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This is an accepted version of a paper published in *Orbis Litterarum*.

Citation for the published paper:

Hansson, H., Norberg, C. (2012)

"Storms of Tears: Emotion Metaphors and the Construction of Gender in *East Lynne*"

Orbis Litterarum, 67(2): 154-170

URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1600-0730.2011.01045.x>

Access to the published version may require subscription.

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Storms of Tears: Emotion Metaphors and the Construction of Gender in *East Lynne*

One of the main characteristics of nineteenth-century sensation fiction is the central importance of emotion. Plots revolve around the effects of characters' emotional, as opposed to rational behaviour, and the representation of particularly women's strong emotions is a conspicuous feature of the genre. In addition, an important function of the works is to appeal to the reader's emotions and create sympathy or revulsion, or in Queenie D. Leavis's scornful description in 1932, to make a "brute assault on the feelings and nerves" of the reading public (154). The 1860s was the main decade for the sensation craze, and the new genre combined the unbridled emotionality of the sentimental women's novel with spectacular scenes that shocked and titillated the readers. But despite the fact that the word sensation refers to both exciting affairs and heightened emotions, studies of the genre have primarily concentrated on the startling and thrilling incidents in the works. The attention to sensational plot elements allows for readings that highlight how female characters transgress social norms, and has enabled rehabilitations of the genre as dramatizing the instability of the Victorian gender contract.

Re-interpretations of women's code violations as signs of autonomy and self-determination however run the risk of endowing the genre with a feminist ethos that cannot be fully supported. Reading the novels with a focus on how emotions are represented instead draws attention to contradictions and ideological tensions in the texts. On one level, the morale of the novels is that the only route to happiness is emotional control, frequently figured as masculine rationality. On another, a recurring message is that rigid emotional control is unnatural and inhuman which valorises textual constructions of femininity. To some extent, the emphasis on female emotionality in the works could thus be taken as a celebration of feminine qualities, in line with Sally Mitchell's suggestion that nineteenth-century women writers "could make use of suffering in order to develop traits in their characters which express an alternate, feminine value system: compassion, sensitivity, consideration, expression of the emotions" (40). A woman-centred outlook is discernible also on the stylistic level, following Lyn Pykett's definition of the address of the novel *East Lynne* as "woman-to-woman," with the story unfolding in a way that "replicates the rhythms of women's conversation" (118-119). Then again, the metaphorical patterns surrounding the representation of emotion seem to follow a patriarchal logic, in contrast with such feminine style patterns. Women's emotions are typically referred to in terms of storms and natural

disasters in the text, in terms of conventionalised metaphors whose exact composition is rarely questioned which means that their ideological functions largely go unnoticed. But if the semantic parameters (Hanks 265) of sensation fiction are identified as a concentration on emotion and an intense concern with gender, the meanings of isolated text segments need to be understood as produced within these parameters. Since the expression “storm of emotion” is principally used with negative inferences (Hanks 262), repeated use of the metaphor reinforces the idea that demonstrations of emotion are undesirable. In this way, metaphorical clusters lock the texts into a conservative model that devalues emotionality as a female characteristic. Ellen Wood’s 1861 novel *East Lynne* provides some of the most complex examples of how ideas about gender and emotion clash and interrelate in the sensation novel.

East Lynne was one of the greatest bestsellers of its time, and like other examples of the genre, it is concerned with the devastating results of uncontrolled emotional reactions. Unfounded jealousy causes the main character Lady Isabel to elope with the aristocratic, but depraved Sir Francis Levison, leaving her husband Archibald Carlyle and two small children behind. She gives birth to an illegitimate child, but is soon abandoned by Levison and lives in poverty on the continent. After a train crash where the child is killed, she, too, is presumed dead and her husband marries his neighbour Barbara Hare, the original target of her jealousy. Destitute, Lady Isabel returns to her former home in disguise, and takes up the position of governess to her own children. In the end, she dies without revealing her identity to them, and her former husband fails to recognise her until she is on her deathbed. A brief infatuation leads to Lady Isabel’s downfall, and the plot of the novel revolves around the disastrous consequences facing a woman who acts on impulse and emotion. Carlyle, in contrast, is in full control of his feelings throughout and is presented as the normative ideal. The two main characters thus occupy opposite endpoints on the emotional spectrum.

From the beginning, Lady Isabel is shown as a passive victim of her emotions. The moment when her love for Levison is rekindled recalls the Sleeping Beauty story, with Lady Isabel completely unaware “that she retained any sort of feeling” for him until he stimulates it (206). When she realises her emotions her first reaction is to “smother them down” (207), but the flames of passion are too strong to suppress. According to Zoltán Kövecses, “there is very little about the emotions that is not metaphorically conceived” (85), as the connection between Lady Isabel’s desire and fire illustrates. The master metaphor is that emotion is a force and the person who is emotionally affected is in some sense a passive victim, as

exemplified by fossilised expressions like “I was swept off my feet” or “[s]he was consumed by passion” (Kövecses 71-72, 75).

The uncontrollable character of emotion is foregrounded on several occasions in *East Lynne*, and, reversely, there are a number of instances where emotional control is emphasised, but the presence of individual examples is not conclusive evidence of a particular outlook. Metaphors however carry ideological viewpoints, since they “provide cognitive frames for perspectives on social issues” as Jonathan Charteris-Black points out (565). Thus, they must be recognised as rhetorical devices that may be strategically employed to legitimise certain ideological standpoints. Discussing media discourse, Lise-Lotte Holmgreen observes that “metaphorical structuring is not always automatic and unconscious [...] but may serve very deliberate and strategic communicative purposes” (103). Patrick Hanks, similarly, notes in his discussion of the collocations “storm of protest” and “torrent of abuse,” that stereotypes are sometimes exploited for rhetorical purposes (246). Although it is impossible to judge what should be considered a deliberate strategy, it seems clear that particularly emotion metaphors have a communicative function in Ellen Wood’s novel. Since metaphor studies are valuable tools for uncovering the underlying assumptions of current political debates, they should be equally useful when it comes to identifying the ideological concerns of the past, conscious as well as unconscious.

Against this background, the aim of this study is to explore what clusters of metaphors are used to express emotion in the sensation novel *East Lynne* and how these metaphorical expressions contribute to establishing gender and class differences in the text. Since metaphors structure the way we make sense of the world, central questions are how far ideological systems are endorsed and to what extent emotion metaphors indicate social and moral positions in the novel. As a genre, sensation fiction is however ideologically unstable, and its main representatives in the 1860s Ellen Wood, Mary Elizabeth Braddon and Wilkie Collins can all be understood as both radical and conventional, according to Jonathan Loesberg (136 note 6). Ellen Wood, in particular, is characterised by a “subversive conventionality” in Loesberg’s view (136 note 6), which suggests that her novels should be marked by thematic uncertainty. Elizabeth Jay, similarly, stresses the ambiguous character of Wood’s *East Lynne* by characterising it as a novel of “mixed messages” (xx), and Jeanne B. Elliott describes the work as a “blend of sensationalism and sermonizing” (330). This study attaches to such discussions by demonstrating how the representation of emotion in the novel

contributes to producing ambiguous messages and the implications of the narrative instability for political/ideological readings in general, including recuperative feminist attempts.

Exactly what ideological work is performed by metaphorical representations of emotions requires a method that combines close reading of individual passages with a systematic investigation of emotion terms and metaphors in the text. Until recently, literary scholars have been reluctant to use research methods made possible by the increasing availability of digitalised texts, in spite of the value of such methods when it comes to gathering hard data. Although methods such as Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) have become increasingly popular in neighbouring disciplines such as media and communication, it has not been embraced to the same extent in studies of literature. A similarly neglected methodological approach is statistical investigation and analyses based on the relative number and distribution of a certain phrase or feature, with the result, as Pat Hudson comments, that “literary studies are impoverished by the continued avoidance of quantification” (131). This study uses a combination of close reading and analyses of linguistic expressions to reveal ideological patterns, and is loosely inspired by the discourse-historical approach developed by Martin Reisigl and Ruth Wodak, although it does not follow the particulars of the model (31-90).

On the Amazon website, a number of works are included in the Search Inside! programme which enables searches for specific words and phrases in the entire text of the work. Similar searches can be conducted in the full-text works posted on the Open Library website and in a number of other places accessible via the Internet. It is possible to extract a large amount of data or collect material from a substantial number of works if the search terms are clearly defined and the research questions specific. The excerption technique is certainly not new, but was previously too time-consuming to be effective. The method can be regarded as a type of corpus study, limited to one or a selection of texts so that the selected examples can then be read in their full original context, in contrast to examples culled from large electronic corpora where only partial context is included. The expressions collected can be grouped together to reveal tendencies and used to form hypotheses that can then be further investigated through textual analysis. The method allows the researcher to work on the entire text and prevents interpretations based on exemplary quotations that may turn out not to be as representative as they initially appeared. It also minimises the risk that a desired outcome, such as evidence of a feminist agenda, determines the selection of examples.

A literary analysis partly relying on lists of text examples is obviously in danger of being thought light-weight, and to be convincing, must include qualitative study in the form of

textual analysis and theoretical considerations. The material collected through the searches is never complete and can therefore not be used for exact statistical comparisons. Especially when it comes to older texts, such as those published on the Open Library or similar websites, there is a risk that fuzzy letters or unexpected spellings in the digital versions of texts may cause missed results. There is also the risk that interdisciplinary approaches may lead to dabbling, with researchers not fully understanding each other's models of investigation. Researcher bias always affects the selection of search terms and the interpretation of the material, and it would be a mistake to claim that the method should be more objective than traditional text analysis. Using varieties of corpus methods means that it is possible to claim that the findings were "there to be found," but not that "everything has been found that was there to find" (Prentice 432). Despite such limitations, the method offers valuable support in testing the validity of intuitive interpretations, not least when the ideological tenor of a work is the focus of study.

To retrieve information about what metaphors are most typically used to express emotions in *East Lynne*, the first step was to search for the generic terms *emotion*, *passion*, *sensation*, *agitation* and *feeling* in the text. The search confirmed that emotions are metaphorically conceived and generally presented as forces that bring about various responses, in line with Kövecses' findings. More specifically the search yielded examples of emotions conceptualised as opponents that individuals *battle* with and that need to be *conquered* and *controlled*, as social forces which *master* or *rule* people and as natural forces which *overwhelm* people (Kövecses 61-86). "She had difficulty conquering her emotion" (122) and "she presently said, after a successful battle with her emotion" (152) exemplify how emotions are conceived as opponents in *East Lynne*, and the phrase "[t]he passion mastered her" (337) conceptualises emotion as a social force that rules its victim or subordinate.

Even a first reading of *East Lynne* thus indicates that women's main characteristic are their strong tendency towards emotional responses. The impression is confirmed by a search for emotion terms in the text, which makes clear that even basic expressions occur most frequently in relation to women characters. In the majority of the cases, emotion is represented as a strong force that needs to be overcome, as when Lady Isabel is described as "repressing her rebellious emotion" (91) or answering her husband calmly "after a successful battle with her emotion (152). The same pattern occurs regardless of what social class the female character belongs to, with the socially inferior Afy Hallijohn represented as "struggling with passion, temper, and excitement" (540) and the middle-class character

Barbara Hare characterised by a temper that “was not under strict control” (163). Women’s battles with their emotions are frequently unsuccessful, however, and their emotional expression are often manifested through sobs and tears represented as storms, floods and other natural phenomena that are beyond human control.

To explore the connection between emotion and natural forces further, terms for natural phenomena (flood, hurricane, storm, torrent etc.) as well as verbs (and forms of verbs) associated with such phenomena (rage, subside, fade, burst, explode, break, blow, batter, lash, ravage, subside etc.) were searched. Patrick Hanks’ corpus-based combinatorial profile of storms served as a point of departure in determining what verbs to search (254 ff.). The searches yielded a number of examples of – primarily – women characters who were *overwhelmed* with emotions or in the grip of *torrents* or *storms* of passions. Recurring nature and disaster metaphors create a persistent link between emotions and natural forces that associates women with a lack of emotional control. The jealousy that drives Lady Isabel to elope with Sir Francis Levison, for example, takes the form of “a storm of tears” (180) and “a storm of sobs” (271). Miss Cornelia Carlyle bursts into a “storm of anger” (372) when she is told about her brother’s plans for a second marriage, and Lady Mount Severn breaks “into a torrent of reproach and abuse” (114) when she finds out that Lady Isabel has spent the afternoon with Sir Francis Levison. When Barbara remembers revealing her feelings for Mr Carlyle, she bursts “into a flood of tears” caused by both shame and the promise of finally gaining his love (367). More expectedly, perhaps, Lady Isabel’s daughter Lucy Carlyle expresses her grief at her little brother’s approaching death by breaking into “a loud storm of sobs” (584), and in her guise as the governess Madame Vine, Lady Isabel shows her empathy for her dying son’s fear that he might not recognise his mother when he comes to heaven by bursting “into a flood of impassioned tears” (577). The full range of basic emotions is consequently given the same manifestation, with the typical metaphor for women’s feelings a storm of tears, almost regardless of what the underlying emotion might be.

In his discussion of the novel, Andrew Maunder notes that one of “the most earnest messages of *East Lynne* is that what woman must learn to rule is [the] passionate side to her nature” (65). The watery storm metaphor has a number of important implications, most of them indicating a patriarchal pattern at the bottom of the conceptualisation of women’s emotions. The prevalence of tears, sobs and crying locates the emotion in the body, with the inference that emotionality is an inevitable aspect of women’s nature. The representation of emotion as a natural force reinforces the connection between women and the natural world

and produces a rhetorical correspondence between emotion and disaster (Merchant 1-41). In this way, it creates a metonymic link where emotion equals nature, nature equals woman and therefore emotion equals woman. The connection with storms and natural forces further indicates that women are helpless and passive victims to their emotions, which corresponds to Kövecses' claim that the idea that "a person experiences emotion in a passive and helpless way" is the "single most important property of emotion in the folk theory" (72). Kövecses does not address possible gender dimensions of the metaphor, however, but in *East Lynne*, the storm metaphor frequently draws attention to women's inability to control their emotions and by extension their bodies. The short-circuited result of this reasoning is that if emotion is a natural force that needs to be controlled to avoid disaster, women as natural, emotional beings must also be controlled, and if men are capable of controlling their emotions they are therefore also capable of controlling women. In this way, the metaphorical representation of emotion constantly interacts with the construction of gender and gendered behaviour in the novel, naturalising the need for patriarchal control of women. At the same time, as Jonathan Charteris-Black shows in his survey of immigration metaphors, expressions "based on the behaviour of liquids have the potential to represent natives as victims of a social or a personal disaster" (569). In line with this view, representations of women as powerless before the deluge of their emotions emphasises their victim status as well as their passivity. An interpretation of the novel as a simple defence of patriarchy is also complicated by the narrative empowerment of Lady Isabel as suffering rather than offending, and the fact that the readers' sympathies remain with her throughout makes *East Lynne* a novel that "manages to voice the very discontent it is designed to suppress" (Jay xxv). Hence, as far as the representation of emotion is concerned, *East Lynne* can be regarded as the site of a discursive struggle between emotional excess and emotional restraint where metaphor and plot both interact with and counteract each other.

Before her marriage, Lady Isabel's surname was Vane, and although Ellen Wood does not engage in the caricature-like naming patterns Charles Dickens indulged in, a discussion of the novel focusing on emotions figured as natural forces can hardly escape the association between her name and the weathervane, an ornament that passively turns with the wind and reflects every change of the weather. Most examples of uncontrolled emotionality in the text occur in connection with Lady Isabel, which might indicate that lack of restraint is a sign of the aristocratic degeneration Andrew Mauser identifies as a main theme in the novel (64).

As a representative of true aristocratic virtues, she should not only be in command of her emotions but emotionally underdeveloped, and Jeanne B. Elliott therefore interprets Isabel's downfall as the result of her inability to "live up to the ideal of the Lady" (331).

Ungovernable emotion becomes a sign of the collapse of the aristocracy and its inability to adapt to the middle class values of good behaviour, dignity and self-control. Emphasising the class dimension, Jonathan Loesberg connects *East Lynne* to the debates that preceded the Second Reform Act 1867, as "manifestations of the same ideological responses that formed the structure of Victorian discussions of parliamentary reform in the late 1850s and 1860s" (116). Maunder presents a similar argument by connecting the novel to debates about aristocratic degeneration and the need to impart a new set of "bourgeois codes of domestic, economic and moral behaviour" (62). The novels thus address changing class structures by illustrating the waning power of the aristocracy and the emerging power of the middle class, as well as by expressing class ambivalence and the "fear of a loss of social identity as a result of the merging of the classes" (Loesberg 117). Lady Isabel symbolises the loss of clear class demarcations through her liminal position as the aristocratic wife of a middle-class lawyer. Both Loesberg and Maunder reject, or problematize feminist interpretations of the novel by emphasising the ideological ambiguity of the text (Loesberg 136 note 6) or by questioning its subversive potential (Maunder 61). If the novel is instead placed in the context of the debates about the Matrimonial Causes Act 1857 and the domain of the discourse (Hanks 265) is redefined as the importance of emotion for nineteenth-century gender models, a feminist dimension is introduced. In such a reading, the important effect of Lady Isabel's unclear class position is that her marriage is figured as sterile because of her inability to be a proper mother to her children, which reintroduces the question of how representation of emotion interrelates with the construction of gender in the novel.

According to Luce Irigaray, "our entire Western culture is founded on the murder of the mother" (qtd in Smart 385). *East Lynne* is explicitly about killing the mother, since what happens in the plot is that the biological mother Lady Isabel is first symbolically killed off through her desertion of her children, then allegedly killed in an accident before she finally dies from a broken heart. As overly emotional, Lady Isabel must be removed so as not to threaten the children's capacity to develop into controlled, rational adults. Since she is helpless before the forces of emotion, devoting "*too much* love" (Kaplan 85, original emphasis) to her children, she cannot be the "moral manager" required (Maunder 67) and is replaced by Barbara whose process to become a new mother figure characterised by

rationality and restraint is charted in the novel. Whereas the aristocratic Lady Isabel's relations with her children build on closeness and sentimental feeling, the middle-class Barbara cultivates detachment and distance, as a more appropriate model of parenting (Gruner 314). Since Lady Isabel's torrential passions approach the pathological, they are potentially contagious which creates an imaginative link between the mother's "unguarded tenderness" (419) and the consumption that eventually causes the death of her son William. The logical upshot of these different versions of motherhood is that Lady Isabel's excess of emotion makes her so incapable of raising the new generation, as well as so unfit for life in the new world that it finally kills her: "My malady is on the mind; it is a breaking heart, and therefore no doctor of physic could serve me" (599).

Although it does not always result in death, lack of control may lead to irrationality and overreaction, as the narrator cautions: "When women, liable to intemperate fits of passion, give their reins to them, they neither know nor care what they say" (114). Emotional responses are therefore presented as something that needs to be hidden. Lady Isabel, for example, talks "hurriedly to cover her emotion" (107), Barbara fears that Mr Carlyle "might detect her emotion" (127) and tries "to keep down her emotion" (163) and the servant woman Joyce Hallijohn hides "her face in her hands to conceal its emotion" (282). Consequently, women are characterised by their emotionality at the same time as this very characteristic is something they are constantly expected to suppress and control.

When emotions are let out, this is repeatedly expressed through the conventionalised metaphor of betrayal. This is particularly the case when strong emotions are concerned, and referring to the night when she revealed her emotions for Mr Carlyle, Barbara says: "I never thought so to betray myself" (367). In a similar way Lady Isabel has to hurry out of the room after seeing her former husband showing affection for his new wife, in order not to "betray herself" (432). The metaphor emphasises the paradox that emotion is inseparable from the self, yet this aspect of selfhood must be concealed. This double attitude to emotion is also expressed by the omniscient narrator: "There are moments in a woman's life when she is betrayed into forgetting the ordinary rules of conduct and propriety; when she is betrayed into making a scene. It may not often occur; perhaps never to a cold, secretive nature, where impulse, feeling and above all, temper, are under strict control" (163). The necessity of not betraying oneself emotionally is also shown in the description of Lady Isabel's way of handling her anger. Contrary to the "milder" emotions which she is most commonly unable to control, she seldom acts out her anger. This may be understood as a sign of female

compliance with social expectations. It is, however, made evident that even women's anger, and in particular Lady Isabel's, appears contradictory in the novel. Lady Isabel's inability to express her anger and communicate her strong emotions to her husband on the crucial night when she eventually decides to leave him (264), may in fact be interpreted as one of the reasons leading to her downfall.

Proper behaviour thus requires emotional control, and emotional expression amounts to breaking the rules as well as betraying the core of the self. Nevertheless, people who rarely or never show their emotions have "cold, secretive" natures. Rule-breaking, as a result, becomes both a negative characteristic because of its connection with betrayal and misbehaviour and a positive idea because it contrasts with coldness. Although the overall theme of the novel remains the importance of emotional control, this message is continually undercut through the representation of ungovernable emotion and the appeal to the reader's sympathies. At the end of the novel the narrator comments on the futility of attempts to suppress emotion:

Let people talk as they will, it is impossible to drive out human passion from the human heart. You may suppress them, deaden them, keep them in subjection, but you cannot root them out. [...] Human passions and tempers were brought with us into this world, and they can only quit us when we bid it farewell to enter upon immortality in the next. (590)

In E. Ann Kaplan's reading, the "narrating voice manifests sympathy for Isabel's yearnings to merge with her love-objects [...] but finally shows that such desire is excessive: the system has no room for this kind of female passion" (79). The narrator's comment contains no straightforward rejection of emotionality, however, but indicates a more complex position that accepts the inevitability of emotional expression despite the constant admonitions to emotional control that run through the narrative. The narrator's final endorsement of emotion could therefore be taken as evidence of a proto-feminist agenda in *East Lynne* that constantly strains against the cautionary tale of the negative consequences of emotional excess. The message remains contradictory.

The contradictions persist, also in relation to the male characters. There are considerably fewer expressions referring to men's emotions in the novel, and the typical scenario is that men exert emotional control, particularly as far as the normative male character Archibald Carlyle is concerned. He is characterised as "self-possessed and calm," and these characteristics are also what make him "every inch a gentleman" (383). In contrast to Lady Isabel whose excessive emotionality means that she fails to live up to both the ideals of the

aristocracy she was born into and the middle class she married into, Carlyle is comfortable in his social place and functions as the epitome of bourgeois virtues in the text. Although there are several occasions when he responds emotionally to occurrences, the descriptions are immediately redirected to his ability to restrain his feelings: “What Mr Carlyle felt was not suffered to appear: his feelings were entirely under his own control” (518). It is mainly in relation to Lady Isabel that he allows his emotions to show, and his proposal to her is represented as a lack of control, almost amounting to an instance of feminisation by being manifested as a blush: “What was Mr Carlyle about to say? What emotion was it that agitated his countenance, impeded his breath, and dyed his face blood-red? His better genius was surely not watching over him, or those words had never been spoken” (118). A corresponding connection between love and the feminine realm of emotion occurs when he is later teased about his interest in Barbara, and Carlyle initially reveals his embarrassment through “a perceptible tinge of red” rising to his face (313). Again, the narrator’s focus is promptly turned to Carlyle’s ability to control his reaction, however, with his blush “telling of inward emotion, but his voice and manner betrayed none” (314). His control slips most obviously when he finds the letter where Lady Isabel states that she is leaving him, but even in this situation his normal state of control is mentioned: “Though a calm man, one who had his emotions under his own control, he was no stoic, and his fingers shook as he broke the seal (280). Even when his young son lies dying, he manages to keep calm, “suppressing the emotion of his own aching heart (521). Discussing Francis Levison’s upcoming trial, the lawyer Mr Ball comments on Carlyle’s refusal to take part in the proceedings as a matter of honour and emotional control: “*I* should go at him, thunder and fury, in his place: but I and Carlyle are different” (511). Throughout the novel, Carlyle’s unemotional approach is thus endorsed and presented as an ideal that most other characters, and most particularly the women, fail to attain.

Whereas women’s emotional storms are primarily connected with sorrow and despair, men’s emotional storms are typically expressions of anger. A “paternal storm” (64) is the expected reaction when Barbara Hare dresses in her finest clothes to impress Lord Mount Severn, and when she later refuses an offer of marriage, her father reacts by “storming over it” (311). The male equivalent to the watery storms associated with women characters is *thunder*, a metaphorical expression that is both more active and less obviously embodied than the tearful female storms. The metaphor mainly occurs in relation to Justice Hare who can be regarded as Carlyle’s male contrast in emotional terms: “Silence and contempt were not

greatly in the justice's line; noise and explosion were more so" (316). When a servant mentions the name of his son Richard Hare who has been thrown out from his home, Barbara says that Justice Hare "thundered at her, as I believe nobody else in the world can thunder" (35), and when she refuses a marriage proposal he reacts by a similar thunder (312). Thunder also characterises his outburst towards a witness in the courtroom (542). Receiving more news of his son, the Justice reacts with "great gusts of passion" (314) and allows his anger to "burst forth" (316), metaphorical expression that focus on the active behaviour of storms rather than the effect a storm has on a passive victim, as is normally the case in connection with the women in the novel. The Justice's reactions are thus directed outward and represent the opposite end of the spectrum from women's embodied emotions, but his lack of control makes him another type of contrast to the golden mean represented by Carlyle. His choleric temper therefore leads to a stroke, described as the deserved result of his rejection of his son:

Justice Hare's illness had turned out to be a stroke of paralysis. People cannot act with unnatural harshness towards a child, and then discover they have been in the wrong, with impunity. Thus it proved with Justice Hare. He was recovering, but would never again be the man he had been (558)

Although Justice Hare has used his anger to control his family members, and in this way has actively employed his emotions to achieve certain ends, in contrast to women's involuntary emotional reflexes, his inability to restrain his ire leads to disaster, and the narrator reaffirms emotional control as the ideal.

The endorsement of emotional control is not complete, however, and as a plot element, it occasionally takes the form of emotional coldness. Instead of trying to reach his wife on an emotional level, Carlyle condescendingly dismisses her feelings: "He supposed she felt hurt that he had not gone with her to the party, and placed his hand on her shoulder with a pleasant smile" (276). The episode confirms Lady Isabel in her decision to leave her home and is the turning point in the narrative. It can be read as the ultimate example of Lady Isabel's disastrous over-reaction, but since Carlyle's failure to enter into her emotions is what leads to her decision it can also be interpreted as an example of the negative consequences of emotional detachment. If Lady Isabel's elopement with Sir Francis Levison is understood as the rejection of an emotionally dead marriage in favour of a life ruled by passion, her husband becomes the literary inheritor of sterile masculine characters like St John Rivers and Mr Casaubon rather than the embodiment of the middle-class norm. As Andrew Mangham argues, the text does not only punish Isabel for her inability to adapt to the demands of

middle-class decorum, but also “highlights the shortfalls inherent to bourgeois masculinity” (136). Hence, the novel dramatizes the conflict between unfulfilled emotional needs and the necessity of emotional control by creating a tension between plot, characterisation and privileged narrative viewpoint in a manner that makes the overall message ambiguous.

Sally Mitchell suggests that sensation novels should be regarded as “emotional analyses, rather than intellectual analyses, of a particular society” (34). The argument can be turned around and recast as sensation fiction’s analysis of the society where it emerged by means of the representation of emotion. The ambivalent attitudes to emotional excess and emotional control in *East Lynne* may then be seen as the literary manifestation of the transitional phase between a generally accepted patriarchal system and emerging feminist challenges to this model. Emotion metaphors emphasise women’s passivity and lack of control, with the implication that female independence might be unfeasible. Against this background, the novel’s advocacy of emotional restraint can be understood as supporting patriarchal control. At the same time, emotionality is presented as an inescapable aspect of human nature, and the persistent link between women and emotion in the novel could thus be seen a valorisation of the feminine. The novel’s double voice when it comes to emotional matters is partly the result of fossilised metaphorical structures, but cannot entirely be taken as evidence of language’s power over thought and representation. Instead, it is an effect of the cultural and ideological ambivalence surrounding the topic of gender and emotion in the mid-nineteenth century.

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