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Representing Empathy: Speaking for Vulnerable Bodies in Victorian Medicine and Culture

by

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in History

University of Warwick, Department of History
Re-submitted December 2007
(original submission: September 2006)

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Abstract

The project of defending vulnerable bodies, whose interior experience could only be known through empathy, helped to develop nineteenth-century epistemologies of selfhood and otherness. The struggles of authors who wished to represent the sufferings and experiences of others in texts were influenced by changes in the understanding of perception and evidence (which have lately received much attention as subjects of historical inquiry). In this project I explore the attempts that were made by individuals and groups of individuals in the nineteenth century to 'speak for' individuals who were perceived as vulnerable: unable or less able, for some reason, to speak for themselves. I examine the strategies by which these authors attempted to achieve a kind of knowledge that amounted to sameness in difference with regard to the subjects for whom they tried to speak. These strategies can be understood as attempts to negotiate the invisible (the interiority of another individual) through the unseen, using sight in 'non-sight' to overcome empirical barriers to knowledge of the 'other'. I argue that in the nineteenth century, empathy became a way of knowing, and a form of knowledge, and that the texts produced surrounding nineteenth-century ethical and social reform movements are characterized by empathic discourse.

Introduction:

Knowing, Seeing, Speaking the 'Other'

In this thesis I explore what was distinctive about the way in which Victorians attempted to understand and communicate the experiences of others. I argue that Victorian ethical discourse was characterized by attempts to communicate empathic knowledge of subjects *as knowledge*, rather than as fantasies intended for the purpose of the moral refinement of the sentiments and the self. In this thesis, I will examine a selection of nineteenth-century professional and popular texts, which attempted to speak on behalf of vulnerable individuals and to present accounts of their (ultimately unknowable) interior experiences. Each chapter will function as a case study, addressing texts drawn from the context of a different ethical debate; each will carefully consider the strategies used by authors to persuasively represent empathic knowledge. I demonstrate the 'newness' of what these authors attempted to accomplish within the specific context of each reform movement, and formulate arguments about the construction of these texts at the level of the individual case study.

This introduction will discuss the definition of 'empathy', as well as the components of empathy (knowledge, communication, and understanding; *logos* and voicelessness; identity, self and other). I will consider trends in the history of perception (and the scholarship of these trends), which affected the development of empathic discourse in the nineteenth century. I will also discuss the meanings of representation and advocacy, and the idea of 'the other'. I will outline my thesis, explain my

methodology as a historian of representation, and the principles by which I have selected the texts I examine in each of my chapters.

The Victorian struggle to cross the boundary between self and other was confirmed and, in effect, crowned at the turn of the twentieth century by the inauguration of the term 'empathy'. It was first introduced by German art theorists as *einfühlung* (roughly 'in-feeling') in the 1870s. Vernon Lee is credited by the *Oxford English Dictionary* as having named the concept in 1903, again in the context of art criticism. Though it is certainly arguable that the earliest users of the word 'empathy' meant for it to communicate an idea that was akin to the word 'sympathy' (which is a much older word, having had its equivalent in ancient Greek), it is equally arguable that the new word came into existence in response to a need for an alternative, to express something different. The words 'empathy' and 'sympathy' have often been, and continue to be used, interchangeably. Still, I argue that the term 'empathy', as opposed to 'sympathy', reflects a more specific interest in the interiority, and ultimate 'difference' of the subject (as 'other'). This kind of 'knowledge' is never empirically attainable, as opposed to what knowledge of the subject (in 'sympathy') could be really and tangibly summoned in the self, based upon perceived commonalities and feelings of fellowship with the subject.

Though there have been many and varied attempts to define the word 'empathy', I find Lauren Wispé's concise declaration of the distinctions between empathy and sympathy most helpful: 'empathy is a way of "knowing". Sympathy is a way of "relating"'.[1] Wispé attempts to clarify the distinction between sympathy and empathy as a social psychologist, but she suggests that these terms can only be properly understood

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[1] Lauren Wispé, 'The Distinction Between Sympathy and Empathy: To Call Forth a Concept, A Word is Needed', *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 50 (February 1986), p. 318.

within their historical context, specifically the context of a particular necessity that resulted in the addition of the new word, 'empathy', first to the German and then to the English language. The title of Wispé's article, which includes the phrase 'a word is needed', conjures a historical moment of insufficient language to suit new practices of thought and expression. In this thesis, I will explore the practices of expression that gave rise to the need for this new word by examining their representations. I examine such expressive practices as are found in nineteenth-century texts that attempted to speak on behalf of other individuals who were perceived to be suffering or vulnerable to suffering, and whose experiences could not possibly be known by the authors of the texts. I pay close attention to any special knowledge claimed or assumed by the authors of these texts regarding the interior experiences of the subjects of whom they wrote.

Empathy can be very emotional, but it is not emotion. If, as Wispé suggests, empathy is about 'knowing', the content of the knowledge produced is often emotionally charged, not least because the circumstances which motivate one to try to 'know' the unknowable difference of the other often likely to inspire strong feeling. This is, in fact, what makes the emergence of the idea of empathy so central to the study of ethical discourse: the perception of someone else's suffering was, and is, a good reason to try to understand and to represent the experiences of that individual. Since no one can 'know', in the strictly empirical sense of the word, what someone else is feeling, there is likely to be some disagreement about what it is *really* like to be the individual who is the subject of empathic representations - especially in the context of ethical debates over the treatment of individuals who are perceived as vulnerable in some way by the participants. Arguably, the purpose of disseminating representations of the experiences of those who

are suffering, exploited, or vulnerable in text would be (at least ostensibly) to persuade readers of the 'truth' of this empathic knowledge. This goal, though, is hardly incompatible with that of the solicitation of emotional responses to the knowledge provided about the subject. The emotional response of the reader may even be an author's immediate goal in providing empathic knowledge of a subject, since a reader's emotional identification with the subject is likely to be a powerful incentive for supporting a particular cause. It is, however, the distinction of empathy as a means of *knowing*, and the strategies that authors use to construct a kind of knowledge through empathy, that is the concern of this thesis. It is this element of knowledge that distinguishes 'empathy' from 'sympathy' and related expressions, and which, I argue, is historically specific and a characteristic of Victorian ethical discourse.

In each of my case studies, I establish how each text I examine, interacts with the context of each ethical debate, producing meanings which function as knowledge, or even as evidence, in the place of information that could not be empirically observed. I link the authors' discussions of what they could not personally observe or discover with aspects of the respective ethical debates that could never be known by anyone, because the authors themselves frequently make this connection. At times, this elision of the invisible with that which was merely unseen was directly ordered by historically specific and characteristically nineteenth-century modes of investigation and knowing, such as systems of inspection, or the compilation of case studies in medical treatment. These were arguably designed to 'objectively' produce a kind of knowledge that was deeper than what could be gained by the simple application of any one person's empirical faculties. Other authors who operated from conventions (especially popular conventions)

that allowed them to be more unapologetically subjective were, not surprisingly, more emotional in their representations, but their strategies still approximated the production of 'knowledge' that was the goal of their ostensibly more objective counterparts. As I have discussed, I do not view empathic knowledge as in any way divorced from emotion, and I do not refrain from examining the way that these authors use emotional language, particularly when they present emotion as a way of knowing, or claim some special knowledge of their subjects for emotional reasons. I am specifically interested, however, in examining these texts to discover the ways that these authors represented empathy as a form of knowledge, despite the fact that the knowledge that they construct is likely to be, and often meant to be, emotionally persuasive. I have selected a range of popular and professional texts as a means of engaging with texts that were meant to be strictly objective, as well as with those which were unapologetically emotional; many, of course, are somewhere in between. By this principle of selection I mean to ensure that I survey the construction of empathic 'knowledge' as strictly or loosely conceived as such.

In the contexts of the ethical debates I study, the relationship between representation and reality could hardly be more crucial. The favoured reception or dismissal of texts that represent the perspective of the vulnerable could have very real consequences for the lives of the individuals who are represented in them. It is therefore vitally important for the historian to try to determine how such representations have been constructed, and in what context. To begin to do so, it is necessary to understand how the idea of knowing and communicating someone else's experiences came to be taken seriously, as something more than just a fantasy. I argue that the explanation lies in the

history of the understanding of the relationship between the imagination and the senses, and of the role of the imagination in perception.

The acceptance of the imagination as an important factor in perception enabled and encouraged individuals to 'speak' for other individuals despite the inexorable contradictions at the heart of such communication. Over the course of the past twenty-five years, many scholars have argued that during the nineteenth century, the human senses came to be viewed as limited and flawed in their independent ability to supply a person with a complete knowledge of reality and the world around him or her, whereas the imagination came to be increasingly understood to play an important role in the process of perception. Scholars have explored the implications of a shift in visual and perceptual theory, from the earlier belief that the 'truth' was gained by more exclusively empirical means to the Romantic embrace of the imagination as a crucial means of 'filling in the blanks' left by what our senses could not tell us, in terms of what this meant for the discourses of science (most especially natural history), literature, and the visual arts. This general argument serves as the point of departure for my thesis, in which I explore the implications of this development in the understanding of observation and perception for ethical discourse.[2] I argue that this development enabled people to speak and express on behalf of others in new and rich ways, and that 'empathy' was the name that was eventually given to the imaginative production of new *knowledge* about

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[2]The following works will be discussed shortly in greater detail: Gillian Beer, *Darwin's Plots: Evolutionary Narrative in Darwin, George Eliot, and Nineteenth-Century Fiction* (London and New York: Routledge, 1983); Jonathan Crary, *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992); Kate Flint, *The Victorians and the Visual Imagination* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); George Levine, *Darwin and the Novelists* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988); James Krasner, *The Entangled Bank: Visual Perception and the Representation of Nature in Post-Darwinian Narrative* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992); Jonathan Smith, *Charles Darwin and Victorian Visual Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

difference, as opposed to the exclusive production of feeling, sentiment, or sympathy based upon commonality of experience. Information provided by the senses is, of course, crucial in the construction (as well as the representation) of empathic knowledge, and prior experience provides a crucial starting point from which to imagine another's perspective. Further, as I have said, empathic knowledge is frequently very emotional. However, the use of the imagination as a serious tool in the production of knowledge about difference, especially as a means of compensating for the limitations of the human senses or empirical obstacles to understanding, is characteristic of empathic discourse, though empirical knowledge, sympathy based upon commonalities, and emotional responses may all contribute (and almost always do contribute) to the understanding of someone else's perspective as well.

In *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century*, Jonathan Crary argues that during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries in Europe, the imagination came to be embraced as an important part of the process of perception; whereas before that time it had not been considered that the imagination played any positive role in the acquisition of 'real' knowledge.[3] As Gillian Beer, George Levine, James Krasner, and Jonathan Smith have all noted, the acceptance of the limitations of the human senses and the increased belief in the powers of the imagination had significant implications for the discourse of science in the nineteenth century, most saliently exemplified by the work of Charles Darwin [1809-1882].[4] These scholars have explored the influence of the resulting new mode of scientific discourse

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[3] Crary, *Techniques*.

[4] In particular, see Charles Darwin, *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection, or the Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life* (London: John Murray, 1859); *The Descent of Man* (London: John Murray, 1871); *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965 [1872]).

upon nineteenth-century literature and culture (and, in turn, the influence that literature also had upon science).[5]

Kate Flint has studied the effects of accepting of the imagination as an important part of perception on the art of the nineteenth century by closely considering the dialogue between the seen and unseen within the mind of the nineteenth-century observer, especially with regard to Pre-Raphaelite painting.[6] Flint articulates the significance to Victorian culture of the acknowledgment of the limitations of the human senses, especially with regard to the sense of sight, as this sense was, and tends to be, privileged over the other senses as the primary means through which humans acquire knowledge of their surroundings. Through an exploration of discourses of 'non-sight' in artistic and literary expression (such as blindness, as well as sight obscured, by dust in the eye), for example, Flint demonstrates the way that Victorians embraced the limitations of the human sense of vision (or a lack of sight) as a means of acquiring a deeper understanding of the world than sight alone could provide. Other scholars have explored this kind of imaginative vision in studying the relationship of Darwin's science and evolutionary narrative to the construction of Victorian works of fiction.[7] I believe that the importance of the kind of sight (within non-sight) that Flint discusses within the context of the expression of the visual arts in the Victorian imagination can be traced beyond the expression of understanding of interior (imaginative) visual processes to a veritable 'opening up' of human interiority to study, consideration, interrogation, and expression.

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[5] See Beer, *Plots*; Levine, *Novelists*; Krasner, *Entangled*; Smith, *Visual Culture*. For general studies of Darwin's life and works, see Adrian Desmond and James Moore, *Darwin: The Life of a Tormented Evolutionist* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1994); E. Janet Browne, *Charles Darwin: Voyaging* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), and *Charles Darwin: The Power of Place* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003).

[6] Flint, *Visual Imagination*.

[7] See Beer, *Plots*; Levine, *Novelists*; Krasner, *Entangled*; Smith, *Visual Culture*.

That which was formerly 'closed' within the human interior was newly made available through the notion that the limitations of the senses could be overcome through the imagination.

I argue that 'sight in non-sight' inspired not only great works of science, art, and literature, but also the creation of texts and stories that made use of the imagination in order to represent individuals with little power to make themselves seen and heard. Ethical discourse, just as many other forms of cultural discourse, was transformed and changed during the course of the nineteenth century, and I argue that changes in visual theory discussed by other scholars, with reference to the expression of knowledge as processed by the imagination, also had crucial implications with regard to the way that people considered and attempted to represent the experience of the 'other'. I believe that the discourse of empathy began to develop as changes in the understanding of perception encouraged a persistent, if at times awkward, cultural foray into the realms of human (and non-human) interiority. In this thesis, I explore the ways in which nineteenth-century ethical discourse reflected the acceptance of the imagination as an important part of perception. I show how the texts of Victorian ethical and social reformers reflect a nineteenth-century belief in the possibility of overcoming the limitations of the human senses and constructing knowledge with the aid of the imagination.

Crary positions the figure of the nineteenth-century 'observer' against an older, strictly empirical (Cartesian) sense-data model, into which the processes of the mind and imagination absolutely did not figure, except maybe as a hindrance.[8] He traces the decline of the Cartesian, or 'camera obscura' model of vision as a necessary condition for the rise to prominence of 'the observer'. According to Crary, the model of the camera

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[8] Crary, *Techniques*, p. 48.

obscura was central to the Cartesian understanding of vision. René Descartes [1596-1650] formulated the model of the camera obscura in order to avoid the subjective impressions brought to the experience of vision by the human being attached to the eye. Crary explains that whereas Descartes was troubled by 'the uncertainties of mere human vision and the confusion of the senses, the camera obscura is congruent with his quest to found human knowledge on a purely objective view of the world'.[9] For Descartes, the disembodied eye was a more perfect tool for vision than the eye that was connected to a human body and mind, since the pure transmissions of the eye could be compromised or corrupted by other thoughts and feelings. Crary argues that as vision began to be respected as a process of the mind rather than just of the eye, a new and more modern understanding of vision as perception resulted in the adoption of the active observer as a replacement for the model of the camera obscura and Descartes' theories of vision.

Crary offers Johan Wolfgang von Goethe [1749-1832] as one of the first to look inward and truly 'see'. Crary demonstrates how Goethe's 'use' of the camera obscura deviated significantly from its purpose as he began to explore new territories of vision: 'Goethe . . . abruptly and stunningly abandons the order of the camera obscura: "The hole being then closed, let him look towards the darkest part of the room; a circular image will now be seen to float before him".'[10] For Goethe, sight in darkness, where there is little or nothing to 'see', or sight with closed eyes, demonstrated that a significant part of visual knowledge came from within. The eyes and the senses, the processes of perception and the production of knowledge, had meaning and truth in themselves, rather than functioning as a means to truth that necessarily existed wholly externally to the observer.

[9] Crary, *Techniques*, p. 48.
[10] Crary, *Techniques*, p. 68.

For Goethe, the eyes and the senses were imperfect; his proof of this was that despite the acceptance of interior human processes as tools of vision, there were things that humans simply could not see. Goethe gave, as examples of these, pure light and pure transparence.[11] It is important to note that Goethe was still able to discuss these as things that he knew to exist. Goethe recognized that an important part of perception occurred within the mind of the observer, and that far from being an impediment, the imagination played a very important role in the process of human perception.

Romantic writers like Goethe were entirely fascinated by the imagination and its processes and possibilities. While it is arguable, as James Engell suggests, that the Romantic interest in the imagination was an inheritance of the eighteenth century, the Romantics developed this interest into a veritable and passionate pre-occupation that would serve to define the way that nineteenth-century thinkers and writers viewed the world.[12] Indeed, the processes of the imagination were appreciated with an almost religious wonder during the early nineteenth century. Religion was transformed by the value that was newly attached to the imagination. The late eighteenth century saw a decline in Deism, which way of thinking had placed a great confidence in the empirical knowledge of the world as a way of discerning the Divine power and plan. In place of Deism arose a way of thinking about God and the meaning of life that placed a much greater importance upon mystery and spirituality. One of the most prominent features of Romantic religion was the sense of the inner life of the individual soul, which was at once isolated and mysteriously connected with all its fellows, with God and all of creation. In *The Prelude*, Wordsworth expressed the idea that the very 'inward' quality

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[11] Cited by Crary, *Techniques*, p. 71.

[12] James Engell, *The Creative Imagination: Enlightenment to Romanticism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981).

of life within the self that tended to isolate the experience of the individual self, was really the spirit that connected everyone and everything: 'the one interior life/Which is in all things'.[13] The imagination was the element that served to connect the 'interior life' of one individual to every other. As Forest Pyle writes, 'the imagination is the figure by which Romantic texts address the disjunction between subject and society as well as that between spirit and matter'.[14] Thus, the imagination provided a way of knowing and understanding the interior experiences of others, despite the fact that this goal was empirically impossible.

Romanticism inherited from the eighteenth century an intense interest in 'sympathy', which term had served by itself since ancient times to refer to the relationship of the self to the other. The eighteenth-century interest in sympathy, however, was more of an interest in feeling than in knowing and understanding. This was simply because there is really no way to know someone else's interior experiences. Such 'knowledge' can only be imagined. I do not claim to be able to identify, with pinpoint accuracy, the precise moment of the beginning of empathy, either as an idea or a practice, nor do I believe that it would be possible to do this for any idea with such a complex development and meaning. I locate the beginnings of 'empathy' during the Romantic period, not because people did not care or think about understanding 'the other' at any time before, but because it was at this time that literary and other artists began to associate knowledge so intimately with the imagination that a 'knowledge' of what could only be imagined could begin to be put forth as such. I consider, in fact, that eighteenth-

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[13] William Wordsworth, *The Prelude, or, Growth of a Poet's Mind, 1799*, in Ernest de Selincourt (ed.), *The Prelude: Edited from Manuscripts, with Introduction, Textual and Critical Notes by Ernest de Selincourt* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1926), MS RV 206, p. 525.

[14] Forest Pyle, *The Ideology of the Imagination: Subject and Society in the Discourse of Romanticism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), p. 1.

century concerns about sympathy and compassion were absolutely crucial to the development of the idea of empathy, and that the empathic discourse of the nineteenth century can be viewed as part of a much larger historical movement to solve the problem of how to understand and represent others. Eighteenth-century literature and philosophy investigated many aspects of this problem. The discourse of sensibility and sentiment in the eighteenth century were devoted to the exploration of the relationship between the self and 'the other' and often used imaginative means to achieve and encourage sensitivity and compassion for others.[15] But was the moral refinement that was the goal of such discourse really considered to be 'knowledge'? Was not the focus of this discourse the improvement of the self, based upon what could be summoned from within the self, even if the reasons for wishing to improve the self were altruistic, rather than selfish? I view the Romantic era as a turning point in the history of the attempt to understand and represent others, since it was then that knowledge and evidence were re-envisioned during this time as partly produced by the imagination. As a result, knowledge began to function around the absolute constraints of what could be grasped by the senses. Life, the earth, and its ancient secrets began to be theorized according to the assembly of mere empirical clues through the use of the imagination during the nineteenth century. At the same time, in a similar fashion, knowledge of subjects whose bodies and experiences could not be apprehended empirically began to be represented in legal, scientific, and medical (as well as popular and journalistic) texts.

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[15] See Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976 [1759]). On eighteenth-century sensibility and sentiment, see John Mullan, *Sentiment and Sociability: The Language of Feeling in the Eighteenth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988); Janet Todd, *Sensibility: An Introduction* (London: Methuen, 1986).

I argue that the convergence of the Romantic obsession with the imagination with the interest in sympathy that continued to develop from the eighteenth century, resulted in a need to think about and express how the self could understand the other in a way that reached out to the feelings and processes of the other, rather than in a way that was restricted to the empirical confines of the self. Engell argues that in the early nineteenth century, sympathy 'becomes that special power of the imagination which permits the self to escape its own confines, to identify with other people, to perceive things in a new way, and to develop an aesthetic appreciation of the world that coalesces both the subjective self and the objective 'other'.[16] In the nineteenth century, the tools of the imagination supplied by the Romantic movement, and the relative freedom from empiricism that resulted, enabled sympathy to *become* something else - and that at the close of the nineteenth century, that something else would be named 'empathy'. I would contrast eighteenth-century sympathy with what would develop into empathy in the nineteenth century by applying the central analogy of M.H. Abrams' famous study of the emergence of Romanticism, *The Mirror and the Lamp*.[17] Whereas the goal of eighteenth-century sympathy was to imitate or reproduce in oneself the feelings of another, in the nineteenth century the goal was instead to understand or to illuminate that difference (between the experience of self and other) as itself.

Engell also locates the beginning of empathy in the Romantic period, despite the fact that there was no word in the English language to express it. He distinguishes it from sympathy by contrasting the thoughts of Coleridge, who spoke of an imaginative union between the perceiver and the object perceived, with those of eighteenth-century

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[16] Engell, *Imagination*, pp. 143-144.
[17] M.H. Abrams, *The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1953).

philosopher Adam Smith, who (as Engell concisely summarizes) 'said that when we sympathize with someone, we are actually working up our own feelings into duplicating his'.[18] Sympathy, then, in the eighteenth century (and indeed today) was a feeling that could be replicated within the self, based upon perceived commonalities with the subject, whereas by the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, increased confidence in the imagination and a less strict reliance upon the empirical powers rendered a certain independence from commonalities in the pursuit of the experience of the 'other', and an inaccessible and impossible 'knowledge' of the subject's ultimate difference became, in effect, the ultimate prize. Of course, any such 'knowledge' can only begin with the perception of some kind of commonality, however imagined. Despite the fact that the idea of empathy did not, and arguably still does not, function wholly independently in practice from that of sympathy, I contend that from the period of the Romantic writers, people began to express notions of sympathy/empathy in ways that were not strictly bound by the empiricism of what the self could really 'know', but that would collapse boundaries of self and other in order to transcend or get past the limitations of the human senses. The authors whose texts I examine in this thesis engage with the problem of collapsing empirical boundaries and work to collapse such boundaries in order that they might try to understand and communicate the interior experiences of others. I begin my study at the close of the Romantic period because I believe that the tools of imaginative 'vision' that gave rise to empathy were developed during this period, and that all

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[18] Engell, *Imagination*, p. 157.

expressions of sympathy/empathy that have been made since the Romantic period have reflected its pre-occupation with the imagination.[19]

During the Victorian era, the effects of the Romantic pre-occupation with the imagination spilled over into virtually every sphere of thought and expression, including science. George Levine calls Charles Darwin the most powerful 'codifier' of the movement in science and history toward a greater dependence upon the imagination.[20] He and Gillian Beer study Darwin, as an author and a scientist, alongside other scientists who made significant use of the imagination in the formation of scientific theories, and in dialogue with literary artists who seem to have influenced Darwin or who were arguably influenced by his work. Like Goethe, Darwin and other scientists of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries required their readers to try to 'see' with their eyes closed. Darwin had to persuade people to try to imagine things that happened millions of years ago, and changes that happened so slowly that they could never be apprehended by the human eye.[21]

Despite the undeniable importance of the Cartesian model of knowledge and vision, its decline in favour of the model of the imaginative observer heralded changes that would afford great benefits to science, culture, and society. These benefits are exemplified by the work of Charles Darwin. In many ways, it is now difficult to imagine how knowledge and what could be considered to be evidence could be absolutely restricted to that which could be proven directly through empirical evidence. Despite

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[19] On the association of Romanticism with the imagination, see Abrams, *Mirror*; Engell, *Imagination*; Pyle, *Ideology*. See also Jerome McGann, *The Romantic Ideology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), for a study of the Romantic imagination as well as of the complexities of Romanticism.
[20] Levine, *Novelists*, p. 9.
[21] See Darwin, *Origin*; *Descent*.

marvellous advancements in technologies that have expanded the scope of our human senses, we are well aware in the twenty-first century that many things that we claim to know about are inaccessible at the level of direct sensory perception, even with the aid of every instrument at our disposal. We push ahead with major developments, for example, in psychology and quantum physics, without letting the lack of many types of empirical information stand in our way. In a world strictly governed by Cartesian rules about knowledge and evidence, much of what we know would not be considered knowledge. Certainly, we would not be able to discuss evolution - or empathy - with any seriousness.

This is not to say that the decline of the Cartesian model of knowledge began in the nineteenth century and continues to decline in a linear fashion today. Despite his tremendous influence upon Western thought, Descartes did not enjoy complete acceptance during own time, after his death, or throughout the eighteenth century. Nor can we say that the twentieth and twenty-first centuries have been largely anti-Cartesian; far from it. Rather, I argue, that the first and greatest upsurge in anti-Cartesian thinking began in the nineteenth century, reached its summit in the middle decades of that century, and inspired a fervent, pro-Cartesian reaction near the very end of the century, which achieved a certain hegemony by the early decades of the twentieth century, despite leaving us with a rich anti-Cartesian legacy.

The resurgence of Cartesian thinking at the turn of the twentieth century was marked by the rise to prominence of behaviourism, which was mostly founded by the cognitive psychologist Conwy Lloyd Morgan [1852-1936], in part as a reaction against the works of Charles Darwin and George Romanes [1848-1894] concerning the study of

the minds of animals.[22] The debate over animal minds will be discussed shortly in greater

detail, but for the purposes of this work it is important to first contextualize behaviourism

as essentially and polemically Cartesian; Morgan's 'canon', as it has come to be known

(and to which strict behaviourists will always endeavour to adhere), was not new at the

turn of the century [1903], but was a fairly precise reiteration of the central argument

made by Descartes regarding the study of animals.[23] Both arguments insist upon the

simplest explanation possible regarding the behaviour of animals and refuse to

acknowledge any possibility that animals may operate at a higher level of complexity

than can be proven by empirical evidence. Both Morgan's and Descartes' arguments

concerning animal minds have been classed as the application of the maxim of 'Occam's

razor' (which advises that one should make as few assumptions as possible in the

explanation of scientific events) to the study of animal life.

What Morgan opposed in Romanes' (and Darwin's) work was primarily anecdotal

methodology, which could not be tested or controlled, because animals could not

understand or produce language.[24] Neither Romanes nor Darwin invented this

methodology, which tended to try to understand the animal mind using the information

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[22] Conwy Lloyd Morgan was a comparative psychologist and philosopher who is perhaps best known for his influential position regarding the empirical assessment of animal behaviour, to be discussed shortly. See G.C. Field, J.F.M. Clark (rev.), 'Conwy Lloyd Morgan', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004). On Darwin's study of animal minds, see Darwin, *Expression*. George John Romanes was an evolutionary biologist who was particularly interested in the study of the evolution of mental life in both humans and animals. See Roger Smith, 'George John Romanes', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004). Romanes' most important works include *Animal Intelligence* (London: Kegan Paul, 1881) and *Mental Evolution in Animals* (London: Kegan Paul, 1883).

[23] Conwy Lloyd Morgan, *An Introduction to Comparative Psychology* (London: Walter Scott Publishing, 1894). For a history of the division between behaviourism and ethology, see Robert Boakes, *From Darwin to Behaviourism: Psychology and the Minds of Animals* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984).

[24] Like the study of animal minds, anthropomorphism, as a way of thinking about animals, is now beginning to lose its fallacious stigma. See Robert W. Mitchell (ed.), *Anthropomorphism, Anecdotes, and Animals* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1996).

gained by subjective human experience. This was the way that ordinary people tried to make sense of animal minds. The result was to produce a narrative from the information that was available. Anecdotal evidence really was (and is) the only evidence for animal minds, since animals lack language and cannot describe or explain their experiences. That Victorian science was prepared to allow people to step beyond strict empiricism and to utilize the imagination in order to study animal minds (alongside other 'unprovable' subjects of inquiry, like evolution) was favourable to the development of an ethical discourse based upon empathy. This epistemology not only encouraged people to try to speak for animals, such as working horses, but also for vulnerable humans, whose words were ignored, doubted, dismissed, or otherwise disallowed.

Though dominant throughout the twentieth century, since the 1970s a group of scientists have begun to reject 'Morgan's Canon' as too restrictive. 'Cognitive ethologists' like Donald Griffin have simply refused to make the assumption that 'Morgan's Canon' demands, and have developed a new kind of comparative psychology that allows for the existence of subjective experiences in the non-human animal.[25] Cognitive ethologists insist that there is much to be learned about the animal mind, despite the fact that its existence cannot be proven by direct empirical evidence. This debate over behaviourism and the minds of animals is illustrative of the Cartesian and anti-Cartesian forces that inform the struggle over empathy and the consideration of an 'insideness' that we all know to exist through personal experience, but which cannot be communicated empirically, even through language. The history of the attempts that have

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[25] See Donald Griffin, *The Question of Animal Awareness: Evolutionary Continuity of Mental Experience* (New York: Rockefeller University Press, 1976); *Animal Thinking* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984); *Animal Minds* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992). See also Colin Allen and Mark Bekoff, *Species of Mind* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1997); *The Cognitive Animal* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002).

been made to access and represent this 'insideness' in spite of its inaccessibility is also

the history of the construction and consideration of the unknowable - the 'other'. It is

helpful to contextualize this struggle within the history of ideas as fundamentally a

struggle between Cartesian and anti-Cartesian modes of thinking. In this thesis I will

examine how, during a period of time characterized by trends toward subjective,

imaginative, and anti-Cartesian thought and discourse (as the nineteenth century has often

been), people attempted to defy empirical barriers to knowledge by attempting to speak

for others who were vulnerable and could not, for some reason, speak for themselves.

The ascendancy of the Cartesian mode of reason resulted in the dismissal of the

claims of the interior life upon the world outside the body, inasmuch as the interior life

could not be articulated. For dualism was also discontinuity; only the production of

knowledge could prove thought, and though humans were more than the sum of the parts

of their body and processes, it was their use of language, as expression of thought, that

proved this. Though the human spirit was thought to be in touch with truth in its

incorporeality, the truth of the world was considered to be external to the body,

measurable only by the production of knowledge that could be accessed as or by

language. What could be doubted, according to Descartes, had to be discarded. I argue

that it was as, and when, this model of knowledge began to lose influence in favour of the

possibilities of the imagination in the nineteenth century, that the ethical and social

discourse came to be characterized by the idea of empathy.

The central critique of the Cartesian model of knowledge (as propounded

especially, but not first or exclusively, by post-structuralist theorists) is essentially the

questioning of the primacy of *logos* as the determinant of thought and of the mind. The

importance of the concept of *logos* to the philosophy of Descartes is demonstrated by his

relegation of animals to the category of 'automata'. According to Descartes, since

animals could not use language in order to prove that they had thoughts, it could be

doubted that they have thoughts at all. Thus, Descartes considered animals to be nothing

more than machines designed to mimic the more complex actions of humans, and that as

such any consideration bestowed upon them was wasted.[26] It is not surprising that

modern animal rights activists sharply impugn the Cartesian classification of animals as

automata, but they do not represent the first such critique, despite the great influence that

Descartes has had upon modern philosophy. In his own time, Descartes was harshly

critiqued by other philosophers for his refusal to consider the suffering of animals,

especially because it meant that he and his colleagues felt free to practice gruesome

vivisections upon animals without any regard or remorse for the agony they inflicted.[27]

A subsequent generation of philosophers saw one of its greatest thinkers, Voltaire [1694-

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[26] 'These animal bodies can be considered as machines; and since they have been made by the hands of God, they are incomparably better constructed, and have internal movements which are more marvellous than any which can be invented by humans . . . if there were any machines which had the organs and external shape of a monkey, or some other animal which lacked reason, we would have no way of telling that they were not of completely the same nature as these animals. By contrast, if there were any such machines which resembled *our* bodies, and imitated as many of our actions as their nature allowed them to, we would still have two infallible ways of detecting that, despite this, they were not genuine human beings. The first is that they would never be able to put words or other signs together, as we do for revealing our thoughts to others. It's easy to imagine a machine which can utter words — and even one which can utter certain words which are appropriate to physical events which cause changes in its internal parts. For example, if it is touched in one place, it asks what you want to say to it; and if it is touched in another place, it screams that you are hurting it; and so on. What it cannot do is to combine words in different ways, so as to respond to the *meaning* of everything that is said in its presence —as even the most dim-witted humans can do.' Rene Descartes, *Discourse on the Method of Rightly Conducting One's Reason and Seeking the Truth in the Sciences, Part V* (1637), Paul Tannery and Charles Ernest Adam (eds), *Oeuvres De Descartes* (Paris, 1897-1909), vol. IV, p. 56-57, George MacDonald Ross (tr.) (1998) [online text] <http://www.philosophy.leeds.ac.uk/GMR/hmp/texts/modern/descartes/discourse/discourse.html>.

[27] Pierre Bayle [1647-1706], for example, led the sceptical reaction against Descartes in the late seventeenth century. In 1692, Bayle published a list of criticisms of Descartes, which included a rejection of the Cartesian view of animals as automata, in *The Historical and Critical Dictionary . . . Translated into English with Many Additions and Corrections Made by the Author* (London: C. Harper, 1710).

1778], respond to Descartes directly regarding his classification of animals as automata and his practice of vivisection; Voltaire considered Descartes to have been quite monstrous.[28] Carolus Linnaeus [1707-1778] also had trouble accepting that animals were mere automata: 'Surely', Linnaeus suggested, 'Descartes never saw an ape.'[29]

Perhaps the most significant dismissal of the primacy of *logos* came from Jeremy Bentham [1748-1832] at the very end of the eighteenth century: 'The question is not "Can they reason?", nor "Can they talk?", but "Can they suffer?"' This is possibly the most direct critique of the relationship between language and the right to consideration that has ever been posed. It is arguable that in thinking deeply about what should entitle an individual to consideration in suffering, and in placing language (and voicelessness) at the heart of the problem, Bentham was beginning to develop a discourse of empathy. At the heart of the struggle of empathy is the 'question of the animal'.

According to Jacques Derrida, Bentham's proposal to change the logocentric criteria by which humans are deemed to be worthy, and animals unworthy, of consideration in their suffering challenged a long-standing and culturally entrenched definition of the animal as primarily a being without *logos*:

the question will not be to know whether animals are of the type *zōon logon echon*, whether they *can* speak or reason thanks to that *capacity* or that attribute implied in the *logos*, the *can-have [pouvoir-avoir]* of the *logos*, the aptitude for

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[28] Voltaire (François-Marie Arouet) [1694-1778], 'A Reply to Descartes' [1764], in Peter Singer and Tom Regan (eds), *Animal Rights and Human Obligations* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1976), pp. 20-22. For a discussion of vivisection and antivivisection in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Europe (with particular reference to Descartes), see Andreas-Holger Maehle and Ulrich Tröhler, 'Animal Experimentation from Antiquity to the End of the Eighteenth Century: Attitudes and Arguments', in Nicolaas Rupke (ed.), *Vivisection in Historical Perspective* (London: Croon Helm, 1987), pp. 14-47.

[29] Cited by Giorgio Agamben, in *The Open: Man and Animal*, Kevin Attel (tr.) (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), p. 23.

the *logos* (and logocentrism is first of all a thesis regarding the animal, the animal deprived of the *logos*, deprived of the *can-have-the-logos*: this is the thesis, position, or pre-supposition maintained from Aristotle to Heidegger, from Descartes to Kant, Levinas and Lacan). [30]

It is important to note that, as Derrida points out, while Bentham's challenge represents a significant moment in the history of thinking about animals, it did not re-direct the thinking of every philosopher who would succeed him. Still, it fixed the 'question' of animals as primarily a dispute over the primacy of *logos*. This encouraged a re-examination of ethics as shaped from a perspective of power instead of from a justice innate to the human. This 'justice', of course, has no meaning outside of *logos*, and it is the human capacity for such as reason and speech that gives the best (and only) proof of its existence. Further, human justice (based, as it is, upon reason, and so exclusive to humans) is quite capable of spinning 'truths' in denial. Voltaire, Bentham, and others have questioned the rectitude of the absolute power of human over animal. Such challenges demonstrate that there is something within human reason that is quite capable of recognizing the element of denial in claims of essential human superiority based on *logos*. Derrida continues his discussion of Bentham's challenge: 'Once its protocol is established, the form of this question changes everything. It no longer simply concerns the *logos*, the disposition and the whole configuration of the *logos*, having it or not . . . It bears witness, manifesting already, as question, the response that testifies to a sufferance, a passion, a not-being-able'.[31] What Bentham, and later Derrida have really asked is whether we don't all already know the answers to the questions that cannot be posed

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[30] Jacques Derrida, 'The Animal that Therefore I Am: More to Follow', David Wills (tr.) *Critical Inquiry*, 28 (2002), p. 396.
[31] Derrida, 'Animal', p. 396.

without language. They suggest that the communication of pain and suffering as well as the response to these are somehow beyond, or before *logos*.

Derrida argues further that Bentham's words attempted to reverse the power that is wielded by *logos* by turning the expression of ability to express a lack of ability, powerlessness, or voicelessness, of which humans are all too aware:

> The word *can [pouvoir]* changes sense and sign here once one asks 'can they suffer?'. . . 'Can they suffer?' amounts to asking 'can they *not be able*?' And what of this inability [impouvoir]? What of the vulnerability felt on the basis of this inability? What is the power at this heart of non-power? . . . Being able to suffer is no longer a power, it is a possibility without power, a possibility of the impossible. Mortality resides there, as the most radical means of thinking the finitude that we share with animals, the mortality that belongs to the very finitude of life, the experience of compassion, to the possibility of this non-power, the possibility of this impossibility, the anguish of this vulnerability and the vulnerability of this anguish.[32]

There *is* power at the heart of non-power, as Derrida suggests. It is the power of the vulnerable and the suffering to excite empathy and to provoke action in others. This power, as all power, is negotiated. However, it must also be said that such power (at the heart of non-power) is often rendered impotent as easily as one shuts ones eyes. Many of the subjects for whom others attempted to speak in the texts I examine were kept away from observers who might have been moved by the sight of them, especially if these might have been further inspired to move against those who were viewed as responsible for the oppression and suffering.   There were those who, for profit, or some other

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[32] Derrida, 'Animal', p. 396.

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benefit, denied this power by becoming hardened against it, and who encouraged others to either become hardened against it, to ignore it, or to become convinced that circumstances were not what they seemed to be. It is even arguable that those who had something to gain, and who were close to the individuals who were suffering, were likely to use their proximity to the situation to be the ones to speak for these individuals, in order that they might have diffused the concerns of others, and to convince them to look the other way.

It is important to consider that although non-human animals give the perfect illustration of power at the heart of non-power because they lack language, language is not power in itself. The powers of language are not always effective against oppression; a person's voice can be stifled. To silence a person who could otherwise speak out about finding themselves in some circumstances of non-power, is to render them less able to negotiate these circumstances. Without words, we all occupy the position of the vulnerable animal; the animal reminds us that language, just as the power at the heart of the non-power which attends an animal's lack of language, can be taken away, denied, ignored, or otherwise rendered impotent. Ultimately, the animal shares with us the voicelessness of our own interiority.[33]

Empathy is not only about animals. It is, however, very much about the voicelessness we share with them. This voicelessness is not the same thing as a lack of language - for one can have a voice without language - but it is the very same as our awareness of a world beyond language, and beyond what language can express. Our knowledge of vulnerability is at heart an awareness that there is that there is something in

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[33] For a study of the consideration of the (human) inability to speak in the nineteenth and early twentieth century, see L.S. Jacyna, *Lost Words: Narratives of Language and the Brain, 1825-1926* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).

ourselves beyond *logos*. This something more is more ourselves than our reason, our thoughts, or our words, but these are our only means of defending it.

Certainly it has happened that humans have sometimes been treated as if they were voiceless, without *logos*, 'like animals'. Traditionally, the taboo of equating people with animals has provided a safeguard against the deprivation of *logos* that is the heart of all human vulnerability. As this taboo was long reinforced by theological rules and conventions, it is hardly surprising that such general anxiety followed Charles Darwin's pronunciation of the continuity of species in the mid-nineteenth century. In doing so, Darwin removed the safeguard of the definition of humanity as a distinct and superior classification of creation. Whereas language had once provided confirmation of the special gifts that God had bestowed upon mankind as created in the image of the divine (as such, able to create, articulate, and communicate the ideas that comprised thought), what was to link human to human, in sacredness and safety, when human was ultimately animal?

Michel Foucault argues that 'man', as a subject for possible study and understanding, was invented only in the eighteenth century, in part as a result of the development of theories of subjectivity that allowed for a more self-reflecting consideration of language and its limits.[34] Giorgio Agamben further explores the origins of the study of 'man', suggesting that the concomitant invention of 'humanity' allowed for the existence of the animal-in-man, which separated elements of civilization in humanity as could be distinguished from man-as-animal: 'the anthropological machine of the moderns . . . functions by excluding as not (yet) human an already human being from

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[34] Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*, Alan Sheridan (tr.) (New York: Vintage, 1970).

itself, that is, by animalising the human, by isolating the nonhuman within the human'.[35]

Thus, some humans could be portrayed as more 'animal' or closer to 'the animal' than others. As humans began to be viewed as having evolved alongside all other living creatures on earth, it became increasingly plausible to view groups of humans as having achieved different levels of humanity, especially with regard to their proximity to western culture and ideas about 'civilization'. Darwin demonstrated the way that other human beings could be viewed as closer to 'wild' nature than to civilized humanity in a well-known passage from his letters, where he juxtaposed a description of his response to his first encounter with a 'savage' with an expression of longing for the comfort of the high culture of home:

> I have seen nothing which more completely astonished me than the first sight of a savage. It was a naked Fuegian, his long hair blowing about, his face besmeared with paint. There is in their countenances an expression which I believe, to those who have not seen it, must be inconceivably wild. Standing on a rock he uttered tones and made gesticulations, than which the cries of domestic animals are far more intelligible. When I return to England, you must take me in hand with respect to the fine arts. I yet recollect there was a man called Raffaelle Sanctus. How delightful it will be once again to see, in the Fitzwilliam, Titian's Venus. How much more than delightful to go to some good concert or fine opera.[36]

Beer has interpreted this passage as Darwin's attempt to negotiate 'a sense of fascinated helplessness at finding himself unable to interpret the profound difference of the

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[35] Agamben, *Open*, p. 37.
[36] Charles Darwin to C. Whitley, 23 July 1834, in F. Darwin (ed.), *The Life and Letters of Charles Darwin*, 3 vols. (New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1905), p. 227.

[Fuegian]'.[37] Unable to conceive of any commonalities between himself and the Fuegian beyond that of species, Darwin pondered the meaning of the absolute difference between self and other in light of his surprising inability to relate to an individual of his own species. The Fuegian, of course, would not have been able to relate to Darwin any better than Darwin could relate to him. The event seems to have highlighted for Darwin the inaccessibility of interior experience; without reference to a common culture, Darwin could not feel sympathy for the Fuegian. There was only ineffable difference.

Particularly interesting for the purposes of this study is Darwin's contrast of the Fuegian's expressions to those of a domestic animal, which, as part of civilization, are 'far more intelligible'. The classification of people and animals became far more complex as humans were acknowledged to be animals themselves. Since the eighteenth century the world had become considerably 'smaller' as a result of colonization and global networks of trade and information, so that there was increased awareness among Britons that there were people who inhabited distant parts of the world who were vastly different from themselves. With the decline of the theological imperative that insisted upon a vast classificatory divide between humans and animals, humans whose lives were so very different from Europeans as to have been difficult for them to understand were easily classified as representative of the animal within the human.

I argue that Agamben's argument can be extended to include members of nineteenth-century western society who tended to be classed more as subjects for study than as candidates for the humane exchange of information or participants in a conversation. I refer to the subjects about whom the authors of the texts I study in this project endeavoured to understand and whose experiences they attempted to write about.

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[37] Gillian Beer, *Open Fields: Science in Cultural Encounter* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), p. 25.

These individuals operated with limitations upon their powers of expression, whether for reasons that we might accept today as having been 'real' (for example, children, who would have lacked the more sophisticated powers of expression of adults), or wholly imposed by culture (as women who were bound by modesty not to speak of gynaecological ailments). In some cases, namely, those of people with mental ailments, it is more difficult to determine whether the barriers to communication were grounded in a genuine incapacity, or wholly or largely fabricated. I choose to study the attempts that were made to speak for such people who could not speak for themselves alongside the attempts that were made to speak for non-human animals, as the project of representing the unknowable experience of the 'other' is essentially the project of seeking to solve the 'question of the animal'. Indeed, it is important to align the study of empathy between humans with that of empathy between humans and non-human animals because the latter serves to illuminate the full range of possibilities and pitfalls that empathy presents to the prospect of communication and representation, even when there is no absolute lack of information to be acquired by an exchange of language.

In *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals* (1872), Darwin examined non-verbal expressions across species in an attempt to document the external manifestation of 'states of the mind'.[38] In his introduction, Darwin argued against the practice of separating the study of humans and animals as if they were completely distinct and independent from one another: 'With mankind some expressions, such as the bristling of the hair under the influence of extreme terror, or the uncovering of the teeth under that of furious rage, can hardly be understood, except on the belief that man once existed in a much lower and animal-like condition'. Darwin explained the importance of

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[38] See Darwin, *Expression*, p. 13.

accepting that humans are animals in the context of challenging theological opposition to evolution, which insisted that man was created independently from animals. However, not much time would pass before the scientific community would begin to reject the study of animal minds. In the 1880s, George Romanes, who was influenced by Darwin, is considered to have written some of the most important of nineteenth-century works about this subject.[39] However, soon after this, studies that focused upon the continuity between human and animals were rendered obsolete, never to be taken seriously again until the late twentieth century. As we have seen, Conwy Lloyd Morgan insisted that if animals were even possessed of minds (in other words, if they had feelings or judgment, or operated by any means other than according to instinct), this could not be proven and so could not be considered an appropriate subject for scientific inquiry. Once again, humans were designated something different and 'more' than all of the other animals on earth, distinguished by the possession of a mind that all other animals could be assumed to lack.

The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals discusses only the physical manifestation of the state of the mind, without relying upon language as a source of information.[40] As well as sketches of subjects, Darwin relied heavily upon the new technology of photography to document particular manifestations of different expressions. Photography was a new technology of vision that no doubt seemed to promise a new level of objectivity to one who wished to capture and document a

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[39] See Romanes, *Animal Intelligence, Mental Evolution*.

[40] See Thomas Dixon, *From the Passions to the Emotions: The Creation of a Secular Psychological Category* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), for a compelling account of the movement from a primarily theological understanding of the emotions to the consideration of the emotions as physical phenomenon contained wholly within the body. Dixon argues that this shift in the way that people thought about and discussed emotion was one that began in the late eighteenth century and was complete by around 1850.

scientific subject. Of course, the complexity of the medium was soon revealed.[41] Vision, like language, is ultimately incapable of making an objective study of the interior life. It is perhaps unsurprising that Darwin chose, late in his life, to study something as elusive as the expression of emotion, since Darwin was always interested in studying aspects of life that were not easily grasped by the human senses. I argue that the acknowledgement of the limits of the human senses, which also acknowledged the existence of things in the world that were very much real, though beyond our scope, encouraged the exploration of the interior life and led to the development of the tool that we now call empathy. The movement toward empathy was essentially anti-Cartesian and can be traced through the history of visual theory. Nineteenth-century visual theory rejected the Cartesian model of vision in favour of one that embraced the human imagination. The imagination enabled the observer to overcome some of the limits of the senses.

I do not believe that since the nineteenth century, we have been steadily following a trend away from a strictly empirical model of knowledge, toward a more imaginative one. I argue, however, that the first (since the seventeenth century) and most forceful turn from the Cartesian model of knowledge occurred during the nineteenth century, and that we have never returned to dismiss the imagination (and its role in perception) as wholeheartedly as was done when the philosophy of Descartes was at its most influential. Neither do I believe that it is possible (or, certainly, desirable) to ever reach a point where we consider the imagination to be wholly superior to empirical knowledge. Still, I believe that it is possible to work toward the achievement of a better balance of the

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[41]For a discussion of the problems that Darwin had with the use of photography in *Emotions*, see Philip Prodger, 'Illustration as Strategy in Charles Darwin's *Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals*', in Timothy Lenoir (ed.), *Inscribing Science: Scientific Texts and the Materiality of Communication* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998).

consideration of knowledge acquired by means of the senses and the imagination. Such practice would prevent the easy dismissal of the suffering of the 'other' by the privileging of empirical 'facts' over the consideration of what might be imagined to be happening, but which cannot be 'proven'. It is easy to assuage the conscience with the thought that one does not 'know' that 'the other' is suffering, and cannot 'know' if the experience of 'the other' is really as bad as one imagines it might be. By considering the history of how we began to consider the idea of interiority, and to struggle for 'empathy' as a kind of (impossible) perceptual possibility, we can be more aware of our own consideration of interiority, as well as the pitfalls and challenges that are presented by any and all attempts to produce and construct knowledge of 'the other', both those that are fundamentally empathic and those that are more empirical, and as such resistant to the notion of empathy.

Though antagonistic to a very strict empiricism, empathy is not the opposite of empiricism. Further, it is arguably assisted by whatever empirical information is available about its subject. The most apparent means of communicating experience is through language. Yet even language cannot achieve perfect transparency. Post-structuralists discuss the impossibility of achieving perfect communication in terms of the information that invariably fails to reach its intended recipient, as no communication can ever be totally successful. They refer to the information that gets lost as the 'excluded third', or, alternatively, the 'differend', or '*differance*'.[42] These are arguably ways of naming or defining the 'other', whether considered as the information that gets lost along the way to communication, or the individual who is not understood. The 'other' as individual is most often considered to be someone who has particular problems among the ranks of

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[42]Terms used by Michel Serres, Jean-François Lyotard, Jacques Derrida, respectively.

others, and who might be excluded for some reason, but it can also refer to every individual, since no one can make their interior experiences known with absolute certainty.

Post-structuralism offers a way to define empathy according to the way that people have attempted and struggled to make use of it as an idea. Gilles Deleuze views the 'idea' as a problem that works and is actively creative. The idea, for Deleuze, can never really be known, and does not actually exist, though it is 'inseparable from a potential or a virtuality'. [43] This virtuality (for Deleuze, 'the characteristic state of ideas') at once 'possesses a full reality by itself' and contains in itself possibility, which, while opposed to the real, 'designates a pure multiplicity' in an idea. [44] We grapple with possibility when we approach empathy, all the while acknowledging the impossibility of knowledge of the interior experience of another. In this way, empathy is a productive and creative struggle; something we use and 'do', rather than something we can ever know. Deleuze would refer to this as a 'dramatization' of the idea. Deleuze argues that 'dramatization' respects the notion of 'difference in itself', unlike 'representation', which is always dependent upon a stable identity. Identity, or sameness, for Deleuze, is merely a way of managing difference. Considered in this way, representation (as a means of constructing identity or sameness) can never really achieve its aims; despite the fact that it is our only way of making sense of the world of difference around us. Empathy begins as a representation to ourselves of our perception of the interior experience of difference, as a way of making sense of difference. The next step, if any are to be taken, is to try to represent to others what sense we have made of this difference. While is arguable that

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[43] Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, Paul Patton (tr.) (London: Athlone Press, 1994), p.182.
[44] Deleuze, *Difference*, p. 211.

we will never be able to 'represent' empathy, the attempt to surmount the impossibility is exactly the same as the struggle to truly understand the experience of another. Despite its impossibility, we use the idea of empathy to understand and to promote understanding beyond what can be expressed and understood through the use of language. We believe it is a help, rather than a hindrance or a distraction from knowledge that can be 'proven'.

The struggle for empathy has been closely followed by a struggle for the representation of empathy. If empathy is a response to the 'insideness' of another, it is also itself a kind of 'insideness', which also defies communication. Indeed, it is almost as difficult to discuss the process of representing empathy as it is to discuss the idea of empathy itself. Such representation is frequently made in the context of an ethical debate or dilemma, since the perception of someone else's suffering or distress presents a compelling reason why one might try to 'speak for' the interior experiences of another individual. It is tempting, and sometimes reasonable, when discussing the representation of empathy, to use the language of ethical discourse, which is typically fraught with connotation. For example, I often use the word 'advocate' to refer to the authors of the texts I examine. The first definition of the noun form of 'advocate', as presented by the *Oxford English Dictionary*, is one that is legalistic and professional; in fact, the emphasis is almost more dependent upon the duty to speak than upon the kind of speaking that is necessarily involved (namely, on someone else's behalf): 'One called in, or liable to be called upon, to defend or speak for'. The second definition of the word, however, describes an advocate less in terms of an obligation to be fulfilled in the case of a summons, than of an ethical figure who is a sort of champion of someone in need: 'One who pleads, intercedes, or speaks for, or in behalf of, another; a pleader, intercessor,

defender'. In spite of the word's legalistic flavour, I feel that it is hardly neutral in its communication regarding motivation - to speak of someone as the advocate of another is to imply that he or she will argue in favour of that other individual's best interests. This, of course, is not always a correct assumption, and though I am often confident using the word 'advocate' to describe the authors of the texts I examine, sometimes I am not convinced that these authors always had the best interests of their subjects at heart.

I believe that the word 'advocate' is simply the best word that exists in the English language to describe one who speaks for another. It is not my intent to explore the motivations behind the discourse produced by those who attempted to represent the experiences of others. Yet, at times the language available to me has fallen short of offering a neutral term to denote an individual who speaks for the experiences of someone else - one who feels empathy and attempts to represent it. As the idea of empathy continues to evolve, perhaps our language will expand to accommodate the discussion of its contexts and processes.

Victorians certainly recognized the 'power at the heart of non-power', though it is impossible to know for certain whether any particular effort to represent empathy for the vulnerable was motivated by the sincere wish to communicate the effects of this power, as experienced by the author, or by a more selfish wish to attempt to harness this power for the advancement of some ulterior goal. It is not my intent to assess the motivations behind the texts I study, except as the representation of motivations informs the strategy of the authors in important ways. I imagine that the motivations behind the texts I study are complex, and indeed, some of the authors whose texts I examine are deeply problematic as ethical agents. Although I have found it impossible to remain completely

neutral in my treatment of historical circumstances that involved a great deal of suffering and oppression, I have tried to engage as little as possible in any value-centred discussion of motivation or judgments. This is not to detract from the suffering of the subjects or victims of the circumstances discussed in these texts, but because it would deviate from my particular goal of historicising the struggle to understand and to communicate our understanding of the interior experiences of others, including their suffering.

The representation in text of the non-verbal (or the unspeakable) is the persistent framework of this thesis, which seeks to explore the historical response to the humane need to confront the limitations of language. The development of the word 'empathy' (as distinct from sympathy) strikes at the heart of this binary as it represents the attempt to know what cannot be known, and to put into words that which cannot be put into words. While this thesis is *not* an attempt to trace the history of the word 'empathy,' and while I would place this thesis more firmly within the 'cultural turn' than the 'linguistic turn' in scholarship and historiography, it is indebted and bound to the latter movement as it operates within a framework of the powers and limitations of language. Of course, the 'cultural turn' of scholarship and historiography owes such a significant debt to the 'linguistic turn' that one can hardly discuss the two movements as wholly separate from one another.[45] Indeed, cultural studies scholar Cary Wolfe has recently revisited the

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[45] The terms 'linguistic' and 'cultural' turn are often used interchangeably; however, I would like to cite Nancy Armstrong's claim that there is a subtle difference between the two: 'The cultural turn is a permutation of the linguistic turn . . . 'The cultural turn' is a later development that not only marked the spread of poststructuralism to history and the social sciences but also promoted the interdisciplinary practice of "cultural studies", 'Who's Afraid of the Cultural Turn?' *Differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies*, 12 (2001), p. 18. I would also like to point the reader of this thesis to important works of 'the linguistic turn' in historiography that have influenced the writing of this thesis: Patrick Joyce, *Visions of the People: Industrial England and the Question of Class, 1840-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991); Gareth Stedman Jones, *Languages of Class* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983); Hayden White, *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins

questions originally asked by Ludwig Wittgenstein regarding the problematics of language in order to obtain a wider, 'post-humanist' view of the role of language and communication in the ethical discourse of species.[46] It is from the standpoint of post-structuralist and post-humanist thinking that I approach the problem of exploring the history of ethical discourse in the nineteenth century.

This thesis is primarily devoted to the examination of language (as textual sources), both as a form of representation and as a topic and theme. Voicelessness is posited as an indication (as well as perhaps a cause) of vulnerability. Though the voicelessness of vulnerable individuals was often arguably something that was constructed or invented by authors who would speak for certain subjects (especially in the case of healthy adults), the perceived inability of subjects to speak on their own behalf provides at least the ostensible motivation for authors to give their subjects a 'voice'. Since I examine language within the broader context of perception (especially visual perception - seeing, not seeing, invisibility, and what Kate Flint would call 'sight in non-sight'), the findings and contentions of this thesis, while based almost exclusively upon texts and textual analysis, are indicative of historical trends that are more broadly representational or discursive.

As a historian of representation, my approach has been deeply informed by New Historicist literary critical methods. I would like to stress, however, that the reason I

University Press, 1987), and *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1973). On the 'cultural turn' in history, see Victoria Bonnell and Lynn Hunt (eds), *Beyond the Cultural Turn: New Directions in the Study of Society and Culture* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1999); Peter Burke, *Varieties of Cultural History* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1997), and *What is Cultural History?* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2004); Lynn Hunt (ed.), *The New Cultural History* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1989).

[46] Cary Wolfe, 'In the Shadow of Wittgenstein's Lion'   See also Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations: 50th Anniversary Commemorative Edition*, G.E.M. Anscombe (tr.) (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001 [1953]).

pursue the study of the construction of texts has everything to do with the potential relationship of such texts as I study to the real - all of the texts I study were constructed for the purpose of influencing ideas and practices involving the treatment of vulnerable individuals. I perform close readings of my selected texts, in order to consider the construction of each text in terms of the author's strategy for presenting empathic knowledge of his or her subject *as* knowledge, and encouraging readers both to accept the text as such and to try to understand, as the author understands, the perspective of the author's subject. In examining the strategies of each author, I ask the following questions: How does the author deal with empirical obstacles to understanding and communication? How does the author challenge the information that *is* empirically available? How does the author attempt establish an authoritative position regarding information that he or she could not possibly know? In short, how does the author negotiate sameness *in* difference, and encourage his or her reader to do the same?

I have selected texts that were written by authors who claimed to be driven by the perception of someone else's present or immanent bodily suffering, not because I believe that opportunities for discussion and expression of the interior experiences of others were only available in urgent circumstances, but because authors working for change in urgent circumstances would have been likely to use the most forceful discourse available to them.[47] Even in the context of legislative debates, the texts I study represent attempts to negotiate changes to the way that vulnerable groups were treated, supported, or protected by British society and its institutions. Though many of the texts I study were influential, I do not attempt to demonstrate that they were so, or to evaluate the impact of each text as

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[47] Indeed, Victorian realist authors tended to embrace the details of the lives of ordinary individuals, as will be discussed shortly.

it really affected the lives of the subjects who were represented. For the most part, I do not study the literal 'results' of these texts, by way of assessing the impact that any of them had upon the ethical cause that any author intended to advance. Nor do I discuss the popularity or breadth of influence of any particular text. This is because what the authors of these texts were trying to do is so historically significant - they effectively carved out a discursive space for the use of empathy in the discussion of reforms that centred around the suffering or exploitation of vulnerable individuals. I would also like to emphasize that I make no claims with regard to the representative nature of the texts I have selected. This is because I mean to show how the authors of these texts responded to urgent circumstances by pushing the limits of articulable discourse, so that the experimental nature of these texts is evident within each relative context. I demonstrate the 'newness' of what these authors tried to do within the specific context of each reform movement, by examining and formulating arguments about the construction of texts at the level of the individual case study.

I assume that each author meant to represent reality as plausibly as possible. Whether the ultimate goal of the individual author was accuracy or persuasion, I assume that his or her immediate, discursive goal was always to construct a representation that was as real, or that seemed as real as possible. There were very real lives at stake in each of the debates, of which each author was been keenly aware. The nature of participation in such ethical debates pre-supposes an interest in the outcome, whether that interest is in achieving a clearer understanding of circumstances, for the purposes of fair assessment, or in achieving the conversion of readers to the author's perspective (even if, as may be

imagined in some circumstances, such conversion is only really desired for the purpose of increasing readership - to sell books).

Individuals who were vulnerable and suffering were likely to be the subject of some controversy regarding their treatment or exploitation. Authors who chose to speak on behalf of such individuals were likely to encounter some impediment to visual access to their bodies (in addition to a lack of access to their voices or verbal expressions). This is the reason I have rooted my study of the history of ethical discourse in the history of visual and perceptual theory. Often, there was a responsible party who was interested in keeping vulnerable bodies from view (sometimes, this was impossible, due to the nature of the exploitation; my chapter on London horses and drivers explores how the persistent and unavoidable visibility of working horses created special problems, both for those who defended them in print, and for those who were forced to try to 'shut their eyes' to the sight of the horses' sufferings because of a sense of guilty complicity, which in turn affected the representation and treatment of desperately poor cab drivers). The bodies of the subject individuals were material and visible, even if in many ways unseen, and the material of these bodies became centres for ethical discourse. Through my readings of texts written to speak on behalf of these vulnerable individuals, I demonstrate how Victorians used the discourse of imaginative observation to negotiate the invisible (the interior experience of others) through their treatment of the unseen. As these authors attempted to describe their struggles with that which they could not see or empirically access, they encouraged their readers to follow them in constructing empathic knowledge of the same subjects. Thus, the imaginative 'knowledge' of the interior experiences of these subjects was provided by the author so that it might be constructed (both by author

and reader) along with an imaginative version of that knowledge which really *could* be empirically known if it was not hidden, far away, or otherwise rendered unavailable only to some.

This kind of knowledge could only be taken seriously within the context of a culture which respected the imagination as part of the process of perception. As scholars of the Victorian realist novel tend to agree, the construction of models of reality was a veritable nineteenth-century pre-occupation. This is not to say, however, that Victorian authors pursued, or believed that they could achieve, a pure and simple mimesis, or that they were not aware of the complexities of their medium.[48] Victorian realist fiction, like empathic discourse, was exemplary of the nineteenth-century struggle to overcome the limitations of the senses through the use of the imagination. It is even reasonable to suggest that empathic discourse emerged as part of the larger Victorian realist 'project', if one considers this to mean the Victorian pre-occupation with constructing models of reality. As well as empathic discourse, the realist 'project', somewhat broadly conceived both in terms of chronology and scope, would have to include, for example, the

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[48] See, for example, Peter Brooks, *Realist Vision* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005); George Levine, *The Realistic Imagination: English Fiction from Frankenstein to Lady Chatterley* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981); John P. McGowan, *Representation and Revelation: Victorian Realism from Carlyle to Yeats* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1986); Ioan Williams, *The Realist Novel in England: A Study in Development* (London: Macmillan, 1974). The idea that Victorians were interested in representing reality is also supported by other, non-literary, scientific, artistic and representational movements and practices of the era, such as photography, non-photographic representations and illustrations of nature and animals, and the Pre-Raphaelite movement. On realism and Victorian photography, see Jennifer Green-Lewis, *Framing the Victorians: Photography and the Culture of Realism* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1997). On Victorian representations of nature, see Barbara Gates, *Kindred Nature: Victorian and Edwarding Women Embrace the Living World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999); Barbara Gates and Ann Shteir (eds), *Natural Eloquence: Women Reinscribe Science* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1997); Bernard Lightman, 'The Visual Theology of Victorian Popularizers of Science: From Reverent Eye to Chemical Retina', *Isis*, 91 (2000), pp. 651-680; Lynn Merrill, *The Romance of Natural History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989); For a discussion of realism and the Pre-Raphaelite movement, see Christopher Newall and Alan Staley, *Pre-Raphaelite Vision: Truth to Nature* (London: Tate Publishing, 2004); Marcia Werner, *Pre-Raphaelite Painting and Nineteenth-Century Realism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

emergence of circumstantial evidence in courts of law.[49] One may discuss fiction as a literary genre, defined in opposition to what is considered to be 'non-fiction', but it is difficult to absolutely divorce this type of textual construction from that which is meant to communicate particular truths, such as legal fictions. For the most part, I try to avoid the analysis of the fiction of novels, in order that I may show that establishing knowledge about the interior experiences of others was not the exclusive domain of the novelist. Many novels would supply me with a great deal of evidence regarding the importance of representing empathy in the nineteenth century, but it is important to me to show that this was a viable means of constructing knowledge about real historical subjects.

The texts I have selected are meant to be broadly representative of the possibilities of a discourse for the representation of the vulnerable that Victorians who were in a position of relative power in relation to their subjects both utilized and made increasingly available. This is not a history of any social movement in particular. It is not my intent to determine the social forces that drove people to take a stand against certain injustices (as opposed to others) by speaking out for a specific group during a specific historical moment. Nor is it my intent to determine how successful each author or text was in influencing its readership or bringing about changes. Instead, I mean to show how strategies of Victorian activism in general reflected broader understandings of the possibilities of the imagination and communication in the construction of empathic knowledge.

I do not try to construct my own representations of the voices of the individuals who are the subjects of the ethical debates I study. In some cases, these individuals may

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[49] See Alexander Welsh, *Strong Representations: Narrative and Circumstantial Evidence in England* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992).

have left written or other kinds of records for historians to study - but in many other cases, there are none. Part of what I hope to contribute to the field of historiography is a careful consideration of what *can* be gained from studying the representations of vulnerable individuals by people in a relative position of power: it is so often all we have.[50]

While the availability of biographical information about the authors of the texts I study is inconsistent, there are a few things that can be said about them as a group. They hailed from a variety of backgrounds, but can be described as broadly upper- to middle-class; most of them were either professionals engaged in professional debates, or else they were devoted (one might say, using a loose interpretation of the word, 'professional') activists, who devoted a great deal of time and energy to the advancement of their respective causes. Some, as journalists, engaged in a variety of debates as part of their profession. All had access to some means of publication (and so would have had to have been at least somewhat well educated), whether their texts took the form of legislative documents, books, tracts, letters-to-the-editor, or other contributions to periodical publications. Some of these types of texts were more widely circulated than others; however, all of them were written to convince someone - perhaps a great many people - to accept their interpretations of the experiences of their subjects as knowledge of the circumstances at the heart of the respective debate. These texts were written because the authors believed that their readers could possibly bring about change (whether because of their individual powers of influence or because of their numbers). Some of the authors whose texts I have selected were professionals writing at least in part

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[50] For a discussion of the problem of power in the production of historical sources, see Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995).

for other professionals, while others wrote for a more popular audience. A few did not write at all; rather, their words were recorded as 'expert' testimony, in the context of a legal debate which centred around their profession. All were heavily invested in the practice of representation.

My principles of selection began at the level of selecting case studies. In selecting the texts to examine in this thesis, I have considered the function of each group of texts as a case study among other case studies, as well as the function of each text within its respective group of texts. Though it was, of course, important to consider the function of each individual text within the context of the larger project, for the purposes of clarity I will address my principles of selection first in terms of my case studies and then in terms of the individual texts within my chapters. I have chosen each group of texts to provide effective comparison and contrast to the others, in order to achieve a selection of case studies that would be broadly representative of Victorian ethical discourse. As previously mentioned, I have selected these groups of texts from among those which were written to bring about change in urgent circumstances, regarding individuals who were perceived to be vulnerable to suffering or exploitation. There were, however, many such individuals during the nineteenth century, and very many were the texts that were written about them. In order to afford each case study with the attention it deserved, and to ensure that my case studies as a whole would ultimately constitute a manageable and coherent thesis, I was required to exclude some very worthy subjects.

The texts I have selected represent a range of popular and professional Victorian discourses, and a range of different causes, and the individuals who were the subjects of these texts were vulnerable for different reasons. Victims of slavery and 'wage slavery'

were economic units in oppressive systems, whose labour and suffering benefited owners, masters, and economies. Animals, whether subject to vivisection or forced to labour, were vulnerable because of their usefulness to humans. Gynaecological patients and patients with mental infirmities, however, were at least in part the ostensible beneficiaries of medical treatment. These were vulnerable because of illness. A woman's gender, however, prevented her from speaking out about her gynaecological problems, and her experience of treatment. An individual who was labelled mentally infirm could well have spoken out, but anything he or she said would have been easily dismissible. Similarly, a child could have spoken, but what he or she said could have been easily dismissed because of his or her age. Further, a child labourer's poverty could have had the effect of lessening the weight of what he or she said, which was also the case with cab drivers. In addition to being poor, cab drivers were a singularly unpopular group of people. Women and slaves were less able to speak for themselves because of who and what they were - judged to have been inferior because of their sex or race. Animals were vulnerable because they were not human. Animals also presented a special case because of their inability to speak at all.

The texts I study in my first chapter, on child labourers, were written by professionals doing a job. Similarly, my third and fourth chapters (on gynaecological patients and the inmates of lunatic asylums) also examine texts written by professionals, to advance particular views regarding professional practice. My second and sixth chapters examine texts that contributed to popular debates and intended to encourage public sympathy for their respective causes, as do the texts examined for my fifth chapter. My fifth chapter (on vivisection) integrates legislative texts as well, because the

relationship between popular and legislative texts regarding vivisection and

antivivisection was particularly intimate (I will discuss this relationship shortly).[51]

Finally, I have ended my project with the examination of texts that concern two

oppressed groups, one of which is oppressed by the other. One of these is, of course,

human, and the other animal. With this chapter I intend to punctuate a work that is at

once wholly about 'the animal', and wholly about the human, the humane, and the ways

in which humans reach out to their fellows - fellow humans, or fellow creatures - with all

the knowledge of the 'other' that each individual feels, empirically divided from

everyone and everything else by his or her sense of insideness. I argue that increased

contemplation and consideration of this ultimate isolation has also allowed for the

configuration of an idea that this isolation is 'shared' - we are all 'the animal'. Our

willingness to overlook empirical impossibility in order to embrace this binary is, I argue,

an important legacy of the nineteenth century.

I will now discuss my principles for the selection of individual texts within each

of my case studies, in the context of my main arguments within each chapter, and the

significance of my examination of these texts. In my first chapter, I examine the reports

and evidence presented by child labour commissioners from the 1830s to the 1860s.

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[51] I would like to point out that the readership of the legislative texts I examine in my first chapter (from the Child Labour Commissions) and my fifth chapter (from the Royal Commission on Vivisection) would have extended beyond the circle of professional legislators to a wider public. This was not solely due to the publication of extracts by activists on behalf of each respective cause (like George Jesse's reproduction of selected testimony from the Commission on Vivisection, which will be discussed shortly). The 1830s saw an explosive rise in the publication and readership of 'Blue Books', or Parliamentary proceedings printed the consumption of a public readership. Oz Frankel explains that the practise of making Parliamentary proceedings (in particular, the reports of Parliamentary Committees and Royal Commissions) available to the public in the form of these books (which had blue paper covers) began around the turn of the nineteenth century. He points out that the proceedings from the 1842 Child Labour Commission (which investigated the employment of children in mines) was the most widely read government publication of the Victorian period. See Oz Frankel, 'Blue Books and the Victorian Reader', *Victorian Studies*, 46 (2004), pp. 308-318; *States of Inquiry: Social Investigations and Print Culture in Nineteenth-Century Britain and the United States* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006).

These reports were formulated in the face of considerable barriers to their understanding of what was happening to labouring children. In addition to the problem of gathering the testimony of (sometimes very young) children, the commissioners were confronted by such impediments as the influences of parents or employers upon what the children would say, factories that were cleaned specially for their visits, illnesses that would not present themselves for many years, absentees, or even hidden labourers (as young boys who were employed to climb chimneys for sweeps were often hidden).   I study the imaginative means employed by the commissioners to assess the 'real' experiences of the children, as well as their use of circumstantial evidence to substantiate their conclusions. In this chapter I engage with scholarly debates about evidence and testimony, drawing upon major works of law and literature scholarship and making connections between this body of scholarship and that of the history of nineteenth-century visual theory.

I have chosen to study a selection of the Royal Commissions on the Employment of Children, based upon the significance of the particular Commissions and the particular tasks and subjects of the commissioners. The Sadler Commission of 1831-32 uncovered major obstacles with regard to the investigation of the conditions of child labour.[52] In particular, it was discovered that interviewing labourers - even adults - in a legislative court was likely to be problematic, as those labourers were unlikely to find favour with potential employers in the future. The 1833 Commission addressed this problem by implementing a system of inspection and reporting; child labourers began to be interviewed, and their working conditions assessed, at their place of employment, often by the commissioners themselves. Those in charge of gathering information at the sites

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[52] On Michael Sadler's philosophy of reform, see Kim Lawes, *The Revival of Paternalism in Early Nineteenth-Century Britain* (London: Macmillan, 2000).

of employment submitted reports to the Central Board of the Commission. This system was followed by later commissions, of which I have chosen two to examine. The 1842 Commission addressed particular problems with children working in mines, and the 1863 Commission focused largely on the problem of the employment of children to sweep chimneys. I have selected to examine the texts produced by these Commissions in particular because they addressed problems that were directly related to the limitations of observation and difficulties obtaining empirical evidence.

In my second chapter, I study the book-length accounts of two British abolitionists (writing in the 1830s and 1840s) who travelled to America in order to 'research' American slavery. As professed abolitionists, these men had difficulty accessing the individuals whose lives they wished to know and write about. They took very different approaches to overcoming similar challenges: one restricted himself to safe spaces in the North, while the other went about the South, and even attended slave auctions in disguise. I relate the very different strategies of these two authors to their understandings of perception and communication, comparing and contrasting the ways that they make use of all of the evidence available to them in their attempts to present their British readers with observations and interpretations of what they thought it must be like to be a victim of slavery. I analyze both authors' use of theological, printed, and oral sources of information as a supplement to what they were able to witness. I discuss scholarship that has been written about the loss of slaves' experiences to history, as well as current scholarship on slave psychology and the pseudo-science of race in the nineteenth century, in terms of the strategies used by these nineteenth-century

abolitionists to try to speak on behalf of victims of slavery, with whom they had little or no contact.

There were only a very few British abolitionists who attempted to observe the conditions of American slavery for the purposes of publishing documentary evidence on the subject.[53] Some of these were celebrated abolitionists who actively took part in the American abolitionist movement.[54] Others possessed status and connections that eased the awkwardness of their position when among slave-holding society (and possibly even kept them out of danger).[55] I chose to examine, instead, texts written by two authors who were neither celebrated philanthropists, nor famous for any other reason. Edward Strutt Abdy and Ebenezer Davies were not directly and actively involved with American abolitionist activities; nor did they have the advantage of such superior connections as might have ensured them of somewhat of a safe passage through the deep American South. They attempted, as best they could and in their own ways, to conduct their own investigations of American slavery and to present their own evidence of slave experiences to the British public. The different challenges that each faced, in the context of very different approaches to the investigation of American slavery, and the strategies that these authors developed to overcome these challenges, afford an illuminating study

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[53] Many British travel-writers in America claimed to find slavery distasteful, but few of these openly supported abolition. See Max Berger, *The British Traveller in America, 1836-1860* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1943).

[54] Joseph Sturge, for example, was a celebrated abolitionist, and wrote from this perspective. See Sturge's *A Visit to the United States in 1841* (London: Hamilton, Adams, 1842); See Alex Tyrrell, 'Joseph Sturge', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

[55] Harriet Martineau was an active abolitionist who visited America and wrote about slavery. Martineau, however, was well known by the time of her visit to America, and her connections (most especially within the Unitarian Church) made her passage through the American slave states relatively smooth. See R.K. Webb, 'Martineau, Harriet (1802–1876)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2004).

of the presentation of empathic discourse in the context of a very tense historical moment in Anglo-American popular political culture.

My third chapter explores the debate over the use of the speculum in nineteenth-century gynaecological examinations, which raged hottest in the 1850s and 1860s. I analyze texts written to support and oppose the use of the speculum in terms of the ways that their (male) authors attempted to speak for or make claims on behalf of gynaecological patients. Both of these groups of doctors claimed that their approach helped them to understand the experiences of the women in their care. Some doctors who used the speculum claimed that this special, visual access afforded them the special status of guardian of the woman's secrets, and, interestingly, special access to her pain, both physical and emotional. For them, to be able to see into a woman's body helped them to know what she was feeling. Opponents of the speculum claimed that *they* were the ones who were able to develop special relationships with their female patients, especially since there was no mechanical device separating them from their patients. These also accused doctors who used the speculum of being too aggressive in their approach, attacking the excessive use of caustics and scarification as practices largely associated with the use of the speculum. I engage with current debates over the meaning of the female body in the nineteenth century, and discuss the technological advancement of the speculum in the shifting significance of sight and touch.

In this chapter, I examine texts written by a number of gynaecologists who advocated the use of the speculum, a well as the texts written by one gynaecologist who was a particularly outspoken opponent of the use of this instrument, Robert Lee [1793-1877]. These texts were written by male medical professionals, mostly to influence other

male medical professionals and to teach male medical students. They debate common practices, and give evidence for their respective stances by making claims about which practices were best for the health of women, as well as by providing anecdotes and interpretations of the experiences of women who were gynaecological patients. As well as making recommendations for practice, the authors of these texts also engage in debates about what medical students should be taught and how they should learn to understand women. In addition to medical texts, in this chapter I also discuss a very few non-medical texts written to oppose the use of the speculum, in order to provide context for the professional debates by presenting some of the kinds of accusations that were popularly levelled upon gynaecological practitioners during the middle decades of the nineteenth century.

In my fourth chapter, I discuss the book-length works (1840s-1860s) of John Conolly [1794-1866], which discuss the construction of insane asylums, as well as the diagnosis and treatment of insanity, in accordance with his philosophy of non-restraint. Conolly claimed that nineteenth-century science could make insanity and the treatment of insanity veritably transparent, and his key to identifying and treating insanity effectively and humanely, as well as to remaining sane oneself, was to imagine the perspective of others. Conolly often took vast imaginative leaps in order to overcome barriers to knowledge of his patients' experiences, occasionally even constructing possibilities that could never be known, in order to prevent or ameliorate possible suffering. Many of Conolly's patients could and did speak, but he maintained a strict control over the interpretation and presentation of their expressions. I examine Conolly's strategies and choices in light of his insistence upon the cooperation of reason and the imagination in

the advancement of humane and effective medicine, as well as in the context of current scholarship regarding the history of patient narrative and theories of cognition and analogy.

In this chapter, I discuss only the works of one individual. I have not examined Conolly's works in the context of any larger debate about policies of non-restraint in asylums because, as Nancy Tomes has argued, the idea of non-restraint was not ground-breaking by Conolly's time.[56] Conolly's great achievement was the implementation of non-restraint on a large scale; no other large institution had dared to abolish restraints before Conolly, and many followed his example after his experiment at Hanwell met with such success. Arguably few, however, would have insisted that the way forward in the treatment of the insane was to continue to tie them up. Conolly's book-length works are largely prescriptive, and present 'the old system' of the use of restraints (and physical coercion) in asylums as rife with inherent evils. Conolly's prescriptions, however, are characterized by empathic discourse, and include striking attempts to know and represent the minds and experiences of the insane.

My fifth case study is that of Victorian antivivisection. In the nineteenth-century debate over vivisection, empirical evidence was limited for many different reasons. First, animals could not testify about their experiences. There was also an element of secrecy about vivisection; physiologists constructed empirical barriers on purpose. The two opposing factions struggled over the right to interpret an animal's experience, as well as how to define pain and cruelty. Regulation depended upon whether the experiences of

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[56] Nancy Tomes, 'The Great Restraint Controversy: A Comparative Perspective on Anglo-American Psychiatry in the Nineteenth Century', in W.F. Bynum, R. Porter and M. Shepherd (eds), *The Anatomy of Madness: Essays in the History of Psychiatry*, vol. 3, *The Asylum and Its Psychiatry*, (London: Tavistock Publications, 1988), pp. 190-225.

the animal, as well as the motivations of the physiologist, could be made clear. Both supporters and opponents of vivisection made claims on behalf of the experiences of animals that were ultimately impossible to prove. In this chapter I study the testimony of pro-vivisection and antivivisection witnesses who were called to give evidence at the 1876 Royal Commission on Vivisection, along with popular tracts that were published in support of and against vivisection in the 1870s and 1880s. I analyze the strategies employed by the witnesses and authors in making claims about animal experiences, drawing on current scholarship about the relationship of language to pain, oppression, and the idea of the animal.

The popular and legislative texts surrounding the debate over vivisection were so closely entwined that one of the leaders of the popular antivivisection movement was asked to testify before the Royal Commission on Vivisection, despite the fact that he was neither a barrister, nor had any professional association with vivisection. Indeed, many of the central arguments put forth for the Royal Commission on Vivisection are most easily accessible through George Jesse's popular publication of extracts from the proceedings.[57] Thus, the legislative documents form a crucial part of the larger debate between antivivisectionists and physiologists. Many questions posed to those who were called to give evidence before the Royal Commission on Vivisection were related to popular and journalistic interpretations of the sufferings of vivisected animals, and much of the material that had been interpreted by antivivisectionists was drawn from the publications of the physiologists themselves. In my study of these tests, I examine the struggle for control over the representation of animal suffering, as well as over the

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[57] George Jesse, *Extracts from and Notes upon the Report of the Royal Commission on Vivisection, Refuting its Conclusions* (London and Manchester: The Society for the Total Abolition of Vivisection, 1876).

establishment of moral and educational credentials that would be necessary for someone to be legally considered worthy to make decisions about animal experimentation based upon their own understanding of animal suffering and any potential 'greater good' that might be achieved by particular experiments.

In my last chapter, I continue my exploration of language, understanding, oppression, and the animal, in a study of tracts and popular articles that were written to debate the reform of the circumstances of cab horses, cab drivers, and other drivers of horses in Victorian London in the second half of the nineteenth century. Victorians were particularly thoughtful about the experiences of horses and quick to speak on their behalf. They were also thoughtful about the means of understanding and communicating with horses, and they were generous in their application of personality, and even moral possibility, to the horse. Touching all classes, and bringing the poor to interact with the wealthy, many different kinds of people met in the space around the horse. As opposed to the problem of vivisection, authors of texts written to promote better treatment of horses had to persuade people how to interpret what they saw every day, rather than how to envision events that occurred behind locked doors. The horse was highly visible, so much so that the significance of individual horses was easily lost or overlooked. Authors often expressed frustration and feelings of helplessness in writing about the abuse of horses, because it was usually not the owners or drivers who noticed that the horses were suffering. Hired drivers, and especially cabmen (who were alternately pitied and reviled) suffered a great deal as well, and just as visibly. However, their uncomfortable, daily, and sometimes threatening proximity to members of the public encouraged people to pity them from a distance. The identity of the cab driver was often conflated with that of the

horse, and the horse was often considered to be more 'humane' than other animals. In this chapter, I study how nineteenth-century authors grappled with the ethical dilemma of the suffering horse and its driver and struggled to understand the forces that shaped individual perspective.

I examine the ways that popular and journalistic texts regarding the treatment of Victorian working horses attempted to persuade readers to see and to understand the suffering of such horses in a particular way. Further, I examine the assessments made by authors of such texts regarding the assignment of blame for the suffering of working horses. As in my chapter on vivisection, I consider the arguments that were made to advance ideas about who should or could be responsible for the interpretation of horses' sufferings and experiences. In the case of working horses, this question tended to raise uneasy issues regarding responsibilities of class and national identity. I discuss how these authors attempted to resolve these issues as they grappled to define the roles, responsibilities, and relationships between and among drivers, horses, and riders in carriages pulled by horses. In addition, I look at the way that these definitions also constructed horses (and often poor drivers, such as cabmen) as moral units within an immoral economic system, and how various authors used imaginative means to develop a 'knowledge' of this system, which, for many reasons, was difficult or impossible to observe, as well as a 'knowledge' of the real experiences (responsibilities, pressures, and sufferings) of those who functioned within it.

I have chosen to study a chronology of text that is mostly Victorian, but begins a few years before the beginning of Victoria's reign and ends a few years before her death. I have chosen to examine texts that date from the end of the Romantic period for reasons

I have already discussed. An additional reason that I have begun my study with texts from the 1830s is that this was a time when issues such as concern over the Anatomy Act, the New Poor Law, factory and child labour, and American slavery (versus British abolition) rose to prominence, which would all become important concerns of the Victorian era regarding vulnerable bodies.   I extend my study to the last decades of the nineteenth century in order to explore texts written at the pinnacle of Victorian animal advocacy, which arguably presented the development of empathy with its most acute challenges.   I constrain my study to texts that were written no later than the early 1890s as it is after this time that both behaviourism and psychoanalysis begin to exert influence upon the development of empathy.   Though these influences have had a great effect upon our idea of empathy today (and despite the fact that the word for empathy was not introduced to the English language until after the turn of the century), it is important to study the development of empathy apart from the influence of psychoanalysis, which produced a new epistemology and language of the human interior.

Chapter 1:

Empathy and Inspection: The Royal Commissions on Child Labour: 1832-1863

The experience of having been a child is one to which all human beings have access, despite how very different one child's experiences may be from another. While many humans have never been women, for example, and while it is conceivable that some people have perhaps never been sick or in hospital, all have been children, and as such, have knowledge of what it is like to have been younger, weaker, and less sophisticated than the adults around them. Notwithstanding developmental (and perhaps cultural, or educational) limitations, children can communicate verbally. However, the legal significance of the verbal communication of children is generally stunted because children are understood to be limited in their ability to communicate independently by an underdeveloped capacity for reason and comprehension, as well as by the probable influence of adult guardian figures upon whom they depend.

It is possible, however, for an adult to present evidence on behalf of a child or children - as if to 'witness' by proxy. The Victorian legislative project of factory reform engaged many adult individuals to provide evidence on behalf of children, including individuals who had been specially selected for the task of seeking and gathering evidence before processing it and reporting back to the legislative community with their findings.[1] These individuals, in addition to examining the child labourers themselves and their surroundings, also reported on evidence provided by others who had significant

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[1] For a study of Royal Commissions and their function within British politics, see Hugh McDowall Clokie and J. William Robinson, *Royal Commissions of Inquiry: The Significance of Investigations in British Politics* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1937). For a discussion of the public readership of the proceedings of Royal Commissions, see Oz Frankel, 'Blue Books and the Victorian Reader', *Victorian Studies*, 46 (2004), pp. 308-318; *States of Inquiry: Social Investigations and Print Culture in Nineteenth-Century Britain and the United States* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006).

knowledge of the conditions under which children laboured. Some of these adults had

professional qualifications, such as medical doctors, and others were simply in daily

contact with labouring children and could give evidence accordingly. Others were adults

who were interviewed in the capacity of having been labouring children themselves at

one point in time - ex-child labourers. Far from inappropriate, the testimony of adults

gave critical scope to Victorian child labour commissions, ensuring that the findings were

not representative of an encapsulated period of time, during which conditions could

arguably could have been transitory. Indeed, the testimony of adults who were once child

labourers was indispensable to the nineteenth-century project of the reformation of the

conditions of child labour, for it ensured that recommended legislative actions were

considered in the light of the injuries they would prevent and the benefits they would

impart to future lives.

The historiography of the concept of 'childhood' as distinct segment of life has

been fraught with debate and disagreement for decades.[2] Whether or not childhood

emerged as a 'new' concept in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in Europe, it is

certain that, as Eric Hopkins suggests, the lives of at least working-class children in

England underwent a significant transformation between the eighteenth and the late-

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[2] Philippe Aries, in the early 1960s, famously argued that there was no such concept as 'childhood' as a distinct segment of life during the Middle Ages. *Centuries of Childhood: A Social History of Family Life*, Robert Baldick (tr.) (New York: Vintage Books, 1963). Edward Shorter, in the mid-1970s, built upon Aries' work, arguing that there was a surge in family 'sentiment' in the eighteenth century, and an accompanying re-organization of familial priorities, which defined the 'modern' family. *The Making of the Modern Family* (New York: Basic Books, 1975). Lawrence Stone, focusing upon the developments of sixteenth- through eighteenth-century England, continued the trend of considering the way that childhood was 'constructed'. *The Family, Sex, and Marriage in England, 1500-1800* (New York: Harper and Row, 1977). In the early 1980s, Linda Pollock rejected the idea that children only came to be viewed 'as children', and as such objects of affection and love, in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. *Forgotten Children: Parent-Child Relations from 1500-1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

nineteenth centuries.[3] Hopkins explains that in the late eighteenth century, working-

class English children attended school infrequently, had few legal rights, and worked

long hours from an early age. He argues that by the end of the nineteenth century, 'all

this had changed. Few children under the age of twelve were in full-time employment,

and education up to that age had become compulsory and free.'[4] One significant

component of this transformation was, of course, the regulation and reform of child

labour practices.

In recent decades, historians of childhood and child labour have increasingly

focused their studies upon representations of children, and the significance of such

representations. Images and literary constructions of children are valuable sources of

information about historical ideas, ideals, meanings, and definitions of childhood.[5] Such

representations, in disclosing what their creators considered to distinguish childhood

from adulthood, offer a means of accessing historical views of virtually every facet of life

in society, since the distinction between childhood and adulthood is also effectively the

definition of what it means to be (or not to be) a fully functional member of society. Of

course, not all adults are always viewed as fully functional members of society, so that

the representation of childhood also illuminates any scale or spectrum that has classified

different groups of people according to their potential for full participation in adult

society (or not), and also the ways that different classifications of people may have been

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[3] Eric Hopkins, *Childhood Transformed: Working-Class Children in Nineteenth-Century England* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994).

[4] Hopkins, *Transformed*, p. 1.

[5] For an earlier influential study of the representation of childhood, see Peter Coveney, *The Image of Childhood: A Study of the Theme in English Literature* (New York: Penguin, 1967). For more recent studies, see Anne Higgonet, *Pictures of Innocence: The History and Crisis of Ideal Childhood* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1998), Laura Berry, *The Child, the State, and the Victorian Novel* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1999), or any of the excellent essays in Marilyn Brown (ed.), *Picturing Children: Constructions of Childhood between Rousseau and Freud* (Aldershot and Burlington: Ashgate, 2002).

expected to develop and move toward the fulfilment of their ideal respective roles. As

such, representations of childhood communicate significant ideas regarding the historical

construction of such notions as class, race, and gender.[6] This chapter will focus on a

(somewhat extended) historical moment in which children were represented in a way that

certainly grouped and defined labouring children's lives according to the socio-economic

circumstances into which they were born. At the same time, the Victorian child labour

commissioners also recognized that one child labourer's life and work experiences were

not representative of those of all others. Thus, the methodologies of the commissioners

tended to progress according to a kind of hermeneutics of identity that sought to know

(and to present as knowledge) the absolute difference of a vast number of individual poor

children's lives and experiences. It will examine, as will all subsequent chapters, the

strategies employed by the authors of texts intended to present 'knowledge' of absolute

difference in spite of the impossibility of ever really achieving this goal. In doing so, it

will demonstrate that the texts of nineteenth-century reform movements were

characterized by empathic discourse - the acceptance of imaginative knowledge of the

'other' *as a form of knowledge.*

The goal of constructing and providing a 'knowledge' of the lives and experiences

of child labourers for the purpose of producing ameliorative legislation could only be

achieved through the imaginative assembly of many individual observations and

subjective judgments. The project of nineteenth-century child labour reform, then,

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[6] See Hugh Cunningham, *The Children of the Poor: Representations of Childhood since the Seventeenth Century* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991). Anne McGillivray writes about the European representation of Native American children. See McGillivray's 'Capturing Childhood: The Indian Child in the European Imagination', in Michael Freeman and Andrew Lewis (eds), *Law and Literature: Current Legal Issues*, vol. 2 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 555-580. See also Carol Dyhouse, *Girls Growing Up in Late Victorian and Edwardian England* (London and New York: Routledge, 1981); Deborah Gorham, *The Victorian Girl and the Feminine Ideal* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982).

necessarily accepted the imagination as a means of both weaving together and 'seeing'

beyond scant and diverse bits of empirical information that could be gathered in the

course of so many brief and imperfect viewings and interviews during visits to different

sites where children were employed. It was necessary to infuse this 'knowledge' of so

many others with knowledge of the self, so that the 'knowledge' created (and sanctioned

officially as knowledge by the legislative body and process of which it was part) was

characterized by what we would now call 'empathy'. Further, the representation of

vulnerable children within the project of nineteenth-century child labour reform is a

particularly important example of how social reformers produced knowledge through

empathic discourse. Carolyn Steedman has argued that in the nineteenth century, 'the

individual and personal history that a child embodied came to be used to represent human

"insideness"'.[7] In the texts of nineteenth-century child labour commissioners, child

labourers could only be represented and known *as, by, and through* this notion of

'insideness'. This manner of representation was the only way to negotiate what *really*

happened to children who worked in factories, based upon the synthesis and

interpretation of many series of observations and interviews. As Victorian reformers and

commissioners struggled to represent the lives and experiences of child labourers, they

effectively developed a system of advocacy through empathy.

The development of a technology of inspection for the purpose of reforming

child labour practices was important to the history of 'seeing' both in terms of

surveillance and empathy - it is even arguable that it provided a means of achieving

empathy through surveillance. The child labourers themselves were watched by

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[7] Carolyn Steedman, *Strange Dislocations: Childhood and the Idea of Human Interiority 1780-1930*
    (London: Virago Press, 1995), p. 4.

reforming investigators as they attempted to acquire knowledge about the quality of their lives and the condition of the children's bodies. Those in a position to discipline child labourers and enforce rules upon them were monitored even as they watched these same children. The individual children who were examined in their conditions were meant to represent the majority of child labourers unselected for examination, and hopefully to display any suffering that was 'typically' endured by such children. Although there was no guarantee that such a representative system would communicate the sufferings of every individual child labourer, it was hoped that the process of unannounced inspection would also encourage a system of self-inspection among the factory owners and subordinate authorities who controlled the labour and conditions of children employed by them.[8]

Through inspection and the subjective interpretations of those selected to execute inspections, it was hoped that the system of child labour would become in some manner visible so that it could be reformed accordingly, thus changing its collective 'practices' rather than the individual practices of individual employers who asserted particular controls on individual children. The mill owners themselves, for example, were encouraged in various ways to watch each other and to be sure that their competitors were not obtaining an advantage by violating regulations. Further, the judgments of those individuals who were elected to be itinerant factory inspectors, and their subordinates, were interrogated by committee to determine whether the system of factory inspection was achieving its aims. Thus, in order to counteract the oppressiveness of the employment of children in the factory system, surveillance was imposed upon those who

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[8] See Michel Foucault's arguments about panopticism and self-inspection, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, Alan Sheridan (tr.) (New York: Random House, 1977 [1975]).

utilize child labour, and other layers of surveillance were added to check any authority that the resulting system of inspection would tend to create. Underlining this web of surveillance, however, was the assumption that individual observations would be interpreted to achieve larger significance than that of the particular instances in which they are made. So too would testimonies of many individuals be knitted together by the readers of reports. As such, human abilities could conceivably stretch beyond what the individual can discover through the perception of his or her senses - and even beyond what many individuals could observe through the same. If the factory system, as a 'system' could not be seen, another system could be configured to see that system, through a network of many pairs of eyes, and subjective tools behind those pairs of eyes to possibly glean what eyes could not do.

In this chapter, I trace the configuration of a system designed to 'see' the invisible as well as the unseen, through the texts that mark the struggle to achieve an effective means of discovering and preventing the exploitation and consequent suffering of child labourers. This has required the close reading of individual texts rather than a broad survey of the collections of documents from which they have been selected. This is not meant to be a history of the Victorian factory commissions, the factory inspectors, or the factory acts. Rather, the documents selected will be analyzed as exemplary documents of the type with which my entire project is concerned: those which attempt to communicate knowledge of interior experiences - ultimately inaccessible and only newly acknowledged and conceptualized in the nineteenth century. That said, my analysis will at times tend to focus upon the testimony of certain individuals and the content of certain commissions of inquiry, in order that I may more closely follow trends of intellect and

judgment, and these in their proper contextual setting. In other words, there were many child labour commissions, many child labour commissioners, and also volumes of collections of reports from factory inspectors, during the course of the nineteenth century. I have chosen to examine selections from the commissions that marked some of the most significant struggles for the reform of child labour in the nineteenth century, along with some of the inspectors' reports of a similar chronology. The Select Committee on Children, Mills, and Factories of 1831-32 (Michael Sadler's Committee) was a groundbreaking enterprise in social reform; many of the witnesses called to give evidence were working people.[9] Calling workers to give public evidence against the conditions of work in factories, however, was not practicable, because this was likely to make it hard for these people to find work in the future. As such, following the advice of Sadler's committee, the 1833 Commission was the first to recommend that Parliament send inspectors out to observe and report upon labouring conditions in the factories.

Through a system of inspection and reporting, the 1833 Child Labour Commission attempted to develop a new way of 'seeing' the unseen as a way of accessing information about the experiences of child labourers. I am interested in the 1842 Commission because it includes a study of working conditions in mines, which were hidden and difficult to access by nature. The 1863 Commission was the first to try to investigate the problem of the employment of chimney sweeps. These children were particularly difficult to access because rather than in large factories, they were employed mostly in private residences and by single individuals.

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[9] Michael Thomas Sadler [1780-1835] was a prominent social reformer and political economist. See Stewart A. Weaver, 'Michael Thomas Sadler', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

The evidence used to support the arguments that comprised the factory debates was marshalled by legal professionals for the purpose of bringing to trial a system that was not working. Ultimately, there was neither a single guilty party nor group of people, nor could there be a specific cause or root of the problem. Therefore, the problem (of the suffering of factory operatives) had to be assessed on its own terms - felt and made to be felt, in order to engage the humanitarian senses in any sort of dialogue with economic forces, in order to bring about effects of substantial improvement.[10] It was possible, then, to view factory legislation as at once necessary and quixotic. Even if the vicissitudes of economics could be translated into figures on paper, the realities of the factory worker were not so readily expressed.

The figure of the factory child was somewhat removed from any battle that could be viewed as waged between two competitive groups of people. Instead, a child working in a factory represented not only one member of a class of operatives, but also an individual at the mercy of a system.[11] Children were viewed by Victorians (as they were

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[10] Economic historians have recently tended to dismiss nineteenth-century legislation as a relatively insignificant factor in the decline in the practice of child labour in Britain. Instead, historians such as Clark Nardinelli and, more recently, Peter Kirby, have argued that the decline of child labour in nineteenth-century Britain was really brought about by other factors, such as technological advancement and related changes in the structure of production. Such arguments present the movements for child labour legislation as having been inconsequential in bringing about real change. Further, Kirby goes so far as to suggest that advocates of nineteenth-century child labour reforms were really acting for the purpose of advancing their own political or economic interests. Arguments such as these do not, of course, detract from the worth of the texts that were ostensibly produced to bring about the reform of child labour practices. As has already been discussed, advocates of reform can be accused of attempting to further personal interests. See Clark Nardinelli, *Child Labour and the Industrial Revolution* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), and Peter Kirby, *Child Labour in Britain: 1750-1870* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003).

[11] For important studies of factory discipline - of the ways people were and have been made to work according to fixed standards and rules within the factory system and why this happened, see Gregory Clark, 'Factory Discipline', *The Journal of Economic History*, 54 (1994), pp. 128-163; David Landes, 'What Do Bosses Really Do?', *Journal of Economic History*, 46 (1986), pp. 585-623; Stephen Marglin, 'What do Bosses Do?: Part I', *Review of Radical Political Economy*, 6 (1974), pp. 60-112.

viewed, and tend to be viewed, by modern Western society in general) as vulnerable and

dependent upon others, which increased the urgency of the idea that they needed to be

protected from this system.[12] The study of children as factory operatives positioned the

worth of the individual life against the very texts that could be used to express the

existence of such. Proof of the reality of the existence of the individual life being given

in the continuous course of the experience of any such individual, any further knowledge

of the interiority of any other individual could only be comprehended subjectively and

intuitively, and thus without rational proof.

Charles Darwin, in his *Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals*, relied

upon the assumption of a generally consistent interpretation of basic emotions in order to

present to his audience an analysis of their exterior manifestations. [13] Although it was

impossible for Darwin to give evidence pertaining to patterns and habits of emotions as

they are felt, he could make reference to felt emotions while restricting his analysis to

their expression without acknowledging the dichotomy. It is interesting to consider the

emphasis upon children in Darwin's work, presumably because their expression of

emotions is less strictly regulated by social influences than that of the adult members of

the human species. Children figure very prominently in Darwin's chapter on weeping,

which, as the most material of human emotional expressions, is arguably most commonly

considered of all such expressions to give access to interior human conditions.

'Weeping', the first chapter of a series of chapters devoted to 'The Special

Expressions of Man', features a selection of photographic plates of crying children.

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[12] For an analysis of the Western definition of children as essentially vulnerable and dependent, see Pia
Haudrup Christensen, "Childhood and the Cultural Constitution of Vulnerable Bodies', in Alan
Prout (ed.), *The Body, Childhood and Society* (London: Macmillan, 2000), pp. 38-59.

[13] Charles Darwin, *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals* (Chicago: University of Chicago
Press, 1965 [1872]), p. 155.

Although, as Philip Prodger has argued, there was no way for Darwin to be absolutely

certain which emotion, or combination of emotions, was being expressed at the exact

moment the images were being captured, Darwin's decision to depict children

exclusively in the plates he chose for the chapter on weeping indicates a certain

confidence in the relative purity of children's emotional expression. [14] Darwin asserted

that 'weeping seems to be the primary and natural expression, as we see in children, of

suffering of any kind'.[15] He added, however, that 'a frequently repeated effort to restrain

weeping, in association with certain states of mind, does much in checking the habit.'[16]

So much so, that when Darwin asked several children to try to produce tears by

contracting the muscles around their lachrymal glands as long and as hard as they could,

it 'produced hardly any effect. There was sometimes a little moisture in the eyes, but not

more than apparently could be accounted for by the squeezing out of the already secreted

tears within the glands.'[17] Much of Darwin's chapter on weeping discusses acquired

habits of restraining this form of emotional expression.

Darwin's chapter on weeping, then, is concerned with the very habits of

emotional restraint that made it so difficult to analyze the sufferings of working-class

operatives, even, and perhaps especially of those of the child labourers, since much of the

evidence depended upon verbal expression. The problems that Darwin encountered

regarding the impossibility of proof of felt emotion were in a manner pre-figured by the

dilemma faced by commissions of enquiry charged with gathering evidence about the

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[14] 'Illustration as Strategy in Charles Darwin's *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals*', in
    Timothy Lenoir (ed.), *Inscribing Science: Scientific Texts and the Materiality of Communication*.
    (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), p. 38.
[15] Darwin, *Emotions*, p. 167.
[16] Darwin, *Emotions*, p. 167.
[17] Darwin, *Emotions*, p. 167.

conditions of factory work. So, too, was Darwin's focus upon children in his chapter

about weeping emblematic of the hopes of Victorian culture that it was possible to gauge

and communicate the interior life to some extent, even if it were ultimately impossible to

prove such communication.

Just as Victorian science pushed knowledge beyond the limits of empiricism, so

Victorian testimony was also led beyond the boundaries of sense information. Jan-

Melissa Schramm points out that even though the interrogation of witnesses was

important to Victorian legal systems (and legal fiction) for the purpose of testing

empirical conclusions and assumptions, equally significant was 'the Christian belief that

testimony can reach to the divine, to the supernaturally "real" or "absolute"'.[18] Jonathan

Crary contrasts the idea of 'the testimony of the senses', which, he argues, 'constituted

for the eighteenth century a common surface of order' with the more subjective notions

of visual reality that developed in the nineteenth century.[19] The 'autonomization of

sight', Crary argues, 'was a historical condition for the rebuilding of an observer fitted for

the tasks of "spectacular" consumption'.[20] The relocation of the reality of sight to the

space within the interior of the observer legitimized the possibility of truth in subjective

testimony. In this way, the acknowledgement of the limitations of human sight expanded

opportunities for investigative practice and legislative amelioration by emphasizing the

necessity of the human interpretive process.

Shoshana Felman's struggle with the paradoxical nature of testimony highlights

the way that testimony has come to be perceived as indivisible from the concept of

[18] Jan-Melissa Schramm, *Testimony and Advocacy in Victorian Law, Literature, and Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 16-17.

[19] Jonathan Crary, *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1990), p. 58.

[20] Crary, *Techniques*, p. 19.

human interiority: Since no one else can give testimony for what another has witnessed, the task of giving testimony is a 'solitary burden . . . And yet, the *appointment* to bear witness is, paradoxically enough, an appointment to transgress the confines of that isolated stance, to speak *for* and *to* others' (original emphasis)[21] In another chapter of the same collaborative project, Dori Laub explores the function of the listener to testimony as the 'enabler of the testimony' by being a witness to the witness and also a witness to himself or herself: 'The listener has to feel the victim's victories, defeats and silences, know them from within, so that they can assume the form of testimony'.[22] Although Laub is specifically discussing the testimony of trauma, this passage is particularly suited to illustrate the role played by Victorian factory commissioners, who served as witnesses and observed and listened to factory operatives, and witnesses who gave testimony on their behalf.

If the increasing acceptance of human subjectivity as a part of human knowledge allowed for a widening of the jurisdiction of human interpretive power, it certainly problematized the meaning of testimony and complicated the burden of determining the credibility of individual witnesses. The Victorian factory commissioners went to great lengths to establish that they were suitably informed to make decisions about the appropriate measures that should be taken to improve factory conditions. J.E. White, in his report for the 1863 Children's Employment Commission, included three pages of an extremely detailed description of the process involved in the manufacture of Lucifer matches. None of this description includes any information about the conditions of

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[21] Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub, *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), p. 2.

[22] Dori Laub, 'Bearing Witness, or the Vicissitudes of Listening', in Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub, *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), p. 58.

labour in the matchmaking industry or about any specific factory. Instead, it reads as a guide through a typical factory where matches were made. Most of the factory commission reports contain similar descriptions of types and places of work. It is arguable that the authors of the reports felt compelled to demonstrate that they were not ignorant of the subjects about which they spoke, and also to provide enough information to render a reader of his report an appropriate candidate for contributing to the process of making legislative decisions about the situation.

Further, a factory commissioner had to explain the qualifications of those whose testimony they considered appropriate to include in their reports as 'evidence'. This was especially important when such a witness was not a member of the operative class. Such was the case of Dr Henry Letheby, who was interviewed by White as part of his report on the conditions of labour in matchmaking factories. White emphasizes the importance of selecting appropriate witnesses to interview. He lists Letheby's degree qualifications before going on to argue that 'Only a medical man dealing with people regarding themselves in the light of patients, and having himself patients from several classes differently employed, seems to be in a position to obtain true and sufficient data for forming a trustworthy conclusion as to [the factory workers'] comparative health'.[23] As he was not in such a position himself, White's strategy highlights both the collaborative nature of the efforts of the factory commissioners and the value of individual processes of judgment to those efforts.

A peculiar problem of testimony in any case of ethics is the relationship of objectivity to ignorance and of subjectivity to experience. Victorian factory reform

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[23] British Parliamentary Papers, 1863 [3170] XVII, *Royal Commission on the Employment of Children (trades and manufactures)* (1863), p. 44.

sought to secure the well-being of factory workers, and especially of members of this group who were children. But those who were closely associated with this class of workers were likely to have had motives that would affect their opinions and their positions. They were also less likely to be open-minded. Robert Gray suggests that doctors who regularly treated factory workers appear to have striven for a balance between advocacy and conformity to the status quo: 'Medical practitioners in manufacturing towns were delicately poised in relation to debates about factory reform or other social issues. On the one hand, the *persona* of professionalism was as much with enlightened philanthropy and public duty as with successful therapies . . . On the other hand, over-assertive and controversial public stances might alienate potential patrons and patients'.[24] Ideas about welfare, happiness, and safety are relative and subject to the forces of human interiority that mould and shape individual definitions of any such abstract concepts.

Writing in 1903, B. Leigh Hutchins and A. Harrison were convinced of the historical significance of the moral problem embedded in the legislative project of the reform of child labour practices; personal interests were likely to influence opinions. They cite one of the 1833 Children's Employment commissioners as deeply frustrated about the politics of ethical judgments. 'Mr. Tufnell confirmed the cruelty of employing children for long hours, and the ill-usage to which they were submitted, as the "Parliamentary and public ground" for supporting the [ten hours] Bill. "But," he went on to say, "not a single witness that came before me to give evidence in favour of the Ten Hours Bill . . . of whatever trade or station he may have been, supported it on the above

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[24] Robert Gray, *The Factory Question and Industrial England, 1830-1860* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 74.

grounds . . . I am perfectly satisfied that motives of humanity have not the smallest weight in inducing them to uphold the ten Hours Bill".'[25] Hutchins and Harrison also argue that even among the factory operatives themselves, there were substantial motives for wanting children to work for purposes other than their own good: 'It is necessary to recognise that the operative class themselves were . . . largely committed to the system of child labour and long hours. Some, whether from need or demoralisation, lived on their children's earnings; others made a profit from employing their own or their neighbour's children; and, however much the better-minded and more intelligent might revolt against the system, there was enough solidarity amongst them to make the position of an informer invidious and impossible'.[26] Writing almost a century after Hutchins and Harrison, Peter Kirby argues that child factory labour in the nineteenth century was more the result of changing demographics than industrialization. There were simply more children born in late eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Britain, Kirby argues, than their parents could afford to raise. Thus, parents were tempted to supplement their income by sending their children out to work and collecting their wages.[27]

In order to approach the politics of labour relations, whether at the level of Parliamentarian or factory worker, 'facts' about welfare and well-being were of course malleable in their representation according to political, economic, and social perspective. The discernment of justice from injustice by rising above rhetoric and politics in one's own subjective sense of humanity is what Richard Weisberg would describe as the ability to recognize 'central realities', which, he argues, are easily evaded by the spoken or

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[25] British Parliamentary Papers, 1833 [167] XIX, *Royal Commission on the Employment of Children in Factories* (1834), Supplementary Report. Cited in B. Leigh Hutchins and A. Harrison, *A History of Factory Legislation* (London: Frank Cass & Co., 1966, [1903]), p. 50.
[26] Hutchins and Harrison, *Factory Legislation*, p. 38.
[27] Kirby, *Child Labour*, p. 10.

written word in any type of legalistic discourse.[28] The introduction of inspectors into

factory legislation after1833 acknowledged the recognition of 'central realities' as an

individual and interior process. The measure enabled responsible parties to make fair, if

necessarily subjective, judgments about the conditions of labour in factories; even if it

could never ultimately guarantee that they would do so.

The most basic judgment that Victorian factory commissioners were obliged to

make in their reports was that of naming the effects of factory labour. The Central Board

of the 1833 Children's Employment Commission attempted to classify the most common

problems caused by children's work in factories according to the degree that each were

readily observable: 'The effects of factory labour on children are immediate and remote:

the immediate effects are fatigue, sleepiness, and pain; the remote effects, such at least as

are usually conceived to result from it, are, deterioration of the physical constitution,

deformity, disease, and deficient mental instruction and moral culture.'[29] This sort of

grouping was essential to the task of evaluating the conditions of children's factory

labour. In his 1833 report, John Elliot Drinkwater summarized a great deal of information

about the conditions in various factories in Nottingham: 'The two mills which we found

in worst repute in Nottingham were Mr. Wilson's at Radford and Mr. Milne's at

Lenton'.[30] Working up to the stage of making such judgments about factories, groups

within the factories were similarly evaluated; for example, sometimes males and females

were observed to respond differently to factory conditions. In his 1833 report on

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[28] Richard Weisberg, *The Failure of the Word: The Protagonist as Lawyer in Modern Fiction* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), p. 3.

[29] British Parliamentary Papers [450] XX, *Royal Commission on the Employment of Children in Factories* (1833), First Report, p. 25.

[30] British Parliamentary Papers [450] XX, *Royal Commission on the Employment of Children in Factories* (1833), C1, p. 40.

factories in Glasgow, one of the commissioners for the Northern District, James Stuart, claimed about the John Dennistun and Co. Mill that 'many of the females, although they have worked for considerable periods, retain the bloom of health, and all the appearance of being robust. The male workers, which is universally the case, were most pale and cadaverous looking'.[31] It seems that Mr Stuart developed a strategy of simultaneously evaluating groups within an individual factory and measuring that same group (in this case, male factory workers) against others of the same group in other factories. In another instance, Mr Stuart observed: 'The women at Mr. Wilson's mill especially are not only robust, but retain their rosy complexions . . . The children at Mr. Kirkland's mill look worse than at any of the other factories here [in Dunfermline] which I saw, but neither should I be justified in saying that they exhibited any thing like a squalid appearance'.[32] Children were evaluated in their immediate circumstance at the time of observation, but their elders afforded a glimpse of how they might fare in the future: 'Girls suffer from pain more commonly than boys, and up to a more advanced age'.[33] Here, girls are compared with boys in their apparent distresses, and also with girls of other ages, as the observer could not possibly have followed the same children through any number of years.

Dr Mitchell made a particularly striking claim about a group of workers in his report for the 1842 Commission: 'One of the most remarkable things in this pit was the cheerfulness with which men and boys proceeded with their work, seemingly

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[31] British Parliamentary Papers [450] XX, *Royal Commission on the Employment of Children in Factories* (1833), First Report and Minutes of Evidence, A1, p. 83.

[32] British Parliamentary Papers [450] XX, *Royal Commission on the Employment of Children in Factories* (1833), First Report and Minutes of Evidence, A1, p. 3.

[33] British Parliamentary Papers [450] XX, *Royal Commission on the Employment of Children in Factories* (1833), First Report and Minutes of Evidence, A1, p. 28.

unconscious of there being any hardship in it. Certainly the miners are a brave set of men'.[34] For the same report, Dr Mitchell interviewed John Sommers, a surgeon in Bedworth, Warwickshire, who often treated miners from the area. When Mitchell asked Sommers about the injuries sustained by the miners in his care, Sommers responded with a generalisation about the constitution of the miners, making use of a memorably strong metaphor: 'Are the injuries soon healed? Remarkably quick, much more so than the agricultural labourers. They live like fighting cocks.'[35] Sommers' rather strong statement placed the miners, as a group, alongside other labouring groups with which he was familiar, and described their health in relative terms. His metaphor, however, went beyond a relative comparison, effectively characterizing the personality of the miner. As it encompassed the lifestyle and perhaps even the moral sense of the miners, it is easy to see why Mitchell retained the use of the metaphor for use in his report.

Factory commissioners included in their reports much contextual evidence, not only about adult factory labourers, but about anything they considered useful for the communication of a complete picture of the life of a factory child. The testimony of the commissioners intended to represent the children in an arena where they could not speak for themselves. It is important to remember that many of the factory commissioners, if not most of them, were trained as barristers. They acted, and presented themselves, as both representative of the government (when interviewing others) and representative of those whom they interviewed (when making their reports). Alexander Welsh explains that in the act of representing, there is necessarily some overlap between the individual

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[34] British Parliamentary Papers [381] XVI, *Royal Commission on the Employment of Children in Factories* (1842), Appendix to First Report, Part I, Sub-Commissioners' Reports and Evidence, p. 6 [48].

[35] British Parliamentary Papers [381] XVI, *Royal Commission on the Employment of Children in Factories* (1842), Appendix to First Report, Part I, Part I, Sub-Commissioners' Reports and Evidence, p. 107 [68].

presenting the information and the subject being represented: 'To make a representation usually means representing the facts on someone else's behalf - there can be a slippage from representing the facts to representing the client'.[36] Assuming that such representation is not just a word-for-word repetition of the words spoken by the subject, however, choices need to be made about the inclusion and exclusion of dialogue exchanged between the one making the representation and the one being represented. To this selection of verbal information is almost always added some form of material that can be described as the observations of the presenter. This new, hybrid voice is meant to be, in ideal circumstances, somehow more effective or truthful than the original words of the subject by themselves, though not necessarily more so than the original testimony as witnessed - one could, after all, 'represent' oneself, and it is quite plausible that one's own testimony communicated directly could be more effective or truthful than someone else's representation of it. However, in a situation where one is being represented by another there is naturally some reason that one is not speaking on one's own behalf. Either there is reason to believe that another's representation might prove to be more effective or truthful than one's own, or circumstances prevent one from giving testimony - one cannot speak for oneself.

In either case, the individual making the representation is burdened with the consideration of what material to include and exclude (gathered both from the original testimony and the observation of that testimony), and of the process by which this material must be pieced together. For, as Welsh argues, 'a representation is literally *made*; arguments need to be set forth, evidence marshalled, and words carefully put

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[36] Alexander Welsh, *Strong Representations: Narrative and Circumstantial Evidence in England* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), p. 9.

together. The substance may stir emotions both crude and delicate, but the representation should appear to be dispassionately devoted to the facts'.[37] As Welsh aligns legalistic representation to its narrative counterpart in fiction, so those obliged to make a legal representation have an authorial responsibility to their subject, their audience, and their text.

As such, it is important to study the choices made by factory commissioners about what to include in their reports on the conditions of child labour. Robert Mackintosh, in his 1833 report on the conditions of labour in the mills of Dunfermline, included in his evidence the testimony of some parents of the children employed in the factories. The parents' statements varied, as some stressed the health of their children and some lamented the necessity of their employment for the survival of the family. Mackintosh represented Ellen Paterson, a widow supported by her three children (who were employed by the Milport Spinning Company), as 'an elderly woman of respectable appearance'. It was important that Mackintosh communicate a description of Paterson's appearance to those who would read his report in Parliament, for it was they who would have to decide whether to believe the sincerity of her statement: ' "With a clear conscience, I don't think it hurts their health".'[38] Mackintosh selected this statement of Paterson's to quote on its own, and summarized the rest of his conversation with Paterson in his own words. Arguably, Mackintosh wished to represent the situation as faithfully as he could; he had too little information to make a sound judgment about the widow, but considered her to be a valuable witness. In this case Mackintosh opted to preserve the woman's statement regarding her integrity in her own words. As he quoted nothing else

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[37] Welsh, *Representations*, pp. 8-9 (original emphasis).
[38] British Parliamentary Papers [450] XX, *Royal Commission on the Employment of Children in Factories* (1833), First Report and Minutes of Evidence, A2, p. 2.

that Paterson said, this was arguably meant to communicate to the reader of Mackintosh's evidence that the parents of working-class operatives were aware that they were maligned for living on the earnings of their children, and that at least some of them would have defended this practice, even if they did not themselves contribute to the family income. Additionally, Mackintosh communicated that not all such parents were apparently drunk, lecherous, and sinister, and suggested that it was *possible* that the employment of children might have been the best of multiple solutions to a family's economic problems (for example, better than a somewhat elderly parent working).

Sometimes it was necessary to imagine the parent behind the child, when the parent was not present. It seems to have been preferable to speak to the child alone, since this would obviate any pressure a parent's presence might have placed upon the child to answer in a manner that would have pleased the parent. For example, John Welsford Cowell, for his 1833 report on the labour conditions in Manchester factories, interviewed a teenager whose experience with employers had sometimes been much better than others, depending upon the individual for whom he worked. The boy explained to Cowell that he had formerly been employed by a woman under whom he had been very happy with his conditions of labour, although he was not so satisfied with the same in his current position. He said that he had had to leave his favourite position because it wasn't paying enough. Up to this point, the boy's testimony reads as if he was simply exercising his agency as a labourer. Cowell then questioned him, however, about whether or not the boy's wages were ever paid to him directly: 'I suppose when you say you wanted more wages, it was your mother who wanted more wages, not you?—Yes, piecers never has

their wages; it's always their mothers.'[39] Suddenly, it seems hardly believable that the boy himself had considered the advantages and disadvantages of his pleasant but lower-paying job before making the decision himself to seek another position. Cowell had apparently by this point in the investigation become quite skilled at discovering from his young witnesses valuable details they might not otherwise have thought to communicate.

Robert Mackintosh framed eighteen-year-old Agnes Drummond's testimony with his own observations, thus communicating rather a different message than the girl seems to have intended. The young employee at Mr Hall's flaxmill in Dunfermline apparently feared that her wages would be cut if the Ten Hours Bill was to succeed. As such, she emphasized her own free agency in the system of factory labour, eager to present the conditions of her labour in a favourable light. Mackintosh, however, included details that would likely have made any reader of the interview sceptical of her motives. Mackintosh reported that Drummond 'has, at this moment, although she has been standing already twenty-four hours, no pain in her knees and ankles, is not tired, or else would not do it; "it's all our pleasure," they do not force us to do it . . . would prefer the present hours and pay to a reduction in both; most of the people would like very much the limitation, but think the present wages little enough for ten hours' labour'.[40] Clearly, Drummond expected that if her workday was to be shortened, her wages would be reduced proportionately. The small direct quotation, placed as it was after the girl's incredible statement that she was neither tired nor feels any pain in her legs and ankles after standing for that long, produces an ironic effect that is almost comedic. For if Drummond

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[39] British Parliamentary Papers [450] XX, *Royal Commission on the Employment of Children in Factories* (1833), First Report and Minutes of Evidence, D1, p. 79.
[40] British Parliamentary Papers [450] XX, *Royal Commission on the Employment of Children in Factories* (1833), First Report and Minutes of Evidence, A2, p. 5.

meant by 'pleasure' that it was technically her choice to work such long hours, standing for twenty-four hours could not possibly be an enjoyable experience, and it is doubtful that she was not feeling any pain. Mackintosh strategically presented Drummond's testimony against itself, encouraging empathy for an individual in a painful situation that she claimed she was not, and exposing the motives for her apparent prevarication.

Sometimes, factory commissioners seem to have differed from one another with regard to the aspects of labouring conditions that interested them. It is clear from Jelinger C. Symons' 1842 report on labour conditions in the mines of Yorkshire, that he was appalled by the employment of young women in the mines. The mining work was difficult; the girls complained frequently and consistently that the tasks they were given to do were far more laborious than they felt they could manage. However, even though Symons did not fail to record these complaints of constant fatigue, bodily pain, and frequent injury, he chose to place far more emphasis upon the intimacy with which mine workers of different sexes mingled in their workplace. This suggests that Symons was more concerned with representing the girls' moral lives and experiences than their physical suffering. Symons explained in his report that in most of the mines he visited which employed females, the female miners worked naked to the waist in trousers. In the mines where girls were required to wear their shifts, it happened that the men who worked alongside them wore only a shirt or were naked anyway, so it mattered little for the sake of modesty that the girls were made to cover up.

Symons' expressions of shock are hardly surprising, considering that other factory commissioners throughout the Victorian factory reform movement were often dismayed to discover that female operatives in the occasional factory sometimes removed their

stockings where males could see them. However, it is also apparent that Symons considered the immodesty of the mines to be the most central issue of his report, despite the fact that this was hardly the main concern of the miners themselves. He described in horror the heterogeneous mixture of half-naked male and female miners, and their relatively easy attitude toward nudity:

> The practice of employing females in coal-pits is flagrantly disgraceful to a Christian as well as a civilized country. On descending Messrs. Hopwood's pit at Barnsley, I found assembled round the fire a group of men, boys, and girls, some of whom were the age of puberty, the girls as well as the boys stark naked down to the waist, their hair bound up in a tight cap, and trousers supported by their hips. Their sex was recognisable only by their breasts, and some little difficulty occasionally arose in pointing out to me which were girls and which were boys, and which caused a good deal of laughing and joking.[41]

Even though the boys and girls were not always able to easily distinguish the sex of one another, Symons clearly considered the exposure of the girls' bodies the principal reason they should not be employed in the mines.

While, as already mentioned, it would have been more than a little unusual for Symons *not* to have drawn considerable attention to the nudity of the girls in the mines, his emphasis on this phenomenon is worthy of discussion because he seems to have had great difficulty drawing complaints from the girls about the men's behaviour toward them. Quite simply, the girls seem to have wanted to talk to him about the strenuousness

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[41] British Parliamentary Papers [381] XVI, *Royal Commission on the Employment of Children in Factories* (1842), Appendix to First Report, Part I, Sub-Commissioners' Reports and Evidence, p. 196 [227]. This passage is suggestive of the kind of sexual politics which, according to Seth Koven, characterized Victorian investigations of conditions among the poor. See Seth Koven, *Slumming: Sexual and Social Politics in Victorian London* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004).

of their labours. It does not appear to have been, as in the case of Mackintosh's 1833 interview with Agnes Drummond, that the female miners were silent on the subject of gender relations in the mines because they feared that they would lose income if they spoke up. If this would have been the case, it is unlikely that the girls would have complained so persistently about their exhaustion and the physical strain of their work. In an interview outside of the mine (at which, Symons was careful to note, the girls arrived dressed neatly and properly, and looking very feminine), each of the girls asserted her earnest desire for shorter hours, and apparently for sympathy, listing all of their injuries and explaining how tired and miserable their work always made them. Symons redirected the conversations, returning again and again to the subject of whether or not the men behaved inappropriately toward the girls. Elizabeth Day, a seventeen-year-old employed in the mines, began the interview with a complaint that the work she did was too difficult for her. Presumably, Symons then questioned her about her relationship with the men in the mines, because her next statement was that 'The men behave well to us, and never insult or ill-use us, I am sure of that.' She then complained of a lamed ankle and a bad back, and insisted that 'It is harder work than we ought to do a deal.' [42] Symons' interviews with the other girls followed a similar trajectory. It seems unfortunate that the girls' own voices were afforded so little authority in this case, as they seem to have been so eager for someone to represent their grievances. It suggests that Symons believed that the girls' relative indifference to nudity was the result of their dispositions having been ruined by vice, and not because pain and exhaustion were more pressing problems.

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[42] British Parliamentary Papers [381] XVI, *Royal Commission on the Employment of Children in Factories* (1842), Appendix to First Report, Part I, Sub-Commissioners' Reports and Evidence, p. 244 [85].

While it is tempting to evaluate the choices made by the factory commissioners about what problems to represent in their reports, however, it is arguably more productive to study their choices and methods as their response to the formidable challenge of making the subjects of their investigation understood. Dr James Mitchell expressed his interpretation of operative culture in the form of a sort of tableaux. Mitchell (who, it might be remembered, was something of an admirer of the raw strength of the miners) attempted to communicate his perspective in watching the miners eating.[43] His description is heavily laden with exoticism: 'It is a fine sight to see the miners congregated at dinner, in a large dining-hall cut out of the coal. There they sit, naked from the middle upwards, as black as blackmoor savages, showing their fine, vigorous, muscular persons, eating, drinking, and laughing. They sit an hour, from one to two, and then resume their labours.'[44] This is one method of communicating difference, presumably with the aim of placing, as far as is possible, an audience with the responsibility of making legislative decisions about the miners and their children, within the perspective of a member of their own community who has witnessed the culture of the miners. Since Mitchell could not express the experiences of the miners themselves, he expressed his own response to the miners as a means of representing them, thus bringing his audience at least a step closer to the mines.

Mitchell also represented difference by describing elements of the mine that were very dangerous, to which the miners were quite accustomed. This would suggest that it

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[43] For an assessment of how the 1842 commissioners represented the general physical condition of the miners (they described the miners as generally short in stature but robust and well-fed), see Peter Kirby, 'Causes of Short Stature among Coal-Mining Children, 1823-1850', *Economic History Review*, New Series, 48 (1995), pp. 687-699.

[44] British Parliamentary Papers [381] XVI, *Royal Commission on the Employment of Children in Factories* (1842), Appendix to First Report, Part I, Sub-Commissioners' Reports and Evidence, p. 4 [29].

was beneficial for the miners to be represented by an outside observer. Mitchell described the workspace inside a mine near Dudley: 'Portions are left to support the great mass until an opening is made on each side of the mass, and also part is taken away from the back. This undergoing is a dangerous part of the work, as, notwithstanding all that experience and judgment can do, occasionally too much is taken away, and a mass of coals will suddenly fall and crush the men and boys engaged'.[45] Mitchell's report juxtaposes a visual representation of the mines as he had seen them with the spectre of accidents he did not see, but of which he was made aware. Representing vulnerability by including in their testimony the expression of knowledge of the unseen, unprovable, and unrepresented was one of the most difficult and important challenges that faced the factory commissioners.

Some evidence gathered to further the aims of the legislative project of Victorian child labour reform did not accord with other evidence gathered for the same purpose. The process of inspection and interview was an imperfect means of acquiring information about factory conditions. The success of an inspection, whether conducted for the purpose of discovery or regulation, is heavily dependent upon a panoptic ideal that is virtually unattainable; the success of an interview upon the accuracy and sincerity of the person expected to provide information. However, the same subjective tools employed by the factory commissioners to make judgments about groups of individuals enabled them to weigh individual statements and bits of empirical information against each other. Even if this technique could never ultimately illuminate the aspects of interaction and discourse that are not directly available to the human senses, such as the motivation

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[45] British Parliamentary Papers [381] XVI, *Royal Commission on the Employment of Children in Factories* (1842), Appendix to First Report, Part I, Sub-Commissioners' Reports and Evidence, p. 3 [21].

behind a statement, it would allow responsible individuals a certain measure of information with which to make decisions that would likely ameliorate the conditions under which a particular group of individuals most certainly suffered. Thus, information processed through the limited means of the subjective judgment of one individual entrusted to glean from evidence truths that were ultimately indiscernible, was far preferable to no information at all, and no change. James Stuart's 1833 report on Paisley distils the testimony he had collected from many figures with some kind of authority over factory children into one dismissive clause:

> Although there is an abundance of evidence from clergymen, as well as from teachers, of a conflicting description, I think it upon the whole impossible to doubt that the young workers must be so much fatigued with the very long hours of labour that they cannot be so fit to receive instruction as other young people, and that they have too little time for being at school even to enable them to learn to read, write, and to understand accounts tolerably.[46]

Stuart arguably intended to express that the substance of the unseen motivations and biases of the clergy and teachers interviewed were of less importance than the fact that he was not convinced by them. There was most certainly a danger in accepting the judgment of a relative outsider over that of an individual in daily contact with the child subjects of this legislative inquiry. But was that danger any less than the one presented by any number of biased motivations - or manifestations of emotional acclimatization - of any relative insiders whose testimony might contradict the opinion of a commissioner? What was certain was that the alternative - allowing conditions to remain as they were -

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[46] British Parliamentary Papers [450] XX, *Royal Commission on the Employment of Children in Factories* (1833), First Report and Minutes of Evidence, A1, p. 122.

however murky the reality of which might have appeared to an outside observer, would have been unacceptable.

In conducting the research for his 1833 report on Glasgow, the same factory commissioner, James Stuart, encountered a situation where the factory operatives may have made choices about their working conditions that undermined their own comfort, thus complicating the task of reporting those conditions. Stuart's report expresses his own perception of the heat in the rooms at the John Dennistoun & Co. Mill. Stuart presented his interpretation of what he perceived to be unseized opportunities of which the operatives could have taken advantage to alleviate the heat, in order to indicate the possibility of a choice or preference to work in the heat:

> The degree of heat that prevailed in some of the rooms, viz. 82º, was greater than Mr. Hussey junior, who accompanied me, represented to me to be necessary; but I suspect that the spinners find that their work proceeds better with that than with a less degree of heat, and their earnings depend on the quantity of yarn spun. Were it not so, they would be attentive in opening windows, and admitting a free current of air, which could not fail to be agreeable to their feelings, and favourable to their health.[47]

Stuart evaluated the opportunity to open windows according to the perceived motivations of the workers. Stuart could see that there were windows and assessed that they could be opened. He also asked a responsible individual about the level of heat necessary for production to proceed satisfactorily. But the question of choice was not a simple one - Stuart came to the conclusion that the operatives made a free choice to leave the windows

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[47] British Parliamentary Papers [450] XX, *Royal Commission on the Employment of Children in Factories* (1833), First Report and Minutes of Evidence, A1, p. 83.

closed, which means that the operatives would have been able to earn sustainable wages with the windows open. He did not, however, give a final opinion on the matter. It is possible that the relative discomfort caused by the heat (and Stuart believed that there was some) was outweighed by the facility with which the yarn could be spun, and the increased profits, which would have resulted. Stuart's readers, however, would have needed to consider all of the possibilities, just as he had done when he made his observations. To represent choice, preference, and motivation, Stuart pointed his readers in the directions of several different, plausible realities, without completely inventing such realities and putting them into print. In this way, different motivations could be considered to have been part of the legislative project of factory reform, even if they could not be seen or physically demonstrated, or proven by such means.

Christopher Allen, in his recent study of Victorian laws of evidence, explains how these laws changed with regard to admissibility. While the British court system became less exclusive about who could testify on the basis of their person and status, it became ever more restrictive of what could be said in court by anyone who could testify. The shift in focus to the content of testimony is suggestive of the way in which truth was increasingly understood to be ultimately subjective. 'Evidence of questionable reliability, which would have been heard for what it was worth a century earlier [than the 1850s], was frequently excluded'.[48] The admission of a statement into court approved that statement and also the influence that statement could have upon individuals in a position to judge. 'What a statement was worth' could tilt the scales against truth or reality as fair and proper judgment and in favour of a skewed perspective.

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[48] Allen, Christopher, *The Law of Evidence in Victorian England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

Interestingly, the understanding of truth as subjective seems to have made the necessity of an objective statement more urgent. John Pegge, a doctor interviewed for the 1863 report on matchmaking factories, was at a loss to express the inexpressible - how painful was the condition of necrosis of the jaw, which many of his patients developed after years of working in the match factory? How could he, who had never suffered from the condition, know how painful it is, and how could he describe the pain to others who had neither suffered from the disease nor perhaps ever met anyone who had? Pegge attempted to solve both of these problems by scaling pain according to the administration of narcotics: 'The suffering of a patient in the earlier stage of the disease and until it has run itself out leaving the bone quite dead and exposed, are intolerable. He will then take almost any amount of narcotics with comparatively little effect.'[49] Instead of relying solely upon a somewhat gruesome description of the condition of necrosis of the jaw to convince his reader that the condition was painful, Pegge chose to illustrate what he had witnessed of the experience of the disease by a means that might validate his claim that the pain is 'intolerable'. Pegge struggled to somehow 'prove' the real condition of a painful experience. Pegge's statement, however, acted to confirm the understanding of pain as constrained by the limitations of human sense experience by its very attempt to reduce those constraints.

Jonathan Crary argues that during the middle decades of the nineteenth century, 'the issue was not just how does one know what is real, but that new forms of the real were being fabricated, and a new truth about the capacities of a human subject was being

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[49] British Parliamentary Papers, 1863 [3170] XVII, *Royal Commission on the Employment of Children (trades and manufactures)* (1863), p. 49.

articulated in these terms.'[50] Changes in the conception of what was 'real' presented

challenges and also afforded opportunities to those involved in advocating the reform of

the treatment of such physically vulnerable individuals as factory labourers, and

especially children. While it was difficult enough to prove or communicate that one

individual was suffering, it was even more difficult to prove that large groups of

individuals were labouring under painful or physically threatening conditions. However,

the increasing acceptance of the necessity of the subjective impressions and feelings of

individuals in determining appropriate legislative actions was the logical response to the

collective considerations (whether popular or specifically approved by government) that

held that the present state of factory labour was decidedly bad, and particularly bad for

children. As such, legal fictions of 'real' conditions of factory labour were constructed

on the basis of both empirical and responsive (conclusive, or subjective) evidence that

could be gathered by the factory commissioners as they personally visited factories and

conducted interviews with workers and those concerned with them.

Perhaps the most obvious discrepancy likely to occur in any situation where

inspection is the primary means of discovery and regulation of working conditions is that

those individuals responsible for maintaining the conditions to be inspected will

anticipate and prepare for the inspector's visit. The child labour commissioners knew

that the factories were prepared for their visits, and took this into immediate

consideration when inspecting a factory. Robert Mackintosh, in his 1833 report on Mr.

Hall's flax mill in Dunfermline, did not consider this to be a problem. On being informed

by an anonymous overseer that this mill was cleaned and prepared for his visit,

Mackintosh noted that 'this of course was to have been expected. I merely mention it to

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[50] Crary, *Techniques*, p. 92.

show that it is not the worst side of things that we have seen here, or that we shall in all probability see anywhere.'[51]

In his report on the same mill, Mackintosh was careful to note anything that he considered might have been the cause of a disparity between the factory he observed and what he imagined it might have looked like every day. He included not only details of aspects he believed might have been 'cleaned up' for the occasion of his visit, but also incidental factors that might have mitigated the appearance of any unhealthy or dangerous conditions. For example, he indicated that 'the prevalence of the influenza in this town may have afforded facility for keeping away those of the children whose appearance might be less favourable.'[52] Even though mentioning the outbreak of influenza in the town did not necessarily prove that a factory in the town was unhealthy, it suggested the possibility of an alternate reality than that which Mackintosh observed. Mackintosh thus constructed the 'real' conditions of Mr Hall's flax mill of Dunfermline for the purpose of evaluation by conflating his observations of the factory with other information he gathered during the course of his inspection. He thereby presented a version of reality (possibly but not necessarily including the weaker children who were too ill to come to work), which was not too far removed from what he was able to observe empirically but not strictly based upon appearances.

As well as presenting multiple plausible realities regarding very specific circumstances, child labour commissioners also sometimes gave very strong general opinions about the conditions of work and the health of child labourers. In his general

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[51] British Parliamentary Papers [450] XX, *Royal Commission on the Employment of Children in Factories* (1833), A2, p. 6.
[52] British Parliamentary Papers [450] XX, *Royal Commission on the Employment of Children in Factories* (1833), A2, p. 6.

report on Scotland, James Stuart reported that his conclusion about the state of the health of the child labourers was that it was not entirely as appearances made it seem. His report concludes: 'The heated and impure atmosphere, which generally prevails to some extent in every factory, unquestionably soon deprives most of the workers (for all, it is thoroughly proved, are not affected in the same way) of ruddiness of complexion and of robust appearance. But it has not been shown that even the young workers . . . are generally unhealthy.'[53] Stuart's text at once constructs and defines the legal fiction of the general health of child labourers according to his feelings about his experience with such individuals, and essentially invites his colleagues in the legislative project of factory reform to use the evidence presented to them to form their own conclusions according to their own interpretations of this evidence. The alignment of the conclusions of all of the collaborators of this project would hopefully produce a kind of truth that would encourage the most effective and ameliorative legislation.

Alexander Welsh discusses the importance of circumstantial evidence to the development of narrative form in nineteenth-century England. The lining up of many stories in law and literature came to be an essential means of telling of things that were unseen.[54] It was especially important to be able to draw conclusions from a chain of overlapping individual testimonies where the issue at hand was the presence and evaluation of suffering, because suffering was not able to be directly communicated. Between the lines of a number of stories supplying indirect information about suffering, it was hoped a truth could be gleaned in the form of a conclusion drawn both from tangential facts and the subjective experience of those in a position to evaluate. The use

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[53] British Parliamentary Papers [450] XX, *Royal Commission on the Employment of Children in Factories* (1833), First Report and Minutes of Evidence, A1, p.122.

[54] Welsh, *Representations*, chapter 1, 'Stories of Things Unseen'.

of this technique was also imperative to factory reform because the entire labour system was essentially on trial. As a system cannot be seen, the evaluation of a system is dependent upon the alignment of many individual stories.

As opposed to the system, individual operatives were far too easily 'seen,' that is, in court, testifying against other individuals who had power over them. Hutchins and Harrison have described the vulnerability of the worker as the reason for the implementation of factory inspectors in 1833. Once an operative had given any kind of evidence against their employer, it was virtually impossible for them to find employment. Further, children were subject to both their parents and employers rather than being free agents in any real sense of the word, and neither could they act as witness in the same manner as a legally autonomous adult. As such, factory inspectors were given the task of collecting information and stories from many individuals, drawing their own conclusions from what was told to them, and then representing the workers, as if by proxy, to the legislative body. The representations, then, of the many factory commissioners, were meant to be aligned in a similar fashion to those of the individuals and circumstances encountered during the course of their inspections. The process of factory inspection, then, could help to illuminate aspects of child labour that were more elusive to direct observation. For example, the factory commissioners challenged the development of a system of relay labour, proposed by the factory interests as a means of reducing the hours worked by individual children without forcing the factories to dramatically shorten their work day. Such a compromise would have made it more difficult to assess the experience of one child by the observation of another. It would have been impossible for

a commissioner to tell for certain by looking how long a particular child had been working, and so they could have been somewhat easily deceived in such a situation.

Ideally, of course, records could have been kept and consulted about the particulars of each individual worker's situation, but such records were not always reliable. Inspection could also offer a sense of other important aspects of labour conditions that were wholly unseen and unrecorded. Jelinger Symons, in his 1842 report on the mines of Yorkshire, was able to describe the dangerous conditions in the mines, many (or most) of which he suggested were never recorded. He explained:

> Accidents of various sorts and degrees are so frequent in the collieries, that it is impossible to give anything like a correct statement of all that have happened in each colliery for three years, or even for a much shorter time. Numbers never reach the employers at all, and of those that are known to the underground steward, unless they are very serious, he keeps no record . . . the collier or the child are the only sufferers if the accident be merely a personal one. In many cases it is concealed from the knowledge of the master, especially where carelessness has occasioned a slight explosion, and the master's property has been risked.[55]

Symons went on to give example of accidents that he believed had happened (he had the miners mention them), the occurrences of which were firmly denied by those in charge of the respective operations.

As we have seen, the exposure of young girls' bodies in the mines presented a striking contrast to the hiddenness of the mines, and this condition quite appalled Jelinger

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[55] British Parliamentary Papers [381] XVI, *Royal Commission on the Employment of Children in Factories* (1842), Appendix to First Report, Part I, Sub-Commissioners' Reports and Evidence, p. 184 [118].

Symons. Symons was able to discover very little evidence of promiscuity among the miners as a result of the habitual mingling of workers of different sexes without much clothing, but he refused to be persuaded that unchastity was not prevalent in the mines. Symons could not find evidence that the female miners tended to bear more illegitimate children than their clothed counterparts in other industries. The explanation he offered for his failure to uncover such evidence emphasized the possibility of interpreting beyond, or even in spite of appearances: 'it is, however, well known that bastardy is by no means a proportionate index to the amount of unchastity; and that the most profligate women are the least likely to bear children'.[56] He believed that the bodies of the female miners were made vulnerable by their exposure and the decline in sexual morality that in his opinion would necessarily follow nakedness. Sexual promiscuity, then, was one more unseen danger of child labour, hidden away in the darkness of the mines. He only 'knew' this promiscuity to exist, however, because he had drawn conclusions about it from indirect, circumstantial evidence and a generalized knowledge of human nature as he perceived it.

The mines were not the only place where human beings might have acted questionably while hidden away from the rest of society, as exemplified by the employment of young children to perform the dangerous and painful task of climbing chimneys to clean them. Chimney sweeps often employed boys to sweep chimneys in the nineteenth century, as having a boy climb up a chimney to sweep out the soot was simply the most effective method of cleaning them. This was especially the case as many larger houses and edifices had chimneys with many turns and angles, and even right

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[56] British Parliamentary Papers [381] XVI, *Royal Commission on the Employment of Children in Factories* (1842), Appendix to First Report, Part I, Sub-Commissioners' Reports and Evidence, p. 196 [230].

angles. A dirty chimney produced unsightly, dirty smoke and bad smells, so sweeps who

used boys continued to be in great demand even after machines were invented that could

do the job almost as well.

It was particularly difficult to evaluate the conditions of child labour in chimney

sweeping, since the trade was practised in the private sector and outside of any kind of

organized industrial system. Increasingly, though, it began to be recognized that 'the

climbing boys,' as they came to be known, were desperately in need of protective

legislation. In 1863, largely due to Lord Shaftesbury's advocacy, their plight was

reviewed by the child labour commission.[57] J.L. and Barbara Hammond, Shaftesbury's

biographers, have summarized the remarkable difficulty that accompanied the regulation

of child labour in private chimney sweeping by explaining how hard it was to prove that a

child had climbed a chimney at all. It became common for sweeps to lie about the actual

occupation of the children employed by them. Since the 'apprenticeship' of the boys was

the only aspect of this system that was public, it was attacked on that level. Sweeps

responded by employing the boys without making them apprentices. 'They would take

them into a house, ostensibly to carry their brushes and soot, in reality to climb the

chimneys, and when the doors were shut there was nobody to see except the housewives

and servants . . . unless the boy died in the chimney it was difficult to prove that he had

climbed it.'[58]

H.W. Lord was one commissioner who was appointed with the task of

'evaluating' the conditions of child labour in the chimney sweeping industry for the 1863

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[57] Anthony Ashley Cooper, the seventh earl of Shaftesbury [1801-1885], was a philanthropist and politician
much devoted to the cause of child labour reform. See John Wolffe, 'Anthony Ashley Cooper',
Oxford Dictionary of National Biography (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

[58] J.L. Hammond and Barbara Hammond *Lord Shaftesbury* (London: Constable, 1923), p. 221.

commission. As one might imagine, the task was not an easy one. Lord could not simply

interview one of the climbing boys as he might have done with young factory workers,

because he did not have easy access to them. He could not, as he would have done in the

case of young factory workers, know precisely when and where they would be employed,

for the practice of employing boys to climb and sweep chimneys was one that would

have been carried out in secrecy by 1860. It was also a practice that was performed

predominantly in the houses of private citizens. Lord could only report indirect evidence

to the commission in the form of what he heard, and by narrating the experience of his

investigation to communicate scant evidence. In some cases, he reported about the hunt

for direct evidence, which never materialized. This was a kind of testimony to the

vulnerability of these children, as it indicated that they suffered their exploitation

unobserved by anyone who might help or defend them.

Lord had heard of the practice of 'sleeping black,' or that young sweeps would

often sleep as they worked - unwashed, covered in soot, under the cloth they used to

catch the soot that would fall from the chimneys. As the rumour of boys 'sleeping black'

was one that caused particular public distress over the use of children to sweep chimneys,

Lord was determined to find evidence of boys doing this and to witness it himself. He

managed to find an informant who claimed to know where some boys habitually slept

that way, and who agreed to lead him to the place. He reported: 'at about 10 ½ p.m., I

accompanied the witnesses Simpson and Stansfield to some cellars where they thought

we might find some boys "sleeping black"; so far as the boys were concerned our visit

was unsuccessful; my companions said that my inquiries had been heard of and the "birds

had flitted".'[59] Although Lord was unable to give any particular evidence about boys

sleeping black, he was nonetheless able to communicate that sweeps who employed boys

took great pains to prevent their practices from being discovered.

One of the most impressive communications in Lord's report on the climbing

boys was a piece of information that he must have discovered by research that would

have been publicly available as part of court records. Though not in itself new

information (indeed, it arose from the testimony of William Wood, who was a particular

activist for climbing boys), its juxtaposition with Lord's tales of his frustrated attempts to

gather empirical evidence of the conditions of child labour in the chimney sweeping

industry must have been very effective indeed: 'In a prosecution at Stalybridge not very

long ago it was proved that 2 boys had swept 78 chimneys in 3 days for the prisoner.

When he was called upon for his defence he said to the chairman "You know my lad

sweeps your chimneys"; the chairman perhaps did not know it, but it was true.'[60]

Although perhaps it was an uncanny (as well as embarrassing) coincidence that in this

case the boys in question swept the chimneys of someone who was expected to help to

bring them justice, Lord's use of this bit of court dialogue is highly suggestive of how

'unseen' the wrongs of child labour in the chimney sweeping industry could actually be.

The 1863 commissioners found that it was just about impossible to find and

interview individuals currently employed as 'climbing boys'. How, then, were they to

proceed in gathering 'evidence' of their working conditions? While the children were

smaller and weaker than the adults who employed them, and as such could be hidden

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[59] British Parliamentary Papers, 1863 [3170] XVII, *Royal Commission on Children's Employment* (trades and manufactures) (1863), First Report, p. 303.
[60] British Parliamentary Papers, 1863 [3170] XVII, *Royal Commission on Children's Employment* (trades and manufactures) (1863), First Report, p. 297.

away or forced to move so that the commissioners could neither see them nor hear their stories, it was also true that they would not always remain that way. Though their childhood may have passed in squalor and exhaustion, it did pass, and many of the climbing boys lived to tell their tales, even if many others perished. It makes sense that those investigating the working conditions of the climbing boys would have turned to the survivors of such employment to look for answers. Of course, these people were no longer children.

As mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, adults were often interviewed as 'ex-children' when circumstances dictated that the children themselves could not directly provide information about their conditions of life and labour.   Interviewing an adult who exhibited symptoms of a disease, disorder, or injury sustained in the course of labouring as a child, could provide empirical evidence of a child's exposure to the same dangerous working conditions, whereas the same exposure could not be readily observed in children themselves. The disease, or symptoms of the disease, would have been invisible during childhood in such a case as the development of necrosis of the jaw by exposure to phosphorus in matchmaking factories. As such, the strategy of interviewing adult sufferers who arguably contracted diseases during childhood as the result of excessive labours has already been discussed as a means of accessing evidence of 'invisible' threats to the vulnerable bodies of children. However, it is important to point out that these symptoms were not forever invisible; this is why it proved so useful for the commissioners to interview the adults, and even to record their observations of these sufferers. Seen in this light, the same strategy used to gather evidence of an invisible nature also made it possible to 'see' into the future. In a similar fashion, the strategy of

interviewing adults who were once employed as climbing boys was an attempt to 'see' into the past in order to construct the fiction of a set of present circumstances.

Edward Mason, an older sweep who was interviewed by H.W. Lord in 1863, used the opportunity of being interviewed by the Commission to express what he wasn't able to communicate to anyone as a child. Mason used a machine to sweep chimneys, and would not employ boys, because he did not wish to subject others to the same painful experience that he had as a child. He was eager to share the details of one dreadful incident in particular: 'I use the machine, and have no boy. The reason why the boys are used is that the landlords will not alter those chimneys which cannot be well swept with the machine, and the sweeps get more for sending the boys up the chimneys. When I climbed I was once stuck in a chimney at the Music Hall. I was there for 3 hours and a half. A hole had to be made in the chimney to get me out. I was nearly suffocated.'[61] While Mason certainly betrayed an awareness of the professional competition of the sweeps that used boys, it was clear that he, too, could have used boys instead of a machine, and could have increased his profits by doing so. His methods of sweeping appear to have been genuinely rooted in an antipathy for the practice of forcing boys to climb chimneys, as he was once forced to do.

One Mr Simpson, a master sweep who had also ceased to use boys to climb chimneys, in favour of the machine, suggested that the commission needed to interview adults who had been chimney sweeps as boys if it was to conduct a fair inquiry. Like Mason, Simpson communicated both an eagerness to criticize his competitors and to seize an opportunity to tell of his own negative childhood experiences as a climbing boy:

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[61] British Parliamentary Papers, 1863 [3170] XVII, *Royal Commission on Children's Employment* (trades and manufactures) (1863), First Report, p. 301.

'masters who were never apprenticed to the trade, and who know nothing about it, speak against the machine to save themselves the trouble of using it; they work with locked doors, so that no one may see what is done'.[62] Simpson seems to have been frustrated that he had to wait until he was an adult to tell his tale - until it was too late for anything to be done for him. His complaint about the lack of exposure of the plight of the climbing boys was put forth with the fervour of one who survived a terrible ordeal that should have been prevented. Even after Shaftesbury and others publicized the sufferings of the climbing boys in general, it was necessary to imagine what the boys might have been enduring in the present based upon scant information and information that was long overdue in the asking - and the telling.

It was not always necessary to wait until a child labourer was fully grown to observe the ill effects of unhealthy labouring conditions upon their bodies. Occasionally, as in the case of James Kirk, who was interviewed by Michael Sadler's Select Committee in 1832, older children already exhibited the effects of hard labour on their bodies. Kirk, aged 17, had been employed in a factory since the age of nine. During his eight years of employment, Kirk developed a physical deformity of the legs. Sadler's organization of the interview with Kirk emphasizes the faculties of observation - both the faculties of Kirk's immediate observers, and those of the individuals with and for whom he had worked for eight years. Sadler had the advantage of being able to display his witness to his fellow committee members, and in a sort of reversal of the general technique of the later commissioners, he encouraged them to imagine how Kirk may have looked to those around him as his deformity progressed. Sadler asked: 'Was it observed by any body in

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[62] British Parliamentary Papers, 1863 [3170] XVII, *Royal Commission on Children's Employment* (trades and manufactures) (1863), First Report, p. 303.

the mill, that your knees were bending?—Yes . . .Will you show your limbs? [Here the witness showed his knees and legs].'[63] Sadler then ascertained that it was also the opinion of the medical doctor who attended Kirk that his deformity was owing to long hours of labour.

The strategy of asking whether anyone else noticed the changes in Kirk's physical form established the fiction of a set of parallel observers who, though able to see that Kirk was beginning to suffer from deformity, were either unwilling or unable to do anything about it. Perhaps this was because the only people who witnessed the process of Kirk's deformity were operatives of equal stature; or, perhaps his employers knew what was happening to Kirk, but did not care. Sadler did not ask Kirk to specify whether and to what extent his employers knew of his condition. He did ask, however, 'Did your employers inquire after you, or pay any attention to you after you became thus weak and deformed?—No.'[64] It seems to have been less important to know whether Kirk's employers had seen him in this condition than to know that the progress of his deformity was readily observable by those who saw and worked with him every day, and yet nothing was done to stop it. Whether this was the fault of a single master, or of a system, in which a vulnerable individual could become lost to the sight of a responsible superior, did not matter. Sadler negotiated the 'seeing' of a whole system in the sight (or potential sight) of one boy becoming deformed. This brought the vastness of the entity of the system to a palpable and visible reality in the bodily deformities of one boy. The boy's body presented the committee with an immediacy that tended to override the problem of

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[63] British Parliamentary Papers (706) XV, *Children, Mills, and Factories Bill, Select Committee* (1831-32), Report, Minutes of Evidence, p. 15 [304-310].

[64] British Parliamentary Papers (706) XV, *Children, Mills, and Factories Bill, Select Committee* (1831-32), Report, Minutes of Evidence, p. 15 [318].

trying to 'see' a system. The boy's body presented at once a single moment of the consequences of exploitation, but also the time and suffering that must have produced these effects upon his body. Further, the boy could easily have been imagined to be one of many like him - his body was made to stand in for the bodies of many other children who were developing or who had already developed similar problems due to overwork and injurious labouring conditions.

The development of a system of inspection was in essence an endeavour to properly see people, and especially young people, who were vulnerable to exploitation. Working children proved especially difficult to see. It is helpful to apply to this situation Crary's modification of Foucault's theory of vision. Crary argues that although Foucault 'emphasizes the ways in which human subjects became objects of observation . . . he neglects the new forms by which vision itself became a kind of discipline or mode of work'[65] in the nineteenth century. The 'work' of developing legislation that would afford authorities empirical verification of conditions of labour struggled to place the subject of investigation under scrutiny at the same time as it tried to enable the subject to demonstrate circumstances according to his or her own perception of the situation. Through his or her own testimony, an individual being examined might confirm or attempt to amend visual evidence as perceived by the examiner.

Thus, the challenge was to observe a subject and to allow the subject a voice at the same time. This could be difficult in the event that visual evidence might contradict a subject's testimony. The body of one under observation might, in essence, 'speak' for itself. In many cases, and especially in the case of young children, there might be reason to consider that the testimony of the subject might be flawed by ignorance or by unseen

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[65] Crary, *Techniques*, p. 18.

motives. But how could one judge against the testimony of a subject without depriving them of their voice? The techniques of inspection that emerged in response to this dilemma signalled the rise of a new technology of vision; a new kind of 'work' that involved engaging the human imagination to compensate for the limitation of direct human sensory perception.

The task at hand was essentially to expose the 'symptoms' of exploited bodies and dangerous conditions of work (while keeping the identities of individuals hidden, and thus protected from exposure within the system). Individuals conducting inspections or making reports would necessarily invent fictions of conditions by naming them in their conclusions, 'dangerous,' 'unhealthy,' or otherwise. As Foucault argues, 'the gaze that traverses a sick body attains the truth that it seeks only by passing through the dogmatic stage of the *name*, in which a double truth is contained: the hidden, but already present truth of the disease and the enclosed truth . . . the synthetic truth of language . . . not a question of an *examination*, but of a *deciphering*' (original emphasis).[66] As a 'body' of workers was prone to sickness or injury in their individual bodies when labour conditions were dangerous or unhealthy, so too were the conditions under which the vulnerable bodies of factory workers named as such and distinguished as disease or disorder.

John Pegge, Fellow of the Royal College of Surgeons, in an interview for the 1863 Child Labour Commission, named a disease after the population of workers who are peculiarly prone to it. Pegge did not invent this name himself, and did not neglect to give the name of the disease as it was called by the medical community; his own credentials, however, lent authority to the source of the familiar term for 'necrosis of the jaw,' as it

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[66] Michel Foucault, *The Birth of the Clinic*, A.M. Sheridan Smith (tr.), 1973 (New York: Vintage Books, 1994 [1963]), p. 60.

was named by the people who knew it best: 'I have been in practice for nearly 30 years. During this time I have treated several cases of necrosis or jaw disease, or as it is call[ed] by the people themselves in this neighbourhood the "match disease"'.[67] The doctor's credentials substantiated the condition as a disease that was recognized by medical authorities. However, his allusion to its epithet granted the people whose community suffered from the disease a measure of authority. These people were an authority to be consulted on this problem that affected their families and community. The simple familiarity (and arguably, resignation) with which such a popular name was assigned to the disease communicated that the problem of the cause of the disease needed be treated as a symptom of the unhealthy conditions under which the matchmakers lived and worked, as these conditions were the common factor in the occurrence of the disease. The doctor's reference to necrosis of the jaw as 'the match disease' suggests that the problem of the occurrence of the disease could be addressed without considering the people who lived daily with the reality of the pain and loss associated with it.

Other reports of the Victorian child labour commissioners also emphasized dangerous working conditions by citing idiomatic expressions used by working people to refer to these conditions. For example, Dr James Mitchell, in his 1842 report on working conditions in mines, detailed the presence of several hazardous gases in the mines. He defined one such poisonous substance as 'the carbonic acid gas, or, as it is called, damp, by which a miner may be *damped to death*, that is, choked.'[68] By communicating the existence of this idiom within the language of the miners indicates that the miners were

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[67] British Parliamentary Papers, 1863 [3170] XVII, *Royal Commission on Children's Employment* (trades and manufactures) (1863), First Report, p. 48.
[68] British Parliamentary Papers [381] XVI, *Royal Commission on the Employment of Children in Factories* (1842), Appendix to First Report, Part I, Sub-Commissioners' Reports and Evidence, p. 4 [30].

familiar enough with the substance, and the condition of its presence, to have developed a means of expressing an experience with the substance, which referenced other, similar experiences. The idea of 'damp' was thus shown to have been incorporated into mining culture. The idiom functions in the report to demonstrate a common awareness of the prevalence of this particular dangerous condition in the mines. The suggestion is that the miners encountered carbonic acid with some regularity. The inclusion of the idiom in the report communicated the danger to which miners were exposed more immediately than any quantitative process of detection could do. Since the mines themselves were always moving and changing as the miners broke into new ground, it would have been difficult to record the actual incidence of the presence of carbonic acid in an individual mine. Even if one could have registered with accuracy each injury or death that occurred as a result of carbonic acid, it would not have told how many experienced miners had only narrowly escaped such a fate. The existence of the phrase 'damped to death' in the common language of the miners, however, contended that the miners were well accustomed to the threat of suffocation by exposure to carbonic acid. It was only left to the legislative body, then, to decide if this threat was an acceptable occupational hazard, and to decide what could be done to lessen the threat by way of regulation and inspection.

Not surprisingly, the workers themselves were often consulted about the conditions under which they worked, and direct statements were taken even from the young children. It is interesting, though, to notice how the statements of the workers (and especially of the young workers) were aligned with the observations of those conducting the interviews. These observations might confirm or qualify the statements of the workers. Robert Mackintosh asked one young mill-worker about the usual state of her

frock: 'Mary Hay "is wet every day. Mary Peacock is worse than me; her frock was just dripping yesterday".' Mackintosh then attached a note to this excerpt of the interview, as if to confirm the statement: 'The frocks of those two children were already at a quarter before seven in the morning (when I examined them) very moist. The night before at the conclusion of the work they were quite wet, and must have been so many hours.'[69] Mackintosh was careful to supply information that was as objective as possible, regarding the times he witnessed the girls' wet frocks, and the degree to which the frocks were wet at these times. It would have been reasonable to conclude by his statement alone that the girls work in very wet conditions. The pairing of his statement with the young workers' own claims that they are wet every day, however, communicated that they also perceived themselves to be wet every day.

Apparently, Mackintosh would sometimes consult with the proprietors of the mills he surveyed about the conditions under which children worked. Mackintosh distilled the content of an interview with eleven-year-old Mary Peacock, and one with her employer, regarding the cause of the sores on her hands. Combining their statements with his own observation, Mackintosh relinquished the form of dialogue to present an unquestionable conclusion: 'The witness's hands were broken out into sores, which she (and Mr. Hall the proprietor) attributes to the constant dabbling in warm water'.[70] Although Peacock's own statement about the cause of the sores on her hands combined with Mackintosh's statement about the existence of the sores, might have stood well enough on its own. Unlike a wet frock, however, the sores from water exposure would

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[69] British Parliamentary Papers [450] XX, *Royal Commission on the Employment of Children in Factories* (1833), First Report and Minutes of Evidence, A2, p. 5.

[70] British Parliamentary Papers [450] XX, *Royal Commission on the Employment of Children in Factories* (1833), First Report and Minutes of Evidence, A2, p. 6.

have been acquired over at least somewhat of a long period of time - longer than Mackintosh could possibly have stayed to witness. Thus, the proprietor's statement was used to confirm Mary's own.

While Mary Peacock said that 'she would . . . be glad to take less wages if she could get a limitation of time',[71] Mackintosh did not seek to substantiate her need for a reduction in hours by stating the hours she normally worked, or any other related information. Instead, he asked why she was required to work more than she wished. The girl demonstrated that she and her siblings had little choice in the matter: 'Has two younger sisters in the same mill; has heard them complain to her mother, and she has told them they must work'.[72] The aforementioned observation of the sores on Mary's hands was kept back until after this portion of the dialogue had been communicated, which strategy afforded the interview dramatic punctuation. Mary's mother not only insisted that she worked, but that she worked until and even though her hands were broken out in sores. Despite what poverty or circumstances might have been driving Mary's mother to do so, one gets a distinct sense from reading Mackintosh's report that the Peacock children had very little agency, and that their wishes for a shorter workday were rooted in distinctly un-childish grievances.

Helen Aitken, aged 15, asserted to Mackintosh that if she had a little girl, she 'never would send her to a mill'.[73] Her statement demonstrates that she did not consider that her history of employment had been entirely voluntary. Further, it suggests that she

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[71] British Parliamentary Papers [450] XX, *Royal Commission on the Employment of Children in Factories* (1833), First Report and Minutes of Evidence, A2, p. 6.

[72] British Parliamentary Papers [450] XX, *Royal Commission on the Employment of Children in Factories* (1833), First Report and Minutes of Evidence, A2, p. 6.

[73] British Parliamentary Papers [450] XX, *Royal Commission on the Employment of Children in Factories* (1833), First Report and Minutes of Evidence, A2, p. 6.

did not personally conclude that her circumstances required her to pursue employment. Instead, she was 'sent' to a mill by her parents. Helen Aitken did not consider that her labour was her own.

Mary Beveridge, only a year older than Helen Aitken, apparently answered the same question that was put to Helen Aitken. However, the question of whether or not she would cause her child to be employed at the mill was decidedly more urgent in Beveridge's case, for she was herself a young mother. Mackintosh reported that the 16-year-old Beveridge 'Has one child herself fourteen months old. It will never come to the mill if she can help it; "because I know to my experience what a mill is".'[74] Drawing from her own experiences, Beveridge constructed a fiction of a mill in determining for herself 'what a mill is', possibly implying that one who was never employed at a mill could never access this knowledge, even by interviewing subjects such as herself. Conspicuously, Beveridge did not list reasons for wishing that her child would never be employed at a mill, arguably because her statement was predicated upon the synthesis of a young lifetime of experiences, the whole picture of which she could not possibly have communicated to the commissioner in an interview. Instead, she constructed a fiction of a mill and a possible future for her infant child, and calculated that another child would likely have had similarly negative experiences being employed in a mill.

It is important to note the novelty of distinguishing between the will and the needs of parent and child in the nineteenth century. It was difficult to incorporate a measure of protection for children from exploitation in employment without calling into question the boundaries of parental agency. No one wanted to exchange the figure of the responsible

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[74] British Parliamentary Papers [450] XX, *Royal Commission on the Employment of Children in Factories* (1833), First Report and Minutes of Evidence, A2, p. 6.

parent in society with state authority, least of all that majority of Victorians who embraced middle-class ideals of virtuous domesticity and familial patriarchy. However, it was not easy to affix all of the blame for the exploitation of child labourers to the manufacturers. The factory system was an intricate sort of abstraction for which many people and possibly most of society could be held responsible. Further, the lower-class parents of labouring children arguably offered a very tempting alternative target to the wealthier members of the manufacturing classes, notwithstanding the powerful image of the clash between the greedy businessman and the frail factory child.

James Stuart and Leonard Horner were elected as Factory Inspectors after serving as commissioners for the Royal Commission on Child Labour in 1833. Along with a few others, they produced reports every few months regarding the working conditions in particular factories in particular regions. It was also their job to enforce the law and report any infringements, to try to isolate trends in evasion of the laws, and to make suggestions whereby child labourers might be better protected from harm and exploitation. One of the problems they found very difficult to solve was that of the illegal employment of children who were too young to work. Despite the fact that children were required to hold documents attesting to their age that were certified by a surgeon in order to work, it was difficult to determine who was to blame when these documents were falsified or non-existent. Thus, factory inspectors visited both manufacturers and surgeons to ensure compliance with the regulations regarding the production and verification of certificates of age. The inspectors also observed labouring children themselves, and frequently removed from employment numbers of children who seemed to be younger than the required age for employment. Often, they were able to

ascertain the real ages of the children simply by asking them, thus demonstrating how lost a child's voice could become among the statements and texts produced by their elders. Of course, it was not possible for factory inspectors to visually confirm the age of each child who entered a factory; the adults responsible needed to be brought to account for overlooking or attempting to falsify the ages of children who were too young to work.

Manufacturers cited the difficulties in determining whether a certificate of age had been falsified, and surgeons blamed the parents. Indeed, if children who were too young to work were working in factories, the parents of the children must have been at least in part responsible.[75] Matthew Gibson, a surgeon from Glasgow, told James Stuart in an interview that it was primarily the parents of potential child labourers, as opposed to potential employers, who were likely to incite him to falsify certificates of age. Stuart paraphrased Gibson: 'he never was asked by a factory proprietor, or his manager, to act otherwise [than in accordance with the law], but he has frequently to resist the solicitations of parents'.[76] Similarly, Leonard Horner reported that in general, he found parents were 'very ready to agree with the employer to evade the law'.[77]

Were impoverished parents to be blamed for doing whatever they could, including sending very young children to labour in factories, in order that they and their family might survive? Sadler asked one child, 'Did not your parents object to this over-work; did they interfere? —No. If they had, could they have got the hours diminished? —No, they could not. And they had it not in their power to subsist themselves and their

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[75] Indeed, recent historians such as Clark Nardinelli and Peter Kirby have tended to emphasize the role and responsibility of the parents of child labourers in the exploitation of their children.

[76] British Parliamentary Papers (519) XIX, *Factory Inspectors' Reports*, Half-Yearly Report for 1839 (Jan.), p. 43.

[77] British Parliamentary Papers (218) XXIII, *Factory Inspectors' Reports*, Half-Yearly Report for 1840 (June), p. 11.

children without your labour? —No.' [78] How could anyone have determined the difference between greed and desperation in the parents of child labourers? Some parents of child labourers took to task those who mistreated their children at their work. Sadler's interview with William Kershaw, who was a forty-two-year-old ex-child labourer, provided a rather unusual anecdote:

> I have been beat with a billy-roller . . . till I repeatedly vomited blood . . . I entreated my mother not to make a complaint, lest I should be further beaten. The next morning, after I went to work, she followed me, and came to the slubber that had used me in that way, and gave him a sharp lecture . . . and as soon as she was gone, he beat me severely for telling, when one of the young men that served the carder, went out and found my mother, and told her, and she came in again and inquired of me what instrument it was I was beaten with, but I durst not do it; some of the by-standers pointed out the instrument, the billy-roller, and she seized it immediately, and beat it about the fellow's head, and gave him one or two black eyes. [79]

Child labourers needed to be protected, even if it was not always clear from whom. To obtain the information needed to assess the problems of child factory labour, children were interviewed both for the information they provided in their statements, and through their presence as subjects to be examined, as patients in need of a remedy. As a patient might have displayed symptoms of a disease to be cured, so the bodies and the expressions of the children (and ex-children) demonstrated the wrongs of the factory

[78] British Parliamentary Papers (706) XV, *Children, Mills, and Factories Bill, Select Committee* (1831-32), Report, Minutes of Evidence, Appendix, p. 46 [1149].

[79] British Parliamentary Papers (706) XV, *Children, Mills, and Factories Bill, Select Committee* (1831-32), Report, Minutes of Evidence, Appendix, p. 47 [1150].

system. These wrongs were written upon their bodies and engraved upon their developmental experiences.

The Victorian child labour commissioners attempted to reproduce the experiences of children after they witnessed factory conditions themselves, as much as was possible during the action of inspection, and heard the testimony of those for whom the conditions of factory labour was a quotidian reality. They used and worked within emerging theories of observation and representation to define and produce truths of subjective vision, to feel and communicate the sufferings of factory children in order to enable appropriate legislative decisions to be made. These individuals, who were responsible for gathering information from the places of children's employment for presentation to the legislative body, were often thrust into an empirical dilemma that could only be solved through the use of the moral imagination - despite whether their ultimate goals were sincerely to bring about positive reform, or whether their intent was really to advance a political agenda. Unfortunately, when circumstances are questionable but not universally deplored (as were the circumstances surrounding child labour in the nineteenth century), the only way to gather the information necessary to institute appropriate reform is to place the question in the hands of a selection of people who can be determined to be relatively 'objective'. The level of subjectivity that would have been required even to make the most basic decisions about what to ask, and what to record would have had much to do with the enquirer's pre-conceptions, assumptions, and opinions on the matter. Here, we have seen the testimony of a fairly large number of people gathered in order to make use of individual subjectivity while achieving a broad (and hopefully, conclusive) view of a controversial issue.

Chapter 2:

Man, Brother, Other: Two British Travellers Write Home About American Slavery

Marcus Wood has convincingly argued that the famous Wedgewood anti-slavery medallion, which figures the body of a black man in chains against a vacant white background, and reads 'Am I Not a Man and a Brother', signifies the condition of abolitionist movement. Wood argues that abolitionist rhetoric regarded 'the black as cultural absentee, the black as a blank page for white guilt to inscribe'.[1] Wood further argues that abolitionists and others who constructed texts about slavery and the experience of slaves in effect wished to 'steal black pain'.[2] It is certainly true that the abolitionist movement in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Britain and America, afforded the perfect space for whites to 'play' in black suffering and white guilt, without the burden of the personality or the experience of the victim of slavery.[3] The experiences of the victims of slavery are indeed, as Wood suggests, lost to history.[4] Just as Wood

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[1] Marcus Wood, *Blind Memory: Visual Representations of Slavery in England and America, 1780-1865* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), p. 22.

[2] Marcus Wood, *Slavery, Empathy, and Pornography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

[3] For a discussion of the Wedgewood medallion in the context of the late eighteenth-century abolitionist visual culture in which it was produced, see J. R. Oldfield, *Popular Politics and British Anti-Slavery: The Mobilisation of Public Opinion against the Slave Trade, 1787-1807* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995).

[4] Wood argues that the experience of the victims of New World slavery is forever 'lost to the conventional resources of historical reconstruction'. *Memory*, p. 44. While I agree, I define 'empathy' very differently than Wood. Wood illustrates what he calls 'empathy' (as the stealing of black pain) with texts located within the tradition of the eighteenth-century 'cult of sentiment'; these texts primarily appropriate the sufferings of others for the effect that they have upon the self. Thus, Wood does not define 'empathy' as a way of knowing, as I do, but as a way of appropriating feeling. Both Wood and I use the word 'empathy' to discuss texts that are older than the word itself, so that neither of us can make any claims regarding contemporary usage. I can report, however, that by the mid-nineteenth century, Victorians such as Frances Power Cobbe were using a different word - the German *schadenfreude* - to refer to the practice of seeking thrills in the sight or consideration of the pain of others. One of Wood's main points in this work is to demonstrate how black pain is denied humanity and constructed as 'other', which argument

suggests, all of the sources available to the historian of New World slavery emerge from a context that is dominated by whites and white agendas, and that the voices of the victims themselves were so utterly silenced that even those rare moments of self-expression that have been recorded are only accessible through the filter of the enslaving culture. It is difficult to extricate the humanitarian and egalitarian impulses of nineteenth-century abolitionist writers, from texts composed from within a culture that largely condoned racism and racial slavery. Such texts are necessarily contaminated with notions of white superiority, as even the most fervent abolitionist could only enter into an ideological exchange of ideas using the voice that he or she developed as part of that same society, and in the language of the unconverted. Abolitionists, even British abolitionists after 1833, functioned as components of a controversy and not outside of that controversy, so that all of their rhetoric, upon close inspection, is arguably epistemologically suspect. Worse than that, controversy on such a scale will always present ample opportunity to those who embrace it - opportunity for fame or notoriety, power, redemption, and certainly money. It is, of course, impossible to confirm the motivations of even the most zealous advocate of any cause, or to verify their intentions, with absolute certainty.

None of this means, however, that the experiences of these victims would have been readily available to abolitionists, if only they had sincerely wished to try to understand, interpret, and communicate these experiences. In the nineteenth century United States, slavery was not easy for an outsider to observe, and the real experience of

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implies that those who would 'steal' the pain of the slave would not imagine that they were understanding or feeling the *same* pain that the slave was feeling, but instead that they were mining the suffering of the slave in order to achieve a feeling in themselves that was fundamentally different, better, and 'white'.

the victims of slavery not readily witnessed, especially as slave-holders came under closer scrutiny and felt threatened. It must be recognized that the discursive opportunities afforded to abolitionists by slavery also represent the primary challenges faced by abolitionist writers who, in their own deeply flawed and white-culturally specific ways, attempted to influence opinions and policies regarding the practice and support of slavery. Just as it is important to evaluate abolitionists texts in terms of their ultimate failure to understand and communicate the experiences of slaves, so too is it important to examine the strategies by which abolitionist authors *attempted* to accomplish just these goals. What kind of knowledge did abolitionists try to produce? How did they attempt to produce this knowledge? By what means did abolitionist writers endeavour to construct and interpret the experiences of slaves for their readers?

Literally hundreds of British travellers published accounts of their visits to the United States during the period between the abolition of slavery in Britain and her colonies and the emancipation of American slaves at the start of the American Civil War. Since American slavery was such a controversial topic, it would be naïve to think that some of these writers did not publish their accounts at least partly for pecuniary reward, or to think that their aims were always wholly selfless.[5] What is more interesting is that so few who published were abolitionists. Max Berger, in his 1943 study of British travellers in America, pointed out that out of approximately 230 British citizens who published accounts of their travels to America during the period from 1836-1860 and

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[5] Audrey Fisch discusses the enormous popularity of abolitionist literature and slave narratives in Victorian Britain. According to Fisch, such materials could hardly be written and published fast enough to keep up with the demands of the Victorian reading public. See *American Slaves in Victorian Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

despite the fact that most of the travellers professed an abhorrence of slavery, the number

of these who openly supported abolition 'were so few as to be counted on one's fingers'.[6]

From the inhabitants of the slave states of America, British activists could expect

very little information about the sufferings of victims of slavery. Especially from 1833,

when Britain abolished slavery in its own territories, the American South became a focal

point of British abolitionist concern. The slave-holding and slave-trading population of

the United States were increasingly and urgently inclined to escape the scrutinizing (or

even potentially scrutinizing) gaze of individuals from outside their own communities.

While an outsider, even a foreigner, could well have gone unnoticed in the big cities of

the South and might have occasionally visited a slave-holding plantation through the

introduction of friends, the slave states were generally a very dangerous place for anyone

who professed to be an abolitionist. In some southern states, spreading abolitionist views

was illegal. Max Berger illustrated the danger that awaited a British visitor to the

American South with the example of William Thomson, a Scottish weaver who visited

his brother, a slave-holder in Virginia, in the decades before the American Civil War.

Thomson, who was converted to the pro-slavery cause during his stay in the United

States, nevertheless held anti-slavery views before he reached the American shores.

During his sea voyage, Thomson argued with his ship captain about slavery, and when he

landed, was only rescued from being tarred and feathered as an abolitionist by the

intervention of his brother.[7]

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[6] Max Berger, *The British Traveller in America, 1836-1860* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1943), p. 192. For a discussion of how anti-slavery sentiment could exist independently from any abolitionist movement, see Christopher Leslie Brown's study of the origins of British abolitionism, *Moral Capital: Foundations of British Abolitionism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006).

[7] Berger, *Traveller*, p. 182.

American slave-holders had good reason to prevent British abolitionists from accessing slaves and witnessing their experiences. During the 1830s and 1840s, abolitionists on both sides of the Atlantic worked together to influence policies that were likely to affect the future of slavery in America.[8] One such policy regarded the potential American annexation of Texas, because it was likely that the annexation of Texas would result in the addition of another slave-holding state to the Union. Another issue that brought British and American abolitionists together was that of fugitive American slaves who managed to escape to British territories in the West Indies and Canada. British and American abolitionists worked to ensure that such individuals would not be returned to their 'owners' in America.[9] As tensions in America rose ever higher over the issue of slavery in the decades leading up to the American Civil War, popular opinions about American slavery became increasingly important. Because Britain's factories and textile mills put to use a great deal of cotton, the chief export of the American South, it is arguable that British public opinion would have been viewed by Americans, including slave-holders, as particularly crucial.

It is arguable that a professed abolitionist travelling through the South for the purposes of gathering information about the sufferings of slaves was unlikely to meet with much success. The few British abolitionists who travelled to America and published accounts of their travels did not tend to venture very deep into the South, and several of them largely restricted their writing to a discussion of the politics of slavery and

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[8] See Clare Taylor, *British and American Abolitionists: An Episode in Transatlantic Understanding* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1974). Taylor reproduces several of Edward Strutt Abdy's letters.

[9] See David Turley, *The Culture of British Anti-slavery, 1780-1860* (London and New York: Routledge, 1991). While Turley argues that by the 1830 and 1840s, enthusiasm had waned for the Anglo-American abolitionist alliance, there were still a few key issues that continued to bring British and American abolitionists together, namely the possible American annexation of Texas and the fate of slaves who escaped to British North American territories.

abolitionism. Only a very few tried to communicate the sufferings of the victims of slavery to their audience back at home, which seems reasonable, considering the limited contact a professed abolitionist would have had with slaves. How could anyone communicate the experience of someone or of a group of individuals with whom they had such limited contact? It is easy to dismiss such an endeavour as impossible, but this was also an era that embraced the power of the imagination to overcome empirical barriers to communication and understanding. The challenges faced by the project of child labour reform in the nineteenth century affords a parallel: it made sense to employ commissioners to investigate the conditions of child labour - to interview, to observe, to make judgments based upon their own empirical experiences. But these commissioners could not see everything. This did not stop them from trying to investigate the suffering they could not see, and of children with whom they had no contact. For British abolitionists in America, access to slaves was very limited. The voices of slaves were silenced, and their bodies hidden from the view of those who wished to investigate the conditions under which they lived and worked. Those abolitionists who wished to write about the conditions of slavery faced the daunting task of assembling minute bits of information to construct a possible reality. Such accounts were necessarily shaped by the writer's imagination, and much closer to 'fiction' than the reports of the child labour commissioners, who were technically entitled to have access to their subjects, even if this was not always a practical reality.

Slaves, as 'property', were virtually unprotected by the law so long as slavery was legal.[10] The American government could send no commission, no inspectors to

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[10] See Orlando Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982) for a discussion of the historical question of property in persons.

investigate or regulate the conditions under which slaves lived and worked. Information about the suffering of slaves had to be gathered in snatches, or in a clandestine fashion. Still, British abolitionists in America believed that they were in a position to offer some insight into the sufferings of slaves, weighing oral and written sources of information against each other and against their own empirical experiences, as well as engaging in as much contact as possible with the victims of slavery themselves.

Edward Strutt Abdy [1791-1846] was the son of an Anglican clergyman from Essex, and was educated at Cambridge. In 1833 Abdy was sent to study the American prison system as part of a delegation led by William Crawford of the Society for the Improvement of Prison Discipline and the Reformation of Juvenile Offenders.[11] Abdy stayed behind after his party left, for the explicit purpose of gathering information about slavery for abolitionist purposes. He was not affiliated with a particular group of abolitionists during his travels, and did not tend to associate exclusively with abolitionists, but he was introduced to some of the most important figures of American abolition, and even met with Willam Lloyd Garrison. With regard to his mobility and travels, it would seem that Abdy, wishing to investigate American slavery, took the most logical course available to him as an abolitionist, remaining mostly in the north, but travelling as far south as Virginia in order to get closer to the victims of slavery. He

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[11] Elizabeth Baigent, 'Edward Strutt Abdy', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004). See also Maria Weston Chapman's extended obituary in the American abolitionist annual *The Liberty Bell* (Boston: National Anti-Slavery Bazaar, 1847), pp. 295-299. In addition to *A Journal of a Residence and Tour in the United States, from April 1833 to October 1834*, 3 vols. (London: John Murray, 1835), with which this chapter is concerned, Abdy later published another, shorter work denouncing racism and slavery, entitled *American Whites and Blacks, A Reply to a German Orthodermist* (London: C. Gilpin, 1842). For a discussion of Edward Strutt Abdy's influence upon William Ellery Channing, see Thomas Harwood, 'Prejudice and Anti-Slavery: The Colloquy between William Ellery Channing and Edward Strutt Abdy, 1834', *American Quarterly*, 18 (1966), pp. 697-700.

talked to as many ex-slaves, free people of colour, and abolitionists as possible, and even visited individuals imprisoned in the north for being runaway slaves.

Abdy realized that discussing slavery with individuals who were not abolitionists could be dangerous. His records of his conversations reveal that he often tried to avoid the topic of slavery, but when the subject was introduced to him, he was not ordinarily successful in keeping quiet. This was as much the case in New York as it was in Virginia. Whether this was because Abdy was trying to achieve a balance between prudence and the effective gathering of information, or because he simply had trouble keeping his mouth shut, one gets a sense in reading Abdy's accounts of these conversations that it was a very good thing that Abdy did not travel any further south than he did.

Ebenezer Davies [1808-1882], a Presbyterian evangelical minister with a flair for the dramatic, served for several years as the minister of the Mission Chapel in New Amsterdam, Berbice before returning to Britain to fill the post of minister of the Caledonian Road Chapel in London.[12] In 1847, Davies toured America, including the deep South, ostensibly to aid his wife's ailing health.[13] It is, however, difficult to believe

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[12] On nineteenth-century Evangelicalism and reform movements, including abolitionism, see Boyd Hilton, *The Age of Atonement: The Influence of Evangelicalism on Social and Economic Thought, 1795-1865* (Clarendon Press: Oxford, 1970); David Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989). See also Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780-1850* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987). For a study of the relationship between British and American Evangelicalism, see David Carwardine, *Transatlantic Revivalism: Popular Evangelicalism in Britain and America, 1790-1865* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press 1978), and for a study of the impact of British Evangelical abolitionism upon American religion, see Thomas Harwood, 'British Evangelical Abolitionism in American Churches in the 1830's', *Journal of Southern History*, 28 (1962), pp. 287-306.

[13] This chapter will examine Davies' published account of his tour, *American Scenes and Christian Slavery: A Recent Tour of Four Thousand Miles in the United States* (London: John Snow, 1849). Though Davies makes regular references to the presence of his wife, it is, of course, possible that that she did not accompany him on his more pointed and dangerous fact-finding missions within the deep South.

that the character of his endeavours would have encouraged the return of his wife's

health, for the methods by which Davies gained information about slavery would hardly

have suited a weak constitution: he travelled in the deep South, essentially acting as an

undercover agent for the abolitionist cause. He travelled within the slavery system and

among slaves as well as slave-holders. Of course, he could never speak his mind in their

presence: 'Had my real object and character been discovered, I gravely doubt whether I

should have left the "great" and "free" city [of New Orleans] alive!' [14] Davies recognized

that the project he had undertaken - to 'spy' on American slavery - was unusual and

daring. He was hardly modest about it: 'Having entered the states by their most Southern

port - that of New Orleans, and finding himself at once in the midst of Slavery, he had

opportunities of observing that system not often enjoyed by a British "Abolitionist"'. [15]

Perhaps less apparently innocuous in its intent than Abdy's publication, Davies knew that

by reporting from within the lion's den, as it were, he could communicate information

that would not be accessible to someone who travelled in the company of abolitionists, or

to the places where an abolitionist would be safe. In his preface, Davies speaks of

himself in the third person: 'Representing no public body, bound to no party, a

"Deputation sent by himself," - he was completely free and independent in thought and

action, and enjoyed advantages for observation which one did not often meet'. [16]

Davies' work demonstrates the Victorian pre-occupation with visual information -

with observation, spectacle, and 'seeing'. It is arguable that Davies offered the culture

and politics of abolition more than a voyeuristic thrill. Davies' abolition was, in a very

real way, abolition in practice, as he invited his reader to enter into an analogical

[14] Davies, *Scenes*, p. 53.
[15] Davies, *Scenes*, p. iii.
[16] Davies, *Scenes*, p. iv.

relationship with the slaves he encountered. He encouraged the establishment of

sameness through the relation of signs of distance in the individuals he observed - he did

not claim to be able to tell very much about them, rather, he read and communicated the

signs of an interiority as full and deep as it was intangible. For example, he constructed

the crisis and anxiety of being sold at a slave auction by describing the way that some

slaves looked back at those who looked at them. He seems to have found the refusal of

slaves to return the gaze of those to whom they were presented a particularly poignant

response to this indignity: 'George kept his eyes fixed upon the dome, as if he felt above

looking down on the grovelling creatures beneath him'.[17] Davies encouraged his reader

to interpret this disconnection as emblematic of a personality that was as unique as it was

mysterious; he could decipher as much and as little from their faces as he could from the

face of any person unknown to him.

In this manner, Davies attempted to construct the arena of spectacle in reverse, as

the spectacle, or 'spectacle' was the subject of his writing. He elaborated upon the

discomfort of being the subject of spectacle by articulating the distance of that subject

from the experience. The anxiety of a slave at an auction was best described as such - as

the anxiety of an individual, which could not ultimately be articulated. Davies explained

that the slaves' eyes could withhold, and could express in their withholding. That there

was something beyond what could be seen - an untappable reservoir of interiority within

the slave - was the communication that needed no description because each reader would

be able to form an analogy based upon the interiority that he or she could never

communicate.

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[17] Davies, *Scenes*, p. 61.

This is not to say that Davies did not attempt to read personalities from the slaves' faces. Even the individuals who appeared to be emotionally disconnected could communicate some element of their personality. 'Ben . . . was a fine buckish young fellow, about twenty-one . . . He was dressed in a good cloth surtout coat, and looked altogether far more respectable and intelligent than most of the bidders. He was evidently a high-minded young man.'[18] But because Davies was 'undercover', he did not have the opportunity to get to know the slaves he encountered at the auction in any other context. This is where the limits of Davies' method of investigation become apparent. Davies expressed a wish to help Ben, and a wish that Ben did not have to stand alone: 'Oh! That I could have whispered in his ear a few words of sympathy and comfort.'[19] Davies could not help, precisely because he was a 'deputation sent by himself'. Alone in a crowd of speculators in human property, even if Davies decided to speak out or stand up for Ben, his efforts would certainly have been ineffectual, as well as terribly dangerous.

Abdy, in contrast, was able to converse with the slaves he met, even when he was in the South. He did not venture to slave auctions or other such places where he would have been more likely to see the most intimate workings of the slave system up close, but when a slave crossed his path he had a measure of freedom to talk to them. Whenever Abdy did converse with a slave, he subjected himself to the suspicious gaze of the white population alongside that slave. Unlike Davies, he was able to stand with the slaves instead of just watching helplessly.

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[18] Davies, *Scenes* p. 63.
[19] Davies, *Scenes* p. 63.

Although Abdy could converse with a slave, he was very aware that he could not do so for any length of time in the sight of a slave-holding population. 'I now thought it time to break off the conversation, as it had already attracted the attention of every one who passed'.[20] By describing himself as a conspirator in the eyes of white southerners, Abdy placed himself under the gaze of the slave-holder. Living in a society whose politics have recently declared against slavery, a British reader in the mid-1830s might have imagined himself or herself transported to a very different world where views against slavery were not tolerated. When Abdy was less careful, the slaves with whom he conversed were quick to remind him that their interactions were carefully monitored: 'I begged he would sit down, as he seemed to be tired, and I would take a seat by him on the grass, while we conversed together. "I dare not", he muttered, looking carefully round: "if I was to be seen by the whites, I should suffer for it". The keen and scrutinizing glance of a man, who stopped at the moment to look at us, explained what he meant.'[21] Abdy was no longer a spectator. Rather, he communicated the tension of an awareness of being watched himself, along with the slave to whom he had got too close for the comfort of the slave-holding population. Instead of reiterating arguments against slavery, in this instance Abdy aligned himself (and his reader) with the position of the slave against the scrutiny and suspicion of slave-holding society.

Abdy pre-empted any argument that could be made concerning the troubles of the southern planter, who lived in fear of a slave insurrection, by demonstrating how the merest display of sympathy for the plight of the slave was enough to render someone an enemy in the eyes of the southerner. A British reader (with anti-slavery sentiments)

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[20] Abdy, *Journal*, II, p. 211.
[21] Abdy, *Journal*, II, p. 212.

would have been thus placed alongside Abdy on the receiving end of the suspicious looks of the slave-holder, occupying the same position as the slave with whom he was conversing, and would have been made to know that he or she was already an 'other' according to the perspective of the slave-holding population of the United States.

This might have significantly changed the way that a British person would have read pro-slavery or anti-abolition arguments from the slave states. The distance between Britain and the southern states of America could have easily been used to ask one who had never traversed that distance to consider their own ignorance of the situation before passing judgment, despite the fact that slavery was unpopular and that slave-owners were much maligned. Abdy, however, drew his fellow Briton into an association with himself as a foreigner of their own origin, having stood quite alone and having been classed as an enemy alongside the slave for holding anti-slavery views. Abdy communicated that for the American slave-holder, there was no middle-ground; if one had enough compassion for the plight of a slave to have talked to them and to have appeared to show some interest in their life or welfare, than one had taken their side, and, with regard to being the object of scrutiny and suspicion, one had taken their part.

Abdy was viewed ambiguously by the few slaves with whom he conversed in Virginia. One of these offered to sell to Abdy a young girl who has been left in his charge for the purpose. When Abdy declined, the 'old grey-headed negro' responded: '"I thought . . . you did not look like a trader".'[22] Abdy did and did not look like a member of the slave-holding population of southern America. Perhaps his body language or facial expression communicated that he did not wish to be mistaken for such a one? Perhaps the elderly and experienced person of colour had long since learned to recognize

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[22] Abdy, *Journal*, II, p. 210.

individuals with whom he could converse as freely as he dared to do with Abdy, as a matter of survival. Abdy blended in to his surroundings to a certain degree, but his camouflage was imperfect, whether because he had no wish to conceal his views against slavery, or otherwise. He made a brave political statement by conversing with slaves in Virginia, in public - something that Davies could not do when he was 'undercover'.

Davies was also mistaken for a slave trader - by a slave trader. He did not, however, venture to correct the error, which was made while Davies was observing an informal slave market along a street in New Orleans. 'As we moved along in front of this sable row, one of the white attendants (though my wife had hold of my arm) said to me, with all the *nonchalance* of a Smithfield cattle-drover, "Looking out for a few niggers this morning?" Never did I feel my manhood so insulted. My indignation burned for expression. But I endeavoured to affect indifference, and answered in a don't-care sort of tone, "No, I am not particularly in want of any to-da—." I could scarcely finish the sentence. Emotion choked my utterance.'[23] It is perhaps less than surprising that the slave trader should have addressed Davies as a potential client, because he was looking at the slaves and probably with interest. The emotion that Davies described having felt at the encounter - whether affected or not - is indicative of the particular barriers that existed between the victims of slavery and those who might defend them.[24] In the space

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[23] Davies, *Scenes*, pp. 23-24.

[24] It is important to point out that emotional language and the description and reference to emotion had long been rhetorical weapons commonly employed by British abolitionists by this time. See Brycchan Carey, *British Abolitionism and the Rhetoric of Sensibility: Writing, Sentiment, and Slavery, 1760-1807* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005). It is certain that Davies would have been much influenced by this tradition. Still, Davies' expression of emotion regarding his inability to access the victims of slavery without having to pose as a slave-trader is indicative of the barrier that existed between the victims and any who would understand them and help them or comfort them. Davies' emotional expression communicates his struggle with the impossibility of surmounting that barrier to the humane knowledge he sought. Davies' British readers would have faced even more difficulty trying to understand the experiences of the victims of American slavery from their

of the slave market, Davies could only safely gather information about slavery in the guise of a trader. The victims themselves must necessarily have viewed him as a potential master, and so would have acted and communicated with him accordingly. This confirms Marcus Wood's argument that the experience of the victims of New World slavery is forever lost to history, but it also affirms the need to examine the new ways in which nineteenth-century activists attempted to surmount the problem of defending individuals who were vulnerable and voiceless. There was little that could be known about the real experience of slaves, and nearly all of the information that Davies provided to his reader was superficial empirical description heavily supplemented by his own imagination. Yet the attempt that he made to 'fill in the blanks' of experience and to try to bridge this particularly unbridgeable gap between human beings is quite striking.

One of Davies' most remarkable strategies for representing empathy with the victim of slavery is demonstrated by the expression of his response to witnessing a young girl named Margaret being auctioned with her infant child. Davies was a spectator at the sale and knew nothing about the girl other than what he could see and what was announced by the auctioneer. When he heard her name, however, he grasped this kernel of information and attempted to construct a kind of narrative of possibility around it: 'The next was a very modest-looking mulatto girl, of small features and slender frame, with a little child (apparently not more than a year old) in her arms, evidently the daughter of a white man. "Now, who bids for Margaret and her child?" Margaret! My own dear mother's name. "Margaret and her child!" What should I have been this day, if *that*

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location. Davies' text establishes a parallel between one person who could not know (himself) and another (his reader). His emotional expression was arguably meant to encourage his reader to engage with their own inability to know or understand the victims of slavery, and to follow his lead in imaginatively struggling to know and understand them anyway.

Margaret "and her child" Ebenezer had been so treated? Who can think of his own mother, and not drop a tear of sympathy for this mother—so young, so interesting, and yet so degraded?'[25] The auctioneer described the girl as between the ages of sixteen and seventeen, and as pregnant again. He also pronounced her a good breeder: 'She'll no doubt be the mother of a great many children, and that is a consideration to a purchaser who wants to raise a fine young stock'.[26] Although Davies knew nothing else about this woman, he knew that she was valued for the 'stock' she would produce as a reproductive unit. He also knew that she and the child in her arms were being considered for purchase according to their potential to be economically and possibly sexually exploited (Davies concludes that her child is that of a white man, presumably because of the colour of its skin). There is a hint that Davies found her sexually attractive ('so interesting'), and this suggestion, whether intentional or not, completes the picture of the young woman's vulnerability, making it even more significant that he imagined his mother in her place. One could easily call Davies as a thrill-seeker and easily dismiss his musings as nightmare fantasies (as Marcus Wood might). Further, Davies cannot be considered to present an accurate or reliable voice for this woman; the historian can never recover her experience. However, the strategy of imagining his mother in the place of this young victim of slavery, and himself in the place of her child, shows that in some way he was trying to relate to her by considering something about her that was the 'same' as himself; it was arguably the closest that one in his circumstances could get to achieving 'proof' of her suffering.

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[25] Davies, *Scenes*, p. 56.
[26] Davies, *Scenes*, p. 56.

Abdy, who made no secret of his identity, was unable to penetrate the spaces that Davies did, and was thus unable to see the victims of slavery in their ordinary environment. When he ventured into the domain of the slave-holder, it was only on the terms of the slave-holder, who was generally on guard. Abdy gained admittance, for example, to the place where a dealer in slaves kept his human property before selling it again. It is not clear how Abdy was represented at the door of the establishment, only that he gained admittance through the introduction of some 'guide'. '[The proprietor] himself was out. Two of his men, however, were standing at the door; and as my guide was familiarly acquainted with them, we were admitted without difficulty.' Once inside, Abdy was given a tour. He did not, however, think that he was allowed to see everything. Nor was he certain that he was given access to the ordinary circumstances of the holdings: 'We were ushered into a well-furnished room, and invited to take wine, some bottles of which were standing on a side-board, for the accommodation, doubtless, of purchasers . . . We then went over the establishment; the delay that had occurred in the parlor, having given time to prepare it for our inspection . . . Everything looked clean and in good order . . . I asked the man who attended us, whether we had seen the whole establishment; having heard a great deal of a dungeon, where the refractory are confined, and where (as I had been informed by a lady who had visited the place, and was unable to proceed from the horror she felt at the description given her of the thumbscrews; and other instruments of coercion) a very different scene was to be witnessed. I was told that there was no room of the kind. It was not to be expected that I should be allowed to visit such a place; to deny the existence of which would be the natural consequence of having it.'[27]

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[27] Abdy, *Journal*, II, p. 180.

On another occasion, in the District of Columbia, Abdy observed a less scrupulously guarded holding pen. Although he did not have access to its interior, he was able to peek inside through the windows:

> I went to see the 'slaves' pen'—a wretched hovel . . . the outside alone is accessible to the eye of a visitor; what passes within being reserved for the exclusive observation of its owner, (a man by the name of Robey,) and his unfortunate victims. It is surrounded by a wooden paling fourteen or fifteen feet in height, with the posts outside to prevent escape, and separated from the building by a space too narrow to admit of a free circulation of air. At a small window above . . . two or three sable faces appeared, looking out wistfully to while away the time and catch a refreshing breeze; the weather being extremely hot.[28]

Without having entered the building, Abdy was able to communicate a palpable sense of the barrier that existed between himself and the slaves within. In his description of the faces at the window, he was also able to describe to his reader that there were things he could not see - the bodies below it - and in presenting the barriers to any further visual information about the inhabitants of the pen, he was able to communicate a sense that the slaves were trapped. His description of the oppressive heat of the day gives an even stronger sense of their claustrophobic condition. This episode of Abdy's 'peeking in' at the conditions of these victims is arguably representative of his whole experience in American slavery, during which he was able to 'see' less than Davies. However, Abdy was not confined to the constant assumption of a disguise, which would have inhibited his ability to interrogate the things he did see.

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[28] Abdy, *Journal*, II, p. 180.

Though Abdy did not bear witness to the more forbidden sights of American slave culture, such as slave auctions, when he did encounter slaves he was able to collect their direct verbal testimony. Restricting himself to safer spaces, Abdy did not need to disguise his motives, and as such seems to have gained the trust of those persons of colour with whom he spoke (though of course we cannot be certain). This is not to say that he never took risks: on one occasion, he conversed with a group of slaves in Virginia 'at some risk to both parties; for I went to their houses by stealth, and at night.'[29] Abdy did not indicate for how long he interviewed these individuals, and did not present a dialogue of their conversations. He did, however, present some of the content of their discussion. Further, he attempted to analyze what these victims of slavery told him, in the context of the particular socio-political culture of slavery as he understood it to exist in that area of Virginia. He contrasted the attitudes toward people of colour in Washington, D.C., as opposed to in Richmond, Virginia, even so far as to analyze the influence of these differing attitudes upon the perception of those victims of slavery with whom he visited in secret:

> Washington is more liberal than Richmond to these people. In the former they
> have two societies for mutual instruction, and two churches supported by their
> own contributions. The females, too, have formed several benevolent associations
> for mutual assistance. Such things would not be tolerated in Richmond; where the
> contrast between freedom and slavery is made to turn, as much as possible, in
> favour of the latter, by connecting degradation and delinquency with the former,

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[29] Abdy, *Journal*, II, p. 264.

that the chain may feel lighter, and the lash less galling. A slave told me he would

rather be as he was, than lie idle about with nothing to do.[30]

Although it is arguable that Abdy was hardly in a position to be so critical of the slave's

point of view, it is important to consider his attempt to imagine what circumstances have

informed the perspective of this particular individual.

One interesting strategy that Abdy used to increase his access to the victims of

American slavery within a relatively safe space was to visit runaway slaves in prisons in

the North. Away from the eyes of the southern slave-holding population, Abdy was able

to interview these individuals in a territory that seems to have been strangely marginal.

Having committed a 'crime' that was not illegal according to the laws of the land that

held them, these victims were caught between the legal worlds of the North and South,

and do not seem to have belonged anywhere. Abdy discovered that the difficulty of

classifying the status of a runaway slave in the North was much more than a cultural or

legal conundrum, but was a matter of practical urgency for the person so identified:

'These poor creatures had no means of support, but what they obtained from casual

charity or by waiting upon the other prisoners . . . Upon inquiry of the keeper, I was told

that there was no legal provision—no allowance of any kind, made for persons under

these circumstances'.[31] Abdy's work rescued the stories of these people from a system

that afforded them no space.

The runaway slaves with whom Abdy spoke in a prison in New York varied from

one another in their enthusiasm for his interview. One of these 'had been within the

walls sixteen weeks. He had made his escape four years before from New Orleans. He

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[30] Abdy, *Journal*, II, p. 264.
[31] Abdy, *Journal*, II, p. 16.

honestly confessed to me that he was a slave; the other was less frank; and so

disheartened by the prospect before him, that he declared he would destroy himself if

taken back to his master in Virginia.'[32] In presenting these differences, Abdy

demonstrated that the experiences of individual victims of slavery were personal and

distinct. Instead of presenting a trope of a runaway slave, he offered an open-ended

picture of the oppression of slavery, inviting others to imagine that there were a multitude

of others whose voices would never be heard by anyone.

Interestingly, Abdy realized that Damon Jones, one of those being held in the

New York prison as a runaway slave, actually 'belonged' to someone he knows: 'It

happened, that his master, to whom I had been particularly introduced a few days before

at a party, was then in the city; and I determined to call and inquire of him whether

Damon's account was to be relied upon'.[33] Abdy was not surprised when this man would

not corroborate his slave's story, considering that Jones had claimed to have purchased

his freedom several times and had been each time defrauded of it. Though Abdy, as an

abolitionist, may not have been likely to believe the word of a slave-holder over that of a

victim of slavery, it is important to note his eagerness to collect information from

different perspectives.

Abdy extended his practice of aligning information gathered from different

sources to his analysis of print sources. Abdy's work often makes reference to printed

materials, some of which, like the *American Annual Register*, the *Niles Register*, and

various legislative documents, would not have been difficult for someone in Britain to

locate. Others, like the *Hopkinsville Advocate* (Kentucky), were more local and might

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[32] Abdy, *Journal*, II, p. 17.
[33] Abdy, *Journal*, II, p. 17.

not have been very easy to access outside of the United States. Indeed, it seems as if Abdy spent a good deal of time researching American popular and legal representations of slavery, but his analysis of print sources extends far beyond the information he could find in print. Abdy often weighed the information he read in print against what he heard and against his general experiences within American culture, and he sometimes concluded against the print sources. Abdy was particularly keen at reading silences in printed material. Some silences were general: 'So much care is taken to conceal what is passing on the plantations in the South, that it is incidentally only, and when the liberal limit to cruelty is exceeded, that publicity is given to deeds of extraordinary atrocity. Enough, however, is on record, of what is daily practised without observation or animadversion, to stamp the whole system with the indelible marks of unmitigated and inevitable atrocity.'[34]

As it is difficult to gather proof of things that are concealed, this judgment is presented as something that must be felt rather than as something Abdy could claim to have witnessed. His point was rather to communicate that his experience in America had left him with the feeling that what was written about the atrocities of American slavery was so incomplete as to give an inaccurate picture of what really happened. Having discovered to what lengths the slave-holding population of America would go to conceal events that were likely to provoke public opinion against them, Abdy imagined it safe to assume that the crimes of slavery were more widespread and horrific than what one could learn from print sources. While Abdy could not prove that this was so by giving examples of events he witnessed personally, he was able to describe how he was led to the conclusion that American slave-holders were desperate to avoid negative press.

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[34] Abdy, *Journal*, I, p. 385.

Abdy sometimes analyzed very specific omissions in printed materials. For example, he discussed an account given in the 1826 American Annual Register of a murder of a slave by his master. The article reported that the victim was suspended by a rope from the ceiling of a smokehouse at the order of his master, a Captain Carter, but 'there is nothing . . . said of Carter's arrest'.[35] Abdy describes the content of several other, similar murder cases as mentioned in the same volume. 'It is not stated whether the perpetrators of these diabolical outrages were punished or not.'[36] Abdy suggests that the significant absence of such important details effectively articulated what was not permitted to be reported in these texts: cultural and political tensions surrounding the controversy of the slave system stifled even the voices of those writers whose duty it was to report the criminal injustices inflicted upon the victims of American slavery.

Abdy argued that American newspaper sources tended to ignore events that highlighted the tragic plight of slaves. He considered that much newsworthy information was suppressed or overlooked because it was either politically risky to run stories about injustices done to slaves, or because the victims of slavery were not considered important enough to merit their stories to be documented by the press. Abdy indicated, however, that although many such stories did not make the papers, they defied the cultural attempt to suppress them and became 'news' anyway. For example, Abdy reported the tale of a young girl in Washington, D.C. who was pursued by hounds as she tried to escape slavery. Rather than allow herself to be caught, the girl threw herself into a river to be drowned. 'No notice whatever was taken of this horrible occurrence by the public

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[35] Abdy, *Journal*, I, p. 386.
[36] Abdy, *Journal*, I, p. 386.

papers; though it was a matter of notoriety'.[37] Abdy must have heard this story from

local residents as he suggests that it was somewhat common knowledge. The implication

is that he searched through the local papers looking for mention of the incident. Abdy

juxtaposed what he perceived to have been common knowledge with what was

considered by the press to be suitable to report in order to demonstrate a tension between

what was 'known' to be wrong, or tragic, and what was publicly admitted to have been

so.

Davies, too, compared what he read in American newspapers to the information

he gathered from other (presumably verbal) sources. Davies gave two sides of a story he

had heard and read about in Mississippi: 'Here, a few years ago, "a Negro man was

condemned by the *mob* to be *burned alive over a slow fire*, which was put into execution,

for murdering a black woman and her master Mr. Green, a respectable citizen who

attempted to save her from the clutches of this monster." Such is the newspaper version

of the affair. Had the real truth been stated, it would have appeared that this Green was

the "*monster*," who had seduced the wretched negro's wife!'[38] In contrast to Abdy's

more formal methodology, Davies did not explain where he read about this event, or even

tell exactly what he had heard elsewhere. He did not aspire to achieve the same

semblance of objectivity as did Abdy. As a result, Davies' text reads more like gossip,

but it is important to note that both Abdy and Davies were writing about things they did

not and could not have witnessed. Their strategies of presentation may have been quite

different, but this only serves to highlight that they were working toward the same

interpretive and communicative goals. Like Abdy, Davies attempted to communicate a

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[37] Abdy, *Journal*, II, p. 92.
[38] Davies, *Scenes*, p. 99.

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significant disparity between 'the word on the street' and what was recorded in the newspapers. This reflects a tension between what was documented publicly and what was popularly acknowledged, and suggests the former adhered to a morality that was constructed to conform to political and cultural imperatives, rather than any real or felt sense of right and wrong.

Davies recounted the story of Mary Brown, headed 'A Painful Story', without so much as mentioning where he heard the story. Mary Brown, according to Davies, was sold in the town of Natchez, Mississippi, and it was while recording his travels through that town that Davies chose to tell her story, almost as if she and her sufferings were part of that landscape: 'At night we came to Natchez, a town beautifully situated on the top of a hill, about 300 feet above the level of the river, and for this reason called "Natchez-on-the-Hill" . . . Darkness had set in when we approached it; yet the numerous lights on shore, rising row above row to a great elevation, gave it a lively and interesting appearance. But, alas! Natchez also is a great slave market; and I can never think of it without remembering the sufferings of poor Mary Brown. Let me narrate her painful story. It may waken in some breast a feeling of sympathy for the American slave.'[39] Davies took several pages to tell the story of Mary Brown, who, as he explained, was born of free parents, but cheated of her free status by local officials when they died. The manner in which Davies detailed her story is quite intimate, as if she had communicated it to him personally - indeed, he never said that she did not.

> Her handcuffs made her wrists swell so much that at night they were obliged to take them off, and put fetters round her ankles. In the morning the handcuffs were again put on. Thus they travelled for two weeks, wading rivers, whipped up all

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[39] Davies, *Scenes*, pp. 93-95.

day, and beaten at night if they had not performed the prescribed distance. She frequently waded rivers in her chains, with water up to her waist. The month was October, and the air cold and frosty. After she had travelled thus twelve or fifteen days, her arms and ankles had become so swollen that she felt as if she could go no further. They had no beds, usually sleeping in barns, sometimes out on the naked ground; and such were her misery and pain that she could only lie and cry all night.[40]

A skeptical reader might doubt that he could have obtained such information from any other source but from Mary herself - or one might be tempted to think that he made some of it up. What is intriguing to note is that Davies did not feel a sense of urgency to communicate the source of his information. He described how Mary Brown felt and about what she did at night when no one was watching, without so much as hinting that he had even met the girl. Why was Davies was so easy about relating this story without feeling any need to tell where he got the information? It is impossible to say for certain, but perhaps he considered that emotion was more convincing than the appearance of 'fact'. It certainly forms a contrast to Abdy's methodology. This difference in their methodologies probably relates to the question of why Davies chose to wear a disguise to seek access to spaces that would be forbidden to anyone known to be an abolitionist, while Abdy did not.

Despite his very limited empirical access to the victims of American slavery, Abdy demonstrated a desire to supply his readers with solid evidence to confirm even some very basic ethnological statements, rather than allowing judgments that he formed according to his observations to rest unsupported. Abdy offered 'proof', for example, of

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[40] Davies, *Scenes*, p. 94.

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the intellectual equality of the oppressed blacks to the enslaving whites, in the form of an expert opinion from one who had served for twenty years as headmaster at a school in New York for people of colour: 'He assured me that he could not discover any difference of intellect in blacks and whites:—he thought that, with similar advantages, the former would be fully equal to the latter'.[41] Not only was Abdy careful to point out this man's qualifications, but, interestingly, he made a direct argument in favour of his credibility. The result was a little heavy-handed: 'This testimony is not to be hastily rejected, derived, as it is, from a man highly respected, of much experience in the tuition of both races, competent to form a sound opinion, and coming to a conclusion directly opposed to all that he had been taught and all he still hears'.[42] Clearly, Abdy had considered the influence that popular prejudices were likely to have had on the reading Briton, and had determined not only to expose the plight of oppressed African-Americans, but also to negotiate for an understanding of the sameness of these victims. The force with which Abdy insisted that his readers accept the headmaster's argument indicates that he anticipated that his readers might have tended to distance themselves from the sufferings of the victims of American slavery by classing them as a group who were substantially different from the white Briton.

In addition to their words, Abdy describes the emotional responses exhibited by people who witnessed the suffering inflicted upon American slaves. One man, in relating to Abdy some events he had personally witnessed, cried when he described to Abdy what he had seen. Abdy made it a point to mention the man's tears, and then went on to make a more general statement about the emotional response to slavery: 'Persons who witness

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[41] Abdy, *Jounal*, I, p. 9.
[42] Abdy, *Journal*, I, p. 9.

these cruelties for the first time are affected even to tears:—the heart seems to sink under the pressure of mental suffering, and sickness, often accompanied with vomiting, ensues'.[43] It is not clear how Abdy knew this, but it was an interesting strategy to align such physical evidence of aversion with the initial sight of cruelty to slaves. This suggested that emotional distress, as might cause one to cry or to vomit, was the natural response to witnessing the horrors of slavery. Abdy's strategy provided his readers, many or most of whom would never had witnessed these horrors, with physical indications of the level of emotional response that were often experienced by people who would witness them for the first time. This gave both an idea to the reader of how he or she might feel when confronted with the spectacle of American slavery, and suggested to the reader that those who would claim it was other than horrific (as slave-owners would have been likely to do) had probably become hardened to such sights and been taught to suppress their emotions. The idea that so many individuals had hardened themselves against responding to the suffering of slaves would likely have encouraged British readers to think carefully about the extreme vulnerability of the slaves, who could not even rely upon others who witnessed their suffering to care about what was happening to them.

Both Abdy and Davies used dialogue to represent the speech of the victims of slavery whom they encountered.[44] Their dialogue was almost always presented in proper English without any attempt to represent dialect, which is arguably significant, as to have done so would have made the subjects of their study to seem more exotic and probably

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[43] Abdy, *Journal*, II, pp. 243-244.

[44] For a study of the representation of the words of people on the margins of nineteenth-century English society, see Bertrand Taithe's *The Essential Mayhew: Representing and Communicating the Poor* (London, 1996).

would have increased the sensational aspect of their works. But Abdy and Davies presented their subjects as normal people who spoke plain English. They both tended not, however, to record long passages of the speeches of even those they interviewed; rather, they normally used dialogue to illustrate points that they themselves had made. Abdy, in delivering to his reader the testimony of a slave he met who was serving as a waiter in Washington, D.C., was sparing with the man's own words, yet certainly made a point of using them: 'He had been married three times;—not that he had been twice a widower . . . the most endearing ties which can bind the parties together by tokens and objects of mutual affection being liable to be torn asunder at a moment's warning. "If the owner of my wife," he observed, "should endorse a bill, and the drawer fail, he would perhaps sell her to obtain money; and we should never see each other again".'[45] It is particularly interesting to note that Abdy chose to present the slave's description of a hypothetical situation rather than a descriptive narrative of something that happened to the man personally (for example, a narrative of what happened to dissolve his former marriages). The choice tended to lend a certain authority to the man's speech, and suggested that only a slave would know best about the general effects of slavery upon the personal relationships of its victims.

Although both Abdy and Davies mostly restricted themselves to weaving short quotes from the subjects they encounter into their own arguments, Davies presented several pages of the speech of a Presbyterian minister of colour. Theodore Sedgwick Wright, though not a slave, died as a result of racial prejudice he experienced while using public transportation in New York, according to Davies . Excluded from transportation that would have been available to whites, Wright was forced to undertake a long journey

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[45] Abdy, *Journal*, II, p. 88.

on foot, suffering from exposure and exhaustion, which lead to his demise. Incredibly,

Davies asks his reader to 'listen to his voice. Though "dead, he yet speaketh". He had

felt this cruel prejudice against the colour of his skin as iron entering his soul . . . "No

man can really understand this prejudice, unless he feels it crushing him to the dust,

because it is a matter of feeling".'[46] It is arguable that Davies was inviting his reader to

'hear' Wright's voice in a spiritual sense, especially since Wright was dead.[47] The

juxtaposition of the biblical reference with the request that the reader 'listen to his voice'

further implies that Wright's soul had transcended the limitations of the flesh (and the

prejudice against his skin colour). [48] It is even more interesting that Davies should have

presented Wright's statement that no one could understand such racial prejudice until

they have been subjected to it. Of course, Davies himself could not claim the experience,

but it was even more important to consider a lesson of 'that which could not be known'

from someone who had transcended earthly life into the realm of divine knowledge.

Empathy, as such, was a divine lesson.

Davies contrasted Wright's 'voice' with other voices he heard at Wright's funeral.

Several hired white attendants, including the cabmen, 'all behave exceedingly well. But

did you overhear what those three or four low dirty men said as we approached? [Davies

was asked to be a pall-bearer at Wright's funeral] I am ashamed to tell because those

men are not Americans, but *Irishmen*,—"Here comes the dead nigger!"'[49] Davies also

quoted from the eulogy, which was delivered by Dr Patton, a white minister who, as

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[46] Davies, *Scenes*, p. 237.

[47] On the historical relationship between the human voice and hearing (as well as the inability to hear), see
Jonathan Ree, *I See a Voice: Deafness, Language, and the Senses* (London: Harper Collins, 1999).
On sound and hearing in the nineteenth century, see John Picker, *Victorian Soundscapes* (Oxford:
Oxford University Press, 2003).

[48] The biblical reference is from Hebrews 11:4.

[49] Davies, *Scenes*, p. 237.

Davies informed his reader, racially segregated his own congregation with the use of a 'Negro pew': 'Dr Patton delivers an oration. In that oration, while speaking of Mr. Wright's anti-slavery feelings as being very strong, he adds, with very questionable taste, '"But at the same time our brother had no sympathy with those who indulged in *denunciation, wrath, and blackguardism. He would never touch those missiles which none but scoundrels use*".'[50] Clearly, Davies did not consider Wright's funeral to be an appropriate venue for denouncing abolitionism.

As well as overhearing the racial slurs of the attendants at Wright's funeral, and 'hearing' the racial prejudice that informed Dr Patton's speech, Davies also 'heard' voices that were unspoken, often in a religious context. Davies juxtaposed his memory of words spoken to him by slave-traders with those he heard spoken at a religious service. He indicted the culture of the slave-holding population of the southern United States by repeating the slave-trader's words for his reader in dialogue, and contrasting them with a religious sermon about freedom: 'He prayed for "our nation and rulers." He prayed that "the great blessings of Civil and Religious Liberty which we enjoy may be handed down to future generations." "Looking out for a few niggers this morning?" thought I.'[51]

Davies also 'heard' scriptural voices presenting words that juxtaposed with the actual scripture that he heard being read, in a way that highlighted the hypocrisy of slave-holding Christians: '"Where is Abel, thy brother?" thought I, during this address to the Father of the spirits of all flesh. He then read the 23rd and 24th psalms. The 33rd psalm was then sung. "Where is Abel, thy brother?" was still heard (by me, at least) louder than

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[50] Davies, *Scenes*, p. 237.
[51] Davies, *Scenes*, p. 29.

the swelling tones of the organs.'[52] The parenthetical reminder that Davies was the only

one to hear this voice, suggested that there was a 'truth' that Davies believed to be known

by all who are present at the church, but that he believed to have been ignored by

everyone else but himself.[53] That truth, arguably, was the reality of the suffering of

slaves, which was wrong despite the fact that no one would discuss it. Davies knew that

he could not discuss it either. The scriptural 'voice' had to remain silent in his head if

Davies was to keep safe among slave-holding American society. It is even arguable that

the tension that prevented Davies from speaking was itself that 'voice'. Davies believed

that the collective conscience of the slave-holders was aware that slavery was wrong and

that it caused tremendous suffering, and his proof of this was the tangible delicacy of the

topic of slavery, and the awareness of the vulnerable position of the institution against the

force of social reform.

The biblical passage that Davies 'heard' spoken in the church is significant, as

they are God's response to Abel's 'blood crying out from the stones'[54] This was

suggestive of the voicelessness of the slave, and also suggested that God could 'hear' the

voice of the voiceless. Just because the cries of the victims of slavery were silenced did

not mean that they did not exist. This was an essential statement of hope for defending

the vulnerable. While it was essentially a statement of religious faith, it was at the same

time a statement of hope in the possibilities of reaching across the boundaries of human

sense perception. Although the voices of American slaves were effectively stifled by

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[52] Davies, *Scenes*, p. 28.
[53] For a study of the moral problem that slavery presented to the traditional British Protestant ideology, see
Edith Hurwitz, *Politics and the Public Conscience: Slave Emancipation and the Abolitionist
Movement in Britain* (London: George Allen & Unwin, Ltd., 1973).   For a broader study of the
moral problem that slavery (and, most saliently, the enslavement of Africans in America)
presented to European ideology, see David Brion Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in Western
Culture* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1966).
[54] Genesis 4:10.

slave-holding society, Davies had, after all, infiltrated this society in order to tell the 'story' of those voices - despite the fact that to do this, he needed to rely heavily upon his own imagination.

Davies' use of the scriptural dialogue between Cain and his Maker is further significant in that Cain responds to God's question ('Where is Abel, thy brother?') with another question of his own: 'Am I my brother's keeper?'[55] It is very likely that Davies' readers would have been familiar with this story, and it is arguable that Davies, in using it, meant to imply that slaveholders deliberately chose to ignore its lesson. Of course, Cain's response was hardly sufficient, and neither was it acceptable for members of the slave-holding society of southern America to ignore the sufferings of their fellow human beings. Davies echoed the Christian idea that all of humanity is 'one body' and thus dismissed the idea that pain is solely the concern of the individual whose body is feeling it.

Both Abdy and Davies, in opposing slavery and racial prejudice, returned again and again to the theological argument that all human beings are the children of one God. It is important to note that contemporary science was deeply interested in uncovering the secrets of racial difference, despite the fact that the concept of race, or at least of 'blackness', seems to have emerged concomitantly with the Atlantic slave trade.[56] The black body came to be seen as so very different from the white body that, as Todd Savitt has pointed out, white scientists went so far as to conduct experiments to try to ascertain,

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[55] Genesis 4:9.
[56] See Peter Erickson, 'Representations of Blacks and Blackness in the Renaissance', *Criticism*, 35 (1993), pp. 499-528. Cedric Robinson argues that 'blackness' (as distinct from 'race') developed as a concept alongside the Atlantic Slave Trade in 'The Inventions of the Negro', *Social Identities*, 7 (2001), pp. 329-361.

for example, how 'deep' black skin went.[57] Despite the fact that nineteenth-century

scientific discourse accepted the legitimacy of the empirical exploration of racial

difference, a parallel religious discourse maintained that all races were descended from

God the common parent, citing religious texts as evidence. Abdy did just this as he

searched for a tactful way to disagree with the racist contentions of one New Yorker.

Upon remarking against the strict segregation of black from white schoolchildren, Abdy

recognized the futility of attempting to persuade his racist conversant to change his

opinion, but quietly stood his ground: 'A contemptuous smile and a very silly assertion

that Nature, by degrading the one race, had placed an insuperable barrier to a closer

approximation with the other, were the only reply. I contented myself with remarking

that there was no color in the soul, and turned the conversation to some other topic'.[58]

Thus, Abdy eschewed any argument over biological difference by dismissing the

consideration of such factors as irrelevant anyway, where the concern was the fair

treatment of human beings. He did not engage in an argument over the empirical,

physical, or 'natural' differences between the black and white races, because even if there

were such differences, it did not matter. The religious discourse of 'sameness' among

human beings was apparently a viable cultural alternative to the scientific discussion of

racial differences.

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[57] Todd L. Savitt, 'The Use of Blacks for Medical Experimentation and Demonstration in the Old South', *Journal of Southern History*, 48 (1982), 331-348. In a similar vein, Sander Gilman has discussed the claims of nineteenth-century science to be able to empirically distinguish racial difference with regard to the Jews: 'the Jew was . . . inherently different from the Aryan . . . Given the basic philosophy of late nineteenth-century science, this difference was defined in terms of observable phenomena (or phenomena suggested to be observable) by ethnologists and those they influenced, such as the physicians of the period. *The Case of Sigmund Freud: Medicine and Identity at the Fin-de-Siecle* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1993), p.14.

[58] Abdy, *Scenes*, I, p. 5.

Abdy argued that racism was irreligious because the bodies of all human beings were, in a sense, spiritual entities in themselves. He paraphrased the statement of one American minister, that Negroes were ' "a *degraded*, *unenlightened, unprincipled,* and *abandoned* race,"' and that they were '"equally *worthless* and *noxious* in themselves, and a *nuisance* to the public"'. [59] He remarked about these statements that 'the arrogance of this language is lost in its impiety; the preacher has insulted the Maker in insulting the work of his hands'.[60] These bodies were flesh and blood, but they were more than the sum of their parts, and were due a measure of respect as such. Abdy presented some (second-hand) knowledge of the possibility that slaves were sometimes 'owned' by religious congregations as evidence of the ultimate absurdity of the slave system: 'It is not uncommon for churches to hold slaves. A person, who was in the habit of asking the slaves to whom they belonged, one day received the following answer, "I belong to the congregation". On inquiry, he found that the man *was* one of a gang who had been bequeathed to a religious society for pious causes; and the proceeds derived from their labour were appropriated to the repairs of the building, and other expenses connected with the congregation.'[61] Even if, as Boyd Hilton has argued, pain and suffering were believed to have been part of the Divine Will and a mechanism of conversion and redemption in the first half of the nineteenth century, the pain and suffering that was the result of such exploitative practices as slavery did not fit very well into this equation. Hilton argues that 'the problem with slavery was that it was so obviously unfair that it challenged the liberal evangelical belief in a just distribution of rewards and punishments

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[59] Abdy, *Scenes*, II, p. 85.
[60] Abdy, *Scenes*, II, p. 85.
[61] Abdy, *Scenes*, II, p. 244.

in the natural world'.[62] Suffering caused by slavery was very difficult to justify as

anything but contrary to God's will, arguably because it was easy enough for one to

imagine oneself in the position of the slave, despite whatever differences might have been

suggested to exist between a person of another race and oneself.

Davies pointed out that slave-holders often class the bodies of slaves with those of

different species. In doing so, he highlighted the attempt of slave-holding society to deny

the victims of slavery the dignity of humanity. Davies quoted a man with whom he

travelled on the Mississippi in Louisiana: 'We observed on the river's bank what a man

at my elbow (a professor of religion, who had discovered a great propensity to talk about

his religious experience before gamblers) coolly designated "a drove of horses, mules,

and niggers".'[63] Davies also compared the way that Edmund, a 32-year-old young man,

was physically inspected at a slave auction to the way that one might have inspected a

horse one was considering for sale: 'At this moment a gentleman, who, like most of those

present, appeared to be a sort of speculator in slaves, stepped forward, and examined with

his hands the boy's legs, especially about the ankles, just as I have seen horse-dealers do

with those animals at fairs.'[64] This familiar action is suggested to the reader as having

been performed in a highly inappropriate context; it is hard to imagine that Edmund could

have been indifferent to this manner of inspection, as one might imagine a horse could

have been.

Davies implied that the experience of this kind of physical inspection would have

been particularly distressing for a woman, as the public exposure of her body would have

caused her to feel humiliation and to fear sexual violation. Davies considered the action

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[62] Hilton, *Atonement*, p. 210.
[63] Davies, *Scenes*, p. 102.
[64] Davies, *Scenes*, p. 54.

of close physical inspection of a woman to be so socially unacceptable that it absolutely shamed the individual who performed such an action: 'Cornelia was standing upon the chair. "Now, gentlemen, who bids for this girl? She is sold for no fault, but simply for want of money. Who bids for this excellent washer and ironer?" At this moment one of the "gentlemen", standing in front of her, deliberately took his walking-stick, and, with the point of it, lifted up her clothes as high as the knee.'[65] Davies' suggestion that he did not consider the man to be a 'gentleman' was arguably more than just an observation of the man's apparent class status. Although he did not give a description of the man, it seems clear that Davies imagined a great disparity between the man's behaviour toward Cornelia and what his behaviour would have been if she were a white woman, and not for sale. Davies may also have meant to suggest that Cornelia's cultural inhibitions, which were likely moulded very deliberately in her training as a household maid, were completely incongruous to the treatment she was expected to tolerate at the auction. As such, Cornelia had been taught to dress (and probably to act) modestly, only to have this modesty violated.

Davies suggested that some human actions and responses transcended cultural performativity to a sort of universal significance. The bond between parent and child would cause behaviours that would mean the same whether performed by an American Negro or a white Briton. Davies described to his reader an incident of small moment, which he observed at the same auction in New Orleans where Cornelia was being sold:

> The next 'lot' was a family, consisting of the husband, a man slightly coloured
> about 30 years of age, the wife about 25, quite black, and reminding me forcibly
> of an excellent woman in my own congregation, a little girl about 4 years of age,

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[65] Davies, *Scenes*, p. 53.

and a child in the arms. They were told to mount the platform. As they obeyed, I

was attracted by a little incident, which had well nigh caused my feelings to

betray me. Never shall I forget it. Parents of England, let me tell it you, and enlist

your sympathies on behalf of oppressed and outraged humanity. It was that of a

father helping up, by the hand, *his own little girl to be exposed for sale!*[66]

Davies entered into a kind of discourse of the 'natural' relationship between parent and

child in order to encourage his reader to consider the transcendence or spirituality of

some actions of the human body.   The performance of this father in assisting his

daughter is rendered perverse by the context of the slave auction. Many of Davies'

readers would have been able to recall having performed similar actions in assisting their

children. Davies suggested that the spirit of such actions would have been the same for

these other people, but perverted by the yoke of slavery.

Bertram Wyatt-Brown has written particularly on the subject of role-playing and

the psychology of the male slave in nineteenth-century America. He argues that role-

playing was a crucial survival skill for a slave in the Old South, but reminds his reader

that 'role-playing does involve inner feelings. Pressure to conform to bondage, to recite

the script as given, can lead to self-deprecation or even self-hatred'[67] Both Abdy and

Davies struggled to see beyond the mask of the slave and to represent their especially

elusive interior experience. Neither Abdy nor Davies presented their subjects as

consistently tractable or docile, and both seem to have been keen to witness evidence of

the human behind the slave-mask. Abdy described a gang of slaves, who were labouring

in a field in Virginia by which he passed in a coach:

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[66] Davies, *Scenes*, p. 52.

[67] Bertram Wyatt-Brown, 'The Mask of Obedience: Slave Psychology in the Old South', *American Historical Review,* 93 (1988), 1228-1252, p. 1230.

The laborers in the field were unwilling machines. The slow and lifeless manner in which they handled the hoe or turned the plough-share;—the uplifted looks they cast at us as we passed;—the furtive cessation from the toil that invariably took place, as the overseer's eye was turned from them;—spoke a language that could not be mistaken. It told of unrequited labor, of undeserved misfortune, of blighted affections, and the destruction of all hopes and fears that play round the heart of a man, and distinguish him from the brute creation.[68]

Abdy could sense both elements of their disposition - the human as well as the slave-mask. He suggested that for one who cared to look, the human suffering could be read on the faces of the victims of slavery.

Davies assigned words to the humanity he read on the face of one intractable slave. He writes of 'Tom', a 35-year-old man who was sold by auction in New Orleans: 'An excellent painter and glazier, and a good cook besides. His only fault is that he has a great idea of his own reserved rights, to the neglect of those of his master . . . 300 dollars were first offered for him, but poor Tom went for 350. "Now, sir," said the man-seller to Tom, with a malicious look, "you'll go into the country" . . . Tom, as he descended from the chair, gave a look which seemed to say, "I care not whither I go; but my own reserved rights shall not be forgotten!"'[69] Davies communicated a sense of the human spirit behind the slave. Though the slave could not speak out against the 'man-seller', neither did he hide his feelings. It is for this reason he was sold, and for this reason that Davies was given a rare opportunity to glimpse what slave-masks would mostly hide from him.

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[68] Abdy, *Journal,* II, p. 214.
[69] Davies, *Scenes*, p. 54.

It is easy to dismiss the efforts of such British abolitionists as Edward Strutt Abdy and Ebenezer Davies as self-serving, as we can never verify their motives. Their attempts to write about American slavery certainly carry the taint of their own white cultural perspectives. Yet Abdy's and Davies' texts, written in 1833-34 and 1849 respectively, make remarkable bookends. Between their works one can sample the cultural progress of the imagination in the nineteenth-century expression of ethical concerns. Unconfined by the legal or scientific framework that would have made the study of their works less unruly, these two popular activists could attempt to see, and to cause others to see, what they could not really observe. They expressed the unknowable. Their very different strategies for overcoming their often significantly different limitations allow a rare glimpse of ethics in practice and of the use of empathy in the nineteenth century.

Chapter 3:

When it Hurts to Look: Interpreting the Interior of the Woman

The history of American slavery has an unfortunate intersection with the history of gynaecology in the career of Dr J. Marion Sims, who designed one of the earliest modern specula. Although his later patients came to include European royalty, his fame was established through a series of surgical experiments performed upon American slave women in a makeshift hospital in his backyard in Montgomery, Alabama, during the years 1845-1849. To inspect a vesico-vaginal fistula, Sims fashioned a pewter spoon into an instrument that would serve as the prototype for the type of speculum that would bear his name in the future (also known as the 'duck-billed' speculum). Though Sims eventually met with some success in treating the vesico-vaginal fistula, which had been formerly untreatable, many if not most of his early 'patients' died as a result of the surgeries or of secondary infections.

Terri Kapsalis, in *Public Privates: Performing Gynecology from Both Ends of the Speculum*, examines the ideological context to Sims' experiments. Kapsalis argues that 'the institution of slavery served medicine in providing subjects for experimentation', and points out that all we know about these women is what Sims himself wrote about them in his autobiography.[1] It is impossible to know whether or not these women consented to these operations (which were conducted without anaesthesia), especially since the disorder was not life-threatening. Sims remains a controversial figure in the history of gynaecology; medical professionals will often praise his innovations without mentioning the deeply problematic context of his 'discoveries'. Some argue that he was merely a

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[1] Terri Kapsalis, *Public Privates: Performing Gynecology from Both Ends of the Speculum* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1997), p. 32.

product of his age. Others, not surprisingly, refuse to abide any reference to Sims'

achievements not immediately qualified by denunciation of his practices.[2]

Kapsalis associates Sims' zeal for invention with a wider trend of enthusiasm for

innovation in the study and practice of gynaecology in the mid-nineteenth century:

'Forever in search of a new tool or surgical technique, Sims was one of the earliest

physicians to link female reproductivity with a kind of technophilia, publishing

extensively on each new innovation'.[3] This trend was not restricted to the American side

of the Atlantic. British physicians pursued gynaecological innovation with a fervour that

was equal to that of their colleagues in the United States, despite the fact that they did not

have access to slave bodies on which they could experiment. Although not subject to

reproach from abolitionists, many of the pioneers of nineteenth-century British

gynaecology were (and are) very controversial figures themselves. Robert Lawson Tait,

for example, is both revered for his surgical innovations and notorious for the frequency

with which he performed ovariotomy as a remedy for diverse ailments. While one can

hardly compare the plight of the nineteenth-century British gynaecological patient to that

of the gynaecological patient who was also a slave, Sims' experiments are a helpful

reference point from which to begin to consider the opinions of those who tried to speak

out in defence of the vulnerable female body as seen through the new technology of the

speculum.

Sims' slave subjects were denied every consideration of female modesty, though

his white patients were apparently afforded more dignity.[4] Across the Atlantic, slavery

had been outlawed in both France and England by the mid-nineteenth century. How

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[2] See Kapsalis, *Public Privates*, pp. 48-49 for a brief analysis of the controversy over Sims' career.
[3] Kapsalis, *Public Privates*, p. 49.
[4] Kapsalis, *Public Privates*, p. 41.

freely could a doctor study the reproductive organs of a free woman? The first modern

speculum was created and used in France by Joseph Récamier in 1801, and by 1810 the

speculum became an instrument of the state as all prostitutes were obliged to register with

the government and to submit to an internal pelvic examination. In the late 1860s,

Britain would implement the Contagious Diseases Acts, which would similarly force

alleged prostitutes in garrison and naval towns to submit to pelvic examinations. Ornella

Moscucci explains that by the 1830s and 1840s British medical students were exposed to

the use of the speculum while studying in Paris, and implemented this technology in their

own practices upon returning to Britain.[5]

     Stanley Joel Reiser places the speculum alongside a number of other nineteenth-

century innovations in medical technology (such as the opthalmoscope and laryngoscope)

that enabled doctors to visually probe the body. Reiser explains that whereas sound had

once been 'the doctor's main sensory probe of the human interior', by the nineteenth

century the visual sense had become just as important a means of acquiring such

information.[6] A doctor could now expect to see many parts of the inside of the living

body that had previously been hidden from sight. Although the speculum was only one

of many new instruments that allowed medical practitioners to peer into the inside of the

bodies of patients, the 'instrumental interference' of the speculum in gynaecological

practice was not widely accepted in nineteenth-century Britain.[7]

     In her analysis of a late eighteenth-century tract directed against 'man-

midwifery', Ludmilla Jordanova demonstrates that by that time the use of instruments

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[5] Ornella Moscucci, *The Science of Woman: Gynaecology and Gender in England, 1800-1929*
     (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 112.

[6] Stanley Joel Reiser, *Medicine and the Reign of Technology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press,
     1978), p. 55.

[7] Moscucci, *Science of Woman*, p. 113.

(such as forceps) to assist in childbirth or in the treatment of gynaecological ailments had become associated with male practitioners, as opposed to the traditional, female midwife, whose approach was less scientific and less interventionist.[8] Through to the nineteenth century, the male practitioner of obstetrics and gynaecology continued to be marginalized, even by other medical professionals.[9] As such, the arguments of nineteenth-century gynaecologists who utilized the speculum in the examination of patients were already burdened by the stigma of their profession before they even began to advance the question of the legitimacy of this suspicious new instrument. The argument to legitimize the practice of seeing into women's bodies through the use of the speculum was closely aligned with the larger argument in favour of the movement away from traditional midwifery (and away from the traditional arts of medicine in general) and toward a more scientific approach to the body as diagnostic material.[10]

The exposure of a woman's reproductive organs to the prying eyes of (male) science presented a great threat to Victorian moral ideals, as this part of the woman had previously been absolutely hidden from all human sight. Even the external genitals of a woman had almost never been permitted to be seen by any except her husband and her (female) attendants at childbirth. Practitioners who advocated the use of the speculum, however, claimed that this new instrument provided them with crucial knowledge about

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[8] Ludmilla Jordanova, *Nature Displayed: Gender, Science, and Medicine 1760-1820* (London: Longman, 1999), pp. 24-25.

[9] See Moscucci, *Science of Woman*, pp. 57-74 for a discussion of the political struggle to overcome the stigma of midwifery in order to establish the professional status of gynaecology within nineteenth-century medicine.

[10] It is important to note that during the early nineteenth century, abdominal surgery was for the most part considered too dangerous to attempt, so that *any* technical advancement in accessing women's reproductive organs was necessarily experimental to a certain extent. It is, as Ann Dally suggests, easy but unreasonable to assume that the chief aim of nineteenth-century gynaecological surgeons was always or most often experimentation, rather than the treatment of women's health problems, since any innovative treatments of the abdominal area would have been necessarily experimental. See Ann Dally, *Women Under the Knife: A History of Surgery* (London: Hutchinson Radius, 1991).

the woman's interior - her experiences, as well as the state of her internal organs. Far from just a convenient metaphor, a woman's internal organs provided these doctors with information that they claimed could help them to know her pain and suffering. In effect, the speculum helped them to 'see' what was happening inside a woman, and what she was feeling. This was especially important as Victorian women were likely to be extremely reticent about gynaecological afflictions. However, the professional opportunities that would necessarily follow the acceptance of the widespread use of the speculum by the medical community convinced some medical professionals that the welfare of the individual patient was not the only motivation behind the advocacy of the instrument. Moscucci claims that debate over the use of the speculum 'had little to do with science, and everything to do with morals.'[11] I argue, however, that although there was certainly a strong moral incentive to oppose the speculum in Victorian Britain, some medical professionals also seem to have been legitimately concerned for the feelings and the bodies that were rendered vulnerable to the promising new advances in the science of gynaecology.[12]

It is certainly no surprise that both advocates and opponents of the speculum claimed to be acting in the best interest of the patient. However, it is interesting to note that both sides argued that the speculum should be used if, and only when, urgently

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[11] Moscucci, *Science of Woman*, p. 114.

[12] As Mary Jacobus, Evelyn Fox Keller, and Sally Shuttleworth have argued, the woman's body has often been the site for competing discourses and meanings other than women's own struggles. In particular, nineteenth-century scientific discourses 'cast the feminine body as the malfunctioning organism that embodies society's ills'. See the introduction to *Body/Politics: Women and the Discourses of Science* (London and New York: Routledge, 1990), especially pp. 7-11. Both sides of the speculum debate represent discourses that compete with the issues of women's health and well-being. Medical professionals on both sides of the debate claimed to be able to speak on behalf of the women in their care with regard to what was best for these women. The struggles for patriarchal values, cultural ideals about propriety, and the advancement of medical knowledge were complicated by the real circumstances of the welfare of gynaecological patients (the ostensible subject of the texts written to advance both sides of the debate).

necessary. Charles West [1815-1898], a strong advocate of the use of the speculum in

gynaecological examination, reminded medical students in his 1856 *The Diseases of*

Women, that

> the simplest mode of examination, and that which causes our patient the least
>
> distress or alarm, is that which we employ our sense of touch alone, unaided by
>
> any apparatus whatever. It is perhaps scarcely necessary for me to remind you
>
> that, while it is our duty to use every means essential to the thorough investigation
>
> of our patient's condition, it is no less our duty to make no needless examination;
>
> never to use an instrument when we can ascertain all that is necessary without it,
>
> never to resort to ocular inspection when we can feel a reasonable certainty that
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> by the sense of touch alone we have arrived at a true knowledge of the disease.[13]

From this passage alone, it would be difficult to guess that West was such a strong

advocate of the widespread use of the speculum. West even advised against using a

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[13] Charles West, *Lectures on the Diseases of Women* (London: John Churchill, 1856), p. 12. For a
discussion of the Victorian medical view of young pubescent girls as particularly delicate, see
Deborah Gorham, *The Victorian Girl and the Feminine Ideal* (Bloomington: Indiana University
Press, 1982), pp. 85-99. Gorham argues that Victorian medical practitioners 'extended the
dangerous time of menstruation to the entire period of puberty', p. 87. While West does not, in
this statement, refer exclusively to pubescent girls in this statement, it is arguable that the
Victorian view of pubescent girls as extremely vulnerable contributed to the 'common sense'
argument against employing the speculum in the diagnosis and treatment of unmarried women.
The other factors that are likely assumed by West in referencing this 'common sense' knowledge
are arguably that an unmarried woman would never had sexual intercourse or borne children
before, so that her sense of alarm and violation at the exposure facilitated by the speculum. It is
further arguable that West meant to imply that in the diagnosis and treatment of an unmarried
woman, the least invasive or intrusive course of action should be taken. Interestingly, it follows
that whereas the ideal means of treating an unmarried woman's gynaecological ailments would be
one that would involve no empirical knowledge whatsoever of such a woman's genitals, the use of
the hand and fingers to probe a woman's body would have been considered less distressing to her
than for a doctor to view her internal organs with the use of a speculum. Perhaps in the case of an
unmarried woman, the use of the hand and fingers may have been considered to have been less
potentially physically uncomfortable or painful to the woman than the use of the speculum, but it
is also arguable that this 'common sense' prohibition suggests that West considered sight, in such
circumstances, to have been more of a violation than touch. Charles West was founder of Great
Ormond Street Hospital. A lecturer in midwifery, West published widely on the diseases of
children as well as on the diseases of women, and is perhaps best known for his work in paediatric
medicine. See N. G. Coley, 'Charles West', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford:
Oxford University Press, 2004).

speculum to examine a woman who was a virgin in all cases but those requiring emergency intervention: 'Need I say that there are some cases, those of unmarried women for instance, in which nothing but the most urgent necessity would justify your employing the speculum.'[14] One might imagine that it would only be a passionate opponent of the speculum who would disapprove of its use even in urgent circumstances.

It is interesting to note West's suggestion, in the passages cited above, that his caveats against the unnecessary use of the speculum hardly needed to be explicitly stated. West considered that medical students and fellow medical professionals were very likely to be aware that an examination with a speculum would likely cause much distress to the patient, and that they would of course be sensitive to this issue when making the decision of whether or not an examination with a speculum was necessary in a particular situation. West claimed to be secure in the knowledge that the speculum would be used only judiciously by anyone with an ordinary conscience: 'restrictions to its use, indeed, such as these, speak to the common sense and right feeling of every one too distinctly for there to be much hesitation in subscribing to them'.[15] This passage implies that West only felt obliged to make these redundant cautionary statements because he knew that if he had not stated the obvious, he would have been attacked by zealous critics of the speculum. Thus, he placed the opponents of the speculum outside the fellowship of the respectable medical community by equating their concerns with the suggestion that medical professionals could not be trusted to make ethical decisions in the best interest of their patients. West argued that critics of the speculum would tie a doctor's hands and render them helpless to aid a patient who was in dire need of an examination with a speculum.

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[14] West, *Diseases*, p. 22.
[15] West, *Diseases*, p. 22.

West was convinced that a frightening percentage of women unknowingly suffered from diseases of the uterus, even if they were not sexually active. He examined the uteri of sixty-two deceased hospital patients (nineteen of whom, he explains, were 'believed to be virgins')[16] and came to the conclusion that many of their reproductive organs were unhealthy: 'There is something at first not a little startling in the result at which we arrive, that the womb was found in a perfectly healthy condition in little more than half of the 62 women, none of whom died of uterine disease, nor were supposed to be suffering from any grave uterine ailment'.[17] This certainly seems to confirm Moscucci's statement that 'Woman was, by definition, disease or disorder, a deviation from the standard of health represented by the male.'[18] West also commented more generally on the pathological nature of the reproductive system in the human female:

> The return of blood from the organ, which is rendered difficult by its situation at
>
> the lowest part of the trunk, is still further impeded by the absence of valves from
>
> its veins; while every month, for several days together this organ and its
>
> appendages are the parts towards which blood flows in superabundant streams.
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> During this period . . . haemorrhage breaks forth along the whole tract,—and it is
>
> not until this has continued for some days, that the congestion ceases and the parts

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[16] Charles West, *An Enquiry into the Pathological Importance of Ulceration of the Os Uteri*, Croonian Lecture Series (London: Brown, Green, and Longman, 1854), pp. 24-25.

[17] West, *Ulceration*, p. 26.

[18] Moscucci, *Science of Woman,* p. 102. On Victorian ideas about the inherent 'weakness' and 'sickness' of womanhood, see also Anne Digby, 'Women's Biological Straightjacket', in Susan Mendus and Jane Rendall (eds), *Sexuality and Subordination: Interdisciplinary Studies of Gender in the Nineteenth Century* (London and New York: Routledge, 1989), pp. 192-220; Barbara Ehrenreich and Deirdre English, *For Her Own Good: 150 Years of the Experts' Advice to Women* (Garden City, NY: Anchor Press, 1978), pp. 91-126; Barbara Harrison, 'Women and Health', in Jane Purvis (ed.), *Women's History: Britain, 1850-1945* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995), pp. 157-192; Sally Shuttleworth, 'Female Circulation: Medical Discourse and Popular Advertising in the Mid-Victorian Era', in Mary Jacobus, Evelyn Fox Keller, and Sally Shuttleworth (eds), *Body/Politics: Women and the Discourses of Science* (London and New York: Routledge, 1990), pp. 47-68.

subside once more into their former state of quiescence . . . I need not stop to tell how a slight cause may protract this haemorrhage, or how some accident may check it.[19]

It is easy to see how one might have imagined that a woman's reproductive organs were in constant need of surveillance, if one were to have accepted West's description of their precarious structure and awkward physiology.

Robert Lee [1793-1877] was a strong opponent of the speculum, especially in the examination and treatment of unmarried women.[20] He did not, however, condemn the use of the speculum in every situation. One of Lee's main arguments against the over-use of the speculum was that most women were too healthy to warrant a visual inspection of their reproductive organs. Lee undertook projects similar to those of Charles West, studying the uteri of deceased hospital patients, in order to prove that most women were not actually afflicted with ulceration of the os uteri. In Lee's introduction to his book entitled *A Treatise on the Employment of the Speculum in the Diagnosis and Treatment of Uterine Diseases: with Three Hundred Cases*, the ostensible purpose of which was to speak against the widespread use of the speculum, there is not very much reference at all to the actual practice of using the speculum. In this work, Lee mostly argued against aggressive medical practices associated with the use of the speculum, rather than dwelling upon specifically how and why a woman or her modesty was 'wounded' by an

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[19] West, *Ulceration*, p. 8.

[20] Robert Lee was a prominent and accomplished practitioner, researcher, and lecturer on midwifery with decades of experience by the 1850s, a fact reflected in his implication that the trained and experienced sense of touch (which younger and inexperienced doctors may have lacked) was the best means of detecting problems with a woman's internal reproductive structures (see p. 173). Lee was outspoken and conservative in his approach to gynaecological medicine; he attacked the practices of ovariotomy and caesarean sections as well as the indiscriminate use of the speculum in examinations. Hilary Marland, 'Robert Lee', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

examination with the speculum.[21] As in West's work, it is implied that the consideration

of a woman's distress in this circumstance is mostly 'common sense', although it is not

overtly stated. It is surprising how many references Lee made to his own use of the

speculum in gynaecological examinations, which may be explained by the fact that this

instrument was the ostensible subject of this particular work. In context, however, these

references seem to demonstrate that Lee did not consider the speculum inappropriate in

all circumstances.

Moscucci mentions that opponents of the speculum were not so much troubled

'about preserving the *physical* virginity of the patient . . . as the Queen's accoucheur

Charles Locock pointed out, it was sometimes necessary to break down the hymen during

an examination by the finger, but obstetricians were never condemned for such a

practice.'[22] She emphasizes the incongruity of the opposition of the medical community

to the speculum with a relative acceptance of the penetration of a woman's vagina by her

doctor's finger during a gynaecological examination, in order to show that 'for the

participants in the speculum debate, a woman's virginity was less physical than moral

and mental.'[23] While certainly an important and interesting point to be made about the

speculum debate (if only applicable to the gynaecological examination of virgins), it

seems significant to consider that penetration was not really the issue at the heart of the

speculum debate, but the means of penetration. That the speculum was considered a

much more offensive means of penetrating a woman's body than the finger says much

about the Victorian privileging of sight over the other senses.   In the twenty-first

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[21] Robert Lee, *A Treatise on the Employment of the Speculum in the Diagnosis and Treatment of Uterine Diseases: with Three Hundred Cases* (London: John Churchill, 1858), p. 9.
[22] Moscucci, *Science of Woman*, p. 115.
[23] Moscucci, *Science of Woman*, p. 115.

century, it is arguably touch that is considered the most intimate (and the most dangerous) means by which one can obtain sensory information about someone else's body. Touching someone's body, today, is more likely to cause them more offence or distress than looking at them. In the nineteenth century, however, the penetration of a woman's body with the finger was associated with more traditional methods of acquiring information about her internal organs than the use of the speculum, which literally brought to light parts of the woman that had never been seen before.

Jordanova, in discussing the debates surrounding visual representations of women's internal organs in the late eighteenth century, offers some insight as to why the speculum was such a controversial instrument as it began to be employed in the century afterward. Decades before the speculum began to be employed in Europe, anatomists like William Hunter were publishing depictions of the internal organs of the woman in striking and graphic detail. In Hunter's *The Anatomy of the Human Gravid Uterus*, the bodies of women and foetuses are shown partly in lifelike detail, with regard to such features as the facial features, hair, and skin of the foetus, and partly as butchered chunks of meat, for example where the legs are amputated in accordance with the boundaries of what is being depicted, and the vascularity of the uterus and surrounding region. Jordanova explains that 'anatomical illustrations linked medical knowledge to sight, and, in the case of eighteenth-century depictions of women, to seeing parts of nature previously deemed private, thereby forging additional links with sexual-cum-intellectual penetration and with the violence of the dissection room.'[24] The producers of these anatomical illustrations, like the practitioners who would advocate the use of the speculum in the decades to follow, argued that the sight of 'nature' was nothing if not

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[24] Jordanova, *Nature*, p. 194.

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humane, and that the enabling of a more perfect medical view of the human body was far from violent, and indeed compassionate.

Medical opponents of the speculum in the nineteenth century, however, seem to have been concerned with more than just the morality of seeing into the woman's body. In fact, some of the tracts written by medical opponents of the speculum concentrated almost wholly upon the issues associated with the use (or over-use) of the speculum, such as aggressive gynaecological treatments, and the use of the speculum as a tool for learning (as opposed to healing) rather than focusing exclusively on the issue of penetration. This suggests that the speculum controversy was not exclusively a debate about feminine morality. Instead, it places the speculum controversy within the much larger debate over the scientization of medicine, which considered the question of whether a patient should be regarded an object of study as well as a person to be cared for and healed.

There was arguably much more to the speculum debate than the placing of an instrument inside a woman's body; the access provided to a medical practitioner by the speculum reflected a new dimension of not only the doctor-patient relationship, but also of the relationship between the outside world and the inside of a woman's body. Would this new ocular access to a woman's interior be aligned with a new respect for the vulnerability of the gynaecological patient to the current philosophies and accepted procedures in medicine? Both sides of the speculum debate engaged with questions regarding the acquisition of information from the body of the woman, as well as her voice and any other means of expression. Both sides also had to negotiate a path between appropriate diagnostics and consideration of the experience of the patient. Whether the

space between the doctor and patient was mediated or not by an instrument, a doctor had to choose a level of interaction with the patient and her body, and the choice of whether to use a speculum or not was part of this, but certainly not the whole. How would a doctor see his patient? How would he feel her? Or was looking enough? What did her pain mean? Her discomfort, unease, or shame? Would he hear her voice? Would he gauge her experience, or just her body? How would he contextualize her difference or sameness to other women? These are some of the deeper questions that were asked by individuals on both sides of the speculum debates of the mid-nineteenth century.

Interestingly, when discussing the experience of female processes, a Victorian doctor often deferred to the authority of the woman to explain what is 'normal'. Although West confirmed that it was 'proper' for women to experience a certain amount of pain during their monthly courses, he could only rely upon the women's communications to him to determine if their sufferings were indicative of an unhealthy or a healthy (though inherently pathological) reproductive system: 'The regular return of menstruation, its accomplishment within a given period, attended by a certain average degree of discomfort are *regarded by women*, and with propriety, as conclusive evidences of the healthy state of the sexual functions'.[25] Since the doctor could not feel the pain himself, he had no choice but to trust a woman to report if she was experiencing any 'abnormal' suffering. The health, then, of the female reproductive system was established largely by a doctor's (subjective) interpretation of a woman's expression of her opinion about her suffering as relative to what she believed that other women suffered 'normally'. This would seem to have placed women in rather a powerful position with regard to the status of their health (or, at least, with regard to their degree of pathology).

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[25] West *Diseases*, p. 6 (my emphasis).

The doctor, however, was free to interpret their expressions in what way he would, and could confirm or decline to confirm that 'nature' in the woman was in a state of equilibrium. A doctor could also assign a woman with an 'unhealthy' level of pain by assigning her an equal level of ignorance. Edward Tilt [1815-1893][26] equated this ignorance with nature itself: 'Now as menstruation is a natural process, it is supposed by women to be part of those inevitable evils to which human flesh is heir, and however much attended by suffering, they imagine it useless for them to seek relief. Thus we are, generally speaking, not called in.'[27] The woman was ignorant, according to Tilt, because she was associated with nature, and nature's wild whims.[28] In gaining control over a woman's expression of pain, Tilt argued that science could convince her that she suffered unnecessarily, and that 'nature' was less her ally than the doctor. Of course, in order to appropriate her voice, he needed literally to look inside her to see what she could not tell him. Thus, Tilt fashioned the rather 'unnatural' intimacy of the gynaecological speculum as allowing a closeness between doctor and patient that was in effect a breakdown of 'natural' or empirical boundaries. This made the doctor privy to the secrets of the woman's body, and thus, Tilt would argue, her pain.

It is clear enough that Lawson Tait wished to be able to claim a perfect knowledge of the suffering of a female patient: 'My method of continuous elastic dilation

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[26] Edward John Tilt undertook much of his medical education in Paris, where he learned to use the vaginal speculum from Joseph Claude Récamier. Récamier is credited with having introduced the speculum to modern European medical practice in 1801. Tilt was one of the original fellows of the Obstetrical Society of London (founded in 1859), and served as president of this organization from 1874 to 1875. D.A. Power, Susan Soxnall (rev.), 'Edward John Tilt', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

[27] Edward John Tilt, *On Diseases of Women and Ovarian Inflammation : In Relation to Morbid Menstruation, Sterility, Pelvic Tumours, and Affections of the Womb* (London: John Churchill, 1850), p. 7.

[28] On the association of women's reproductive organs with 'instinct' and nature, as opposed to reason and civilization, see Moscucci, *Science of Woman*, p. 34.

of the uterus involves no trouble to the surgeon, and neither pain nor risk to the patient, and it ought to have for her no pain'. [29] But what if his patient were to contradict him, and claim to feel pain when she 'ought not?' The solution was simple enough. Further along in the same paragraph, Tait explained that using this method, uterine 'dilation may be made completely in six hours, if there is need for it, and the pain may easily be subdued by a hypodermic injection of morphia'. [30] Doubtless 'a hypodermic injection of morphia' would solve a multitude of problems. To say that Tait was being slightly devious in order to market his new procedure is a simple enough assertion, but this is complicated by the way he dictated what should be the appropriate experience of the female body undergoing the procedure.

It would be absurd to deny the benefits of anaesthesia for the woman (or any individual) undergoing a painful medical procedure. However, as anaesthesia alleviated physical pain, it also changed the 'rules' governing the empirical 'ownership' of a medical experience. Mary Poovey, in discussing nineteenth-century obstetrics, argues that 'chloroform transfers to the doctor the *knowledge* of pain, as it renders the woman's body merely a sign, which he can read more accurately than she can'. [31] Poovey goes on to describe how this epistemological transfer heightens a doctor's control over the moral meaning of the procedure, rendering the woman's interior experience so much emotional clay: 'Epistemologically, the "unresisting body" offers no impediment to the doctor's interpretation. Chloroform, therefore, enables the medical man simultaneously to conceptualise his necessarily intimate physical contact with a woman in abstract and

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[29] Tait, *Diseases*, p. 109.
[30] Tait *Diseases*, p. 110.
[31] Mary Poovey, ' "Scenes of an Indelicate Character": The Medical "Treatment" of Victorian Women', *Representations*, 14 (Spring 1986), p. 141.

euphemistic terms and to replace what Simpson described as the doctor's incapacitating vicarious suffering with a powerful feeling of having earned the thanks with which women rewarded his labor'.[32] Armed with an effective means of alleviating pain, a doctor had a woman at his mercy; from such a position, he could virtually dictate her experience. The power to subdue pain through technology elevated the status of associated technology and gained the wielder of such technology access to secrets that would otherwise be revealed with pain. A woman's experience was thus arguably wrenched to fit the experience projected by her doctor, and probably was at least in some way really changed by his exertion of this control.

This is not to say that nineteenth-century medical men denied the emotional suffering that a woman undergoing a gynaecological procedure was likely to experience. West, a fervent enthusiast of speculum technology, took great care when addressing an audience of medical students to provide a very personal construal of what a gynaecological patient felt during an examination with the speculum, particularly when she lacked the urgency of the circumstance of childbirth to dull her modesty:

> The examination . . . by which alone this information can be obtained, must be extremely painful to a woman's feelings, since she is not now, as in the time of labour, impelled by the extremity of her sufferings to submit to anything for the sake of relief. She seems indeed to be now peculiarly alive to every painful impression; and while she feels almost overwhelmed by a sense of humiliation at having to undergo an examination of the necessity for which she may not yet feel fully convinced, she will judge with painful minuteness each act of yours—any

[32] Poovey, 'Scenes', p. 141.

needless delay, any careless exposure of her person, any apparent want of

delicacy or consideration.[33]

West attempted to view himself (and asked his students to attempt view themselves) as

he imagined the patient viewed him.   In doing so, West meant to encourage his students

to try to imagine what it would be like to feel, as the woman would, the pressure of the

instrument upon sensitive parts of the body, and to imagine the sense of urgency she

would feel at any deviation from what she was been taught (perhaps by him, or others

who have undergone similar procedures) to expect was necessary. West's pedagogical

strategy was also arguably a rhetorical one, as it displayed (to his opponents in the debate

over the speculum) his own complete sensitivity to the distress that was likely to

accompany the examination of a woman's body with the speculum.

Before he could attempt to bridge the profound gap between male self and female

other, the Victorian gynaecological practitioner seems to have imagined that he needed to

catch the elusive prospective female patient, who was likely to try to escape him and his

prying questions (not to mention his prying eyes). Once the ailing woman was snared

and her illness 'discovered', it was argued that she would hide its finer points beyond a

labyrinth of lies, half-truths, and silences, despite her suffering. Tilt even assigned the

woman a peculiar sort of intelligence for the purpose of leading her doctor astray in his

attempt at diagnosis: 'Instead of making it clear to him, the patient will often ingeniously

evade his questions . . . she may say what is not true, so that he will be frequently led

wrong'.[34] Despite his argument that this made a doctor's position very difficult, Tilt

associated this propensity to lie with femininity - a facet of both nature and of

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[33] West, *Diseases*, p. 11.

[34] Edward John Tilt, *A Handbook of Uterine Therapeutics* (London: John Churchill, 1863), p. 2.

civilization. The gynaecological patient was to be admired for her shyness. 'Female modesty', Tilt explained, 'which is the best attribute of woman and the sure safeguard of society, raises such a barrier between the patient and the practitioner that she long conceals her sufferings.'[35] Tilt warned the young medical professionals especially that the gynaecological patient, when her 'modesty bends to self-preservation and a sense of duty, she naturally prefers the elder practitioner, and thus deprives the younger of the average opportunities of studying her disease.'[36] While Tilt's patronising admiration ostensibly meant to encourage pity for the quietly suffering woman, it also suggested that the experience of her body was a sort of prize to be sought with subtlety and persistence.

Charles West, rather than encouraging medical students to expect women to prevaricate at every given opportunity, discussed the reticence of a gynaecological patient in terms of what she *would* tell her doctor:

> Women may apply to you, who seem out of health, and in whom you may, perhaps, at first, suspect the existence of uterine disease, but they appear annoyed at inquiries with reference to their sexual functions, or perhaps deny, and with perfect truth, the existence of any pain in the uterus, or its immediate neighbourhood. Perhaps, however, they may confess to a pain in the rectum … Always suspect the import of these sufferings.[37]

Both Tilt and West expected to have to access a woman's private pains against her will. They both implied that she secretly wanted to be found out, in order, of course, that she might be relieved of what is ailing her. Any ground she gave was a 'confession', which description is suggestive of West's perception that there was a burden relieved as a

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[35]Tilt, *Handbook*, p. 2.
[36] Tilt, *Handbook*, p. 2.
[37] West, *Diseases*, p. 9.

woman shared her experience with her doctor. West's advice that the doctor should 'always suspect' would have communicated, however, that despite the prospect of the relief a woman might have found in confessing her pain to her doctor, it was more than likely that her pain would need to be discovered in spite of her.

It made sense to West that English women should have guarded the secrets of their bodies with more vigilance than women on the continent. He described that the posture for examination with the speculum of women on the continent provided superior access to the one generally allowed to doctors of British women:

> On the Continent, the posture usually assumed by a patient when about to undergo a specular examination, is on the back, with the nates resting on the edge of a bed or table, and the legs bent up towards the body, or the feet resting on two chairs, between which the doctor stands. There can be no doubt but that in this position of the patient the os uteri falls more readily within the orifice of the speculum, and that light is admitted much more thoroughly than in any other attitude; but its apparent indelicacy is so serious an objection to it, that except under especial circumstances, it is desirable to introduce the speculum with the patient lying on the left side.[38]

West considered that the internal reproductive spaces of a British woman were especially secret. The British doctor had to work a little bit harder to discover her secrets, and the prize of the knowledge of what occurred inside her body was a little bit harder to win.

A sense of 'wonder' at the mystery of the woman was right and proper, according to West, but one had to be careful to distinguish between reverent awe and ignorant superstition, with which he cleverly associated the traditional values that would prevent

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[38] West, *Diseases*, pp. 20-21.

society - and prevent a woman - from allowing a doctor to see inside her body. With a Platonic reference, West placed himself within a venerable contemplative tradition, yet he insisted that to keep a respectful distance was to stifle the advancement of civilization:

> In wonder, says the ancient writer, all philosophy begins, in wonder it ends; —but wide, indeed, is the distance which separates the marvelling of the ignorant from the admiration of the learned . . . the principle of life . . . was in the earliest ages the object of reverence, or of actual worship, while the happy issue of the mysterious process of parturition was sought to be secured by rites and ceremonies, and charms, propitiating the various deities who superintended it.[39]

Here, we must notice a movement away from the intimacy of the relationship between a woman and her doctor, and toward a scientist's relationship with his subject. No longer are the barriers between the gynaecological patient and her doctor persuading a woman to suffer in silence, but the progress of medicine is retarded, and Western society is drawn back into a darker age of spells and superstitions. This passage is headed for a very strange defence of the advancement of medical science through looking at healthy women's reproductive organs, which I will discuss later in this chapter.

The clear advantage of the use of the speculum in gynaecological examinations was, and is, quite simply, that the instrument enables a doctor to see inside a woman's body. The advantage is so indisputable as to have rendered debate over its use completely moot through the twentieth century. Can we not, however, even now consider the dangers of placing our complete faith in the human eye as a mechanism through which we may avert or ameliorate suffering? The importance of the eye itself has now been dwarfed by technologies designed to improve upon human sight. Whether

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[39] West, *Ulceration*, p. 3.

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in the hands of a male doctor, a female doctor, or even a woman examining the inside of her own body, the speculum can facilitate visual access to internal organs, but can hardly be said to wield the diagnostic power of laparoscopy.   Donna Harway argues that though women claimed the speculum for themselves in the 1970s, this 'handcraft tool' can hardly be considered empowering in the face of the more sophisticated technologies of vision developed in the late twentieth century. [40]   As technologies of medical vision become ever more arcane, one can, indeed feel (and probably look) more cyborg than human in the context of a modern investigative procedure. Yet the human can never be forgotten - the creative force behind and directing the technology, making the decisions - as well as the human patient, who, such a space away from her doctor, can seem to be at the mercy of machines, without a human to whom she (or even her unconscious humanity, in her body) can appeal.

Robert Lee's arguments against the speculum suggest that he was concerned that the instrument, if used when unnecessary, could rob medical diagnostics of some its humanity in favour of an increased reliance upon new technological (rather than human) vision. If the doctor could 'see' his patient better through the filter of technology, it might be at the expense of not being able to 'feel' her so well. Even Edward Tilt, a staunch advocate of the speculum, qualified the diagnostic value of the instrument as opposed to touch. While he considered the speculum indispensable, he allowed that it

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[40] Haraway discusses the problematic issues underlying the technologies of the twentieth century, which have learned to 'see' women in new ways: 'Among the many transformations of reproductive situations is the medical one, where women's bodies have boundaries newly permeable to both 'visualization' and 'intervention. Of course, who controls the interpretation of bodily boundaries in medical hermeneutics is a major feminist issue…The technologies of visualization recall the important cultural practice of hunting with the camera and the deeply predatory nature of a photographic consciousness'. *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (London and New York: Routledge, 1991), p. 169.

was 'less useful than the finger for diagnosis of uterine affections'.[41] Lee, not surprisingly, provided several examples of instances where, in his opinion, the speculum was of little or no use to a doctor. In describing these instances, Lee focused upon the inferiority of the speculum to the use of the hand as a diagnostic tool. For example: 'In all large uterine polypi it is obvious that the speculum can be of no use, and that it would not enable us in any case to decide whether a tumour in the vagina was a polypus or an inverted uterus, a small portion only of the lining membrane of the uterus, in either case, being all that could possibly be presented to the eye'.[42] Lee's argument was that the visual sense had not the penetrative power required to diagnose the case successfully, because as the afflicted parts were brought to the eye and be presented to it, they were alienated from their original, human context. What was needed, according to Lee, was a way to get more properly inside a woman in order to diagnose. Long before the availability of such advances as laparoscopy, Lee believed the human hand was the best apparatus for the task. The implication is that the more intuitive, more qualitative epistemology of the human touch was better suited to discerning the workings of the internal (and interior) woman than the eye in such circumstances.

Despite his reservations, Lee had enough experience using the speculum to compare his experiences of making diagnoses with and without it. He explained that when 'tumours have passed partially or completely through the os and cervix uteri, their size, density, the length and thickness of their roots, and the relations these bear to the os and cervix uteri, can only be determined by the touch'.[43] He continued, confidently: 'I have never detected a small polypus within the os uteri, or hanging through it which I

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[41] Tilt, *Uterine*, p. 83.
[42] Lee, *Speculum*, p. 7.
[43] Lee, *Speculum*, p. 6.

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failed to detect with the finger'.[44] This does not imply, though, as one might suppose,

that he had never used a speculum in any such case. He explained why: 'I have,

however, repeatedly employed the speculum to ascertain the colour of the polypus of the

uterus, and the degree of vascularity of the investing membrane, which without ocular

examination could not have been determined. The knowledge thus acquired was of no

use in the treatment'.[45] Lee did not, then, necessarily object to a doctor's acquisition of

visual knowledge of the inside of a woman's body. Rather, he was concerned about the

reason for the acquisition of that knowledge. He implied that there are often two goals in

medicine, and that more general, scientific knowledge was often sought alongside the

knowledge of a particular case and course of treatment: 'In a case of small glandular

polypus in a sterile married lady … the speculum was employed, and it made us

acquainted with the colour, and more perfectly with the nature and diminuitive size of the

disease. The polypus was removed with the forceps, after the speculum had been

withdrawn'.[46] It seems that Lee meant to suggest that some knowledge was 'taken' from

the patient without her knowing, as there would probably have been no way for her to

know whether or not the visual inspection of her internal affliction was necessary. Of

course, it is easy to imagine that one of the other doctors in attendance could have argued

(and possibly did argue) against Lee, that the knowledge of what the polypus looked like

in the particular instance was helpful to the case in some way or other. It was precisely

this uncertainty that placed the woman in such a vulnerable position - for if there was

some question about whether or not she needed, for the sake of her health and the

avoidance of pain, to make a visual display of her physiological secrets, it would have

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[44] Lee, *Speculum*, p. 6.
[45] Lee, *Speculum*, p. 6.
[46] Lee, *Speculum*, p. 6.

been difficult for her to refuse to do so. And so, we might ask, noticing Lee's use of the plural pronoun, how important *was* the information gathered in this instance? We might imagine two, or three (or more?) men taking turns peering inside this woman, and she in some discomfort wondering what they were seeing. This is exactly the kind of scene that Coral Lansbury imagines women to have had in mind when they made such a strong stand against vivisection in the nineteenth century.[47]

Much of the debate surrounding the use of the speculum in nineteenth-century medicine, however, was centred exasperatingly outside of the real experience of women. One striking example of a text written to oppose practitioners of gynaecological medicine was George Morant's 1857 *Hints to Husbands: A Revelation of the Man-midwife's Mysteries*. As the title clearly indicates, this text was not intended to educate women who were likely to be treated by practitioners of gynaecological or obstetrical medicine, nor was it intended to persuade them directly. Rather, it was meant to enlighten men about the danger of allowing their wives to be treated by 'men-midwives', who would contaminate their purity and thus reduce their moral value.

Morant dedicated an entire chapter to the evils of the speculum, and called the patient examined by this instrument a 'victim'. He described the women who were 'victimized' by the speculum, however, as suffering a loss of respect rather than experiencing any positive suffering: 'its employment plunges its wretched victim, woman, down into the lowest deep of infamy and degradation'.[48] Morant continued from that statement in an interestingly racial bent, to claim that the hiddenness of the woman's

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[47] Coral Lansbury, *The Old Brown Dog: Women, Workers, and Vivisection in Edwardian England* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985), pp. 83-95.

[48] George Morant, *Hints to Husbands: a Revelation of the Man-midwife's Mysteries* (London: Simpkin, Marshall & Co., 1857), p. 46.

reproductive organs defined her basic humanity. Thus, an examination with the speculum robbed a woman of a certain dignity that nature bestowed even upon savages: 'added, in its application, that of *sight*; exposure the most complete of all which modesty, even in the most abject of races, invariably conceals'.[49] It is as if women, in submitting or being made to submit to an examination with the speculum, were made to wear their secret reproductive parts on the outside of their bodies. Indeed, William Acton referred to the speculum as an instrument for converting the uterus from an internal to an external organ: 'By means of physical examination the uterus may be converted, as it were, into an external organ, and the art of diagnosis reduced to the simple plan applicable to organs situated externally'.[50] It is worth remembering at this point the stubborn belief that women's reproductive organs were basically the male reproductive organs, turned inside out.[51] It is important to make a careful distinction within the rhetoric of the speculum debate, between the woman as a vulnerable victim, and the woman as threateningly masculinized, her reproductive organs dangerously liberated.

It is equally important to realize how difficult it can be to make this distinction, and why. Morant criticized Charles Locock for approaching the examination with the speculum from a doctor's perspective, instead of considering that of the woman who would be examined. Morant cited Locock as saying 'that he looked into the vagina as he would a throat'.[52] Morant was not satisfied: 'True enough, so far as *he* simply is concerned . . . But would the *woman* regard it in this philosophical light? Is it the same to

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[49] Morant, *Husbands*, p. 46.
[50] William Acton, *A Practical Treatise on the Diseases of Urinary and Generative Organs, in Both Sexes* (London: John Churchill, 1851), p. 32.
[51] See Catherine Blackledge, *Story of V* (London: Wiedelfield & Nicholson, 2003) for a thorough discussion of this idea and its tenacity, even through the nineteenth century.
[52] Charles Locock, *Medical Times*, 21 (8 June 1850). Quoted in Morant, *Hints*, p. 47.

her whether her tongue is pressed down with a spatula, or her vagina distended with a speculum?' (original emphasis).[53] At first glace, Locock's position seems less sensitive than Morant's. But upon further consideration, it seems that one motive for Locock's statement may have been to try to encourage the medical community to foster a space where women might feel less shame about their bodies - in order that women would be able to escape the moral significance of their bodies for long enough to have their physical ailments tended. It is arguable that Locock attributed much of a patient's suffering during an examination to her perception of the doctor's perspective - as a man, rather than a doctor. Locock's decision to communicate his perspective in this way suggests that he believed that if women suffered emotionally during an examination with the speculum, it was in part because they were made to feel that they should.

Morant, on the other hand, considered the feelings of 'the woman' as she was - or, perhaps more accurately, as she was meant to be. Though Morant's sensitivity for the woman's experience in this instance was perhaps more palpable than Locock's, it was arguably also more shallow and not so thoughtful. Morant did not mention the possibility of a physical ailment in need of remedy, and so did not consider the possibility of competing necessities, which may have been difficult for the patient to prioritize. Further, the question he asked next suggests that he considered a woman's suffering during an examination to have been an indicator of her status as a woman: 'Is *her* moral state to be left out of account together, and are we to treat the most sensitive organ in her frame as if it was so much inert matter, whose great use was to be cauterized?'[54] For Morant, a woman suffered during an examination with the speculum because it was

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[53] Morant, *Hints*, p. 47.
[54] Morant, *Hints*, p. 47.

morally wrong; her sexual identity was inseparable from her moral identity. Morant's

use of the word 'sensitive' demonstrated the ease with which a woman's 'moral

suffering' was able to be collapsed with her physical suffering, as if no distinction needed

to be made. If there were a distinction between the two, then a woman could have made

the choice to prioritize one over the other. In Morant's world - the world defied by the

emergence of gynaecological medicine - a woman could not express the difference

because she lacked the vocabulary to do so.

Morant's argument that a gynaecologist made improper 'use' of the uterus

suggested a contest over the 'ownership' of a woman's uterus and its services. Of course,

the proper 'use' of the uterus would have been procreation within marriage. This service

was owed to a woman's husband and to society. This raised the question of who 'owned'

womanhood. For Morant, it was womanhood, rather than individual women, that was

vulnerable. The title *Hints to Husbands* clearly indicates that 'husbands' owned

womanhood, and that gynaecology would rob them of this prize, women themselves

being passive and thus unable to prevent it.

Ownership of womanhood was not, however, the exclusive rhetorical territory of

the opponents of the speculum. William Jones used the idea of the ownership of

womanhood to establish a shared emotional space with his patients: 'I can readily

commiserate the delicately painful situation of the woman whom circumstances compel

to submit to the employment of the speculum'.[55] For Jones, womanhood was jointly

owned, and if there was an injury to modesty then it was an injury to both doctor and

patient. Paired with the suggestion that women were often unaware that the speculum

would cause them no physical harm, empathy for the emotional injuries a woman would

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[55] William Jones, *Practical Observations on Diseases of Women* (London: H. Bailliere, 1839), p. 94.

sustain in an examination with the speculum presented a compelling interpretation of a woman's relationship with her doctor: "Let it be explained to them, that it neither bruises, cuts, nor injures them in any way;—let them be convinced that although painful to their feelings, it is equally unpleasant to the feelings of the practitioner, and that nothing but a stern necessity—a consciousness of imperative duty—impels him to adopt it'.[56] For Jones, the doctor hardly *wielded* the speculum; rather, he sustained the same emotional injuries as the patient who was examined with it. If the woman was subject to his gaze, he looked back at himself by appropriating her perspective from the position of knowledge and privilege he had established inside her body. Instead of merely peering at her, he stood with her; but in order to do so she (and her culture) needed to allow him to make a legitimate space inside her for himself.

Jones negotiated for the sanctioning of a new kind of intimate relationship between a man and a woman. Unable to wholly escape the sexual significance of this relationship, Jones embraced it with tenderness. He described his ideal scenario for the introduction of the speculum as gentle and slightly ritualistic: 'let it be proposed with caution, circumspection, and delicacy; let the confidence of the patient be first gained, and then let the proper moment be taken for its employment'.[57] If this sounds like advice that might have been given to a groom concerning his wedding night, Jones immediately killed the moment by mentioning his mother. Instead of making a contrast, however, Jones insisted that he was only summarizing what he has said about the proposal of the speculum to the woman: 'in short, let any practitioner who can duly appreciate the speculum, and who is convinced of its necessity in a given case, only act towards his

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[56] Jones, *Diseases*, p. 91.
[57] Jones, *Diseases*, p. 91.

female patient with the same firmness and kindness that he would manifest towards his mother, and rare indeed will be the objections made by women to the employment of the speculum'.[58]

Sacrifice and selflessness formed the heart of this new relationship and were the key to the empathy that would enable the doctor to implement the technology of the speculum into real life, according to Jones. It was not the woman alone who should have been required to sacrifice. Jones would have had the woman believe that he suffered with her in her sacrifice, and he scorned any members of her family who would not make the sacrifice as well: 'nor yet [can I suppose] a being, worthy of the name of man, attached to a mother, to a sister, or to one still more nearly allied to him, who could weigh a momentary sacrifice against years of happiness'.[59] Far from compromising his masculinity, a man who allowed his wife to undergo an examination with the speculum was brave and selfless enough to endure the pangs of hurt modesty alongside his wife - and her doctor.

What title, then, would Jones have wished to employ to secure the status of the new relationship that he proposed to exist between the doctor who examined with the speculum and his female patient? Poovey, in discussing the debate over chloroform in obstetrics, describes the attempt to legitimize the doctor's place with an anaesthetized woman, which was especially troubling because of the contact he would necessarily have with her genital area in assisting the birth of her baby. She argues that the vulnerability of modesty was implied to be the very jurisdiction of the doctors who might otherwise seem to threaten it; guarding womanhood was held out as the vocation of every medical

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[58] Jones, *Diseases*, p. 91.
[59] Jones, *Diseases*, p. 95.

professional. A woman is without defences under anaesthesia, therefore, as Poovey argues 'the doctor's calling is . . . to keep her secrets and to superintend her delicate modesty'.[60] Jones would certainly have agreed to bestow upon the doctor who employed the speculum the title of 'Keeper of Secrets'. This title certainly describes the position envisioned by Jones of a doctor who employed the speculum with reluctance and a sense of special duty.

This duty would certainly have been a cultural duty; did it follow that it was only owed to women of one class? In practice, some women were afforded more modesty than others: after the passage of the Contagious Diseases Acts in 1864, certain women were not free to refuse an examination with the speculum. We may also remember that Edward Tilt considered no young physician's education complete without a year in the Paris hospitals, where they were very 'generous' with their women. Were poor women considered to be less deserving of the kind of guardianship outlined by Jones? Did they have secrets to keep? Were their secrets worth keeping? Victorian doctors who debated the practice of examining gynaecological ailments with the speculum did not often discuss class in their texts. At first, it is tempting to surmise that this is because they were not inclined to discuss the feelings, modesty, or morals of poor women. If these medical authors maintained an absolute silence regarding the issue of class, it would be very difficult to believe anything else. It is also certain that almost all of the women whose bodies were studied by doctors after their death came from hospitals, and were poor. Occasionally, however, one of these doctors did discuss class in their writings about the speculum. The issue always seems to have been raised un-self-consciously, as if the author did not perceive the need to point out that female patients came from different

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[60] Poovey, 'Scenes', p. 152.

classes. For example, in one of his texts, Charles West discussed the different social classes of potential patients in order to explain that a particular illness or disorder would tend to be presented in its early stages by one class of women, and in its later stages by another. West explained that this was particularly the case with cystitis - wealthier women would have it treated at the first sign of discomfort, while poorer women would wait much longer, until the condition had advanced considerably.[61] The lifestyles of poorer women increased their possibility of suffering from certain ailments, and sometimes medical authors who engaged in the debate over the speculum discussed the consideration of class difference in determining class-specific causes of ailments. Writing a few decades after West, Robert Lawson Tait described a kind of uterine disorder 'in which the displacement is due to a previous puerperal condition, and where it has arisen in an arrest of the process of subinvolution'.[62] He explained that 'In the upper ranks this is generally due to the non-fulfilment of the functions of lactation; in the hospital class of patients it is due to the women getting about too soon'.[63] He apparently did not consider that all of the habits of wealthier women were particularly salutary.

The tone of these statements about class suggests that doctors did not feel the need to specify particular methods, treatments, or considerations for women with elevated class status. This is not to say that in practice extra consideration was not given to wealthier women, or that poorer women were not, in practice, treated more coarsely. Lee made it clear that he found it unacceptable to use a speculum, without urgent necessity, to examine any unmarried woman, regardless of class: 'In unmarried women,

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[61] West, *Diseases*, p.180.
[62] Robert Lawson Tait, *Diseases of Women and Abdominal Surgery* III (Leicester: Richardson & Co., 1889), p. 139.
[63] Tait, *Diseases*, p. 139.

whatever their rank or condition in life may be, the integrity of their structures should not be destroyed with the speculum, nor their modesty wounded by an examination of any kind without a necessity for such a proceeding being clearly shown'.[64] This statement implies that there have been individual practitioners who would have striven more earnestly to avoid injuring the modesty of a wealthier woman than a poorer one. Charles West explained how one might have acquired such a habit and warned that a medical professional needed to be vigilant against it:

> The familiarity which hospital practice begets with these ailments among women whose sensibilities are not always as keen as those in a higher class of life, or the circumstance that they do not venture to express the pain which want of consideration may have caused them, leads but too often to carelessness in these respects on the part of men who would yet shrink from the idea of inflicting a moment's unnecessary suffering upon any one.[65]

It is difficult to decide what West really meant to communicate in this statement about class, as the statement does not entirely commit to a reason for the behaviour of lower-class women. Did West mean to suggest that they were hardened, and so were not as sensitive to the injury of their modesty as wealthier women would have been? Or did he mean that they were less communicative - hushed by a sense of class inferiority and vulnerability to both doctor and disease? This statement, one of the very few that he wrote to discuss issues of class, ruled out none of the above, nor does the statement necessarily imply that all poor women felt or acted the same way. What is clear is that West encouraged young medical professionals to imagine what suffering might have

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[64] Lee, *Speculum*, p. 9.
[65] West, *Diseases*, p. 12.

been experienced by a woman in their care, whether or not they had been taught by society to consider that poor women were less sensitive than wealthier women, and whether or not the woman would have been likely to communicate her distress to him.

Whether as new, important and vulnerable clinical material or as patients whose modesty required a doctor to fill in the blank spaces between expression and experience, women fired the imagination of nineteenth-century medicine. Newly empowered to see and to treat the inside of a woman's body, medical professionals now had the task of assigning identity to disorders that had once been known only by reported symptoms, which had only recently began to be regarded as an inferior means of detecting and determining illness. The nineteenth century saw a proliferation of newly identified women's disorders and diseases. Of course, both the 'new' diagnoses and women's awareness of them were a great boon to the emerging study and practice of gynaecological medicine. But how many of these 'problems' were real abnormalities that posed a threat to a woman's health or happiness, and how many were fabrications of a sort of craze for women's medicine? If being a woman and possessing a set of female reproductive organs was enough to classify one as 'ill', than it would have been impossible for a woman to have been 'cured'. It also would have meant that all women needed medical treatment.

Advocates of the speculum argued that it was necessary to use this instrument frequently in the examination of female patients, because most of them, being women, were likely to have been afflicted with reproductive illness. In the preface to *Practical Observations on Diseases of Women*, Jones claimed of 'numerous complaints peculiarly incidental to women', that 'scarcely one … out of ten passes through life without

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experiencing some one or other of them'.[66] It is clear that he believed that most women

needed some kind of gynaecological treatment, but whether he meant to imply that most

of these experienced serious reproductive disorders is not so apparent. Charles West, as

we have seen, claimed that roughly half of all women are disordered in their reproductive

organs. West placed this claim directly in the context of a plea for the more widespread

use and acceptance of the use of the speculum. Despite the fact that the women whose

bodies he studied were not known to have been suffering or exhibiting the symptoms of

any gynaecological ailment, West argued that it would have been better if the ailments

had been seen and known, presumably so that they could have been treated before they

became more advanced.

Technology in medicine, according to A.J. Youngson, altered women's lives 'far

more than the lives of men'.[67] Medical technology has liberated women (and, of course,

everyone else) from scores of diverse sufferings that were once necessarily endured.

Sufferings particular to women, encumbered with cultural meaning and liable to weighty

interpretation, presented a problem for traditional medicine and a great opportunity for

scientific medicine. Women's reproductive organs were essentially material that had

been previously shrouded by taboo. While exploring this 'new' material, medical

professionals also shattered archaic perceptions about the necessity of women's pains,

and could really claim to have been breaking down the barriers that had once trapped

women needlessly in their sufferings. Thus, as gynaecology emerged as both a subject of

inquiry and an area of treatment, practitioners could claim advancements for both the

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[66] Jones, *Diseases*, p. iv.
[67] A.J. Youngson, *The Scientific Revolution in Victorian Medicine* (London: Croom Helm, 1979), p. 216.

science and humanity of medicine - indeed; they needed to do so, for they had many opponents, both among their medical colleagues and in popular opinion.

But could one so easily have kept both aims in mind at all times? Nineteenth-century medical practitioners produced texts illustrative of the web of intent surrounding the science and medical treatment of women, and often conflated the two as if one were indistinguishable from the other. It is easy to see how women may have been perceived as more vulnerable as their genitals were exposed in new ways, and it is equally apparent that women's reproductive organs were not necessarily best served by secrecy. An examination of the rhetoric surrounding the use of the speculum provides reason to believe that the path to the advancement of women's health was not set exclusively in one direction. The debate over the use of the speculum encouraged discussion of the protection of women's newly exposed bodies from over-enthusiastic science as well as the protection of women from disease and injury that could result from neglect through prejudice or ignorance. The scrutiny of one side of the debate by the other allowed respect for women's feelings and comfort, while the other prevented them from being forced to endure for the sake of modesty.

Charles West, in promoting the use of the speculum, moved easily between the roles of scientist and humanitarian. Often he accomplished this by shifting directly from compassionate consideration of one woman to a discussion of the importance of a general knowledge of *the woman* and her structures, as if to discuss one were to discuss the other. In discussing ignorance, West craftily aligned myth and shamanic superstition with an ignorance of the interior of a woman's body.[68] He phrased a response to general criticism

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[68] West, *Ulceration*, p. 2.

over the lack of success in curing women's ailments in terms of 'investigation' and 'truth' and 'knowledge' as opposed to 'alleviation' and 'treatment':

> Their existence has been made a constant ground of reproach against those who, having to do with ailments so simple as they are assumed to be, yet have left so much concerning them uncertain or unexplored. I believe, however, that many of the doubts and uncertainties which beset these subjects depend on the difficulties in the way of arriving at truth concerning them, far more than any want either of diligence of honest purpose on the part of those whose special duty it was to engage in their investigation . . . those difficulties have arisen which did, and still do, retard the advancement of knowledge concerning uterine disease.[69]

It is arguable that West was purposefully unclear whether this duty was toward science or toward the welfare of individual patients - whether this purpose was healing or knowledge. West's opinion was that the two were inseparable.

That medicine is greatly assisted by advances in scientific knowledge is hardly cause for debate. However, at whose expense should such knowledge be gained? West argued that the speculum needed to be used to examine healthy women - not just those who were sick or suffering, and in need of treatment. It was more difficult to make the argument that medical professionals should have access to the inside of women's bodies solely for the knowledge such access would provide. Still, West could not find a nicer way to say it: 'we must not forget that where the knowledge of healthy structure and natural function is defective, the knowledge of diseased structure and perverted function must be imperfect too'[70] He also blamed the slow progress of learning about uterine

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[69] West, *Ulceration*, p. 3.
[70] West, *Ulceration*, p. 5.

physiology upon a lack of access to 'the intimate nature of its structure in the virgin state'.[71] Despite the fact that we no longer consider that an examination with a speculum corrupts a woman's purity, it is hard to read this passage without getting a sense of someone being violated. Neither, West argued, was it entirely helpful to be granted access to dead bodies: 'It must … be borne in mind that many evidences of disease, such as are very obvious during life, may be greatly obscured, or may even entirely disappear after death'.[72]

Perhaps, on these points, West did not wish to mince words. He certainly communicated a great deal of frustration, and this frustration extended from knowledge to treatment: 'It was from sheer want of opportunity, that the anatomical and physiological discoveries that were made, though slowly and imperfectly, remained long unapplied; that for ages all knowledge of the pathology of the female sex continued fragmentary'.[73] In another volume, West directly considered the worth of knowledge against the expense of the suffering gained in its acquisition. The speculum, he argued, 'adds so much to our therapeutical resources as to counterbalance all the suffering, both moral and physical which its employment not infrequently inflicts upon the patient'.[74] Here again, it is not entirely clear whether this statement meant to address the therapeutic resources that would benefit the particular treatment of individual patients, or whether West meant to suggest that it was acceptable for a woman to endure some moral and physical suffering for the sake of science. The latter seems more likely, and even if we do not consider an examination with a speculum to be likely to cause a great deal of

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[71] West, *Ulceration*, p. 5.
[72] West, *Ulceration*, p. 18.
[73] West, *Ulceration*, p. 4.
[74] West, *Diseases*, p. 23.

moral and physical suffering, it is reasonable to expect that there might have been

opposition to the suggestion that women should make the sacrifice.

West's discussion of professional 'duty' is ambiguous with regard to whether it

was one that was owed to the body of the patient or to a body of knowledge. Other

physicians who were engaged in this debate, however, presented their duty to employ the

speculum as one which was strictly owing to the health of patients. If it was the pursuit

of knowledge that compelled William Jones to look inside the bodies of women, he did

not say so. Rather, he acknowledged the existing body of scientific knowledge as the

reason a doctor was obliged to perform an examination with the speculum upon a woman

with some suspected disorder of her reproductive system. For Jones, 'it is incumbent on

the practitioner to take care that [the speculum] be employed at least in every case which

has been of some duration … we must admit that the practitioner who, in the present

advanced state of pathological science, neglects its employment in cases indicating its

necessity, incurs an awful responsibility, if he be not highly culpable'.[75] It is easy to

imagine that few of Jones' colleagues, on either side of the speculum debate, would have

disagreed that a physician who neglected to use a speculum when he thought it was

absolutely necessary, would have been committing an injustice. The dispute was rather

over what circumstances should have convinced a medical professional of the necessity

of seeing inside a woman's body. It was, after all, the *reason* for an examination with the

speculum (or, indeed, any examination) that distinguished between a patient and so much

clinical material.

Jones argued that there can be no knowledge obtained during an examination that

did not benefit the patient, since 'negative evidence is frequently as valuable as

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[75] Jones, *Diseases*, pp. 100-101.

positive'.[76] 'Negative Evidence' is highly suggestive of the feelings of the patient, for an examination that would produce such evidence would necessarily be conducted after a patient's complaint or presentation of symptoms. Rather than looking for new and interesting pathology, a doctor seeking negative evidence would be looking for tissues and structures that were normal, often for the purpose of reassuring a worried patient. Jones offered several anecdotes to demonstrate the potential of negative evidence gained with the use of the speculum to comfort an individual who was worried that there was something terribly wrong with her.

Before demonstrating this admirable sensitivity, however, it must be said that Jones also offered thanks, in the preface to *Practical Observations on the Diseases of Women*, to a number of colleagues who 'lended' him their patients for the purposes of his research: 'For many of the illustrative cases [the author] is indebted to medical friends, whose kindness permitted him to examine patients under their care, for which he avails himself of the present opportunity to offer his sincere thanks'.[77] No mention is made of the patients who ostensibly allowed Jones to examine them in their illness. It is arguable, though, that the women Jones examined, even if they had given him their enthusiastic consent, would not have wanted to be mentioned, for shame of the exposure they had made to him. Still, one cannot help wondering if these women knew, and what they might have thought about being clinical material for a book.

Ultimately, because of the cultural taboos surrounding women's reproductive organs, it is hardly surprising that Jones felt obligated to thank his colleagues for lending him their patients to examine for the purposes of his book. Opportunities for internally

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[76] Jones, *Diseases*, p. 98.
[77] Jones, *Diseases*, p. viii.

examining women were scarce, for whatever purpose. Not only was it problematic to examine women for research, but it was very difficult for a young or inexperienced doctor to gain expertise in conducting examinations with a speculum. Since it was arguable that only a doctor with some experience could interpret what he could see happening inside a woman's body in a way that would help the woman, giving such access to an inexperienced doctor was likely to benefit his education more than it would the patient. Further, young doctors in general were less likely to be trusted with a woman's modesty.

Edward Tilt encouraged young medical professionals to take advantage of every opportunity available for experience in studying the anatomy and pathology of women's reproductive organs. Tilt cautioned that women's modesty tended to make it difficult for a young doctor to learn about the female body, for 'when modesty bends to self-preservation and a sense of duty, she naturally prefers the elder practitioner, and thus deprives the younger of the average opportunities of studying her disease'.[78] The implication is that something was taken from the young doctor that was rightfully his. Tilt suggested many tips and tricks for studying the 'mental peculiarities' of women, and insisted that certain rather unscientific criteria needed to be met for one to achieve the status of a successful 'lady's doctor': 'He need not be handsome, but must not be ugly … He must be married, or what right has he to know anything about women!'[79] And where could a young medical professional learn about women? Paris. 'No one, who intends following this branch of practice, should think of settling down without having spent at least one year in the Paris Hospitals, which afford such large opportunities for studying

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[78] Tilt, *Diseases*, p. 2.
[79] Tilt, *Diseases*, p.6.

diseases of women—opportunities so generously placed at the disposition of all'.[80] Who was so 'generous' with women's bodies? It is ultimately unclear whether he was referring to French legal authority or to the French medical community. Perhaps the French women themselves? It is probably not likely that Tilt viewed French women as having had so much control over their own bodies, but there is definitely the suggestion that something about French culture that allowed greater access to women's bodies (or at least poor women's bodies). Of course, France had been compelling its prostitutes to submit to examinations for a number of decades by the 1850s. Was this also 'generosity?'

Tilt insisted that women should be made a study; that the young doctor needed to focus upon them and learn all they could. He presented women as elusive and perhaps devious. He illustrated the obstacles that prevented one from accessing a greater knowledge of their bodies with alarming frankness. According to Tilt, knowledge of women did not come easily; at least, not in Britain. But perhaps the portrayal of women's bodies as difficult to access tended to highlight that some viewed their bodies as clinical material; the scarcity of an important resource does tend to make its presence or absence felt and talked about. What complicates matters is that female modesty was also viewed by Victorians as a precious resource, and arguably a national resource. Who should have been given access to this resource, and who should have sacrificed?

As we have seen, extensive and intimate knowledge of the female anatomy was argued to be crucial to understanding the experience of the woman, especially because she was expected (and encouraged) to be reticent about her own body. Whether knowledge was gained to benefit a general wealth of knowledge (which could benefit

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[80] Tilt, *Diseases*, p. 5.

many women in the future), or to assess the state of the body of one woman, Victorian medical professionals radically disagreed about the means of acquiring this knowledge. Their arguments took the form of attempts to 'speak' for the women in their care, and even for women in general. Claiming knowledge of the woman and her experiences through medical intimacy with her body, doctors on both sides of the debate over the use of the speculum attempted to argue from a position of empathic as well as scientific knowledge with regard to what was best for her.

Chapter 4:

Madness and Chains: John Conolly and the Reform of Asylums for the Insane

That the nineteenth century saw the mass-institutionalization of care for the mentally ill

in Britain is a fact neatly confirmed by a striking increase in the recorded number of

people assigned to British asylums for the insane during this period.[1] This trend,

however, developed alongside and intersected with a movement for the reform of the

treatment of the insane that is more difficult to define, loosely labeled the movement for

the 'moral treatment' of the insane.[2] Historians tend to trace the beginnings of 'moral

treatment' to the late-eighteenth century, and specifically to the theories and innovative

practices of Phillipe Pinel [1745-1826] at the Bicêtre Hospital, in France and William

Tuke [1732-1822], a Quaker merchant whose 'retreat' at York was developed in response

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[1] Roy Porter refers to 'brute figures,' which establish that the insane were increasingly institutionalized
throughout the nineteenth century: whereas 'around 1800, no more than a few thousand 'lunatics'
were confined in England to all kinds of institutions, by 1900 the total had skyrocketed to
100,000'. *Mind-Forg'd Manacles: A History of Madness in England from the Restoration to the
Regency* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987), p. 2. Steven Cherry, more recently,
has offered figures for the middle decades of the nineteenth century: in 1845, less than 5,000
patients were confined to English county asylums. By 1880, there were 40,000. *Mental Health
Care in Modern England: The Norfolk Lunatic Asylum/St. Andrew's Hospital, 1810-1998*
(Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2003), p. 10. For discussion of nineteenth-century asylums and the
emerging asylum system, see Joseph Melling and Bill Forsythe (eds), *Insanity, Institutions, and
Society, 1800-1914* (London and New York: Routledge, 1999).

[2] As Andrew Scull explains, 'one cannot readily summarize in a phrase or two what moral treatment
consisted of, nor reduce it to a few standard formulae, for it was emphatically not a specific
technique'. Scull argues that instead, moral treatment was 'a general, pragmatic approach which
recognized the lunatic's sensibility and acknowledged (albeit in a highly limited and
circumscribed sense) his status as a moral subject'. *Most Solitary of Afflictions: Madness and
Society in Britain, 1700-1900* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), p. 98. William Bynum,
Eric Carlson, and Norman Dain equate 'moral therapy' with a focus upon therapeutic efforts to
treat the non-bodily or psychological elements of mental derangement, as opposed to the treatment
of physical disorders that accompanied insanity in patients. See William Bynum, 'Rationales for
Therapy in British Psychiatry, 1780-1835', in Andrew Scull (ed.), *Madhouses, Mad-doctors, and
Madmen: The Social History of Psychiatry in the Victorian Era* (Philadelphia: University of
Pennsylvania Press, 1981), p. 37; Eric Carlson and Norman Dain, 'The Psychotherapy that was
Moral Treatment', *American Journal of Psychiatry*, 117 (1960), p. 519.

to the suspicious death of a Quaker inmate of the York asylum.[3] Though historians

generally agree about where and when the movement for 'moral treatment' began, there

is less of a consensus regarding the conditions out of which this movement arose, or,

indeed, regarding the meaning or historical implications of 'moral treatment'.[4]

Pinel and Tuke embraced the ideal of 'non-restraint', which was the reduction, or

even abolition, of the use of restraints to subdue or control the mentally ill. Later, John

Conolly [1794-1866] became the first person to successfully abolish restraints at a large

asylum in England.[5] Though Conolly did not invent the practice of non-restraint, his

success in its implementation at the large Hanwell asylum, near London, was certainly a

landmark achievement in the moral reform of the treatment of the insane.[6] Conolly's

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[3] For a study of William Tuke and the York Retreat, see Anne Digby, *Madness, Morality, and Medicine: A Study of the York Retreat, 1796-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985). On Philippe Pinel and the beginnings of moral treatment in France, see Jan Goldstein, *Console and Classify: The French Psychiatric Profession in the Nineteenth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987).

[4] See Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*, Richard Howard (tr.) (New York: Random House, 1965 [1961]), for a discussion of the social and cultural meanings of the large-scale confinement of the mad and the moral reform of this practices. Foucault argues that the institutionalisation of the mad was a means of policing the poor, and that moral reform simply replaced physical restraints with even more effective, and more repressive, psychological bonds. See also Andrew Scull, *Museums of Madness: The Social Organization of Insanity in Nineteenth-Century England* (London: Allen Lane, 1979). Foucault's arguments have been the focus of a great deal of debate and qualification. Since the publication of Foucault's book, most historians of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century psychiatry maintain some position on his arguments. For a summary of many of the stronger and more influential of these positions, see Scull, *Solitary*, ch. 1. See also Roy Porter, 'Foucault's Great Confinement', in Arthur Still and Irving Volody (eds), *Rewriting the History of Madness: Studies in Foucault's Histoire de la Folie* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), pp. 119-125; H.C. Erik Midelfort, 'Madness and Civilization in Early Modern Europe: A Reapprasial of Michel Foucault', in Barbara C. Malament (ed.), *After the Reformation: Essays in Honour of J.H. Hexter* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1980), pp. 247-265.

[5] Andrew Scull and Nancy Tomes have discussed Conolly's career and philosophies in the context of the nineteenth-century moral reform of the care of the insane. See Andrew Scull, Charlotte MacKenzie, and Nicholas Hervey, *Masters of Bedlam: The Transformation of the Mad-Doctoring Trade* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996). See also Nancy Tomes, 'The Great Restraint Controversy: A Comparative Perspective on Anglo-American Psychiatry in the Nineteenth Century', in W.F. Bynum, R. Porter and M. Shepherd (eds), *The Anatomy of Madness: Essays in the History of Psychiatry*, vol. 3, *The Asylum and Its Psychiatry* (London: Tavistock Publications, 1988), pp. 190-225; Scull, *Solitary*, pp. 149-151.

[6] See Akihito Suzuki, 'The Politics and Ideology of Non-Restraint: The Case of the Hanwell Asylum', *Medical History*, 39 (1995), pp. 1-17. Following his success at Hanwell, the previously obscure

career cannot be described as having been overwhelmingly successful, nor can it be said that his achievement was the crown of a linear struggle for the advancement of a clear and consistent reform agenda. In fact, Conolly at one time firmly opposed the practice of treating the insane within asylums.[7] It is with Conolly's strategies for the advancement of his reform agendas, however, that this chapter is concerned.

From his *Inquiry Concerning the Indications of Insanity with Suggestions For the Better Protection and Care of the Insane*, written in 1830, almost a decade before his appointment to Hanwell, through to *The Treatment of the Insane Without Mechanical Restraints*, written in 1856, Conolly demonstrated a consistent approach that places him in a prominent position within the history of empathy, even if it lacks a parallel in his unsteady career and fluctuating philosophies.[8] Conolly attempted to make plain the invisible and the unverifiable, imagining what he could not know, and often imposing a narrative over both the expressions and the silences of the asylum inmate. Though this narrative is not infrequently arrogant, it represents a project of reaching beyond empirical boundaries to try to construct the interior experience of the insane, who lacked the power to make themselves understood. By doing so, Conolly attempted, albeit in a very patriarchal fashion, to establish a basis from which the methods and practices of the treatment of the insane could be considered.

Conolly was celebrated by figures such as Anthony Ashley Cooper, seventh earl of Shaftesbury, was elected a fellow of the Royal College of Physicians and presented with an honorary DCL from Oxford University. See Andrew Scull, 'John Conolly', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

[7] See Scull, MacKenzie and Hervey, *Bedlam*, p. 48.

[8] John Conolly, *An Inquiry Concerning the Indications of Insanity, with Suggestions for the Better Protection and Care of the insane* (London: John Taylor, 1830), *The Construction and Government of Lunatic Asylums and Hospitals for the Insane* (London: John Churchill, 1847), and *The Treatment of the Insane Without Mechanical Restraints* (London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1856).

Conolly often gave descriptions of his patients' experiences. He described what it was like for patients to be treated in asylums, and even what it was like to be insane. Even though Conolly's use of his patients' voices often (if not always) amounts to appropriation, his expressions were crafted to produce a compelling account of real experiences, which warranted action and reform. This is particularly important, as patients' voices do not figure prominently in records available to historians as sources of the history of nineteenth-century asylums.[9] While we can never know how accurate Conolly's interpretations of his patients' expressions were, these interpretations are valuable as records of empathic 'knowledge' of these subjects.[10] Conolly's empathic discourse serves to render a significant portrait of the lives of inmates of nineteenth-century asylums, which is often as illuminating as it is subjective. Conolly's representation of his patients' experiences are suggestive not only of the construction of knowledge of insanity in the nineteenth-century, but also of how Victorians took seriously the idea of trying to understand and communicate what it was like to be someone else, even in spite of significant impediments to reasonable communication with that someone else. Further, Conolly's works demonstrate the importance of empathic discourse to debates over Victorian social reforms.

Conolly often used the voices of his patients not only to demonstrate and celebrate his own ideas and successes, but also to construct an alternative, 'old system' of

[9] On the scarcity of patient voices in recorded sources for the history of nineteenth-century asylums, see Cherry, *Mental Health Care*, p. 13; Andrew Scull, 'Psychiatry and its Historians', *History of Psychiatry* 2 (1991), pp. 245; David Ingleby, 'Mental Health and Social Order', in Stanley Cohen and Andrew Scull (eds), *Social Control and the State: Historical and Comparative Essays* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1981).

[10] Historians have, however, increasingly attempted to locate these patient voices. See Allan Beveridge, 'Life in the Asylum: Patient's Letters from Morningside, 1873-1908', in *History of Psychiatry*, 9 (1998), pp. 431-469; Dale Peterson (ed.), *A Mad People's History of Madness* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1981); *Roy* Porter, *A Social History of Madness: Stories of the Insane* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1987).

treatment of the insane, which differed sharply from his own. It is arguable that even as more and more asylums implemented non-restraint, turning the tide very much in favour of Conolly's ideas and practices, Conolly's post-Hanwell works required him to produce a rhetorical model of a system, against which to define his own.[11] The result was most certainly the kind of 'anathema' that Roy Porter argues did much to contribute to the 'demonology' of the system of care for the insane that existed before the Victorian 'moral reform' movement.[12] Conolly presented the world inside the 'traditional' asylum as one that could not easily, if ever, be known - a world of stifled cries and lost voices, which could only be recovered if they were rescued and brought to the light of the non-restraint asylum.

Although the practice of putting the insane on display had not entirely ceased by the first quarter of the nineteenth century, Conolly argued in 1856 that for many years, the insane had not been sufficiently visible to prevent their ill-treatment. Of course, it is not necessarily inconsistent to consider that insanity may have been both spectacle and secret, especially during the early part of the nineteenth century, but as reform sentiment grew stronger there was clearly more incentive to prevent outsiders from witnessing ill-treatment of the insane in asylums. In his *Treatment of the Insane Without Mechanical Restraints* (1856), Conolly argued that until the practice of using restraints in asylums began to be abolished, and asylums began to be more strictly regulated, 'secrecy had long been the protection of the officers'.[13] Conolly gave examples of the concealment of practices, records, and even patients themselves: upon inquiry into a number of asylums,

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[11] Andrew Scull points out that by the time Conolly published *The Treatment of the Insane without Mechanical Restraints*, Conolly's model of non-restraint had become 'the ruling orthodoxy, particularly among the expanding county asylum system'. See Scull, 'John Conolly'.

[12] Porter, *Manacles*, p. 5.

[13] Conolly, *Treatment*, p. 24.

he claims, 'the actual *disappearance* of many patients was never accounted for . . . In reporting the number of deaths, several—sometimes 100 out of 300—were taken from the list of the dead, and placed in the list of the cured' (original emphasis).[14]

If 'lunatics' were confined because they were not thought mentally fit to have the freedom to interact with other people, then it is small wonder that, without any functional system of inspection or regulation, individuals could have been made to 'disappear'. A form of disappearance occurred, in fact, when a person was removed from the public world and placed in confinement. In order to see that person, one needed special permission, authority, or qualifications. Then, everything that the public discovered about what happened inside an asylum, according to Conolly, made people dread to commit a relative to the care of such a place, and certainly to fear being confined themselves.[15] Thus, if one were to experience symptoms of mental infirmity, one would try to disguise or hide them. As no one had access to the interior experience of the individual, it was very difficult to prove whether or not an individual was insane. It was also difficult to prove that one was *not* insane. If one were suspected of insanity, the suspicion planted deeply enough in the minds of relatives, friends, or doctors, one could be mistakenly confined to an asylum. Conolly gives an example of such a case: 'His indignation would pass for raving; his moderation, for the proverbial cunning of a lunatic. A man of undisturbed understanding, suddenly surprised by the servants of a lunatic asylum, with handcuffs ready, and a coach waiting to carry him off, would infallibly exhibit some signs, easily construed into proofs that he was "not right in his head"'.[16]

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[14] Conolly, *Treatment*, p. 25.
[15] Conolly, *Indications*, p. 6.
[16] Conolly, *Indications*, p. 4.

Yet Conolly claimed that it was not outside the scope of nineteenth-century medicine to determine whether or not an individual was insane. On the contrary, he claimed that increased access to the insane and to asylums would significantly diminish the mystery of insanity. This would happen through the prevention of the mistreatment of the insane (people would no longer view the asylum as necessarily a horrible place where bad things happened to those confined within), and also through the proper training of medical students in the art of diagnosing mental illness.[17] Conolly further claimed that the diagnosis of insanity should 'present no greater difficulties in the way of observation than those [disorders to which the medical student] is accustomed to in his study of the functions of respiration, circulation, digestion, or reproduction; and are in no degree *more* hidden and mysterious even in their nature, though certainly not less so.'[18] Conolly made this claim in the first chapter of an instructional text he authored on the subject, and it is clear that with this claim he meant to deny some general notion that insanity was mysterious or difficult to identify and diagnose.

The 'mystery' of insanity is not itself very difficult to identify. It was impossible then, as it is now, to absolutely know the interior experience of another individual. How was one to know whether what was happening inside someone's own mind was 'insanity'? How was one to define what was 'insane'? Perhaps not surprisingly, Conolly had an answer. He argued that any individual who was insane would demonstrate this through his or her behaviour. This was so, not so much because behaviours afforded a key to what an individual was experiencing within his or her own mind, but because

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[17] Conolly claimed, as of 1830,that medical students were not given proper access or training with regard to the mentally infirm. He also argued that the asylum was the best place for medical students to acquire knowledge, through experience with patients as well as instruction. Conolly, *Indications*, p. 36.

[18] Conolly, *Indications*, p. 37.

Conolly located insanity in the performance of behaviours suggested by abnormal impulses. Sanity, according to Conolly, was not the condition of not having abnormal thoughts, impulses, or imaginings, but rather the ability to recognize them as such and to resist performing the types of behaviours that they would seem to prompt. This included the making of claims and the uttering of other speech that did not conform to the societal consensus of what was real or appropriate.

If a person's senses provided them with information that was somehow different than the perception that is common to his or her fellows, this would tend to disrupt, according to Conolly, the relationship between that person and the rest of the world. For Conolly, this was a spiritual as well as a physical disorder, since it affected what happened in the spaces within one that connected one person's interior experience with that of another:

> So dependent is the immaterial soul upon the material organs, both for what it receives and what it transmits, that a slight disorder in the circulation of the blood through different portions of the nervous substance, can disturb all sensation, all emotion, all relation with the external and the living world; can obstruct attention and comparison, can injure and confound the accumulations in the memory, or modify the suggestions of imagination.[19]

To have suffered from a disordered perception was not, however, madness in itself. To have been mad, one must have believed that the information supplied by one's

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[19] Conolly, *Indications*, p. 94.

'unfaithful' nervous agents was accurate and correct, despite being told that everyone else's perceptions were very different.[20]

The ability to interpret 'false intelligence' as such was the jurisdiction of the faculty of comparison, according to Conolly. [21] A person whose senses supplied him or her with faulty information, who also lacked the ability to compare his or her experiences with the experiences of a majority of other people, in order to reach the conclusion that what the majority experienced was necessarily nearer to what is real, correct, or true, was mad, according to Conolly. Thus, it was imperative that a person with disordered senses be able to imagine what it was like to view the world from someone else's perspective, for it was the recognition that most other people had a different experience of the world than oneself, and a subsequent renunciation of one's own experience in favour of that of the majority, that distinguished madness from mere sensory disorder. Conolly offered the example of colour-blindness, or rather, colour-impairment: 'There are individuals whose sensations of colour do not accord with those of the generality of mankind; who do not know blue from green'.[22] Such a one would be mad, according to Conolly, if he or she insisted that what everyone else called blue was green, and vice versa. However, as he pointed out, most people in such a position would conclude that they must be suffering from some impairment, if their experience was so different from everyone else's. It would be madness to conclude that everyone else was wrong.

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[20] Conolly, *Indications*, p. 62. For a study of the nineteenth-century association of sanity with ordered and controlled behaviours, and of mental deficiency with the failure to regulate the passions, see Roger Smith, *Inhibition*: *History and Meaning in the Sciences of Mind and Brain* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1992). Smith also discusses the development of the perceived relationship between the material body (especially the brain) and the sound or unsound mind. See Smith, *Inhibition*, p. 3.

[21] Conolly, *Indications*, p. 62.

[22] Conolly, *Indications*, p. 96.

Conolly located truth, then, in social consensus. Interestingly, and perhaps disturbingly, this consensus need not have been something as arguably universal as the difference between blue and green. A refined taste was also an indication of sanity, in the same way as a preference for coarse over sophisticated sounds, for example, was indicative of a defect or impairment of the comparative faculty. According to Conolly, there was something wrong with someone who could not 'derive any greater pleasure from a musical composition of the first merit, than from the strains of a street fiddle, or the scream of a peacock.'[23] Sophistication, somehow, was a mark of sanity. One cannot help but wonder how far Conolly would have pressed this assumption. Would he really have considered that anyone whose taste differed from his own must have been impaired?

Taste aside, Conolly scrutinized an event in the life of an eighteenth-century man of letters, of whom he spoke reverently despite using an anecdote about a claim that he made as an example of madness:

> Dr Johnson believed that at one time he heard the voice of his deceased mother calling to him, "Sam, Sam!" he believed that his mother called to him from the other world. It was useless to say to him that a voice could not be so heard; he believed that it could. Unless therefore we believe that the dead may communicate with the living, (which I am not prepared to deny,) we must say that this was an insane belief.[24]

One might ask whether, since Dr Johnson died three years before he was even born, Conolly could have reasonably claimed, by his own standards, to have been able to judge Johnson's assertion as madness. Conolly and Johnson were not alive at the same time;

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[23] Conolly, *Indications*, p. 96.
[24] Conolly, *Indications*, pp. 316-317.

would not both have needed to be part of the same circle of social consensus in order for one to have declared the other an aberration? This problem was arguably not central for Conolly; he implied that at least some others among Johnson's contemporaries attempted to dissuade him from the idea that his mother was trying to communicate with him from beyond the grave.

It is arguable that Conolly chose the example of Dr Johnson because he imagined that he was someone with whom his reader would have been quite familiar (he may even have expected that his reader was likely to have been familiar with the anecdote). Dr Johnson lent an air of uncompromising objectivity to Conolly's argument, so that it appeared that Conolly felt bound to name madness wherever he found it, even in the life of an eminent literary genius. It is interesting to note, however, that Conolly stopped short of classifying a belief in ghosts as necessarily irrational. Perhaps he did this in case there were those among his contemporaries who were less than skeptical. If there did not exist a social consensus against the existence of ghosts, then to believe in them would not have been madness, according to Conolly. Conolly's moderate tone also served to show that rather than making a pointless accusation, he was providing an example by which he could demonstrate how an episode of madness *could* be identified, if certain criteria were met. It did not matter, then, if it could be argued that Dr Johnson's individual case did not fit the criteria, because it could just as well have served as a kind of template for discussion if the conditions in the individual case were not met absolutely.

Whether literary genius or common man, it has long been argued that human perceptions must share some basic elements in common. Barbara Stafford has most recently discussed the structure of human cognitive coherence in terms of 'hardwiring',

suggesting that the constraints of neural processes are responsible for shaping the way that people deal with information, which helps to explain how we relate to one another.[25] Although he had difficulty articulating it, Conolly gave a wonderfully pre-Freudian account of the way in which people can be said to gather, store, sort, and recall pieces of information that have come to them through the senses and have been processed into perceptions. Conolly described insanity as a sort of waking dream, where one could not control the way one assembled this information into an experience recognizable as reality. During sleep, Conolly argued:

> the Imagination still revives the thousands of buried but indestructible chains of ideas which are mysteriously treasured in the brain, and weaves them into endless combinations . . . But as during this state we cannot command our attention, we can therefore exercise no comparison; we cannot reflect, we can form no correct judgment, can exercise no self-control' and we act inconsistently with the imaginary scene into which the unsleeping imagination has transported us, or evince no surprise at the most unlikely combinations of places and persons, or experience undue impressions, immoderate anger, unreasonable fear, or pleasure as excessive as it is transient and unsubstantial.[26]

A post-Freudian world would likely re-phrase this definition of insanity as a 'leaking' of the subconscious. For Conolly, it sufficed to say that someone who was insane acted as if in a dream.[27] The dream served for Conolly both as a tool for classification and as a

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[25] Barbara Stafford, 'Leveling the New Old Transcendence: Cognitive Coherence in the Era of Beyondness', *New Literary History*, 35 (2004), p. 328.

[26] Conolly, *Indications*, p. 45.

[27] For a discussion of the evolution of the idea of the 'unconscious' before Freud, see Lancelot Law Whyte, *The Unconscious Before Freud* (New York: Basic Books, 1960). Roger Smith also discusses the nineteenth-century association of sleep with the suspension of reason. See Smith, *Inhibition*, p. 42.

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bridge between the experiences of sanity and insanity, so that a sane person might have been encouraged to reach toward an understanding of what it was like to be insane by recalling the dream state.

For Conolly, it was not only the presentation of false sensory information within the dream that distinguished it (and insanity) from a sane, wakeful state, but also the ability to judge what is real, and to command and direct attention toward appropriate objects and away from those upon which it would be unsuitable to dwell. Conolly explained that 'we can give indulgence to the imagination, which then exerts unlimited power over them, disconnecting and uniting the several links in an infinite number of series'.[28] This, he argued, was what happened when sane people fell asleep, and relaxed control over their imaginations. For Conolly, most unlike Freud who would follow some half a century later, the content of the dreams was unimportant. Arguably, it did not matter that much for Conolly whether the information one received when awake was absolutely accurate, or relatively dreamlike. What was most important is that one could recognize the difference between the real and the imaginary when one was not sleeping.

Conolly argued that in order to achieve a cure for the insane, one needed to employ one's imagination to get inside their world, at least for a time. This was not a dangerous thing for a sane person to do, because a sane person would always be able to distinguish between reality and fantasy, and would always be able to direct their attentions appropriately. A sane person could imagine what it was like to be insane without confusing the invented scenario with reality. In order to help a person suffering from insanity, Conolly argued that one needed to attempt to reconstruct their experiences in order to relate to them. Then, one could guide them back to sanity by convincing them

[28] Conolly, *Indications*, p. 44.

that they were acting in a way that was 'not right'. If an insane person could recognize that what he or she was doing, feeling, or thinking was different from everyone else, the person could subsequently choose to conform according to the consensual standard. In making this choice, he or she would then be 'cured'.

For Conolly, all odd behaviours constituted a degree of insanity. He defined eccentricity as being a 'diseased state of the comparing faculty', and argued that 'any affection of that faculty brings a man nearer to the condition of a lunatic.'[29] If this seems a wide bracket with which to encompass all those approaching madness, Conolly confirmed his hard line as he explained that some forms of eccentricity also approached madness:

> If a man wears a white linen coat in July, or a very broad brimmed hat of light manufacture, it may be that the coat and hat are cooler, and therefore better, than the coats and hats commonly worn; here is an appearance of reason, but an appearance only: for the custom of wearing a warm coat and stronger hat has really arisen from long experience of the short continuance and great uncertainty of the hot weather . . . The general attention, memory, and comparison of the people of this country, have come to such a conclusion; but the eccentric individual has not come to the conclusion. His attention has been unduly attracted by the sensations of a few hot days; he has not paid the same attention to the sudden, but common, interruptions occasioned by inclement weather.[30]

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[29] Conolly, *Indications*, p. 135.
[30] Conolly, *Indications*, p. 136.

Thus, any departure from usual practice, even if it seemed to make sense, was evidence of madness. If sanity equalled reason, it was a reason equivalent to a Rousseauian General Will, from which any departure would be error, for anyone truly reasonable would reach the same conclusion by way of his or her own faculties. One might wonder how this could ever have allowed for innovation, or for the respiration of the human imagination? As we have seen, Conolly assumed the imagination to have been ever-present, only restrained by the same faculty of the will, and informed by the comparative faculties, which would recognize a potential behaviour as aligned with common practice or divergent from it. Conolly somewhat weakly offered that innovation could be viewed as present in the production of works of genius without models (he gave the example of ancient philosophers), but nonetheless he insisted that genius was antithetical to madness, because of the control and force of the will that was ultimately required to produce works of genius.[31]

The imagination was crucial to Conolly's process of self-regulation, for the process of constantly comparing one's behaviours with those of others required the mind to occupy the space between the self and other individuals, constantly creating and destroying contemplative worlds of activity and stasis, before one could choose a path of action to follow. This correlates with Stafford's argument about cognitive coherence, perhaps explaining how the self-proclaimed hyper-rationalist Conolly of *Indications* could so easily slip into the highly imaginative, empathic Conolly of his other works, who tended to tell stories from the perspective of mental patients:

> Biology . . . supports the ancient combinatorics of analogy: our bent towards
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> mental travel and the collecting and piecing together of many different kinds of

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[31] Conolly, *Indications*, p. 136.

realities by the roving imagination. The primal prefix, trans-entangled with multidimensional aspirations to connect—functions epistemologically and ontologically like the arch of a bridge. But this linking image-in-the-middle— striving to join things that are segregated, divided, or on the other side—has proved notoriously difficult to delimit merely to the activity of medication. Whether deployed rhetorically or philosophically, this enabling device has periodically resisted the self-effacing role of span. In other words, the mental operation that had served as a supple medium for bringing distant monadic elements into proximity itself came to stand for the integration it was working to achieve. Rather than being a participatory condition making unity possible, it was reified into a representation of that unity.[32]

For Conolly, it was part of life to imagine oneself in a different position, performing a different action, or wearing a lighter coat in warm weather. Just as it did not oppose reason to place oneself within the perspective of a patient experiencing paranoia or dementia, it was not insane to imagine oneself in many different situations, doing many different things. Conolly argued that madness was in the matter of choosing to act out the wrong one in reality, because one did not know the difference.

Social intercourse would effectively prevent eccentric behaviour in most people, according to Conolly. Awareness of the experience of one's fellows would most often stop an individual from exhibiting certain behaviours, because one was likely to care about what others would think and feel: 'When eccentric habits are growing upon a man who continues to mix in society, they may be checked by his own efforts, on observing

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[32] Stafford, 'Leveling', p. 327.

the surprise or the amusement which is caused by them. The starts of irritability, and the gloom of discontent, are alike corrected by prudential feelings, or by regard for others.'[33] For this reason, he argued, it was imperative that mental patients engage in as much social contact as was possible. Completely cut off from family and friends, as under the 'old system' before non-restraint, one would have had little reason to try to abandon abnormal behaviour, to focus the attentive and comparative faculties. Conolly described how he imagined it would be impossible to do anything but become worse in such an environment: 'a place in which a thousand fantasies, that are swept away almost as soon as formed in the healthy atmosphere of diversified society, would assume shapes more distinct.'[34] It is interesting to note Conolly's particular attention to the sensual and even geometric aspect of the experience of madness. He attempted to form a bridge between everyday daydreams, which he assumed that all readers of his texts would have had, and the experience of the mad, which he imagined and argued to be primarily an inability to control these.

Conolly's definition of madness included any kind of action that did not conform to the standards of society, but it is also clear that this definition was conceptual rather than practical in its purpose, and that he did not consider that anyone who deviated from this extremely rigid standard to have been 'mad'. Further, he knew that those who had become insane had not always been that way, and suggested that no one could be totally secure in their faculties. Thus, the treatment of the insane was a universal issue: 'Every man is interested in this subject; for no man can confidently reckon on the continuance of

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[33] Conolly, *Indications*, p. 17.
[34] Conolly, *Indications*, p. 22.

his perfect reason.'[35] Conolly took for granted that everyone his text might have reached would have experienced some personal moments of unreason. He tried to build on some common mental ailments in order to encourage empathy for the incarcerated mad. Conolly believed that most people had, at some point, experienced mental distress, and he relied on this assumption in order to communicate what he imagined it was like to be restrained in such a state. He offered the example of a sleepless night, assuming that most of his readers would have experienced insomnia at some point: 'Whoever has known the affliction of a restless night must know that his affliction would have received no abatement from his being tied down to his bed; and that fresh air, cold water, sitting up awhile, and diversion of mind, are the things to which he would resort for relief.'[36]

Conolly also insisted that the inmates of an asylum shared with those outside its walls the trait that they were all individuals in common, and were each one different in personality and quirks to the next: 'we cannot fail to perceive that . . . the degrees and shades of affection are very variable, and almost infinite: that, like the persons *without* the walls of that institution, each individual has a distinct character, his own trains of thought, his own peculiar habits, his own pursuits'.[37] It is interesting to note that he presented the range of personalities inside the asylum walls as a parallel to those on the outside, rather than grouping the 'mad' together as if they were one personality, in order to try to communicate a singular experience of madness. Here, Conolly made an important decision, for if he had chosen to consistently construct a 'typical' inmate of an asylum, according to common traits and circumstances, it would have been easier to make his reader feel that they 'knew' this personality as a character. In this instance,

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[35] Conolly, *Indicaions*, p. 8.
[36] Conolly, *Treatment*, p. 51.
[37] Conolly, *Indications*, p. 11.

however, Conolly chose to distance the reader from the 'typical' inmate by establishing the range of difference inside the asylum. By doing so, it is arguable that Conolly meant to impress his reader with the force of numbers, almost as if he were supplying statistics: there were 'as many' different kinds of people within the asylum as outside of it. Here was a world apart, and the reader would have been forced to confront that it existed as such, as well as the people within it.

Of course, the people who lived or worked within an asylum would have been best acquainted with its other world. It was important for Conolly that those on the outside were kept aware that this world existed, mostly in order that what went on in the asylum would not be kept a secret. People outside could influence legislation that would affect the way people were treated inside the asylum, but ultimately what mattered the most was what happened within the space where the inmates and the staff of the asylum interacted with each other. Conolly was interested in characterizing this space as intimate and familial: 'An officer living in an asylum, and really intimate with the insane, can scarcely fail to become interested in persons who in the wreck of mind retain often so many valuable feelings. Fear and anger are not long the emotions they excite, but in their stead sympathy and compassion.'[38] If everyone involved with the care of the insane were very close to one another and to the inmates, natural affection would generate an interest in the welfare of patients, and the space between and among these individuals would become the site of healing. In this context it is easy to imagine how Conolly figured the ideal asylum as centred around a patriarchal leader who would inspire kindness and ensure order while attempting to lead by example.

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[38] Conolly, *Treatment*, p. 115.

Conolly depicted his patients as dependent children, who would be granted their freedom once they regained their sanity, despite the pain that this would cause to both parties. Of course, he would know when the time was right, like any parent. Conolly portrayed the ideal asylum doctor as wise as well as led by feeling. He claimed that patients often cried at the conclusion of their treatment because they did not want to leave his asylum: 'Witnessing these scenes, not without emotion, and reviewing them at the quiet close of each busy and anxious day, I began to feel assured that the system we were pursuing, however difficult, could not be wrong.'[39] Conolly's asylum, as well as his movement for reform of all asylums, was ultimately be governed by feeling - though he insisted that feeling must be informed and educated by a soundly reasonable mind.

According to Conolly, certain kinds of people could generally be expected to be more reasonable than others, although no one could be completely certain that their good mental health would always continue. Namely, Conolly argued that those whose senses and faculties were more 'educated' were less likely to suffer from all manner of mental ailments, ranging from eccentricities to nervous habits to insanity. This argument amounts to a rather disturbing distinction between rich and poor:

> The faculties of uneducated people, and particularly of the lower order, who are neither instructed by precept or observation . . . suffer daily the same inconveniences [as do children], for want of power to connect causes and effects. Even their senses are so unskilfully employed and unimproved, that we cannot always depend on what they believe they have seen with their eyes, or heard with their ears.[40]

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[39] Conolly, *Treatment*, p. 117.
[40] Conolly, *Indications*, p. 99.

Conolly's spectrum of mental strengths and weaknesses infantilized inmates and encouraged to mimic their 'betters'. In the following description of admission to the asylum, it is difficult to determine whether or not Conolly meant to imply that poverty alone was the cause of many cases of mental distress: 'When no proper care is omitted, it is often gratifying, after the patient has been an hour in the asylum, to see a poor, ragged, dirty, half-starved, sullen, wretched creature, transformed into a clean, decently-dressed, cheerful and hopeful person, disposed to be pleased with everybody and everything: and this is a first step towards a cure'.[41] Especially after reading his description of the general mental weakness of the poor, one might imagine that poverty was in some measure equivalent to insanity for Conolly.

Connolly stressed that the behaviour of asylum staff was important as it set an example for the inmates to follow, as well as providing a positive stimulus to encourage a good response. Patients, too, exerted influence over their fellow inmates. In describing the influence that inmates of an asylum might have upon each other, Conolly at once emphasized the importance of watching the inmates, their behaviours, and interactions, as well as the importance of recognizing that they, too, were watching what they saw around them. 'The religious despair of a patient in the next apartment, brings back and confirms the religious despondency of his neighbour in this: the passions and violence of those who are parading the airing grounds revive the passions and raving of those who are becoming more tranquil'.[42] The staff, then, had to endeavour to regulate what happened in the spaces between the inmates, as well as what happened in the spaces between the inmates and themselves.

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[41] Conolly, *Construction*, p. 107.
[42] Conolly, *Indications*, p. 28.

Restraints, of course, made it quite easy to control these spaces. When the restraints were removed, not only could the patients wander, but they became free to make new associations with their environment and with other patients. They could also manipulate their environment, perhaps in dangerous ways, if proper pre-cautions were not taken. Conolly referred to restraint as having been 'the grand substitute for inspection, super-intendence, cleanliness, and every kind attention'.[43] It is easy to see how the removal of restraints must have necessitated a total upheaval in asylum practice, for without them patients would require far more attendance and supervision to prevent them from injuring themselves or others. Conolly acknowledged the trouble that needed to be taken when restraints were removed, and insisted upon a new regime of discipline within the asylum that would never allow any means to ease the responsibility of the constant supervision of patients. Conolly argued that 'any contrivance which diminishes the necessity for vigilance, proves hurtful to the discipline of an asylum'.[44] In this new, quasi-familial space, the staff were meant to keep watch over the patients every moment of the day and night. This, according to Conolly, would have the dual effect of regulating the behaviours, actions, and interactions of the inmates, as well as encouraging bonds of empathy between and among everyone who participated in the daily life of the asylum.

Conolly believed that the flaw at the core of the 'old system' (which used restraint) was the way that the inmates were viewed: 'The old system placed all violent or troublesome patients in the position of dangerous animals. The new system regards them as afflicted persons, whose brain and nerves are diseased, and who are to be restored to health, and comfort, and reason. This simple difference of view it is which influences

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[43] Conolly, *Construction*, p. 28.
[44] Conolly, *Treatment*, p. 202.

every part of an asylum for the insane.'[45] This process of viewing at once suggests the consideration of the humanity of the patients, and also that any significant understanding could only be reached by constant surveillance. It is arguable that watching was also important because it facilitated non-verbal communication. Non-verbal communication was especially important because the verbal communicative abilities of the mentally infirm were easily dismissed as defective, and in some cases may actually have been limited. Conolly suggested that once the staff learned to view the inmates as human beings, they would naturally watch, attend, and form bonds with them. Hence, viewing was the central act of the asylum, both with regard to the care of patients and to the experience of being an inmate.

Conolly argued that as asylum staff became accustomed to seeing patients in restraints, and their feelings disregarded, they became detached from the patients and learned to view cruelty as acceptable. He said of circumstances in which restraints were commonly employed upon mental patients: 'nothing can more forcibly illustrate the hardening effect of being habitual witnesses of cruelty, and the process which the heart of man undergoes when allowed to exercise irresponsible power.'[46] Of course, staff would not need to watch patients as closely if they were wearing restraints. They would not have to constantly consider and worry about what a patient might do next. Thus, they would not have to consider the patient's thoughts and feelings, to imagine their perspective, and get to know their personality.

Under Conolly's system of non-restraint, a patient who became unmanageable might be removed from the society of the rest of the asylum, and placed in isolation.

[45] Conolly, *Treatment*, p. 49.
[46] Conolly, *Treatment*, p. 28.

Conolly understood that this practice could be interpreted as just as cruel as imposing restraints upon a patient. He took trouble to explain the differences between the two, and to articulate the conditions under which a patient may be placed solitary confinement. Conolly argued that without the option of placing a patient in isolation, it might prove impossible to dispense with restraints in a large asylum.[47] He added that 'a written report of each instance of seclusion, and of its duration, is sent to the physician at the close of each day, and copied by him into a book which is inspected at every meeting of the Committee'.[48] The practice of isolating a patient was carefully monitored by a system of observation, report, and review. A representation was generated of the patient in isolation, which also became a record of the member of staff who made the decision to place the patient in isolation.

Conolly recommended that the patient in isolation had to be watched through an inspection plate in the door, so that while in solitary confinement, he or she was not left alone, or allowed to remain confined for any longer than was salutary: 'By occasionally looking through the inspection-plate, the attendant is enabled to ascertain the effect of the seclusion; and the medical officers, to whom every seclusion is, or ought to be, reported immediately, are enabled to judge of the propriety of continuing or putting an end to it.'[49] The observations, then, would be recorded and a representation of the patient's condition would be passed along to those in charge, so that they, too, could 'see' the necessity for keeping the patient in isolation. If the doctor in charge had engineered a warm and trusting environment, and had selected staff who were likely to be honest about their observations, then even if the faculties of the staff members were not so well 'trained' as

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[47] Conolly, *Treatment*, p. 41.
[48] Conolly, *Treatment*, p. 45.
[49] Conolly, *Construction*, p. 26.

those of the doctor's, his acutely educated observational skills would enable him to see beyond the report and prompt him to go and see for himself, if he sensed that something was amiss.

The Foucauldian may consider Conolly's arrangements the very pinnacle of Victorian panopticism, but there is one important exception to be noted: the specifications of Conolly's means of inspection do not fit into Foucault's paradigm. The function of Foucault's panopticon, as derived from Bentham's famous prison design and applied to many other institutions, is 'to induce in the inmate a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures that automatic functioning of power . . . power should be visible and unverifiable'.[50] As Conolly explained how the inmate in isolation should be monitored through an inspection plate, he went to some trouble to describe the exact specifications of the device. It was required to be placed in the door at a convenient eye-level, and the hinges needed to be fitted in such a way that it made no sound to disturb the patient.[51] Conolly specified that the inspection plate should not be unverifiable by any means. He explained that in other asylums, inspection of the patients had been conducted by means of concealed apparatus, 'secret openings in the walls or roof' that allowed staff to peer in at patients without them knowing.[52] Even despite the danger posed by patients who were 'disposed to injure the eyes of the attendants when applied to the opening' of the inspection plate in the door, Conolly called this the concealment of the apparatus of inspection a 'perversion of ingenuity'.[53] He argued that the active curiosity and sharpened senses of most patients would immediately discover these

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[50] See Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, Alan Sheridan (tr.) (New York: Random House, 1977 [1975]), p. 201.
[51] Conolly, *Construction*, p. 27.
[52] Conolly, *Construction*, p. 27.
[53] Conolly, *Construction*, p. 27.

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supposed secret openings; and that they would be more likely to be offended by them than by a more avowed watchfulness. He suggested that patients were likely to triumph over the defeat of such a contrivance.[54] Conolly effectively argued that such deception, especially practised upon those who may already be prone to paranoia, would break bonds of empathy with the patients and encourage them to view their attendants and doctors as enemies. Instead, Conolly recommended engagement with the perspective of the inmates and tried to imagine them returning the gaze of the asylum staff.

Conolly was aware that the system of observing patients through an inspection plate in the door was not perfect, but he apparently thought it was the best option of all available. He knew that inmates would try to frustrate the attempts of asylum staff to observe them, and considered that sometimes it might have been acceptable or even desirable for the staff to let them do so: 'Some patients are particularly sensitive concerning being watched, and contrive to hang up clothes so as to obstruct inspection. This is chiefly the case with patients whom it is not necessary to look so closely after when left to themselves; but in the refractory wards the practice must not be permitted, or in the case of patients disposed to suicide.'[55] Conolly relied upon the subjective judgment of asylum staff to determine whether or not it was inappropriate for an inmate to opt out of inspection in such a way. The rules, apparently, were more of a guideline in this matter than absolute law. Conolly expected that attendants, who, it must be remembered, were supposed to be well acquainted with the personalities of the different patients, should be able to feel their way through these kinds of situations. Trust was arguably more useful to Conolly than forced obedience, and it is also arguable that he

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[54] Conolly, *Construction*, p. 27.
[55] Conolly, *Construction*, p. 27.

would have liked his patients to develop a measure of self-control even when they were aware that they were *not* being watched.

In addition to inspection of the inmates, Conolly also expected asylum staff to monitor their own behaviour. The patient was never to be presumed insensible to what was going on, even if he or she seemed very far away: 'they know and appreciate everything that is done, whether they are well or ill'.[56] Conolly rested partly on the authority of the patients themselves, who were able to recall to him things that were done or said when they had been apparently insensible. Patience and increased acquaintance with inmates would, according to Conolly, demonstrate to the attendant that they were not beyond reach, even when they seemed very much so:

> A lunatic is seldom, even in his most raving fits, insensible to what is said to him: he will often show, among his wildest and most extravagant expressions, that he is watchful of the conduct of those about him, and when the ordinary observer would expect nothing from him but what indicated savage fury, those who are patient with him, and who, regardless of his wildness, continue to indicate their kind feelings towards him, will find that sometimes his voice falters, and his eyes fill with tears.[57]

Persistence, then, would eventually reach through madness to the person within. The hand extended to the inmate by the asylum needed to be one that he or she was not afraid to cling to, for this contact was the foundation upon which his or her social life was to be rebuilt.

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[56] Conolly, *Construction*, p. 27.
[57] Conolly, *Treatment*, p. 210.

Like the testimony of children, the testimony of the mentally infirm is easily denounced as an unreliable source of evidence. In presenting the voices of those designated mad, Conolly often sheltered these voices under the authority of his own narrative, integrating paraphrase and carefully selected quotations into his own arguments. Conolly led by example in his acceptance of the words of the mentally infirm, tacitly asking his reader to trust in his own experience and ability to distinguish sanity from insanity. He assumed that his reader would not deny that there was at least the possibility of truth in the testimony of the insane, arguably relying on the perception of their vulnerability to prevent any absolute dismissal. The reader, aware that there was never likely to be anyone but the abuser to witness the ill-treatment of the confined mad, might well have been reluctant to allow the grievances of the insane to go completely unacknowledged.

What knowledge can a sane person have of the experience of madness? Conolly explained that the appearance of insensibility could be very deceiving. How did he know? Rather than recording and presenting myriad individual testimonies as evidence, Conolly distilled what he heard of the words of the mad into a brief narrative. He offered himself as a witness to the testimony instead of delivering it directly: 'Recovering gradually from this state, they would tell us that, even in that apparent torpor, they watched everything that was done, and were attentive to every observation that we made; and by degrees they understood us, and tried to rouse themselves'.[58] There is no mention of the means by which he acquired this precise information: did he ask questions of his patients during periods of calm? How many patients did he interview? How did he decide when they were 'calm' enough to speak about their experiences? To pose such

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[58] Conolly, *Treatment*, p. 122.

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questions would be to question the credibility of the 'witnesses' themselves. In order to proceed so far with Conolly, it would have been necessary to consent to a suspension of such conventions of interrogation, for the subjects (indirectly) presented by Conolly were avowedly unreasonable. The reader could only trust Conolly to describe what he believed a person recovering from a paroxysm of madness *would* say, presumably based upon his experiences with individuals in this circumstance and his interpretation of their expressions.

It is apparent that Conolly often wrote from personal experience, either remembering or recounting specific episodes with particular patients, or making broad assumptions and statements regarding patients or types of patients in general. It is also clear, however, that he made frequent use of case notes and reports, in order to substantiate his arguments regarding the insane and their proper treatment. As the first physician of Hanwell, his authority extended in practice to the last word of any narrative that issues from the asylum, whether regarding the expressions of patients or the complaints of the staff. As Hanwell was his great responsibility and experiment, so Conolly's arguments implemented narratives of diverse origin, and processed these according to his own expressive needs. In this way, Conolly's larger works mimicked the design of the individual case note, which would function to harness the concise truth of a patient's situation by viewing it through the lens of medical knowledge and previous experience. While it is arguable that referencing case notes in order to write about a patient's experience effectively obstructs the voice of the patient behind a wall of previous analysis, it must also be said that the case history tells the story of the patient in its own way. Stuart Hogarth and Lara Marks argue that 'far from eliminating the

narrative, new techniques of examination (linked as they were to new bureaucratic

standards of documentation) transformed the patient narrative into a case history that

became the cornerstone of institutionalized welfare'.[59] Conolly shifted so effortlessly

between the use (and even reproduction) of case notes and of less formal, less verifiable,

and more literary sources of observation, that it is often difficult to follow his shift from

one to the other. For Conolly, it was all part of the same 'story'.

It is arguably easier to discredit the words of one labelled mad than to discredit a

doctor's interpretation of them. Conolly developed a strategy of relating the experiences

of insane individuals together as one narrative statement. He developed a strong

narrative position by confirming individual expressions with other, similar tales. Conolly

demonstrated the way in which these stories corroborated one another, so that the

repetition of certain expressions of the inmates functioned as a form of evidence for their

experiences. He paraphrased the tale of one woman in particular (he added that she

eventually left his asylum, fully recovered), and then moved on to make a more general

statement about what he had heard from female patients of their treatment in other

asylums:

> She had a distinct recollection of the events of her illness; told us that for a length
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> of time she had worn a strait-waistcoat in the day-time, her wrists being at the
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> same time confined by iron handcuffs; and that at night both her hands and feet
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> had been fastened to the bedstead . . . In their calmer intervals they [women]

[59] Stuart Hogarth and Lara Marks, 'The Golden Narrative in British Medicine', in Trisha Greenhalgh and
     Brian Hurwitz (eds), *Narrative Based Medicine: Dialogue and Discourse in Clinical Practice*
     (London: BMJ Books, 1998), p. 145.

would relate the severities inflicted upon them; often, it seemed, by men, who were employed to overpower them.[60]

It is possible that he chose to highlight this one woman's testimony because he could say that she eventually recovered from her insanity. However, Conolly did not supply the woman's own words or the words of the others whom he mentioned as having suffered similar experiences. Conolly expected that his reader would trust his judgment in the interpretation of these women, perhaps especially since he was entrusted with the decision of whether and when any of these under his care were to be released, and called 'sane' again.

Conolly maintained complete control of the presentation of the stories of the insane, often writing their experiences as his own narrative. He told the story of a woman who experienced a traumatic event, before being taken to an asylum where restraints were used upon her: 'When in childbed, a fire broke out in a neighbouring house. She was extremely alarmed; and mania ensued . . . Her peculiar condition, her recent fright and agitation, were alike disregarded.'[61] Conolly explained that this woman was eventually removed to Hanwell: 'She was timid, agitated, and cried much; and spoke affectionately of her husband . . . she speedily began to regain composure and to feel some confidence in those about her.'[62] Conolly indicated that the patient was released within a month after he began to care for her. In the course of relating her narrative, Conolly described an event (the fire), he related what the woman felt during this event (she was alarmed), and even gave a retrospective diagnosis (mania ensued). He then described the failings of those who attended her at the first asylum (disregard for her

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[60] Conolly, *Treatment*, p. 119.
[61] Conolly, *Treatment*, p. 109.
[62] Conolly, *Treatment*, p. 109.

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condition, fright, etc.). He then moved effortlessly to describe what he may actually have witnessed, after she was placed in his care, and more, as he described what confidence she began to feel in those around her. Within this narrative, Conolly related the interior condition of the woman as easily as he asserted verifiable facts and observable actions, for these were for him part of the same story. We may assume that he inferred this information from personal interviews with this patient, but we really don't know; perhaps he may have gathered much of it from attendants who spent more time with her. He simply did not bother to communicate such details. Instead, he made her story his own, in order that he might tell it, and anyone who would challenge it would be challenging him, rather than his patient.

Conolly often related the expressions of his patients in paraphrase, indicating that the words he used were at least approximately their own: 'Nobody, she told us, used to come near her; and she was let to cry from vexation and the pain caused by the strait-waistcoat'.[63] In this instance, Conolly began by describing the woman as she was when she arrived at Hanwell. The indication of her appearance and her vital signs suggests that he was actually present at the moment the woman was brought in, though he could have easily read this information from a report that had been made to him by a member of his staff. Certainly his use of the object pronoun 'us' was meant to communicate his presence on the occasion. Interestingly, he stated that 'her mind was confused, and she talked rapidly and incoherently' before he began to explain what 'she told us'. [64] This information contrasts distinctly with the clarity of Conolly's own paraphrase of the woman's words. Was this a purposeful contrast? Did Conolly mean to fashion himself as

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[63] Conolly, *Treatment*, p. 108.
[64] Conolly, *Treatment*, p. 108.

the woman's skilled interpreter? Or was her initial confusion meant to contrast with the clearer dialogue of which she was apparently capable later? It is not entirely clear why Conolly chose this strategy, except that he certainly meant to align the woman's former incoherence with her former institutions, and clarity with Hanwell. In the sentence that followed, Conolly assigned blame for the woman's confusion and for her inability to communicate clearly: 'Unfortunately, she had been first taken to a private asylum, where restraints were in ordinary use.'[65] Was it mental illness, or ill-treatment, that robbed this woman of the ability to communicate clearly? Despite whatever condition in which she might have been when she arrived at the first asylum, at Hanwell, Conolly was sure to emphasize, they managed to reach her.

Very occasionally, Conolly utilized direct quotations from patients. Whenever he did so, it was usually to demonstrate strong feeling, as in the case of one twenty-year-old young woman who denounced the treatment she received at another asylum before coming to Hanwell. At Hanwell, the woman caused no particular trouble to the staff and eventually became well enough to discuss her past history: 'She complained, however, that before coming to Hanwell, she had worn "those infernal fetters" day and night for three weeks'.[66] The direct quotation here is very useful, as it establishes that the woman was sensible of what was done to her while she was in restraints, and also that she was sufficiently coherent and stable to recall her unpleasant experience with clarity and to denounce it while yet remaining calm enough to discuss it without raving. At Hanwell, as she pronounced the words, she was not in fetters, and though angry, she was not furious. The experience of having been fettered was the real experience of a human

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[65] Conolly, *Treatment*, p. 108.
[66] Conolly, *Treatment*, p. 118.

being, and her civilized condemnation of the practice of putting people in fetters was arguably meant to inspire doubt that the woman could have ever given so much provocation as to convince someone that she needed to be restrained in such a way for three weeks.

A most interesting instance of Conolly's use of quotation is actually one in which he made use of his patient as a secondary source, the primary source of the quotation having been a warden who attended the patient at the beginning of her illness, twenty years before: 'At this distant period she still remembered her own expressions and theirs—her appeals to them as women, her prayers for pity, and their too ready reply, which shut out hope—"You don't know what a madhouse is yet, but we will teach you".'[67] The inverted commas imply the speech of one voice, if not one person. Arguably, Conolly meant to communicate that his patient heard this reply over and over again, from different attendants, at the first asylum to which she was committed. The tertiary quotation, however, is phrased as one voice, just as Conolly heard it told. The patient arguably distilled many instances of having heard the same or similar speech repeated, into one voice, which was still very much alive in her memory. That she would have spoken of this experience was evidence of the positive effect of Conolly's reforms. The woman obviously made a significant distinction between the treatment she received under Conolly's care, and the treatment she once received at another asylum twenty years ago.

When one of Conolly's patients gained access to his own records (presumably by looking over the shoulder of an attendant, or some such accident), his response to what

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[67] Conolly, *Treatment*, p. 125.

was written about him before he became an inmate of Hanwell proved too valuable a piece of evidence against the old asylum system for Conolly to have omitted:

> A man reported dirty and violent has sometimes himself remarked, when accidentally seeing these characters written on his admission paper, that he might well be both when he was fastened down in a trough, half fed, and often struck; and such patients, on being set at liberty, have not unfrequently at once become cleanly in their habits and calm in their conduct.[68]

Although Conolly did not use a direct quotation in this instance, the paraphrase itself retains a great deal of the bitter emotion that must have been expressed in the patient's original words. Part of the reason is that Conolly himself would not have had the authority of personal experience to place behind the complaint; if Conolly claimed a patient had been 'half fed', it would have been the expression of a reasonably wealthy man describing the condition of one who was much poorer than himself. This could have read as exaggeration if applied outside the context of the paraphrase, or stated more generally about patients who came to Hanwell from other institutions.

The spontaneity of the accident of the patient seeing his own records gave the paraphrase an extra element of plausibility; despite the fact that that Conolly retained absolute control over the patient's testimony (and despite the fact that he could very well have said things to direct the patient's response, once the patient began to remark upon what was written about him), it appears that the patient had assessed the treatment he received prior to his arrival at Hanwell according to his own standards. Using paraphrase in this way, Conolly achieved a persuasive balance of subtle and stark language, thus delivering a rare brand of testimony: the insane patient, whose words would have

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[68] Conolly, *Treatment*, p. 49.

ordinarily been dismissed as the raving madness, was able to speak out against the treatment he had been given at asylums before Hanwell, and to defend his violent behaviour and dishevelled demeanour as having been the results of this treatment. Dr Conolly gave to the patient's words the weight of his own respected reason, and the patient, in return, gave to the doctor's argument the weight of his personal experience. Conolly framed his own account of the patient's response to what was once said about him within the context of the experiences of his other patients. The suggestion is that that these others would have presented similar testimony if given the chance to respond to what was said about them before they had been integrated into the system at Hanwell.

In *Indications*, Conolly presented an interesting account of one patient who was able to comment on her own condition during her lucid intervals. In order to demonstrate that in the event of hallucination, 'the illusion is not the madness', Conolly explained that though this woman hallucinated consistently, her ability to recognize her hallucinations as such did not always fail her. [69] Sometimes, according to Conolly, the woman was 'conscious that her sensations were diseased; and was of sane mind: she could exercise her observation on others, and by comparison of their unconcern with the false images which her senses figured to be around them, remain convinced that the images were unreal'. [70] In this instance, it is difficult to believe that the patient's own words approximated anything like what Conolly wrote. Unlike in the instance of the patient who saw his own records and responded to what was written on them, it is certain that the words Conolly used to communicate the woman's circumstances were nothing like the

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[69] Conolly, *Indications*, p. 113.
[70] Conolly, *Indications*, p. 113.

woman's own words. Conolly positioned himself in this instance in the role of a translator between the patient and his audience.

Whether or not her own words were clear enough to have been easily understood in their original form, Conolly 'medicalized' this woman's expressions in a way that presented her experience as the description of an interesting case. While this at once seems somewhat arrogant of him, and places his subject at a greater emotional distance from his reader than if her expressions were presented more 'naturally', it also represents an attempt to divulge an experience that we would now call 'empathic', by means of a more medical, professional language. Using this language, the woman's experience may have fit somehow with a variety of other expressions that other patients of other doctors, and so to use a common (if lofty) parlance would also tend to make her experience more accessible to other doctors who may have treated similar cases, or cared for individuals suffering from similar ailments. Here was a woman who could speak of the experience of mental illness with the intimate knowledge of a sufferer. The challenge for Conolly was to present the 'knowledge' acquired to a third party, and Conolly chose to do this by completely refiguring her story and placing her case at a distance in order to describe it in his own way.

At times Conolly stepped wholly into the perspective of his patient, communicating details of experiences so intimate that it can only be assumed that he invented them. For this he never apologized. Instead, he encouraged his reader to think beyond what he or she could readily accept as empirical proof of what happened within someone else's mind, as there could never be perfect evidence of such, most especially if that person was not completely capable of communicating effectively according to

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established social and cultural protocol. Just because someone could not communicate their interior experience, it did not mean that it did not matter whether they were suffering. Conolly's strategy was suggestive of the need to consider the possibility of what *might* be happening to a person who was locked inside themselves without means of expressing their experience. Conolly used any clues available and used his own imagination to fill in any blank spaces. He gave the example of a woman who lived in fear of being burned alive: 'In every one who approached her she seemed to behold an enemy, or an executioner. It may be readily supposed that in a case of this kind, a stern reception, the continuance or the imposition of restraints, and a darkened room, would only have confirmed the patient's fears'.[71] Conolly certainly exercised some shrewd logic in the translation of this woman's fears and expressions, but his reasoning was heavily dependent upon his imagination. He encouraged others to use the same kind of reasoning to step beyond what could be readily proven in order to reach for a more imaginative knowledge of someone else's experiences. Interestingly, given the context, one could speculate that this particular woman may not even have existed as an individual; it arguably would have been enough to suppose that some individuals were subject to such paranoia, in order to place oneself in the perspective of such a one. Perhaps Conolly had seen many such cases and selected facets of a particular case in order to construct a type with which to illustrate his point. Since his point was to encourage others to push beyond the boundaries of the empirical into the realm of possibility, it would have served just as well to have done so.

Conolly sometimes constructed wholly representative characters out of the material of his real patients. In one instance Conolly even constructed, for the sake of

[71] Conolly, *Treatment*, p. 112.

argument, a fictitious patient he did not believe to be typical, in order to provide a 'worst-case scenario'. Conolly attempted to pre-empt any argument against the sensibility of patients admitted to asylums:

> I will suppose a person to have been received into the establishment unconscious of the change,—a thing which happens very rarely. The patient is insensible, and suffers nothing. But this state will not last long. The patient recovers some degree of consciousness; his vehemence and passion abate; or a load of despondency and horror begins to be cleared from him. He tries, very feebly and imperfectly, to recover broken chains of thought: recollections of past circumstances return to him, as to one awakening from a deep sleep, or from a troubled dream; perhaps the recollections of his family, of his home, and of suspended affections. Who can paint the surprise and alarm which must naturally arise from the unexplained confusion around him! Shocked and affrighted, he may relapse into his madness and be lost.[72]

The purpose for the creation of this character and scenario was not to describe something that actually occurred, to demonstrate the necessity of considering what *might* be the experience of an inmate in an asylum. To incite fear was certainly part of Conolly's strategy; he presented the mystery of mental illness in a manner that would likely encourage a wish that individuals who might find themselves in this situation would be extended a hand beyond the frontier of normal social intercourse. Conolly provided points of reference, to which anyone could relate - the experience of a troubled dream; the gradual recollection of the good things in one's life as a nightmare fades. No one

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[72] Conolly, *Indications*, p. 18.

who had not experienced madness could really know if it is like experiencing a troubled dream. However, the example of a dream served as a sort of integer, taking the place of unknown factors. This was Conolly's interpretation of innumerable interactions with the mentally ill, or an expression of what he imagined the experience of madness to be.

In *The Treatment of the Insane Without Mechanical Restraints*, Conolly described the experience of living through the 'old system' of treatment by interpreting the words of old official reports and imagining what the lives of the people who were observed in these reports might have been like. For example, after quoting from the report of Mr Wakefield, Mr Western, and Mr Calvert to the House of Commons in 1815, which concerned Bethlem Hospital, Conolly descended into long, narrative paraphrases, eventually culminating in highly imaginative statements regarding what it must have been like to be a patient at Bethlem in 1815: 'Each miserable day was like another, and each night'.[73] He did not claim to use any other source but the report to be able to know this, yet the statement challenged the reader to assert that the reality of the lives of these patients could have been any other way, based on the portion of the content of the 1815 report that had been reproduced on the page before.

Conolly sometimes presented physical evidence of the experiences that Hanwell inmates had endured at other institutions, as if their only the bodies of the inmates could clearly express the reality locked within these individuals, in spite of the obstacles of their disordered minds.   Who could explain what it was like to have lived in shackles for years? Even Conolly had not travelled alongside the patient from that world, where he had no jurisdiction. Thus, only the patient could document the contrast with any authority. Conolly read their experiences from their faces, especially when they were

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[73] Conolly, *Treatment*, pp. 26-27.

reminded of former days: 'in these patients the mere mention of restraint was often observed to cause the patient's face to become deadly pale—an evidence of its efficacy as a punishment; standing quite apart from any proof of its efficacy as a means of moral control'.[74] According to Conolly, the damage that had been done to these people would never entirely heal, and their facial expressions and body language would reflect this damage whenever they were caused to remember past torments. These memories could cause a patient to be chained again, somewhere in his or her own mind. Using his imagination, Conolly read and expressed the stories behind the scars.

Some of these emotional scars had their counterparts impressed upon the physical form of these individuals, which served as a more permanent reminder of their past treatment for anyone with whom they interacted. Unlike bad memories and emotional scars, which could be seen only when a patient was reminded of the horrors of his or her time in chains, physical scars could be seen all the time, even when the patient was not perhaps in mind of the past. Conolly described a woman of forty-six who had worn restraints for twenty years before coming to Hanwell: 'like most of the patients of those old asylums, the story of her restraints was written in broad indelible scars on her wrists, but in still worse characters on her memory.'[75] The physical scars, according to Conolly, were only the scratches on the surface, which could not fully reveal the extent of the wounds. Yet, the scars upon the wrists were palpable and immediate; they could not be dismissed or obscured by rhetoric and theory. It provided Conolly with evidence of cause-and-effect, which effect necessarily had some parallel in the mind of the individual

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[74] Second Report from Hanwell, 1840. Cited by Conolly, *Treatment*, p. 205.
[75] Conolly, *Treatment*, p. 125.

whose body had been so marked.[76] What parallel this might have been, anyone could imagine. Conolly argued, however, that it was worth trying to imagine, even if there was no way to be certain.

Patients, including women with gynaecological ailments and people with mental infirmities, were the ostensible beneficiaries of the medicine that was practised upon them. We have seen, however, that it was not unheard of in the nineteenth century for a medical professional to have considered the benefits that practising upon one person could possibly have had upon society more generally, especially with regard to potential of contributing to the common pool of knowledge. Women's bodies were viewed as very private property (though perhaps not the property of the women who inhabited them). As such, these bodies became sites of fervent dispute when doctors wanted to access what happened inside them. By contrast, the bodies of the mentally infirm needed to be handled by someone in order that they might be shut away and made to become 'secret', at least until the minds that inhabited them were healed. The treatment of the 'lunatic' as such was at least in part meant to benefit the society that could not cope with their free presence. The mentally infirm patient, then, was vulnerable because he or she was not someone whose body a society would particularly wish to own. Conolly struggled to demonstrate that by releasing the mentally infirm from their restraints, he could improve the lives and experiences of inmates of lunatic asylums without exposing people to danger, and indeed, that he could do so with the effect of contributing to the wellness of society by reducing the number of people who were mentally infirm. Conolly presented himself as an intermediary figure capable of interpreting and communicating the

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[76] On the history of the physiognomy of madness, see Sander Gilman, *Seeing the Insane* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1996), and *Disease and Representation: Images of Illness from Madness to AIDS* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988).

experiences of his patients. Empathic discourse, for Conolly, functions as a means of demonstrating the necessity and success of his reforms.

Chapter 5:

Suffering and Science: The Victorian Vivisection Controversy

The ability of an individual to speak for himself or herself can be hampered by any number of 'handicaps', which are constructed as a facet of cultural or legal epistemology, but not necessarily rooted in any real obstacle to communication. Black slaves in nineteenth-century America, notwithstanding illiteracy or fear of punishment, could and did certainly manage to articulate their suffering in the event that they were given access to someone who might have some power to speak up for them. Likewise, a woman undergoing gynaecological treatment in nineteenth-century Britain, notwithstanding a sense of embarrassment or shame, would have been capable of telling someone about her experiences. As Gayatri Spivak argued famously in 'Can the Subaltern Speak?', a voice and language are not all that is necessary in order to make oneself effectively heard.[1] The problems presented by the testimony of a child or of someone suffering from mental disease, are perhaps more 'real', in that there may be a legitimate barrier to communication, although not necessarily so. In either of these cases, any apparent problem with an individual's testimony is likely to stem from an inability to use language effectively to express oneself, or else the perceived possibility of dissimulation. But what if verbal language were not a possibility?

Nonhuman animals do not have access to human language tools, in all cases but those of a few specially trained primates. It has often been argued that because they lack language, animals are necessarily excluded from the kind of social contracts that protect

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[1] See Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, 'Can the Subaltern Speak?', in Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (eds), *Marxism and the Interpretation of* Culture (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), pp. 271-313.

human beings from one another.[2] While not all agree that this is right, it is certainly the

reason that they invariably need a human advocate to speak for them in any context

determined by human language; humans may do as they wish with, and may even kill

those animals who are not protected by the contracts which protect themselves. [3]

Jacques Derrida calls this phenomenon a 'sacrificial structure', which he defines as 'a

matter of discerning a place left open, in the very structure of . . . discourses (which are

also 'cultures') for a noncriminal putting to death'.[4] Such a 'sacrificial structure' is

necessarily predicated by the notion that something *must* be done, usually for survival or

safety - will be *us* or *them*. Whoever (be they human or animal), in such circumstances,

finds themselves in the position of *them*, need not bother with a defence, for if it can be

accomplished, their fate will already have been decided.

A study of the development of the concept of empathy would be grossly

incomplete without the inclusion of the study of attempts to empathize with animals,

precisely because they lack our language tools. Despite the limitations of language, how

do we fare without that method of communication? Pain is particularly difficult, if not

impossible, to communicate through language, even among human beings. Elaine Scarry

goes so far as to argue that language is useless when we are in pain. She explains that

'physical pain does not simply resist language but actively destroys it, bringing about an

immediate reversion to a state anterior to language, to the sounds and cries a human being

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[2]See, for example, Stanley Cavell, *The Claim of Reason: Wittgenstein, Skepticism, Morality, and Tragedy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999). See also Vicki Hearne, *Animal Happiness* (New York: Perennial, 1995).

[3] See Cary Wolfe's introduction to *Zoontologies: The Question of the Animal* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003).

[4] Jaques Derrida, 'Eating Well', in *Points . . . Interviews, 1974-1994*, Elizabeth Weber (ed.), Peggy Kamuf, et al. (tr.) (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), p.278.

makes before language is learned'.[5] If the use of language is a primary explanation for the separation of humans and non-human animals into such different ethical categories regarding treatment and consideration, what about the human in pain, who lacks language? If we have no language when we are in pain, how have we tried to understand animals that are in pain? We can only begin to answer these questions by studying the attempts that have been made to overcome barriers to communications when individuals have perceived or imagined others to be experiencing pain and suffering.

As Victorians began to make the epistemological leaps consequent to their increasing acknowledgement of the limitations of human sense perception, they did not limit their attempts at empathy to their fellow human beings. James Turner has argued that the awareness of biological affinity between humans and non-human animals, evident since the late-eighteenth century but more forcefully apparent as the works of Charles Darwin influenced Victorian society (as well as science), animal pain became an increasingly urgent subject for consideration.[6] Turner also discusses how the establishment of the relationship between humans and animals based upon evolutionary science presented opportunities to make use of animals in ways that were scientifically and medically relevant to humans.[7]

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[5] Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), p. 4.

[6] Of particular significance, Darwin's *On the Origin of Species by means of Natural Selection, or the Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life* (London: John Murray, 1859), and *The Descent of Man* (London: John Murray, 1871). James Turner discusses Victorian British culture as a site for a major transformation of the consideration of animals, especially with regard to the sensitive interpretation of animal pain. Turner argues industrialization was another major factor in this transformation. *Reckoning with the Beast: Animals, Pain, and Humanity in the Victorian Mind* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980). More recently, Lucy Bending has discussed the meaning and representation of pain in (late) Victorian culture, as these were linked both with evolutionary science and ideas of civilization. *The Representation of Bodily Pain in Late Nineteenth-Century English Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

[7] Turner, *Reckoning*, pp. 60-63.

As they tried to make sense of their connection with animals, Victorians increased

their consideration of their fellow creatures, arguably as resourcefully as they found new

ways of exploiting them. One of the most controversial of these was the practice of

experimental physiology, or vivisection. Although people had been experimenting upon

live animals (and humans) since ancient times, in the nineteenth century experimental

physiology gained increasing importance as a profession and a branch of medical

science.[8] Vivisection was subject to popular moral censure in nineteenth-century Britain.

Opposition to vivisection can be viewed in association with the larger movement for the

reform of the treatment of animals.[9] Hilary Rose has demonstrated how prominent

antivivisectionist Frances Power Cobbe [1822-1904] drew together discourses of pet-

keeping and the defence of domestic animals against abuse to increase the strength of her

antivivisectionist rhetoric. Rose argues that Cobbe, in her article 'The Consciousness of

Dogs', worked at once to convince her audience of animals' capacity for pain and to

harness the power of Victorian sentiment for pets to advance the cause of

antivivisection.[10]

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[8] For a concise and comprehensive study of the history of vivisection, see Anita Guerrini, *Experimenting with Humans and Animals: From Galen to Animal Rights*, Johns Hopkins Introductory Studies in the History of Science (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003). On the history of vivisection (and opposition to vivisection) before the nineteenth century, see Andreas-Holger Maehle and Ulrich Tröhler, 'Animal Experimentation from Antiquity to the End of the Eighteenth Century: Attitudes and Arguments', in Nicolaas Rupke (ed.), *Vivisection in Historical Perspective* (London: Croom Helm, 1987), pp. 14-47.

[9] For a study of the movement for the reform of the treatment of animals in Victorian Britain, see Harriet Ritvo, *The Animal Estate: English and Other Creatures in the Victorian Age* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989).

[10] Hilary Rose, 'Learning from the New Priesthood and the Shrieking Sisterhood: The Debate over the Life Sciences in Victorian England', in Lynda Birke and Ruth Hubbard (eds), *Reinventing Biology: Respect for Life and the Creation of Knowledge* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), pp. 3-20. See Frances Power Cobbe, 'The Consciousness of Dogs', *Quarterly Review*, 133 (1872), p. 281. Cobbe will be discussed shortly in greater detail. Rose further explains that vivisection was viewed as a threat to domestic pets, as pet owners worried that their pets could be stolen and vivisected by physiologists. Rose, 'New Priesthood', p. 14. On pet-stealing (for ransom) in Victorian Britain, see Philip Howell, 'Flush and the *Banditti*: Dog-stealing in Victorian London', in Chris Philo and Chris Wilbert (eds), *Animal Spaces, Beastly Places: New Geographies of*

Antivivisection can also be viewed as a reaction against the emergence of scientific medicine, especially as manifested in the trend of appropriating bodies for scientific experimentation (the Anatomy Act of 1832 provided for human bodies to be supplied to scientists for dissection).[11] As the decades of the nineteenth century passed, the practices of medicine and medical science (including experimental physiology) increasingly merged and developed as branches of the same profession. Scientific medicine became increasingly respected as a professional discipline, especially as innovations and advancements in medical science brought new benefits, protection and cures, thus providing palpable evidence of its own worth.[12] At the same time, opposition to the practices of experimental physiology intensified, based upon the pain and suffering caused to the animals whose bodies were the subject of vivisection.

Human-Animal Relations (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), pp. 35-55. On Victorian sentiment for pets, see Teresa Mangum, 'Animal Angst: Victorians Memorialize their Pets', in Martin Danahay and Deborah Denenholz Morse, *Victorian Animal Dreams: Representations of Animals in Victorian Literature and Culture* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), pp. 15-34.

[11] See Ruth Richardson, *Death, Dissection and the Destitute* (London and New York: Routledge, 1987). For a study of the social and cultural responses to the Anatomy Act of 1832, see Timothy Marshall, *Murdering to Dissect: Grave-Robbing, Frankenstein, and the Anatomy Literature* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995). Coral Lansbury connects fears about the scientific appropriation of the bodies of poor people with support for the antivivisection movement. See *The Old Brown Dog: Women, Workers, and Vivisection in Edwardian England* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985).

[12] On the emergence of medical science during the nineteenth century, see M. Jeanne Peterson, *The Medical Profession in Mid-Victorian London* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978); A.J. Youngson, *The Scientific Revolution in Victorian Medicine* (London: Croom Helm, 1979). Bruno Latour argues that the emergence of experimental physiology as a profession was simply part of a larger trend toward professionalization in the nineteenth century. Latour locates the link between science and medicine through experimental physiology in that the latter allowed for the scientific examination of a part of a body that was still representative of (as it was still attached to) the functional, and functioning, whole. Therein, Latour argues, was the relevance of this emerging branch of science to the practice of medicine and the medical profession in the nineteenth century. 'The Costly Ghastly Kitchen', in Andrew Cunningham and Perry Williams (eds), *The Laboratory Revolution in Medicine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 295-303. For a general study of professionalization from the late nineteenth century, see Harold Perkin, *The Rise of Professional Society: England Since 1880* (London and New York: Routledge, 1989).

Protest against vivisection erupted into a significant social and political movement in the 1870s.[13] The crusade against vivisection led to the formation of the first Royal Commission on Vivisection and the consequent passage of the Cruelty to Animals Act of 1876, which by no means satisfied the requirements of the antivivisection movement. In this chapter, I will analyze texts that attempt to 'speak' for the animal subjects of vivisection during the period immediately before the enactment of the 1876 legislation. Sometimes, these human voices claimed scientific knowledge of the experience of the animal, and sometimes they attempted to express the interests of animals vulnerable to vivisection - animals they perceived to be in pain by means of feeling and empathy. Whatever these writers tried to communicate about the experiences of animals, they could not say anything without recourse to the kind of imaginative vision that propelled so much of nineteenth-century art and thinking; where their senses failed, they tried their best to fill in the blanks, and without apology.

Recent scholarship of nineteenth-century antivivisection has largely focused upon the role of women in the movement. Indeed, nineteenth-century antivivisection provides a very rich context in which to study Victorian women's philanthropic activities, for it was considered have been largely a 'women's movement'.[14] Of course, many of the contemporaries who named it as such intended to label antivivisectionists as either

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[13] See Richard French, *Antivivisection and Medical Science in Victorian Society* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975).

[14] See Lansbury, *The Old Brown Dog;* Mary Ann Elston, 'Women and Anti-vivisection in Victorian England, 1870-1900', in Nicholaas Rupke (ed.), *Vivisection in Historical Perspective* (London: Croom Helm, 1987), pp. 259-294; Moira Ferguson, *Animal Advocacy and Englishwomen, 1780-1900: Patriots, Nation, and Empire* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1998); Barbara Gates, *Kindred Nature: Victorian and Edwardian Women Embrace the Living World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), and *In Nature's Name: An Anthology of Women's Nature Writing and Illustration: 1780-1930* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002); Susan Hamilton, *Animal Welfare and Antivivisection 1870-1910: Nineteenth-Century Women's Mission* (London and New York: Routledge, 2004).

ignorant females or effeminate men. Victorian women certainly rallied to the cause of antivivisection - though the question of whether this was because they, unlike men, did not have to worry about appearing to be 'unsexed' in this role has not been sufficiently explored. Rather, scholars have looked at the opportunities that antivivisection provided for Victorian women, whether as a public platform that women could ascend with relative impunity, in order to make themselves heard, or, as Coral Lansbury has argued, as a means by which women could rail against the injustices done to themselves and the members of their sex, only through the pretext of defending animals who were vulnerable and exploited in ways with which women could readily identify.[15] While much of the scholarship that has been undertaken to align the history of antivivisection with gender studies has produced rich historiography and compelling theses, it is ultimately unsatisfactory to consider that the primary motivation behind such robust activism as was conducted by so many prominent female antivivisectionists in the nineteenth century, was to advance their own aims. Is it not enough to say that these women were genuinely concerned for the suffering of vivisected animals, and that they were speaking out to stop a practice which they believed to be deeply wrong?

Whatever their primary or secondary motivations, women were certainly accepted as appropriate spokespeople for the cause of antivivisection, and as such for vivisected animals and those animals liable to vivisection. As Mary Ann Elston has shown, women who supported vivisection (including the wives of prominent physiologists) were commonly criticized as not possessing a 'natural' feminine compassion, and men who championed the cause of antivivisection were often portrayed as 'soft' or unmanly.[16]

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[15] See Lansbury, *The Old Brown Dog.*
[16] See Elston, 'Women and Anti-vivisection'.

Despite the social acceptability of women's involvement in antivivisection, however, their attempts to speak out against vivisection were often easily dismissed for the very reason that they were considered to be 'natural' - women's allegedly unreasoning compassion. Further, notwithstanding that Elizabeth Blackwell [1821-1910] was a successful physician as well as an antivivisectionist, few women held qualifications as doctors, surgeons, or any other position that enabled them to speak with any authority on the subject of physiology.[17] Therefore, their opponents could and did argue that women's 'natural' response to vivisection was uninformed and based solely upon appearances, and further, that women could be easily led to support antivivisection through exposure to graphic images and anecdotes, supplied to them for the purpose of provoking emotion rather than explaining 'facts'.

Women, then, were considered to be the natural advocates of animals subjected to vivisection, just as they were the least likely to be taken seriously. The most famous of these women was arguably Frances Power Cobbe.[18] In an introduction to a collected volume of antivivisection writings, Cobbe explained that 'As regards the scientific

[17] This is not to say that women physiologists did not exist, nor to detract from their contributions to their field. See Lynn Bindman, Alison Brading, and Tilli Tansey (eds), *Women Physiologists: An Anniversary Celebration of their Contributions to British Physiology* (London and Chapel Hill: Portland Press, 1993), especially E.M. Tansey, '"To Dine with Ladies Smelling of Dog?" A Brief History of Women and the Physiological Society', pp. 3-17. See also Rose, 'New Priesthood', pp. 6-9. The novelist George Eliot (Mary Ann Evans), though not a physiologist herself, lent support to the physiology through the establishment of a studentship in memory of her companion George Henry Lewes (Lewes will be discussed later in this chapter). On George Eliot's support for physiology, see E.M. Tansey, 'George Eliot's Support for Physiology: The George Henry Lewes Trust, 1879-1939', *Notes and Records of the Royal Society of London*, 44 (1990), pp. 221-240. On the relationship between George Eliot's fiction and science, see Sally Shuttleworth, *George Eliot and Nineteenth-Century Science: The Make-Believe of a Beginning* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984).

[18] Frances Power Cobbe [1822-1904], was born in Dublin into a family of the Anglo-Irish gentry. Cobbe was a prolific writer and prominent activist on behalf of several causes, including women's rights and, of course, antivivisection. See Barbara Caine, 'Frances Power Cobbe', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); *Life of Frances Power Cobbe: by Herself*, 2 vols. (London: R. Bentley & Son, 1894); Sally Mitchell, *Frances Power Cobbe: Victorian Feminist, Journalist, Reformer* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2004).

passages and descriptions of experiments in these papers, they have all been written with

the help (or, at least, not without the revision) of men qualified to judge of each question.

I have no fears that their accuracy will be seriously impugned.'[19] Clearly, Cobbe intended

to pre-empt criticisms regarding her sex and her education. If she was not qualified to

speak on scientific subjects without the support of a man of science, however, Cobbe

insisted that she was perfectly qualified to address the moral aspects of the vivisection

controversy. She asserted:

> The moral arguments have been the results of my own long and anxious
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> reflections, based on the chosen studies of my youth. When, more than thirty
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> years ago, I wrote my *Essay on Intuitive Morals* (an attempt to present Kantian
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> ethics in a popular and religious form) I did not anticipate that my old age would
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> be devoted to an effort to apply those large principles solely to protect the
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> science-tortured brutes from cruel wrong.[20]

Cobbe styled herself as a moral philosopher, and, as the controversy over vivisection was

essentially a moral issue, she approached it from this angle. What is more, Cobbe was a

woman, and she believed that womanhood had already endowed her with a certain moral

authority. She argued that if scientific knowledge was provided to her from a reliable

source, she could evaluate it for herself and speak as an advocate for animals from the

perspective of a moralist.

It is not difficult to imagine why antivivisectionists, especially those who were

women, were unlikely to witness vivisections themselves, in order that they could present

evidence they had gathered themselves. It was highly improbable that Frances Power

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[19] Frances Power Cobbe, *The Modern Rack: Papers on Vivisection* (London: Swan Sonnenschein & Co., 1889), p.v.
[20] Cobbe, *The Modern Rack*, p.v.

Cobbe, or any other known antivivisectionist, would have been made very welcome in a physiological laboratory or theatre. This 'secrecy' itself was often claimed as evidence against the practice of vivisection - as evidence that there was 'something to hide'. Physiologists, meanwhile, insisted that in order to 'see' vivisection properly, one needed suitably trained and 'scientific' eyes. They argued that unlike most antivivisectionists, physiologists could 'understand' what was really felt (and not felt) by a vivisected animal, rather than being deceived by appearances. J. Crichton Browne wrote, in a letter to *The Times*, that 'to the non-professional reader [graphic descriptions of vivisections] may seem to justify the unwarrantable conclusion that intense and protracted agony was inflicted during their progress'.[21] With reference to the same sort of graphic descriptions of vivisections, Charles Ferrier wrote to George Jesse, explaining why these did not seem consistent with the physiologist's claim that the animals involved suffered no pain: 'What to you may be inconsistencies, do not appear so to those capable of interpreting the true significance of the facts'.[22] It would follow, then, according to the physiologist, that he, rather than an 'ignorant' antivivisectionist, was the best person to speak for the vivisected animal. I will return to discuss this particular argument later in this chapter.

Lack of access to actual vivisections presented antivivisectionists with a real problem in terms of gathering evidence. To overcome this obstacle, antivivisectionists commonly used the most readily available materials available on the subject of vivisection - namely, the words of the physiologists themselves. Rather than apologize for the apparent need to borrow the words of their opponents in order to construct their

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[21] J. Crichton Browne, letter to *The Times*, 4 August 1875.
[22] Letter, Charles Ferrier to George R. Jesse, dated 9 August 1875, quoted by Jesse to the Royal Commission, and reproduced in his *Extracts from and Notes upon the Report of the Royal Commission on Vivisection, Refuting its Conclusions* (London, 1876), p. 15.

own evidence, antivivisectionists proclaimed that they really didn't need to do anything else, for the sufferings of animals were written into the works of the physiologists by their own hand.[23]   George Jesse, secretary of the Society for the Abolition of Vivisection, read aloud from a publication of his society, to the members of the Royal Commission on Vivisection in 1875, ' "Thine own mouth condemneth thee, and not I. Yea, thine own lips testify against thee".[24] As it is often asserted that the practices of vivisectors are exaggerated, the Society brings forward more examples of them'.[25] Mona Caird, writing some twenty-five years afterward, returned to this central feature of the vivisection controversy, as if to suggest that the absurdity of the refusal of physiologists to take their own evidence as evidence against them was the very reason that the controversy was not resolved: ' The present controversy as to whether or not torture is inflicted, is truly ludicrous, seeing that numberless volumes of evidence are extant, written by the physiologists themselves, wherein the contentions of their opponents are proved, and proved again. Indeed the evidence of the operators in these terrible experiments on living creatures, is practically *the sole evidence that exists on the subject*. Yet so truly ironical is Fate, that this is the evidence that pro-vivisectors deny with so much anger and scorn!'[26] Much of the debate that surrounded vivisection in the late nineteenth century was, then, a debate over who could 'speak' (not always meaning to advocate) for animals with authority and who would do so with integrity.

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[23] Stewart Richards explores the problem of publication in physiology with relation to the antivivisection movement in Victorian Britain, with particular reference to J. Burdon Sanderson (ed.), *Handbook for the Physiological Laboratory* (London: J & A Churchill, 1873). This book was a particular source of reference and a target for antivivisectionists. See Richards, 'Drawing the Life-Blood of Physiology: Vivisection and the Physiologists' Dilemma, 1870-1900', *Annals of Science*, 43 (1986), pp. 27-56.

[24] Job XV, 5-6

[25] Jesse, *Extracts*, p. 10.

[26] Mona Caird, *Beyond the Pale: An Appeal on Behalf of the Victims of Vivisection* (London: William Reeves, 1897), p. 5.

While Frances Power Cobbe, George Jesse (an engineer by trade), and other non-medical antivivisectionists did not consider that they absolutely needed to witness actual vivisections in order to make their arguments, the cause of antivivisection was still very dependent upon those few medical persons who, having witnessed vivisections themselves, were willing to speak out against what they saw. By far the most important of these figures was George Hoggan, who, in February 1875, wrote a letter to *The Morning Post*, testifying against what he had seen during his tenure as an assistant to physiologist Claude Bernard, with the air of someone who wished to make amends for what he had seen and not stopped. Hoggan declaimed:

> I am of the opinion that not one of those experiments on animals was justified or necessary . . . I witnessed many harsh sights, but I think the saddest was when the dogs were brought up from the cellar to the laboratory. Instead of appearing pleased with the change from darkness to light, they seemed seized with horror as soon as they smelt the air of the place, apparently divining their approaching fate . . . Hundreds of times I have seen when an animal writhed in pain, it would receive a slap, and an angry order to be quiet and behave itself . . . To this recital I need hardly add that, having drunk the cup to the dregs, I cry off, and am prepared to see not only science, but even mankind, perish rather than have recourse to such means of saving it.[27]

This letter was reprinted in *The Spectator* in May of 1875, and quoted very frequently by antivivisectionists throughout the debate surrounding the legislation of the 1876 Cruelty to Animals Act. Richard French argues that it was this letter that 'so further aroused

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[27] George Hoggan, 'Vivisection', letter to *The Morning Post*, 2 February 1875. Reprinted in the *Spectator*, 48 (1875), p. 177.

public opinion that [Richard Holt] Hutton, Cobbe, and other activist antivivisectionists no longer needed the wealth and power of the RSPCA to gain access to Parliament. Of all medical testimony against vivisection, before or since, George Hoggan's letter had the greatest impact'.[28] French describes the situation before 1875, when the chief hope of antivivisectionists was for the unconditional support of the RSPCA, which, as it had been founded primarily to prevent the cruel treatment of animals at the hands of the poorer classes, hardly knew what to do with vivisection, as physiologists were necessarily well educated individuals. Hoggan's letter, which communicated a sense of his having been helpless to relieve the suffering he witnessed every day as he was employed as an assistant to a prominent physiologist, also described a lack of feeling demonstrated by the other physiologists with whom he worked: 'Were the feelings of experimental physiologists not blunted, they could not long continue the practice of vivisection. They are always ready to repudiate any implied want of tender feeling, but on the contrary, in practice they frequently show the reverse'.[29] At the publication of Hoggan's letter, the British public was arguably seized not only with horror at the pains inflicted upon the vivisected animals, but also with compassion for their voicelessness. Not only did these animals lack the language tools to articulate their sufferings in words, but their non-verbal expressions of pain were ignored. Hoggan's letter reads as if he wished to put voice to the expressions of the voiceless sufferers of the physiological laboratory, and there proved to be many who were willing to listen.

In debating vivisection, Victorians on both sides of the issue often found themselves struggling to determine what should be considered evidence that an animal

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[28] French, *Antivivisection,* p. 68.
[29] Hoggan, 'Vivisection'.

was in pain. While antivivisectionists refused to countenance any suggestion that the observable indications of suffering were not necessarily proof that an animal was in pain, they had to concede that appearances could be deceiving, as questions over the efficacy of anaesthetics changed the nature of what would once have been accepted as evidence of insensibility. Despite the fact that no one could ever say for absolute certain what an animal was experiencing, and despite the fact that animals had no language with which to communicate their experiences, Victorians felt quite passionately that the subject was worth discussing. It is arguable that the interior experience of the animal had never before been so closely considered.

Victorians, or at least Victorian scientists, seem to have questioned whether frogs, in particular, were capable of feeling pain, and to what degree. Henry Wentworth Acland was Regius Professor of Medicine at Oxford during the time that he was interviewed by the Royal Commission in 1875. Like many other physiologists, he was not prepared to make any absolute claims about what a frog suffers during the course of a physiological experiment. Despite this, however, Acland implied that he had difficulty believing that certain experiments performed on frogs were not extremely painful to those animals. After describing an experiment he had read about in which a frog is disembowelled alive, Acland comments: 'Now, if the frog suffers pain, that is as painful, I suppose, a thing as can be done.'[30] While Acland did not make any claims about the specific experience of a frog or frogs, he presented a kind of 'common sense' opinion, derived from the processes of his imagination, and yet protected by an 'if' clause. He could not help but to imagine that a frog would feel terrible pain if disembowelled alive.

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[30] Jesse, *Extracts*, p. 27.

It is worth mentioning at this point that few physiologists called by the 1875 Royal Commission were willing to support the work of all their fellows without exception. Although physiologists wished to retain as much autonomy as possible in the face of possible legislation to regulate vivisection, they can hardly be said to have closed ranks. Rather, most physiologists tended to make a general statement of support for the practice of vivisection, but reserved their staunch support for those experiments that they performed personally, and for those of their colleagues who performed similar experiments to their own. This was arguably because, during that time of uncertainty, it was not prudent to subject one's own reputation to the censure that others, who surely caused more pain to animals than oneself, received. Physiologists who practised what they considered to be a limited amount of vivisection, or who caused what they considered to be only a little suffering, were quick to denounce the work of other physiologists. As such, it is really impossible to discern a consensus among the physiologists summoned before the 1875 Royal Commission about animal suffering.

Alfred S. Taylor, another physiologist who spoke before the Royal Commission in 1875, exhibited a particular strategy for qualifying a statement about what frogs did or did not suffer. Having presented his opinion of what a frog might feel when boiled alive, he was prepared to say that it would be painful for a frog, but insisted upon adding that the pain would be less than if a human were to endure the same: 'I think it a very painful experiment, subject to the observation that the frog does not suffer as much pain as ourselves, but still for the animal I have no doubt it is a very painful experiment, and do not see what good purpose it would answer.'[31] Physiologists seem to have been very reluctant to discuss the amount of suffering that an experiment would cause to an animal

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[31] Jesse, *Extracts*, p. 27.

without also discussing the purpose or worth of the experiment. I will discuss this later in this chapter. What is immediately interesting about Taylor's statement is that he made a very confident claim about a frog's perspective, which he could not know. The claim was constructed in a way that stated not only a 'knowledge' of difference between human and frog, but also an 'awareness' of the existence of an entirely separate perspective from that of the human. Some deference was paid to the unknowable status of the frog's perspective, as Taylor expressed 'no doubt' that the experience would be painful 'for the animal', rather than phrasing the statement more positively. For example, Taylor could have said that 'the frog feels a great deal of pain'. Instead, he fashioned a space for the frog's perspective that could never be filled. He had 'no doubt' that this perspective existed, and he could be certain enough to say that the pain would be very great in the circumstances described to him, despite the fact that there could be no absolute proof of this.

George Rolleston, Linacre Professor of Anatomy and Physiology at Oxford during 1875, was posed a very direct question by one of the commissioners, regarding the same experiment upon which Taylor was asked to remark: ' "Having regard to the low temperature of the frog's blood, that is very much the same as if we were put into boiling water, is it not?" "Well, I am not quite clear about that".'[32] In order to determine the real meaning of such an equivocal answer, one would need to know the context. Rolleston could have communicated any number of responses here by altering the tone of his voice. It is interesting as well to consider this line of response by itself, because it represents the reluctance of many scientists to state their position too strongly with regard to the existence and degree of animal suffering, for which there could really be no proof.

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[32] Jesse, *Extracts*, p. 30.

Some physiologists, however, did try to provide evidence regarding the nature of animal suffering. G.M. Humphry presented anatomical evidence in order to assert the difference between the physiological experiences of human and 'animal': ' "You said you believed that the animal creation did not suffer so acutely as the human race?" "Just so". "On what do you found that observation?" "Their nervous system is not so large, it does not bear so large a proportion to their bodies, and we have reason to think it is not so sensitive".'[33] There is, of course, a logical gap between the first two suggestions and the third. It seems that Humphry was trying to supply the size and proportion of the nervous system in animals as plausible reasons for their alleged insensitivity, despite the fact that this did not prove the insensitivity. If one were willing to assume, based upon the other 'reasons' to which Humphry alluded, that the nervous system of animals was less sensitive than that of the human, then the anatomical 'reasons' supplied by Humphry might provide clues about why this might be so. However, Humphry's anatomical 'evidence' could not stand alone. It is arguable that in providing this anatomical information, Humphry hoped to sway opinion. If one were inclined to think that animals did not suffer pain in the same way as humans, but could not explain it, here was a possible solution.

Other physiologists attempted to prove that animals were less sensitive to pain by providing examples of animals responding differently to pain than humans, drawn from everyday life. In the *Westminster Review*, it was written that 'It occurs not unfrequently to flyfishers to take a salmon or other fish, which has already one or more hooks fastened in its jaw, but which does not seem to have suffered in health or condition in

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[33] Evidence of G.M. Humphry, British Parliamentary Papers [1397] XLI, *Royal Commission on Vivisection* (1876), p. 332.

consequence; yet compare this with the effect of any injury of a similar magnitude upon a human being, and the contrast will be striking enough'.[34] Again, there is no real evidence provided here to establish the relative insensibility of fish to the pain of having hooks stuck in its jaw, but it is arguable that the author was hoping to persuade rather than to prove. As such, there was no need to apologize for relying upon appearances. Out of the imagined difference between the responses of the fish and the human that the author hoped to build feeling against the idea that animal pain is similar to human pain.

William Rutherford, Professor of the Institutes of Medicine and Physiology at the University of Edinburgh, argued before the Royal Commission that even among dogs there are different levels of sensibility to pain. Dogs of different breeds, he explained, responded to similar operations in different ways: 'greyhounds and spaniels are exceedingly sensitive, and are thrown into great excitement by an operation which, if done on a sheep dog, or a mongrel dog, would scarcely produce any excitement at all. It is wonderful what one may do to a sheep dog without the animal making any commotion.'[35] Although both sides of the vivisection debate argued that appearances could not always be trusted as evidence of sensibility or insensibility to pain, both sides made reference to response as a clear indicator of whether an animal was suffering or not. This is hardly surprising, considering that expressions of some description are the only way of communicating pain, or anything else. The constant return to expression and response as evidence of suffering, despite the fact that it is not proof of such, is a reminder that in considering the interior experience of an animal (or a human, for that

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[34] 'Physiological Experiments: Vivisection', *Westminster Review*, 85 (1866), p. 137.
[35] Jesse, *Extracts*, p. 15.

matter), there must always be an imaginative leap, rather than a clear empirical path to follow from observation to conclusion.

The author of the *Westminster Review* article on animal sensibility went a step further than comparing the responses of one breed of dog to another to painful operations; it was argued in this article that humans of different backgrounds also experienced pain differently from one another. For this author, it seemed a logical extent of the argument that different animals respond to painful stimulus by different degrees - beyond this, the author believed that there was an entire hierarchy of sensibility that did not abruptly level with the human: 'The proposition, then, that the animal creation, not excepting even its higher classes, is immensely less sensitive to pain than is mankind, is one which we believe will not admit of serious dispute; but it is worthy of notice in this connection that the degree of sensibility to pain even in mankind varies directly with the increase of civilization'.[36] Here, the author provides anecdotes from medical men who had treated men of different races, and argues that doctors had much 'evidence' that an operation that would give a white man much pain would not upset an 'Arab'. One such doctor cites, for example, removed a bullet from the arm of an Arab without his patient making any expression of pain. The author presented this as evidence of a hierarchy of sensitivity according to refinement of sensibility, which did not only distinguish animals from humans, but also human from human. The social and/or racial 'superior' among humans, then, deserved special consideration not merely because of a constructed set of social rules, but also because an 'inferior', by definition, had less need of consideration.[37] Emotional prejudice was thus aligned with a kind of empiricism based upon regard; if the

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[36] *Westminster Review*, p. 136.
[37] For a discussion of the Victorian association of sensitivity to pain with civilized humanity, and insensitivity to pain (in humans) with the 'savage', see Bending, *Bodily Pain*, pp. 123-134.

observer did not notice (or care to notice) the suffering of another, it could be assumed that suffering did not occur.

It is now difficult to imagine how, based on appearances, a nineteenth-century doctor once concluded that different races of people had different levels of sensitivity and tolerance to pain. Indeed, as we have come to consider that race is socially and culturally constructed, such a claim would today be dismissed as absurd. Yet we might learn much about the relationship between the appearance of pain and the perception of another's pain, from the apparently wild racial assumptions of this doctor, who felt confident enough in his claim to submit it as testimony before the Royal Commission on Vivisection: appearances can be deceiving regarding the perception of another's pain, whether one is tempted to assume, based on appearances, the existence *or* the non-existence of pain in another individual.

J.Crichton Browne once explained in a letter to *The Times* that animal subjects of vivisection were often assumed to be in pain when they were not, because they gave outward indications that under normal circumstances would mean that they were experiencing pain. Likening the feline subjects of a specific vivisection to musical instruments, Browne argued that these animals were not in pain, but acting as if they were because of the parts of the brain that were being stimulated. He accused those who objected to the experiment of seeking the attentions of an ignorant public: 'All of this must have been well known to those who concocted the advertisement referred to, and yet they have not hesitated to deceive the public by representing mere automatic movements as indications of intense and protracted agony. To such base practices may not ill-judged enthusiasm, or a thirst for subscriptions, reduce even a benevolent

society.[38] Browne pointed out that the mystery of another's pain could be harnessed and used to persuade largely without restriction, since the existence of pain in another could not be disproved, even if it could not be proved, and the suggestion of the possibility of pain could have poignancy even without proof.

George Jesse's reply to Browne's letter, which, though it was never printed by *The Times*, he read before the Royal Commission on Vivisection, claimed that Browne substituted his credentials for proof that the cats in question were not feeling pain, and asked why, when the brains of animals were stimulated during experimentation, they did not exhibit signs of anything *but* pain: 'Browne's credulity permits him to affirm, though it is what he cannot possibly know, the creatures felt no more than a pianoforte, how was it the animal gave evidence of astonishment, anger, rage, and pain? . . . Why, then, when other "motor centres" were "stimulated" did not the cat evince signs of love and other feelings?'[39]

The previously mentioned author of the *Westminster Review* article supporting vivisection, explained that one thing regarding animals' pain, of which there could be certainty, was that many people did not understand it or perceive it correctly: 'The subject of pain, as it exists among the lower animals, is one upon which it is impossible to doubt but that a vast amount of misconception exists, not among the ignorant only, but also among the refined and highly educated'.[40] In addition, the author of this article argued that it was known that to rely upon appearances when arriving at conclusions regarding pain in animals could be misleading:

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[38] J.Crichton Browne, letter to *The Times*, 4 August 1875.
[39] Jesse's reply to J. Crichton Browne, unpublished by the *Times*; quoted by Jesse to the Royal Commission, and reproduced in his *Extracts*, p. 21.
[40] *Westminster Review*, p.134.

It is certain . . . that in any attempt to estimate the degree to which animals of various grades in creation are sensitive to pain, we must go beyond mere appearances or we shall be grossly misled. What are commonly spoken of as "the ordinary indications of pain" are all of them more or less fallacious. Every surgeon has seen men writhe and heard them groan under operations when he has known well that chloroform had rendered them perfectly insensible before they began.[41]

It is interesting to note the shift from the discussion of animal to human pain within the context of the Victorian debate over vivisection tended to occur without any sort of introduction, as if to speak of the human was to speak with certainty, even if the human one discussed was under anaesthesia. It is especially important to note that the human under anaesthesia lacks something that humans in most other situations do not, and that is language. Thus, the anaesthetized human, who complained of pain without the use of language, became the effortless substitute for the animal.

It was not only the supporters of vivisection who questioned the relationship between the existence of pain and the appearance of pain. Antivivisectionists were also mistrustful when appearance was offered as proof that an animal was not in pain.[42] Mostly, such suspicions concerned the effectiveness of anaesthesia. The advent of anaesthesia, of course, significantly changed all discussions of any kind of ethics regarding pain. If pain could be removed, did that not put an end to the question? The

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[41] *Westminster Review*, p.134.

[42] See Stewart Richards, 'Anaesthetics, Ethics, and Aesthetics: Vivisection in the Late Nineteenth-Century Laboratory', in Cunningham and Williams (eds), *The Laboratory Revolution,* pp. 142-169. Richards argues that one of the primary reasons physiologists were unable to mount an effective defence against antivivisectionist accusations of cruelty and brutality was that they failed to 'stress sufficiently the efficacy of anaesthetics' (p. 146).

problem was that sometimes an awareness of the existence of anaesthetics could allow people to be convinced that animals were not feeling any pain, when in fact they were. A strong belief that this was often the case, based upon his experiences as an assistant physiologist, caused George Hoggan to make some very strong statements: 'I am inclined to look upon anaesthetics as the greatest curse to vivisectable animals . . . They indeed prove far more efficacious in lulling public feeling toward the vivisectors than pain in the vivisected'.[43] One might imagine how a member of the public may have felt duped and outraged after reading Hoggan's letter in the *Morning Post* or its reprint in the *Spectator*, if formerly he or she had believed that vivisected animals were all effectively anaesthetized before any experiment began.

Hoggan explained to a horrified public that it was possible for a substance to induce the appearance of anaesthesia without actually dulling pain. He referred to a substance called 'curare', which (we now know) induces muscular paralysis without diminishing pain. During the nineteenth century, some argued that curare did actually act as an anaesthetic, but because it was poisonous, it was difficult to know for certain. Hoggan told of an experiment he witnessed conducted on the Continent, the subjects of which were administered curare, he argued, more for the benefit of the audience than for the animals themselves. These 'were supposed by those present to be insensible to [what was being done to them], while all the time the poor brutes were suffering double torture that the feelings of the audience might be spared'.[44] The idea that an animal in pain might, by the use of this substance, be rendered unable to move or cry out, proved inflammatory to the public imagination. What is more, the existence of such a substance

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[43] Hoggan, 'Vivisection'.
[44] Hoggan, 'Vivisection'.

called into question much of the use of 'anaesthetics' as a solution to the problem of pain in vivisection.

It was not only the effectiveness of curare as an anaesthetic that was questioned. While arguing that anaesthetics had indeed brought great benefits to humanity, Hoggan insisted that the benefits that anaesthetics had brought to the subjects of vivisections had been negligible:

> The incalculable advantages which mankind have derived from chloroform have remained a dead letter as it regards the lower animals, in consequence of the very unsatisfactory state of knowledge of the line which separates insensibility from death in those animals. Many of these die apparently before they can become insensible through chloroform . . .The practical consequence of this uncertainty is, that complete and conscientious anaesthesis is seldom even attempted, the animals getting at most a slight whiff of chloroform, by way of satisfying the conscience of the operator, or of enabling him to make statements of a humane character. We have also to bear in mind that when complete insensibility has been produced at the beginning of an operation, this effect only lasts for at most a minute or two, and during the rest of the experiment, lasting perhaps for hours, the animal must bear its torture as best it may.[45]

Now, the effect of 'anaesthesia', or painlessness, was not necessarily consequent of the *use* of anaesthetics (even in the case of substances, like chloroform, that were commonly used in humans and known to be generally effective). Arthur de Noé Walker explained to the Royal Commission on Vivisection: 'When an experimentor says . . . that "before

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[45] Hoggan, 'Vivisection'.

and throughout these experiments anaesthetics were used", it is perfectly true; but if by that you choose to believe that while the animal lived and was experimented upon, he was throughout insensible, it is the greatest delusion that ever was'.[46] Here, Walker suggested that one could choose, or not choose, to validate the possibility an animal's pain, which could not be absolutely known or proven.

Between pain and anaesthesia, many levels of suffering exist as represented by a vast and imprecise spectrum of language. Though a multitude of expressions allow for more explicit communication, none of the minute connotations of words used to describe pain will affix to any empirical reference point in order to provide any possibility of a standard definition. Thus, neither antivivisectionists nor supporters of vivisection had an easy time explaining the nuances of their arguments regarding the level of suffering experienced by vivisected animals. What did it even mean, and how much suffering would have to be present, even to declare that something was 'painful'? Sir William Fergusson, when he was questioned by John Colam at the Norwich vivisection trials, 'said that the injection of absinthe into the femoral vein would cause suffering in any animal, but how it would suffer it was impossible to say'[47] At the same trials, Thomas Tufnell, President of the Royal College of Surgeons of Ireland, tried to be more specific, but in doing so, only provided reasons *why* an animal would suffer in the same circumstances: 'The stomach is accustomed to receive a variety of things, but the vein only its particular fluid, and therefore the injection into the stomach by means of a tube would not cause pain'.[48] In making this claim, Tufnell was arguing in relative terms, as he meant to show that one vivisection in particular could have been performed more

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[46] Jesse, *Extracts*, p. 25.
[47] 'Account of the Norwich Vivisection Trial', *British Medical Journal*, II (1874), p. 753.
[48] 'Account of the Norwich Vivisection Trial', *British Medical Journal*, II (1874), p. 753.

humanely than it was. In more general terms, it was far more difficult to discuss, let alone to discuss how to regulate the levels and kinds of pain caused to animals by vivisection, because it was impossible to say, as Fergusson pointed out, exactly *how* they would suffer. This made it all the more difficult to decide what amount of animal suffering might be considered 'acceptable' in exchange for a certain potential benefit.

Some of the individuals called to give evidence before the Royal Commission on Vivisection were prepared to exploit the elusiveness of a standard definition of pain, offering some rather extraordinary interpretations of what is painful to an animal, when questioned on the subject. Frederick William Pavy, Physician to Guy's Hospital and Lecturer in physiology, was asked to give his opinion of the suffering that would be experienced by an animal - frog or human - when gradually boiled alive:

> 'But I suppose the healthy frog suffers very much the experience of being put into boiling water?'
>
> 'I should think not'.
>
> 'I suppose the frog would feel much what we should feel if we were to be put into water and the temperature gradually raised to the boiling point?'
>
> 'I think we should not feel any pain'.[49]

Although, to a certain extent, one can only wonder at Pavy's response, whether or not he really believed that even a human would not suffer pain if boiled alive, it is also possible to imagine that Pavy was attempting to redefine pain to suit his purpose, knowing how elusive it was to define.

Frances Sibson, Consulting Physician of St Mary's Hospital, also presented an interesting interpretation to the Royal Commission on Vivisection of circumstances

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[49] Jesse, *Extracts*, p. 9.

usually categorized as painful. The experience upon which he was asked to comment was that of starvation. Sibson did not claim that starvation did not involve any suffering whatsoever, but he insisted that he would not classify the level of suffering as 'pain':

'Would you say the same of Chossat's experiments of starving animals to death, that very little suffering was involved in those experiments?'

'I am very familiar with those experiments; I have been over them again and again, and I would say the very same of them, that there was very little suffering inflected on the animals by the process of starvation to which they were subjected by Chossat'.

'Then do you mean that when, sailors are exposed to the process of starvation, from the loss of their vessel, what they go through can only be described as discomfort or inconvenience, and does not merit the name of extreme pain?'

'I should say so, certainly'.[50]

Though puzzling in its own right, Sibson's response sheds light on that of Pavy's, in that both arguments sought to define what would constitute a 'painful' (or 'extremely painful') experience according to very rigid criteria.

Pavy and Sibson understood that it was this criteria against which the proposed benefits of vivisection would be measured, in order to determine whether and in what circumstances a 'balance' between its good and its evil could be achieved. Once it was accepted that there could be some motivation among physiologists for the good that could come to humanity (rather than only the good that could come to their own careers)

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[50] Jesse, *Extracts*, p. 9.

through vivisection, there was indefinite room for interpretation of the pain that such 'good' would cost to animals. Of course, antivivisectionists did not accept that to endeavour to achieve such a 'balance' in vivisection was a right goal - whether because they did not believe that such positive motivation existed, because they did not think that the good could be worth the evil, or because they did not trust the slippage between the force of motivation for professional advancement and the interpretation of pain. The only goal of antivivisection was to prevent the pain caused to animals by vivisection, regardless of what reasons a physiologist might have had to undertake to cause it.

It is difficult to determine which question tends to be asked first (or which should be asked first): why does one cause pain to another, or does it matter why? The concept of 'cruelty' considers both questions at once, incorporating motivation into an abstraction of power and pain relationships that is already a judgment. However it is defined, 'cruelty' always considers motivation, and is always a judgment. It is important to note that even before motivation becomes a part of the deeper abstraction of 'cruelty', it is invisible and unverifiable by empirical means. As such, the perception of motivation is almost wholly dependent upon language and the imagination, as we have seen in previous chapters. Yet, perhaps because it is such a protean concept, and elusive as it has to be in order to consider both of the above questions at the same time, 'cruelty' is the concept to which legal and ethical discourse arguably clings the most readily, as if to seek refuge from the empirical when feelings are the urgent imperative. This also means, of course, that 'cruelty' is as difficult to 'prove' as it is to define.

Of everyone who was involved in the Victorian discussion of vivisection, Frances Power Cobbe probably spent the most energy defining cruelty. In *The Modern Rack,*

Cobbe stated that 'CRUELTY may be objectively defined as *the voluntary infliction by a Moral Free Agent on a Sentient Being of severe Pain, not beneficent to the sufferer and not authorised by Justice*'.[51] After adding her own supplementary definitions of the words 'beneficent' and 'justice', Cobbe launched into what she termed a 'subjective' definition of cruelty, which comprised a number of classes into which 'cruel' acts could be placed. These are actually types of cruelty resulting from various deficiencies of human character: ignorant cruelty, of which the perpetrator is unaware; careless cruelty, to which he or she is indifferent; wanton cruelty, which is inflicted for the purpose of excitement or spectacle; malignant cruelty, inflicted out of hatred; and interested cruelty, which is inflicted for the perpetrator's own benefit. These categories do not mention any particular act or kind of act that must be performed, nor do they specify the type, degree, or level of pain that must be inflicted in order for an act to qualify as 'cruel'. Instead, the focus is upon the cause or motivation behind the pain that is inflicted.

Cobbe's 'objective' definition of cruelty is problematized by the necessity of the interpretation of any and all of its clauses. The most striking of these is the suggestion that exceptions may be 'authorised by Justice', but, as we have seen, with regard to non-human animals, the meaning of 'severe pain' and even of 'sentient' could also be thrown open to debate, because animals cannot use human language to express or to contradict what is said about them and what they do or do not feel. It is arguable that Cobbe's 'objectivity' was informed by her own deeply religious sensibility, which would likely consider 'Justice' (as well as the 'truth' about such concepts as sentience and pain) to be

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[51] Cobbe, *The Modern Rack,* p. 62.

rooted in divine 'Truth' and thus above petty dispute. [52] Cobbe realized, though, that this 'objectivity' (despite the fact that it is, to her, simple reality) could hardly stand according to the rules of secular empiricism, and so she supplied her secondary, 'subjective' definition of cruelty. Cobbe may well have meant to suggest that the popularly scientific and legal rules, according to which she had to argue, were not interested in real, 'objective Truth'. Rather, she had to approach the definition of cruelty *as if* it were an abstract concept.

Cobbe understood that even outside of any legislative proceedings, the debate over vivisection tended toward a quasi-legal tone, likely to avoid depending upon sentiment and abstract 'belief' (though certainly, not all antivivisectionists did so) in favour of hard evidence that could not be easily dismissed as emotional rhetoric, despite the difficulty faced by both factions in establishing empirical facts to support their respective arguments. In distinguishing between 'objective' and 'subjective' definitions of cruelty, Cobbe attended to the practical matter of proof, while she insisted upon reserving a larger, more important, more intuitive reality that would nevertheless be reviled as unreasonable both in the British courts and the legal culture of popular, secular debate. Still, Cobbe often proved unafraid to speak of a spiritual and moral reality, as she perceived it, rather than restrict herself to 'facts' or 'evidence' that could be demonstrated and proven. Thus, she engaged warmly at times against circumstances that would, to her, indicate cruelty in its 'objective' sense - an appeal directly to the hearts of others whom she believed to harbour a similar intuitive knowledge of the ultimate (or 'objective')

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[52] Throughout her career, Cobbe published extensively on the subjects of religion and spirituality. Though her theology was often unorthodox, Cobbe's religious works were somewhat influential. Her 1884 defence of the spiritual life was even admired by the likes of William Gladstone. For a thorough investigation of Cobbe's spirituality, see Mitchell, *Frances Power Cobbe*, pp. 63-83.

difference between right and wrong, in the hopes that feeling might override 'facts'. Of course, this exposed her to some ridicule (then, as now) as an overemotional and unreasonable zealot for the cause of antivivisection.

Cruelty to animals had been officially outlawed in 1822 under the Martin's Act.[53] As such, the word 'cruelty' had not only ethical connotations, but distinctly legal ones as well. Of course, the Martin's Act did not outlaw all acts which caused pain to animals (nor did it, incidentally, protect cats, dogs, or birds). The pain that was caused to an animal by a certain act was not enough to classify that act as cruel. Cobbe herself justified many uses of animals that cause them to come to harm; she was (and, indeed, still is) commonly criticized for her support of other practices that caused pain or death to animals, and most especially for her consumption of meat. In 'The Right of Tormenting', Cobbe explained the difference as between pain (or death) and torture: 'The hours of its keen and excessive agony outweigh immeasurably all its poor little harmless joys of food and sunshine, and the love of its master and its offspring. It were well for that creature had it never been born.'[54] As we have seen, however, the existence of pain, though easy enough to recognize and to assume, is much more difficult to prove - how much more so the difference between 'pain' and 'severe pain'?

Though it is possible that she wrote more than anyone else on the subject of the definition of cruelty, Cobbe was far from the only person in Victorian Britain who was concerned with determining what it meant to label a particular act as cruel, as well as whether, and to what extent vivisection was cruel. As witnesses were chosen and

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[53] The Act to Prevent the Cruel and Improper Treatment of Cattle, or 'Martin's Act', was passed in 1822. The first legislation passed to protect animals from cruelty, it was championed by the Irish Member of Parliament Richard Martin [1754-1834]. See Hilda Kean, *Animal Rights: Political and Social Change in Britain since 1800* (London: Reaktion Books, 1998), pp. 33-35.
[54] Frances Power Cobbe, *The Right of Tormenting* (London: Victoria Street Society, 1884).

interviewed for the purpose of gathering evidence for the 1875 Report of the Royal

Commission on Vivisection, many of the questions they were asked sought to discover

the motivations behind the practice of vivisection. The witnesses were made to defend

the motivations behind any vivisections they had performed, as well as their beliefs about

the motivations of others, in order that they might provide evidence regarding the cruelty

of specific vivisections, as well as of vivisection in general, despite the fact that the

definition of cruelty was itself fraught with difficulty and disagreement. Arthur de Noé

Walker, a medical professional who was against vivisection, declared to the commission

that he considered that vivisections were sometimes performed without good reason, and

were therefore cruel. He was then pressed by a member of the commission to provide

convincing proof of his assertion, especially since it amounted to an accusation that

would have been necessarily directed at respectably educated individuals. Instead of

attempting to provide empirical evidence by way of example in this instance, Walker

remained fixed within the realm of concepts, as if avoiding the temptation: ' "Are we to

take it as your opinion that eminent Physiologists, whose time is valuable, perform such

experiments with no object whatsoever, and for mere wantonness?" "My reply is, that a

certain number of experiments performed by them I deem to be wanton cruelty".'[55]

Interestingly, George Jesse would later extract this dialogue in order to present his own

kind of 'evidence' to a wider public, so that they might interpret the dialogue themselves,

and gather meaning from the silences.

Witnesses also gave more direct answers regarding the motivations behind

vivisections. The more direct the response, however, the more speculative it had to be, if

the speaker was not speaking exclusively about his or her own actions. John Anthony,

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[55] Jesse, *Extracts*, p. 25.

another medical professional with sentiments against vivisection, was not quite ready to demonize those of his colleagues who practised vivisection: 'I think it is not from want of feeling, but they do not think about it. They want to know something, and the creature is utilised for that particular purpose.'[56] According to Cobbe's definition of cruelty, this would fall into both the categories of careless and of interested cruelty. Of course, Cobbe's definition was hardly a standard to which the commissioners uniformly adhered. Yet, Anthony's statement demonstrates the difficulty with which many grappled in trying to define what it meant for a human to be cruel, since to be cruel would be to deny or to be without human feeling, in some way. Anthony tried to make a very sharp distinction between 'feeling' and 'thinking', suggesting that physiologists who vivisected animals simply prioritized their motivation to learn over their impulse to feel pity. Was this not cruelty? If not, certainly the reasons for the performance of the vivisection would have had to have been very good ones. But who was to decide which reasons were good ones? Supporters of vivisection asserted that educated scientists were necessarily humane enough to make their own decisions. Antivivisectionists, however, insisted that individuals who could shut off their feelings so easily were not fit to make such a decision, as it relied so heavily upon feeling. Further, antivivisectionists argued that scientists would be biased toward the advancement of science over the welfare of the animal. Physiologists argued the opposite; that antivivisectionists would be biased against science. In addition, they insisted that no one but a scientist was fit to determine the importance of a particular experiment.

Cobbe argued that the impulse to have compassion, though learned, was learned independently of the sort of scientific education a physiologist could claim. She insisted

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[56] Jesse, *Extracts*, p. 11.

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that, in fact, physiological education through vivisection could cause compassion to be 'unlearned' in a way that would inspire a forgetfulness of the traditional bonds of affection between domesticated animal and human master. Interestingly, Cobbe proved willing to rhetorically sacrifice less favoured groups of animals for the sake of cherished cats and dogs:

> But it is impossible to regard this subject as if it were an abstract ethical problem. The vivisection of dull reptiles and wild rats and rabbits, wherewith the elder generation of students generally contented themselves is not alone in question, nor even that of the heavy beasts in our pastures. By some strange and sinister fatality the chosen victims at present are the most intelligent and friendly of our domestic favourites—the cats who purr in love and confidence as they sit beside us on the hearth; the dogs whose faithful hearts glow with an affection for us, truer and fonder than we may easily find in any human breast.[57]

Cobbe's inconsistency, however, is arguably less interesting than her insistence upon the immediacy of feeling and its priority over strict logic. For Cobbe, vivisection specifically ignored a very real connection between human and animal. The case of domesticated animals offered the best proof that the practice of vivisection disregarded, purposefully shut down, and ultimately quashed empathy, exactly because it was a case that had a special pleading. Whether it was right or wrong that domesticated animals were more likely than other animals to provoke emotion in human beings was, according to Cobbe, just another obtuse question that got in the way of ethical human impulses. Thus, for

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[57] Frances Power Cobbe, *The Moral Aspects of Vivisection* (London: Williams and Norgate, 1875). It must be said that elsewhere in her writings, Cobbe did advocate the welfare of wild species and less popular animals, such as rodents and frogs.

Cobbe, if it felt wrong, it probably was wrong - unless one had been taught 'wrong' feeling (which, for her, was undoubtedly a spiritual or religious matter, rooted in some simple, if mysterious, divine Truth). Over-discussion, as such, stripped from the knowledge of pain its sense of urgency; to delay the remedy was to prolong the suffering.

It was just this simplicity with which the experimental physiologists of Cobbe's time took exception. Appealing and 'natural' as it may have seemed to many people that ethical decisions should be dictated by feeling, supporters of vivisection argued that only individuals educated beyond this level of sophistication could assess the relative evils and prospective benefits associated with vivisection, by which they could achieve a nobler, if far more complicated, system of ethics. Decisions made accordingly would necessarily be painful ones. In order to demonstrate this, the physiologists called before the Royal Commission on Vivisection often made reference to their own fondness for animals. G.M. Humphry, for example, provided as evidence of his sensitivity to animals' suffering, his reasons for abandoning the practice of hunting for sport, as he could not justify the evils of shooting the hunted game with any larger benefit to humanity: 'I may mention for my own part that I was very fond of shooting, and one of the things which ultimately led to my giving it up altogether, was the pain consequent on it to animals, the lingering suffering of the animals after they were wounded'.[58] Significantly, many male antivivisectionists often cited their relationships with their hunting dogs as the source of their disgust with the practice of vivisection.[59] These argued, as Cobbe did in her defence of meat consumption, that the degree of pain caused to animals by shooting them was not

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[58] Evidence of G.M. Humphry, British Parliamentary Papers [1397] XLI, *Royal Commission on Vivisection* (1876), p.331.
[59] Thomas Tufnell, who interrupted the vivisection that led to the prosecutions at Norwich, and cut the restraints of the dog that was subject, phrased his denunciation: 'I am a sportsman as well as a surgeon, and I will never see a dog bullied'. *British Medical Journal*, II (1874), p. 752.

comparable to the pain caused by vivisection. However, for many physiologists, like Humphry, it was the motivation behind the act that really mattered.

In discussing his decision to forsake his enjoyment of hunting in order to save animals from unnecessary pain, Humphry silently underscored his belief in the necessity of vivisection, suggesting that he always considered the pain that his actions caused to animals, both in and out of the laboratory, and perhaps even hinting that his experiences as a physiologist rendered him more sensitive than others to animals' pain. In effect, Humphry emphasized the difference of the experience, and so the ethics, of the physiologist as a medical scientist. While he attempted to explain the ethical decisions that he and his colleagues were forced to make, he also suggested that the ethical world inhabited by physiologists was far too complicated to have been accessible to most other individuals. According to this argument, it was the physiologist who was denied connection, and who could be easily misunderstood. Persecuted by both popular and now, legislative forces, the only way he could defend his actions to a mistrustful world is to present for consideration the decisions he had made outside of his laboratory. According to Humphry, he could only hope that through the evaluation of his personal character, outside of the laboratory, the world would come to trust him, though they could never understand.

Perhaps the strongest argument against such a position as Humphry's came from other doctors who were opposed to vivisection. While these may have been individually vulnerable to critique on the basis of their science, Humphry hardly could have called them wholly ignorant of medical practice. As we have already seen, not all medical professionals promoted or supported vivisection. Neither were all other

antivivisectionists ignorant of science. John Colam [1826?-1910], then secretary of the RSPCA, based what were arguably the most important accusations of the entire Victorian controversy over vivisection upon the grounds that a series of vivisections performed upon dogs utilized bad science.[60] Colam argued that these experiments, conducted in Norwich in 1874 with the aim of demonstrating the epileptic effects of absinthe, favoured ease and quickness over both the welfare of the subjects and the validity of the results. Colam claimed that both charges rendered the experiments 'cruel' and subject to prosecution under Martin's Act. The absinthe was administered to the animals by injection into the femoral vein, which was argued by Colam to have been more painful to the dogs, as well as less useful to medical science, than if it had been administered by other means. The court proceedings paraphrase Colam: 'The insertion of this noxious fluid into the stomach was one thing, but inserting it into a vein was another; and he submitted that the analogy was destroyed by the mode in which this experiment had been performed. If it had been injected into the stomach, he was not prepared to say whether these proceedings would have been taken. He could not, however, say whether this would have been so or not'.[61]

It is important to note that throughout the course of the late nineteenth century, the RSPCA had a very uneasy relationship with antivivisection. While the RSPCA never really sanctioned vivisection, at least not without exception, neither did it ever officially oppose the practice unconditionally. This relative neutrality was often read by

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[60] John Colam served as secretary of the RSPCA from 1861 until 1905. He was a shrewd leader and strategist, not well liked by those who, like Frances Power Cobbe (and Henry Salt, who was an anti-hunting activist and a strong advocate of vegetarianism), would have preferred the RSPCA take stronger positions regarding more radical animal welfare reforms. See Brian Harrison, 'John Colam', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

[61] 'Account of the Norwich Vivisection Trial', *British Medical Journal*, II (1874), p. 752.

antivivisectionists as a betrayal, and the issue proved divisive as well as frustrating for many supporters of animal welfare reform. That said, it is also important to recognize the important role that Colam and the RSPCA played in the focusing of popular attention upon the problem of the ethics of vivisection. Richard French argues that if Colam had not prosecuted the physiologists at Norwich, there never would have been much of a Victorian antivivisection movement, despite however specifically these particular physiologists might have been targeted for their carelessness in this instance.[62]

Neither the supporters nor the opponents of vivisection united to adhere to any standard position. Many of those who opposed vivisection were simply not prepared to accept science or medicine as a good enough reason to cause the degree of pain to animals that they believed vivisection to cause. However, if many were unprepared to accept any kind of vivisection performed for any reason, arguably many more were prepared to acknowledge the need for legislation that would ensure that vivisections were performed only for the best reasons, and caused as little suffering as possible. Further, antivivisectionists did not always uniformly oppose other practises, which caused animal suffering, such as hunting and eating meat. As we have seen, some antivivisectionists, like Frances Power Cobbe, did not necessarily consider other uses of animals to be wrong, including killing them for meat, or even sport. Thus, supporters of vivisection were quick to compare vivisection to many other different uses of animals, which would cause animal suffering or death in order to save human life. The supporter of vivisection who anonymously authored the mentioned *Westminster Review* previously mentioned in this chapter asked his readers: 'Does any reasonable man doubt that he may lawfully ride

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[62] French, *Antivivisection*, p. 70.

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a horse to death to save a human life, whether his own or another's?'[63] This question,

which has nothing to do with experimental physiology, and everything to do with the

respective value of human and animal life, operates according to the assumption that the

benefits and motivations behind vivisections were always good.   Some reformers, while

they agreed that human life was worth more than animal life, were not prepared to make

those assumptions about the good intentions of experimental physiologists and the life-

saving benefits of vivisection. James MacCauley, for example, wrote in a religious tract

entitled 'A Plea for Mercy to Animals', in 1875:

> The advancement of human knowledge and happiness may rightly supersede the
>
> claims of the lower animals, but we must examine how far these benefits are real.
>
> The advancement of the healing art, for example, might warrant the adoption of
>
> experiments on living animals, but we must be satisfied that the results of
>
> vivisection are such as justify the practice of it, and that these results can be
>
> obtained in no other way.[64]

Though he was willing to accept that physiologists may be justified in causing animals to

suffer if it would truly bring about progress in medicine, MacCauley was also deeply

suspicious of the real benefits achieved by experimental physiology. Such a point of

view required solid proof of the advantages of vivisection. Someone like MacCauley was

unlikely to trust unconditionally in the good intentions of those who carried out

experiments on animals. Instead of doubting the intelligence of experimental

physiologists and their ability to recognize the worth of their findings, MacCauley

questioned their sincerity and the motivations behind their research.

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[63] *Westminster Review*, p.137.
[64] James MacCauley, *A Plea for Mercy to Animals* (London: Religious Tract Society, 1875), p. 10.

But why else, besides for the benefit of humanity, would one possibly perform vivisections upon animals? Dr George Hoggan, who worked as an assistant to prominent experimental physiologist Claude Bernard, made some harsh claims regarding the true motivations of his ex-colleagues in the vivisection laboratory, in his incendiary letter to the *Morning Post*: 'The idea of the good of humanity was simply out of the question, and would have been laughed at, the great aim being to keep up with, or get ahead of, one's contemporaries in science'.[65] Here was the stark opinion of one who had worked among experimental physiologists as one of them, before his conscience got the better of him. Hoggan's letter made experimental physiology seem something of a conspiracy - was the goal of the welfare of humanity just a ruse? If practitioners of vivisection were indeed conspirators, they did not demonstrate any real solidarity as they testified before the Royal Commission on Vivisection. It seems to have been impossible to have persuaded any one physiologist interviewed by the commission to make any statement of support for the ethics of any group of experiments or kinds of vivisections that were not performed by themselves or their closest colleagues. In fact, many of the physiologists called to testify seemed very willing to critique the ethics of vivisections practised by others; finger-pointing was not uncommon. Rather than making broad statements in support of vivisection, as witnesses, these physiologists were prepared to defend their own work, but not the work of others. And though many of the English physiologists often found fault with the ethical standards of vivisections performed by their countrymen, they frequently proved even more eager to denounce the ethics and practices of continental physiologists, most popularly one by the name of Francois Magendie.

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[65] Hoggan, 'Vivisection'.

What if medical science *could* prove the good intentions of experimental physiologists and the benefits of vivisection to humanity, beyond any doubt? Some, such as Frances Power Cobbe, insisted that this would never have swayed her from opposing vivisection. Cobbe doubted that vivisection benefited humanity as much as some physiologists claimed, but she also firmly believed that the degree of pain caused to animals by vivisection could never be justified: 'But even *if* I be mistaken—if vivisectors have already made or shall hereafter make discoveries, tending directly and importantly to relieve our bodily pains, even *then* would Vivisection, I ask, stand justified? Not so my friends, assuredly. Bodily health, relief from pain, prolongation of life, are not the only or the greatest good to be sought by man.'[66] In suggesting 'the greatest good to be sought by man', Cobbe directed attention toward spiritual goodness, reminding her reader that before any benefits were achieved by vivisection, humanity would be required to inflict the opposite of what it sought to gain - causing sickness, pain, and death.

It is not extraordinary that Cobbe should have valued spiritual over bodily 'health'. As Boyd Hilton has demonstrated, many individuals living in the late eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries believed in an economy of atonement, whereby spiritual shortcomings were offset by earthly sufferings, borne with patience in order to expiate sin.[67] It must also be noted that in giving testimony before the Royal Commission on Vivisection, experimental physiologists often reflected this same paradigm of atonement. As we have seen, physiologists like G. M. Humphrys spoke of suffering themselves at the necessity of putting animals in pain through vivisection, as if it were their own sacrifice made for the greater good of medical science. Perhaps, though,

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[66] Cobbe, *Tormenting*.
[67] See Boyd Hilton, *The Age of Atonement: The Influence of Evangelicalism on Social and Economic Thought, 1785-1865* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992).

George Henry Lewes expressed this belief the most eloquently when he explained to the Commission that in vivisection, 'the pain is in the wounding and not the wound.'[68] By encouraging identification with the suffering animal subject of vivisection, Cobbe sought to edify the human spirit before regarding the ailments of the human body. Her attempt to consider the necessarily alien perspective of the animal in pain was quite consistent with her otherworldly beliefs about what was good for humans; to look inward from the outside fosters spiritual development rather than the empirical knowledge gained from use of the senses.

Cobbe tried her best to imagine, and to encourage others to imagine, what might have been the perspective of an animal subject to vivisection. She turned to religious ideas in order to persuade her readers to think beyond a human-centred perspective. Rather than relying upon scriptural teachings to communicate her lesson, Cobbe chose in this instance to utilize the idea of beings that were greater than humanity in order to construct an imaginative universe: 'Let us fancy superior beings—angels, or God Himself—treating *us* in like manner; accepting our humble services, drawing forth our adoring love and fidelity, and then coldly consigning us to the torture chambers whence we shall never escape!'[69] As she could hardly hope to prove what it would be like to be in the position of an animal liable to vivisection, Cobbe tried to get people to imagine a position of strength above themselves; religion provided a kind of cultural currency from which Cobbe could draw a common notion of the vulnerability of humanity to a higher power. Cobbe assumed that most people will at some point in their lives have felt helpless, powerless, or vulnerable; what is more, she knew that most would have been

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[68] Evidence of George Henry Lewes, British Parliamentary Papers [1397] XLI, *Royal Commission on Vivisection* (1876), p. 611.

[69] Cobbe, *Tormenting*.

taught, as she was taught, to fear and to hope for mercy from a greater Being with absolute power over life. As such, it was no great step to ask them to imagine what it might be like if God suddenly 'turned' and treated them as they had done to His creatures. At the same time, Cobbe accused experimental physiologists of 'playing God' with the animals in their care, thus establishing a sort of allegorical world that would have been readily accessible to most by a common faith as well as by an awareness of the ultimate ignorance of humanity regarding the mysteries of life and the universe, despite so many advances in science.

Cobbe dramatized this allegorical world into *Science in Excelsis: A New Vision of Judgment.* A most unusual sort of tract, *Science in Excelsis* reads as a play. In it, a group of angels perform vivisections upon a group of physiologists. Only the Angel of Mercy objects. As she is dismissed by the others as ignorant and weak, with specific reference to her sex, the Archangel Rafael supplies her with reasons for the physiological exploration of humans. He exalts the noble search for knowledge and doubts whether humans are really very sensitive to pain, before declaring that in fairness, physiologists themselves will be the subjects of the same vivisections they performed upon animals on earth. The angels then discuss amongst themselves which of the physiologists' own experiments will be tried upon each of them. Cobbe interjected instructions read from specifically referenced physiological works, into the angels' dialogue:

We must first take off the Professor's spectacles, and then

'scrape the cornea of the eye, so as to remove the epithelium completely.

Hereupon, the caustic is to be rubbed two or three times lightly over the whole

surface, after which the eye is washed with saline solution, and the animal (or

professor) is left to itself for twenty or thirty minutes'—

during which interval spectators have recorded that it is apt to perform antics of a

very diverting description.[70]

The effect of Cobbe's bold tract is to afford an eerily visual, palpable representation of

vivisection from the perspective of the subject. No doubt the subtitle, *A New Vision of

Judgment'*, suggests her intent to encourage her readers to try on a new and imaginative

perspective, inviting them to become playwrights of the possibility of animal experience.

Cobbe and her fellow antivivisectionists knew that there was a significant chasm

between the debate over the 'facts' of vivisection and the experience of witnessing its

reality. Since it was not possible to bring people into vivisection laboratories in order

that they might witness for themselves what happened behind their locked doors,

antivivisectionists had to make the most of the information that could be gathered from

physiological writings, incorporating, as we have seen, the sparse testimony of those few

non-supporters of vivisection who had actually been given the opportunity to witness

vivisections, that they might construct such a visual tableau as would communicate

scenes of vivisections as interpreted according to antivivisectionist perspective. In *The

Moral Aspects of Vivisection*, Cobbe illustrated the emotional connection that she

believed to exist between humans and dogs, using only vague testimony, but testimony

that nonetheless invoked familiar experiences that many people would have had with

dogs, in order to communicate the pathos of betrayal in vivisection:

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[70] Frances Power Cobbe, *Science in Excelsis: A New Vision of Judgment* (London: Victoria Street Society, 1875).

So deeply rooted, indeed, is this faith in man in the case of the dogs that those who have witnessed the scenes in the laboratories of physiologists testify that the brutes can scarcely be made to understand that it is intended to hurt and kill them, but still try after hours of agony to lick the hands of their tormentor, and plead with him for mercy with their beseeching eyes when their limbs are all fastened down and immovable on the operating table.[71]

Not only was it likely that Cobbe's reader would have witnessed a dog entreating a human by licking their hands, but it was also likely that many would have at some point observed a dog acting submissive despite having been ill-treated. Cobbe assumed that her audience would have had this sort of familiarity with dogs and so would have been able to follow her visual representation of the pathos of vivisection.

Those who had witnessed vivisections often did not feel that they could effectively communicate the experience to others who had not. Henry MacCormac, Consulting Physician to Belfast Hospital, wrote in 1868: 'Ah! There are things about vivisection that cannot be committed to paper, the agonising, if inarticulate intreating, the groans, the pantings, and the cries, the paws even of the poor brutes being cast round the neck of the hardened operator.'[72] Rather than try to describe one scene, McCormac listed bits of empirical information that have affected him emotionally. He conjured these sights and sounds as if conjuring demons that haunt him. Placing them in a list surrounded and bombarded the reader with all of the worst of MacCormac's experiences with vivisection. To the individual who had never witnessed a vivisection, he presented an alternative to the construction of a scene. The result was less realistic, in effect, than

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[71] Cobbe, *Moral Aspects.*
[72] Henry MacCormac, 'On Vivisection', *Medical Press and Circular*, 1 (1868), p. 281.

Cobbe's description of the betrayal of the submissive dog who continued to lick the hand of the vivisector, but it was far more nightmarish. It is arguable that MacCormac's medical qualifications gave him the added credibility that one would have needed in order to convincingly present his reader with such a nightmare sequence of impressions.

If, as MacCormac argued, it was impossible to understand the true extent of the horrors of vivisection without witnessing them oneself, how could antivivisectionists ever hope to communicate their message to people who had never been inside a physiological laboratory? The secrecy with which vivisections were performed was antivivisection's biggest obstacle, but it also provided antivivisection with one of its most convincing platforms: why, if experimental physiologists were not ashamed of their work or afraid of public censure, were the operations not made more public? As we have seen, physiologists argued that it took a mind thoroughly educated in the physiological sciences to understand the true purpose of physiology - to see beyond its immediate evils to grasp the greater humanitarian rewards. Physiologists faced a problem, however, in that in order to disseminate the knowledge attained by vivisection, they needed to publish the results of their experiments. A.S. Taylor explained to the Royal Commission: 'we must steer between two difficulties, on the one hand of not making these matters too public, but at the same time giving enough to inform professional men. I have endeavoured to do that in a work on poisons lately published, that is to say, to give professional men knowledge, without giving knowledge to the public.'[73] In this statement Taylor compared the dissemination of dangerous knowledge about poisons to the provision of too much information to the public regarding vivisection. It is arguable that Taylor

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[73] Evidence of A.S. Taylor, British Parliamentary Papers [1397] XLI, *Royal Commission on Vivisection* (1875), p. 356.

meant to imply that too much information about vivisection was poisonous to a mind without or with too little education in the physiological sciences.

No doubt Taylor would have considered Cobbe's *Light in Dark Places* a poisonous piece of work. Largely comprised of illustrations taken from books by physiologists, Cobbe stated that the purpose behind this work was 'to convey . . . ocular illustration of the meaning of the much disputed word *Vivivsection*'.[74] The title suggests that bringing visual information about vivisection to the public would expose the secretive world of the physiological laboratory. With this title Cobbe also implied that if this task were ever wholly completed, the 'light' of liberation would enter into the 'darkness' of that same laboratory, as a public wholly enlightened about the horrors of vivisection would not rest until this were accomplished. Cobbe pointed out, as MacCormac also argued, that words were not sufficient to describe vivisection. In order to grasp its atrocity, one needed to see:

> Some of the tools and some of the furniture of the physiological laboratory, various modes of fastening the victims, and a selection of instances of divers experiments, have been arranged with the view of affording the reader by a few moments' inspection a truer idea of the work of the work of the 'torture chambers of science' than can be obtained by the perusal of a vast quantity of letter-press description.[75]

Cobbe noted that all of her reproductions come from the 'standard works of eminent physiologists' - by this we may assume that the works were somewhat easily accessible.[76] But who would be looking in a physiological handbook or textbook besides a

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[74] Frances Power Cobbe, *Light in Dark Places* (London: Victoria Street Society, 1883).
[75] Cobbe, *Dark Places*.
[76] Cobbe, *Dark Places*.

physiologist? Cobbe, in this instance, capitalized upon the very weakness expounded by A.S. Taylor; namely, that physiologists needed to publish their work, and that their need to publish most often outweighed the necessity of keeping graphic images of their work from the sight of a public that was likely to 'misunderstand' it.

Was it entirely desirable, even for an antivivisectionist, to persistently thrust graphic images, or even graphic descriptions, of vivisection into the face of individuals who might have been deeply disturbed by such materials? Just as today, exposing people to disturbing images and similarly upsetting information in order to persuade them to support a cause could as easily drive them away as achieve its intended purpose of attracting supporters. Despite the fact that he extracted many of the more disturbing passages from the Royal Commission on Vivisection, for a publication that was likely to reach a wider audience than was likely to peruse the whole of the legislative proceedings, George Jesse chose to spare his audience the very worst. To an ellipses in a passage he extracted regarding experiments where puppies were intentionally drowned, Jesse appended a footnote: 'This portion of evidence is omitted here, because though it ought to have had great weight with the Royal Commissioners as proving the demoralizing result on the mind of these practices, the details are too loathsome for general readers'.[77] Though the briefest perusal of Jesse's extracts may cause one to wonder how Jesse could have been at all protective of the sensitivity of his readers, it is clear that he was aware he trod a thin line between exciting the compassion of his readers and making them sick.

It was also a problem that such graphic expositions as were likely to comprise the texts of antivivisectionists could excite morbid fascination in some readers. Cobbe commonly referenced this as 'schadenfreude', or the taking of pleasure in the form of a

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[77] Jesse, *Extracts*, p. 43.

thrill at witnessing the pain of others. There was, though, and is little that can be done about this problem, as there is no escaping it when the plight of a sufferer needs to be exposed so that that individual may gain the support of others. It does, however, prompt one to ask whether censorship of such information, such as practised by George Jesse in suppressing the details of the intentional drowning of puppies, was done more for the benefit of the audience or the subject, as much now as in the nineteenth century.

Victorian antivivisectionists and physiologists both struggled to communicate on behalf of animals. The sufferings of the animal subjects of vivisection could only be imagined, rather than proven, since animals could not speak for themselves, and since vivisections were not generally performed in public. Both of these factors increased the poignancy of the plight of these animals. Faced with impending legislation against vivisection, physiologists needed to offer an alternative interpretation of the reality of vivisection to the one presented by antivivisectionists. Physiologists claimed that they had a better right to define and interpret animal experiences than antivivisectionists, because most antivivisectionists were not educated in the science of animals' bodies. Antivivisectionists claimed that compassion, rather than scientific education, was the most important qualification for speaking on behalf of animals. Both physiologists and antivivisectionists cautioned against relying upon appearances as a means of determining whether or not an animal was suffering. The particular barriers to knowledge of the experiences of the animal subjects of vivisection - the voicelessness of these animals, and the secrecy with which vivisections were often performed - made this debate a rich site for Victorians to work with and through empathy.

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Chapter 6:

Horse Sense: Understanding the Working Horse in Victorian London

The animal subjects of vivisection were not only without a voice, but they were kept

hidden from the sight of anyone who might speak out against their suffering.   Not all

animal suffering, however, was done in secret in the nineteenth century. In this chapter I

will consider texts that focus upon horses, who were particularly visible to the public

during this period. The exploitation of horses in the nineteenth century was as crucial to

Victorian society as the animals themselves were accessible to view; horses provided

labour to pull carriages and especially cabs, a most important means of transportation in

the nineteenth-century city. Coral Lansbury even argues that 'generally, in the nineteenth

century, if people were asked for the most obvious instance of cruelty to animals, then

[the] spectacle of a beaten and exhausted horse would have answered'.[1] Working horses

were not alone in their labour - nor, often, in their suffering, since horses had to be

driven. Drivers who made a living by providing hackney carriage transportation were

among the lowest class of workers, and certainly the least popular. Cab drivers were an

oppressed group of people in the nineteenth century, and they were viewed with all the

more disdain because of the visible suffering of the horses they drove. In my final

chapter I will examine texts by authors who attempted to understand and speak out for

the working horse in the nineteenth century, juxtaposing these texts with others that try to

understand the experiences of the driver, and to make sense of his position and his role.

I suggest that complex network of relationships surrounding the Victorian

working horse, especially within the urban space, represented the opposite end of the

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[1] Lansbury, *Old Brown Dog*, p. 63.

spectrum of animal suffering with regard to vivisection; the suffering of horses was

public, widespread, and arguably widely accepted, as opposed to vivisection, which was

practised by only a small number of people, mostly as secretively as possible. While any

benefits that resulted from vivisection were harder to locate and define, those reaped from

the exploitation of horses were immediate and undeniable. Perhaps most importantly in

terms of the way that people expressed their understanding of the experiences of horses,

ordinary people were not wholly innocent of the suffering of the horse. This was much

unlike the case of vivisection. Thus, the authors of the texts I examine about horses

would have had to negotiate a complex and public network of responsibility and blame,

of which they would have been very likely to have been a part.

In 1873, *Chambers's Journal of Popular Literature, Science, and Arts* published a

short article entitled 'The Horse Question'. The article discussed the crucial economic

necessity of these animals, which was a problem because they were, according to the

author, exceedingly scarce in England, as well as highly expensive to buy, feed, and

maintain.[2] As Clay McShane and Joel A. Tarr have argued in their study of urban horses

in nineteenth-century America, during this century horses were valued for their extreme

utility, and thoroughly exploited and commodified as 'living machines'.[3] McShane and

Tarr offer, as evidence of the economic (as opposed to sentimental) nature of the

relationship between horse and animal in nineteenth-century America, the fact that horse

owners almost always dispatched of their horses by killing them or having them killed as

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[2] W. Chambers, 'The Horse Question', *Chambers's Journal of Popular Literature, Science, and Arts* 50 (1873), p. 673.

[3] Clay McShane and Joel A. Tarr, *The Horse in the City: Living Machines in the Nineteenth Century* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007). For a study of the economics of British horse work in the nineteenth century, see F.M.L. Thompson, 'Nineteenth-Century Horse Sense', *Economic History Review*, New Series, 29 (1976), pp. 60-81.

soon as the cost of their maintenance began to outstrip their productive value.[4] There is

no reason to think that in Victorian England, horses were any less important as economic

and productive units than they were in America. W. Chambers' 1873 article certainly

seems to suggest that the high expense and necessity of horses in Victorian England

would have required them to be commodified in the way that McShane and Tarr describe.

There was, however, in Victorian Britain, also much popular and heated discussion of the

plight of the exploited horse.[5] It is arguable that 'the horse question' was more than a

question of economics, but that the inescapable necessity of the horse's work (and its

commodification) presented what Victorians interpreted as a moral and ethical problem

with no simple solution. It was difficult to avoid the necessity of taking a horse-drawn

cab, for example, when one needed to move about London, but it was also difficult for

many people to resist acknowledging and advocating the reform of circumstances that

caused the horse's suffering, especially since Victorian British culture afforded the horse

with a great deal of moral and cultural significance.[6]

       It is no surprise that Victorians were interested in methods of communicating with

horses, for both economic and ethical reasons, particularly in the context of driving (and

taming) them. Horse-driving, for Victorians, was both a science and an art.[7] In popular

periodical literature, Victorians called for reforms of the driving of horses and other

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[4] McShane and Tarr, *Horse in the City*, p. 18.

[5] This chapter will focus upon popular discussion of the suffering of working horses, as well as the roles and circumstances of drivers and riders of horses, in Victorian Britain (and London in particular). I do not, however, mean to imply that there was no parallel movement for the reform of the treatment of horses at the same time in America.

[6] On the Victorian 'cult of the horse' and its manifestation in literature, see Gina M. Dorré, *Victorian Fiction and the Cult of the Horse* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006).

[7] Two late-Victorian periodical articles illustrate this trend most effectively: A. Kerr, 'Scientific and Humane Horse Taming', *Illustrated Naval and Military Magazine*, 4 (1890), p. 117; Henry C. Merwin, 'The Art of Driving', *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, 93 (1896), pp. 513-18. While the latter article is largely concerned with style and technique, the author considers humane treatment of the horse to be part of these.

exploitative practices by referencing and encouraging readers to try to understand horses. The goal of the amelioration of the suffering of working horses, however, was fraught with debate over the assignment of blame, and it was impossible in many circumstances to consider what steps might be taken toward ethical reform of drivers' actions without considering the economic factors that contributed to the dilemma. Cab drivers were seen driving miserable-looking horses in the streets every day, but they were miserably poor themselves, and took orders from the people who hired their cabs. Victorian periodical authors embraced the problem of the cab driver along with the plight of the horse, debating and attempting to define his position, role, and statuses as interloper, abuser, responsible party and vulnerable victim. Upper-class abuse of horses was also disdained in the Victorian periodical press, as authors and activists sought to inform, educate, and persuade against exploitation for the sake of fashion, as well as discussing issues of responsibility and ignorance. Communication is a significant theme across the different spheres of reform advocacy. This chapter will examine how authors of popular English periodical texts and pamphlets tried to understand and promote understanding of the suffering involved in the exploitation of the work of horses in the mid- to late- nineteenth century.

In 1892, George H. Hutt authored a poem to honour a recently retired London police constable's career. John Pegg, over the course of three decades, had secured some 1300 convictions against the perpetrators of cruelty to animals, mostly working horses. Hutt's poem, narrated by a horse, is suggestive of the possibility of determining the suffering of an animal through close attention and empathic imagination, and assertive of the necessity of authorizing responsible humans like Pegg to translate their observations

and interpretations into language, by which legal actions may be taken to stop or to ameliorate the suffering. The poem suggests that animals can and do try to communicate with humans, though these communications may not be noticed: 'Before we had your kindly aid/Our pleading proved in vain/And often with a heavy load/We've struggled on in pain'.[8] It is arguable that Hutt meant to imply that Pegg had utilized his rational and creative faculties to *detect* a horse's suffering, and that he possessed a kind of sensitive cleverness - possibly the result of a good moral upbringing or education - that allowed him to see what others might miss, or else ignore: 'Dear Mr. Pegg, you've proved our friend,/No one can that deny/By oft detecting cruelty/While others passed it by'. This empathic knowledge was put to use during Pegg's career as he used his own voice to express the suffering of animals he observed, since they could not speak for themselves. Given his position of authority, Pegg was very effectively able to 'speak up' for abused horses: 'Your life has been devoted to/The ailments of my race/And when the tongue was void of speech,/Yours kindly took its place'. These lines could suggest either that Pegg had spoken in proxy for the horse, or that he had spoken out against abuses other humans had observed, but of which they had refused or neglected to speak. It is possible that Hutt intended to imply that Pegg's voice both supplied speech to the horse's tongue, which was 'void of speech', and also 'took the place of' the human voices that remained silent when they should have been put to use to do the same.

Hutt's equine narrator describes the rifts in communications between horse and human master. Hutt implied that such rifts, more often than not, were the fault of human vices. He gave the example of how a man, when drunk, would be more likely to fail to consider that a horse had similar needs to his own: 'Sometimes a drunkard held the

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[8] George H. Hutt, 'A Horse's Letter to Ex-Police Constable 365, John Pegg' (London: 1892[?]).

reins,/And muddled, did not think/That I as well as he required/A cool refreshing drink'.

Sometimes humans misunderstood horses, interpreting a response to pain as bad temper: 'Again I've stood hour after hour/Til corns have made me kick,/And blamed for vicious temper been/Belaboured with a stick'. Sometimes, Hutt argued, people did not possess enough moral sense to distinguish suffering from laziness: 'drivers in their ignorance/Have vowed that we did shirk/And though we have been weak and ill/Have urged us on to work'. According to Hutt, however, Pegg always had the sharp sense of the humanitarian to guide his judgment and to help him to interpret the communications of suffering animals: ''Tis you and only such as you/Who mark the mute appeal/Of us poor helpless quadrupeds/When indisposed we feel'. According to the poem, many humans, excepting Pegg's fellow humanitarians, failed to decipher the stances and expressions of animals and thus failed to recognize their pain, whether because they were not smart enough or because they did not care enough to try. This insensitivity would have reinforced the already formidable barriers to communication between human and animal.

Hutt styled Pegg as having been entirely immune to the constraints of this barrier. The narrator of the poem addresses Pegg, of course, in human language (thus enabling a host of other readers to share in the 'communications'). This could hardly be otherwise, though the choice of a horse as narrator is suggestive of Pegg's special interpretive talent. At one point, however, the narrator departs from general communications about bad treatment at the hands of humans to directly complain about a specific ailment he had, when there was no one there to understand: 'I've had the horrid toothache, Pegg/And fast I could not go,/But as a medicine received/A cruel, stinging blow'. This ingenious

strategy meant to encourage the reader to think about the excruciating pains of a toothache, but then also to imagine what it would be like not to be able to express this suffering in language to anyone.

Interestingly, Hutt's narrator actually addresses Pegg in 'horse language', and even includes a translation: 'So horses, mules, and asses, too,/Their wishes to you give/By neighing "Honhy, honhy, hon!"/Which means "Long may you live!"' These lines were certainly written to praise Pegg and not to mock him; this intention is easily discerned from the context of the rest of the poem. In fact, while at first glance the lines may seem to have been written solely for a light comic effect, upon further consideration, they function as the crucial punctuation of a task that would have been otherwise incomplete. This is because the narrator needed to speak in human language. Without the neighing at the end, the poem would have almost undermined the praise heaped upon Pegg for his ability to decipher the communications and feelings of horses without human language. While the body of Hutt's poem does the primary work of expression, it is only in the neighing that the horse speaks back to Pegg, thus reminding other readers that communication with animals is not so easy as the rest of the poem suggests. This can also be seen as an attempt to prevent the reader from pitying the narrator solely as a fictional character, quite different from ordinary animals who were unable to speak, and so especially worthy of consideration. This was a trap into which, as Coral Lansbury argues, nineteenth-century activists who wrote animal fiction often fell, despite the very best of intentions and the most supreme talents: 'horses that spoke to each other . . . made an actual horse seem a very inferior and deficient kind of animal. It then became possible to make the fictional animal the privileged species and the real animal an anomalous

species without rights or status.[9] The problem is that whereas animals do not use language, an attempt to 'give' them a false language in order to explore the possibility of what an animal might feel is almost too far removed from reality to encourage serious thought about real animals.

By closely observing a horse's response to environmental changes, one could surmise what caused a working horse the most trouble, what made him uncomfortable, what gave him ease. One did not necessarily need to transform a real animal into a fictional character with a voice in order to convey a certain sense of transparency with regard to the common troubles a horse might experience: 'it is not so much the paving as the change from one sort to another which is so puzzling to the horses, the sudden break from granite to asphalt, or macadam to wood, requiring an instant change in the step to which not every horse is equal, though by some the knack is caught in a week or so'.[10] It is important to notice that this author, W.J. Gordon, went further than to scrutinize behaviour; in fact, no mention is made of what actions he had seen horses perform, or what mistakes he had seen them make, that led him to draw this conclusion. The point, rather, was to encourage the reader to try to imagine the work of pulling a carriage (in this case, an omnibus), from a horse's perspective. It can be assumed that Gordon had seen horses stumble and trip at such moments as pavement has changed, and noted patterns that have brought him to his conclusions. It is interesting to consider how much more of a horse's 'feeling' would have been accessible while riding the carriage as it is pulled, if a rider but paid attention to the source of various bumps, shaking, wobbling,

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[9]Coral Lansbury, *The Old Dog: Women, Workers, and Vivisection in Edwardian England* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985), p. 182.

[10]W. J. Gordon, 'The Horse World of London: The Omnibus Horse', *Leisure Hour*, XLI (Nov. 1891), p. 30.

starts, and jerks about. Riding in the carriage of a cab, it would have been particularly easy to feel the movements of the horse, if one only took the time to consider the motions of the carriage as the connected with the bearer of its burden. In an omnibus, it would have taken more imaginative work to make the connection. Still, particularly if one had ever ridden on a horse's back, the feelings of the horse were not entirely inaccessible to a rider. It is easy to imagine what may have signaled to Gordon that a horse was 'puzzled'. It is not even that difficult to imagine for oneself what 'puzzled' might have felt like to the rider in a carriage or omnibus pulled by a horse who was currently feeling this way.

Another way to access the experience of the working horse is simply to touch the horse. While not always practicable, if the horse is not one's own, touching a horse's body is arguably the most direct way to understand what a horse was feeling, including the scars of past experiences. The author of an 1875 *Blackwood's* article on bits and bearing reins considered a quotation from Sir Francis Head, of forty years earlier, still to be relevant, with regard to determining the damage done by bearing reins and other types of oppressive restraints: 'if the reader will pass his hand down the back sinews of one of our stage-coach or post-chaise horses, he will soon feel (though not so keenly as they do) what is the fatal consequence.'[11] The body of a horse would arguably feel much different depending upon what social, cultural and economic forces had 'shaped' the horse's body. These changes, especially if they are grossly unnatural or unhealthy, can certainly communicate the feelings of a horse and help to foster understanding. The horse's body can 'speak' to a person in this way. Until the arrival of the automobile and other modern, mechanical modes of transportation, the human hand was never far from the horse -

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[11] Sir Francis Head, *Bubbles from the Brunnens of Nassau, by an Old Man* (London, 1834). Quoted. in 'Horses, Bits, and Bearing Reins', *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, 117 (1875), p. 742.

nurturing or abusing - constraining, compelling, and ultimately, shaping. Quoting Sir Francis Head, the author of the *Blackwood's* article referenced the way that the human hand could read the response of the horse's body to detect the history of the changes that other human hands had made to the same body. Thus, the hand was used to understand the effects upon the horse of the hand, and of many different hands.

W.J. Gordon emphasized the humanity of exercising patience toward such horses when they displayed less than perfect temperament. He asked his reader to try to consider the effects of heavy toil, distress, and discomfort upon their personalities. Interestingly, Gordon utilized the concept of forgiveness, which, with its moral and even religious connotations, arguably meant to suggest a very human-like capacity for responsibility in the horse: 'Surely a little touchiness can be forgiven after a worrying trip through noisy London in rain or snow or fog, varied at all sorts of irregular intervals with sudden stops and starts on greasy asphalt, the start . . . being for a full load a pull of between three and four tons'.[12] Gordon's references to subtle nuances of personality, such as the word 'touchiness' suggested to his reader that horses had very complex personalities with many levels of emotion. His description of a trip through London as 'worrying' is suggestive of the kinds of emotions ordinarily associated with humans rather than animals. Gordon's implication that a horse could be worried, and even that a horse could be 'a little touchy', communicated that the horse had some significant capacity for a wide range of feelings. Gordon's reader would likely have imagined that the behaviours of such a horse were easily influenced by feelings, in ways that involved choices regarding such things as temptation, resistance, and even self-discipline.

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[12] Gordon, 'Omnibus', p. 30.

Gordon's application of moral possibility to the horse was hardly new in 1892, or unusual for a nineteenth-century non-fiction text. In fact, the whole of the nineteenth century abounds with literature that specifically discusses the virtues and vices of horses.[13] Curiously, it was far less common for other domestic animals to be portrayed as possessing vices in terms of making moral choices (though the virtue of the dog was very commonly extolled). This may have been because of the difficulty involved in persuading such a strong animal as the horse to consistently follow human orders regarding movement and constraint of movement for many hours at a time. It is arguable that the force of a horse encouraged Victorians to interpret this animal's actions, as indicative of a moral will. Victorians afforded the horse with the ability to make 'right' and 'wrong' choices and to perform 'right' and 'wrong' actions. Significantly, Gordon retained this moral paradigm, urging his readers not to misinterpret a horse's response to, for example, exhaustion or nervous unease (states of mind and body with which any human could relate), as the commission of 'bad' acts that deserved punishment. If humans deserved mercy because they were imperfect, than so did horses, who were also imperfect.

Victorians recognized that even though horses could not understand human language, they could determine well enough what was required of them by the signals they were given in human language. Horses, of course, were trained to respond to different signals in different ways.[14] If a horse did not satisfactorily respond to a prompt

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[13] It is interesting to note that the 'moral status' popularly afforded to the horse allowed authors to depict the cooperative, give-and-take relationship between horse and human as potentially fair or unfair, so that the horse functioned (at least ideally) as a unit within moral economy and a broadly ideal system of justice: the horse was not merely abused, he was 'cheated'. See, for example, E.I. Sears, 'The Horse, How he is Cheated and Abused', *National Quarterly Review*, 27 (173), p. 346.

[14] Not only was it considered that horses responded to human language signals, but also that British drivers of horses who had been trained in an indigenous language of the Empire would need to learn that

in the manner that was expected, force was likely to have been applied to reinforce the command. Henry Curling, in his 1851 tract 'A Lash for the Lashers', argued that horses could feel not only the sting of the whip, but also that of a harsh tone in the voice of a driver. Far from requiring a lash to be compelled to follow orders, horses could detect changes in vocal patterns indicative of displeasure in their performance. Curling argued that horses, just like humans, understood when they were being scolded, and would respond with increased efforts whenever reasonable. 'A hard word is as instantly and keenly felt by a horse as by a human being. The willing brute will attempt to improve an effort the instant he is spoken to'.[15] The implication is that whenever cross words were unreasonably administered, they only served to hurt a horse's feelings, just as they would do to a human, and brought no positive result. Liberal scolding, according to Curling, did not inspire horses to be eager to serve. Despite the fact that horses do not understand human language, Curling believed them sensitive enough to comprehend the meaning of a scolding, and the difference between a kind and an unkind word, since these were felt, rather than processed in units of words. Thus, human language could communicate feelings to a horse, as well as foster or break down relationships between horse and driver.

In addition to encouraging readers to imagine from the horses perspective the effects of the use of hard language and physical force, authors of Victorian periodical texts also tried to get people to think about the needs and desires that horses might have

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indigenous language order to effectively communicate with their horses. Matthew Horace Hayes' *A Guide to Training and Horse Management in India. With a Hindustanee stable vocabulary* went through four editions between 1874 and 1885 (Calcutta: T.S. Smith, 1874, 1875, 1878, 1885).

[15] Henry Curling. *A Lashing for the Lashers: Being an Exposition of the Cruelties, Practiced upon the Cab and Omnibus Horses of London* (London: N. Wright, 1851), p. 4.

had when they were not working. C. Forbes, in an 1853 article in *Notes and Queries*, pleaded that after a hard day's work, the driver of a horse should 'give him a roll'.[16] Forbes argued that horses needed refreshment as much as do humans. He cited various texts from ancient and foreign cultures to demonstrate how well horses enjoyed being let loose to roll about on the ground, and how effectively this assisted a horse in recovering strength and spirits after protracted exertion. It is interesting to note that although humans could certainly relate to the need for rest and reflection, Forbes considered refreshment in terms of the horse's difference. In order to do so, both author and reader were required to trawl their own experiences of 'refreshment' in order to harvest a sort of template feeling upon which they could reflect, while considering the reality of an experience very different than their own. Observation helped to fill in the blanks, and the testimony of other humans who had witnessed what they believed to have been horses refreshing themselves helped to establish the tangible possibility of such difference.

An 1875 article in *Chambers's Journal of Popular Literature, Science, and Arts* constructed a similar argument to Forbes' in *Notes and Queries*. The author if this article argued that the horse should be allowed to enjoy its own faculties, as it was wrong to deprive him of their use just because they were not always required for human service. The faculty in question was the horse's eyesight: 'We have never been able to understand why horses should be tied up in a darkened apartment, within a limited allowance of space for movement, with their heads towards a dead wall. The horse loves the light. He has good eyesight, and likes to look about him. And why should he not have this simple enjoyment?'[17]

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[16] C. Forbes. ' "Give Him a Roll"—A Plea for the Horse'. *Notes and Queries*, 8 (24 September 1853), p. 287.

[17] 'Horses, and Treatment of Horses', *Chambers's Journal of Popular Literature, Science, and Arts*, 52 (1875), p. 291.

Since it harmed no one for the horse to have more use of his eyes, the author argued that horse should have this use. It is very interesting that the author of this article made the claim that the horse 'liked' to look about him. This statement implies the possibility of knowing or sensing what is pleasant to the horse, and what the horse enjoys. Consequently, it also implies the possibility of recognizing when a horse is suffering. Although the author of this *Chambers's* article was not likely to have been challenged over the means by which he arrived at the knowledge of how a horse felt, and whether a horse 'liked to look about him', it is important to note that in the Victorian debate over vivisection, it was exactly this sort of assumption that was rigorously questioned. Here, we are fortunate to see the *subtle* work accomplished by empathy, as a reasonable means of speaking up for others, even if knowledge of another's interior experience could never be absolute or proven.

Henry Curling suggested, as a remedy for those drivers of cab and omnibus horses who abused their horses, that these drivers place themselves, quite literally, in similar circumstances to those which their horses endure every day. After a disclaimer meant to reserve religious and traditional notions of discontinuity between mankind and animal, Curling went on to follow, in practice, the trend toward continuity that was such a hallmark of Victorian science and culture:

> Far be it from us to place a human on par with a brute beast . . . nevertheless, if we might suggest a slight trial, in order to convince a cab-driver how greatly he acts against sense and humanity, and at the same time prove our case to him feelingly, we would merely ask any cab or omnibus-driver, given to misusage of the whip, to place himself in charge of a common truck, and drag it up Holborn Hill; then, whilst he labours at the dead pull, let him imagine for a moment the effect upon himself of what he is so partial to; let him

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imagine a series of strong jerks fretting his jaws, and a continued compliment of heavy

lashes over his bare loins. He will then, perhaps, be able to appreciate the effects of his

own system, and how at last it whips the spirit of a horse quite out of the animal.[18]

Curling attempted to take force and coercion out of the practical equation of his proposed

experiment, relegating violence to the imagination of the cab or omnibus-driver, lest his

suggestion portray such drivers as ones who should be enslaved and treated 'like

animals'. Yet what driver would have agreed to participate in such a trial, and which of

these was likely to have believed, beforehand, that the tasks assigned to their horses were

not so very arduous as Curling represented them to be? Curling's fictitious proposal was

but a short step away from wholesale animalization of the cab and omnibus drivers. His

readers, who were unlikely to be cabmen themselves, were meant to imagine how a

driver's perspective - and practice - might change if he were given the opportunity (or, if

he were forced) to discover what it felt like to pull such a large burden up a hill, the way

that horses were made to do every day.

Poor drivers were not the only people Victorian activists wished to expose to a

horse's perspective. In fact, in castigating wealthier members of society for their

contribution to the suffering of horses, it appears that one had less need to take care not to

degrade or animalize the subject. At an 1868 SPCA meeting, the Earl of Romney

expressed his anger at wealthy horse owners who would leave their horses to wait outside

for them as they attended engagements, fully outfitted in painful bits and bearing reins.

Here, he is quoted by *Blackwood's*: 'If I had the power, I should like to put these

[wealthy horse owners] out in the sun, half undressed and let the flies bite them, because

they would very soon be able to understand what torture they were inflicting upon those

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[18] Curling, *Lashers*, p. 9.

poor unfortunate animals'.[19] Interestingly, Curling's proposed experiment reads very like

an exercise in the judicial punishment of criminals, while Romney's statement sounds

more like the threat of hell. Both consider the treatment of others - animals - from the

cultural standpoint of Christian theology, yet both expand the moral franchise (the one

that instructs one to 'do unto others . . .') to include animals as individuals who were

entitled to consideration, whose suffering should be prevented if possible, and not

wantonly ignored.

Most scholars who have studied the position of animals in the nineteenth century

have tended to look at the ways that animals have served as surrogates for the discussion

of human relationships.[20] It is easy enough to see how such statements as those about

placing the cab driver or the wealthy horse owner in the place of their horses could be

interpreted as telling a story about class dynamics and social problems among humans.

No doubt this is part of the story behind such expressions as these, despite the fact that

animals were the real subject of discussion. But must one always imagine animals to have

been only the *ostensible* subject of discussion? While there is certainly validity to the

claim that discussion of animals was used to express opinions about sensitive, tense, or

otherwise difficult relationships between and among humans and groups of humans, it is

surely absurd to dismiss all discussion of the welfare of animals as a cover for 'real'

concerns about humans. Is it not just as interesting - and important - to consider the ways

in which humans have identified with animals *as* animals? Thus considered,

human/human relationships can also be studied in fuller depth. Further, the introduction

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[19] 'Bits and Bearing Reins', *Blackwood's*, p. 745.

[20] See Lansbury, *Old Brown Dog*; Harriet Ritvo, *The Animal Estate: English and Other Creatures in the Victorian Age* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989); Moira Ferguson, *Animal Advocacy and Englishwomen, 1780-1900*: *Patriots, Nation, and Empire* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1998).

of the animal as animal into the discussion of human culture reveals a level of complexity in life and history that is all too easily overlooked, whether because it is difficult to discuss or because it makes human beings feel uncomfortable in our position and forces us to confront problems that are not easily resolved.

The Victorian British had a very real relationship with the horse, so much so that equine 'difference' (as assigned by human beings) was integrated into the national identity. The horse's 'spirit' was imagined to be like the British spirit. As we have seen, economics established this special relationship, for horses were expensive and indispensable to Victorian Britain. It is easy to see, however, how people to whom horses were so important would learn much about, as well as learn to cherish what they perceived to be the horse's traits and characteristics. Proud of their relationship with horses, this pride was sustained and increased by attempts to elevate the horse from the status of the animal. *Blackwood's* celebrated the efforts that were being made to defend and protect horses, consciously coining an interesting term to express just how very special an animal they considered the horse to be: 'We heartily rejoice . . . that a voice has at last been raised on behalf (to coin a word) of suffering *horsehood*.'[21] Less an animal than a humane spirit lodged in a horse, 'horsehood' was also a vulnerable condition. To find oneself in a state of horsehood was to lack language or any means to demand consideration, while retaining many humane qualities, as well as the ability to suffer from lack of consideration. To be a horse (otherwise, to suffer in a state of horsehood) was to need someone to understand your needs and to speak for you so that they could be met.

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[21] 'Bits and Bearing Reins', *Blackwood's*, p. 743.

Forbes, the author who pleaded for working horses to be allowed to roll themselves on the ground for refreshment, strengthened his case for the consideration of horses' feelings and experiences by using a term to identify them that emphasized their closeness to human beings. Forbes described horses as 'English Houyhnhnms'. Cleverly mined from British literature, the idea of the English Houyhnhnm emphasized the national identity of British horses. This term served to chide the English for not extending to horses the same consideration as had been extended to them in classical cultures, and continued to be extended to them in foreign cultures in the nineteenth century. This term also served to blur the species boundary between human and horse until it more closely resembled a racial difference. It was perhaps even meant to suggest that horses (as Swift's Houyhnhnms) were in some ways superior to humans, and that human beings might do well to emulate some equine traits. In Swift's text, Houyhnhnms were wiser than other races and not given to petty fighting; Forbes praised 'Houyhnhnms' implicitly for their endurance and fortitude. It is possible that he also intended to contrast the horses' character against that of the drunkard who denied his horse refreshment, while engaging in less salubrious (and less wise) acts of refreshment than a horse would have chosen.

'Horses and Horsiness' is the title of a strange and interesting Victorian exercise in the cultural analysis of the English relationship with horses, which was published as an article in 1865 in *Temple Bar*. The article suggests that the love of horses was a British cultural phenomenon. The author explained: 'our natural horsiness has shared in the progress and development of most of our arts'.[22] It seems that the author did not expect readers at first to have known exactly what he meant by using the term 'horsiness'. In

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[22] 'Horses and Horsiness', *Temple Bar*, 14 (1865), p. 446.

fact, the concept of 'horsiness', as expounded by the author, is quite complex, arguably because the relationship of the English to the horse was also complex. First, the author mentions the English obsession with equine sports. Then, he discusses a trend that a twenty-first century historian might call the 'democratization' of horse-riding. While the article pokes a bit of fun at those upwardly mobile individuals who took up riding in order to appear as members of a superior class, the author does not seem to have been overtly hostile to the practise. Instead, he seems to have been interested in the way that horses, in terms of economics and leisure in particularly, came to be bound so closely with the English sense of identity. The author expresses a sense of wonder at the wealth of fictional literature concerning horses and their caretakers, and laments the decline of the quality of English horses, and the concomitant rise in their price. The author implies that such changes were likely to cause an upheaval in the English sense of pride and country and in the general understanding of what it meant to be English.

Another article published in *Temple Bar* during the same year demonstrates the relationship between the description of human character and that of the character of the horse. The author of this article, entitled 'High Horses', explored a kind of reverse anthropomorphism, whereby humans were believed to share the characteristics of horses. The traits expounded by the author are almost entirely negative (mostly a critique of gendered behaviours), and rhetorically separated from the horse-as-animal from the first line: 'There are three kinds of horses bestridden by men, not counting the four-footed beast standing godfather to the rest'.[23] Of these three, namely, hobby-horses, stalking-horses, and high-horses, the last and its many variations forms the topic of most of the article. Equine references propel almost every line of the discussion. References abound

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[23] 'Temper, Pride, and other High Horses', *Temple Bar*, 15 (1865), p. 348.

to bits and bearing reins, hard mouths and bridles, saddles, and even neighing. For example: 'home is the place where the high horse of temper has his ordinary airing ground,—where he shows off his paces unchecked by bit or rein, uncurbed by the presence of strangers, and unweighted by the pressure of the properties—where he is just a ramping, plunging, hard-mouthed devil that runs away with the family coach.'[24] Horses, indeed, made very easy surrogates for the discussion of human relationships, and they did not serve so only through discussion of their finer qualities and pleas for their welfare. Further, the portrayal of humans as horses, and human vices as having limitless rhetorical parallels in equine behaviour, displays the veritable wealth of cultural information that existed about the character of horses. Despite whether this information was verifiable (or accurate), it shows that Victorians imagined themselves to have had a very close relationship with the horse, and not only with his purportedly nobler qualities.

Arguably all of the cultural information about horses contained in such articles as those published in *Temple Bar* would have been based on middle- or upper-class knowledge of horses. While cabmen and other lower-class individuals may have had their own library of terms to express their perceptions of the character of the horse, and while their relationships with horses may have differed considerably from those of people of the middle or upper classes, little of this world has survived that was not filtered through the interpretations of authors of a higher class than cab drivers. Many reports, like Henry Curling's, accused cabmen of gross inhumanity toward their horses. Some, however, described cabmen as exhibiting tender affection toward their constant equine companions.[25] The most interesting depictions of the relationship between cabman and

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[24] 'High Horses', *Temple Bar*, 15 (1865), p. 348.
[25] See James Greenwood, *The Wilds of London*. (London: Guildford, 1874), pp. 108-110.

horse conflate the identity of the two. These intended, of course, to degrade the cabman rather than to elevate the horse. Functioning as almost a counterpart to *Blackwood's* 'horsehood', *Punch* coined the term 'Cabmanity' to revile the sympathies of those who supported charities organized to benefit members of this race of beings, who were clearly separate from the rest of humanity.[26] In an 1853 article entitled 'Saint Cabbie', *Punch* portrayed the cabman as a human with a horse's head.[27] Written to mock sympathy for the cabmen whose fares had recently been regulated to sixpence a mile, the article proposed the erection of a memorial statue to commemorate the sufferings of 'Saint Cabbie': 'An aureole, made of dirty straw, should shine round his head'.[28] *Punch* thus conflated the personality of the cabman with that of the horse he drove, and placed him in closer connection with the space and objects associated with the horse than with the culture of humanity.

Perhaps more helpfully than was intended, a later article in *Punch* of 1868 spoofed 'A Cabman's Complaint'. Though still mocking the plight of the cabman and those who have sympathy for it, the author of this fictitious cabman's poetic invective represented that cabmen complained about being treated like horses: '*Drivers?* Blest if we *are*! *We're druv*!'.[29] It is hardly unbelievable that the cabmen might have felt this way. A glance back at another 1854 *Punch* article, which again focused upon the Cab Act that had roused such indignation in cab drivers and the strike that had been their response, reveals another instance of the Victorian periodical text addressing the cabman

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[26] 'Friends of Cabmanity', *Punch*, 25 (1853), p. 32.

[27] See Appendix 1; from 'Saint Cabbie', *Punch*, 25 (1853), p. 112.

[28] 'Saint Cabbie', *Punch*, 25 (1853), p. 112. The Cab Act of 1853 regulated the cabman's fare to a sixpence per mile (before which time they had only been required to carry some recognized book of fares). This provoked outrage among the cab drivers, which culminated in a general strike that brought much of London to a veritable standstill.

[29] 'A Cabman's Complaint', *Punch*, 54 (1868), p. 209.

as if he were a horse. The title of the article, 'Steady, Cabbie, Steady', conflates the

angry cabman with the restless horse. It seems the cabman, himself a provider - or means

- of transportation, may as well have *been* his horse, as he was simply viewed as another

creature that needed to be tamed to do his job without causing problems.

Intending to highlight what he perceived as the selfish culpability of cabmen,

Henry Curling described the way in which cabmen themselves associated their own

bodies with those of their horses. If their horses suffered from the lash, the cabmen

argued that they did as well, since it was all their exertion forced the horse to move.

Curling recounted a conversation he held with a cab driver, and how that driver

responded to his upbraiding: ' "you must have flogged a good many shillings out of that

horse in the course of the day." "And if I have," he returned, "I suppose I've earned

them. My arm's as stiff as if I'd been thrashing in a barn.".'[30] Although the driver may

have responded to Curling's remonstrance about his horse's suffering with a statement of

cold indifference, both his reply and Curling's decision to quote his reply indicate that the

cabman and his horse were in some way perceived as a single physical unit. For Cabbie,

it was all in a day's work; he was required to suffer, as was his horse. For Curling, the

cabman who abused his horse perverted that oneness into a fractured abomination. The

cabman, so intimately connected to his horse as to feel pain in the shared act of moving

the cab to transport the rider, ignored and denied the indications of his horse's pain and

suffering, despite the fact that he was very likely the individual who could read them

best.

Not every text that associated the body of the cabman with that of his horse was

written to speak out against cab drivers. A charitable periodical of the 1870s entitled *The*

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[30] Curling, *Lashers*, p. 14.

Cabman included in every issue a discussion of the way a horse's body worked - alongside a discussion of the way that the cabman's body worked. A different part of the horse's body was highlighted for discussion every month (for example, the eye, or the hoof). [31] Often, the horse's anatomy was introduced in terms of how it differed from that of the human, thus prompting the reader, who was expected to be a cabman, to compare and contrast a part of his own body to the corresponding part of his horse's body. This instruction often informed a subsequent discussion of how and why the horse should be treated and cared for in a certain way. Clearly, the hope was that if cab drivers were more educated about the horse's body, they would understand their horses better and be less likely to abuse them, especially out of frustration and ignorance.

The authors of *The Cabman* also featured articles that were arguably aimed to prevent the cabman from abusing his own body, as well. These articles discussed the anatomy and physiology of the human, specifically concerning particular ailments to which cabmen were prone, such as asthma and dyspepsia (and not the least, intemperance). These articles describe the reasons why cabmen were prone to these particular ailments, and suggest preventative and curative measures to combat such quotidian evils. Reading these articles, one gets a sad sense of how very different indeed were the lives of the cabmen from their fellow Victorians, and of how truly grim was the cabman's lot. Paired together with the articles about the body of the horse, the anatomy and physiology lessons resemble a description of a world of difference that likely would have been difficult for anyone who was not a cabman to understand - difficult, indeed, for

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[31] London Cabman's Mission. *The Cabman*: *A Monthly Journal and Review Issued from the London Cabman's Mission Hall, King's Cross* (London: 1874-76).

the cabman to understand - and one in which the bodies of the cabman and his horse were inextricably bound, even if the cabman was ignorant or resentful of that tie.

Certainly the outside world associated the cabman and his horse most intimately. *The Cabman* reminded its readers that the personality of a horse was a veritable window into the character of those who drove him: 'You can judge the character of a man by the character of his horse.'[32] The actions of humans upon horses in their charge were viewed as tending to write themselves upon the character of a horse, as if through the medium of the horse's body: 'What are designated "hard mouthed" and "pulling" horses are made so by hard, unfeeling hands, want of knowledge and of sympathy for this useful creature, or indolence in attending to its requirements'.[33] True enough, the horse's body reflected unfeeling treatment received at the hands of humans. But whose fault was it? Were the driver's hands the instruments of the riders that paid him, or did the driver get in the way of the relationship that wealthier people imagined that they themselves would have had with the beloved horses of England, if not for these inhumane (but absolutely essential) interlopers? In the meagre cultural space that existed for him between his horse and his riders, the cabman found himself an awkward fit.

As the driver mediated the space between the horse and the rider in his carriage, and as driver and horse became rhetorically interchangeable, the space that was occupied by the driver himself became almost negligible. Thus, a cabman encroached upon the space that was viewed as belonging to the rider. He was unwelcome in this space, but he could not keep away, and could not keep to himself. *Punch* represented the cabman as constantly transgressing the space between himself and the people in his carriage: 'We

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[32] *The Cabman* (April 1875), p. 27.
[33] *The Cabman* (December 1874), p. 27.

can scarcely wonder at the easy familiarity of a cab-driver, for there is no one who seems so utterly incapable of keeping his distance'.[34] The cabman was viewed as making this space uncomfortable for his passengers by his persistent invasion of the carriage. Interestingly, he was represented as unable to keep to himself, which actually suggests that the social space allotted to the cabman was too small for him to occupy comfortably. Perhaps the cabman was too cramped in this space, and felt a need to stray and to share that from which his passengers would have liked to keep him excluded. It is almost as if the passengers felt like that he was touching them.

It is easy to see how touching might be unavoidable, especially as the cabman might very well have been opening doors or handling luggage. Certainly some amount of touching would have been necessary to collect a fare. Even if the cabman was not directly touching his passengers, however, they still seem to have been acutely aware of his closeness, and to have felt it intrusive. There even seems to have been awareness among passengers that they were breathing the same air as the cabby. The odour of tobacco often contributed to this awareness. During the mid-1850s, *Punch* presented its readers with a series of mock memoirs, ostensibly authored by cabmen at different times of the year, complaining of seasonal trials and offering tips to their colleagues, such as the following, entered for January, 1854: 'If you drives a night-cab, get inside when on the stand, pull up the winders, and smoke. Bacca airs the vehicle, and you can, if objected to, say it was the last fare'.[35] If a cabman sat in his carriage, in January, with the windows up, it would have been at least partly because he was trying to escape the cold. What is more interesting, though, is that the author of this 'memoir' seems to have

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[34] 'What is a Cabman's Mile?' *Punch*, 13 (1847), p. 200.
[35] 'Monthly Memoirs of a Cabman', *Punch*, 26 (1854), p. 133.

imagined that the cabman usurped this space in the absence of passengers. That he would

have pretended he did not do it, and would have faulted the 'last fare' is an indication that

a cabman would have been aware of the offence given by the smell of his tobacco smoke.

It further suggests that a cabman was also likely to have been aware that his passengers

did not like to imagine themselves sitting in a place that had been frequently and recently

occupied by him. It is interesting to speculate the about what led the author to have

placed this particular suggestion in the mouth, as it were, of his fictitious cabman. Had

he seen cabmen at their stands, shutting up in their carriages, smoking away the cold and

boredom while waiting for employment? Had he been told, as he alighted into a reeking

carriage, that the last passenger was to blame for the offensive odour? Perhaps this

author even placed himself in the position of the cabman; during moments of

unemployment, to whom (besides the master from whom he had rented) did the cab

belong, if not to himself? For what reason should the cabman have abstained from

occupying the carriage, which afforded him comfort, if no one was paying him to do so?

The *Punch* author implied that the space within the carriage was the cabman's

responsibility (one with which he could not be trusted), but also acknowledged that the

cabman had authority over this space. He grudged the cabman this authority, especially

since it was one which his social betters had to occupy, at least if they wished to travel

anywhere in the city. As I will discuss shortly, the cabman was also grudged authority

over his horse, and it was considered unfortunate that it was necessary to entrust him with

the responsibility for the welfare of this animal in his charge.

The authority that a cabman exercised over his cab (which extended somewhat to

those who ride in it - and, of course, to his horse) was presented as having been

commonly abused. The cabman was seen as a bully who would use any and all means at his disposal to extort money from his passengers, and who would use whatever force was necessary to squeeze as much income as possible from a failing horse, even to the point of driving the horse to death. One poem in *Punch* from 1853 mocks the idea that cabmen were vulnerable people who deserved public assistance. The poem addresses the 'poor' cabman as a kind of ironic ideal: 'You who have bullied half the world'.[36] Of course, actual cabmen were hardly the target audience for *Punch*. The author of the poem arguably believed that his poem would reach such individuals of middling status as were unlikely to have owned carriages, but who were wealthy enough not to walk - and to not want to be seen walking. For these people, hiring a cab was one of the only options, and certainly the most convenient available. At night, particularly, hiring a cab was much safer than walking the streets to get about the city. The cabman was, then, a kind of intermediary person between the individual of middling rank and the rough streets they might wish to avoid in order to avoid dangerous encounters with lower-class people. In a way, the cabman represented the lower-class people, and the streets in which he could walk relatively without fear. Coarse in appearance (because of his poverty), and probably in manners, he wielded the power of the streets. In the incarnation of the cabman, individuals of middling rank found the streets peculiarly inescapable.

Women were considered particularly vulnerable to the bullying of cabmen. In addition to the concern of interface with an individual from whom one might have wished to shy away in the street, the rough cabman also presented a middle-classed woman with an oblique sexual threat. While there does not seem to have been a direct fear that a

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[36] 'The Public's Address to His Cabman (Imitated from the Arab's Address to His Steed)'. *Punch*, 25 (1853), p. 44.

woman risked sexually violation by a cabman while travelling alone (likely because they were licensed and regulated; cabmen were required to carry a license from 1838, while hackney carriages had been licensed since the seventeenth century), women were, in effect, the captives of the drivers whose cabs they boarded - perhaps with much luggage, and perhaps with children. Indeed, if one imagines the worst a cabman could do to a woman in this circumstance who argued with him, such a woman might have found herself in quite a predicament if she were to have been set down, with her children and belongings, alone in a rough part of the city. It seems women were aware of this threat, and it was suggested that because of it women were willing to pay higher fares: 'There is no wonder that the female has a greater horror of the cab-driver than the male entertains. She seldom or never finds him a chivalrous enemy. He looks upon her and her children, and her band-boxes, and the maid-servant that is within her gates, as a spoil and a prey; and when her husband travels with her, his charges sensibly decrease'.[37] Interestingly, this author did not revile cabmen and their claim to charity, in the fashion of *Punch*. Instead, this author argues that society had a particular duty to cabmen, since it had placed them in such a position of mutual distrust with regard to those upon whom they depended for their living, and to whom they needed to turn for assistance in the poverty that their living afforded them. It is small wonder that satirists were so enamoured of the subject of the cabman; he was at once dangerous and vulnerable, dwelling as he did in the transgressive space between the rough streets of the city and the comfortable, middle-classed homes to and from the safety of which he perpetually conveyed occupants.

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[37] 'Our Duty Towards Our Cabmen', *Chambers's Journal of Popular Literature, Science, and Arts*, 34 (1860), p.268.

Despite how easy it might have been to mock the idea that the roguish cab driver could actually have been vulnerable, arguably few would have seriously disputed the assertion that poverty and discomfort were endemic to cabmen. But what, if any, responsibility did the class from which they earned their living bear for the circumstances or the quality of cabmen's lives? It seems that no remonstrance or expression of disdain spoken against the cabman in Victorian periodical literature lacked its corresponding expression of compassion for his plight and poverty. The cabman was as much pitied as he was reviled. As with any 'other' perceived to be threatening or dangerous, it was safest to pity the cabman from a distance. Of course, if one needed to travel by cab, it was impossible to avoid him. Once inside his carriage, it was best to put aside thoughts of charity. Even if one could afford to pay a cabman well for his services, it was regarded by some as irresponsible to do so, for the sake of those who could not afford to do the same:

> Fast young men who have plenty of money to spare, do not know, and perhaps would not care if they did know, how much extortion and evil-speaking they are indirectly responsible for, when they fling down their extra shillings at the railway station . . . whenever the extra money is given as a part of the fare, munificence of this kind is not only not generosity, but is absolute meanness as respects those who, poorer than the donor, have yet occasion to make use of the same sort of conveyance.[38]

To overpay a cabman, under ordinary circumstances, then, was to take the easy way out for oneself, rather than to help someone else. This would encourage the cabmen to bully

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[38] 'Our Duty', *Chambers's*, p.269.

others for more money, using threats and insults and to try to extract the same fare they might have gotten from a wealthier passenger who was able to spend more liberally.

There was definitely some general agreement about what was due to a cabman for his services. However, forty years after the 1853 Cab Act, the problem of regulating cab fares persisted. While regulation fares had not increased very much, it seems that cabmen expected to be paid more than what was standard. By the early 1890s, other modes of transportation presented the cab with more and more competition. The author of an article in *Leisure World* of 1891 explained that cabmen expected their standard fare to be supplemented, and that the tension over this extra money persuaded passengers in the 1890s to explore other options:

> It is not the sixpence a mile that people object to, or even a shilling a mile, but the 'living margin'; and so long as a cabman has to depend more or less on charity— for that is what the voluntary addition to his fare amounts to—so long will the crowd flock to railway, tramway, omnibus, and railway omnibus, in which they know exactly what they have to pay, and can pay it without injuring any delicate sensibilities.[39]

People understood that a cabman could not live upon his earnings except in poverty, yet they could not accept being charged whatever he thought was fair for his services, as cabmen (frequently rough characters to begin) were known to employ tactics of bullying and extortion in order to obtain as much money as possible from their passengers. The space of the cab was an awkward one; as much as it brought members of different classes together, it erected barriers to understanding and fomented suspicion and resentment.

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[39] W.J. Gordon, 'The Horse World of London: The Cab Horse', *Leisure Hour*, XLI (Dec. 1891), p. 112.

The cabman was a means to a horse, but he also came between the horse and the rider, and so occupied an uncomfortable position. He was shunned, reviled, and animalised, despite his measure of authority over both horse and rider, and despite his very legitimate claim to the compassion of his passengers. The cabman did not fit very will into the social space of the cab, as there was nowhere within this space where his passenger could accept his presence, particularly because of the authority he exercised over this space - and over his horse.

It seems that a passenger in a Victorian cab would have preferred to look through the cab driver to the horse. The horse performed the service, the horse was non-threatening, and the horse's vulnerability had no taint of authority or power. The passenger could do little to help an individual cab horse. A member of the public could alert the police if they witnessed particular cruelty to a horse, but in 'ordinary' troubling circumstances a horse worked and travelled under the practical authority of his driver. Essentially, the driver stood between the rider and horse and was viewed as a sort of interloper and intruder.

There does seem to have been an ideal concept of how travel by horse was 'meant to be', and of the relationship that was supposed to exist between horse and rider. These did not simply correspond to the mode of riding espoused by the upper class, for the owners of private carriages were excoriated for their treatment of horses at least as much as cabmen. The ideal seems to have somewhat resembled the paradigm of the sportsman and his horse, but sportsmen were also known for abusing their horses, especially since the excitement of the chase could make them oblivious to their horses' circumstances. More accurately, the ideal relationship between horse and rider was imagined as one that

was fostered by the circumstances of the every-day country rider on horseback. The author of an 1862 article in *Chambers's* described this idyllic relationship between the horse and solitary rider, whose means of communication with the horse comprised only the gentle 'snaffle-bit': 'by such connection, there is so great a reciprocity of feeling, that the horse and his rider become for the time a kind of united being.'[40] Without the evil pomp of the gag bit and bearing rein, and without the pesky mediation of such interlopers as cabmen and coachmen, horse and rider were able to relate to one another perfectly. Of course, eventually economics would probably intervene, and it was likely that the horse would be sold as age depleted his value. At least when a horse was sold from such ideal circumstances, the seller would bear no responsibility for any unnatural wear to the horse's body, nor for an ill temperament, nor for a 'hard mouth' gained from rough usage and abuse. It is arguable that a horse with such a perfect master would have been far slower to age than other horses. However, it is far from a certainty that many such owners existed.

Over the course of his lifetime, a Victorian horse was likely to move through many different spheres of human society, and to make contact with people of diverse backgrounds and classes. Anna Sewell presented her character Black Beauty as moving easily from the service of one class of masters to that of others of distinctly different status, and Black Beauty's wealthier masters are not always the best or kindest.[41] Sewell did, however, allow for her famous character a level of vaguely upward mobility

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[40] 'Horses and their Treatment', *Chambers's Journal of Popular Literature, Science, and Arts*, 52 (1875), p. 290.

[41] Anna Sewell, *Black Beauty: his Grooms and Companions. The Autobiography of a Horse. Translated from the Original Equine by Anna Sewell* (London: Jarold & Sons, 1877). See also Ellen B. Wells and Anne Grimshaw (eds), *The Annotated Black Beauty* (London: J.A. Allen, 1989); Moira Ferguson, 'Black Beauty and His Friends: Icons of Englishness and Empire', in *Animal Advocacy*, pp. 75-104.

near the end of her novel that would have been sadly unlikely for a Victorian horse. As they aged or were injured, or as they began to display 'bad temperament', horses lost value and were sold for less and less money to people with lower and lower standards, and were destined to be eventually slaughtered for meat and other resources that could be got from their corpses. While it would not have been visibly apparent to an observer on the street that a ragged, worn-out cab or omnibus horse had ever been anything else, it was merely a short step to wonder whether such a horse had ever seen 'better days'. Though a low-born horse would not have started his career in the service of the highest echelons of society, a well-bred horse could only lose value as it aged, and so was as likely as any to end his days in lowly occupation. A horse was an expensive animal, and so would be kept in service for as long as possible, despite the fact that as he aged his potential for creating revenue would invariably decline until he was only fit for performing the most menial of tasks.

This bleak trajectory of a horse's life also established an inescapable, if not immediately apparent, connection between the wealthiest of horse owners and the lowliest of cabmen. The horse that pulled the fancy private carriage was the same horse that would one day drag the humble cart or cab. Even under the lash of the poorest driver, such a horse might still carry the scars he gained in service to wealthier masters. The most notorious of these scars, and the ones that were argued to contribute most to a decline in a horse's value and quality of life, would have been suffered through the use of the bearing rein and accompanying gag-bit. *Blackwood's* 1874 article 'Horses, Bits and Bearing Reins' directly relates the use of the bearing rein with the transfer of a horse from carriage to cab work. The author of this article argued that once the bearing rein

was applied to a horse, it would be only a relatively short time 'until, with temper and mouth both ruined, he passes into the hands of a bus-driver or cabman'.[42] It is interesting to think of the horse's body as a space where members of diverse classes left their marks, each meant to communicate a message or else physically coerce a response from the animal. All that would have been visible to an observer (or a rider), of course, would have been the cabman's wretched old horse, and it would be easiest to associate the horse's suffering with the cabman. Texts such as 'Horses, Bits, and Bearing Reins' suggest that wealthier people may not always have felt their consciences clear of blame for the condition of cab horses, especially if they had ever sold horses that had been 'ruined' in their households into similar service.

E.F. Flower, an outspoken opponent of the use of the bearing rein for carriage horses, suggested in a letter to *The Times* in 1874, that the use of the bearing rein was not often enough criticized, despite the fact that it was a common sight and recognizably cruel: 'there is one most cruel and barbarous practice going on all around us, of little or no notice is taken, possibly because the perpetrators are in the higher classes of society, which really makes it much worse, as they ought to know better. This stupid and cruel practice is the use of the gag or bearing-rein for carriage horses'.[43] Flower claimed that because the bearing rein was mostly used by the upper classes, the RSPCA tended to be weak in their denunciation of its use and were reluctant to bring charges against people who used it, even when cruelty was painfully apparent. A response from the RSPCA, denying the accusation, was published the day after Flower's. In this response, George Fleming claimed, 'the use of the "bearing rein" has not been unnoticed by [the RSPCA],

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[42] 'Bits and Bearing Reins', *Blackwood's,* p. 744.
[43] E.F. Flower, 'Cruelty to Horses', letter to *The Times* (12 August 1874), p. 6.

and that, though the perpetrators are chiefly in the higher classes of society, they have not been spared censure'.[44] In this letter, Fleming also communicated a sense of helplessness and resignation:

> 'Until horse-owners care to take an interest in their four-footed slaves, and subordinate the silly whims of their coachmen to their own superior intelligence, I fear that admirers of the noble creature will continue to be subjected to the annoyance and pain they experience in witnessing splendid horses made ridiculous and almost inefficient by this pernicious invention'.[45]

Clearly, Fleming believed that coachmen were directly responsible for the pain caused to horses by the bearing rein, and their employers only indirectly responsible. Further, Fleming described the pain of a horse in bearing rein using terms that were somewhat disconnected from the experience of the horse. In Flower's scenario, while the horse is made 'ridiculous and almost inefficient' by the bearing rein, it is the admirer of horses who, in observing this spectacle, experiences pain. Fleming also claimed that this pain was much less for the carriage horse than to the wagon- and draught-horses that were also employed in the service of the same people. Again, the coachman is offered as responsible, this time for setting the bad example: 'Of course the waggoner or drayman only follows the example set him by my Lord's coachman, but both are ignorant of, or indifferent to, the inconvenience and pain the stupid contrivance causes the unfortunate animals intrusted to their management'.[46] Fleming made it seem as if there were so many people whose treatment of horses needed to be monitored, that it was hardly surprising that the employer could not keep track. His solution required that the coachman be

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[44] George Fleming, 'Cruelty to Horses', letter to *The Times* (13 August 1874), p. 6.
[45] Fleming, 'Cruelty', p. 6.
[46] Fleming, 'Cruelty', p. 6.

closely regulated in his treatment of horses, as he suggests that other employees in the same household would follow the coachman's example.

The coachman was often reviled as a kind of upstart who would abuse the horses in his charge when left to his own devices. It was suggested that coachmen mostly used the bearing rein because they liked to show off, rather than because they had been instructed to use it: 'Unfortunately, in our complex social system, [the horse] is comparatively seldom under the direct guidance of its master or proprietor; but is handed over to a servant—some "Master Jeames"—whose chief concern, possibly, is to shew off in livery in an enviably splendid "turn-out"'.[47] Thus, the offence of his employers was downgraded from abuse to a kind of gullible neglect. The coachman, of course, would have been more readily visible to observers than the riders in the coach, and it would have been possible to surmise that the riders in the coach, who were not be easily seen, were not wholly aware, or were completely unaware of what was happening to their horse. In this position, the coachman became a buffer between the outside world and his employers, and a target for blame. It is but a short step to imagine that this might have been part of his duty. Imagined in this way, the outside world knocked at the window of the carriage to try to relay the unpleasant information about the pain suffered by their horse, but the riders inside remained safe in their ignorance.

Flower was quoted by *Blackwood's* in 1875 as saying that in addition to the pain inflicted upon horses with the bearing rein, 'it is a severe penance to any man who loves a horse to walk along the fashionable streets or the Park, and to witness the sufferings of horses from this absurd and cruel practice'.[48] Flower considered it intensely hypocritical

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[47] 'Horses and their Treatment', *Chambers's*, p. 290.
[48] E.F. Flower, quoted in 'Bits, and Bearing Reins', *Blackwood's*, p. 744.

that the elite members of a society that almost unanimously disparaged the treatment of

cab horses regularly engaged in such a practice as the use of the bearing rein, especially

since, as we have seen, the use of the bearing rein was known to wear out well-bred

horses very quickly, so that they would soon be sold for lower service, such as cab work.

He highlighted the hypocrisy of individuals who professed to support the cause of animal

welfare and reform while continuing to allow their coachmen to employ the bearing rein.

He hinted at the reluctance of the RSPCA to denounce the practice of using the bearing

rein for fear of offending their most important supporters: 'Little does the benevolent

dowager who sits absorbed in the pages of the last tract of the "Society for Prevention of

Cruelty to Animals", know of the sufferings of the two noble animals by whom she is

leisurely drawn along the "Lady's Mile".'[49] Yet Flower did not accuse such a person of

intentional or wanton cruelty. Rather, he explained that 'the pain which is inflicted upon

their horses, proceeds almost exclusively from a want of knowledge on the part of the

owners, and not from any disregard of the suffering of the animal.'[50] It is easy to see how

wealthy women especially may have been viewed as 'excused' from the blame for such

ignorance, as it could well pass for a kind of naivety, though it urgently required remedy

through education.

Flower imagined that even when a woman was confronted with the spectacle of a

horse suffering in bearing rein, she might have been taught by society (which prized the

sight) to interpret what she saw as something other than suffering. He argued (not

unconvincingly even to the twenty-first century reader, which may suggest the

pervasiveness of this interpretation) that the woman could be persuaded that because a

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[49] E. F. Flower, quoted in 'Bits and Bearing Reins', *Blackwood's*, p. 744.
[50] E. F. Flower, quoted in 'Bits and Bearing Reins', *Blackwood's*, p. 742.

horse looked more fashionable in bearing rein, he was as proud to wear the device as the owner was proud of the way he looked. This would provide a specious explanation for why the horse in bearing rein looked and acted differently than one that was loosed from it: 'She probably fancies that the high prancing stem, and the toss of the head which scatters flakes of foam at every step, are expressions of pride and satisfaction at their task, when in fact they are occasioned by pain, and a vain attempt to obtain momentary relief from their suffering'. [51] It seems that by the 1870s, horses in this condition were either imagined to look proud solely because the bearing rein was designed to make them look to be displaying pride like a human (with their heads held high), or because people were so accustomed to associating this condition with horses possessed by the upper classes. The latter would perhaps account for the association of pride with the tossing of the head and foaming at the mouth, for these actions can hardly be said to resemble any human display of pride. It seems that the bearing rein at once attempted to stamp the horse with an image of human pride in forcing the head to be held high, and also invented an image of a kind of false equine pride, that was actually synonymous with a horse's response to the pain of wearing the device.[52] It is certain that in the case of the bearing rein, practical empathy was in some way impeded by a learned interpretation of this response, but it is equally certain that this interpretation was liable to break down with any attempt at interrogation, as is proven by the many endeavours that were made to re-

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[51] Flower, quoted in 'Bits and Bearing Reins', *Blackwood's*, p. 744.

[52] It is interesting to note that Victorian fashion constructed the image of the corseted woman in a way that was not wholly dissimilar. If a horse's response to the pain caused by the bearing rein could be viewed as a demonstration of the horse's 'pride', so could a woman's suffering (or even fainting) in a corset be construed as feminine 'delicacy'. Gina Marlene Dorré has made a compelling study of the parallels between the cultural functions of the fashions of the bearing rein and the corset, and between the movements to oppose these fashions. See 'Horses and Corsets: *Black Beauty*, Dress Reform, and the Fashioning of the Victorian Woman', *Victorian Literature and Culture*, 30 (2002), pp. 157-178.

educate society and thus to establish (or re-establish) a line of natural communication with the horse that was undistorted by fashion.

Though they did not own private carriages in order to use bearing reins, it seems that middle-class women were not exempt from the accusation of contributing to the abuse of horses through ignorance. In this quote from a *Chambers's* article on omnibus horses, the problem again is fashion versus common sense. Rather than be seen walking, a woman might pay a small sum to ride a very short distance on an omnibus, which, of course, would cause the team of horses to be made to frequently repeat the action of their most strenuous tasks, stopping and starting with their burden of several tons. Interestingly, though Gordon assumed that such a woman would have likely been ignorant of the pain she caused to the horses at the front of the omnibus, he did not excuse her ignorance in the same way that Flower somewhat excused the naivety of the upper-class woman in her carriage. Rather, Gordon equated the ignorance of the woman who used the omnibus in order to avoid walking a short distance for the sake of fashion with a frivolous and injurious stupidity. For Gordon, this kind of fashionable carelessness was a veritable destructive force: 'Think of it, ye exigent women, who rather than walk a yard will stop an omnibus twice in a minute, the sudden stopping and starting, so often unnecessary, taking more out of a horse than an hour's steady tramp on the level, and being the chief cause of the London horse's poor expectation of life.'[53] It is likely that a large omnibus, full of people, would have facilitated this kind of ignorance even more than the carriage and coachman between a rider and horse would have done. In order to see suffering and confront its possible causes, even in such visible creatures as

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[53] Gordon, 'Omnibus', p. 29.

those horses used for transport in the streets, one needed to look for it, rather than to give in to the temptation to look away.

Despite their visibility, it was not a simple matter for an observer to witness the extent of the use and abuse of horses, even those employed for public transport. Gordon explained that it was difficult to arrive at the number of London cab horses. First, one needed to consider that not all horses worked in cab service all the time. Some, for example, were made to pull coal part-time, or to work in other kinds of hauling or industrial transport work.[54] This meant that the cab horse seen on the street might have an entirely different job to do some days; the conditions of which could be better or worse. It also meant that a cab horse might be made to last longer hours than his driver; such a horse may have another job to do before or after a cabman begins or quits his shift. Such would have been the case with night cabs; Gordon explained that the horses employed to pull night cabs were invariably engaged in some other kind of work during the day.[55]

Henry Curling suggested that although the suffering of the cab horse was highly visible, by 1851 people had hardened themselves so much to this spectacle that they believed that there was little help for it. Of the abuse inflicted daily upon horses by cabmen, Curling said that 'except from the circumstance of its being by custom familiarized to the public eye, they could not endure the sight of such cruelty'.[56] The frequency with which cab horses were seen to be in pain was likely to overwhelm the discretion of a single observer (perhaps even a policeman) who could not confront a multitude of cabmen, each doing like the other. A certain (and, Curling would likely

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[54] Gordon, 'Cab', p.12.
[55] Gordon, 'Cab', p.12.
[56] Curling, *Lashers*, p. 9.

argue, an unreasonable) level of suffering thus became acceptable. No doubt the feeling that one could not confront the individual actions of so many was compounded by a sense of complicity in people who hired cabs, perhaps every day. It would have been much easier simply to accept that there was little that one could do to rectify the situation (as one person's boycott of cabs was unlikely to bring about great change), and to try to make one's way without thinking too much about it. There was also an awareness that the cabman's poverty contributed to his treatment of horses, and whether one believed that a cabman applied his lash because of his poverty or his rough temperament, this was the fault of a flawed system that could not be remedied by denying the cabman one's fare - especially when one really needed transportation in a hurry.

Night cabs were presented by the Victorian periodical press as having been almost an entirely different species of business than the cabs that were frequently seen in the streets during the day. Night cabs seem to have been viewed as less respectable than day-time cabs, but much more necessary because people did not want to walk about during the dark. They were often more expensive than daytime cabs. The men who drove night cabs seem to have been viewed as slightly sinister for working at indecent hours (Sunday cabs were also viewed as somewhat improper, though very convenient for church-goers). It is arguable that this reputation was helped by the fact that night cabs appeared to be part of the night, shabby and shrouded in darkness. Certainly the driver of a night-time cab was able to inflict more damage upon the horse in his charge, with less impunity, because his actions would have been less visible in the darkness. It also would have been harder for an observer to detect the condition of a horse in the dark.

In his 1851 tract, Curling claimed to have confronted a night-time cabman about a particularly frightful instrument with which he had been driving his horse: 'He excused himself by saying it was his *night whip*, an instrument he owned he dare not use in the day, but absolutely necessary to make use of against the horse in question.'[57] The 'night whip' would not have been so visible during the dark as to be easily seen by riders and passers-by, and it also seems that horses of the poorest condition were put to night work: 'The night-cabs are worked by the worst description of horses: there is scarcely one of them that is not spavined or partially blind, or both. To see one whose fore-legs are not looped and palsied from falling down and breaking his knees, is an exceptional curiosity.'[58] Thus, the driver night cab was presented as taking advantage of the darkness to utilize horses of the very worst condition.[59] These horses, because of their relative weakness, would have had to have been forced to pull a cab by more brutal methods than their counterparts of the daytime. Also, as we have seen, night cab horses may well have been engaged in other service during the day, which work was likely to have been less public. Both passenger and cabman of the night-cab were portrayed as a little desperate, and the cabman possibly as rapacious. The representation of the night-time cab presents a useful contrast to that of the daytime cab, in that it confirms that despite the fact that the public were hardened to the suffering and abuse of cab horses in poor health and condition, there was definitely a limit to what would be tolerated. That this limit could be exceeded during the night-time shows that there was a level of dependence upon public

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[57] Curling, *Lashers*, p. 13.

[58] 'Cabs and Cabmen', *Chambers's Journal of Popular Science and Literature*, 38 (1862), p. 333.

[59] In its description of 'night-cab work', Curling's tract is particularly evocative of the kind of Victorian exposé journalism of the underworld discussed by scholars such as Seth Koven and Judith Walkowitz. See Seth Koven, *Slumming: Sexual and Social Politics in Victorian London* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004); Judith Walkowitz, *City of Dreadful Delight: Narratives of Sexual Danger in Late-Victorian London* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

cabs that could stretch appropriate boundaries in the right circumstances. The provision or concealment of visual information about the treatment and condition of cab horses was crucial in determining a level of acceptable suffering in the cab horse, as perceived by the public and weighted by their need for this mode of transportation.

While it is true that those who wrote about the suffering of working horses did not have to overcome the problem of visual access, as did antivivisectionists, the visibility of the working horse in the street did not grant a clear picture of the horse's life and circumstances, nor did it necessarily make plain what steps would need to be taken in order to ameliorate the horse's suffering. In order to understand the circumstances surrounding the suffering of horses, it was necessary to engage with a whole network of associations, which included connections between and among individuals of the most disparate classes. These connections were potentially as uncomfortable as they were undeniable. Most especially one could not hope to understand the suffering of the horse without considering the circumstances of the driver of the horse. Unfortunately, the most common conditions in which horses were driven (especially in urban spaces) - those of the cab and cab driver - were also the most likely to breed suffering.

Some tried to blame the suffering of the poor cab horse entirely upon the cab driver. Cab drivers were a very unpopular sort of people and proved a very convenient scapegoat. Cab drivers were indeed often guilty of abusing the animals in their charge. The brutality of cab drivers, however, was a thin explanation for the suffering of horses, as cab drivers themselves lived and worked in conditions of dire poverty and discomfort. Further, the horses they drove often bore the scars of forms of the more intense abuse (than neglect and overwork) that they had suffered at the hands of wealthier people who

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used acutely harmful methods of restraint and compulsion, such as the bearing rein. Though their horses looked younger and healthier, people of fashion were known to cause the worst kind of suffering to horses when they employed the use of bearing reins in the fitting of their horses to fancy carriages.

Though the cab driver would have seemed to the casual observer to have been the obvious source of the suffering of horses, the circumstances surrounding the suffering of horses was really much more complicated. This is reflected in the diversity of popular texts that were written about the issue. Historically, the situation provides insight into the figure of the observer in the nineteenth century, precisely because the situation required the observer to perform a great deal of work in order to work through problems that were not immediately evident. In order to produce a text that was likely to encourage positive change, it was necessary for an observer of suffering in this instance to look deeply into what was visible, and perhaps to look twice, or three times, in order to achieve more than a superficial understanding of the suffering that occurred. The development and use of such skills of observation (detection) became an interest in themselves during the nineteenth century and beyond. Victorians applied the imagination to the fragments of empirical data that were available to achieve a deeper understanding of the experiences of vulnerable individuals. The work of empathy was meant to provide an 'inside' knowledge of others' sufferings, as opposed to settling for the limited and sometimes misleading information that the senses alone could provide.

Conclusion

It is helpful to study the advocacy of humans and animals alongside one another, because it emphasizes how vulnerable humans are often considered to lack a 'voice' - the 'other' is epitomized by the animal 'other'. It also reminds one that the interior experience of another individual is as knowable and ultimately unknowable in another human as it is in an animal. In fact, if one is to attempt to study empathy (as the real experience of witnessing the suffering of someone else that would provoke one to speak out on behalf of that individual), it is crucial to study both animals and humans as subjects, as the differences between animals (who necessarily lack a voice) and humans tend to highlight the uses and benefits of empathy as a tool, as well as its problems.

To say that people had agency when they spoke up for others, and did not act solely as the result of the pressure of forces exerted upon them, is certainly not to say that they did not use this agency to achieve their own ends. The reason that it is easier to reduce the advocacy of one group or individual on behalf of another to the outcome of various forces, rather than to consider that these were people making choices, is that the motivations behind the making of such choices are impossible to absolutely prove. Historians may often make good guesses about the motivations behind the advocacy of one group by another, however, and often they have come to the conclusion that such motivations have been selfish. It is quite possible, and even probable, that the primary goal of many of the authors of the texts I have examined in this thesis was not always the advancement of the best interests of their subjects. Further, we can have little idea how the subjects themselves were affected by the attempts that others made to speak for them. Empathy, as such, may be used as a genuine means to express the perceived sufferings of

others in order to bring about an end to those sufferings, or else the struggle for sameness in difference may be rerouted to achieve the selfish ends of the person who has attempted to access and express knowledge of someone else's interior experiences.

Why, then, should we even bother to study how people have spoken on behalf of others? The study of empathic discourse and the representation of empathy through the texts by which individuals meant to speak for others, is as fraught with problems as is our own use of empathy. Yet this parallel offers some promise: despite the problems we may encounter in trying to understand the struggle to understand, the study of the historical development of an ethical discourse characterized by empathy can help us to understand the ways in which we represent the experiences of vulnerable individuals today. Linda Alcoff suggests, in her article 'The Problem of Speaking for Others', that despite the apparent pitfalls of trying to speak on behalf of someone else, it is better to make the attempt than to refuse to even try because of the risk of misrepresentation and the fear of imposing the self upon the other. Though empathy and representation are rife with problems, Alcoff argues:

> adopting the position that one should only speak for oneself raises similarly
> problematic questions. For example, we might ask, if I don't speak for those less
> privileged than myself, am I abandoning my political responsibility to speak out
> against oppression, a responsibility incurred by the very fact of my privilege? If I
> should not speak for others, should I restrict myself to following their lead
> uncritically? Is my greatest contribution to *move over and get out of the way*?[1]

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[1] Linda Alcoff, 'The Problem of Speaking for Others', *Cultural Critique*, 20, (1991), p. 8.

Alcoff positions the stakes of speaking for others against what she argues is the only other option, which is silence. Silence, when one is in a position to speak, is an act and an expenditure of agency - the result of a choice made on behalf of others.

The representation of the reality of another is only the expression of an interpretation, which may not reflect anything like the real experience of the subject, whether because of intentional dissimulation, ignorant (or arrogant) imposition, or simple misunderstanding. Still, it is arguable that despite the problems inherent in speaking for others, in many situations it is preferable to take the risk, as opposed to saying nothing. The study of the history of speaking for others is equally problematic, and arguably just as important. As historians, we understand that the experiences of many individuals, especially of those who were less able to speak for themselves, are ultimately irrecoverable. In order to seek what it is that we *can* recover, we must look beyond the information provided about such individuals by those who were in positions of power or privilege, as this information is invariably less than trustworthy. Yet the problems we face in using sources written by the privileged to uncover the history of those who were less able to speak for themselves are an apt reflection of the problems we face when we try to speak for others today. Awareness of the problems of empathy and the pitfalls of representing the experiences of others does not solve these problems. I hold with Alcoff that we should explore these problems in as much detail as possible. It is crucial to for scholars to explore the role that empathy has played in the history of ethical expression.

My solution to the problem of studying the attempts of nineteenth-century authors to represent the interior experience of others without disregarding the historical agency of these individuals has been to examine how they were enabled to formulate a discourse of

empathy, rather than to consider why they chose to speak on behalf of the groups that they did. This has also helped me to avoid becoming ensnared in a constant analysis of the motivations behind every text that I have studied. Instead of engaging in a more conventional analysis of the social, cultural, and political forces that may have acted upon the authors of the texts that I study, I have focused upon the factors that enabled them to express and to understand the plights of others in the way that they did. I believe that placing historical figures within the context of factors that enabled or constrained their behaviours or expressions provides an alternative to the presentation of these individuals as veritable slaves to the pressures of their historical circumstances. It is possible to study humanity in history.

Victorians developed an ethical discourse characterized by empathy as a means of thinking through 'the problem of speaking for others'. For Victorians, empathy did the work of producing the knowledge that was necessary to make progress in debating important social and ethical issues. Empathy afforded meaning to the unknowable realm of the experience of 'other'. Victorians established a multiplicity of sites for the articulation of such meaning through the authorship of texts intended to represent the sufferings and experiences of vulnerable individuals. Empathy did the work of ultimately allowing Victorians to bypass barriers to understanding, and the introduction of the word 'empathy' at the turn of the century signalled the significant investment that Victorians made in this work.

. The emergence of a Victorian ethical discourse based upon empathic 'knowledge' is traceable through strategies that authors used to express the inaccessible. This was especially important if the facts available in a particular situation were scant or

scarcely observable. The authors of these texts attempted to overcome almost every sort

of empirical obstacle in order to acquire knowledge of their subjects. Whether the

barriers were natural, geographical, or man-made; whether they were the barriers of

bodies that were hidden, diseased, or otherwise oppressed or challenged, empathy could

help to overcome these barriers. Whether their subjects literally had no voice, or were

unwilling or unable to use their voices; whether the subjects' voices were liable to be

dismissed or mistrusted, the authors of the texts I have studied provided their subjects

with voices, and found that these voices could still be considered to represent the

subjects' own. For good or ill, at least their subjects were not absolutely doomed to

silence.

The authors of the texts that I have studied rose to the challenge of speaking for

others by utilizing the particular strategy of expressing an understanding of the invisible,

interior experience of the other through the presentation of his or her navigation of

elements of the unseen. Each writer faced particular obstacles to visual observation in

the course of their investigations, and each presented his or her reader with a means of

overcoming these by pairing reason with the imagination. None of the suggestions

offered by these writers regarding the experiences of their subjects could ever have been

proven to be absolutely accurate; however, the ambiguity of the circumstances of the

subject was often presented as the most pernicious factor to be considered. The

vulnerability of the subject augmented the significance of possibility. Further, the

inability of the vulnerable subject to speak for himself or herself increased the urgency of

the presentation of possibility.

Each of the authors of the different texts I have examined communicated a certain lack of faith in the empirical information that was readily available to them. Their impressions of circumstances seem to have been formed with great care, rather than on the basis of appearances or hasty prejudice (at least this is the way that the authors have represented their impressions, which indicates that they were all somewhat skilful at crafting the communication of their perceptions). The texts demonstrate that these authors possessed an awareness of the malleability of perception, along with a wish not to be duped, or to allow others to be duped, by appearances into a false complacency (or, as in the case of the physiologists who testified in favour of vivisection, into a false sense of indignation). I argue that this mistrust of appearances is characteristic of the nineteenth-century observer.[2] Further, I argue that this is indicative of the shift away from a culture that defined the relationship between subject and object wholly in terms of commonalities.

This was in contrast to the way that eighteenth-century individuals perceived the world outside themselves, especially with regard to ethics and the relationship between subject and object. William Reddy describes the eighteenth century as an age that believed that the best ethical (as well as social, and political) direction was guided by feeling, or a 'sense' of right and wrong.[3] Though Reddy's book is primarily about France, he does make somewhat regular use of the works of British thinkers to support his claims (the above citation references Reddy's reading of a passage written by the third

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[2] I would argue that the Victorian interest in magic and mesmerism, far from contradicting this argument, is further proof of the nineteenth-century fascination with the malleability of perception. See Alison Winter, *Mesmerism: Powers of Mind in Victorian Britain*, for a study of this phenomenon (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998).

[3] William M. Reddy, *The Navigation of Feeling: A Framework for the History of Emotions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 156.

earl of Shaftesbury in 1711), and I am convinced that the eighteenth-century British, as well as the French, placed their faith in the association between the senses and the feelings as the best means of finding their way in their lives and their world. In the texts I have studied, I have found compelling evidence of how this trend of associating the senses with feelings (especially with the kind of feelings that would move someone to work for the reform of treatment of vulnerable individuals) and the discernment of truth was somewhat reversed in the nineteenth century. It seems very reasonable that it should have done so in light of the changes in the understanding of perception that occurred during this time.

Beginning in the Romantic era of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, the role of the imagination of the observer came to be privileged over strictly empirical data in the understanding of perception. This enabled people to embrace broad possibilities of perception. For example, the authors of the reports on the conditions of child labour that I examine in the first chapter of this thesis advance the attempt to 'see' a system; rather than looking exclusively for people to blame, the commissioners and inspectors who reported to the child labour commissions submitted their own testimony to form part of a web of subjective judgment in order that decisions might be made to adjust that system in a way that would best address and ameliorate the sufferings of child labourers. The authors of the texts that I have studied embraced the possibilities offered by the prospect of the imagination in communicating an ethical imperative to some number of readers who lacked the benefit of the same access or information that the author had. In each case, the authors discussed the empirical obstacles that they had to overcome in order to gain access or information about the subjects, and endeavoured to

demonstrate the imaginative means by which they managed to overcome these obstacles. The texts read almost as a roadmap to guide readers in their employment of the imagination to formulate a perception of the subject and the subject's experience.

The texts I have examined have taught me, however, that while the significance attached to the imagination as an element of perception in the nineteenth century may have encouraged people to embrace new opportunities for understanding and communication, it also deprived them of a certain sense of security in an unassailable sense of moral direction. If, in the eighteenth century, one could trust one's empirical perceptions and the feelings informed by these, in the nineteenth century, people seem to have been acutely aware that their feelings could be manipulated by the manipulation of their perceptions. If, as Reddy argues, the eighteenth century was characterized by faith in a natural 'sense' of right and wrong, in the nineteenth century, people seem to have been very aware that things were not always as they seemed. The authors of the texts I have studied seem to have been vigilant against those who would manipulate or obscure empirical information regarding vulnerable subjects, and also against the temptation to make hasty judgments about the circumstances of such subjects based upon simple appearances.

One reason that Victorians were eager to lead and to educate others seems to have been to combat the influence of those who might wish to advance a different perception of the experiences of the subject in question. Victorians seem to have been driven to urge others to look beyond empirical impressions in order to find the 'truth' of particular circumstances. In other words, the nineteenth century saw the 'sense' of right and wrong replaced with an emphasis upon the moral imagination. Of course, the moral

imagination required education in order that it might formulate perceptions in accordance with cultural or religious standards. This would explain why the evangelical movement of the nineteenth century produced so many texts devoted to the communication of the plights of vulnerable groups of individuals. Ebenezer Davies' anti-slavery text is but one particularly good example of many of these.

There was a great deal of popular literature written in the nineteenth century for the purpose of educating the moral imaginative faculties of children. I consider that it would have been beyond the scope of my thesis to study children's poems and stories in detail, but the examination of such texts in light of nineteenth-century attitudes toward ethics and the imagination would make a very interesting study. I believe that the genre of sensation fiction merits its own study in light of nineteenth-century developments in ethical expression. It is likely that there was enough sensation fiction produced during the nineteenth century that sought to educate the moral imagination as well as to entertain to warrant a study of these texts alone.
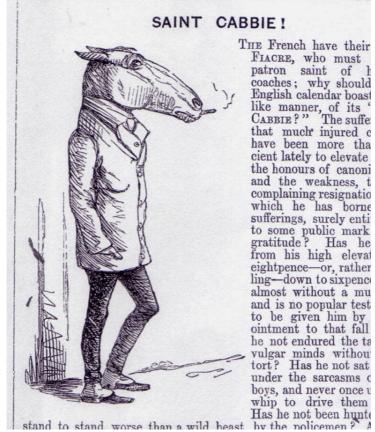
Another possibility for research that I would like to propose is the study of the way that different groups throughout history have gained popular consideration as opposed to being groups the advocacy of whom cut against the grain of conventional 'wisdom'. I believe that no such study could be made without a foundational analysis of the development of the concept of empathy. During the nineteenth century, many groups that were championed as worthy of protection against vulnerability to exploitation and abuse eventually came to be afforded a measure of protection. Though we still struggle to achieve equality for all humans, it is arguable that our culture values humanity as the ultimate or 'natural' group that we might call 'ourselves'. Of course, this wasn't always

the way. Divisions based upon race, sex, religion, and nationality have placed certain human beings outside of the circle of consideration in many historical circumstances, and these divisions were defended fiercely; they were believed to be quite 'natural'. It is interesting to me that despite how self-reflective we have become regarding the social construction of 'natural' differences, we continue to insist that the line we have constructed between humans and animals is 'natural'. Is it possible to historicize the boundaries we have constructed - and deconstructed - between and among privileged and unprivileged groups? What convinces people to begin to include members of a formerly excluded group into their circle of consideration? By what means do have opponents of such movements attempted to reinforce notions of natural difference?

I am convinced that to find answers to these questions (or at least to better understand the questions) we must look to the history of empathy and the history of the moral imagination that we have inherited from the nineteenth century. I believe that this was the very beginning of our self-awareness regarding the social construction of our values, as well as the source of our awareness that our perceptions are often easily influenced. We know that we are not always perfectly self-aware. The nineteenth-century moral imagination bequeathed to us an insecurity about appearances that reminds us of everything we do not know, as well as an ambition to try to know the impossible. If this anti-empiricist legacy has been often challenged in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, it has never been wholly forgotten. It is what drives us to continue to struggle against complacency regarding the hidden suffering of the 'other', despite the fact that the exploitation of others can often provide great benefits to the privileged. As the Victorians troubled themselves to imagine what they did not know about the

circumstances of others, they learned to locate the 'other' within themselves, and to cultivate a crucial, if uncomfortable, 'sameness' in difference.

Appendix 1: 'Saint Cabbie'
from 'Saint Cabbie', *Punch* 25 (1853), p. 112.

SAINT CABBIE!

THE French have their
FIACRE, who must
patron saint of h
coaches; why should
English calendar boast
like manner, of its '
CABBIE?" The suffe
that much injured c
have been more tha
cient lately to elevate
the honours of canoni
and the weakness, t
complaining resignatio
which he has borne
sufferings, surely enti
to some public mark
gratitude? Has he
from his high elevat
eightpence—or, rather
ling—down to sixpence
almost without a mu
and is no popular test
to be given him by
ointment to that fall
he not endured the ta
vulgar minds withou
tort? Has he not sat
under the sarcasms o
boys, and never once u
whip to drive them
Has he not been hunte
stand to stand worse than a wild beast by the policemen? A

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