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MAY SINCLAIR AND HER ILLUSTRATORS: THE LIMITS OF CO-AUTHORSHIP

Abstract
Before the advent of visual media, illustrations were striving to show in images what the written text intended to tell in words. In addition to their semiotic function as highlighting devices for particular contexts and characters' attitudes in the work of fiction, illustrations exude aesthetic feelings and states of mind which may at times even interfere with the meaning of the illustrated text. The present paper intends to negotiate the effects of the novelist/illustrator interactions on the readers' reception of the works of May Sinclair, especially in the context of the representation of gender relations. The topic of collaboration will mainly be analysed within Sinclair's text, as this interaction is itself the subject matter in some of her major works.

Key words: May Sinclair, illustrations, painting, co-authorship, gender representation

1. Introduction

In the absence of modern photography and film, paintings and illustrations played the role of rendering visual images of what the written text was supposed to convey. Thanks to their artistically appealing quality and their visual and imagery impacts on the readers, these illustrations largely

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contributed to presenting situations and contexts and to bringing about the desired effects of both the writer and the illustrator. This could not have been possible without the contribution of editors and publishers, who insisted on accompanying the text with the adequate appealing illustrations. The latter part of the 19th century in particular witnessed the flourishing of the art of illustration (Doyle 2018: 292). Fiction works teemed with illustrations in the forms of both colour paintings and sketches. In addition to their functional role as supporting devices for the semantic purport of the fictional text, illustrations conveyed aesthetic feelings, states of mind, airs and contexts that might freeze, deepen, or even alter part of the meaning of the illustrated text. On the other hand, due to their visual nature and semiotic features, the sum of illustrations might also interfere with the aesthetic and narrative components of the work of fiction to the extent that the artist illustrator may claim a certain kind of "co-authorship" of the novelist's masterpiece.

As a 19th and early 20th-centuries novelist, May Sinclair's earlier works of fiction abound in illustrations. Although she was forgotten for a while, her novels still captivate a renewed and wider readership, especially among feminist discourses. But the early illustrated editions had some additional effects. Instead of elaborating on the interplay between Sinclair's text and its illustrations, this paper rather intends to question the effects of this text-image collaboration between the novelist and the illustrator on the reader and on their reception of the work of Sinclair. A special focus is laid on Sinclair's literary characters' expressed consciousness of the illustrator's possible interference in her illustrated work of fiction, especially within the context of the early and seminal representation of gender relations. The paradigm of collaboration will also be analysed within Sinclair's text, as it is the subject matter in some of her major works.

As the importance of illustrations is gauged and measured by the degree of attention conferred to them by May Sinclair herself and by the anticipated reception of her implied readers, the scope of analysis will be focused on the early illustrations, mainly those made during the writing activity of this prolific novelist. This strategy presupposes limiting oneself to the earlier editions of the creative works that bore illustrations, identifying their illustrators, and approaching the illustrations within the context of their respective texts. The supposed connection between the two modes of representation, the text and the illustration, is to be considered for the sake of gauging the degree of harmony and agreement, on the one hand, or discord and distortion, on the other.

Where applicable, an analysis of the delicate relation between the illustration, as a set of artistic and aesthetic techniques deployed by the illustrator, and its textual context, will also be helpful in offering more evidence on the possible co-authorship between the two authors. Referring to late Victorian Britain as being "awash in illustrated literature," Richard J. Hill rightly assumes that the "illustration of texts heavily influenced the interpretations of those texts by children and adults alike" (Hill 2017: 13). The impact of illustrations on the reception of novels is also noted by Julia Thomas, who asserts that the presence of illustrations in these works impacts how the novels are read and can even modify and shape the texts themselves (Thomas 2016: 617).

The status of the illustrator himself is also to be analysed as a subject matter within the very works of fiction of our novelist. The illustrator's role and his either revealing or rivalling power are to be addressed as there is a set of creative contexts in which the novelist approaches this point in unprecedented detail. Nothing is arbitrary in the suggestion of one of Sinclair's female characters, Mrs. Fanny Waddington, to have a female illustrator, Barbara Madden, for the work of a male creator, Mr. Horatio Bysshe Waddington (Sinclair 1921: 160).

2. May Sinclair in the Age of Illustration

The art of illustration claimed to be the only visual form of entertainment that could go hand in hand with the text. As a visual form of entertainment, the illustrated written book strove to offer something more exciting and more tantalizing beside the bare typographical characters (Chaouch 2010: 47) in order to ensure to this literary and prosaic medium a more entertaining and thus more captivating shape. In this sense, the illustration has what Laura Mulvey says on "the possibility, in cinema, of shifting the emphasis of the look" (1999: 843); this perfectly applies to the art of illustrations, which was the only visual rendering of the literary text. Each illustration not only shifts "the emphasis of the look" but it also freezes the reader's imagination, thus confining it to a visual frame in which the choice of and focus on particular details, scenes and emotions are exclusively decided and managed by the illustrator. More recently, a "renewed interest in book illustration […] comes not only from researchers but also from publishers who are beginning to recognize as both relevant and remarkable the complementary presence of images" (Ionescu 2, quoted from Leroy 2016: 166).

A number of May Sinclair's novels were illustrated by a set of talented contemporary illustrators. The amount of illustrations that accompanied the early editions of the novels under consideration and the particularity that this mode of visual representation acquired in the context of European and American readership at the time most probably reveal the importance of the role of the illustrations in helping to make sense in a different way.

Most of the illustrated works of May Sinclair fall within the very period known as the "Golden Age of Illustration" (Doyle 2018: 292). It is also important to note that one of her books under study in this paper, *The Creators*, was first published – serially – in the *Century Illustrated Monthly Magazine*, a fact that classifies this novel under the literary and entertaining works that were more prone to being illustrated, which had become a need for the author as well as for her readers. In his assessment of the rising need to illustrations in this period, Richard J. Hill notes that:

> [t]he end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth saw the ever increasing proliferation of illustrated literature that directly prefigured and influenced the cinematic age. It is essential, therefore, to understand how the authors themselves wanted their work illustrated, and, if possible, to glean how they themselves might visualize their own characters and settings. (2017: 13)

Operating in the absence of the subsequent forms of visual media, the early illustrators, those contemporary with May Sinclair in particular, offered more authentic and more collaborative illustrations to the texts of her novels. Their contemporariness offered the possibility of not only collaboration but also rivalry between both "authors". As a novelist belonging to this golden age of illustration, May Sinclair herself was certainly more conscious of the selective and altering potential of painters and illustrators.

3. Sinclair's Illustrators and Potential Co-authors: Collaboration or Rivalry

The different illustrations and drawings that are interspersed in the novels of May Sinclair have, to different degrees, undeniably contributed to shaping and moulding the meanings of each novel and its reception as well. These works of art had a seminal effect under the brushes of the early

illustrators in setting the tone of Sinclair's novels to the extent that these texts are still re-edited with them or, at least, with other illustrations that are more susceptible to evoke that exceptional and unique turn-of-the-century mood. Each illustration was in itself a certain *visual* reading and an artistic reinterpretation of the text, all manoeuvred by a talented illustrator whose artistic style, semiotic intervention and aesthetic peregrinations might—at any moment—have the edge on the purely semantic message of the literary text. In such a case, the interplay between the literary meaning and the visual significance may result in a latent competition between the author and the artist/illustrator. The professional status of the latter and the degree of his artistic competence might very well be decisive elements in either increasing or lowering the quality of the novel, a fact which is similar to the relationship between a play, as a dramatic text, and the variety of its multiple performances on the stage.

The choice of the illustrations and of their disposition in each novel shows that there was a certain degree of collaboration between May Sinclair and her illustrators about the number and the kind of illustrations created to adorn her texts. This is a fact that is corroborated by some of Sinclair's own declarations about this process of collaboration that in some instances times may turn to rivalry. A neat case in point is her work with the famous American illustrator, Arthur Ignatius Keller (1866-1924), who was an exceptional figure in the art of illustration. On his deep application to his work and his way of handling the texts to be illustrated, one of his contemporaries, Walter H. Dower, the art editor for *The Ladies Home Journal*, makes this significant account:

> He actually lived his stories. How else could he make us feel the courage or coolness, hate or weakness of his men as they charged across the page or slumped in a corner, the peacefulness and dignity of his old ladies, the provocative beauty and charm of his young women? (Matz 1998)

The use of the possessive pronoun "his" in this context is a highly revealing point. Old ladies and young women of the stories become *his* own through the process of artistic appropriation. It is difficult for a novelist like May Sinclair not to be appealed by the status of such a painter so deeply involved in his art and concerned with fashioning *her* "characters", who become *his* own. One of the most important and rare assumptions on her own illustrators is, in fact, recorded about her collaboration with Arthur Keller

himself, whom she plainly dubs her "hated rival". In her detailed notes on the editorial procedures of Sinclair's novel, *The Creators*, Lyn Pykett elaborates on the psychological state of the novelist and the pressing effect of the tiring process of the first serialisation of the novel in *The Century Magazine*. It is within this context that Pykett's words show the kind of attitude the novelist had towards some of her illustrators:

> She found the writing process constrained by the editor's space limitations for particular instalments and by deadlines. The deadlines were even tighter than she had anticipated because the *Century* wanted each instalment to be illustrated, and Sinclair had to provide a copy for Keller, the illustrator, whom she described as 'my hated rival [...] set upon me to hound & harry me from chapter to chapter' (quoted in Raitt, 126) […] Perhaps unsurprisingly, the stresses of this mode of literary production led to illness (possibly a mild mental breakdown) and Sinclair was admitted to a nursing home for a three-week period in June 1909. (Pykett 2004: xxix)

Though Sinclair's breakdown was certainly brought about by the whole mode of literary production here, especially the cutting process made by the editor, her own words on the illustrator in particular, who was no other than Arthur Keller, reveals the state of an angry author being annoyed by her competitor; but her own funny metaphor and vigorous terms of "hated rival", "hound" and "harry" clearly suggest the dynamic image of the novelist being hurried by the illustrator, as though by a hunting dog, on a dual race to complete the shared masterpiece.

This idea of rivalry over literary and artistic creation is also one of the subjects of May Sinclair's novels themselves, which shows her awareness and concern about authorship being at stake when it comes to the usurping effect of the illustrators. Does this explain the absence of illustrations from some of her novels? The answer to this question will probably be more evident after analysing her attitudes to illustrators not only as artistic translators, captors and decorators of her text and captivators of her readers, but also as characters and subject matters in a number of her novels.

May Sinclair's unquestionable consciousness of the particular status of her illustrators is clear from what she plainly says both in some of her non-fiction essays and in the views of literary characters in some of her

works of fiction. In this regard, a very pertinent passage from her novel, *Mr. Waddington of Wyck* (1921), discusses the dangers and stakes of "hiring" a competent illustrator for a piece of work of one's own and the possible claims to both authorship and fame between the two creators: the author of the literary work embedded in the typographical text, on the one hand, and the author of the illustration, on the other:

> Mr. Waddington's *Ramblings through the Cotswolds* were to be profusely illustrated. The question was: photographs or original drawings? And he had decided, after much consideration, on photographs taken by Pyecraft's man. For a book of such capital importance the work of an inferior or obscure illustrator was not to be thought of for an instant. (Sinclair 1921: 159)

This evidently presupposes a careful consideration of the choice of the right photographer or illustrator and the set of criteria to be taken into account before opting for him as long as Mr. Waddington's work is not to be illustrated by any artist. From the outset, Mr. Waddington excludes the illustrator who is "inferior", that is at the level of artistic skills, and "obscure", at the level of fame. So he has to be both a reliable, competent and professional artist, on the one hand, and a well-known and established one, on the other. According to the novel's narrator, however, this poses the problem of co-authorship for any literary author if the illustrator is a "distinguished artist"; the succeeding sentences in the same passage clearly show this concern:

> But there were grave disadvantages in employing a distinguished artist. It would entail not only heavy expenses, but a disastrous rivalry. The illustrations, so far from drawing attention to the text and fixing it firmly there, would inevitably distract it. And the artist's celebrated name would have to figure conspicuously, in exact proportion to his celebrity, on the title page and in all the reviews and advertisements where, properly speaking, Horatio Bysshe Waddington should stand alone. It was even possible, as Fanny very intelligently pointed out, that a sufficiently distinguished illustrator might succeed in capturing the enthusiasm of the critics to the utter extinction of the author, who might consider himself lucky if he was mentioned at all. (Sinclair 1921: 159–160)

This quotation summarises, in fact, Sinclair's main concerns on the possible "rivalry" between the novelist and the illustrator over the authorship of the illustrated work. In the context of this novel, the fictional narrator even assumes that this contention would certainly be more favourable to the "distinguished illustrator", whose celebrated name would loom so big that it would certainly lead to the "extinction" of the author. This proves once again that May Sinclair's narrator was undoubtedly conscious of the importance of the pictorial narrative to be read side by side with the textual narrative and the possible diversion that the former may create at the cost of the latter.

In this passage, as it is the case in Sinclair's novels at large, the subtle choice of characters' names is also highly revealing and betrays Sinclair's possible allusion to the great figures of the 19th century. Isn't the fictional author's full name, Horatio Bysshe Waddington, an onomastic combination that is reminiscent of both names of the famous Roman poet – Horace – and the great Romantic one – Percy Bysshe Shelley –? It is as though the yoked fames of both august celebrities might be outrageously outweighed by the celebrity and lustre of the "distinguished illustrator" who "might succeed in capturing the enthusiasm of the critics."

The assumptions and prophecies voiced by Fanny, one of the fictional characters, about the possible "extinction" or eclipse of the author by the artist's celebrated name, which "would have to figure conspicuously […] on the title page and in all the reviews and advertisements" (Sinclair 1921: 159), have most ironically come true, a century later, with the newly online marketed versions of some novels of May Sinclair herself.

We can say that potential co-authorship may amount to marketing standards too. Suzanne Raitt claims that, among Sinclair's most notable achievements, was her active participation "in many of the most significant movements and events of her day: the 'commercialization' of the book trade" (2000: 10) in particular. Her concerns with matters of "fame and the literary market place" (77) can be additional illuminating elements to explain the novelist's concerns about the possible threat of illustrators as co-authors.

4. Sinclair on the male status of illustrators

Men have certainly controlled the brush throughout most of the history of Western painting, in general, and literary works illustrations, in particular. When considering the presence of illustrators in the Sinclairian text, we

find an undeniable feminist touch that is in line with the novelist's handling of similar situations of male-female interactions and attitudes in other contexts. In addition to the illustrators' presence in her text as producers of the pictorial accompaniments of the narrative, their male status is also felt within the text itself in a number of her narratives. In her exertions to respond, to transcend, then to extricate herself from the "shadow of his language" (Battersby 2020: 102), that is the language of male novelists (Joyce), philosophers (Spinoza and Schopenhauer), poets (Shelley) and psychoanalysts (Freud and Jung) (107, 111, 115), May Sinclair had yet – has still – to escape the "net" of the illustrator and the "shadow" of his illustrations; this is, in fact, an allusion to the 'net' metaphor so brilliantly elaborated by Christine Battersby in her paper, "'In the Shadow of His Language': May Sinclair's Portrait of the Artist as a Daughter" (112, 117).

In this regard, the previously mentioned passages from *Mr. Waddington of Wyck* (1921) and the succeeding related dialogues tackle a further, but no less important, issue at stake and bear an undeniable feminist touch. In this novel, Fanny suggests her husband's book could be illustrated by Barbara Madden, a female illustrator this time. It seems as though May Sinclair is trying once again to imagine the illustrator as female; she had already deployed, in *Mary Olivier: A Life* (1919), all her "courageous and creative use of theory to reimagine the artist as *female* [*sic*]" (Battersby 2020: 120). Unfortunately, in the novel, the arguments previously advanced by the wife, Fanny, on the importance of a reliable illustrator – instead of a professional photographer as her husband is planning to hire one – was not in Fanny's favour, as the narrative goes on:

> Fanny had shown rather less intelligence in using this argument to support her suggestion that Barbara Madden should illustrate the book. She had more than once come upon the child, sitting on a camp-stool above Mrs. Levitt's house, making a sketch of the steep street, all cream white and pink and grey, opening out on to the many-coloured fields and the blue eastern air. And she had conceived a preposterous admiration for Barbara Madden's work. (Sinclair 1921: 160)

Consequently, Fanny's suggestion is faced with a vehement refusal on the part of Mr. Waddington, whose reaction shows once again the interplay between the issues of co-authorship and feminism at such an early phase. That is, Sinclair can be considered among the precursors in addressing

the topic of the reception of female authors and illustrators by their male counterparts. Fanny's proposal, "It'll be an enchanting book if she illustrates it, Horatio," is faced with the stressed answer of the male author: "*If* [*sic*] she illustrates it!" (Sinclair 1921: 160). The underlined conjunction evokes the impossibility of admitting the idea of the book being illustrated by this young woman. His further reactions and assumptions throw more light on the undeclared reasons of his refusal:

> But when he tried to show Fanny the absurdity of the idea – Horatio Bysshe Waddington illustrated by Barbara Madden – she laughed in his face and told him he was a conceited old thing. To which he replied, with dignified self-restraint, that he was writing a serious and important book. It would be foolish to pretend that it was not serious and important. He hoped he had no overweening opinion of its merits, but one must preserve some sense of proportion and propriety – some sanity.
>
> 'Poor little Barbara!'
>
> 'It isn't poor little Barbara's book, my dear.'
>
> 'No,' said Fanny. 'It isn't.' (Sinclair 1921: 160-161)

Mr. Waddington's insistence that he is writing 'a serious and important book' is further emphasised by his claim of the writing craft, which is proper to him, not to Barbara: 'It isn't poor little Barbara's book, my dear' (161). This shows once again Waddington's claim to authorship and his firm objection to the interference of this potential illustrator, a female one in this case, with the sanctum of his authorship.

It is noteworthy to mention that May Sinclair herself had no female illustrator for her own novels. In the first analysis, this could be explained historically by the scarcity of "distinguished" female illustrators that would compete with their male counterparts. But in the last analysis – the Sinclairian one – this might be the result of such disregarding of these female illustrators, from the outset, by their contemporary authors, as exemplified here by Horatio Bysshe Waddington.

Another instance of the particular handling the status of illustrators within the Sinclairian text is found at the very beginning of her novel, *The Creators* (1910), which opens ironically enough with the novelist's prosaic description of an illustrated portrait of the main female figure of the novel, Jane Holland, being portrayed by a fictional illustrator, R. A. Gisborne.

The readers never see this fictional illustration as an accompaniment to the text, but the whole portraiture is textually rendered by the narrator to the minutest detail on the very first page of the novel. When we read the narrator's account on this ekphrasis, we get it finding faults with both the way the female character is mis-portrayed by the male illustrator and the egoism of the latter as he was badly selective in his representation, according to the narrator. The latter argues: "It was no longer she who presided at the feast, but her portrait by Gisborne, R.A. He had given most of his attention to the portrait. Gisborne, R.A., was a solemn egoist, and his picture represented, not Jane Holland, but Gisborne's limited idea of her" (Sinclair 1910: 3). The last sentence is of extreme importance as it alludes to the idea of the subjective representation that could be applied by the illustrator, any illustrator. The narrator then justifies this artistic and representational assessment by juxtaposing two prosaic portraits: first, the argued one, which is badly made by Gisborne, and the alternative one, made by the narrator as a more authentic and pertinent rendering of this female figure:

> It was a sombre face, broadened and foreshortened by the heavy, leaning brows. A face with a straight-drawn mouth and eyes prophetic of tragedy, a face in which her genius brooded, downcast, flameless, and dumb. He [the illustrator] had got all her features, her long black eyebrows, her large, deep-set eyes, flattened queerly by the level eyebrows, her nose, a trifle too long in the bridge, too wide in the nostril, and her mouth which could look straight enough when her will was dominant. He had got her hair, the darkness and the mass of it. Tanqueray, in his abominable way, had said that Gisborne had put his best work into that, and when Gisborne resented it he had told him that it was immortality enough for anyone to have painted Jane Holland's hair. (Sinclair 1910: 3)

Before moving to the second portrait, the one made by the narrator, it is worth mentioning that the first detailed portrait not only recreates the illustrator's distorting touches, highlighted by the extreme adverbs of 'queerly' and repeated 'too', but it also reveals the complicity between the two males, the painter (Gisborne) and the male genius (Tanqueray), in making fun and getting pleasure out of this distorted picture of Jane, whose first name leaves no doubt as to her female representativeness. The result

of the distorted image is that the portrait has become a source of annoyance to Jane by the two men: "When Tanqueray wanted to annoy Jane he told her that she looked like her portrait by Gisborne, R.A." (Sinclair 1910: 4).

Then after the narrator's assessment of this portrait as it was effectively fashioned by the painter, she suggests the kind of portrait that Gisborne ought to have painted. Once again, the narrator evokes the minute details that the painter should have included in his work of art for a more authentic rendering not only of Jane's physical appearance but also of her moral character; the stress on the physical details that would highlight the powerful sides of this lady is undeniable:

> If Jane had had the face that Gisborne gave her, she would never have had any charm for Tanqueray. For what Gisborne had tried to get was that oppressive effect of genius, heavily looming. Not a hint had he caught of her high levity, of her look when the bright devil of comedy possessed her, not a flash of her fiery quality, of her eyes' sudden gold, and the ways of her delicate, her brilliant mouth, its fine, deliberate sweep, its darting tilt, like wings lifted for flight. (Sinclair 1910: 4)

Granted, these two textual portraits – the distorted one and its alternative – drawn by the narrator at the opening pages of the novel were not illustrated by the real illustrator of this novel, Arthur Ignatius Keller (1866-1924); he most probably avoided illustrating the two juxtaposed portraits for fear of finding himself within the 'net' of the same criticised male club of the fictional painter, Gisborne, and the male genius, Tanqueray. Nevertheless, it seems he got the full message of the narrator on Jane's hair, in particular, and fashioned it so brilliantly in many of the illustrations interspersed in this narrative (Sinclair 1910: 107, 349, 433, 494).

Moving to an earlier novel that bears the same concerns of female representation and which may also affect the way it has been illustrated from the early editions to the present ones, we find other examples of illustrating the female main figure of the novel. In Sinclair's novel, *The Tysons: Mr. and Mrs. Nevill Tyson* (1908), which is "a clever character study of an exceptional man and woman, whose union inevitably leads to tragedy" (Cooper 1912: 252), we are supposed to see the portraits of both prominent characters, the wife and the husband. However, in this earliest edition of the novel, the one supervised by May Sinclair herself, we find only the portrait of Mrs. Tyson in an exceptional frontispiece illustration (Sinclair 1908:

Frontispiece) that shows both the physical beauty, the excessive make-up and decorative splendour, and the undeniable and explicit pride of this exceptional female character. Taking into consideration the main context of the novel, centred around the difficult marital relationships between these two great, idiosyncratic minds, the only presence of her portrait and the absence of his own may very well be justified by the amount of importance given to the female characters over the male ones at this early phase of the novelist's career. In this novel in particular, May Sinclair's concern is with the reasons and processes of the disintegration of this marital relationship. But her focus is undeniably on the female character as the main character backdrop against which the other partner, Mr. Nevill Tyson, is scrutinised. This character analysis was duly reflected in the unique illustration of this novel at the frontispiece of the novel. This illustration, designed by another contemporary of Sinclair, the talented illustrator, Malcolm A. Strauss (1883-1936), most probably under the eyes of the novelist, is highly pertinent and meaningful as regards the nature and significance of the most adequate visual message to accompany and support the text of this particular novel. The choice of this illustrator and painter, Strauss, was most probably due to his being "known for his depictions of women in the manner of Charles Dana Gibson and Paul Helleu' (Kiernan).

However, in subsequent editions, more particularly in modern ones, and in the absence of the novelist's control, the illustrations accompanying the title page of this novel are devoid of that pre-eminence of the presence of the female image in this work. This proves once again that, contrary to current illustrations, the early ones were designed under the supervision, or at least the consent, of the novelist and that the early, talented illustrators were contributors in shaping and conveying the meaning of novel.

5. Conclusion

When reading May Sinclair's novels, namely editions containing the works of art done by the talented illustrators of the turn of the century, such as Arthur Ignatius Keller, Clarence Coles Philips, Malcolm A. Strauss, and John Wolcott Adams, we come to see the far-reaching effects of the early illustrations on the timeless readers of May Sinclair's novels and the ongoing reception of her works. There is a latent but undeniable issue of co-authorship being disputed – even in a posthumous sense – between the

novelist and her illustrators as long as each of them offers an aspect of the novel to be appreciated so that both the novelist's text and the artist's illustrations are supposed to make up the final woven fabric of the literary work.

The delicate collaboration between the novelist's masterpiece and the illustrator's works of art has been gaining more and more space in academic scholarship, to the extent that Julia Thomas rightly talks about the emergence of a new discipline called 'illustration studies' (2016: 617). The aim of this paper was not to exacerbate an undeclared 'dispute' over authorship between May Sinclair and her illustrators, but rather to problematise the possible rivalry between the two creators, with the fear of the novelist's name being possibly dimmed, or even eclipsed, by that of the illustrator.

New online editions of May Sinclair's novels are issued with cover page illustrations that show once again the predilection of modern audiences for classically illustrated works, especially when it comes to reading the novels of this particular novelist, being accompanied with paintings from the Golden Age of Illustration. However, in many cases, the marketing strategies are not always in favour of the novelist's name as the cover page illustrations chosen by Internet-based enterprises to accompany her novels are generally inspired by a superficial reading of the title, not on the idea or spirit of the literary masterpiece as a whole. Many of such misplaced illustrations are famous classical paintings of countesses, earls, or historical figures with little or no relevance to the chosen novel. Their choice is mainly dictated by the fact that the tableaus were made by artists belonging to the Golden Age of Illustration.

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