

**Gender, Conflict, Continuity: Anne Brontë's *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* (1848)**  
**and Sarah Grand's *The Heavenly Twins* (1893)**

Jessica Cox, University of Wales Lampeter

**Abstract:**

The New Woman fiction of the *fin de siècle* brought into conflict patriarchal and feminist ideologies, challenging widely-held assumptions about gender roles and the position of women. Sarah Grand's *The Heavenly Twins* is an important contribution to the genre, and engages with a number of the key issues that concerned feminists at the end of the nineteenth century, including marriage, the education of women, the double standard, male licentiousness, and the wider issue of social purity. These are also key themes in Anne Brontë's *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* – published nearly fifty years before Grand's seminal New Woman text. In this essay, I consider Anne Brontë's text as a forerunner to the New Woman fiction of the *fin de siècle*, through a comparative examination of *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* and *The Heavenly Twins*.

**Keywords:** Ann Brontë, *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*, Sarah Grand, *The Heavenly Twins*, New Woman

In her biographical note for a new edition of *Wuthering Heights* and *Agnes Grey*, following her sisters' deaths in 1848 and 1849, Charlotte Brontë condemned Anne's second novel, *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* (1848), dismissing the 'choice of subject' as 'an entire mistake'.<sup>[1]</sup> This public denouncement of her sister's work echoed critics, who variously described the work as 'course',<sup>[2]</sup> 'revolting',<sup>[3]</sup> and 'vulgar'.<sup>[4]</sup>

Over four decades later, Sarah Grand's *The Heavenly Twins* (1893) was greeted with similar disdain – labelled 'immoral'<sup>[5]</sup> and, like Anne Brontë's novel, 'coarse'.<sup>[6]</sup> Writing a new Foreword to her novel in 1923, Grand recalls how one friend 'almost went down on her knees to entreat me not to publish "that dreadful thing"',<sup>[7]</sup> while others 'were all against the mention of that horror [syphilis] as a part of it'.<sup>[8]</sup> The fact that these texts provoked similar controversy and criticism should not be dismissed as merely coincidental, but rather as indicative of the ongoing conflict between the woman writer and her critics in the nineteenth century. The

striking similarities between the two works emphasize the challenge they both pose to Victorian notions about marriage, gender roles and propriety. In her biography of Grand, Gillian Kersley cites *The Heavenly Twins* as the first novel ‘to attack male sexuality both within and outside marriage, and to expose the double standard of morality which governed this masculine stronghold’.[9] Yet Anne Brontë, writing nearly fifty years before Grand produced her seminal New Woman text, pre-empted this attack with her own radical challenge to patriarchal structures. In this essay, I argue that *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* can be read as a forerunner to the more overtly feminist fiction of the *fin de siècle*, and that the parallels between Anne Brontë’s work and the New Woman novel are such that its publication some fifty years later would have resulted in her being classified as a New Woman writer alongside authors such as Grand, Mona Caird and Olive Schreiner.[10]

Lyn Pykett argues that Anne Brontë’s second novel represents an ‘early example of the sensation novel’,[11] and there are certainly some parallels: the narrative structure, for example, anticipates that of sensation novels such as Wilkie Collins’s *The Woman in White*, while the descriptions of Helen’s suffering at the hands of her drunken and adulterous husband also bear comparison with the melodramatic sensation fiction of the 1860s. Significantly, Meegan Kennedy proposes that ‘*The Heavenly Twins* dallies heavily in melodrama and sensation fiction’,[12] and indeed a number of New Woman writers wrote novels which might be classed as sensation fiction – Grand’s *Singularly Deluded* (1892),[13] for example, and Emma Frances Brooke’s *A Superfluous Woman* (1894). In some respects, therefore, the sensation genre may be seen to bridge the gap between the early Victorian fiction of the Brontës,[14] and the New Woman fiction produced at the *fin de siècle*.

Thematically, however, and indeed as a purpose novel, *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* appears closer to the New Woman fiction of the late nineteenth century (of which Grand's *The Heavenly Twins* is a key example) than to the sensation fiction of the 1860s. Both texts are didactic, and both address issues that were central concerns for the Victorian women's movement: the marriage problem, the licentious male, and the education of the sexes, for example. Both novels engage with issues central to contemporary feminist debates; but while Grand was directly involved in the feminist movement of her time, Anne Brontë was not. Nevertheless, both works petition for an end to the sexual double standard, for a married woman's right to protection from her dissolute husband and for the equal education of girls and boys. While Grand's novel is clearly more radical in its portrayal of the potentially devastating effects of male vice, Anne Brontë's examination of these key feminist issues, at a time when the organized women's movement was just beginning to gain momentum, undoubtedly marks her out as an important early Victorian feminist writer. An examination of the representation of these issues by Anne Brontë and Grand serves to highlight these parallels.

Anne Brontë's novel tells the story of Helen Huntingdon, who has married the dissolute Arthur Huntingdon believing she will be able to reform him. When his behaviour worsens, and he refuses to grant a separation, Helen eventually escapes, along with her young son Arthur, and faithful servant Rachel, going into hiding as Helen Graham in a house – Wildfell Hall – owned by her brother, Lawrence, where she supports herself by selling her paintings. She eventually returns to her husband as he lies on his deathbed. Following his death, she inherits a large estate from her uncle and subsequently remarries.

Grand's *The Heavenly Twins* tells a very different story – indeed, tells a number of different stories – relating the experiences of three women: Edith Beale, Evadne Frayling and Angelica Hamilton-Wells. Edith – ‘a lovely specimen of a well-bred English girl’,<sup>[15]</sup> marries Sir Mosley Menteith, ignoring Evadne's warnings about his disreputable past and the dangers this poses. Consequently, both she and her child contract syphilis, and she dies ‘quite, quite mad’.<sup>[16]</sup> Evadne, well-educated and widely-read, is aware of the dangers of marrying a man like Menteith, but is kept in ignorance of her husband's (Major Colquhoun's) past, discovering the truth just after they are married. She consequently refuses to consummate the union, and lives a stale, passionless existence until her husband's death, after which she marries Dr. Galbraith. However, she cannot overcome the oppressive feelings provoked by her earlier experience, and suffers from periods of hysteria and depression, at one point attempting suicide while pregnant. Angelica, by far the novel's most adventurous heroine, and one of the ‘heavenly twins’ of the title, is frustrated by the limitations she faces as a woman, and attempts to overcome these by marrying the much older Mr Kilroy, on the basis that she will be allowed to do as she pleases, and by dressing as a boy. When her escapades lead to tragedy, however, she eventually accepts the role of dutiful wife.

Gender conflict, and more specifically, marital conflict lies at the heart of these texts, both of which present the reader with a series of problematic marriages.<sup>[17]</sup> The disastrous marriages of Helen, Evadne and Edith are made as a consequence of the state of ignorance in which the Victorian woman was frequently deliberately kept. In *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*, Helen marries Arthur Huntingdon despite her aunt's warning that ‘If you should marry the handsomest, and most accomplished and superficially agreeable man in the world, you little know the misery

that would overwhelm you, if, after all, you should find him to be a worthless reprobate'.[18] In *The Heavenly Twins*, both Evadne's and Edith's families fail to warn them of their prospective husbands' licentious pasts, and the potentially tragic consequences of such unions are illustrated through the premature deaths of Edith and her child. In spite of this, one critic of the novel questioned Grand's depiction of Evadne's celibate marriage, suggesting that 'when the author [...] argue[s] that a young man's fall from virtue must be punished by perpetual enforced celibacy [...] she fails to carry her readers with her',[19] implying that the ignorant wife should silently suffer the consequences of her husband's dissolute past, and thus expressing the view which the novel sought to challenge.

Both Anne Brontë's Helen and Grand's Edith marry under the mistaken belief that they can reform their husbands. Responding to her aunt's concerns, Helen states: 'I shall consider my life well spent in saving him from the consequences of his early errors'.[20] Edith echoes these sentiments when Evadne attempts to warn her of Sir Mosley Menteith's character, retorting 'if he is bad, I will make him good; if he is lost, I will save him'.[21] Evadne alone recognizes the dangers of such ignorance, though she is herself deceived by her parents, who fail to inform her of her husband's past prior to her wedding. Her response to this insistence on keeping the truth from vulnerable women constitutes one of the key feminist statements of the text: 'I would stop the imposition, approved of custom, connived at by parents, made possible by the state of ignorance in which we are carefully kept – the imposition upon a girl's innocence and inexperience of a disreputable man for a husband'.[22]

Significantly, the wife who has the greatest success in reforming her husband is Evadne. Her refusal to consummate the marriage is, it appears, accepted by Colquhoun, who, under Victorian law, had every right to his wife's body – thus

Evadne agreeing to live with him is something of a dangerous move. However, under Evadne's moral guidance, he appears to improve, or at least to show some respect for his wife and her wishes. While her moral stance effects a significant change in her husband's dissolute character, it is somewhat problematic to a feminist reading of the text, appearing to endorse the notion that women's purpose is to act as men's moral guides. This, however, is as much a reflection of the problematic nature of late nineteenth-century social purity feminism, as it is a reflection of Grand's own feminist position. Furthermore, it is contrasted by the experiences of Helen and Edith, both of whom eventually recognize the significance of their errors of judgement. Advising a younger friend on her future, Helen observes 'Marriage may change your circumstances for the better, but, in my private opinion, it is far more likely to produce a contrary result'.<sup>[23]</sup> This condemnation of the institution of marriage is later undermined by her subsequent second marriage to Gilbert Markham, an example of the Brontës' problematic heroes. The consequences of Edith's realisation are far more traumatic. Lying on her deathbed, after she and her child have contracted syphilis from her husband, she condemns those 'who represent the arrangement of society which has made it possible for me and my child to be sacrificed in this way'.<sup>[24]</sup>

In both novels, the licentious male poses a significant threat to the figure of the dutiful wife and to the Victorian child, and so the next generation. In *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*, the happiness, if not the lives, of Helen and her son is sacrificed by her degenerate husband, who threatens to turn their son into a replica of himself. Arthur Huntingdon and Grand's Sir Mosley Menteith and Major Colquhoun are all representative of a certain character type: the drunken, licentious husband who appears not only in Victorian fiction, but frequently in nineteenth-century feminist

discourse. Grand herself wrote articles advising women against marrying licentious men, warning that ‘It is their habit to sacrifice women for their own or each other’s benefit’,[25] and concluding ‘Once a dog, always a dog’,[26] suggesting the impossibility of reform. Even typically anti-feminist writers, like Sarah Stickney Ellis, had, in the earlier Victorian period, acknowledged that ‘there are men occasionally found who are not, strictly speaking, noble, nor highly enlightened, nor altogether good’,[27] although she concludes that ‘it must be woman’s part to build him up [...], to raise him’.[28] In her article demanding greater protection for abused wives, ‘Wife-torture in England’ (1878), Frances Power Cobbe focuses on the working-class, drunken, abusive, adulterous husband – a strategy to gain the support of the middle classes who exerted control over the laws. Anne Brontë’s and Grand’s novels indicate that this licentious male also proliferated amongst the wealthier classes. In both texts, the dangerous influence of these men is indicated in part by the company they keep. Evadne’s discovery of her husband and his friends, including ‘three strange ladies [...] flushed with wine and horrid excitement’,[29] drinking and playing cards in their marital home, is reminiscent of Arthur Huntingdon’s escapades in *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*, in which Helen describes her husband as ‘a lover of pleasure, given up to animal enjoyments’.[30] The novels suggest, then, that it is not only diseases such as syphilis which threaten to contaminate the wives and children of dissolute men, but their immoral behaviour in general.

While the tragic consequences of male promiscuity are made clear through the premature deaths of Edith and her child in *The Heavenly Twins*, Anne Brontë’s text is more optimistic than Grand’s in suggesting the possibility of recovery from a traumatic marriage, but nevertheless it too hints at, though never makes explicit, the threat of disease posed by the promiscuous husband. Elaine Showalter proposes that

‘syphilis was surely the symbolic disease of the *fin de siècle*’,[31] and the syphilitic child in *The Heavenly Twins* clearly represents the physical embodiment of the father’s sin. While Anne Brontë does not engage directly with the issue of syphilis, both texts clearly illustrate the dangerous inheritance that threatened the child of the licentious male, though in *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*, the child is threatened by moral rather than physical contamination. Nevertheless, it is significant that Helen’s child, with his ‘delicate features and smaller bones than commonly fall to the lot of individuals of the rougher sex’,[32] is described in similar terms to the syphilitic child in Grand’s novel, who is ‘small and rickety, with bones that bent beneath its weight, slight as it was’.[33]

Grand presents the reader with two syphilitic children: the legitimate and the illegitimate child of Edith’s husband Sir Mosley Menteith. The fact that both these children – the child of the respectable Victorian wife and the child of the disreputable fallen woman – suffer the same fate illustrates the indiscriminate nature of the disease, which effectively destroyed class distinctions. As Meegan Kennedy observes, ‘Syphilis bridges the Victorians’ perceptual divide between the masculine world of intercourse and the Angel of the House, marking mother and whore alike with the trace of their common lover’s contaminated touch’.[34] Anne Brontë’s Helen also becomes associated with the fallen woman when she is forced to disguise herself as a widow to escape from her abusive husband – a disguise which anticipates that of the fallen woman in Elizabeth Gaskell’s *Ruth* (1853), who passes herself off as a widow in order to conceal the fact that she is an unmarried mother. Male licentiousness and female ignorance combine to inflict punishment for the father’s sins on the respectable Victorian woman, just as they do on the working-class women who represented a sexual resource for the middle-class man, thus Edith’s position as the

typically chaste Victorian heroine in *The Heavenly Twins* fails to protect her from the consequences of male promiscuity.

The issue of women's ignorance relates to the wider themes of women's education and women's reading – issues addressed by both authors in their respective novels. In *The Heavenly Twins*, Evadne's education, gained through the study, without her father's knowledge, of many books considered unsuitable for a lady, saves her from the same fate as Edith, for she is no longer ignorant of the destiny which may await the wife of a degraded man. Ironically, while Anne Brontë and Grand pleaded for a woman's right to knowledge through their fiction, critics argued that such novels were unsuitable for lady readers. A review of *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* that appeared in *Sharpe's London Magazine* stated that it was 'unfit to be noticed in the pages of *Sharpe*', explaining the inclusion of the review was to 'warn our readers, and more especially our *lady-readers*, against being induced to peruse it'.<sup>[35]</sup> Similarly, Grand's work was rejected by one publisher who explained that he 'could not, and would not dare to place your work in the way of ladies, who compose so large a proportion of the novel-reading public',<sup>[36]</sup> while elsewhere Grand recalls how one 'dear old gentleman wrote to me [...] to implore me not to read *The Heavenly Twins*. He said a knowledge of such books would entirely spoil the charm of women like myself'.<sup>[37]</sup>

These comments represent an endorsement of the very system that Anne Brontë and Grand sought to challenge through their novels: a system through which women were condemned to an early grave or a life of unhappiness as a consequence of male lust and female ignorance. Both authors staunchly defended themselves against such criticism. In the preface to the second edition of her novel, Anne Brontë argued that 'All novels are, or should be, written for both men and women to

read',[38] a sentiment echoed in *The Heavenly Twins* in the scene in which Evadne's father discovers her reading a book on sociology:

He could not have been more horrified had the books been "Mademoiselle de Maupin," "Nana," "La Terre," "Madame Bovary," and "Sapho"; yet, had women been taught to read the former and reflect upon them, our sacred humanity might have been saved sooner from the depth of degradation depicted in the latter.[39]

Grand further emphasizes the importance of women being informed rather than ignorant in her response to one publisher's rejection of her novel, in which she explains that 'I have been urgently incited to write the book by other women, who send me accounts of cases so horrifying and so heartrending that I believe if you knew but a little of them you would take up the subject yourself'.[40] This desire to inform the woman reader of the realities of life echoes Anne Brontë's desire to reveal the truth through her fiction. Continuing the defence of her work in her preface, she wrote: 'My object in writing [...] was not simply to amuse the Reader; neither was it to gratify my own taste, nor yet to ingratiate myself with the Press and the Public: I wished to tell the truth, for truth always conveys its own moral'.[41]

In emphasising the importance of their stories, both Anne Brontë and Grand employed metaphors which indicate that while their subject matter might be distasteful to the woman reader, it was nevertheless necessary that she be acquainted with the existence of such evils. Again there appears to be a particular emphasis on truth. Anne Brontë argues, in her preface, that 'as the priceless treasure too frequently hides at the bottom of a well, it needs some courage to dive for it, especially as he that does so will be likely to incur more scorn and obloquy for the mud and water into which he has ventured to plunge, than thanks for the jewel he procures',[42] while Grand, in her 1923 Foreword to *The Heavenly Twins*, reveals that 'My plan was to compound an allopathic pill for [the reader] and gild it so that it would be mistaken

for a bonbon and swallowed without a suspicion of its medicinal properties. Once swallowed, it would act'.[43] Both metaphors imply that the truth, while necessary and ultimately beneficial to the woman reader, is nevertheless unpleasant, thus both authors subtly acknowledge their breach of the boundaries of Victorian propriety in their choice of subject matter, but justify this breach in terms of the benefits ultimately conveyed.[44] These sentiments are further reinforced by the authors' references to the dangers of the type of books generally deemed suitable for the Victorian lady reader. Anne Brontë confesses that 'I would rather whisper a few wholesome truths therein than much soft nonsense',[45] anticipating the narrator's description in *The Heavenly Twins* of Evadne reading books that are 'far too sweet to be wholesome'.[46] Thus both authors attempt to challenge the misplaced propriety that prevented women reading books that might actually be of some use to them.

Furthermore, both authors appear to have based aspects of their narratives on the experience of people with whom they were personally acquainted. Grand, in a letter to the editor of *The Literary World*, wrote 'I have myself known eight of those dreadful Edith cases',[47] while Arthur Huntingdon's alcoholism seems likely to be based either on the experiences of the author's brother, Branwell, or, perhaps more probably given Huntingdon's treatment of his wife, on the husband of a Mrs Collins, with whom the Brontë sisters were acquainted. In a letter to Ellen Nussey in 1840, Charlotte Brontë wrote of Mrs Collins's 'melancholy tale of her wretched husband's drunken, extravagant, profligate habits', and her resolve to 'leave him directly'.[48] This seems to suggest notable similarities between Mrs Collins's experience and that of Helen Huntingdon in *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*.

Anne Brontë and Grand also warrant comparison in terms of their approaches to the 'distasteful' subjects discussed in their respective works. In a letter written

after her sister's death, Charlotte Brontë reveals that Anne 'wrote [*The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*] under a strange, conscientious, half-ascetic notion of accomplishing a painful penance and a severe duty',[49] while in the 'Biographical Notice' which appeared in the second edition of Anne's novel, Charlotte wrote of Anne: 'She hated her work, but would pursue it'.[50] These sentiments are echoed by Grand in her description of the writing of *The Heavenly Twins* forty years later: 'I shrank from the task with loathing; but I knew that I should not shirk it when it came to the point'.[51] Such statements are indicative of the authors' feminist sympathies: they clearly anticipated the negative reaction to their novels from certain readers and the press, but nevertheless felt an overwhelming need to enlighten the reader, particularly the ignorant female reader, kept in such a position in order to preserve her 'purity' and 'innocence' at the expense, Anne Brontë and Grand suggest, of her well-being, even her life.

The challenge that both texts pose to the conventions of Victorian patriarchal culture is clearly significant, yet while the authors contest the state of ignorance in which women were perpetually kept, they initially appear to retreat from their feminist purpose in the conclusion of the narratives, which seemingly contain their formerly subversive heroines within the boundaries of both marriage and the male subject's narrative. In *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*, Helen concludes the novel apparently happily married to Gilbert Markham, whose narrative frames her diary,[52] while in the conclusion of *The Heavenly Twins*, the third-person narrative is replaced by the first-person narrative of Evadne's second husband Dr Galbraith, and the formerly subversive, cross-dressing Angelica is apparently happily married to the sedate Mr Kilroy. Helen, Evadne and Angelica thus appear to be re-inscribed as 'conventional' Victorian wives, and sacrifice their earlier independence (Helen's as

an artist; Evadne's as a scholar; and Angelica's as a boy). However, a closer examination of these conclusions indicates the continuing presence of subversive elements and points to a revision of gender relations within marriage. Helen's power over Gilbert is established by the fact that she brings wealth to the marriage, and thus raises *his* social position; while Angelica, whose marriage proposal ('Marry me, *and let me do as I like*')<sup>[53]</sup> reverses traditional gender roles, continues to subvert tradition by writing her husband's political speeches. Evadne, however, unlike Helen, is unable to escape the influence of her oppressive first marriage and find fulfilment in her second marriage and attempts to kill herself and her unborn child.

The endings of both texts are problematic. Anne Brontë's solution is to provide Helen with a fulfilling second marriage, to 'reward' her for her previous suffering with an apparently happy union, in which the balance of power is shifted in her favour. However, she offers no wider solutions for the problems highlighted in the novel: marriage remains a lottery in which luck seems to determine the wife's fate. Indeed, the novel's conclusion is further problematised by the fact that aspects of Gilbert Markham's behaviour seem to replicate Huntingdon's. While he is not an alcoholic, like his predecessor he toys with the emotions of women who express an interest in him (Eliza Millward) and he is something of a bully, squeezing Helen's hand spitefully when she annoys him,<sup>[54]</sup> and attacking Lawrence when he believes him to be having an affair with Helen. Discovering what he supposes is Helen's secret – her relationship with Lawrence – he confesses 'I felt glad to have it in my power to torment her'<sup>[55]</sup> and admits 'I secretly exulted in my power, I felt disposed to dally with my victim like a cat'.<sup>[56]</sup> His behaviour, then, forces the reader to question Anne Brontë's 'happy-ever-after' ending, and while Helen's position as a wealthy heiress seems to shift the balance of power in her relationship with Markham

in her favour, this fact is, of course, redundant, as once she marries him he becomes, under Victorian law, the legal owner of all her property and wealth. Helen thus fails to heed her own earlier warning to Esther about the dangers of marriage, and Anne Brontë, it seems, can offer no alternative fate for her protagonist. Unlike Anne Brontë, Grand attempts to offer no idealized fairytale endings. Edith dies; Angelica's adventurous spirit is quelled and she relinquishes freedom and independence for the role of dutiful wife; Evadne, like Helen, remarries, but is unhappy and attempts suicide. The novel emphasizes the oppressive situation women are in, but offers little hope for the future.

The New Woman became a social and literary phenomenon at the end of the Victorian age, and carried the feminist movement forward into the twentieth century. She appears distinct from the figure of the early Victorian woman writer whose feminism was, generally, at best implicit. *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* provides a link between early Victorian feminism and the late Victorian and Edwardian feminism of the New Woman. Indeed, a direct line can be traced between Anne Brontë's work and Grand's later novel: from Elizabeth Gaskell's biography of Charlotte Brontë, to Gaskell's own novel detailing the experiences of the victim of the promiscuous Victorian man, *Ruth*, which in turn was a source of inspiration for Josephine Butler in her campaigns for the rights of prostitutes [57] – a campaign which affected Sarah Grand to the extent that she included a figure who appears to be based on Butler, who warns Evadne of her husband's disreputable past in *The Heavenly Twins*. These two novels both engage with key Victorian debates about the institution of marriage and the roles of the sexes, but, perhaps more significantly, they signify the persistent and continuing protest made by women writers throughout the nineteenth century; a protest against the conventions and traditions of Victorian patriarchal culture.

Critics, both Victorian and subsequent, have suggested that Anne Brontë's didactic purpose in her second novel overshadows its artistic merit. Similar claims were levelled at Grand, who wrote in the 1923 Foreword to her work: 'The book has never been accused of being a work of art'.<sup>[58]</sup> While this criticism of Anne Brontë may not be entirely without justification, the parallels between *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* and *The Heavenly Twins* suggest that the youngest of the Brontë sisters should be considered not, as Margaret Lane terms it, as 'a Brontë without genius'<sup>[59]</sup> but as an embryonic New Woman.

### Notes

- [1] Charlotte Brontë, Biographical Note for the second edition of *Wuthering Heights* and *Agnes Grey* in Miriam Allott (ed.), *The Brontës: The Critical Heritage* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1974), p.274.
- [2] Unsigned review, *Spectator* (8 July 1848) in Allott (ed.), *The Brontës*, p.250; unsigned review, *Sharpe's London Magazine* (August 1848) in Allott (ed.), *The Brontës*, p.263.
- [3] Unsigned review, *Sharpe's London Magazine*, p.263.
- [4] Unsigned review, 'Mr Bell's New Novel', *Rambler* (September 1848) in Allott (ed.), *The Brontës*, p.267.
- [5] T. Baily Saunders, cited in Carol A. Senf, Introduction to Sarah Grand, *The Heavenly Twins* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1992), p.xx.
- [6] Cited in Sarah Grand, Foreword to *The Heavenly Twins* (1923) in Ann Heilmann (ed.), *Sex, Social Purity and Sarah Grand*, Vol. 2 (London: Routledge, 2000), p.405.
- [7] Grand, Foreword, p.406.
- [8] Grand, Foreword, p.404.
- [9] Gillian Kersley, *Darling Madame: Sarah Grand and Devoted Friend* (London: Virago, 1983), p.74.
- [10] Incidentally, *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* is not the only Brontë novel that warrants comparison with the works of the New Woman writers: in *Brontë Transformations*, Patsy Stoneman argues that both Grand's *The Heavenly Twins* and Olive Schreiner's *The Story of an African Farm* (1883) echo Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* (Patsy Stoneman, *Brontë Transformations: The Cultural Dissemination of Jane Eyre and Wuthering Heights* [London: Prentice Hall/Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1996], p.294).
- [11] Lyn Pykett, *Wilkie Collins* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p.91.
- [12] Meegan Kennedy, 'Syphilis and the Hysterical Female: The Limits of Realism in Sarah Grand's *The Heavenly Twins*' in *Women's Writing*, Vol. 11, No. 2 [2004], p.272.
- [13] Although published in 1892, Grand began working on *Singularly Deluded* in the 1870s, when the sensation novel was still particularly popular.
- [14] *Jane Eyre* and *Wuthering Heights* also contain sensational elements.

- [15] Grand, *The Heavenly Twins*, p.155.
- [16] Grand, *The Heavenly Twins*, p.304.
- [17] Other examples of such marriages in *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* include that of Lord and Lady Lowborough, which ends in divorce, that of Millicent and Hattersley, the latter one of Arthur Huntingdon's associates and similarly dissolute, and Helen's second marriage to Gilbert Markham at the end of the narrative.
- [18] Anne Brontë, *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* (1848; London: Penguin, 1996), p.111.
- [19] 'Recent Novels', *Spectator* (25 March 1893) in Heilmann (ed.), *Sex, Social Purity and Sarah Grand*, Vol. 2, pp.422-3.
- [20] Brontë, *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*, p.125.
- [21] Grand, *The Heavenly Twins*, p.234.
- [22] Grand, *The Heavenly Twins*, p.78.
- [23] Brontë, *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*, p.288.
- [24] Grand, *The Heavenly Twins*, p.300.
- [25] Sarah Grand, 'On the Choice of a Husband' (1898) in Ann Heilmann (ed.), *Sex, Social Purity and Sarah Grand*, Vol. 1 (London: Routledge, 2000), p.108.
- [26] Grand, 'On the Choice of Husband', p.109.
- [27] Sarah Stickney Ellis, 'Characteristics of Husbands' (1843) in Janet Murray (ed.), *Strong Minded Women and Other Lost Voices From Nineteenth-Century England* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1982), p.125.
- [28] Ellis, 'Characteristics of Husbands', p.126.
- [29] Grand, *The Heavenly Twins*, p.325.
- [30] Brontë, *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*, p.193.
- [31] Elaine Showalter, 'Syphilis, Sexuality, and the Fiction of the *Fin-de-Siècle*' in Lyn Pykett (ed.), *Reading Fin de Siècle Fictions* (London/New York: Longman, 1996), p.166.
- [32] Brontë, *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*, p.72.
- [33] Sarah Grand, *The Heavenly Twins*, p.290. It is tempting, of course, to read much into these comparable descriptions. Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847) lends itself to a similar interpretation: Rochester, like Grand's Mosley Menteith, is the father of an illegitimate child who is the consequence of an illicit liaison, while his first wife, like Edith, descends into madness. Furthermore, he is eventually blinded – a condition, as Elaine Showalter notes, associated with venereal disease (see Elaine Showalter, 'Syphilis, Sexuality, and the Fiction of the *Fin-de-Siècle*' in Lyn Pykett [ed.], *Reading Fin de Siècle Fictions* [London/New York: Longman, 1996], p.168). Given Charlotte Brontë's reaction to *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*, however, it is hardly likely that this was her intention.
- [34] Kennedy, 'Syphilis and the Hysterical Female', p.262.
- [35] Unsigned review, *Sharpe's London Magazine* (August 1848) in Allott, *The Brontës: The Critical Heritage*, p.263, my emphasis.
- [36] Cited in Grand, Foreword to *The Heavenly Twins*, p.406.
- [37] Frances McFall (Sarah Grand) to William Blackwood (24 July 1893) in *Sex, Social Purity and Sarah Grand*, Vol. 2, p.37.
- [38] Brontë, *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*, p.14.
- [39] Grand, *The Heavenly Twins*, p.104.
- [40] McFall to Blackwood (24 September 1891), *Ibid*, p.24.
- [41] Brontë, *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*, p.13.
- [42] Brontë, *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*, p.13.
- [43] Grand, Foreword, p.404.

[44] Grand invokes similar sentiments elsewhere in her writing, through her use of the image of the competent housekeeper who dusts in ‘dark corners’, arguing that ‘It is for us to set the human household in order [...] We are bound to raise the dust while we are at work’ (Sarah Grand, ‘The New Aspect of the Woman Question’ in Ann Heilmann [ed.], *Sex, Social Purity and Sarah Grand*, Vol. 1 [London: Routledge, 2000], p.35. In *Wuthering Heights*, Lockwood employs a comparable metaphor, noting that ‘I’ll extract wholesome medicines from Mrs Dean’s bitter herbs’ (Emily Brontë, *Wuthering Heights* [London: Penguin, 2003], p.153.

[45] Brontë, *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*, p.13.

[46] Grand, *The Heavenly Twins*, p.45.

[47] Sarah Grand to F. H. Fisher (22 March 1894) in Heilmann (ed.), *Sex, Social Purity and Sarah Grand*, Vol. 2, p.40.

[48] Charlotte Brontë to Ellen Nussey (12 November 1840) in Juliet Barker (ed.), *The Brontës: A Life in Letters* (London: Viking, 1997), p.82.

[49] Charlotte Brontë to William Smith Williams (5 September 1850) in Barker (ed.), *The Brontës*, p.295.

[50] Charlotte Brontë, ‘Biographical Notice’, p.274.

[51] Grand, Foreword to *The Heavenly Twins*, p.404.

[52] For a discussion of the novel’s narrative structure, see Elizabeth Signorotti, “‘A Frame Perfect and Glorious’: Narrative Structure in Anne Brontë’s *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*” in *Victorian Newsletter*, Vol. 87 (Spring 1995), pp.20-25.

[53] Grand, *The Heavenly Twins*, p.321, emphasis in original.

[54] Brontë, *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*, p.36.

[55] Brontë, *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*, p.103.

[56] Brontë, *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*, p.106.

[57] See Jane Jordan, *Josephine Butler* (London: John Murray, 2001), p.45.

[58] Grand, Foreword, p.401.

[59] Margaret Lane, *The Drug-Like Brontë Dream* (London: John Murray, 1980).

### **Bibliography**

Brontë, Anne. *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*. 1848; London: Penguin, 1996.

Brontë, Charlotte. ‘Biographical Note’ for second edition of *Wuthering Heights* and *Agnes Grey* (September 1850) in Miriam Allott (ed.). *The Brontës: The Critical Heritage*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1974, p.274.

--- to Ellen Nussey (12 November 1840) in Juliet Barker (ed.). *The Brontës: A Life in Letters*. London: Viking, 1997, pp.82-3.

--- to William Smith Williams (5 September 1850) in Juliet Barker (ed.). *The Brontës: A Life in Letters*. London: Viking, 1997, p.295.

Brontë, Emily. *Wuthering Heights*. 1848; London: Penguin, 2003

Frances Power Cobbe. ‘Wife-torture in England’. *Contemporary Review*. April 1878. Repr. in Hamilton (ed.). *Criminals, Idiots, Women and Minors*, pp.132-71.

Ellis, Sarah Stickney. Extract from 'Characteristics of Husbands' (1843) in Janet Murray (ed.). *Strong Minded Women and Other Lost Voices From Nineteenth-Century England*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1982, pp.124-7.

Grand, Sarah (Frances McFall) to William Blackwood (24 September 1891) in Ann Heilmann (ed.). *Sex, Social Purity and Sarah Grand*, Vol. 2. London: Routledge, 2000, p.24.

--- *The Heavenly Twins*. 1893; Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1992.

--- (Frances McFall) to William Blackwood (24 July 1893) in Ann Heilmann. *Sex, Social Purity and Sarah Grand*, Vol. 2. London: Routledge, 2000, p.37.

--- to F. H. Fisher (22 March 1894) Ann Heilmann (ed.). *Sex, Social Purity and Sarah Grand*, Vol. II. London: Routledge, 2000, pp.40-41.

--- 'The New Aspect of the Woman Question'. *North American Review*. 1894, Vol. 158. Repr. in Ann Heilmann (ed.). *Sex, Social Purity and Sarah Grand*, Vol. 1. London: Routledge, 2000, pp.29-35.

--- 'On the Choice of a Husband' (1898) in Ann Heilmann (ed.). *Sex, Social Purity and Sarah Grand*, Vol. 1. London: Routledge, 2000, pp.106-11.

--- Foreword to *The Heavenly Twins* (1923) in Ann Heilmann (ed.). *Sex, Social Purity and Sarah Grand*, Vol. 2. London: Routledge, 2000, pp.397-408.

Jordan, Jane. *Josephine Butler*. London: John Murray, 2001.

Kennedy, Meegan. 'Syphilis and the Hysterical Female: The Limits of Realism in Sarah Grand's *The Heavenly Twins*' in *Women's Writing*. Vol. 11, No. 2 (2004), pp.259-80.

Kersley, Gillian. *Darling Madame: Sarah Grand and Devoted Friend*. London: Virago, 1983.

Lane, Margaret. *The Drug-Like Brontë Dream*. London: John Murray, 1980.

Pykett, Lyn. *Wilkie Collins*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005.

Senf, Carol A.. Introduction to Sarah Grand. *The Heavenly Twins*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1992, pp.vii-xxxvii.

Showalter, Elaine. 'Syphilis, Sexuality, and the Fiction of the *Fin-de-Siècle*' in Lyn Pykett (ed.). *Reading Fin de Siècle Fictions*. London/New York: Longman, 1996, pp.166-83.

Signorotti, Elizabeth. "'A Frame Perfect and Glorious": Narrative Structure in Anne Brontë's *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*' in *Victorian Newsletter*. Vol. 87 (Spring 1995), pp.20-25.

Stoneman, Patsy. *Brontë Transformations: The Cultural Dissemination of Jane Eyre and Wuthering Heights*. London: Prentice Hall/Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1996.

Unsigned. 'Mr Bell's New Novel'. *Rambler* (September 1848) in Miriam Allott (ed.). *The Brontës: The Critical Heritage*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1974, pp.266-8.

--- 'Recent Novels'. *Spectator* (25 March 1893) in Ann Heilmann (ed.). *Sex, Social Purity and Sarah Grand*, Vol. 2. London: Routledge, 2000, pp.422-3.

Unsigned review. *Spectator* (8 July 1848) in Miriam Allott (ed.). *The Brontës: The Critical Heritage*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1974, pp.249-50.

---. *Sharpe's London Magazine* (August 1848) in Miriam Allott (ed.). *The Brontës: The Critical Heritage*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1974, pp.263-5.

### **Biographical Note:**

Jessica Cox is a lecturer in post-1800 English literature at the University of Wales, Lampeter. Her research interests include Victorian sensation fiction, first-wave feminism the Brontës, New Woman literature, and neo-Victorian fiction and film. She has published a number of articles on sensation fiction, and she is the editor of the Penguin edition of Charlotte Brontë's *Shirley*.