides her with as many books as she wants. By satisfying her book lust, Isabel displaces her desire for Roland onto fiction. She is caught between two different forms of text—the letter of the law and the creative writing of her novels. Isabel is a creature both formed by and torn apart by words, as she is a linguistically constituted subject who is wholly constrained by language. The written word of the law and her marriage lines should govern her behavior, but it is the language of the fiction she devours which frames her existence.
Isabel’s reading choices reinforce the Victorian belief that sensation novels in particular would rip apart the fabric of middle class domestic life by corrupting the women who read them. This distaste for sensation novels is articulated by H.L. Mansel in 1863 when he disparaged the new genre: "No divine influence can be imagined as presiding over the birth of [its] work; no more immortality is dreamed of for it than for the fashions of the current season. A commercial atmosphere floats around works of this class, redolent of the manufactory and the shop" (Allingham web). While Mansel was criticizing Wilkie Collins, the larger sentiment highlights a number of Victorian fears about women’s place in society and how their devotion to social duties is negatively influenced by reading trashy novels. To be a female reader exposing herself to illicit material is actively to court a position outside the domain of the Angel in the House, the term coined by Coventry Patmore in his 1854-1862 poem of the same name. In that manner, Isabel allows her mind to be polluted by the things she chooses to read and, as such, disqualifies herself from being a suitable middle class wife.

Seduced by fiction, Isabel nearly allows her love of Roland and his books to lead her astray. As her tastes in reading material take an increasingly dark turn, she becomes fascinated by the criminal “hero,” for, as Sigismund cautions George before his marriage, Isabel is “waiting for a melancholy creature, with a murder on his mind” (30). Sigismund’s warning to George is a clear indicator that Isabel’s love of the fictional word will supersede any other kinds of realist language that George attempts to impose on her. Her marriage lines will mean little to her once a man in possession of a good book comes along, particularly when that man not only has an impressive library but also is an author himself. The lure of fiction will be too strong for Isabel to resist, and thus her marriage is doomed long before it actually begins.

Despite Sigismund’s reservations, George, a decidedly “[un]melancholy creature,” cannot comprehend Isabel (or anyone, for that matter) wanting to live in a world of books. It is this lack of imaginative capability that demonstrates how ill suited a pair they are. Nevertheless, George proceeds with the wedding and Isabel then promptly falls in love with Roland, whose only heroic act was to testify against a ring of forgers and bank robbers, which was led by a man named Jack the Scribe. In true sensation fiction fashion, Isabel turns out to be Jack the Scribe’s daughter, although she did not know of his criminal activities until after his conviction. Up to that point, she believed herself to be the daughter of a barrister (15, 358). Isabel, then, unknowingly comes from criminal stock, and her fascination with the criminal hero is almost biologically determined, even though she is desperate to “be good” (297).

Despite her desire to fulfill this self-imposed mandate, Isabel is always out of place, never quite managing to achieve her goal. Her tastes in reading material and men both fail to meet the criteria for what is socially and morally acceptable, and so she escapes into fiction as a means of compensating for her discomfort. In doing so, she reinforces her separation from society’s mandates as she becomes further and further entrenched in her novels. Of this inability to navigate her way within her social world, Pamela Gilbert writes that Isabel, inhabits a borderland. . . Coming from an indeterminate background, raised as a lower-middle-class woman yet really the daughter of a petty con-artist, she breaches class boundaries both by marrying into the
Isabel is not cut out for middle class marriage because of both her antecedents and her taste in literature. Nor is she a woman who can become Roland’s mistress since she has been raised as part of the middle class. She believes she is one thing, fantasizes about becoming another, and ultimately cannot reconcile these disparate elements of her personality and social station. She does not belong anywhere and, because of her novel obsession, finds herself drawn to the dangerous temptation that is Roland Lansdell.

Part of Roland’s allure is that he seems to provide her with entrée into both spheres, a mooring for her lost self. However, Isabel’s ultimate trouble is that she cannot see Roland for who and what he really is. She is so used to creating a fictional landscape in her head that she transposes these behaviors onto those who surround her, including Roland, expecting that he will comport himself like the characters in her novels. Roland, who has beseeched her to abandon her husband and elope with him, appears to be as exotic as one of the tragically romantic heroes of her books. Yet, as Braddon writes,

She was totally unable to understand him as he really was—a benevolently-disposed young man, desirous of doing as little mischief in the world as might be compatible with his being tolerably happy himself; and fully believing that no great or irreparable harm need result from his appropriation of another man’s wife. (278)

The world of her novels and the world in which she lives collide in ways she cannot adequately resolve, which leads to her inability to truly exist in either social space. Roland further complicates her search for belonging as he tells her that they are not bound by traditional laws, and he spurns conventions in favor of what he considers to be the higher law of independent choice. He is driven by desire and is not the elevated soul Isabel believes. In fact, Roland is just as conflicted as Isabel since he wants very badly to be an author, yet he is the owner of Morded Priory. He has responsibilities to others but neglects his duty as a landowner. If he can find a way to justify his desires, he believes that violations of social law are acceptable since they are, in his mind, serving a higher purpose. Natalie Schroeder and Ronald A. Schroeder argue that for Roland, “If a marriage meets the criteria of a ‘holy union,’ he regards it as beyond interference or intervention. If it does not meet those criteria, it has no status at all…Love trumps marriage, regardless of law and social expectation” (178).

When Roland attempts to persuade Isabel to leave George, he says “we have tried to submit, and to rule our lives by the laws which other people have made for us” (269). Both he and Isabel spurn the written word of the law in favor of the written word of fiction, thereby blocking them both from being fully integrated members of the society to which they should belong. Roland rejects the law by creating a separate set of precepts to govern his actions, and this deviation from traditional moral standards projects itself onto Isabel. In many ways, these two are the same person: neither has any reverence for accepted social codes, nor do they see anything fundamentally wrong with acting as they please as long as those actions bring them individual happiness. For this attempt to detach themselves from the prevailing
written social contract they both must be punished—Roland with death and Isabel with heartbreak.

The belief that he is not governed by the law drives Roland throughout the novel. He plays with the justice system and sees his participation in the process as an amusement instead of assessing it for what it authentically is—an essential and sober role laid out in writing by those who have a commitment to law, order, and maintaining an agreed upon social compact. As a citizen, Roland has little official standing in the legal system, but he inserts himself into the law in a way which has profound consequences for every character in the novel. Roland is not one of the sanctioned players in the process and by joining in as a joke, he sets loose a chain of events that upends everyone’s role, both in the legal realm and in his own social milieu.

While one might briefly think that Roland’s dedication to ensuring that justice prevails redeems the flaws of an otherwise self-involved man, we quickly learn that he sees his brief venture into law enforcement as nothing more than a lark, since, “It was the first adventure I ever had in my life, and I assure you I most heartily enjoyed it” (180). His desire to participate because he finds the experience fun is in large part the tone of the rest of his narrative, for his amusement quickly wanes when he has to give evidence at the trial: “I was not so well pleased, however, when I found that I was wanted as a witness at preliminary examinations, and adjourned examinations, and on an off through a trial that lasted four days and a half” (180). For most jury trials, four and a half days is not that long, especially given that Victorian court cases could stretch out for months or years (as Charles Dickens so aptly satirizes in his 1852-53 depiction of the Court of Chancery in Bleak House). Roland, however, sees his participation in the legal process as beginning and ending with the chase. As with much of his existence, Roland’s interest fades when the object of his desires is attained, and he cannot commit to any kind of project or relationship with sustained vigor. Because of his nature, we realize that Roland’s involving himself with this case is a mere diversion, and he appears to have little respect for the law as a thing in and of itself; rather, he sees the justice system as a means of personal pleasure. If he had not chosen to give chase, the thief would not have been caught and prosecuted. If he had not pursued a married woman, he would not have helped set loose the chain of events that leads to his death. In both instances, he treats the law as a trifle, one which does not bind him to any particular set of actions, and it is for these reasons that he ultimately is eliminated. Roland plays at life, and cannot be troubled to embrace social codes, since, “It is my fault or misfortune that I cannot believe in the things in which other men believe” (245). Neither Roland nor Isabel acknowledges that society’s precepts have any effect on their own lives; they both break social rules and act according to their own whims. Isabel believes that this is permissible because the conquering heroes of her novels engage in this behavior, and Roland does so because he refuses to recognize that society has any right to exert any moral or written authority over his choices.

Roland is just as entranced by fiction as Isabel, and, in fact, has taken it a step further by authoring a book of poetry entitled Alien’s Dreams. His inability to see himself as bound by ordinary rules might, if he were at another station of life, be perceived as having little effect on the larger social fabric. If he were lower class or
had committed fully to his desire to be a writer, as does Sigismund Smith, his failure to adhere to accepted codes of behavior would be seen as having a negligible effect for socioeconomic reasons—the actions of those who are trapped in poverty or who deliberately pursue an artistic career which promises little pay do not have the same ramifications as someone of Roland’s standing. However, as the owner of the suitably Gothic-sounding Mordred Priory, he should serve as an exemplar to the neighborhood. His failure to take responsibility as a wealthy landowner means he is not performing one of the primary duties of his class. Roland wants all of the benefits of being landed and rich with none of the responsibilities. For his own enjoyment, he enters into the process which will force him to participate to some degree in “the things in which other men believe,” and it is this casual breaking of boundaries that infuriates the regular players in the process.

Roland’s abandonment of social duty—and his arbitrary treatment of the law—indicates that he believes his own choices to be the primary mover behind creating societal standards, rather than time-tested folkways to which people generally ascribe. He places himself above the law, just as much as Jack the Scribe, but at least Jack acknowledges he is breaking written legal mandates. For Roland, the law exists for his own pleasure rather than as a system of meaning in which he also resides, and it is this inability to see himself as governed by the same statues that govern Jack that place him outside the boundaries of most social norms.

Jack is one of the first to recognize that Roland has no concern for larger issues of justice or equitable enforcement of the law. When he is convicted because of Roland’s testimony, Jack says,

“I don’t bear any grudge against the gentlemen of the jury, and I don’t bear any malice against the judge, though his sentence isn’t a light one; but when a languid swell mixes himself up in business that doesn’t concern him, he deserves to get it hot and strong. If ever I come out of prison alive, I’ll kill you!” (180-181).

Jack realizes that he broke the law and, according to the rules of the system he violated, that he must endure punishment. In fact, Isabel’s father has masqueraded as a barrister—a regulator of the law—in order to deceive his family about his true profession. Jack respects the authentic players in the socially mandated justice system and resents the interference of an outsider, especially one who enters the fray simply because he is bored. Roland has no place in this world because he has deliberately removed himself from it, only stepping back into the system when it is convenient and entertaining. He is not an unwitting bystander who gets involved because he perceives it as his duty, but rather is a “languid swell,” one who has nothing better to do than meddle in a well orchestrated process that has sanctioned members who define and deliver justice. Yet again he places himself in charge of a particular social system—choosing to participate (or not) based on his own whims rather than because he acknowledges his role within the hierarchy and as one who is bound by a social contract.

Roland must be punished for both his “amateur detective” status and his refusal—once he has inserted himself into the process—to abide consistently by the law. He is neither a sanctioned police officer nor a member of the justice system, but rather a jaded member of the gentry with nothing better to do than to interfere with
society’s dictates, both in the trial and in his attempt to seduce Isabel. By deliberately toying with the legal system as he does (even though society benefits from his actions) he poses a major threat to it. As a wealthy landowner, Roland should be firmly on the side of law and order as he is of the class most likely to profit from it. Traditional laws regarding inheritance, income, and property rights all benefit him. Also, as the major landowner, it would be his responsibility to care for those whose well-being fell to his manor and town. Those would include the local doctor and his wife. Instead of fulfilling the role which ethical behavior mandates, Roland romantically pursues the doctor’s wife. He violates his responsibilities, abandons the mores that have been inculcated in him since birth, and engages in the roles society has assigned him only when he chooses. As a result, Roland is a hazard to every other member of his social class: the legal system cannot rely on his sense of duty to participate, nor can the local parish rely on his behaving with the paternalistic approach of the primary landowner. He adheres to no traditional system of faith and advocates for adultery and free love. Roland has rejected the law in all its forms—the written law, the ethical law, and now the moral law.

Ultimately, it is this failure to embrace the agreed-upon laws and social customs that leads to his death. Roland erroneously believes Isabel has taken a lover and follows the man, who turns out to be her father. When the two confront each other, Jack’s ire is not because Roland is pursuing the married Isabel, but rather is a reaction to Roland’s testimony in the trial:

“Stop a bit,” cried Mr Sleaford the barrister,—stop a bit. I thought I knew your voice. You’re the languid swell, who were so jolly knowing at the Old Bailey,—the languid swell who had nothing better to do than join the hunt against a poor devil that never cheated you out of sixpence. I said, if ever I came out of prison alive, I’d kill you, and I’ll keep my promise.” (353)

It is the same grievance that Jack lodged against Roland at the trial. Jack steps back into the role of “Mr Sleaford the barrister” and acts as the prosecutor and executioner: Then Mr Sleaford’s bludgeon went whirling up into the air, and descended with a dull thud, once, twice, three times upon Roland’s L Lansdell’s bare head. After the third blow, Jack the Scribe loosed his grasp from the young man’s throat, and the master of Mordred Priory fell crashing down among the fern and wild-flowers, with a shower of opal-tinted rose-petals fluttering about him as he fell. (353)

Both Jack and Roland occupy two roles in this scene. Jack is first Mr. Sleaford and then, after he beats Roland, he becomes Jack the Scribe. He moves from the legal to the criminal, from his former identity to his present one, from a convicted (and unrepentant) felon to a murderer. Roland is both the “master of Mordred Priory” and surrounded by drifting flower petals—his attack scene is most poetic, which hearkens back to his amateur book of poetry, Alien’s Dreams. He is gentry and poet, land owner and artist, witness and victim. It is the collision of all the fundamentals of these two men’s personalities that lead to this event. The disparate elements of Mr Sleaford/Jack the Scribe and Roland Lansdell, landowner/poet have to be resolved. For Jack, the criminal part comes to the fore, although he believes he is fulfilling his role as a barrister by executing the man who dabbled in the legal process for his own
entertainment. Eliminating the “languid swell” restores order. By performing his role, Jack enables Roland to finally occupy the space he has always desired. As the rose petals drift over Roland’s body, he returns to his role of the author of *Alien’s Dreams*, the book of poetry that caused Isabel fall in love with him before their first meeting. It also enables him to become the romantic hero of Isabel’s fantasies yet again. By being removed from his role as a landowner, his hedonistic actions no longer have larger social implications. He has fully entered into the world of Isabel’s books, but does so in a way that makes him unthreatening, both to Isabel and the middle class as a whole. His imminent death means he no longer can pressure Isabel to abandon her husband, yet he gives her the memory of the love of an unattainable man—precisely the kind of thing about which she fantasized when reading her novels.

Roland’s death both confirms and transforms Isabel’s reading habits. Her visions of romantic and tragic heroes have been restored and she is the beneficiary of Roland’s very large estate, yet she indulges her dreams in a more mature manner. While she is no longer the child fascinated by story-book romances, she still in some ways uses the romantic hero ideal as a pattern card for mourning: “the fortune bequested under such strange circumstances had become a sacred trust, to be accounted for to the dead. Only the mourner knows the exquisite happiness involved in any act performed for the sake of the lost” (403). Roland is no longer a hazard, but he enables her to become the abandoned tragic heroine, one who keeps her true love alive through acolyte-like devotion to his memory. She might have grown emotionally, but there is still some element of schoolgirl longing for “her life to be like her books [one who] wanted be a heroine,—unhappy perhaps, and dying early” (28). While she does not die, she sees her unhappiness as a “sacred trust” and keeps coming back to Roland’s memory each time she engages in charitable acts with the money and property he left her.

Her mourning becomes the “exquisite happiness” she longed for, which creates recursive links to her on-going love of the tragic. We are pointed back to the beginning of the novel where Sigismund Smith chided her for reading a particular author whose work was “dangerously beautiful” (24). Isabel admits that while the books make her unhappy, she “likes that sort of unhappiness. It’s better than eating or drinking or sleeping, and being happy that way” (24). While she has grown up and is no longer the girl who expressed that naïve opinion to Sigismund, there is enough of her early appreciation of melancholy novels (which has been reinforced by her own tragic love life) that enables her to revel in the bittersweetness of performing charitable acts with Roland’s estate. Isabel might be older and sadly wiser, but she still sees herself as the heroine of the novel of her life. She becomes “dangerously beautiful” since she appears to be a virtuous woman but has flirted with abandoning middle class mores. And it is through Roland’s death that her tenuous virtue—and by extension—the values of the middle class are reclaimed and preserved. It is not through her own choices which, had she been an authentic member of the middle class, would have been inviolable. While she looks as if she belongs, she does not because of her family’s origins. Thus, she can be tempted to fall from grace. All of this is encapsulated by her dangerous love of reading since it can (and does) lure her to abandon the moral precepts she should have absorbed in her youth.
Isabel’s novel choices and her questionable middle class standing are not the only things at stake here: she also is caught between the polar definitions of justice represented by her father and her lover. If Roland lived, his recovery would be a codification of his way of life, and an endorsement of the sensational elements that drove the novel. However, Roland’s death, combined with the way that Isabel inherits, upholds traditional law and order. Isabel’s father’s brand of justice, oddly aligned with the law, wins out over Roland’s hedonistic beliefs. Roland’s murderer escapes and no one—including Isabel—knows of his crime. In fact, even Roland recognizes that Jack is the instrument of justice:

I fancied it was an easy thing for man to make his own scheme of life and be happy after his own fashion. It was well that I should be made to understand my position in the universe. Mr Sleaford was only a brutal kind of Nemesis waiting for me at the bottom of the hill. If I had tried to clamber upwards,—if I had buckled on my armour and gone away from this castle of insolence, to fight in the ranks of my fellow-men,—I need never have met the avenger. Let him go, then. He has only done his appointed work; and I, who made so pitiful use of my life, have small ground for complaint against the man who shortened it by a year or two. (396)

On his deathbed, Roland meditates on his own failures and not only finds salvation but also realizes that justice has been served. He thinks of Jack the Scribe in the barrister role—as Mr Sleaford—and says the “avenger” has done his “appointed work,” which would have been unnecessary had Roland been a better man. This traditional resolution indicates that Braddon has attempted to subsume the sensational elements in an attempt to fulfill to the realistic goals of the novel. There appears to be a tidy ending—Roland and George die, Jack the Scribe escapes, Isabel inherits and doesn’t have to deal with a nasty neighborhood scandal, and Sigismund keeps writing his sensation novels. As Tabitha Sparks observes, life for Isabel is much the same as it was at the beginning of the text (204). In fact, the only material change that Isabel has experienced is that she is now rich and has access to a better library. All of the elements of social disharmony have been eliminated, and each of the men who caused her heartbreak in some way or another has disappeared.

The ending is almost too clean, and Braddon herself was troubled by this, especially as it related to George and Isabel. In a letter to Edward Bulwer-Lytton, she wrote:

I was cruelly hurried in writing it, and only toward the last decided upon what I should do with George & Isabel. I always meant Sleaford to kill Roland, but to the last I was uncertain what to do with George. My original intention was to have left him alive, & Isabel reconciled to a commonplace life doing her duty bravely, and suppressing all outward evidence of her deep grief for Roland. (Wolff, “Devoted Disciple” 25).

Had Braddon left George alive, Isabel’s trajectory would have been much different: she would have been punished constantly for falling in love with Roland and for making a bad marriage choice in the first place. The ending Braddon settled on, because she is, “so apt to be influenced by little scraps of newspaper criticism, & by
what people say to me” (Wolff, “Devoted Disciple” 25), marks out a very different and more salutary life for Isabel. She is able to retreat into her new library of grown-up novels, practice goodness and charity, and become the romantic heroine. In some ways, she draws from the best qualities of both George and Roland as she fashions a new identity for herself in the wake of both their deaths. She performs humanitarian works in the community, as George did in his role as doctor, and she funds these contributions with Roland’s money, thereby widening the boundaries of charity in ways neither George nor Roland could do. And since Roland repented of his sin and their relationship, in death he became who she always believed him to be. Thus, her inheritance is not tainted with the stain of a man who ended his life as dissolutely as he lived it.

Dissatisfied though she might have been with her authorial choices, Braddon’s decision to eliminate both George and Roland led to positive reviews of and public acclamation for the novel (Wolff, Sensational Victorian 166). Nevertheless, the ending is jarring in its very neatness, especially since this is a novel that was modeled on Madame Bovary, a most untidy text that boasts an unchaste heroine who dies because she does not conform to societal norms. Tabitha Sparks writes of Braddon’s orderly kitting up of narrative strands that, “The sentimental ‘utopia’ ending . . . is a major weakness in Braddon’s project to make The Doctor’s Wife realistic” (207). However, this resolution is probably as close to realist fiction as someone who wrote sensational novels for a living was likely to get. Given that Braddon’s forte was creating scenarios that unraveled normal middle class assumptions, any attempt on her part to reinforce traditional social norms was likely to be at least partially unsuccessful. In fact, Braddon ultimately reverses Madame Bovary in two important ways: Isabel does not actually engage in a physical affair, and she outlives both her husband and lover. With those divergences, Braddon also parts ways from the adultery theme and, instead, by incorporating sensational elements, the novel becomes more about the dangers of fiction and the effect it has on Isabel and Roland. Despite her unhappiness with the novel’s ending as she bowed in some measure to public opinion, Braddon does at least partially fulfill her goal. By combining her desire to write a “‘literary’ novel” (Pykett viii) and her sensationalist roots, we are left with a text in which the law has been validated, justice has been served, the violator of the law has repented and been punished, and traditional English values are reified as social order is restored.
Works Cited


