

“The Incest Plot” in John Banville’s *Ancient Light*

“O enredo incestuoso” em *Ancient Light* de John Banville

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Abstract: *Ancient Light* (2012), the third and (to date) final book in the Alexander and Cass Cleave series by John Banville, is a text in which characters who died in the previous books are recycled and brought back as roles in a film, played by characters whose characterisation itself blurs with the roles they are playing. Banville’s established preoccupation with returning to the past and retracing old ground takes on an intriguingly excessive dimension in this novel. *Ancient Light* presents a heightened version of what Neil Murphy has referred to as an “interlocked intertextual Banvillean world” (86). This article will examine the book using Stephanie Insley Hersbinow’s ideas around “the incest plot.” She calls this structure a “model of tautological self-enclosure – the embrace of self-sameness, repetition, even redundancy, over change” (150). My claim is that the novel’s very infrastructure is one of “tautological self-enclosure.” The features of “self-sameness, repetition [and] redundancy” are inescapable in this novel, and the “change” conventionally offered by third books in trilogies is simply not to be encountered in Banville’s relentlessly self-referential third instalment. In her discussion of incest as form, Hersbinow contends that “highlighting form is the only way to see the ways that incest exceeds its literal manifestations” (156). She further suggests that incest “is a way for the novel to explore the minimal amount of difference required for narrative to continue to function as such, to experiment with narrative minimalism” (ibid.). The plot structure, as well as a more literal interpretation of ‘incest’ will be mined, given that the narrator’s desire for his dead daughter Cass is the primary animating force behind the narrative.

Key words: John Banville; *Ancient Light*; Incest Plot; Women.

Resumo: *Ancient Light* (2012), o terceiro e (até hoje) livro final da série *Alexander and Cass Cleave* de John Banville é um texto no qual os personagens que morreram nos livros anteriores são reciclados e trazidos de volta, como papéis em um filme, interpretado por personagens cuja caracterização em si se confunde com os papéis que estão interpretando. A preocupação estabelecida de Banville com o retorno ao passado e o retrocesso do passado adquire uma dimensão intrigantemente excessiva

neste romance. Ancient Light apresenta uma versão mais acentuada do que Neil Murphy chamou de “mundo intertextual banvilleano entrelaçado” (86). Este artigo analisará o romance usando as ideias de Stephanie Insley Hershinow sobre “o enredo incestuoso”. Ela chama esta estrutura de “modelo de autoencerramento tautológico - o abraço da mansidão, da repetição, até mesmo da redundância, sobre a mudança” (150). Afirmando que a própria infra-estrutura do romance é um “autoencerramento tautológico”. As características de “auto-samudez, repetição [e] redundância” são inescapáveis neste romance, e a “mudança” convencionalmente oferecida por terceiros livros em trilologias simplesmente não deve ser encontrada na terceira parcela incessantemente auto-referencial de Banville. Em sua discussão sobre o incesto como forma, Hershinow afirma que “destacar a forma é a única maneira de ver as formas que o incesto excede suas manifestações literais” (156). Ela ainda sugere que o incesto “é uma forma de o romance explorar a quantidade mínima de diferença necessária para que a narrativa continue a funcionar como tal, para experimentar o minimalismo da narrativa” (ibidem). A estrutura da trama, assim como uma interpretação mais literal do “incesto” será minada, dado que o desejo do narrador por sua filha morta Cass é a principal força animadora por trás da narrativa.

Palavras-chave: *John Banville; Ancient Light; Enredo incestuoso; Mulheres.*

This article examines *Ancient Light* (2012), the third and (to date) final book in the Alexander and Cass Cleave series by John Banville. Like *Eclipse* (2000), the first book in the trilogy, *Ancient Light* is narrated by Alexander Cleave. Both the first text and *Shroud* (2002) alert the reader to the suicide of Cleave’s daughter Cass, and the novel under examination occurs ten years after this loss. This reading will investigate the novel’s narrative trajectory that circles in on itself and will not go anywhere because of its compulsion to return to Cass, who is dead. This dynamic is clarified through the lens of Stephanie Insley Hershinow’s recent work on what she terms “the incest plot”, which is the more established “marriage plot’s” “countervailing model of tautological self-enclosure – the embrace of self-sameness, repetition, even redundancy, over change” (150). I contend that it is this impulse and underlying desire that animates the plot of Banville’s 2012 novel, and indeed the entire trilogy. Cleave’s desire for his dead daughter, his overwriting of every woman he meets with elements of her, as well as his recounting of a relationship he had with his best friend’s mother at the age of fifteen, all drive the narrative toward the precipice – but never over the line – of literal incest. Banville appears to have an interest in the closed dynamic of the theme. This closed dynamic will also be shown to resonate with structural choices that shape the narrative.

Ultimately, this examination explores the utility to which the character of Cass Cleave is put. This corresponds with a trend in Banville's work in which the characterisation of women, particularly women viewed through the warping lens of the erotic desire of male narrators, is limited and subservient to the novels' primary preoccupations.

The plot includes Alex Cleave's bizarre commission to play the role of Axel Vander, his "anagrammatic alter-ego" (Chattopadhyay 235) and "dark double" (D'hoker 6) in a film about the latter's life, who according to the biography upon which the film will be based, died two years after Cass. Alex delves into the text on the character and finds out that Vander was also in Portovenere, where Cass died, at the time of her death, and he approaches but never grasps the knowledge that Vander and Cass were intimate. Cass features prominently, being the primary loss that Alex takes into this narrative, as well as the missing link between Alex Cleave and Axel Vander, which the narrative fitfully circles but never lays bare. (Perhaps gaining and processing this knowledge would be too like closure and completion for a work that has no inclination towards definitive endings.)

While Cass's presence is always spectral, she features in all three novels and is a primary concern of each. Cass is doubly absent in *Ancient Light*, by which I mean that she is physically absent, and information pertaining to the final period of her life spent in Italy is markedly absent. Interestingly, the reader is positioned as a knower of information of her last days in Italy and disastrous relationship with Axel Vander (assuming that the reader has read *Shroud*, which is a prequel of sorts). *Ancient Light* is therefore intriguingly positioned within the reader's own reading, and that reader encounters references to Cass equipped with knowledge that escapes the narrator, and the text therefore remains open to correction, being narrated by Cleave and read by someone who, presumably, knows more than him. This positioning of the reader as one who can revise is welcomed by a text that demands to be read more than once. A first reading may take the text at face value, however the knowledge with which a reader is equipped can and should be applied to the text in a supplementary reading.

The compulsion to return forged by a restless state of perpetual longing for what has been lost, is built into the architecture of *Ancient Light*. The text demands a second reading, and therefore folds back in on itself, asking that the reader also attempt something like the return (to Cass) that Alex wants. The representations of women in the text are predominantly caught up in and influenced by this structure. The primary reason the text requires a second reading is that it is revealed at the end of the novel that for the duration of their relationship, Mrs Gray was terminally ill. The most glaring omission of his narration, that the woman at the core of it was terminally ill and in

debilitating pain, is one that a reader is bound to fill in to a narrative that remains in error. This knowledge is to be folded over the narrative as the self-same narrative is re-encountered. Hershinow remarks that the structure of the incest plot, which can be observed in *Ancient Light*, welcomes “the model of novel reading book historians have increasingly urged us to adopt [which is] characterized . . . by rereading, flipping back, skipping around, returning to the beginning” (150). This invitation to perform a second reading, and several more, is implicit in *Ancient Light*’s very layout. I also contend that the blind spots of the narrator are deliberately cast as such. That is, Banville has built the presentation of failure into his representations of women narrated by men.

The novel begins with the sentence “Billy Gray was my best friend and I fell in love with his mother” (Banville 3). At first glance, this beginning promises narration animated by what Peter Brooks calls “the desires that connect narrative ends and beginnings, and make the textual middle a highly charged field of force” (xiv). The first sentence is charged with desire, and the narrative structures that are shaped by and seek to contain desire may be assumed to follow such an opening. *Ancient Light*’s first paragraph even includes the narrative allure of the words “[w]hat if I were to set off in search of her? That would be a *quest*. I should like to be in love again, I should like to fall in love again, just once more” (Banville 3, my emphasis). When using his own name, John Banville has not authored many narratives that may be called “quests” (*Mefisto* [1986] and the far more recent *Snow* [2020] and *April in Spain* [2021] are exceptions), and the appearance of this reference to an older form of narrative in the introductory paragraph is bound to disappoint a reader who takes it as a sign of a starting point that initiates unambiguous movement towards a definitive end. Indeed, Alex Cleave’s desire to “fall in love again”, in spite of the appearance of a frank articulation of desire, is not a precursor to a conventional marriage plot. Such a plot remains a powerful structuring force of many novels, and a term popular among scholars of eighteenth-century narrative in which societal convention necessitated the beginning of courtship and end of marriage, and a proprietary containment of desire such as that conveyed by the words “I should like to fall in love again”. According to Hershinow, the marriage plot “is the novel’s surest model for teleology – the propulsive forward movement that has long been understood to be built into the novel’s very form” (150). Her illuminating article offers an explanation not of the marriage plot, but of what she terms “the incest plot”, which is the marriage plot’s “countervailing model of tautological self-enclosure – the embrace of self-sameness, repetition, even redundancy, over change” (ibid.). I contend that it is this latter impulse and underlying desire that animates the plot of Banville’s 2012 novel, and indeed the entire trilogy. The relationship the narrator

recounts having at fifteen with Mrs Gray has features of incest, and the representation of Cass that will be looked at here is also structured by this theme. My claim is that the novel's very infrastructure is one of "tautological self-enclosure". The features of "self-sameness, repetition [and] redundancy" are inescapable in this novel, and the "change" conventionally offered by third books in trilogies is simply not to be encountered.¹ Readers accustomed to the characteristics of quests, marriage plots, and trilogies are to have their expectations disrupted by Banville's relentlessly self-referential third instalment to the Alexander and Cass Cleave trilogy. While not commenting on an incest plot per se, Neil Murphy also notices a "narrative minimalism" when commenting on the incest-like relationship between Freddie and Athena in Banville's 1995 *Athena*. He remarks that what the reader encounters when engaging with this author is an "interlocked intertextual Banvillean world" (Murphy 86). His use of the term "intertextual" is apt, and Banville's broad literary allusions are well explored in Murphy's chapter. It is his use of the word "interlocked" that draws my eye here, however. The wording alludes to a kind of trap, and the impossibility of escape. This is a particularly striking aspect of Banville's trilogy, in which not even death grants escape to the characters in this "interlocked" world.

In her discussion of incest as form, Hershinow contends that "highlighting form is the only way to see the ways that incest exceeds its literal manifestations" (156). She further suggests that incest "is a way for the novel to explore the minimal amount of difference required for narrative to continue to function as such, to experiment with narrative minimalism" (ibid.). The world of *Ancient Light* is indeed one in which a "minimal amount of difference" can be detected from previous iterations of that world. The selfsame characters are recycled, and even the dead ones are brought back as roles in a film, played by characters whose characterisation itself blurs with the roles they are playing. The decision to have Axel and Cass played by Alex and Dawn Devonport enables a new character to simply revivify an old one, and the off-screen relationship Alex forges with Dawn is a restaging of his relationship with his daughter as well as what comes close to a romantic affair. When first introduced to Dawn, Alex remarks that "[t]he script calls for some strenuous grapplings between her and me, which cannot be an appetising prospect for one so lovely, so delicate, so flagrantly young" (Banville 92). The taboo of the "grapplings" with the "flagrantly young" woman is heightened by the implication that her character and Cass, his daughter, are the same person. The desires that shape the text tend not to propel it forward, but rather towards itself. This complex arrangement of characters inhabiting characters certainly has the inclination, if not the form, of literal incest. It is also a result of a fair amount of recycling and return, and may be understood as an "experiment

with narrative minimalism” that is a feature of “the incest plot”. This plot, Hershnow stresses, while often characterised by literal incest, is also a form of narrative architecture, or as she writes, “a centripetal force of formal arrangement” (151).

Neil Murphy comments that “Alex textually echoes Axel, in a perfect anagrammatic relationship, and their relationships with Cass, as father and lover respectively, are repeatedly blurred, stretched beyond the limits of literal characterization” (120). Murphy reaches back to *Shroud* to recall a scene in which Cass imagines her father walking about the room when she is in bed with Vander, but stops short of calling this what Patricia Coughlan has cited as proof of “incestuous feelings” (Coughlan 96). He remarks that “while there is certainly validity in Coughlan’s identification of such a thread it is also perhaps to assign too firm a material substance to characters that more closely resemble variations of each other than specific pretend humans” (Murphy 120). It seems here that Murphy understands the blurred lines delineating the characters as a reinforcement of the fact that they are “pretend humans” without “too firm a material substance”. They are indeed fictive forms, and his reading is valid and well argued. Banville’s interest in the delineation of “pretend humans” has for many years extended to a preoccupation with the ethics of their representation. We cannot forget Freddie Montgomery in Banville’s earlier novel *The Book of Evidence* and his aside about the woman in the painting he stole while murdering a “real” woman, “[t]here is no she, of course. There is only an organisation of shapes and colours” (Banville 105). Both women are an organization of shapes, and, “pretend humans” whose representation can be interrogated. In addition, the relations between overlapping and “interlocked” creations can be seen as what Hershnow calls “partnerships [which] dramatically replicate consanguineal ties in joining partners who are effectively social relations, suggesting that the principles of narrative economy and formal unity are themselves inherently incestuous” (160). As if riffing on this “narrative economy”, Banville inserts a figure into the final novel in the Cass Cleave trilogy that has been indispensable and present throughout the books, but never named beyond the front matter. The characters in *Ancient Light* are joined by Banville, who has inserted himself as the scriptwriter and author of the biography of Axel Vander. This writer is called JB (initially misheard by Alex as “Jaybee” [Banville 93]) – and is a barely-disguised proxy for John Banville. This seemingly endless cycle of self-reference gives the novel, and indeed the whole trilogy, the character of the incest plot, given its insistent “self-enclosure [, ... and] embrace of self-sameness, repetition, even redundancy, over change” (Hershnow 160).

If the overtly stated desire of *Ancient Light*'s narrative is to recount and possibly reconnect with Mrs Gray, the less conscious desire (the one with which the narrative positively bursts) is to remember and attempt to return to Cass. Cass as a little girl features prominently, and descriptions of other women repeatedly become descriptions of Cass. When Dawn Devonport is holed up in Cleave's home after her own suicide attempt (likened repeatedly to Cass's suicide), she sits in the room in which Cleave writes, "in a huddle in the chair with her legs drawn up, hugging herself. She wears no makeup and binds her hair back with a bit of ribbon. She looks very young with her face bare like that" (Banville 232). He writes that he "treasure[s] her presence, secretly", and then without preamble, as though the two descriptions are one, he recalls "how Cass as a little girl used to lie on her side on the floor while I paced, reading my lines aloud from a script held up before me" (ibid.). He admits outright that "I see Cass in every young woman I meet, not Cass as she was when she cut short her own life but as she might be now, these ten years later" (77). Even Billie Stryker, a woman he goes to some lengths to demote from the category of desirable and therefore attention-worthy woman, has her description interspersed with that of Cass. He writes that Cass "would be about Billie Stryker's age, as it happens, though that, surely, is the extent of what they would have in common" (78). Billie Stryker is the one woman in the novel whose characterization is not merely a means to attempting a return to Cass. Indeed, the only connection Alex makes is this one: a remark that Billie is of an age that Cass never reached.

In her brief description of the movements that have shaped fiction that centres around domestic concerns, Hershinow describes the "work" of many such novels, which "might be to funnel multifarious human experience into the sharply delimited narrative of courtship and companionate marriage", and this would have "subordinated or foreclosed [...] the remainder of domestic life outside of the marital bond" (149). Cass is a "remainder" in several senses of the word. She is an element of Cleave's narrative that exceeds his primary marital bond, as well as the roughly-hewn abortive marriage plots that dictate the trajectory of his relationships with other women (aside from Billie Stryker). In addition, the subtraction of her presence has not resulted in her absence, and her persistent presence in Cleave's thoughts, dreams, and in every interaction Cleave has with women is a feature of this novel that puts one in mind of the incest plot. The persistent and helpless way in which the narrative "is turned toward her" (Banville, 2000b) insinuates the narrative's primary desire, which given its object, stages repeated return. Very like "the incest plot," *Ancient Light* is an example of "the novel at its most static and, therefore, at

its most resistant to plot as we've tended to understand it (that is, as the kind of desire that moves us inexorably forward)" (Hershinow 150).

Recounting another memory of Cass as a child, Cleave recalls the following:

When Cass was a little girl she used to say that as soon as she was grown-up she would marry me and we would have a child just like her so that if she died I would not miss her and be lonely. Ten years; she has been dead ten years. Must I set off in search of her again, in sorrow and in pain? She will come no more to my world, but I go towards hers. (Banville 235–36)

Hershinow articulates "the persistent pressure of incest as both a governing ideal of attachment and a centripetal force of formal arrangement" (151). She is certainly intrigued by the connections it forges between characters, but perhaps more so by the "centripetal force of formal arrangement" it gives rise to, and the implications of this force for plot structure. In the passage reproduced here, the young Cass engages in a not uncommon fantasy to marry her father, and she cannily factors reproduction as well as her own death into the scenario. Cass seems aware of what happens to women in stories; a fate well-articulated by Rachel Blau Du Plessis, who remarks "[o]nce upon a time, the end, the rightful end, of women in novels was social – successful courtship, marriage – or judgemental of her sexual and social failure – death" (282). An interesting addition to Cass's fantasy is that by having "a child just like her", she can replace herself, and prevent any pain her father might feel as a result of her loss. This child does not serve the usual narrative purpose of children, that is, as projections into the future. This non-existent child, a pure articulation of desire, would be more of the same, another Cass, and a kind of return. Hershinow remarks that the incest plot, as she understands it,

is a form of over-closure, a hermetic sealing of narrative desire. [...]Incest (and, as often, the "specter of incest") acts as a reminder of the procedures of the marriage plot's closure not by resisting them but by putting them into overdrive, thereby exposing and even destabilizing their coercive effects. We might consider the work of the incest plot to be aestheticizing marriage as camp: stylized, always "in quotation marks", faintly ridiculous. (153)

Cleave's treasured memory of Cass's proposal does have the "faintly ridiculous" character of a marriage plot in "overdrive". The loop of desire that shapes it (loss mitigated by return and replication) is indeed a kind of "over-closure, [or] a hermetic sealing of narrative desire". It is also a sealing of the desire of mourning: in this fantasy the possibility of

replacing the one lost by another who is the same obliterates the need for mourning, or any acceptance of loss. This memory, recounted in the narrative present-tense, also results in Alex being whipped back around from any future of his own to this recollection of absence and unconsummated desire. His words “[m]ust I set off in search of her again” echo the quest-like language that opens the novel, only it is apparent upon first reading that the desire that propels this language will not be assuaged. Only upon a second reading is it clear that the same is true of the first instance of such language, “[w]hat if I were to set off in search of her? That would be a *quest*. I should like to be in love again, I should like to fall in love again, just once more” (Banville 3, my emphasis). These two instances of quest-like language both begin and end the novel (the first appears in the first paragraph, the second a few pages from the end, just before the revelation that Mrs Gray is dead, which amounts to a narrative call for a second reading, and indeed, a return to the beginning. There are therefore two articulations of the onset of a quest that bookend the content of *Ancient Light*. Admittedly the second of “[m]ust I set off in search of her again” bears the marks of it having been attempted before, without success, and the reluctance of “[m]ust I”, however it is no less an expression of desire than the first. The arrangement this bracketing produces is very like what Hershinow identifies as “centripetal force”, or the movement of an object towards its own centre. Two articulations of intended movement begin and end Banville’s 2012 novel, and they both articulate desire that results in the book turning in on itself. The movement of narrative that may be labelled a “quest” is summed up by Jacob Reed, who writes that a “narrative pattern of romance [is one in which] a questing hero successfully achieves his or her or goals, often with a psychological transformation, and the overall pattern affirms a positive moral order” (iii). Rose Marie Beston writes that “the hero of romance is fated to pursue the quest of unattainable desire in a setting invested with an air of mystery” (5). What she calls a “quest of unattainable desire” resonates quite well with Cleave’s interminable version of mourning. As far as any quest pertains to Mrs Gray, Cleave admits:

I did not dream about her, after she was gone, or if I did I forgot what I had dreamed. My sleeping mind was more merciful than the waking one, which never tired of tormenting me. Well, yes, it did tire of its sport, eventually. Nothing so intense could last for long. Or might it have, if I had truly loved her, with selfless passion, as they say, as people are said to have loved in olden times? Such a love would have destroyed me, surely, as it used to destroy the heroes and the heroines in the old books. But what a pretty corpse I would have made, marbled on my bier, clutching in my fingers a marble lily for remembrance. (Banville 226)

Cleave does not have the clarity of purpose or the “selfless passion” that that such teleology requires. He does lament the loss of an exquisite performance as a “pretty corpse” however. He casts himself as a hero in a section penned towards the end of the novel:

Other people’s motives, their desiderata and anathemas, are a mystery to me. My own are, too. I seem to myself to move in bafflement, to move immobile, like the dim and hapless hero in a fairy tale, trammelled in thickets, balked in briar. (231)

Insofar as he is a hero on a quest, he is baffled, “immobile”, “trammelled” and “balked”, and will therefore stay precisely where he is. Indeed, while both intentions of questing appear to reach beyond himself, they are in fact desires to return to what has been lost, and what no longer exists beyond his memory, and beyond himself. Importantly, Alex’s desire to see Cass in all other women is both incestuous and narcissistic. That is, it is a desire for the same rather than a desire for the other. What trammels him and renders him immobile is his own inability to quest out towards the other; his desire, in other words, is only to love what he has created and what is therefore a part of him.

In another passage in which he describes his longing for Cass, Cleave writes:

When I think of Cass – and when am I not thinking of Cass? – I seem to sense all about me a great rushing and roaring, as if I were standing directly under a waterfall that drenches me and yet somehow leaves me dry, dry as a bone. This is what mourning has become for me, a constant, parching deluge. (78)

Alex’s description of a “parching deluge” is an apt description of the paradoxical core which animates this endlessly self-referential, compulsively returning, demanding to be reread, text. The consciousness at its core cannot be parched because he refuses to actually let Cass be dead. Instead, she is rendered spectral by being found in all the women around him. So he mourns her in a way that denies that she is dead and properly gone. This renders his mourning endless and unsatisfying. This mourning without end determines the structure of the book, given that (as I have mentioned previously) a desire for Cass is the primary animating force behind the narrative. Importantly, Cass is dead. Her loss is built into the narrative from the start. What Cleave desires is to cease to mourn by making all other women into Cass. But he can’t do this. Which means he must mourn without end. Or endlessly seek a way to make mourning cease, which ironically is why his mourning has no end.

Mrs Gray has the most room devoted to her in the narrative, and the quest-like language that begins the novel and articulates a desire to go in search of her and “fall in love again, just once more” (3) comes up against the limit of its reach when it is discovered at the end of the novel that she is dead, and was dying throughout Alex’s relationship with her. The second reading tacitly required by this revelation can fill in those oddities in her behaviour with the imagined motivations of a dying woman, but this return will not yield a complete and satisfying encounter with a woman seen and remembered only by the myopic Alex. The text engenders the desire to return, and presents a limited representation that leaves that desire unsatiated.

Cass has been known to be dead in all three of the books examined here. I have shown that a desire to return to her is so integral to Alex’s narration that all other women in the text have their edges blurred with remembrances of her. This is true of almost all the women in the trilogy. Axel (a character blurred in his own way with Alex) blends the representations of Cass and Magda, and Alex sees Cass when he sees Lily, Dawn Devonport, and even Billie Stryker. Cass is deeply desired, dead, and unattainable. A yearning for her animates the narrative, and results in what Hershinow calls a “centripetal force of formal arrangement” (151). She is the primary reason why the novel turns in on itself, and employs only “the minimal amount of difference required for narrative to continue to function as such” (156). The desire that forges the trajectory of the novel is a desire to go nowhere, and to return to what cannot be returned to. Incest has been explored as a theme (which resonates with a desire to return) and also as a structuring mechanism, and this is best understood alongside an analysis of Cass as she appears in *Ancient Light*. Cass’s allure, coupled with the utter lack of any substance (she was mad, and was once a child, is the sum of what is to be discovered) makes her both elevated and vacant. She is a tool, and her utility is to be an elevated and vacant centripetal force around which the three novels in the trilogy can perform their obsessive desire to return. Her presence facilitates a structure that loops back on itself and goes nowhere. Her representation is that of a trapped woman who can never be known. She exists only to be dead and ineffectually longed for, and to never escape the being longed for, even by way of death. She is reanimated and longed for again as a role in a film played by someone whose representation is merged with hers. The circling of Cass does not end, and this movement does not require that she be fleshed out enough to be known.

Notes

1 In his analysis of the teleology inherent to the layout of serialised novels, Robert Allen remarks that “serial novels employ a serialised structure in which a linear, plot-driven story is told across subsequent installments which often end with moments of marked suspense and which encourage readers to acquire the next installment, and analyse previous ones, to find out what will happen next” (184).

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