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The Wild and Distracted Call for Proof:
Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Lady Byron Vindicated*
and the Rise of Professional Realism

In an 1869 cartoon from the October *Merryman's Monthly*, Harriet Beecher Stowe wields an immense quill and conjures Lord Byron in the shape of a satyr. Byron rises on a dark cloud from a great black inkwell; a snake at Stowe's feet is marked "scandal"; a horned toad sits on copies of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and *Dred*; and, in the background, a human skull as well as a jarred fetus rest on a shelf. The caption reads: "Mrs. H— B— S—'s Great Incantation. Who have we here?— The great poet Byron or the D—I?"¹ (Figure 1.)

The cartoon's surface critique is obvious: Stowe's writing is witchcraft. More subtly, however, the parody targets three specific attributes that had comprised Stowe's rhetorical ethos ever since the publication of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*: her tripartite position as woman, Christian, and abolitionist.² The Christian critique is the most apparent. An emissary of the "D—I" (manifested in the serpent that names her writing practice "scandal"), Stowe's art transforms Byron from a great poet into a Satanic incarnation, insinuating that Stowe's own writing is not great—it can only defile and debase the great. In turn, the elements of witchcraft, especially the pickled fetus, suggest that Stowe's womanhood has gone awry. Rather than nurture and protect the republic's children, her writing or sorcery pollutes the domestic space. And, indeed, the entire portrait is not just magic but *black* magic: the stuff of Stowe's art, her ink, drips thick and black; and Stowe's two slavery novels, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and *Dred*, are the representative productions of this art. By implication, the sketch racializes all of Stowe's writing, suggesting her treatment of Byron is inflected by a different kind of "blackness."



Figure 1.

This cartoon is but one response of many to Stowe's article "The True Story of Lady Byron's Life." Published simultaneously in the September 1869 issues of the *Atlantic Monthly* in America and *Macmillan's* in England, this piece initiated a transatlantic media attack so virulent and widespread that Oliver Wendell Holmes called it the "Byron whirlwind."³ In short, the article accused Lord Byron of committing incest both before and during his marriage. Even though this gossip had been around for over sixty years, such a blatant and public accusation against the revered male poet by a female pen explains, in part, the caustic nature of the critics' response. However, the professional and realist assumptions motivating the precise quality of these condemnations are less transparent, and Stowe's response to these censures reveals her participation in an emerging literary culture of professional realism—a realism both historic and deeply paradoxical.⁴

Indeed, the criticisms aimed at Stowe's "True Story" spurred her to approach narrative in a new, more "factual" way. In less than six months after the appearance of the "True Story," Stowe rewrote her tale into a very different kind of text, *Lady Byron Vindicated*, a book-length work that embraces certain precepts of professional realism, including a self-conscious use of professional style and an emphasis on fact-as-value. At the same time, *Vindicated* maintains an affinity with the kinds of sentimental appeals Stowe had employed ever since the publication of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. As a result, even though the text is in part an historical commentary, *Vindicated* operates as a kind of realist fiction, thereby highlighting the slip-page between cultural categories of fact and fiction that actually engendered the professional realist project. As such, *Vindicated* both exposes and helps to solidify the gender and commercial stigmas that were necessary to the rise of professional realism in late nineteenth-century America.

Professional Realism and Feminine Reading

Stowe's original essay and its sequel adapt the same story as their centerpiece. On a trip to England in 1856, Lady Byron granted Stowe a *lête-à-tête*, one in which Stowe learned the secret reason behind Lady Byron's marital estrangement: that Lord Byron had fathered a child with his half-sister Augusta Leigh and maintained an incestuous relationship even after his marriage—all the while blaming Lady Byron's frigidity as the source of his dissipation. Thirteen years following this confidence, and after Lady Byron's death, Stowe happened upon a memoir by Byron's last mistress, the Countess Guiccioli. This work perpetuated the oft-repeated portrayal of Lady Byron as a "narrow-minded, cold-hearted precisian" who stifled Byron's art and drove him to seek solace in other women.⁵ Then Stowe

alleged to have come across an article in England's *Blackwood's* praising Guiccioli's memoir and offering it as a true representation of Byron's wedded woes.⁶ Angered at what she felt to be a one-sided attack on Lady Byron's character and frustrated that no English writer would come to her defense, Stowe argues in the "True Story" that since "Lady Byron has an American name and an American existence, and reverence for pure womanhood is, we think, a national characteristic of the American," she deserves a conclusive "refutation of the slanders" from an American author.⁷

At one level, then, Stowe's "True Story" works as a national corrective, not merely one woman speaking in defense of another's honor but as America tutoring England on how to treat its pure women—not unlike how *Uncle Tom's Cabin* sought to teach Southerners how to "feel right" on the issue of slavery. But Stowe's piece on Lady Byron troubles the very gender position she claims as a credential, her appeal as a symbol and defender of pure womanhood. Indeed, Stowe's detractors accuse her of behaving in an unwomanly manner by spreading sexual scandal and breaking confidence. The editor of London's *Illustrated Times* jibes, "[Stowe's] rash and utterly unjustifiable [sic] conduct only illustrates once more the melancholy truth that man's inhumanity to man is as nothing compared with woman's uncharitableness to woman."⁸ In turn, a letter to the editor of the *Pall Mall Gazette* claims that "women, especially when jealous, are not very scrupulous in their assertions, and, moreover, after a certain time actually believe in the truth of their assumptions. They will in fact, to use a common expression, stick at nothing."⁹ And another critic quoted in *Public Opinion* exclaims, "[Stowe] is false to the instincts of her own sex; it is theirs to draw the curtain over the faults of the living, and to cherish sympathy for those whom genius endows with her noblest gifts."¹⁰

Two impulses are at work in these censures: first is an equation between sentimentalism and hasty, feminized emotion. The assumption that Stowe's article is founded on feminine-based susceptibility to feeling is a direct result of her former reputation as a sentimental author. Thus, to the *Illustrated Times* editor, Stowe's revelation is "rash," the result of impulse rather than a measured process of judgment. The *Times* calls Stowe's conduct "uncharitable," which echoes *Public Opinion's* charge that Stowe has gone against the "instincts of her sex." Not only, then, is Stowe weakly sentimental: she is unladylike, failing to exercise her forgiving nature and exposing "faults" which she is supposed to "veil," especially if such faults reside in "genius." By implication, the second and related impulse here is in keeping with one of the critiques raised by the *Merryman's* cartoon: a sentimental writer is the instrument of (feminine) sympathy, not (masculine) genius.

But in addition to charging Stowe with debasing pure womanhood, her detractors construed her article as a text made up of lies. The *Pall Mall Gazette* engages bandwagonism to suggest that *all* women, including Stowe, "stick at nothing," while the London *Standard* refuses to quote from the "True Story" because doing so would "allow the authoress . . . to employ over again in these pages the well-known dexterity of the romance writer when fiction has to be made to look like fact."¹¹

Importantly, the *Standard* confounds the accuracy of Stowe's article by suggesting that an acknowledged romance writer would dupe readers through her fictional "dexterity," a substitution of fancy for fact. In this manner, the *Standard* codes narrative unreality as feminine, aligning a number of nineteenth-century genres—including sentimental and sensational texts—with stereotypes of female equivocation.

Such indictments of Stowe's feminine corruption and falsehood reveal one set of stigmas necessary to the ideology of professional literary realism that was, by 1869, gathering high-culture cachet. As Nancy Glazener has detailed, certain precepts of the emerging professionalism in disciplines such as medicine and law provided the means by which a new coterie of male realist writers could shift "the intertwined effects of commercialism and consumerism onto women's culture."¹² Professionalism allowed for this dislocation by its basic contradiction between expertise and entrepreneurship: male authors could both participate in the perhaps distasteful economics of the literary marketplace while maintaining intellectual transcendence as public arbiters of high-cultural taste. Of course the relationship between a sentimental woman writer and her female reader traded on emotional sensitivity, not intellectual or spiritual elevation, and such sensitivity was dangerously addictive, inspiring immediate gratifications rather than the timeless ones offered by the professional male realist. Further, since the instantaneous delight of sentimental reading must be continually renewed through buying and selling repeated pleasures, such practice could be construed as a kind of prostitution. Inevitably, then, professional male realists could adopt positions of cultural management, labeling women writers who participated in the sentimental or the sensational as authorial amateurs or literary whores. The *Merryman's Monthly* cartoon is a case in point: Stowe's hair and dress are in dishabille, and she lifts her skirts to display her ankles—clear signs of sexual permissiveness.

But it is not just Stowe's virtue or veracity that are at stake. The *Merryman's* caricature also implies that Stowe's writing is fantastic—not just dishonest but beyond the realm of the "real." The cartoon's humor trades in a conflation of Pagan and Christian mythologies: in satyrs and witches and the Devil in his proverbial serpent's skin. Such imagery suggests that

Stowe's claim of Byron's incestuous infidelities is merely a fable, thereby playing into indictments of the "True Story" that, like the *Standard's*, insisted that all of Stowe's "romances" were "fiction . . . made to look like fact."¹³

This particular strain of criticism against the "True Story" epitomizes a larger cultural unease over what Michael Robertson has termed the pervasive "fact-fiction discourse" in America at the end of the nineteenth century. Akin to the fact-fiction slippage in the 1700s that had brought about the modern form of the Anglo-American novel,¹⁴ between 1865 and the turn of the century many fictions read like relations of fact, whereas newspapers "indiscriminately mixed news, fiction, and feature articles that had an indeterminate truth status."¹⁵ The job of a professional realist writer, then, was to counter the fictionally induced unreality of quotidian life by producing a fiction more real than reality—a narrative more factual than fact.

Though seemingly contradictory, this belief that a high-art, realist, masculine text could provide a culturally redeeming narrative more factual than fact is in keeping with nineteenth-century professional ideologies that repeatedly privileged scientific objectivity and fact-as-value. Thus, an American realist writer appropriated a grammar of fact—dates, names, figures, events—and simultaneously withheld his personality from the text in order to distance himself from an authorial position coded as feminine. One need only think of Hawthorne's infamous complaint about scribbling women, or Poe's insistent adoption of personas, or Melville's Ishmael, or Whitman's expansion of "self" beyond all possibility of an identity defined by domestic relationships to see how a withholding of personality performed "the real." And Stowe's detractors repeatedly argued that the "True Story" revealed itself as an unrealistic product of sentimental hokum.

Indeed, review after review called on Stowe to produce "facts," hard proof of Byron's crime. In 1851, Southern critics had denounced the veracity of Stowe's fiction, prompting her to write *A Key to Uncle Tom's Cabin*, a compendium of real-life stories that allegedly served as the basis of controversial scenes Stowe had incorporated into her novel.¹⁶ Twenty years later, however, a much more comprehensive body of readers, including educated Northerners, were denouncing the veracity of her nonfiction. "The wild and distracted calling on me for proof," Stowe protested, "utterly ignoring the only kind of proof that I have to give, shows that the public is yet not in a proper state to weigh anything."¹⁷ In the largely sentimental reading culture of the 1850s, "proof" had been a matter of effecting a convincing narrative to arouse Christian sympathy—the very kind of proof Stowe had to give. Now, with the advent of professional realism as a high-

culture benchmark, Stowe's emotionally based ethos no longer granted her automatic authority, especially on an historical topic dealing with real people and lacking verifiable data.

Taken together, the deluge of criticism against the "True Story" reveals a complex of ideas privileging an authorial ethos and a kind of narrative that were at odds with Stowe: an ethos simultaneously masculine, secular, and cosmopolitan that produced either fact-based texts or texts that rendered a mimetic reality. As such, it is little wonder that within half a year of the publication of her "True Story," Stowe rewrote her article into a book-length study, one that emphasized fact-as-value and reframed her rhetorical position from woman-Christian-citizen to that of professional realist writer.

Sentimental Versus Professional Realist Forms

The Independent, a newspaper that had printed many of Stowe's articles, carried a prototypical indictment of the "True Story" from its editor, Theodore Tilton. In his review, Tilton admonishes, "Startling in accusation, barren in proof, inaccurate in dates, infelicitous in style, and altogether ill-advised in publication, [Stowe's] strange article will travel round the whole literary world and everywhere evoke against its author the spontaneous disapprobation of her life-long friends."¹⁸ Tilton's specific condemnations are telling. Stowe's piece is "startling"—which meant shocking or disturbing rather than merely surprising—and the reader's sensibilities are "startled" by a text that cannot, according to Tilton, justify the consequence of such disturbance: the story contains no proof; it is inaccurate; it is stylistically gauche and generally "strange." Thus, the article fails because it does not adhere to Tilton's unspoken prejudice for exact evidence and a straightforward writing style. If a reader is "startled," Tilton suggests, there had better be objective proof to mitigate a reader's exposure to an offensive idea: i.e., the form of the text must assuage the text's function.

Indeed, Tilton was accurate that the form of the "True Story" was not one that suggested "truth": the article is clearly a product of 1850s sentimentality, employing heuristic and didactic techniques upon which Stowe had founded her career as a sentimental novelist. For instance, the article confuses dates, misrepresenting how many years the Byrons were married. Lord Byron's poems are cited as unalloyed autobiography—passages from *Don Juan* demonstrate Byron's mistreatment of Lady Byron and excerpts from *Cain* and *Manfred* show how he "justified himself in incest."¹⁹ In keeping with the style of historical romance, the text refers to the narrator as "the writer," never providing Stowe's name.²⁰ The syntax is the opposite of

economy, a maze of sinuous constructions, and the piece relies on pathos-based allusions, including the requisite tears: "Lord Byron's 'Fare thee well . . .,' was set to music and sung with tears by young school-girls, even in this distant America."²¹ The plot structure resembles a moral tale. The "True Story" first establishes the traditionally caustic portrayal of Lady Byron as a crime perpetuated on innocent readers. The narrative then retells the same story through new eyes, including all the damnable actions on Byron's part—the "secret adulterous intrigue with a blood relation" and the fact that he asked Lady Byron to allow a "continental latitude" in their marriage, "in which complaisant couples mutually agreed to form the cloak for each other's infidelities."²² Finally, the article's symbolism follows the pattern of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, embodying the redemptive love of Christ in a Little Eva exemplar—"Lying so near the confines of the spiritual world, [Lady Byron] seemed already to see into it"—and making a prophetic analogy between Byron and a fallen angel whose evil doings had influenced gullible readers.²³ In short, the article is a romance.

But in response to rebukes such as Tilton's, Stowe produced a very different sort of text: *Lady Byron Vindicated*, an archive of dates, manuscripts, and named sources—a self-consciously professional document. As Stowe sought to meet the rhetorical demands of a public calling for "proof," like her realist contemporaries, she appropriated words from the burgeoning professions, especially law and psychiatry. "As it is too late to have the securities of a legal trial," Stowe explains, "certainly the rules of historical evidence should be strictly observed. All important documents should be presented in an entire state, with a plain and open account of their history."²⁴ Here Stowe attempts to cast herself in the role of the impartial, investigative lawyer, the one who will provide the "plain and open account" of all documents and will put Byron on literary trial. Later in the text, she simulates the voice of the psychiatrist, the one who will establish Byron's moral illness and its infection of the entire British nation. The consequence of miming such professional postures, however, is the tension Stowe creates against her own sentimental ethos—a tension against her own established artistry.

The professional form and tone of much of *Vindicated* are designed to teach Stowe's readers the proper state in which to read both her text's proof and her own position as a credible narrator. Unlike the "True Story," Stowe autographs the book, referring to herself in the preface and elsewhere as "I" and "me" instead of as "the writer."²⁵ Punctilious in naming names and quoting sources, Stowe devotes an entire chapter to the notorious interview, providing the who, what, where, when, and how hitherto absent. Stowe numbers, footnotes, and dates; *Vindicated* moves in a rough

chronological fashion, inserting an entire chapter abstracting the most salient events. The text justifies the error previously made over the marriage dates by precisely citing a source, thereby impugning someone else's faulty research. For the most part, *Vindicated* turns away from Byron's poems as biographical material to analyze his personal correspondence.²⁶ Overall, the substance of *Vindicated*'s approach changes from what Stowe herself characterizes as the "most general terms" of her original article to "just where I would stand were I giving evidence under oath before a legal tribunal."²⁷ With this evocation of a courtroom, Stowe appropriates the language of an expert witness as well as the voice of a defense lawyer. For the chapters requiring data to demonstrate the "criminal" aspects of her case, pertinent documents are quoted at length, often in their entirety, and are structured like a legal brief. Here is one example of many:

IV. Aug. 9, 1817.—Gives to M. G. Lewis a paper for circulation among friends in England, stating that what he most wants is public investigation, which has always been denied him; and daring Lady Byron and her counsel to come out publicly. Found in M. G. Lewis's portfolio after his death; never heard of before, except among the "initiated."²⁸

By placing the date first, this passage makes it appear as one in a series—a reassurance that the following information is linked to a specific day in a specific year. Sentence fragments form the body of the paragraph as if the investigator merely jotted down the most striking facts. All of the information comes from a named document. Indeed, this excerpt provides the reader with the "plain and open account" Stowe herself had said was imperative, the knowledge of who had the documents, where they were found, and how preserved. And in reference to Byron's actions, the passage chooses two words that connote culpability: "daring" and "initiated." Byron dares his wife like an overgrown child picking a fight—he doesn't request, demand, or expect her to make a public accusation. And clearly Byron is a member of some mysterious band called the "initiated"; the quotation marks highlighting this term imply that the word is Byron's own, further implicating him in some covert activity.

Read against the following paragraph from the original "True Story," *Vindicated*'s appropriation of legalistic discourse is all the more evident:

Madame de Staël commenced the first effort at evangelization immediately after [Byron] left England, and found her catechumen in a most edifying state of humility. He was metaphorically on his knees in penitence, and confessed himself a miserable sinner in the loveliest manner possible. Such sweetness and humility took all hearts. His conversations with Madame de Staël were printed and circulated all over the world, making it to appear that only the inflexibility of Lady Byron stood in the way of his entire conversion.²⁹

The syntax here is literary, consisting entirely of independent clauses rather than sentence fragments. In addition, the text applies a number of literary devices: strings of value-laden descriptors highlight Byron's artifice (e.g., "edifying," "miserable," "loveliest"); metaphor portrays Byron's effect on others (e.g., "[his] sweetness and humility took all hearts"); and the diction suggests a belletristic narrator (e.g., "evangelization," "catechumen," "penitence"). There are no dates or documents. Distilled to its informational content, this excerpt has very little in the way of hard fact: the reader knows Madame de Staël got involved in some way to persuade the public that Lady Byron was at fault for the separation, although de Staël's manner of involvement is not specified, and the reader learns that Byron engaged in confession, but the transcript of this confession is absent.

But unlike the "True Story," *Vindicated* moves fluidly from one professional accent to another. Taking on the voice of the psychiatrist, Stowe devotes an entire chapter to what she calls a "Physiological Argument"—a chapter intended to convince the reader that Byron was an alcoholic as well as a hysteric. When needing the opinion of an expert, especially a medical man, *Vindicated* quotes long passages from Dr. Forbes Winslow and his article "Obscure Diseases of the Brain and Nerves."³⁰ Yet the text goes beyond mere citation to ventriloquize medical discourse itself:

Modern physiological developments would lead any person versed in the study of the reciprocal influence of physical and moral laws to anticipate the most serious danger to such an organization as Lord Byron's, from a precocious development of the passions. Alcoholic and narcotic stimulants, in the case of such a person, would be regarded as little less than suicidal, and an early course of combined drinking and licentiousness as tending directly to establish those unsound conditions which lead toward moral insanity.³¹

Here the diction insinuates scientific jargon with such turns of phrase as "reciprocal influence," "precocious development," and "unsound conditions." By forgoing the use of "I" in favor of a third-person, passive voice, this excerpt suggests a universal, objective point-of-view, and the writing hints that the narrator herself is one of those people versed in this esoteric study without actually having to claim that she is or is not. In essence, this example mimes classic textbook prose, adopting the inflection of a distanced, intelligent narrator whose opinion is axiom.

The Necessary Sentimental

Such legalistic and pseudo-scientific concessions to a public calling for proof throw into relief points where *Vindicated* returns to the sentimental, revealing something about the narrative that necessitates an intimate,

emotional stance. *Vindicated* adopts just such an approach for the most sensational chapter, "Lady Byron's Story as Told Me"—the one relating the all-important moment of Lady Byron's confession. It was this piece of evidence (or, rather, the lack thereof) that produced the most skepticism against Stowe's "True Story." Thus, for this most contestable chapter—a chapter containing no documents to bolster its claims, no spectators to reinforce its merit—Stowe adopts the form of fiction: scene, setting, dialogue, and character.³² Even this chapter's title is telling: "Lady Byron's Story as Told Me." For while Stowe takes a certain authorial responsibility for *Vindicated* by signing the book and writing a preface, she also obscures her role as the story's mediator in order to insert a distanced, professionalized ethos in place of material proof. As a result, all preceding chapters from Part I of *Vindicated* offer no sense of a narrative "I" or "me" in the text, and all subsequent chapters lose this first-person perspective. (The chapter just prior to the infamous one is the only other to adopt the first-person, "Lady Byron as I Knew Her"—a point discussed below.) Taken together, then, these titles suggest that *Vindicated*'s summaries, arguments, and résumés are not "authored"; rather, they represent a compendium of publicly-owned evidence. Moreover, these chapters add thick layers of documentary evidence on either side of the confession, bookending a moment meant to be taken on faith by the reading public; as such, these chapters create an illusion of inner substance as well as a further mystification of the terrible secret.

The narrator's difficulty with "Lady Byron's Story as Told Me" rests with a professional's dependence on print—clear, precise words that function as the binding vehicles between writer and reader. A carefully chosen word connotes authenticity, objectivity, and timelessness (the masculine Public), while the spoken implies hearsay, personal opinion, and the immediate (the feminine Private). Stowe's audience could scrutinize a letter, an affidavit, a catalogue of dates; and by wrapping her volatile chapter in so much information, *Vindicated* responds to typographic prejudice in like form, admitting that straightforward prose more closely approximates truth. However, by feeding this prejudice, the book also reveals its dependence on intimate, private exchange and oral testimony, thus subverting its own logic. As such, Stowe had to try to remake orality into fact, and, further, herself into a kind of objective, professional witness.

For this reason, before relating the crucial interview, *Vindicated* includes a chapter on "Lady Byron as I Knew Her." The narrator explains, "Lady Byron's communications were made to me in language clear, precise, terrible; and many of her phrases and sentences I could repeat to this day, word for word."³³ Here Stowe's confessional idiom deliberately imitates

the language of the professions. In *The Culture of Professionalism*, Burton Bledstein explains that with the rise of professionalism in America, "A man was his 'word' or the words others used about him. . . . To place an opinion in writing was to make it final, commit the writer to its veracity, document a position and submit that position to the impartial reading of a third party."³⁴ Bledstein stipulates that the professional's words had to be "clear, plain, direct, and tangible," and these are precisely the quality of words that emerge from Lady Byron's mouth: "clear, precise, terrible."³⁵ In this manner, Stowe suggests that the words she remembers and records are real, true, irrefutable.

In turn, Stowe represents her own memory as lexic. It is not, Stowe insists, that she cannot remember Lady Byron's testimony; rather, if she had reproduced Lady Byron's precise language in her "True Story" word for word, "the public horror and incredulity would have been doubled."³⁶ Thus *Vindicated's* narrator takes on the role of a realist writer choosing words that will convey brutal, irrevocable truth. This move further serves to maintain Stowe's pure womanhood, for feminine modesty as much as professional restraint are at work.

Once Stowe insists that the most significant statement can be produced verbatim or "scripted," her next step is to credentialize her source:

I am now about to complete the account of my conversation with Lady Byron; but as the credibility of a history depends greatly on the character of its narrator, and as especial pains have been taken to destroy the belief in this story by representing it to be the wanderings of a broken-down mind . . . , I shall preface the narrative with some account of Lady Byron. . . .³⁷

While the narrator obviously means to rescue Lady Byron's integrity, she also alludes to those critics who accused Stowe herself of having misunderstood or lied about Lady Byron's confession. As a result, Stowe's brief history of her subject's virtue is a displaced reparation of her own damaged reputation, and the qualities this chapter chooses to elucidate—purity, exceptionalism, and intelligence—stand as testimony to Stowe's own role as a professional witness.

Having now "proven" their mutual qualifications as accurate sources, the narrator is ready to relay the "most painful interview which has been the cause of all this controversy."³⁸ And here the text's ethos dramatically shifts: it delivers its climactic conversation in dialogue, thereby gaining a sense of the dramatic as well as the feeling that the interview is happening before the reader's eyes; and with the insertion of a specific "me" in the text, Stowe risks compromising her carefully calculated position as a distanced, professional expert. Although other chapters certainly include

statements in the first person,³⁹ this chapter is unique in that it requires Stowe take the dual part of critic and subject.

Thus, at one level, this scene's writing style returns to the kinds of descriptions, details, and images abundant in Stowe's sentimental writing. As previously mentioned, in the "True Story," Lady Byron is characterized as a kind of Little Eva who compels her reader with suffering and forgiveness. In *Vindicated*, Lady Byron is less an artless, puerile embodiment of Christ and more a rational Christian, one who approaches religion from a position of maturity and consideration, while still representing a stock figure of pure womanhood:

She answered quickly, and with great decision, that . . . she felt sure [Byron] had finally repented; and added with great earnestness, "I do not believe that any child of the heavenly Father is ever left to eternal sin."

I said that such a hope was most delightful . . . , but that I had always regarded the indulgence of it as a dangerous one. . . .

She looked at me so sadly, so firmly, and said,—

"Danger, Mrs. Stowe! What danger can come from indulging that hope, like the danger that comes from not having it . . . ? The danger of losing all faith in God, . . . all hope for others, all strength to try and save them."⁴⁰

Here it would be easy to discuss other aspects of sentimental convention and Christian tautology Stowe employs at the crux of *Vindicated*, even though these narrative techniques are not as exaggerated as in the "True Story." In a Tompkins vein, it would be obvious to argue that with conversations like the one above, Stowe drew on her audience's rich literacy as sentimental readers, their recognition of certain archetypal characters and scenes and the sympathy she expected to realize from their use.⁴¹ After all Stowe had written to Oliver Wendell Holmes that "[t]he interview [with Lady Byron] had almost the solemnity of a death-bed confession"—clearly a familiar theater.⁴² However, it is not accurate to separate sentimental from professional realist attributes. Rather, what makes *Vindicated* so compelling within its historical moment is its demonstration of how necessary the sentimental was to realistic writing. *Vindicated* is indicative of professionalized discourse throughout the 1860s and '70s that crossed fact and fiction and that functioned in a manner and purpose similar to emerging literary realism. Nineteenth-century professionals (social scientists, lawyers, academics, etc.) writing about human behavior provided particular interpretations evidenced with examples—character case studies or generalizations about certain groups of people. Unlike empirical scientists whose subjects of study had no interiority of their own (a leaf, an asteroid, a liver), interpretations made by such "social" professionals could not be tested for their falseness but would be accepted or rejected on the basis of

the detail and depth of their explanations as well as the credibility of their narrative positions. And all such professionals had didactic intents: the psychiatrist wanted to curb sexual deviance; the lawyer wished to argue that women should be allowed limited rights of property in marriage. Milieu, *métier*, and personal bias delimited all such writings.

In this professional culture, the technical supplanted the moral; or, rather, the technical *was* the moral. Even though professional texts abjured subjectivity and held up data and method as the things that “spoke,” the new professionals and realist writers alike provided images of and for their culture that were meant to excite an appropriate sympathy, a morality with qualities more culturally sustaining than what William Dean Howells—that metonym for American realism—once disparaged as the “artfully-wrought sensations” of the newspaper or the sentimental novel.⁴³ In terms of *Vindicated*’s troublesome chapter, then, what emerges is an emphasis on disciplined emotion over emotion for its own sake—i.e., species of literary realism. The text’s moment of true confession, sans documentary evidence, induces *Vindicated* to cross sentimental writing with professional technique and realigns narrative discourse into mimetic representation. In other words, because Stowe’s story must rely on realistic fictionality in order to present itself as true, *Vindicated* fits Howells’ own description of literary realism: “the very highest fiction is that which treats itself as fact.”⁴⁴ As such, Stowe’s chapter “Lady Byron’s Story as Told Me” opens with backstory, key characters, and setting. “My sister and myself were going from London to Eversley,” begins the narrator. “On our way, we stopped, by Lady Byron’s invitation, to lunch with her at her summer residence on Ham Common, near Richmond . . . as she said she had a subject of importance on which she wished to converse with me alone.”⁴⁵ So might a Henry James novel start, with the evocation of a class-bound *donnée* and the slightest hint of social intrigue. From here, the narrator sets the stage for a *tête-à-tête*: “After lunch, I retired with Lady Byron; and my sister remained with her friends.”⁴⁶ Now the text constructs and arranges the two principle characters: the credible interviewee—calm, dignified, quiet, lucid—and the professional witness. Stowe even goes so far as to admit the possibility of error in order to accent the words she will insist are exact. “In recalling the conversation at this distance of time, I cannot remember all the language used,” Stowe confesses. Yet “[s]ome particular words and forms of expression I do remember, and those I give.”⁴⁷ Now the terrible accusation is furnished, “word for word”:

There was something awful to me in the intensity of repressed emotion which she showed as she proceeded. The great fact upon which all turned was stated

in words that were unmistakable: ‘Mrs. Stowe, he was guilty of incest with his sister!’ She here became so deathly pale, that I feared she would faint.⁴⁸

Here, then, is the true center of *Vindicated*: the “great fact” stated in words “unmistakable,” including what the narrator later refers to as “that one word”: incest. To accurately observe this moment, the narrator is required to speak plain, exacting, harsh language. To make up for the deficiency of documents to prove her claims, the book is equally required to textualize the moment via verisimilitude in setting, dialogue, and the portrayal of convincing character. And to guard against the kinds of criticism Stowe had already received, she is required, finally, to articulate the charge of incest but professionalize its articulation.

But just as *Vindicated* evokes professional realism, the text’s very technique indicates the emotionality, the sentimentality, of the story. The narrator experiences an “awful” emotion—the awe-inspiring, intense empathy of an ecstatic witness—while her subject of study enacts a “deathly pale” aspect, reminiscent of Christ’s death as well as of the paleness and propensity to faint that connote female virtue.

Further, in addition to employing these soteriologic transformations the narrator reveals the fictionality of her facts. By reasoning that she could not “remember all the language used,” yet would provide “[s]ome particular words and forms of expression” she could recall, Stowe puts into question what parts of the chapter are *literatim*, what parts “the substance of what was said.” For example, one passage reads:

I inquired in one of the pauses of the conversation whether Mrs. Leigh was a peculiarly beautiful or attractive woman.

“No, my dear: she was plain.”

“Was she, then, distinguished for genius or talent of any kind?”

“Oh, no! Poor woman! she was weak, relatively, to [Byron], and wholly under his control.”

“And what became of her?” I said.

“She afterwards repented, and became a truly good woman.”⁴⁹

The rhetorical devices for textualizing this moment actually alert the reader to invention: the dialogue tag “I said”; quotation marks to bracket speech; a line of indirect dialogue; and a presentation of everyday speech that normalizes the breaks, pauses, and incoherencies inherent in real-life communication into a seamless, polished exchange. A reader could easily suspect the narrator’s assertion that these are the exact “forms of expression” used by Lady Byron and Stowe thirteen years earlier. Could Stowe possibly recollect whether Lady Byron had said, “No, my dear,” or “My dear, no”? How about the order of “Oh, no!” and “Poor woman!”; might

not Lady Byron have exclaimed, "Poor woman! Oh, no!"? And if the reader disputes these superficial phrases, the text cannot insist on the exactitude of the whole.

That Stowe does insist on just that points toward a use of fiction as fact. "Of course," Stowe says, after having recited the whole of the interview, "I did not listen to this story as one who was investigating its worth. I received it as truth. And the purpose for which it was communicated was not to enable me to prove it to the world, but to ask my opinion whether *she* [Lady Byron] should show it to the world before leaving it."⁵⁰ Because a confessional moment demands that the narrator present herself as a friend of Lady Byron's, Stowe cannot be the objective investigator she claims. As Stowe herself admits, a friend receives a painful disclosure as truth, not as a statement that must be reviewed, contested, substantiated. Thus Stowe makes her role as a professional witness liable by the very act of claiming full responsibility for the truth of her story.

Here Stowe's credibility problems have everything to do with gender. As Stowe wrote to her publisher Osgood, "Nobody has ever called for *proof* from any of the numberless writers who reported their conversations with Lord Byron."⁵¹ The inverse is true for the problem of silence: since Lady Byron failed to assert her side of the story in her own lifetime, her reticence worked as "proof" of her culpability, even though silence, in and of itself, proffers no conclusions. Lady Byron's silence was consequently scripted by Byron's poems and letters into slander (i.e., her silence meant she had something to hide), and because Byron was male, his assertion was accepted without proof. "Of course," notes Stowe, "there is no stronger power than a virtuous life; but, for a virtuous life to bear testimony to the world, its details must be *told*, so that the world may know them."⁵² Bearing witness to Lady Byron's story is the precise act that in itself is true. Stowe claims that the instant she takes up the pen, her fiction becomes fact: "When a noble name is accused, any person who possesses truth which might clear it, and withholds that truth, is guilty of a sin against human nature and the inalienable claims of justice. I claim that I have not only a right, but an obligation, to bring in my solemn testimony upon this subject."⁵³ Thus the vindication Stowe attempts to achieve in her book is threefold: a vindication of Lady Byron, a vindication of Stowe herself, and a vindication of the crucial role of feminine sentimentalism in all projects of culture-making, even in a professional realist climate.

In essence, *Lady Byron Vindicated* reveals the gendered hypocrisies necessary to professional realism. If her critics require more proof than Stowe has to give, by inference, they cannot accept Byron's version of his marriage and divorce. In turn, if they believe Lord Byron in spite of his own

lack of proof, they must simultaneously accept Stowe's version. "All this is not proof," Stowe says, referring to the iteration of Lord Byron's allegations. "It is mere assertion, and assertion made to produce prejudice. It is like raising a whirlwind of sand to blind the eyes that are looking for landmarks."⁵⁴ What Stowe doesn't say, however, is "all this is not real." What she's describing is how one writes realist fiction, and, of course, this is the exact method Stowe employs.

Realist Professionalism and Advertising

There is a final layer to these series of paradoxes so rife in Stowe's book one that exposes how commercial stigma both served and worked against professional realism. The repetition of an assertion to such an extent that the concept becomes truth is not only a technique of professional expertise but a key component of advertising, although advertising repeats assertions in combination with images until the idea or statement is synonymous with its image. Advertising as a corporate industry in America did not fully emerge until after the Postal Act of 1879, an act that provided cheap mailing privileges to periodicals; but even a decade earlier, Stowe's *Vindicated* provided a powerful venue for Stowe to link her text with potent, conspicuous images.

Like any professional realist writer, Stowe relied on the workings of consumer culture, especially advertising, in order to propagate her moral expertise. In *Vindicated*, the key components were the documents, so much weight in facts, figures, and dates. Before the 482 pages of *Vindicated* went to press (463 pages longer than her original article), Stowe stipulated to Osgood that he "choose a good, clear, plain type for the *documents* so that nobody may skip them as fine print, and then have a larger type for my own words. The documents are the very marrow of the thing, and every care must be taken to make them flash clearly on the eye at a glance."⁵⁵ Stowe manipulated the same documents she used to inculcate Byron to serve her own claims to truth. The typeface itself was to perform the effect of her words—"good, clear, plain" type would equal Stowe's good, clear, plain purpose. The substance of the Byron documents mattered little; they provided eye-catching support for the "larger type" of Stowe's own text.⁵⁶

Thus, Stowe marketed *Vindicated*'s documents as advertisement—advertisement fashioned to rouse an inevitable sympathy from her readers. Indeed, it was crucial for Stowe to retender these documents as surface not substance: ironically, since they were the "marrow," the vital life-blood of her case, she had to disinfect them so as not to further promulgate Byron's contaminants, the language that was his lie. Otherwise, Stowe

might breed infection in the sentence, since, after all, she sought to engage in exactly the enterprise she most reviled in Byron: writing slander.

Yet advertising worked against Stowe even more than it worked for her. While Stowe had comprehended the import of speaking out on such a topic and against such a favorite as Byron—especially as a woman and an American—she couldn't have foreseen the universal wrath she would incur for having uttered "that one word." Stowe was condemned for using propaganda similar to Byron's own and for spreading an even more virulent social disease. "The ruthless hand of the sensational authoress of 'Uncle Tom's Cabin' has invaded our shores," cries one columnist for *Vanity Fair*, "and torn the veil from the figure which might just as well have remained veiled."⁵⁷ Through the periodical press, Stowe metamorphosizes from defender to invader, advocate to assailant, cure to infection. "Mrs. Stowe has been guilty of . . . extremely bad taste," pronounces another writer in the *Saturday Review*. "[S]he has let loose a flood of immoral talk and immoral speculation on loathsome subjects which has deeply defiled, and will long defile, European and American society."⁵⁸ Like Stowe's own treatment of Byron in the "True Story," now Stowe herself is labeled innately wicked—seeking fame and money, or according to one satirist in *The Period*, merely living up to her own evolution.⁵⁹ "If we were to dissect her encephalon, we should in all probability find imprinted upon the inmost recesses of her brain the words she has herself placed in the mouth of one of her most popular characters: 'I 'spects I'se awful wicked'; for only by natural and innate weakness can we account for the mischievous character of her writings."⁶⁰

Like the depiction of Stowe as a black-magic witch in the *Merryman's Monthly*, many a satirist makes race the central dynamic of his or her insult, a throwback to the media contention surrounding *Uncle Tom's Cabin* but also a typical nineteenth-century elision, collapsing gender with racial degeneracy and, in so doing, threatening Stowe's most powerful claim to social power: her whiteness. If her brain is inscribed with Topsy's famous phrase, Stowe herself harbors an essential blackness—a constitutional weakness but also, by association, a lurking animalism. The black woman in Stowe denotes her "wickedness," her sexual knowledge, but especially her knowledge of incest, for, as the logic goes, who would know more about incest than a black slave woman? In a *Will-O'-the-Wisp* cartoon, for instance, Uncle Tom crouches behind a horrified-looking Stowe and asks a weeping Little Eva, "How could she paint one of her own brethren so black?"⁶¹ (Figure 2.) From *The Comic Monthly*, another shows Topsy telling Byron, "I'se so glad you'se come. Is'e got company now. Is'e wicked—but Missis saz you goes ahead o' me," while still another pictures Uncle Tom, playing a great

WILL-O'-THE-WISP. Saturday, September 25, 1869.



A VOICE FROM THE MIGHTY DEAD.
 SEVERAL OF THESE "GRATUITOUS SLANDERS" WERE PAID FOR THE SAME OF FILTHY LIES AND PUBLIC NOTORIETY!
 SUNDAY, 25 SEPTEMBER, 1869. OUR TEEN MAY COME NEXT, JOIN AS WE DID NOT LIVE, HAPPLY, OUR WIVES, AND
 UNCLE TOM'S CABIN, A LADY, AND EYE, AFTER PAINTING A NEGRO LIKE HE SO WHITE, NOW COULD SHE PAINT ONE OF HER OWN BRETHREN SO BLACK!

harp and pleading, "Go 'way from me, Massa Byron—my Missus saz you're too wicked to 'sociate wid spectable cullud sperrets."⁶² (Figures 3 and 4.) In these caricatures, Stowe is often in the act of self-blackening or striating black streaks across a gleaming statue of Byron or performing "black magic." Alternately, she is a prim-and-proper Alice-in-Wonderland type, besmirched with the very mud she slings;⁶³ a hag, scuttling up Byron's noble visage trailing muck from her hands and feet⁶⁴ (Figure 5); or a witch, brewing a cauldron of calumny.

As these examples demonstrate, the backlash against Stowe became an enterprise of advertising. The sacred connotations she had hoped to instill with her portrayals of Lady Byron as a noble martyr and herself as a fearless defender were quickly drained of their import through a process of swift trivialization. By distorting Stowe's image, showing her here as a witch, there as a peevish old woman, her representation was exhausted—just another bit of sensational gossip from a ridiculous, sentimental woman.



Figure 3.



Figure 4.

Even those periodicals who claimed moral indignation against Stowe "one word" served to proliferate the sensationalism surrounding the tale for the technologies of mass iconographic distribution that had just started up when Stowe wrote *Uncle Tom's Cabin* were in full swing by 1869.⁶⁵ In 1852, readers may have seen Stowe's portrait in the frontispiece to her novel or perhaps in a shop-window—a pirated copy from an engraver original. If her face sold anything, it sold her book or, by abstraction, the American abolition movement: serious items and ideas. But the convergence of mass transit, mass media, and mass information deprived Stowe face of its gravity, using it, instead, to sell trivia and sensation, "entertainment." Thus the meaning of Stowe's critique wasn't in the content of her analysis but transferred to the act of consumption itself, to whatever the consumer wanted her face or text to mean. Since Stowe had tried to portray Lord Byron as a liar and a cheat, the press retaliated in kind. English and American critics disliked Stowe's commodity, and so they realigned the terms of the market by revising the look, and thereby the meaning, of wh



STOWE IT!

P.C. FOX.—"NOW THEN, OLD GAL, IF YOU WANT TO MAKE YOURSELF CONSPICUOUS, YOU HAD BETTER GO ELSEWHERE, AND NOT LEAVE YOUR DIRTY MARKS THERE!"

she had tried to produce. And once Stowe and her text no longer stood for righteous action or decorous womanhood, once the symbol was detached from its rational signification, it failed to carry any cultural relevance. "Sold" as the paragon of American abolitionism and pure womanhood with *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, with *Lady Byron Vindicated* Stowe was now "sold" as an indecorous woman out to make a quick buck.

Stowe's friend and correspondent, George Eliot, wrote to another friend about the Byron controversy, commenting, "As to the Byron subject . . . [t]he discussion of the subject in newspapers, periodicals and pamphlets is simply odious to me, and I think it a pestilence likely to leave very ugly marks. One trembles to think how easily that moral wealth may be lost which it has been the work of ages to produce, in the refinement and differencing of the affectionate relations."⁶⁶ With the advent of advertising as a basis of meaning-making, it is no wonder that, as a high-art realist, Eliot would worry that the "refinement and differencing of affectionate relations" she had spent her life's work trying to promote was undergoing rapid-fire annihilation through popular print. But while Eliot condemned the media that had made Stowe's claims into a "pestilence," she also forgave what she believed to be her friend's motive. In a letter to Stowe, Eliot consoles, "[W]ith regard to yourself, dear friend, I have felt sure that in acting on a [unique] basis of impressions, you were impelled by pure, generous feeling."⁶⁷

And, in fact, Stowe's critique of Byron from within his own providence reveals a tenacious "feeling," one that is "pure" if not necessarily "generous." For Stowe clearly believes in an aesthetic transcendence that rises above and stands beyond all other social discourse—reified, perfect, and one might say, pure. To criticize Byron for using his poetry as propaganda is to posit that true literature is not commodifiable or is somehow beyond the designation of mere advertisement: precisely the claim made by professional male realists. Stowe censures Byron for possessing a sentimentalized aesthetic, a bankrupt notion of what literature is and should be. By showing Byron's art as insufficient—especially lacking in moral ideality—Stowe pays allegiance to the professional realist's faith in a perfect, continuous realm of art. At the same time, Stowe intimates that she, like a professional male realist, is a true artist, one through whom timeless moral sentiment makes itself known to the general public. As a result, Stowe's *Vindicated* and Stowe herself serve as emblems of the late nineteenth-century ideology of professional realism that would, ironically, contribute to the ultimate decline of Stowe's own standing in the age of New Criticism.

Figure 5.

Notes

1. Cartoon, *Merryman's Monthly*, October 1869.
2. A year after completing *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, Stowe explained to an English admirer: "I wrote what I did because as a woman, as a mother I was oppressed & broken-hearted, with the sorrows & injustice I saw, because as a Christian I felt the dishonor to Christianity—because as a lover of my country I trembled at the coming day of wrath" (Harriet Beecher Stowe to Lord Denman, 20 January 1853, Huntington Library).
3. John T. Morse, ed., *Life and Letters of Oliver Wendell Holmes* (Cambridge: Riverside, 1896), p. 183: "We have had three storms this autumn," Holmes wrote to his friend John Lothrop Motley. "1. The great gale of September 8th, which I recognized while it was blowing as the greatest for fifty-four years. . . . 2d. The Byron whirlwind, which began here and travelled swiftly across the Atlantic; and 3d, the goldstorm, as I christened the terrible financial conflict of the last week. About the Byron article I confess that, great as I expected the excitement to be, it far exceeded anything I had anticipated."
4. "Realism" here is not meant simply to concede to the traditional rubric of the late-19th century high-art canon, i.e., Howells or Eliot as social realists, Twain as a regional realist, or James as a psychological realist. Rather, "realism" is meant as an aesthetic term that both presupposes a set of standard "realistic" criteria at the same time that it embodies the appropriation of aspects of other aesthetic movements that, at first glance, seem antithetical to realism's form and function: chiefly appropriations of textual and readerly "sentimentalism" as created in and by sentimental novels.
5. Harriet Beecher Stowe, "The True Story of Lady Byron's Life," *Atlantic Monthly*, 24 (September 1869), 295; Harriet Beecher Stowe, "The True Story of Lady Byron's Life," *Macmillan's*, 119 (September 1869), 377–96. For the sake of clarity, all page numbers for "The True Story of Lady Byron's Life" come from the *Atlantic Monthly*.
6. This point has been debated by one of her modern biographers, Forrest Wilson, who writes, "It is remarkable that none discovered the astonishing fact that much of [Stowe's] argument . . . was based on a misrepresentation of fact, and a deliberate one. Not one critic or enemy ever found it, and Harriet died with her guilty secret intact. . . . Critics picked at such flaws as her misspelling of Miss Milbanke's name and her inaccurate statement that the Byrons' married life had lasted two years, but never once saw that in her *Atlantic* paper, which, she cried so passionately in her book, she had written in answer to the review in *Blackwood's*, she did not mention that review at all. The explanation is, of course, that when she wrote her dreadful gossip for the *Atlantic*, she did not know of the *Blackwood's* review. It had not yet been published" (Forrest Wilson, *Crusader in Crinoline: The Life of Harriet Beecher Stowe* [Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1941], pp. 549–50).
7. Stowe, "True Story," pp. 295, 313.
8. "The Lounger," *Illustrated Times*, 9 October 1869, p. 231.
9. Letter to the Editor, *Pall Mall Gazette*, 7 September 1869, p. 3.
10. "The Byron Scandal," *Public Opinion*, 25 September 1869, p. 381.
11. *The Stowe-Byron Controversy: A Complete Résumé of Public Opinion; with an Impartial Review of the Merits of the Case, by the Editor of "Once a Week"* (London: Thomas Cooper and Co., [1869]), p. 56.
12. Nancy Glazener, *Reading for Realism: The History of a U. S. Literary Institution, 1850–1910* (Durham: Duke Univ. Press, 1997), p. 95. Authors are imperfect professionals. Unlike doctors, lawyers, and academics, authors do not establish or control set procedures of credentializing that function as gatekeeping mechanisms. While there are, of course, accepted methods for attaining the recognized position of "professional author" (e.g., publication), these methods are not regulated nor, ultimately, required.
13. *Stowe-Byron Controversy*, p. 56.

14. For a study of how the fact-fiction slippage in the 18th century gave rise to the British novel as well as the construction of female authorship, see Catherine Gallagher *Nobody's Story: The Vanishing Acts of Women Writers in the Marketplace, 1670–1820* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1994).
15. Michael Robertson, *Stephen Crane, Journalism, and the Making of Modern American Literature* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1997), p. 6.
16. In addition to Southern criticisms of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, Stowe received censure from English reviewers as well. See Wendy F. Hamand, "'No Voice from England': Mr Stowe, Mr. Lincoln, and the British in the Civil War," *New England Quarterly*, 61 (March 1988), 3–24.
17. Stowe to James R. Osgood, n.d. [August or September 1869], Fields Papers, Huntington Library.
18. Theodore Tilton, "The Byron Revelations," *Independent*, 26 August 1869, p. 1.
19. Stowe, "True Story," p. 304.
20. The editor's preface to the *Macmillan's* issue did, in fact, name the author as "Mr Beecher Stowe," although in the article itself, as in the American version, the narrator calls herself "the writer."
21. Stowe, "True Story," p. 296.
22. Stowe, "True Story," p. 306.
23. Stowe, "True Story," pp. 310–11.
24. Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Lady Byron Vindicated: A History of the Byron Controversy, from Its Beginnings in 1816 to the Present Time* (Boston: Fields, Osgood, 1870), p. 322.
25. Though it may seem, at first glance, that a first-person narrator is less authentic than a universalized third-person voice, *Vindicated* is indebted to a long history of readers equating first-hand experience with credibility: examples are Aphra Behn *Oroonoko*, Benjamin Franklin's *Autobiography*, or Olaudah Equiano's *Interesting Narrative of the Life*. One of the reasons Stowe's text can be seen in part as a kind of realist "nove" is that the narrator slips between first-person and third-person throughout the book, the convergence of fact and fiction that opens a space for the creation of the modern novel brings together the assumed integrity of a first-person perspective with the equal assumed integrity of normalized, third-person objectivity.
26. Stowe also contends that Byron himself reacted to the public criticism of his poetry—especially *Blackwood's* initial condemnation of Byron's representation of Lady Byron as Donna Inez—as if his art were the substance of fact: "March 15, 1820.—Write and dedicate to I. Disraeli, Esq., a vindication of himself in reply to the 'Blackwood's' 'Don Juan,' containing an indignant defense of his own conduct in relation to his wife and maintaining that he never yet has had an opportunity of knowing whereof he has been accused" (Stowe, *Vindicated*, p. 80).
27. Stowe, *Vindicated*, pp. 261, 258.
28. Stowe, *Vindicated*, p. 79.
29. Stowe, "True Story," p. 297.
30. Stowe, *Vindicated*, p. 387.
31. Stowe, *Vindicated*, p. 374.
32. After *Lady Byron Vindicated* came out, the *Nation*—a periodical that had roundly abused Stowe's "True Story" and had a history of publishing negative reviews of Stowe novels—recognized that the "only additional proof" Stowe had added was "more extended and explicit reports of the conversation in which Lady Byron revealed the secret" (*Nation*, 6 January 1870, p. 2).
33. Stowe, *Vindicated*, p. 202.
34. Burton Bledstein, *The Culture of Professionalism: The Middle Class and the Development of Higher Education in America* (New York: Norton, 1976), pp. 73, 75.
35. Stowe, *Vindicated*, p. 202.
36. Stowe, *Vindicated*, p. 202.

37. Stowe, *Vindicated*, p. 204.
38. Stowe, *Vindicated*, p. 232.
39. For instance, the second paragraph of the book begins, "I have not thought it necessary to disturb my spirit and confuse my sense of right by even an attempt at reading the many abusive articles that both here and in England have followed [my] disclosure." It should be noted that this assertion is false, insofar as it is clear Stowe read many of her critics because *Vindicated* is a point-by-point refutation of claims made against her argument in the "True Story," going so far as to quote many of her detractors (Stowe, *Vindicated*, p. 1).
40. Stowe, *Vindicated*, p. 247.
41. See Jane Tompkins' chapter on *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in *Sensational Designs* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1985).
42. Charles Stowe, *The Life of Harriet Beecher Stowe Compiled from her Letters and Journals* (1889; rpt. Detroit: Gale, 1967), p. 453. Stowe iterates this line in "True Story": "The interview had almost the solemnity of a death-bed avowal" (Stowe, "True Story," p. 311).
43. W. D. Howells, *My Literary Passions: Criticism and Fiction* (1895; rpt. New York: Harper, 1911), p. 178. Howells admitted that he experienced "impossible stress" from the Sunday paper, "which with its scare-headings, and artfully-wrought sensations, had the effect of fiction, as in fact it largely was."
44. Howells, "Preface to *English Society* by George du Maurier," in *Prefaces to Contemporaries (1882-1920)*, ed. George Arms, William M. Gibson, and Frederic C. Marston, Jr. (1897; rpt. Gainesville: Scholars' Facsimiles & Reprints, 1957), p. 76.
45. Stowe, *Vindicated*, p. 232.
46. Stowe, *Vindicated*, p. 233.
47. Stowe, *Vindicated*, pp. 234-35.
48. Stowe, *Vindicated*, p. 235.
49. Stowe, *Vindicated*, p. 245.
50. Stowe, *Vindicated*, p. 251.
51. Stowe to James R. Osgood, n.d. [August or September 1869], Fields Papers, Huntington Library.
52. Stowe, *Vindicated*, p. 160.
53. Stowe, *Vindicated*, p. 196.
54. Stowe, *Vindicated*, p. 313.
55. Stowe to James R. Osgood, 16 October [1869], Fields Papers, Huntington Library.
56. Even early on, writing *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, Stowe had valued the medium of the image, its power to evoke emotion through a seeming objectivity. "My vocation is simply that of a painter," she had told Gamaliel Bailey, editor of the *National Era*—the periodical that ran *Uncle Tom's Cabin* between 1851 and 1852. "[M]y object will be to hold up in the most lifelike and graphic manner possible Slavery. . . . There is no arguing with pictures, and everybody is impressed by them, whether they mean to be or not" (Stowe to Gamaliel Bailey, 9 March 1851, [typescript, original lost], Department of Rare Books and Manuscripts, Boston Public Library).
57. "The Byron Scandal," *Vanity Fair*, 11 September 1869, p. 146.
58. "The Byron Case," *Saturday Review*, 11 September 1869, p. 343.
59. As Susan Wolstenholme points out, nearly everyone who has written about the Byron controversy has speculated about Stowe's motives, i.e., whether Stowe's intentions were pure or profane in revealing Lady Byron's secret. See Susan Wolstenholme, "Voice of the Voiceless: Harriet Beecher Stowe and the Byron Controversy," *American Literary Realism*, 19 (Winter 1987), 48-65.
60. "Polychromatic Portraits.—No. 1," *Period*, 30 October 1869, p. 2.
61. Cartoon, *Will-O'-the-Wisp*, 25 September 1869.
62. Cartoon, *The Comic Monthly*, October 1869.

63. Cartoon, *The Comic Monthly*, October 1869.
64. Cartoon, *Fun*, 18 September 1869.
65. A commentator for *The Tomahawk* unwittingly yet aptly assesses the paradox of claiming to abhor libel at the same one writes and rewrites it: "We fearlessly challenge that reckless malignancy which, biting its lips over such a congenial morsel of scandal as this, imputes to all who will not join in its rabid assumption of virtuous indignation the crimes that it gloats over while it deplores. We are content to be classed by such creatures with the irreclaimable votaries of vice, because we have protested against the beastly curiosity which lays bare the repulsive secrets of the lives of those who were great in spite of their moral blemishes." See "The Byron Scandal," *The Tomahawk*, 18 September 1869, p. 125.
66. *George Eliot Letters*, ed. Gordon Haight (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1955), V, 56-57.
67. *George Eliot Letters*, V, 71-72.