"The omen never fails": Appropriating Intertexts in Louisa May Alcott's *A Long Fatal Love Chase*

Emma Butler-Way

Abstract

Not seeing publication until 130 years after it was written, Louisa May Alcott's *A Long Fatal Love Chase* (1866) was deemed "too sensational" to be published by her publisher (Alcott 1989: 153). Thus far, academic work on the novel has largely explored its place within Alcott's wider canon of work and the relationship between Alcott's work and that of Charlotte Brontë, particularly *Jane Eyre* (1847). This article takes the latter approach as its starting point, using Gerard Genette's theory of hypertextuality as a primary lens through which to approach the novel, exploring *A Long Fatal Love Chase*'s relationship not only to *Jane Eyre*, but also to mythology, the works of Shakespeare and Tennyson, and Goethe's *Faust* (1808). By doing so, this article undertakes a Genettian analysis of Alcott's novel not only to show how Alcott ultimately attempts to refute prevailing literary modes, but also to offer a reading that takes us into the realms of the hypothetical, which in turn highlights the role of the personal reader response in intertextual analyses.

Keywords

Louisa May Alcott; *A Long Fatal Love Chase*; hypertextuality; transtextuality; Gerard Genette; intertextuality; Charlotte Brontë; *Jane Eyre*; Goethe; *Faust*

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"The omen never fails": Appropriating Intertexts in Louisa May Alcott's *A Long Fatal Love Chase*

Emma Butler-Way

Two years before *Little Women* (1868) granted Louisa May Alcott the financial stability she had worked so long to achieve, she penned a novel so sensational that it remained unpublished for almost 130 years. Opening with a young woman's passionate declaration that she often feels as though she would "gladly sell [her] soul to Satan for a year of freedom" (Alcott [1866] 1995: 1), and featuring a multi-country chase that ends in tragedy, Alcott has her protagonist unwittingly embroiled in a sham marriage, seeking refuge in a monastery, locked in an asylum, and ultimately dying in a storm off the coast of England. That novel was *A Long Fatal Love Chase* (1866, hereafter *Love Chase*), a "blood & thunder tale," as Alcott called her sensational output (Alcott 1987: 79), that, according to her diaries, was deemed "too long & too sensational" by publisher James R. Elliott (Alcott 1989: 153). Following Alcott's death in 1888, the manuscript rested in the archives of Houghton Library, largely forgotten, until Kent Bicknell acquired the manuscript and the rights to publish it in the early 1990s (Doyle 1999: 215).

In 1975, Madeleine Stern began the process of (re)publishing Alcott's anonymous and pseudonymous (under the name A. M. Barnard) sensational tales. These stories appeared in three major volumes, *Behind a Mask: The Unknown Thrillers of Louisa May Alcott* (1975), *A Marble Woman: Unknown Thrillers of Louisa May Alcott* (1995), and *Louisa May Alcott Unmasked* (1995), and revealed across more than thirty stories that "Alcott had written with both hands, one producing classic domestic novels, the other shaping narratives of violence and revenge, pride and passion, [and] intrigue and suspense" (Stern 1995: 280). Unlike the stories published in those volumes, *Love Chase* is novel-length. However, the original manuscript "consists of 290 pages written and revised, along with a shorter version ('Fair Rosamond') in the hand of May Alcott [Louisa's youngest sister] […]. Bicknell sought to restore the original sensational manuscript as much as possible," but fused together elements of both versions where there were gaps in the original manuscript (Blackford 2011: 34 n.15). This choice, including Bicknell's admission that he had made a few unacknowledged emendations to the text, was lambasted at the time by the conservative critic James W. Tuttleton as an editorial decision that illegitimised the final product to the extent that, in his view, "serious scholarship and criticism will find the publication unusable" (1995: 20). However, despite the somewhat

suspect nature of the final product and Tuttleton's seeming attempt to undermine the "value" of exploring such work academically, the novel cannot be entirely discounted as a valid avenue of exploration into Alcott's development as a writer, developed as the original manuscript was towards the middle of her career.

Initially set on a small island off the coast of England, *Love Chase* opens with Rosamond Vivian's assertion that she would consider exchanging her soul for a year of freedom. Soon afterwards, Philip Tempest appears, and Rosamond notes that he bears a remarkable resemblance to a portrait of Mephistopheles hanging in an unused room of the mansion in which she lives with her emotionally negligent grandfather. In the early chapters of the novel, Rosamond and Tempest have several conversations about life, freedom, and fate, during which Rosamond, fascinated, falls in love. Tempest wins Rosamond in a card game against her grandfather and whisks her away on his yacht to continental Europe. The narrative resumes one year later in Valrosa, revealing Rosamond and Tempest reflecting on their year of marital bliss. Soon afterwards, their relationship falls apart: Rosamond discovers that Tempest is already married and his servant boy, Ippolito, is actually his son. After overhearing a conversation between Tempest and his manservant/spy Baptiste in which it is implied that Tempest has killed Ippolito, Rosamond flees, setting in motion the eponymous Chase. Over the remainder of the novel, Tempest stalks Rosamond across Europe. Rosamond adopts various disguises in her attempts to evade him, among which are an actress, a nun (during which time she meets Father Ignatius, who becomes her most loved and trusted ally), and a companion to a wealthy widower's daughter. After Rosamond attempts suicide in what she deems the only path to freedom left available to her, Tempest confines her in an asylum. Following her escape, she temporarily stays with Tempest's wife, Marion, in the north of England, before attempting to return to her grandfather's mansion after Tempest finds her. She does not make it there alive, however, and the novel closes with Tempest taking her corpse in his arms and killing himself, declaring "mine first – mine last – mine even in the grave!" (Alcott [1866] 1995: 346)

When it was published in 1995, *Love Chase* became a *New York Times* bestseller, with positive reviews (quoted here from the front matter of the 1995 Dell edition) declaring it "a suspenseful and thoroughly charming story" (Stephen King, for the *New York Times Book Review*); a "tale of obsession and sexual politics [that] deepens our appreciation for her championing of women's rights and for her extraordinary storytelling skills" (*Booklist*); "lively, so exuberant, and so naughty, reading it is like biting into a juicy peach" (*The Boston Phoenix*); "sexual passion permeates like a London fog," according to *Newsday*, and *Publishers Weekly* wrote, "this romantic cliff-hanger about a woman pursued by her ex-lover, a relentless stalker, seems sprung from today's headlines. This absorbing novel revises our image of a complex, prescient writer". With the first pages of the book dedicated to such reviews, the reader is made aware that the Alcott they are about to encounter is not the one they know from the experience of *Little Women* that so many have had. Indeed, in his editor's note, Bicknell states that:

> The nostalgic reader who holds a memory of charming books with feisty but "good" little women and men […] may be startled by the contemporary issues with which [*Love Chase*] grapples: a woman's right to be independent and free, the healing power of intimate female-female as well as female-male friendships, the psychological dynamics of abusive relationships (including the danger and trauma for the victim of a "stalker"), priestly celibacy, divorce, bigamy, suicide, and murder. Sprinkled with foreshadowing accomplished through revealing literary references to Shakespeare, Goethe, and Greek myths and tragedies, novel whirls the reader through the development of a most engaging nineteenth-century literary heroine. A consistent Alcottian theme runs throughout the book: the quest for physical, financial, intellectual, and spiritual independence.
>
> (1995: 348-9)

Bicknell, perhaps with an editorial bias, frames these "revealing literary references" as a positive and conscious use of a literary tool on Alcott's part. Contrastingly, Tuttleton's almost vitriolic critique, which echoes the Victorian responses to sensation fiction levelled against female sensation writers,[1] declares the novel to be formulaic and predicable, with two-dimensional characters, featuring matters "beyond Miss Alcott's ken," and constituting "a tissue of stale clichés" lifted from her Gothic predecessors and sensation contemporaries (1995: 19). Finally, Tuttleton roundly declares that "[Alcott] *was* ashamed of this kind of writing, but churning it out paid the bills" (19, original emphasis). Something I demonstrate in this article, then, is how the active intertextuality of *Love Chase* enables it to be both a thrilling, or "trashy," pot-boiler and a genuine literary venture: if Alcott can "write with both hands," then her work should be read as coming from such an author: her knowledge and education did not vanish the moment she picked up the pen of A. M. Barnard.

Love Chase emerged in a critical environment that has been elucidated in Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar's influential *The Madwoman in the Attic* (1979). They declare that the nineteenth-century woman writer was "constricted and restricted by the Palaces of Art and Houses of Fiction male writers authored" ([1979] 2020: xvii), and that "just as women have been repeatedly defined by male authors, they seem in reaction to have found it necessary to act out male metaphors in their own texts, as if trying to understand their implications" (xviii). Such an approach is not without its pitfalls, however, and "the use of male devised plots, genres, and conventions may involve a female writer in uncomfortable contradictions and tensions" (70). Alcott's negotiation of this gendered literary space is embodied in the intertextuality of *Love Chase,* especially through her reworking of elements of Goethe's *Faust* (1808), but also through her dialogue(s) with *Jane Eyre* (1847, a key text identified by Gilbert and Gubar as one which "acts out male metaphors") and Margaret Fuller's response to *Faust* (explored in section 3) – two female responses to the male "Palaces of Art and Houses of Fiction."

Discussing the wider hybridisation of the Gothic and sensation genres in *Love Chase* through a gendered lens, Elena Emma Sottilotta refers to

> a restriction put in place by the Sensation novel, set as it is in contemporary times, which consequently precludes a full triumph of the imagination […] This limitation imposed upon the supernatural in [*Love Chase*] inevitably recalls the Radcliffian tradition of the 'supernatural explained', conventionally employed by women writing gothic fiction in order to make their works less transgressive and more acceptable.
>
> (2015: 86)

I would argue that what Alcott does with *Love Chase* through her use of generic hybridity and intertextuality is not placate, but challenge. This reading is closer to Elizabeth Keyser's suggestion that Alcott subversively uses Gothic modes to "represent the 'wrongs of woman' in patriarchal society, the way in which women resist as well as collude with their oppressors, and the need for feminist consciousness and communication across generations" (1993: 4), and Lauren Hehmeyer's, which similarly purports that Alcott twists generic convention both "to illuminate women's social dilemmas" (2025: 2) and give the female protagonists agency (3). Perhaps building on Gilbert and Gubar, Emma Butler-Probst suggests that, in "A Whisper in the Dark" (1863) and *A Modern Mephistopheles* (1877), "while Alcott makes her female characters resilient when it comes to mental temptation, they are nevertheless both destroyed by virtue of narrative conventions that reveal the limited range of possible

[1] Notable examples include the anonymous "Homicidal Heroines" (1866) in *The Saturday Review*, Margaret Oliphant's "Novels" (1867) in *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, and Florence Layard's "What Women Write and Read" (1887) in *The National Review*.

futures for female characters in these kinds of fictional worlds" (2025: 150). While the implication of these perspectives, taken collectively, is that Alcott's sensational output simultaneously challenges, and succumbs to, convention, I argue that her active appropriation of intertexts in *Love Chase*, particularly *Jane Eyre* and *Faust*, demonstrates a challenge not just to broader narrative conventions, but to specific narratives that perpetuate a particular idea of a woman's place in the literary, and narrative, sphere.

While it is my broad thesis that Alcott builds *Love Chase* upon both implicit and explicit intertextual foundations in order to pose a challenge to accepted narrative modes, Graham Allen suggests the term "intertextuality" has become "one of the most commonly used and misused terms in contemporary critical vocabulary [… and] is in danger of meaning nothing more than whatever each particular critic wishes it to mean" (2011: 2). I conclude this introduction, therefore, by offering a brief overview of the theoretical field of intertextuality, before establishing the area(s) of that field with which this article engages. It is a varied and conflicting one, and one which, especially in the work of its foundational thinkers such as Saussure, Bakhtin, and Kristeva (who coined the term intertextuality in 1968), has a tendency towards elitism in the "deficit model approach" (Mason 2019: 6) – that is, if a reader is not able to identify the intertexts, they cannot hope to fully understand the text. Jessica Mason (2019) hypothesises that, while undeniably influential and central to the field, the theories put forward by these writers and, later, Michel Riffaterre, cannot be relied upon for a practical application in textual analysis due to the highly conceptual nature of the ideas. As Peter Barry suggests, Kristeva's notion that intertextuality embodies all knowledge and is potentially infinite in terms of connective signification is a definition so broad that it "places the phenomenon [of intertextuality] beyond human ken – no conceivable reading technique could cope with intertextuality thus defined" (2010: 1002).

Gérard Genette, a contemporary of Riffaterre, considered intertextuality "a relationship of copresence between two texts or among several texts" ([1982] 1997: 1), refining the idea of intertextuality into five separate textualities: transtextuality, the broadest, which encompasses the others – it is, essentially, the "literariness of literature," and what may broadly be understood as intertextuality, particularly as theorised by Riffaterre (2)**;** paratext – titles, subtitles, forewords, prefaces, and so on; metatextuality, or the commentary surrounding a text (3); architextuality – the silent relationship between texts, "articulated at most only by a paratextual mention"; and finally, hypertextuality, which is "any relationship uniting a text B (which I shall call the *hypertext*) to an earlier text A (I shall, of course, call it the *hypotext*), upon which it is grafted in a manner that is not that of commentary […] a text derived from another preexistent text" (5, original emphasis). Genette offers two "provisional" interpretations of this derivation: one where B "speaks" about text A, and another where text B is "unable to exist, as such" without text A, from which it originates through a process of "*transformation*" (5, original emphasis). Ultimately, text B is derived from text A, and though the relationship may be of a varied intensity, there is a clear line of connection between the hypertext and its hypotext(s) that intrinsically inform the narrative.

Though this definition is likewise problematic for Mason in her survey of intertextuality as it relies on an inherent knowledge of potential hypotexts, "rather than the perceptions and utterances of the readers" (2019: 9), she concedes that "in instances where hypertextual relations are known, or perceived by readers, Genette's work offers a highly complementary framework for analysis" (9). In the case of this article, *Love Chase* is the "text B" to two key "text A"s – *Jane Eyre* and *Faust*. Before exploring these, however, the first section of this article will address some broader transtextual relationships that are alluded to in the early chapters between *Love Chase*, and Shakespeare and mythology, which work to establish both the internal awareness of narrative modes, and the self-conscious intertextuality of the text.

Section 2 will then explore the relationship between *Love Chase* and *Jane Eyre*, and section 3 the ways in which Alcott transforms *Faust.* Finally, section 4 will consider the importance of reader response in intertextual analysis, and hypothesise about another possible hypotext: the final issue of the original serial publication of Rhoda Broughton's *Not Wisely, but Too Well* (serialised 1865–66).

Taken together, these sections put forward a Genettian analysis of *Love Chase* to demonstrate the ways in which Alcott brandishes her "blood and thunder" pen to challenge prevailing literary modes in the Western canon that seek to confine women to a particular, romanticised narrative.

A Rose by Any Other Name: Transtextual Renaming

Rosamond is an avid reader of romances, often casting herself in the role of the heroine that awaits rescue; nevertheless, as evidenced by the opening lines of the novel, she finds herself increasingly exasperated at the possibility that she may have to fulfil that role indefinitely. The night of Tempest's arrival, Rosamond **"**dream[s] dreams of the new hero who had come to play a part in the romance of her life" (Alcott [1866] 1995: 17), and, after he implies that he will help her out of her despair, she tells him that when she first saw him she was "glad and welcomed [him] as the captive ladies used to welcome the brave knights who came to free them" (39). Yet, while Rosamond may cast herself in the vague role of heroine-awaiting-rescue, it is Tempest who, shortly after his arrival, attaches names to such figures, linking Rosamond not to a vague archetype, but specific characters and narrative arcs. Indeed, Butler-Probst refers to the role of reading in the construction of power between male and female characters, suggesting that "Alcott's male villains curate reading materials specifically intended to compromise women and bend them to their will" (2025: 151). While Tempest does not actively curate any of Rosamond's reading as others do (such as Sylvia's uncle in "A Whisper in the Dark," which Butler-Probst explores), he takes advantage of her reading habits in attempt to manipulate her behaviour. By limiting the success of Tempest's attempt, however, Alcott further pushes against the constrictions and restrictions of the "Palaces of Art and Houses of Fiction" authored by men (Gilbert and Gubar 2000: xvii).

In the early chapters of *Love Chase*, Alcott offers fleeting allusions to Tennyson's "Mariana" (1830) after Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure*, the myth of Hero and Leander (which features a clandestine love affair between a priestess of Aphrodite and a young man from the opposite side of the Hellespont, and a storm that leads to a tragic conclusion), Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, and Goethe's *Faust*, which is the focus of section 3. Genette suggests that hypertexts are contingent on their hypotexts, unable to exist without them ([1982] 1997:5); while the Faust myth is explicitly referenced alongside the Shakespearean and mythological narratives, the other texts are much broader allusions and, while influencing the reader response, do not have the same level of narrative influence on *Love Chase*.[2] Despite that, however, they nonetheless remain important in establishing the internal relationships between Rosamond and reading, which ultimately feed into the wider intertextual framework of the novel and Alcott's active manipulation thereof.

Commenting on Rosamond's solitude at her grandfather's mansion, Tempest suggests, "so, like 'Mariana in the moated grange,' you are often 'aweary, aweary,' and wish that you

[2] I use Goethe's *Faust* as the hypotext in this analysis, due to various narrative parallels and para/metatextual evidence. As shall be noted in section 3, however, there is also an argument to be made that it is broader myth, rather than the specific version written by Goethe, that influenced Alcott.

were dead, I fancy?" (Alcott [1866] 1995: 7). Rosamond rejects the likeness, however, surprising Tempest with "no trace of sentimental weakness … but an indomitable will" as she responds that she has no intention of dying until she has enjoyed her life (7). Tempest later asks her, as she gazes out over the sea, if "Hero is looking for her Leander," to which Rosamond responds that her Leander "has not yet been found" (20). Unlike her response to the reference to Mariana, this comment is slightly more ambiguous: she does not reject but evades it, suggesting that the myth's narrative of tragic love and stormy conclusions may yet be fulfilled, or even desired, were a Leander to appear for her. The final name that Tempest uses for Rosamond in her presence is that of Miranda, from *The Tempest*. During a trip on Tempest's yacht, Tempest demonstrates the more ruthless side of his character by pretending to put Ippolito in danger, and says to Rosamond, "You see of what I am capable; are you resigned to your fate, Miranda?" (35). Where Tempest's previous re-namings were met with rejection or ambivalence, this one, in the face of apparent danger, "reassured Rosamond" (35). Rosamond is thus shown to identify with Miranda in a way that she does not with Mariana and the mythological Hero; after all, both Tennyson's Mariana and Hero are tied to their locales, waiting and dying respectively. Miranda, on the other hand, is rescued from her island, finding love, happiness, and freedom – this is a fate that Rosamond desires. In naming her as Miranda, therefore, Tempest implicitly suggests that he is her Ferdinand. For a year, at least, that is the case.

Blackford argues that "the narrator's representation of Rosamond is an uneasy paradox. Rose is simultaneously a swashbuckling woman of the world … and a whiny child pleading for protection from various characters" (2011: 5). This paradoxical nature is rooted in the text's very hypertextuality: Rosamond is both a startlingly modern product of Alcott's blood-and-thunder pen, and a character tied through narrative convention and hypotextual reference to the archetypical damsel. The "in-world" references ensure that Rosamond associates herself, consciously or otherwise, with those characters, leading the reader to do so with her. Prior to Tempest's arrival, her experience of life was her grandfather and the romances she read; just as Tempest becomes the hero in the romance of her life (for a short period of time, at least), she becomes the tragic heroine. If, as Julie Sanders suggests, "each new generation of story-makers adopt[s] familiar mythic templates and outlines for their storytelling purposes" (2006: 64), then the effect of Alcott doing so explicitly here, announces in the early pages of *Love Chase* that her narrative appropriations are active interventions in the accepted traditions of Western literature – proving, as Doyle suggests, that she was "a master of intertextuality" (1999: 216) – rather than a more easily-dismissed story made up of a "tissue of stale cliches" (Tuttleton 1995: 19).

"You might be forgiven for beginning to wonder if you had misremembered *Jane Eyre*…": Transatlantic Transformation

As mentioned above, it is my contention that *Love Chase* is an inherently intertextual (in the broadest sense) novel, featuring both implicit and explicit intertexts; Mason refers to these respectively as "unmarked" and "marked" intertexts – that is, texts that are "not explicitly marked out by title or definitive assertion of their presence by an author" (2019: 115), and "those that are objectively present and overt within written texts" (89). Bicknell highlights the explicit/marked intertextual relationships between *Love Chase* and Shakespeare, Goethe, and Greek mythology; Christine Doyle, on the other hand, reveals the underpinning implicit/unmarked intertext that Genette might consider an architext: Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, without which *Love Chase* would likely not exist in the manner in which it does, and to which Alcott refers in her list of books she likes following her resolution "to read fewer novels,

and only those of the best" (Alcott 1989: 67-8). In *Louisa May Alcott & Charlotte Brontë: Transatlantic Translations* (2000), Doyle traces the career-long dialogue that Alcott fostered with Brontë's work, drawing attention to the ways in which Alcott pays homage to, re-works, argues with, and in some cases parodies, Brontë's oeuvre – particularly *Jane Eyre* (1847), and, to a lesser extent, *Villette* (1853).[3] Doyle's examination of *Love Chase* in this context is particularly valuable, drawing myriad connections between *Love Chase* and *Jane Eyre*, from plot points to character formations, opening her study with:

> Suppose you knew the novel open before you had been written by a woman in the middle of the nineteenth century. Suppose further that, in that novel, a woman seems to be urged in a chapter title to "Flee temptation"—that is, to flee the man she loves because he has lied to her and is already married. Suppose you noticed another scene in which an eighteen-year-old woman banters with an older man about societal rules […]. You might be forgiven for beginning to wonder if you had misremembered *Jane Eyre*, for this novel might seem to be Brontë's famous work, and yet somehow not. The lines […] appear in *A Long Fatal Love Chase,* a novel not written in 1847 by the British writer Charlotte Brontë but a generation later and an ocean away by an American admirer: Louisa May Alcott.
>
> (Doyle 2000: xv)

The parallels between the two novels are numerous; indeed, as a hypotext, *Jane Eyre* is "evoke[d] more or less perceptibly without necessarily speaking of it or citing it" (Genette [1982] 1997: 5). Despite the significant number of connections, Doyle concludes that *Love Chase* "is not a reprise of *Jane Eyre* but an argument against it because, despite the many connections at external levels, Alcott cannot believe in Rochester/Phillip as a romantic hero" (62); it is Alcott's familiarity with Brontë's work that makes her "capable of using it to suit her own, sometimes very different, ends" (xvi). As this section shall demonstrate, Alcott presents a challenge not only to the broadly idealised ending of *Jane Eyre* where female perseverance and mutual sacrifice lead to reconciliation, but also to what Christopher A. Fahy refers to as "the ultimate equality of the Eyre-Rochester union and the impossibility of the angelic heroine truly reforming the Byronic hero" (2002: 192), through her active and open re-writing of Brontë's narrative.

Jessica Cox has referred to *Jane Eyre* as a "proto-sensation novel" as Brontë employs numerous tropes which were later adopted by writers of sensation fiction (2019: 8), many of which are listed above by Doyle.[4] As Doyle suggests, however, Alcott denies Tempest the status of romantic hero that Rochester Byronically achieves: "[Tempest's] character has all the fire of Rochester, but none of the redeeming qualities Brontë believes, but Alcott doubts, that Rochester possesses" (Doyle 2000: 60). Alcott presents her readers with this doubt in the fifth chapter where she has Tempest orchestrate the death of a man who is aware of his previous marriage, an event which is followed by Tempest telling Rosamond that he believes he is without a conscience (Alcott [1866] 1995: 87), and which is a plausible, more sensationalised alternative to Rochester's dealings with Richard Mason. Indeed, Alcott makes no pretence that

[3] Such Brontëan influences are also found in, but not limited to: "A Whisper in the Dark" (1863), *Moods* (1865/1882), *Work: A Story of Experience* (1873), and the *Little Women* saga (1868–86).

[4] Shelley Streeby refers to 'nineteenth-century sensation fiction [as] an international genre' (2004: 179), but highlights that American sensation fiction seems to have developed decades earlier than its British counterpart, from the 1830s (180); though concerned with similar themes, such as urbanisation, industrialisation, and the associated social changes, where British sensation fiction developed alongside legislative and political changes particular to Britain, American sensation fiction developed within and throughout the socio-political contexts of the US-Mexican War (1846–8) and the American Civil War (1860–5).

Tempest is anything other than a danger to Rosamond. For example, after Tempest tells Rosamond that he believes he has no conscience, he continues:

> I mean that it is more natural for me to be wicked than virtuous; when I do a bad act, and I've done many, I never feel either shame, remorse, or fear. I sometimes wish it was not necessary as I don't like the trouble, but as for any moral sense of principle, I haven't a particle. Many people are like me as their actions prove, but they are not so frank in owning it and insist on keeping up the humbug of virtue. You'll find that is true, Rose, when you know the world better. (87)

If *Love Chase* is an argument against the idealism of *Jane Eyre*'s reconciliatory conclusion, then this passage can be considered a direct address to Brontë by Alcott – the naivety that Tempest assigns Rosamond might also be the idealism that Alcott sees in Brontë.

In an early conversation with Jane, Rochester acknowledges that he was not always as he now appears; it was circumstance, rather than an innate characteristic, that set him on his current path[5]:

> I started, or rather […] was thrust on to a wrong tack at the age of one-and-twenty, and have never recovered the right course since: but I might have been very different; I might have been as good as you – wiser – almost as stainless. […] I was your equal at eighteen – quite your equal. Nature meant me to be, on the whole, a good man, Miss Eyre; one of the better kind, and you see I am not so. […] take my word for it, – I am not a villain: you are not to suppose that – not to attribute to me any such bad eminence, but, owing, I verily believe, rather to circumstances than to my own natural bent, I am a trite commonplace sinner.
>
> (Brontë [1847] 2008: 118-21)

Tempest rejects remorse wholesale: it is not something that he is capable of feeling and therefore reformation is impossible; Rochester, on the other hand, while referring to remorse as "the poison of life" (119), acknowledges that he has the strength, if not the current inclination, to reform. The society and love of a good woman, however, appears to give him that inclination. As Rochester tells Jane during his account of his marriage to Bertha Mason, "After a youth and manhood passed half in unutterable misery and half in dreary solitude, I have for the first time found what I can truly love – I have found *you*. You are my sympathy – my better self – my good angel" (282, original emphasis). Taken at face value (and disregarding the inherently manipulative intent of his actions in the scene), this is evidence of at least the desire to reform due to Jane's influence. When Jane returns to Rochester at the end of the novel, the physical injuries Rochester suffered following the fire and his subsequent hermitage are the unwished-for manifestation of that reformation: his "vigorous spirit [was subjugated] to a corporeal infirmity" (389). Jane reports that, "violent as he seemed in his despair" when she declared she must leave him following the revelation of Bertha's existence, "he loved

[5] The circumstance being his father and brother plotting "against [him]" with the Masons to secure his marriage to Bertha, and thus her dowery. Though he admits, with self-directed contempt, to being "dazzled, stimulated: [his] senses were excited; and being ignorant, raw, and inexperienced," he was completely drawn in, he attributes his marriage, and its outcome, to his "avaricious, grasping" father's manipulation (273-4). After four years of marriage, in despair, Rochester first considers shooting himself (276), before returning to England and Europe, spending the next ten years accruing mistresses and living a "grovelling form of existence" in a bid to forget Bertha (279). He eventually returns to England on business, "in a harsh, bitter frame of mind, the result of a useless, roving, lonely life corroded with disappointment, sourly disposed against all men, and especially all *woman*kind" and meets Jane (280).

[her] far too well and too tenderly to constitute himself [her] tyrant" (390): where violence, whether in action or in word, had been his recourse in the past, his love for Jane apparently prevented it in that instance (though he does threaten violence, nonetheless). It is worth remembering that it is Jane who tells the reader this, however – we do not hear it from Rochester via directly reported speech, but through Jane's various temporal and emotional filters. Jane thus presents her reader with an idealised relationship with a reformed man: Reader, I changed him.

Rosmond, an avid reader of romances, hopes to be such a woman for Tempest, with Holly Blackford suggesting that such reading of romances has "corrupted her views" and prevented her, at first, from understanding Tempest (2011: 5). As the novel progresses, however, and the eponymous Chase is underway, it is revealed that Rosamond:

> had never been blind to the fact that Tempest was no saint, but like many another woman she hoped to save him through her love, and as time showed her more and more clearly the nature of the man, she tried to forget his sins to others and remember only his generosity, his tenderness to her.
>
> (Alcott [1866] 1995: 104-5)

There is some evidence that Rosamond might have been able to "save him through her love" had Tempest's nature allowed it: though Tempest tells her that he "cherished the foolish fancy" he might develop a conscience through her influence, he has given up any hope of doing so after discovering that he is "worse than ever" (87-8). Tempest later tells Marion (his wife) that he loves Rosamond as he "never thought to love any mortal creature" (128); when he first catches up with Rosamond after she flees, he, while attempting to manipulate her, nonetheless looks at her "with the one genuine passion of his life eloquently expressed in his fine eyes" (142). It is a "selfish love" (225), however, and throughout the duration of the Chase, Tempest is remorseless in both his pursuit of, and attempts to regain, Rosamond, which at one stage result in her attempting suicide to escape his grasp. While Rochester searches for Jane after she left him, he never finds her, growing "quite savage on his disappointment … he got dangerous," though seemingly not to towards any individual but himself (Brontë [1847] 2008: 378); throughout *Love Chase* Alcott actualises the potential threat that simmers under the surface of Rochester in Tempest, offering him, as Doyle suggests, none of the redeeming features Brontë grants Rochester through his remorseless violence. After Tempest has Rosamond confined in an asylum, the tempting vestiges of love that lingered in her heart for him are finally quashed; in response, Tempest increases his efforts, determined to claim her. Tempest is, undeniably, a Genettian transformation of Rochester – but a Rochester whose conscience never developed, and whose actions are borne not of external "circumstance," but of the belief that his nature is inherited, inherent, and inalienable: "I simply live out my real self and I don't think I shall be called upon to atone for my sins, as they are [his father's]" (89).

Rosamond's love, while it lasted, never saves Tempest in the way that Jane's appears to prompt Rochester into reformation. Remorse and reformation, in both texts, orbit each other, seemingly related though never quite achieving the symbiosis that might be expected. Rochester, though reformed, barely expresses remorse; Tempest never reforms, but finally, on the penultimate page of the novel, is shown to feel remorse. Early on, he tells Rosamond of a vision he had in a supposedly magic mirror in which he stands near a "lovely dead woman [and] an old man mourning her … with an expression of remorse and despair such as [he] is quite incapable of feeling" (Alcott [1866] 1995: 26). Following Rosamond's death at the end of the novel, "he saw the vision of the Venetian mirror verified" (345). The young woman, the old man, and "the likeness of himself standing near wearing an expression of unutterable remorse and despair" (345). This remorse does not prompt any form of reformation in Tempest,

however, and drives him instead to suicide, which is discussed further in the final section of this article in relation to the original serial ending of Rhoda Broughton's *Not Wisely, but Too Well* (1865). Alcott closes her novel without the resolution Brontë appears to offer Jane and Rochester through the former's elevation and the latter's humbling: Tempest's final act is to claim Rosamond's dead body as his, deny her final claim to freedom, and by doing so negate any prior agency that she had been able to assert. The idealised conclusion to an unequal relationship is rejected.

"Why, you are the very image of Meph–": Transforming *Faust*

The final (active) hypotext to be explored, as mentioned above, is Goethe's *Faust*. Much like *Jane Eyre*, it is never mentioned in *Love Chase*, yet there are various allusions to the themes and narratives therein throughout the novel. Though Alcott was familiar with the works of Goethe from the age of fifteen (Elbert 2016: 63), she does not mention *Faust* in her diaries until 1877, when she recorded the completion of *A Modern Mephistopheles*, a novel inspired by her reading of *Faust* the previous year (Alcott 1989: 204), which borrows more explicitly from Goethe's narrative than does *Love Chase*.[6] We can infer, however, that Alcott was familiar with the text prior to 1876, given her decades-long admiration of Goethe, and references to the statues of Goethe and Faust in Frankfurt during her European trip in 1865 (143); at the very least, there was familiarity with the myth.[7] Furthermore, she was familiar with, and admired, the work of her father's Transcendentalist contemporary, Margaret Fuller (herself an acolyte of Goethe), who wrote in *Woman in the Nineteenth Century* (1845):

> In *Faust* we see the redeeming power, which, at present, upholds woman, while waiting for a better day, in Margaret. The lovely little girl, pure in instinct, ignorant in mind, is misled and profaned by man abusing her confidence. To the Mater *Delrosa* she appeals for aid. It is given to the soul, if not against outward sorrow; and the maiden, enlightened by her sufferings, refusing to receive temporal salvation by the aid of an evil power, obtains the eternal in its stead.
>
> (Fuller [1845] 1999: 67)

This summary of redemptive power is an almost-perfect blueprint for the narrative trajectory of Rosamond in *Love Chase*. Monika M. Elbert suggests that some women writers in nineteenth-century America "co-opted Goethe's material (and especially the suffering but redemptive Gretchen/Margaret figure)" (2016: 61), and that Fuller, in particular, was "eager to show how Faust is edified, indeed redeemed by women, … deny[ing] his exploitation of woman: she makes it appear as if woman were here to serve or teach man, to show him a higher self" (67). Elbert argues that Fuller "constructs the feminised version of a man's Faust: she feels that Mephistopheles and Faust can be reconciled, as she celebrates the redemptive power of woman (as helpmeet to men) and the progressive vision of man's perfectibility through androgyny" (74). If *Love Chase* can be read as a rebuttal against Brontë's redemptive conclusion to *Jane Eyre*, then Alcott's interpretation of the Faust myth, here, can also be seen as a refutation of Fuller's idealistic vision of "the possibility of having one man or one woman redeem the world" (Elbert 2016: 74), or of Faust being redeemed by women: there are flaws deep within the human being that idealism alone cannot mend, and, through her

[6] *A Modern Mephistopheles* appears to be the working title for *A Long Fatal Love Chase* (Doyle 2001: 58), with Alcott writing in September 1866 that she "finished the long tale 'A Modern Mephistopheles.' But Elliott would not have it, saying it was too long & too sensational!" (Alcott 1989: 153).

[7] Though there is the possibility that this familiarity might have come via Christopher Marlowe, rather than Goethe, there is little evidence in Alcott's diaries and journals to suggest this is the case.

attempts to challenge both the male literary tradition and the female response which she evidently finds lacking, Alcott recalibrates Fuller's idealistic view of Faust/*Faust* in *Love Chase* to reflect that conclusion.

Alcott's transformation of *Faust* is not as assured as her transformation of *Jane Eyre*, which, as noted, might be because she had not yet read the play herself and was relying on a general, second-hand knowledge of the myth and/or the play. Nonetheless, parallels between *Love Chase* and *Faust* include: a deal for freedom being made with Mephistopheles/one who resembles him; the role of a magic mirror in tying the fate of Faust and Margareta[8]/Tempest and Rosamond, granting the former their first glimpse of the latter – though Tempest does not realise it is Rosamond until the end of the novel (Goethe [1808] 2007: 75, 107; Alcott [1866] 1995: 26, 343-4); and Margareta's/Rosamond's admiration of Faust's/Tempest's intellect and worldly knowledge and the subsequent wonder at his interest in her (Goethe [1808] 2007:102; Alcott [1866] 1995: 39-40).

Most Faustian allusions occur in close succession in the first pages of the novel, offering a tantalising lens through which to read the rest of the story. Rosamond, as mentioned, opens the novel by declaring that she "often feel[s] as if [she'd] gladly sell [her] soul to Satan for a year of freedom" (Alcott [1866] 1995: 1); Tempest's emergence in the immediate aftermath is met by Rosamond's grandfather greeting him with, "speak of Satan and he appears" (3). Soon afterwards, we are told that, "in the fitful light of the dusky hall the new-comer's face suddenly appeared fiery-eyed and menacing, and, glancing at a portrait of Mephistopheles, Rosamond exclaimed, 'Why, you are the very image of Meph–'" (5). It is never revealed why there is a portrait of Mephistopheles in the mansion, but the first time Tempest looks at it, "an expression of weariness and melancholy" passes over his face (5), as if there is a familiarity and resignation towards the likeness. The second time he gazes upon the portrait, Tempest ruminates on the likeness with a "dark smile," saying to himself, "poor little Margaret, no hope for you when Faust and Mephistopheles are one" (50). There are few indications that Tempest's self-identification with Faust is accurate, however, given his more prominent Mephistophelean traits and concerted lack of remorse. Nonetheless, he is presented as a man dissatisfied with life and, indeed, granted the equivalent of Faust's moment in which he no longer seeks to strive,[9] in the unexpected, albeit genuine (if ultimately toxic) love for Rosamond.

As Jane K. Brown reminds us, however, *Faust* is preceded by the "Prelude in the Theatre" and the "Prologue in Heaven," two scenes that indicate that it is:

> a self-reflexive play about the nature of drama, [and] it reminds us that it is itself a drama. It also insists that the reader remain aware that the entire drama to come is a drama, an illusion to which he must not surrender himself.
>
> (1986: 34)

The "Prelude in the Theatre" is a conversation between the director, the poet, and the clown. For the director, "the audience is to be manipulated by tools" whereas "the world of the poet is completely opposite. He flees noisy reality to a transcendent, timeless realm of ideas and ideals" (38). For Brown, the Prelude "defines the fundamental problem in the play [… which]

[8] She is also known as Gretchen – for the purposes of clarity, however, this article will only use the name Margareta when referring to *Faust*.

[9] "if you can beguile or flatter me / into a state of self-contented ease, / Delude me with delight or luxury - / that day shall be my last. […] If I should bid the moment stay, or try / To hold its fleeting beauty, then you may / Cast me in chains and carry me away, / For in that instant I will gladly die." (Goethe [1808] 2007: 52)

may be identified as the dialectic of the real and ideal" (37). This tension is evident throughout *Love Chase* as noted by Blackford (2011): Rosamond is caught between the real – that is, her "swashbuckling" modernity as a product of Alcott's blood-and-thunder pen – and the ideal, or the various literary templates upon which both she and Alcott mould aspects of her character. Furthermore, Brown suggests that the two prologues are "a warning […] that *Faust* is illusion and not to be mistaken for reality" (1986: 42): this warning against mistaking illusion for reality is one that Alcott rehearses throughout *Love Chase* in her intertextual treatment of *Faust*, *Jane Eyre*, and others.

Despite numerous narrative parallels between *Love Chase* and *Faust*, the characters are not necessarily as fixed as they might initially appear. Tempest acknowledges this when he ruminates that he is both Mephistopheles and Faust (Alcott [1866] 1995: 50). In casting Rosamond as Margareta, however, Tempest neglects to acknowledge that she is as much Faust to his Mephistopheles as she is Margareta to his Faust.[10] Where the main narrative of *Faust* begins with the titular scholar pacing his office in despair at the monotonous lack of fulfilment in his life, desperate to "escape into a wider sphere!" (Goethe [1808] 2007: 15),[11] *Love Chase* opens with Rosamond's "impetuous" cry for freedom, "and the most intense desire gave force to her passionate words as the girl glanced despairingly about the dreary room like a caged creature on the point of breaking loose" (Alcott [1866] 1995: 1). This desperation and confinement cannot help but recall Faust's early words to Mephistopheles:

> Each morning when I wake, I wake with dread,
> With bitter tears I greet the day that brings
> No promise and no hope of better things,
> No wish fulfilled, not one, for hope is dead[.]
>
> (Goethe [1808] 2007: 48)

The deal with the devil is struck to alleviate the apathy, and Faust's soul is the deposit. Rosamond desires "a short life and a gay one for me and I'm willing to pay for my pleasure if it is necessary. […] I'm not afraid to own that I hope to be as free as air, to see the world, to know what ease and pleasure are" (Alcott [1866] 1995: 9). Just as Mephistopheles offers Faust "wishes fulfilled" that eventually sour, Tempest provides Rosamond with a "short life" in which she is, temporarily, "free as air," knowing ease and pleasure until the terms of the deal are met.

Throughout *Love Chase*, Tempest strives to possess Rosamond, finally seeming to get his wish at the very end when, gathering her corpse into his arms, he declares that she is his first, last, and even in the grave (346) – just as Mephistopheles believes until the last moment that he will possess Faust's soul. When Rosamond finally acknowledges the Faustian deal between them towards the end of the Chase, she casts herself in the role of Faust, despite the wider narrative connections established between her and Margareta (including her ultimate

[10] This slipperiness, particularly in terms of gender(ed) roles, is something that Alcott would later explore in *A Modern Mephistopheles* through the character of Gladys, caught between Felix Canaris (the Faust figure) and Jasper Helwyze (the aptly-named Satan figure). See Butler-Probst (2025), Chapman (1996), and Sanderson (1991) for further exploration of the relationship between *A Modern Mephistopheles* and Goethe's *Faust*.

[11] This article utilises a modern translation (by John R. Williams). Alcott herself may have encountered translations by Anna Swanwick (1850) and/or Bayard Taylor (1870–1), or perhaps even by Margaret Fuller (Cheever 2007: 4), though there is little evidence she *published* a translation.

demise following her recognition of Mephistopheles for what he is[12]). She laments to Ignatius: "[Tempest] is my evil genius, and long ago when as a reckless girl I said I'd sell my soul to Satan for a year of freedom, little did I know that I should be taken at my word in such fearful earnest" (278): Tempest, to Rosamond, is the Mephistopheles she identified him as in the early pages of the novel. Just as Mephistopheles is denied Faust's soul, so too is Tempest denied Rosamond's: Father Ignatius refutes Tempest's claim with his own, citing the truth and purity of his and Rosamond's love and declaring that he shall "rejoin her in a blessed world where such as [Tempest] cannot enter" (345). Thus, as Mephistopheles laments of Faust after the angels cast away his soul to Heaven, Tempest has "lost the greatest treasure there could be; / that lofty soul that pledged itself to me" (Goethe [1808] 2007: 364).

Both *Jane Eyre* and *Faust* showcase the redemptive power of women over men. Alcott appears to renounce this idea through the unrepentant end faced by Tempest, and Rosamond's active rejection of such responsibility. Her killing of Rosamond, however, poses a challenge to her rebuttal of both social and narrative convention; the walls erected around the masculine narrative modes are too substantial to be entirely breached at this point in her career. In her return to *Faust* in *A Modern Mephistopheles* eleven years later, however, Alcott would be firmer in her method and write a tale in which "autonomous womanhood triumphs over patriarchal evil […] us[ing] male myth to renounce male power" (Sanderson 1991: 46).

Hypothesising a Hypotext: Rhoda Broughton's *Not Wisely, but Too Well*

As discussed above, Genette refers to the process of "transformation" in his hypothesis of hyper- and hypotexts; that is, the hypertext transforming elements of its hypotext(s), folding them into the new narrative: a hypertext is "any text derived from a previous text either through simple transformation […], or through indirect transformation" (1997: 7). To differentiate between simple and indirect transformation, Genette uses the example of the *Odyssey* of Homer as the hypotext, James Joyce's *Ulysses* and Virgil's *Aeneid* as the hypertexts: Joyce's "simple transformation" transforms the Homeric epic into a modernist novel, transplanting the action from the Ancient Mediterranean to twentieth century Dublin, whereas Virgil "indirectly" transforms the *Odyssey* by imitating Homer's style, rather than his narrative.

The twentieth and twenty-first centuries have seen both indirect and simple transformations of *Jane Eyre* in novels such as Daphne Du Maurier's *Rebecca* (1938), Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966), Mimi Matthews's *John Eyre* (2020), and Rachel Hawkins's *The Wife Upstairs* (2021). However, *Jane Eyre* also saw two simple transformations happen within two decades of publication: *Love Chase*, as discussed, and Rhoda Broughton's *Not Wisely, but Too Well*. The relationship between *Jane Eyre* and *Not Wisely* is an established one, with Tamar Heller observing that:

> *Not Wisely but Too Well* recycles a number of elements from *Jane Eyre*: the would-be bigamist, trapped in marriage with a woman he despises; his attempts, once the respectable girl discovers he is married, to persuade her to become his mistress; the girl's rejection of this sexual temptation; and her subsequent relationship with an ascetic young clergyman. … Like Rochester … Dare [Stamer] is also punished for his attempted bigamy. … Unlike his

[12] Where Rosamond perishes in a storm in her final attempt to flee Tempest, Margareta, condemned to death for infanticide, is visited by Faust on the eve of her execution; when Mephistopheles arrives, Margareta recognises him for a devil and gives her soul up to God and is redeemed, despite Mephistopheles's declaration that 'She is condemned' (Goethe [1808] 2007: 150).

> predecessor, however, he is not humbled and redeemed but dies unrepentant and apparently damned.
>
> (2006: 92-3)

Not Wisely is an extreme interpretation of those plot points, pushing *Jane Eyre'*s sensational potential close to its limits. The conclusion of the original serial ending (1865), however, enables a secondary hypotextual relationship to be hypothesised between *Not Wisely* and *Love Chase.* There are, admittedly, few points of connection between the wider narratives of the two texts, yet there are two notable similarities between the original serial ending of *Not Wisely* and *Love Chase*: the former lover returns to lay claim one last time, but is denied in no small part by the influence of a religious figure whom the woman loves, followed by the death/murder of the woman and the former lover's suicide.

Alcott toured Europe between 1865 and 1866 as a "nurse-companion" to Anna Weld, daughter of a Boston shipping merchant; in April 1866 Alcott parted ways with her companions and travelled alone, ending her tour in England before returning to Boston (Doyle 2001). It is not beyond the realms of possibility that Alcott came across the final issue of *Not Wisely* whilst in England. Alcott wrote *Love Chase* between August and September 1866 (Bicknell 1995: 348), starting it very soon after her return from Europe; the final instalment of *Not Wisely* was published in the *Dublin University Magazine* just one month prior in July.

During June 1866, and the first week of July, Alcott lodged with "Mrs. T[ravers] & daughters, [and] two sisters from Dublin," describing the time as "Very free and jolly, roaming about London all day, dining late and resting, chatting, music, or fun in the evening," before leaving for Liverpool on the 7th July for her journey home (Alcott 1989: 152). Though the *DUM* did not have a particularly large circulation – c. 2000 in 1865 (Ellegård 1971: 18) – it was available through Mudie's circulation library, and appealed to "middle and upper class readers of good education" who were "politically liberal-conservative" (18-19). From 1856, the title pages featured Hurst and Blackett of London as "publisher or publisher/distributor" (McCormack 1996: 101), suggesting it was distributed in England by the time Alcott was there.

Love Chase ends with Rosamond's accidental death and Tempest's suicide. The original serial ending of *Not Wisely*, however, ends in Stamer murdering Kate, and then killing himself. Stamer's murder of Kate is described thus:

> He wrapped her in his arms once again; once again he devoured her face with his deepest murderous eyes, wells of burning hell-fire […] He put the muzzle [of the pistol] to the little fluttering heart, pulled the trigger with a resolute hand – nerves turned to iron – and fired. One low groan of bitter pain; then the head fell back, and the splendid hair, moon-bathed, flowed like a mantel over his shoulder. Oh, the ages of hell crowded into that moment! The unspeakable, unimaginable remorse!
>
> (Broughton 1865: 74)

He shoots himself soon afterwards, with the narrator revealing that, "he had hasted, as he said he would, to follow after the woman he had loved; but follow her has he may, I think that he'll never overtake her again through all the ages of eternity" (75). The ending of *Love Chase*, though significantly sparser in imagery and description than that of *Not Wisely*, echoes many elements of the passage above and the surrounding narrative. Where Kate's corpse is described as "smiling up, with calm, tender gravity, at the dusk summer sky ahead" (74), in death, Rosamond's hair frames her "fine pale face where shone the smile seen only upon countenances on which death has set his seal" (Alcott [1866] 1995: 343); where Stamer "might call, and wring his hands, and beat his breast … [but] could not bring one jot of terror or love, or sorrow into that fair dead face" (Broughton 1865: 74), Rosamond's grandfather bids of Tempest,

"wring your hands and groan till your black heart breaks, you are too late for any word of hers" (Alcott [1866] 1995: 344); finally, where Stamer "hasted" after Kate to his death, "with a world of despair in the ghastly wide open eyes" that showed "death had not been sweet to him" (Broughton 1865: 75), Tempest, "like a fallen spirit shut out from eternal life […] drove a hidden dagger deep into his breast, and dropping on his knees, gathered the dead woman in his arms" (Alcott [1866] 1995: 346). Where Tempest dies with Rosamond's body in his arms, however, Stamer dies "at ten paces from [Kate]" (Broughton 1865: 75); where Rosamond dies apart from Tempest, Kate dies in Stamer's arms. *Love Chase*'s ending is far from a simple transformation of *Not Wisely*'s, but these echoes between the two pairs' death suggest that if there is a connection to be made between the two texts, then it is one that situates *Love Chase* as the recollection of a dream – or, rather, the transformation of a story recently, and briefly, encountered.

Mason suggests that intertextuality can be "investigated as a key product of personal response rather than the result of authorial intention" (2019: 135), and refers to "unmarked intertextual relations linked to a text's production and reception: in other words, the associations we believe an author made when writing versus the associations readers make when reading" (115). Compared to more explicit or "marked" references, implicit or "unmarked" references "always involve a degree of uncertainty about their presence or absence" due to a lack of evidence regarding an author's own narrative schema (116). For example, as discussed above, there is no firm evidence that Alcott was familiar with Goethe's *Faust* on a first-hand basis at the time that she wrote *Love Chase*; her diaries suggest that she first read it a decade later. There are a number of suggestions, however, within the minutiae of her narrative that there was nonetheless a familiarity with the play – or at the very least, the myth – that preceded her written record of reading it; we can assume, therefore, that it was part of her narrative schema, just as *Jane Eyre*, though even more "unmarked" a text than *Faust*, was. *Not Wisely, but Too Well*, however, is a wholly unmarked intertext for *Love Chase*: there is significant uncertainty about its presence or absence, and there is no evidence that *Not Wisely* featured at all in Alcott's narrative schema. The connection is one that is a key product of my own personal reader response – it is an association that I made while reading, that may not align with any associations made by Alcott when she was writing.

Conclusion: What's in a Text?

A Genettian analysis of *Love Chase*'s trans- and hypotextuality is one that not only exposes Alcott's attempted refutation of prevailing literary modes (and thus familiarity and command thereof) as outlined in sections 1 to 3, but one that also takes us deep into the realms of the hypothetical, as shown in section 4.

As Mason argues, there are many limitations inherent in intertextual theory due to the assumptions of knowledge in the reader and intent in the author; yet, as an analysis based in reader response rather than authorial intent, intertextuality can be seen as a more personal, than purely intellectual, mode of analysis. At its heart, and regardless of which theorist's framework is privileged in the analysis, intertextuality is the means by which a text is explored as existing within a matrix of interrelated materials. The matrix may be developed by the author, or the reader; it may be visible to one person but not another. Once it is revealed, however, it offers the potential of an enriched reading experience. That said, it is difficult to reconcile a rejection of the elitism in early theorists' "deficit reading" approaches with the undeniable conclusion that exploring intertextual relationships opens intriguing avenues of analysis and textual understanding; after all, an intertextual approach renders a text "not an individual, isolated

object but, rather, a compilation of cultural textuality" (Allen 2011: 35) – a compilation that will be unique to each reader due to the very nature of our existence.

Originally intended as a pot-boiler, *Love Chase* makes no demands of its readers, except that they enjoy themselves. The novel can, indeed, stand alone as a blood-and-thunder narrative of scandal, sensation, and fatality; as this article has demonstrated, however, there does appear to be intent on Alcott's part regarding her intertextual appropriations: just as British sensation fiction offers a social critique through contextual allusion, Alcott's American sensation novel creates a dialogue that transforms various, familiar narratives and conventions into one palimpsestic tale that presents a challenge to the systemic issues regarding gender roles within the Western literary canon.

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