

# The Victorian Newsletter

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Cover: Max Beerbohm's caricature of George Meredith from *Vanity Fair* 24 September 1896

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## Ten Unpublished Letters by John Addington Symonds at Duke University\*

John G. Younger

In 1934 Duke University acquired a small collection of papers which were eventually catalogued in 1994: ten unpublished letters by John Addington Symonds (1840-1893) to Edmund Gosse (1849-1928), a short list of the contents of these letters by an earlier compiler, an envelope, and a small monograph.

Of the letters nine are complete and one is an undated post script; all fall within the period 17 December 1889 to 29 March 1892.

The large envelope (15x23 cm.) was addressed to Edmund Gosse, 1 Whitehall, London and sent 4 December 1894 by registered mail. The envelope therefore could not have been mailed by Symonds, who died 16 April 1893, even though the back flaps of the envelope are sealed in red wax and stamped with his signet ring bearing part of his coat of arms; "1 & 4, Symonds 'party per fere sable & or, a pale & three trefoils counterchange,' 2 & 3, Mainwaring, 'bony of twelve pieces argent & gules'" (Schueller & Peters L1963: to Gosse). Since the envelope was sent from Venice (no return address), it might have been sent by Horatio Forbes Brown, Symonds's literary executor; Brown owned a house, 560 Zattere, on the Guidecca Canal in which Symonds leased a mezzanine apartment from 1883, usually spending the Spring and Fall there (see, e.g. Schueller & Peters L1845).

The small monograph is by Octave Delapierre, an 1870 copy of his 1861 treatise, "Un point curieux des moeurs privées de la Grèce" written in part as a response to the 17th-century homoerotic romance, "L'Alcibiade fanciullo a scola," by Antonio Rocco. Symonds collected erotica, as his references in the Duke Letters make clear: an edition of the *Priapea* (Duke Letter I), the *Erotica Biblia Society* (Duke Letter III), and pornographic literature in general (Duke Letter V: "This kind of literature is not good for me. . ."); and it is possible that this Delapierre treatise is Symonds's copy that might have accompanied his 1862 reprint copy of Rocco's romance, to which he refers in Schueller & Peters L1846 (15 November 1890). Or it could have belonged to Gosse, who also did "prize rare books" and apparently had an "enfer de bibliothèque" to put them in (Duke Letter II). The connection between Symonds and Delapierre/Rocco is made slightly more intriguing by the fact that the Gennadeion library in Athens, Greece, has a 1908 copy of his "A Problem of Greek Ethics" with which is bound another copy of Delapierre dated 1871.

The rest of the Duke collection consists of Symonds's ten letters. Four of the letters (Duke Letters I-III, VIII) are written on Symonds's personal stationery, sheets of light creme-yellow paper laid-out horizontally and imprinted with AM HOF, DAVOS PLATZ, SWITZERLAND in the upper

right corner. Symonds then folds each sheet vertically in half and begins as if writing a book, beginning with the right half of the obverse (p. 1), the left half of the reverse (p. 2), and so on; page 5 begins a new sheet. Similar paper, but without the AM HOF imprint and laid out horizontally, is used for Duke Letters IV, VI, and the Post Script X; perhaps the AM HOF sheets were designed to be covers and the unaddressed sheets seconds.

When at the Countess Pisani's villa, Symonds uses her stationery for his Letter V, a dark blue onion skin paper; it, like the AM HOF stationery, is also laid out horizontally and folded vertically with her address occupying the two top corners of p. 1 (right half of the obverse), in italics: *Stazione e Posta Stanghella* obliquely at the left and *Vescana, Provincia di Padova* horizontally at the right. For Letter VII, Symonds experimented with a light blue onion skin laid out vertically but with the same AM HOF, DAVOS PLATZ, SWITZERLAND across the top right corner and printed by the same printer. Letter IX is similar in color, a light blue, but as thick as the creme-yellow AM HOF paper and laid out similarly horizontally, but no address is printed.

In the transcription that follows, I append minimal notes to the end of each letter, and I use standard epigraphical conventions, of which perhaps the following two need explanation here: //word// = word written above the line; and [word] = my clarification. Postscripts to two letters are tucked into available spaces: most of the postscript to Duke Letter VI is squeezed in perpendicularly into the top of the first page of the letter, and the postscript to Duke Letter VIII is written up in the left side of the last page.

Several Duke letters have received later marks; some of these may reflect intended changes to have been made for publication that did not take place. Some of these changes occur in pencil: brackets around the penultimate three paragraphs of Duke Letter III, and around the propenultimate three paragraphs and most of the last paragraph of Duke Letter VI; in Duke Letter V, the second paragraph in the section written on 7 April is struck through, as is the tag to paragraph eight This, please, is said privately to you and as is the postscript to Duke Letter VIII. In Duke Letter VII, however, the strike-outs are done in black ink, and violently—these I have indicated in the transcription.

One theme that runs through the Duke letters is JAS's homosexuality, especially his collection of homoerotic photographs of nude males, and his two homosexual apologiae *A Problem of Greek Ethics* (1883) and *A Problem in Modern Ethics* (1891b). Related themes also appear: outrage over the social and legal condemnation of "inversion," Symonds's con-

\*I am grateful to Duke University's Perkins Library, Special Collections, and to Melissa Delbridge, Associate Librarian, for the opportunity to study and publish this collection. I also wish to thank Dr. Rictor Norton for much help and many suggestions, amongst which that the collection may have come from a box containing Symonds's papers, letters, photographs, diaries, and

pamphlets left by Horatio Forbes Brown to the London Library (of which Gosse was the Chairman of the Committee of the London Library); Gosse's death in 1928 may have freed up the collection for its eventual acquisition by Duke in 1934.

cern over the critical reception to his biography of Michelangelo (1893a), especially to its chapter XII, his epistolary friendships with Walt Whitman and Karl Ulrichs, and remarks about a few lovers. All these themes appear in letters already published.

Duke Letters IV and VII also imply more about Gosse's own homoeroticism, which has occasioned little comment. Schueller & Peters (451, n.1) identify Gosse's *Firdausi in Exile* as having "homosexual themes. On February 24, 1890, Gosse had written to Symonds of his homosexual tendencies, and they had exchanged other letters skirting the subject." Gosse's letter of 24 February is partly published: "Years ago I wanted to write to you about all this, and withdrew through cowardice. . ." (Grosskurth 280-81, fn. 29).

The available letters in the period between Duke Letters IV and VII develop their mutual discovery (Grosskurth 280-82 and fn. 29 for Gosse's letters; for JAS letters, Schueller & Peters Ls 1783, 1786, 1792, 1797, 1810, 1845). One of the remarkable aspects of this series of letters is the homoerotic language Gosse and Symonds use. They speak through photographs of nude youths and men, through the "aura" they perceive in themselves and others, and through a language of silence. This last, the theme of silence and being silenced, is a well known topos of the period (cf. Grosskurth 282, 81), even before it was epitomized in the last line of Alfred Douglas's notorious poem "Two Loves" (qtd. in Harris 549-51 and dated September 1892): "I am the Love that dare not speak its name." Symonds and Gosse use this topos early in their correspondence (cf. the letter from Symonds to Gosse, 28 October 1886: Grosskurth 230 fn. 70) and passionately. If JAS could write a "L'Amour de l'Impossible," Gosse could counter with a "Tragedy without Words"; in their letters and their poetry they write the unspeakable.

## [Duke Letter I]

Am Hof, Davos Platz, Switzerland, Dec: 17 1889

My dear Gosse

I am extremely grateful to you for that most magnificent study of Sandow. It is superb, & I am already like you éperdument épris.

I wonder whether you would do me a great kindness; & that is, to get & send me at once copies of all the nude studies which have been taken of this hero. I say at once, because they will be really useful to me in some work wh. I am doing—or rather passing through the press again, upon the relation of the model to the work of art. I wrote to Van der Wyde himself, but have had no answer—perhaps because I could give no other address than London to my letter.

I hardly venture to write what I feel about the beauty of this photograph. It not only awakens the imaginative sense. But beats every work of art except for a few bits of the Pheidian period. And no sculpture has the immediate appeal to human sympathy which this superb piece of breathing manhood makes.

I should think that just at present in England Sandow could make a colossal fortune, if he were indifferent to virtue.

It seems to me rather odd, though it quite squares with

my personal opinions & wishes, that the authorities should allow the wide circulation of this nude portrait of a man attracting thousands to his feats of strength.

Odd, I say, when one remembers the extraordinary attitude of the English law toward certain practices, & what is notorious about the state of London, & last not least the disturbance going on at the present moment in the radical press.

As Ulrichs, in one of his strange pamphlets, speaking of the English Home Guards, says:

Perdet te pudor hic! Habere, Britannia,  
Severitatem non licet hanc et hos praetorianos!

It is really illogical of the authorities, knowing what morals are & what the law is, to permit the open sale of such photographs.

The whole matter is a worrying problem, about which I should be glad to talk, but which cannot to [sic, 'be'] discussed in a letter. But all I wanted now to observe is the absurdity of maintaining such monstrous laws, in the face of patent ~~great~~ //natural// facts, & then of authorizing the sale of pictures wh. cannot fail to be verführerisch in many instances. They would not allow a fancy female dancer to be sold in effigy like this; and ~~the~~ yet there are no laws about women.

I am glad you like that "Page of my Life." It was very hurriedly written, & printed off without the benefit of the elaborate corrections I gave it. This annoyed me greatly; for an autobiographical sketch of this sort is risky anyhow, & it ought to be flawless in mere typographical accuracy. I should like, now I have begun, to produce a good many more pages of my life here. It has attractive sides for a man of letters, who has accepted his barbarian surroundings—Ovid's Tristia are not in it.

By the way, Walt Whitman sent me an American paper, with your kind remarks on my Gozzò! Thank you much.—He is a very kind old friend, always paying some pretty little attention of this sort.

Please do not forget about the Sandow studies. Tell me what the cost is, & I will send it. After I have used them for my work, I will have them framed & put up in a gymnasium I have recently built & given to Davos Platz.

Referring to an older letter of yours, wh. I had not the time to answer, I see that you have inscribed one piece of your forth-coming volume of early poems to me. Thank you indeed heartily. It is a great honour, & I value it extremely as a sign of your friendship. When will the book appear? Soon I hope.

You also mention a private edition of the Priapeia (£ 3.3.0). I should like to take a copy, provided the alia you speak of add to the collection considerably. Anyhow, if the list is not closed, & you think the book worth my having, I am ready to subscribe.

In the same letter you allude to something from my private press, wh. I talked of sending you. I have no very certain memory of what this was. But if you will revive my memory, I will attend. From time to time, I have printed a great number of opuscula for my own use, wh. I did not choose to circulate to the public, & which I wanted to get out of the tiresome Ms. condition.

My daughter writes that she spent a very pleasant time with you & Mrs. Gosse one day, speaking of your wife's kind-

ness to her—for which I am sincerely grateful.

Everyours

JASymonds

People ought to subscribe, & get a complete cast of Sandau. This has been done in Germany for a man of his perfection.

Notes to Duke Letter I: About Eugene Sandow, see Schueller & Peters L1770, and 436 n.3. In his studies of aesthetics JAS used photographs of the male nude; see Symonds 1891a, Schueller & Peters Ls 1767 & 1770, & 434 n. 2, and below, Duke Letter VIII. Van der Wyde may be another publisher of photographs of male nudes. The "disturbance" refers to the Cleveland Street male-prostitute scandal that involved Lord Somerset in mid-November; see Schueller & Peters 556 n. 4, and below, Duke Letter III. Ulrichs's Latin elegiac couplet (Ulrichs 93 n. 64, a paraphrase of Martial 10.98) translates: "Your modesty is lost here. Britain, you cannot both be puritan and have those Praetorians!" For "A Page of my Life" see Symonds 1889; and Schueller & Peters Ls 1748, 1750, 1751, 1758, & 1759. For Gozzò," see Symonds 1890d. The "Priapea" appears again at the start of Duke Letter II and in Schueller & Peters L1770, a reference the editors could not explain at the time.

## [Duke Letter II]

Am Hof, Davos Platz, Switzerland, Dec: 24 1889

My dear Gosse

For your kind letter of the 21st & for all the trouble you have taken about the photographs & the book, very many thanks! The packet has not come by this night's post; but it will I hope do so tomorrow, & before I can send this letter off, I hope to tell you so & to enclose a cheque.

I think artists are right in criticizing Sandow from the point of view of plastic beauty. There is a want of agreeable proportion between his immense muscularity & the fine articulation of the wrists. I expect to detect the same abnormal fineness in the ankles.

I have already observed these signs in professional athletes. A powerfully developed peasant, who has used his hands & feet at ordinary work in the years of adolescence, makes a better proportioned model.

What attracted me in the portrait you sent of Sandow was the personal rather than the purely plastic beauty of the man—his carriage—the feeling that one would like him for a comrade.

I knew that you prize rare books. So I am going to send you one of my private publications, wh. is a great rarity, in as much as only 10 copies were struck off. One of these I bound for my own use, & have enlarged (I will not say enriched) with copious annotations. One I gave to [Benjamin] Jowett //(Master of Balliol)//; a third to my friend H. G. Dakyns, the translator of Xenophon's works. No one else has a copy.

You will perceive that it is an elaborate study of pederastia among the Greeks; & unluckily, it bristles with

Greek texts.

I wonder, when you have looked at it, whether you think it could be published?

Please be discreet with the little book, & put it into l'enfer de votre bibliotheque. Chaste as I am sure it is in treatment, there are many persons who would condemn me for having even handled such a topic. And I believe I am the only Englishman who has attempted the task, so cynically & prudishly held out as a bait to scholars by Gibbon (cap. xliv, note 192).

To this rather singular Christmas present I will add one of the Viennese studies of a nude young man, which seems to me to have considerable beauty of line & attitude. I will enclose it in the little vol: "A Problem in Greek Ethics." at p. 24.

Very sincerely, & with all best wishes of the season,  
yours

John Addington Symonds

Notes to Duke Letter II: The "private publication" is Symonds 1883 (written 1873); I have seen the later editions Symonds 1901, 1908, and 1931; see Schueller & Peters L1770 and 436 n. 4, a reference which the editors could not explain at the time. JAS provides the correct reference to Gibbon. Page 24 of the British Museum's 1883 copy of "Greek Ethics" contains a passage deleted from later editions that ends "in ancient times [i]t was enough that physical needs and spiritual emotions blent together in one impulse, drawing the strong to the graceful, the young to the athletic." (I am grateful to Rictor Norton for having examined the British Museum's copy.)

## [Duke Letter III]

Am Hof Davos Platz, Switzerland, Jan: 25 1890

My dear Gosse

Thank you for your very kind letter. I think I may say (to begin with) that I have pretty well shaken off the results of the influenza. It has taken all the month to do this, & has left my lungs & head both weak; so that I shall not be able to reckon this as a successful winter.

I am really surprised by the appreciation which you express for my essay on Greek Love. It was written with considerable care in order to keep a certain tone I felt needful in the treatment of the subject. But I thought that, as a piece of literature, it had suffered in consequence. You are quite right about the last section. It is out of harmony with the text, & was thrown in while the pamphlet was being printed. I will tell you why. I helped [Benjamin] Jowett to translate the Symposium of Plato; & at the end of the work came to serious words with him upon the anomaly of his straining every nerve to put that dialogue into English, & to disseminate it, while he holds the most Philistine notions about the slightest shade of Greek feeling. We had been discussing the affaire of V[iscount] H. Somerset, whom I know, & whose wife Jowett regards as the martyr to an unmentionable rascal. I told him that either he ought to be more tolerant, or that he ought to keep the Greek classics out of the hands of sympathetic &

appreciative youths—that he was deliberately inciting to what he considers vice in quarters where the very finest natures might catch an infection from the eloquent imaginative enthusiasm of Plato.

It was in bitter irony that I wrote the section. Surely it is paradoxical for parents to put the whole Greek and Latin library into the hands of boys & young men, & then to hunt them out of society if they follow the example of Harmodius & Aristogeiton.

I wanted, in fact, to raise the question, to make people think what perils they expose their sons to, finally to suggest that more toleration is required if the classics are to form the staple of our higher education.

But, in my corrected copy of the essay, marked & enlarged for possible publication, I have deleted the whole section. The essay itself avoids polemics & ought not to pose problems.

You are quite right about Aeschines. In that oration against Timarchus we get the purest & clearest expression of Attic morality—the exposition of what gentlemen thought right & what they thought wrong in these matters. He & Maximus Tyrius do this with great precision. But while M: Tyrius (p. 10 of my essay) writes merely like a sophist or man of stylistic letters, Aeschines was speaking to the whole nation assembled in the Pnyx or the theatre; & such utterances as he there delivered are the strongest testimony to the existence of a finely marked code of social morals on this matter in Athens.

If I could ever give a wider circulation to my pamphlet, I think I would follow your suggestion, & emphasize the distinction drawn by Aeschines.

Would it be possible to publish it?—adding translations of the Greek passages? What do you think?

By the way, who are the Erotika Biblia Society? I should much like to know that they are doing. Can you inform me?

To return to the point I dropped about Jowett. I have a letter of his before me (written during the ground-swell caused by my quarrel with him about the Symposium).

He says: "I am always surprised to hear you say what you have said before to me about the influence of Plato on persons who have tendencies towards such feelings. I do not understand how what is in the main a figure of speech should have so great a power over them."

The italics are mine. But fancy a Greek Professor calling Greek Love "a figure of speech"! He has presumably all the facts I have marshalled in my essay at his fingers' ends: or ought to have them, & to know more about them than I do, who am not a Greek Professor. He admits that persons have "tendencies towards such feelings". And yet he sophisticates his intellect into thinking that he can supply these persons with Plato, & translate Plato for them, & not be responsible for the development of their feelings by contact with a luminous & glorious panegyric upon those feelings in incorruptible & monumental literature. And "a figure of speech", with Aeschines on the Bema, with Phaedias at Olympia, with Alcibiades tempting Socrates, with Epameinondas & Cephisodorus, with Cleomachus & Panteus, with the Sacred Band of Thebans, with Sophocles & the boy of Samos, with all the Spartan kings, with everything & everybody in Greek history staring him as facts (not figures of speech) in the face.

Dante says, in the Inferno, that all Brunetto Latini's fellow sufferers were "cherce"—clerks, men of humanistic education. If so, why were they infected with Latini's sin? Not because they were educated, but because they had found in classical literature what society around them (following S. Paul) would not so much as speak about.

I am running on & wandering. But I have few people to whom I can communicate my thoughts & questionings upon this serious topic.

There is no longer, I fear, any chance of your coming out to see us here? The grippe is over & gone; & we talk about it as little as we can. It has made many victims & raised the death-rate among our colony of invalids very high. But here as elsewhere it has now relaxed its hold. The winter, however, is not a very favorable one. We have had little snow & much too much mild weather.

I wish you could come to visit me here. I can only peck at you in the few days I spend in London. And here we have unlimited leisure, otia dia, chants royal of illimitable tally.

Just at present I am deep in the medieval history of Graubünden, I want to write a book about the 30 years war in this Canton. It is a fine subject. But it wants a lot of preparatory studies.

Please send me any notes you have. I shall receive them with high interest. Also your poems. When are they to appear?

Believe me sincerely & aff<sup>ly</sup>  
Yours

J. A. Symonds

Have you read Haigh's "Attic Theatre"? It is a good book of its kind: one of the best bits of literary scholarship sent out in these years by our universities.

Notes to Duke Letter III: JAS and Jowett translated the Symposium together over the summer of 1888 (Schueller & Peters Ls 1694 and 1709; Grosskurth 268). JAS planned a history of Graubünden centered around the Swiss soldier Georg Jenatsch (1596-1639); see Schueller & Peters L1751.

#### [Duke Letter IV]

Feb: 21 1890

My dear friend

I do not want those studies back. I only wished you to see samples of Neopolitan models, & to have Plüschow's address. They are by no means the best out of the 96 specimens I bought the other day (at 6 apiece), but the one I w. spare. The praeturi do not seem to be favourite models in Naples. If I obtain other nudes wh. I think you would like, I will send them.

I am collecting hundreds with the view of illustrating an essay. I have written on the relation of plastic art to the nude in nature. Plüschow's studies have the great merit of open-air illumination & scenery.

I understood the drift of your undated scrap. Your letter of the 19th lies before me. You may trust to my discretion as to what you write. I destroy writings of a private nature.

I am touched to deep sympathy by your letter. If I say

little, it is not because I do not feel much. It is indeed a mad world, my masters, when you & I cannot come together for a few hours, & exchange the thoughts wh. have been pent within the hearts of both. There is some solace for old incurable & aching wounds in the mere unbosoming of all that perilous stuff.

We lead different lives, you say. That is true. But if you are inclined to envy me my otia, I envy your negotia. The central passions concentrate their fires in solitude, & entame the heart. I am driven to incessant brain-work. I wonder whether you ever read between the lines of some sonnets I wrote on L'Amour de l'Impossible?—What is there in nature or society of [sic, "so"] cruel & unjust, that the lives of some people, born like their brethren unwarped, or uncrippled, should be doomed to such mischance of everlasting self-repression? The thin fine thread of purest incorruptible gold which runs through warp & woof of their spiritual nature, though it gives its value to the brocade, rendering it as dreadful to wear as Creusa's marriage robe.

I talk in parables & hide my meaning. You are right. It is better not to publish that essay on the Greeks—or any of the other writings—the best writings of a life-time—wh. touch on the forbidden theme. Good God! why should it be forbidden? Will the time for prophecy never come—the hour of emancipation never strike? It will, I know, come some day: when we are dead. But posterity will not know how many martyrs suffered under the superstitious tyranny of a brutal majority. Else we might with confidence look forward to crowns & choral hymns.

What waste, what waste, what suffering, what useless shame, what undeserved agony of sinless sinning, what lapse from virtuous passion to vice through loss of heart, what false self-torturings & crucifixions by bewildered conscience! And the world goes its way, without recking that ~~by~~ perhaps two percent of the population is maimed, maddened, and unmanned, through its own stupidity of prejudice.

My heart burns within me to speak out. Did you ever study the contemporary literature of this matter—Ulrichs in particular & Krafft-Ebing? These wild wailings of mine would not seem to you spasmodic, if you had writhed, as I have done, with impotent wrath at the heart-breaking confessions of scores of wronged and outraged victims. A deliverer is called for; a champion; some one at any rate to fling his gauntlet in the face of Goliath, & let the truth look. But, as Goethe's Faust says, entbehren sollst du sollst entbehren.

It is very late. I must not go on groaning here, especially as these inarticulate utterances do not accord with your manner & more modest strain of feeling.

I would fain speak to you. Perhaps you will come & see me in the Summer days. On the vast upland meadows, in the pine-woods, by the lake-shore, ~~are~~ there one can talk best of these things.

Addio.

JAS

I send you an old idle ebullition of incoherent verse about Erôs Masculus in Hellas, Rome, Renaissance, Now, Future.

Notes to Duke Letter IV: Guglielmo Plüschow (Schueller &

Peters 645 n. 2, L1969, and pl. 16) and Count Wilhelm von Gloeden (1986) were cousins who both "specialized in studies of nude youths." JAS and Gosse correspond more about their lives: Schueller & Peters L1792. The 14-sonnet cycle "L'Amour de l'Impossible" appears in Symonds 1882: 36-49, and, as his "autobiography shows, Symonds addressed the sonnets to a series of male friends, especially to Angelo Fusato" (Schueller & Peters 96 n. 3). Among "the best writings of a life-time" JAS considered his "Modern Ethics" "my best work, my least presentable" (Schueller & Peters L1758, Dec. 6 1889). "[T]he contemporary literature" on homosexuality includes the sources JAS uses in "Modern Ethics," especially Ulrichs and Krafft-Ebing. The poem "With Caligula in Rome," also mentioned in Duke Letters VI and X, is Symonds 1890e (Schueller & Peters Ls 1780 & 1781).

[Duke Letter V]

Stazione et Posta Vescovana, Stanghella, Provincia di Padova  
Friday, April 4 1890

My dear Gosse

Your letter with the enclosures wh. I will return reached me at Davos last Friday just before the beginning of my journey to Italy. It is always a great business this spring journey to Italy; for we all of us prefer to drive for two days over the Passes to the Lake of Como, instead of taking the rail by the Gothard. And this year we all of us nearly lost our lives, for we had to run the gauntlet of three huge avalanches—of on the Fluela Pass, one of which would have swept us away if we had reached the spot two minutes earlier. As it was they gave us infinite trouble delay & physical fatigue, & kept us in peril of our lives for two hours.

I came here from Milan yesterday. This is an ancient fief of the House of Este, wh. passed from them by a marriage in the 15th century to the great Venetian family of Pisani. The Pisani are extinct now in the direct male line; & my friend the Contessa Evelina Almarò Pisani, with whom we are staying, is the widow of the last count & the heir of this very considerable landed estate. She is a grand woman—English originally—the dr. of Byron's Dr. Millingen—but she was educated at Rome as the Pope's adopted child from the age of 5—//five// till she married. So is at least as much Italian as English.

I stayed a couple of days at Milan to see a soldier friend there. I had known him as a young peasant in the Bergdinesque for two years; & last autumn he was drafted into the Alpine, or Chasseurs des Alpes, a picked regiment of specially strong men. I found him reposing on his bed in a barrack-room, snipped out of one of those vast halls in the Castello of the old Dukes in Milan—a dark solemn place illuminated by a sombre fourteenth century arcaded window. Bonfazio is like the Hermes of Praxiteles with the coloring of a Giorgione St. Sebastian, just over six foot high, & 20 years of age. He was very glad to see me, & we went straight to his Captain, who gave him leave to spend the greater part of the two days with me. This was very nice & I enjoyed myself immensely. He had never been inside a theatre. Fortunately the Scala gave



two Grand Ballets one evening. When we came away from the entertainment I had to tell him that most probably he would never see anything in a theatre during his life so good as this, & that he must not found his expectations on so gorgeous an experience. You know the Balli at the Scala are as good as at the Alhambra, & the stage is thrice as grand—the house classically grand, harmonious.

Well, so I tumbled out of that life into the large solemn harmonies of this venerable Italian Castello under the shadow of the Euganean Hills; & tomorrow I hope to go on & take up my abode in our own little dwelling at Venice

560 Zattere.

April 5. While I was writing this yesterday morning, in came the domestic chaplain (who looks after the 30 or so inhabitants of the villa & blesses the 300 head of white oxen in the stables) to tell me it was the Countess's birthday, & would I not write her an ode on the occasion to be presented at the 12 o'clock déjeuner? The Chaplain is so thoroughly Italian that I could not refuse. And there I was, from 10 till 11.15, beating my brains & hammering out rhymes like Hogarth's Distressed Poet. I must leave the question of the books till I reach Venice. There is no time for anything.

April 7. I must really not delay this letter longer. Much as I should like to see some of the books in question, I do not think I can buy any. This kind of literature is not good for me in any way; & unless I am actually studying some aspect of such things, it supplies only an unwholesome element to fancy!

I too felt deeply moved by the analysis of Jaques Lautier in "La Bete Humaine". On my way from Milan I wrote a letter to Zola, suggesting that he should make a study of Sexual Inversion. I think I am going to send it. But I do not suppose he will follow my suggestion. And, as Shelley in Hogg cried, "What would Miss Warner say if he did?" There are a good many poems & prose writers in wh I trace his note—certainly in Marlowe. In all Loti's sailor novels: a touch of it in "La Vita Militaire": in a great many number [of] books of poems (like Ionica, "Bertha"): in Stothard's "South Sea Idylls": but the diagnosis is difficult & dangerous. The aura, when I feel it, seems to me very distinct. By the way, did you ever come across V. H. Somerset's "Songs of Adrien"? A weak book. Italian literature has a great deal here & there—but not of a good alloy.

You see I have got your last 3 letters. You cannot write too often to me. I wish you were spending yr. Easter here. Venice is so lovely.

A long procession has just passed beneath my windows along the quay of the Guidecca—young men stoled in white bearing huge candles flaming in the morning sun, with all the dance & glitter of the waves for background. They crossed the dark pool of blood where a soldier dashed his brains out last evening from the upper windows of the barracks wh. is our next door neighbors. Strange contrast! What was the man's mystery, I wonder? To choose Easter Day, & such a day the whole world's en fête, for such an act of desperation!

Goodbye & believe me, yours always—

JAS.

P. S. After all I should like to hear whether Forberg is to be got, & at what price. It is a classical repertory.

Notes to Duke Letter V: JAS's traveling companions included his wife Catherine, his daughters Margaret and Katharine, and their maid Rosa (Schueller & Peters L1788, p. 454 n. 1). For more information on the Countess Evelina Millingen Pisani, see Schueller & Peters Ls 1717 and n. 2, 1785, & 1850. JAS writes Gosse more about his "soldier friend" (Schueller & Peters L1911); Symonds 1891c describes a young friend similar to Bonfazio; and mentions the Scala production again (Schueller & Peters L1789). JAS wrote about the Euganean hills: Symonds 1890a. The "domestic chaplain" at the Pisani estate is Don Antonio (Schueller & Peters L1691 n. 4). The "study of 'Sexual Inversion'" finally emerged as a collaboration with Havelock Ellis. Symonds mentions homoerotic literature in other letters (Schueller & Peters 412-14 ns. 8 & 9, L1755), and uses the word "aura" when he senses another's homoeroticism; (see Schueller & Peters Ls 1868 & 1872). For another procession along the Guidecca, compare Schueller & Peters 1845. The suicide resembles one which he describes as by "a man of high position in London" (Symonds 1931: 150). Frederich Karl Forberg wrote *Manuel d'Erotologie Classique. De figuris Veneris* (Paris 1882), illustrated with pictures of performed sex (I am grateful to Rictor Norton for this reference).

[Duke Letter VI]

Davos, July 12 1890

My dear Gosse

It seems a long time since we exchanged letters; & I really do not know whether I am in your debt or you in mine.

I joined the Incorporated Authors, at your suggestion. I wonder whether I could obtain information there, or whether you could advise me on the following point? I have finished my treatise on "A Problem in Modern Ethics: being an Enquiry into the Phenomenon of Sexual Inversion"; & I should like to print it privately. But is absolutely needful that I should find a printer of confidence, dealing with whom I could be quite secure against the divulgence of proofs or the abstraction of them by some enterprising compositor.

The Greek essay I sent you was printed for me at Edinburgh by Ballantyne & Hanson. I have not had to complain of them, except that one of their compositors wrote denouncing the wickedness of ~~the~~ my work, & had to be dismissed from the establishment. This Modern Essay is a much more dangerous affair, & would incite a disturbance if it exploded on the public.

Apropos I have another thing to ask. While I was at Venice I wrote an article on the "Platonic & Dantesque Ideals of Love" in relation to the contemporary Beatrice Festival in Florence. It is a really interesting demonstration of a very singular historical parallel, the true bearings of which have never yet been pointed out. But of course I have to make it plain that the Platonic Love arose out of pederastia & a pederastic chivalry—Athens playing the same part to the originally martial enthusiasm of the Hellenes, as Florence subsequently played to the previously martial chivalry of Romance & the Teutonic race.

Frank Harris, to whom I wrote about this article, said he

could not venture to publish it. He did not see the thing, & does not perhaps give me credit for touching the subject with delicate adroitness.

Do you know of any periodical that would take it? I have lived so long out of the world of letters that I am ignorant. There may be psychological or semi-scientific journals open to such things. I thought of the Westminster.

Please, if you can find time, answer me on these two points.

By the way, I wonder whether I sent you a poem on "Caligula in Rome", wh came out in a most "incongruous concatenation". It was written long ago, as one number in a series wh. I meant to illustrate the contrasts—~~been~~ between Greek, Roman, between Renaissance, & Contemporary passion. This Cycle of poems remains unpublished—a colossal ruin: only a piece here & there, like "The Lotos Garland of Antimenes", having seen the light. Caligula suffers by being detached from its context. I abandoned the scheme, not only on account of its audacity, but also because I came to feel that I had not succeeded artistically—in fact that I had not the proper gift of poetical narration.

It is pleasant to see you & Mary Darmesteter & myself side by side in the Fortnightly. My article was hastily put together in one day at Harris's urgent request that I should show the public our exchange of compliments in the PMG [Pall Mall Gazette] had left no rancour on either side. But I had to omit the nicest parts of my diary, to wh. the rest (what I printed) served but as setting. Some things cannot be published; and the frame goes to the Salon without the picture. I could not introduce Augusto to the English public. They would have thought my perfectly innocent relations with a working-man were at the least startlingly unconventional. But here are two portraits of Augusto, wh. please return. You may put him on the top of Penolice or among the acacia groves of Galgigniano or the stately pleasure-grounds of Val San Zibio, in your mind. He is dressed in 3 harmonized blues—light for the Camiciotto, darker for the trousers, bright & sharp for the fascia around the waist.

As usual, when I begin to write to you, I go running on. I do wish you were coming here. We have had some American friends on a visit, & are now expecting the Henry Sidgwickes together with Miss Poynter & the Countess of Temple & two of her sons. It is rather a strain on the resources of our not very extensive house. Afterwards come the Dowager Princess of Montenegro & her daughter Olga, who is a great friend of my daughter Madge. We manage to get a good many miscellaneous people here in the course of a year; & one sees more of them in a place like Davos than it is possible anywhere else.

But it is a horrid summer. I have just come back from a cold wet week at Munich, where I went to see German pictures & some artists. Today it is snowing out of doors, laying the whole hay-crop of the valley (der only crop) flat. I am huddled up by the stove, writing on my knees.

I made lately a version of Bion's Adonis in hexameters, imitating the dactylic bounds & Phrygian outcry of the original. It satisfied me, & I have sent it to be splendidly printed in that odd journal "The Century Guild Hobby Horse".

Nudes pour in on me from Sicily & Naples. I have a vast collection now—enough to paper a little room I think. They

become monotonous, but one goes seeking the supreme form & the perfect picture.

My wife is in England. Her sister Miss North is sinking rapidly I fear, & I expect every hour this dismal morning to hear the telegraph boy ring upon the bell. With kindest regards to Mrs. Gosse, ever yours.

JAS

Notes to Duke Letter VI: For "Platonic & Dantesque," see Symonds 1890b. Frank Harris was editor of *The Fortnightly Review*, in which JAS published many articles. *The Westminster Review* last published a scandalized critique of Symonds 1884 in January 1885 (Grosskurth 219). The three articles by Gosse, Darmesteter, and Symonds appeared in *The Fortnightly Review* 48.233 (July 1890). "Augusto" is Augusto Zanon, a porter in Venice, whose dress JAS mentions in another letter (Schueller & Peters L1982). Henry Sidgwick, an old friend and ethical philosopher, was still a visitor in late July (Schueller & Peters Ls 1807 & 1809); Eleanor Frances Poynter wrote the novel *Mme de Presnel* (1885) and was a frequent visitor (Schueller & Peters L1667); the Countess of Temple should be the wife of William Stephen Gore-Langton, 4th Earl Temple of Stowe (Schueller & Peters L1809, and p. 477 n.2); Princess Darinka Krekviceva of Montenegro (Schueller & Peters Ls 1790, 1958, & 1959) was "one of the very few foreign women whom I ever seemed to know intimately" (Schueller & Peters L1958). JAS's translation of Bion's "Adonis" is Symonds 1890f; the inspiration for it occurred "when I was sobbing myself upon the mountains for Augusto's wound" (Schueller & Peters L1891; cf. L1798). Marianne North died 30 August 1890 (Schueller & Peters Ls 1802 & 1831).

[Duke Letter VII]

Am Hof, Davos Platz, Switzerland, August 4 1890

My dear Gosse

I was deeply interested in a "Tragedy without Words" & both for its literary merits (which are great, & in a line of marked originality, both of diction & versification the style of the last century being blent with a curious modernity, eg. in the six lines about "the shapely bird") and also for the aura which, your light cast upon the poem, I am able to discern in it.

The whole of the middle portion of the eclogue—from "But when the snow" to "sting of his defeat"—seems to me quite masterly, in the precise delineation of the two moods & the subtle & quiet analyses of the diverse situations of the lovers, in whom nascent love was so indirectly & by influences light as air diverted from its natural development.

I wish that the real motif could have been unfolded, for it strikes me that a something of superfine refinement, almost bordering on euphemism, remains in the treatment of the subject; ~~a between [3 WORDS]~~ & that just this would have been right, under the conditions of modern life & amid the perplexities of sentiment, if the names ~~unfortunately~~ had not been disguised.

In short, I believe that every genuine emotion has a com-

plexion sui generis, & will not bear without injury the transposal from its own key into that proper to a sister emotion. Some of the finest touches which you have laid, as indirections (in the W. W.'s [Walt Whitman's] phrase) to indicate the difficulty of the situation between Blair & Sebaste, would in my opinion, have been most appropriate, more inevitable to the dramatic unfolding, ~~had Sebaste not appeared instead of Auguste.~~

But I am not sure whether I should have felt this, had I not been into the secret. I am certain that I should have felt the literary skill, peculiarity, & subtle detail of the poem. But I think too that, not reading as I do between the lines, I should have been inclined to judge the theme slightly wiredrawn, excessive in tenuity—wh. it is not when the ~~actual thought~~ is known.

I duly received the photographs in excellent condition, & I will send you some more. If you really care for N. M., I will order it, & beg you to keep it. I can always get these things from Sicily, though the photographers are rather tiresome & casual in their execution of orders. I will sort out some other "visions of the woodland", really pretty bits of studied humanity in natural surroundings. Only, I thought that this class of study struck you as artificial—you said something once about their reminding you of the bouquets of zoophytes which used to adorn your late respected father's books.

I am glad that my Essays have reached you at last; & pray thank Mrs. Gosse from me for reading them. I have got some interesting & appreciative letters on the subject of these volumes—have seen no reviews, except the pieces Ch & H [Chapman & Hall] use for advertizing.

I still remain in doubt what I ought to do about my "Problem". When Henry Sidgwick was here, he thought I had made out a good prima facie case for the ~~altering~~ //reconsidering// the English court. Indeed he was clearly much impressed by the flood of new light which has recently been thrown upon the subject, & by the arguments addressed to utilitarian moralists & jurists against maintaining the present state of things. But he urged me very strongly not to run those risks which are inseparable from having matters of this sort set up in type. He thinks that (short of surreptitious disclosure of the proofs, or chantage) some gossip about my doings might leak out & get into the newspapers—my name & position, in his opinion, being enough to give an edge to curiosity.

So, you see, I am still undecided. I shall try to make up my mind soon. But for a while I must dismiss the subject. My doctor gave me a severe lecture upon over-work, & "the enormous demands I make upon my nervous energy", yesterday. In fact I had to send for him because I was ill. And without knowing what very trying work I had been engaged upon for some months, he went straight to the point of the nervous system.

Believe me always affectionately yours

JASymonds.

Notes to Duke Letter VII: Duke Letter VII was written the day after he writes his well-known appeal to Walt Whitman (Schueller & Peters L1814). Gosse had apparently provided a "key" to the real subject of his "Tragedy without Words"; this "key" is probably that which Schueller & Peters L1786, 25

March 1890, identify as "The Taming of Chimaera," the "key," unpublished, to the meaning and the sequence of poems in *Firdausi in Exile* (1885) . . . . Seen now in the context of Duke Letters IV and VII, it seems likely that Gosse's "Chimaera" let JAS "into the secret" of "Tragedy without Words." "N.M." may be an abbreviation for "nude men," "natural male," or the name of a Sicilian model. The "Essays" that Gosse apparently received are Symonds 1890c. JAS's "Problem" should be his *Problem in Modern Ethics* (1891b).

[Duke Letter VIII]

Am Hof, Davos Platz, Switzerland. March 6 1891

My dear Gosse

I feel jealous of all your wonderful activity. It seems to deprive me of what you might give to my greedy self. Do not think I repine.

My wife & I have nearly finished your father's life; so we have been living in close sympathy with you these few days past. It has interested us both immensely; & I enjoy the limpidity of the style of your narration. Sometimes, if you will pardon me for saying so, I feel that you break the pellucid diction by rather forced images—e.g., the "tea-kettle" of Boston. But then I pardon much in gratitude for the splendid application of Juvenal's "Lassata viris-see nec dum satiata" to your father and his sea-beasts!

The whole is vivid with life; & you have drawn the sad pale silhouette portrait of your dear mother with singular delicacy. I almost feel her spiritual atmosphere. You can imagine too that I catch as eagerly at the rare glimpses I get of you in your boyhood.

I should be untruthful if I said that I felt myself in sympathy with your father either as man or stylist. His quality is remarkable & pungent; but while I admire his vigour of intellect & character, I cannot appreciate the species of his genius.

Perhaps; because I had a Plymouth Sister for my grandmother, in the very Ascalon or Gates of that dreary sect //Bristol//. She was an old lady of great pride & ancient blood, every inch une grande dame de la vieille roche, wh. made her fanaticism more distressing, & her association with greasy brethren of the Chadband species more revolting. I had to live alone with her in her big house at Clifton, often, & for weeks together, when I was a boy of from 7 to 10. It was dreadful. She used to pray every night against my father & get an especially loathsome "pharmaceutical chemist" to do the same. She put her servants in the basement of her house to sleep, me alone on the first floor, & herself alone on the second floor. The third she had turned into a large garden of shrubs and flowering plants.

I had "the horrors" all night long, with her deep voice echoing in my ears: "Thus saith the Lord." Jeremiah was her favorite classic! Good gracious!

I have tried to draw a portrait of this dame in my Autobiography. And I—my soul was lodged in Italy and Greece already—I dreamed already of young gods & heroes.

I am working as hard at Michelangelo as my bad health (unusually bad now) permits. Very curious things work out

about his devotion to beautiful young men. If the Italian Government permits me to examine the Archivio Buonarroti (wh. is closed to foreigners) I may find much of interest there upon this topic. For it is certain that the three men who had dealt with the Mss., (Milanesi, Guasti, Gotti) did all they could to conceal or explain away important facts. This, please, is said privately to you.

I sent a letter to the king of Italy in Council today, praying for the permission.

Please keep your copy of my "Problem" with care. It may turn out to be one of six in existence. The rest of the small edition was sent me on the same date that yours was posted. But the parcel has not arrived. Things never take so long a time en route. And I wonder whether it has been lost or detained or something.

Mrs. Myers sent me a lot of her photographs the other day: about 25: including your portrait, wh. I am very glad to have. I have written an article on them (really on the relation of Photography to Art & Nature) for "Sun Artists". I did this to please her.

I wish there were more of you in your Father's Life. You could write a fascinating autobiography if you chose; & I hope you will do this. Only how can we do veracious psychological self-portraiture? I have felt, all my life, like a man whose right hand was tied up & covered.

Ever<sup>YTS.</sup>

JAS

what became of Sam, when your father left Jamaica?

Notes to Duke Letter VIII: The book JAS and Catherine Symonds read together is Gosse 1890. The quotation from Juvenal (Satire VI.130), concerning the Roman empress Messalina, translates: "exhausted by men but still unsatisfied." See Grosskurth 12-14 for a characterization of JAS's maternal grandmother, Mrs. Sykes, leader of the Plymouth Brethren in Bristol. Janet Ross, who lived in Florence, was instrumental in gaining permission for JAS to conduct research in the Archivio Buonarroti (Grosskurth 304-5; Schueller & Peters 561 n.2, and Ls 1869, 1871, 1873). For the three previous biographers of Michelangelo, see Schueller & Peters 567 ns. 1-3 and 566 n. 3. Eveleen Tennant Myers was "an admirable photographer" who photographed JAS at Cambridge (Schueller & Peters 402 n. 3, Ls 1744 & 1751).

[Duke Letter IX]

Davos. March 29 1892

My dear Gosse

I fear there is no chance of my being able to send you even first proofs of "Michelangelo" before the date April 8. We are at present in the middle of Chap: xi & there are xv chaps as well as a large appendix of comments & an elaborate preface. Also the illustrations have not been settled on.

The slowness with wh. the book has been advancing (after I had worked very hard to get my part in Ms. ready by the middle of December) has annoyed me greatly.

When I see myself within a reasonable distance of com-

pletion I will get Nimmo to send you advance sheets & if possible to let you see the illustrations. I should value an early notice from your pen in some leading periodical, not as a puff, but, because I am sure you would treat the difficult chapter //xii// on Michelangelo's poems & his loves with discernment. In such matters some brutal unsympathetic note given out at the beginning of the review business, is apt to dominate the opinion of critics who are not strong enough to form their own opinion.

Would you be so kind as to read through the proofs of this chapter xii for me? If you would, I will send them to you with my corrections and additions. I feel that the public may reasonably think itself ill-used by the view I have given out of Michelangelo's emotion. But my own corrections are only strengthened by repeated testings of the evidence, & have been curiously corroborated by essays wh. have appeared in Italy & Germany after I had formed them.

I suppose I may have Chapter xii in print within about eight or ten days at the snail's pace we are going.

This slow work keeps me up here, where the spring is appallingly disagreeable. I cannot leave my library until the whole of my own Ms. is in type.

I am glad you liked what I wrote about Lefroy. His friend & literary executor, a Mr. Gill, seems to have misled me as to the small amount of recognition he obtained in his lifetime. I wish I had known that you admired his work. ~~It~~ //It, the work// came upon me as a surprise, which shows perhaps how imperfectly I had studied Sharp's "Sonnets of the Century". But I do not think Sharp made a very good selection.

You have heard no doubt by this time of Whitman's death. I got a telegram on Sunday morning. I shall try to write something expressive of my thoughts & feelings about him as a whole. But this is exceedingly difficult.

Ever yours

JASymonds.

I am in a low state of health & spirits, suffering from depression caused by the abominable thaw of enormous snow-masses & also by a need of change. I've had an attack of haemoptysis the other day, while driving over one of our passes in an open sledge. This kind of thing is no joke. Nothing else within the range of my experience seems to bring death so clearly & nearly before the vividly stimulated consciousness.

Notes to Duke Letter IX: About *Michelangelo* (Symonds 1893a, see Schueller & Peters 634 ns. 4-7, 671 n. 3, Ls 1934, 1946, 1947, 1955, 1965: the book was already sold out by subscription in mid-November 1891, the manuscript was finished by 10 December 1891, and the proofs began arriving by 12 February 1892. JAS was worried about the critical reception of his treatment of Michelangelo's homoerotic affairs and would have liked a favorable advance review, although such a practice had earlier been criticized (Grosskurth 231); also see Schueller & Peters 570 n. 2, Ls 1880, 1960, 1891, and Symonds 1893a, vol. II: 400-6 (Michelangelo's own letters). The essays that appeared to corroborate JAS's interpretation of Michelangelo's homoeroticism are given in Schueller &

Peters L1977, 685 ns. 3-5, and L1984, 695 n. 3. The winter of 1891/2 had been unusually severe: "a fine young man I know was swept away two days ago" in an avalanche (Schueller & Peters L1947). For the essay on Lefroy, see Symonds 1892. Sharp 122-25 publishes four of Lefroy's sonnets. Whitman died 26 March 1892 after a long illness (Schueller & Peters L1941, 641 no. 2); the two had been corresponding for some time. The essay on Whitman complains of his hypocrisy; see Symonds 1893b: 6-7, and section VIII; and Schueller & Peters L1814 (3 August 1891) and L2088 (13 February 1893), which quotes Whitman's reply of 19 August.

[Duke Letter X: a postscript]

P. S.

I forgot to thank you for what you said about my Roman poem, & to tell you that I quite understand & appreciate your point of view. It ought not to have been published alone, coming, as it did, in my original plan, at the end of a series of poems on Greek life, & in the middle of a series upon Rome, which were followed by subjects chosen from Italian Renaissance & Contemporary life—all illustrating the psychology of the topic. I believe that the hint in it of ἀγριότης and ὑβρις [wildness and audacity] was ethically justified. I should like, by the way, to show you some time a poem on modern life called "John Mordan". But I have it only in Ms & feel sure beforehand that you would not care for its workmanship.

Notes to Duke Letter X: The "Roman poem" is Symonds 1890e, obliquely referred to in Duke Letters IV and VI; on 22 July 1890, JAS writes Gosse (Schueller & Peters L1810): "I am not surprised that you do not sympathize with 'Caligula'." The Duke postscript may belong to this letter; it fits better there than at the end of JAS's next available letter to Gosse, Duke Letter VII, although JAS often repeats himself from one letter to the next. John Mordan was a newsboy at Piccadilly Circus; JAS sent a copy of the poem to Henry Sidgwick, who was so scandalized Symonds urged him to destroy it, but obviously he had kept the original (Grosskurth 116).

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Duke University

## Gissing and Bosanquet: Culture Unhoused\*

Peter Allan Dale

My concern is with the interesting relation between the late-Victorian novelist George Gissing (1857-1903) and something I shall call the ideology of culture. Almost all of what I have to say has to do with Gissing, but I introduce Bernard Bosanquet (1848-1923) into the discussion emblematically, as it were. He is an Oxford educated, true believer in culture, who shared with Gissing a preoccupation with the most intractable social problem of the last two decades of the Victorian era, the degrading effects on the individual and on society of widespread and persistent poverty in the inner city (see Jones, esp. ch. 16 "From Demoralization to Degeneration: The Threat of Outcast London"). Bosanquet wrote in the conviction, embraced by many of his class and background, that the application of a liberal education to the minds of the laboring poor and the chronically unemployed (the "residue" as they were called) was the one thing needful to deliver them from their misery and, at the same stroke, restore the disintegrating social totality that increasingly threatened the middle classes. What I shall be showing is how Gissing was at once thoroughly entangled in the sort of thinking Bosanquet represents, and deeply skeptical of it. My title is meant to signal, in short, that to understand the distinctiveness of Gissing's intellectual situation, to appreciate why he still matters to us, one needs a Bosanquet as a measure of what he had to contend against.

For the sake of economy I draw my definition of the ideology of culture from John Brenkman's book *Culture and Domination*.

... Western thought, beginning with Plato, inaugurated the idea of culture-art, literature, and philosophy . . . —as a realm separated from the factual domain of social life and material necessity . . . . The "higher good" of the philosopher's own pursuit of knowledge becomes the model of the growing idea that culture is the transcendent realm of those meanings and values not realized in the actual life of society as a whole. . . . [This idea of culture has] an ambiguous history. On the one hand, it gives the idealist philosophical tradition an essentially critical attitude towards society. . . . On the other hand, bourgeois society will transmute this tension between the real and the ideal . . . into a fixed separation between an outer world of ugly fact and an inner world of harmony called the soul. The very satisfactions that the inner world provides become justifications for the outer world as it is. . . . The higher value attributed to the soul, thought, and art becomes the apology for reality rather than an implicit condemnation of it. (6)

To locate this ideology in the Victorian period we have only to invoke the prophecy of Matthew Arnold, which needs no

extended rehearsing here: culture is a critical reading of the best that has been written in all branches of knowledge and the object of that reading is the complete perfection of the individual self. That inner perfection of self once accomplished—and this is Arnold's radical move—becomes a secular substitute for the failing religious ideology. As he puts it in *Culture and Anarchy* (1867), "religion says *The Kingdom of god is within you*; and culture, in like manner, places human perfection in an *internal* condition, in the growth and predominance of our humanity proper. . ." (347).

The story of this ideology as it played itself out in England in the last century and in the early modern period has been classically told and retold by Raymond Williams.<sup>1</sup> An integral part of the story, untold by Williams, is the rise of a discrete philosophical movement closely associated with Balliol College, Oxford, emanating from Arnold's tutor Benjamin Jowett and everywhere inspired by Hegel's phenomenology of spirit and philosophy of the state (Vincent and Plant, ch. 3). This second Oxford movement, as it has been called, embraced an impressive group of thinkers, not popular sages like Arnold or John Ruskin, but professional philosophers and university dons. It was the special distinction of one of these, Bernard Bosanquet, to transform the ideology of culture (with the help of Hegel) into a fully developed political theory and social policy. It was his distinction as well to have attempted what Arnold never did, the practical application of his theory to the resolution of concrete problems of the inner city. He and his wife, Helen, stand with that more famous crusading couple Beatrice and Sidney Webb among the giants of Victorian social reformers, stand with them, that is, as giants, but not ideologically. The Bosanquets were scarcely less motivated in their social mission by the spectacle of the suffering poor than by the threat of having that suffering addressed by the socialist policies of the Webbs (see McBriar).

Culture's late-century philosophical enemies, as Bosanquet saw them, were two camps: the rising socialists, on the one side, with their subordination of the individual to the state, and the long-established utilitarians-cum-capitalists, on the other, with their ongoing reduction of humane values to material need. Gissing was neither of these. He was, in fact, very close in spirit to Bosanquet. As a student of Owens College, Manchester, he had early received an excellent indoctrination in the ideology of culture (well described in *Born in Exile*). He, like Bosanquet, carried that learning to the London slums; only unlike Bosanquet, he did not go as a social worker. Gissing went to the slums because he himself was impoverished. There he had the unsought for opportunity of empirically applying the ideology of culture to what he called, "the unmapped haunts of the semi-human" (Halperin 91). The result is an intriguingly conflicted response to that ideology which ends by telling us more about the insidious-

\* A version of this paper was printed without the author's knowledge by AMS in a volume entitled *Homes and Homeless in Victorian England*. The new version here was already set for publication before we learned of the previous printing.

<sup>1</sup>Most notably in *Culture and Society: 1780-1950*. See also Baldick for a thoroughgoing account of how the ideology of culture was purveyed through the schools of late-Victorian, early-Modern England.



ness of culture's appeal than we are perhaps comfortable knowing.

In the novels written between 1880 and 1889, novels that established his reputation in his own time, and subsequently in ours, as the greatest Victorian novelist of the city and its poor since Charles Dickens, Gissing characteristically constructs stories about the effects of high culture on the working-class mind. These stories could almost be read as popular illustrations of the doctrines of Bosanquet—or Arnold or Ruskin or William Morris—were it not for the fact that they always end by challenging that doctrine, and they were by no means popular. His fourth novel, *Thyrza*, written in 1886-1887, arguably the most economically depressed year of the Victorian age, provides a particularly obvious instance. Egremont, a wealthy young man educated liberally at Cambridge, is in need of a social mission to appease his conscience and occupy his excess of spare time. He descends upon the slums of Lambeth with a cultural program which, once instilled in the working-class mind, he is convinced, will start a social revolution, a gentle one, that is.

"Now suppose one took a handful of such . . . men and tried to inspire them with a moral idea. At present they have nothing of the kind, but they own the instincts of decency, and this is much."

"And you [will] use English literature to tune the minds of your hearers? [asks his friend Newthorpe].

"That is my thought. I have spent my month in Jersey in preparing a couple of introductory lectures. It seems to me that if I can get them to understand what is meant by love of literature pure and simple, without a thought to political or social purpose—especially without thought of cash profit . . .—I shall be on the way to founding my club of social reformers." (14-16)

One sees that Egremont has taken in the crucial points of the ideology of culture: it develops the inner humanistic self with a wonderful disinterestedness that makes the self proof at once against two opposing threats from the realm of the "vulgar," the socialist revolutionaries and the capitalists. His project is doomed to failure for a reason derivable from close reading of the passage just quoted. Egremont, from his upper-middle-class perspective spontaneously thinks of himself as establishing a "club" of working-class converts to culture, a club which will presumably grow apace until all of London, and beyond it Great Britain, is at one, spiritually totalized. But his metaphor, "club," is an egregious, if unconscious, form of condescension, a concept of community from a world his pupils can know nothing of. Frederic Jameson's analysis summarizes the ideological situation not only in this story but throughout Gissing's early social novels. Gissing, he says, does not tell us so much about slum dwellers in late-Victorian London as about the

. . . narrative paradigms that organize middle-class fantasies about [the] slums and about "solutions" that might resolve, manage, or repress the evident class anxieties aroused by the existence of an industrial working class and an urban lumpenproletariat. (186)

But Jameson's further and more telling point is that Gissing, unlike his great predecessor Dickens, actually understands and thematizes the irrelevance of these middle-class philanthropic paradigms or "ideologemes" to the people they seek to re-define and the problems they pretend to resolve. Indeed, not only do Gissing's social fictions enact the failure of the cultural ideology as social policy, they also expose its duplicitousness. As one of Egremont's potential students puts it, the lectures on culture, like the Christianity they aim to displace (or refurbish), are, after all, "sops to the dog that's beginning to show his teeth! . . . The capitalists are beginning to look about and ask what they can do to keep the people quiet" (*Thyrza* 25).

If we pursue Gissing's critique of culture beyond the social novels, which effectively end in 1889 with his most Zolaesque work *The Nether World*, we find that critique elevated to a still more sophisticated key. *New Grub Street* (1891), the one Gissing novel, if any, we still include in our syllabuses, presents us with the world of literature (culture) as business, not simply surplus spiritual exercise made possible by the labor of the poor (one of the themes of *The Nether World*) to be turned back against them as "sop," but as an activity whose values are entirely determined by the forces of the marketplace. Thus the coming man, the new "cultural" hero, is not a man born into sufficient funds and an Oxbridge education, intent on saving the lower classes, but the literary entrepreneur, Jasper Milvain, who rises to a respectable eminence by manipulating the means of cultural production. Over against him is set the pathetic case of Edwin Reardon, who foolishly follows his aesthetic/cultural conscience at the expense of his pocketbook and, ultimately, his life. As Milvain puts it,

"He is the old type of unpractical artist; I am the literary man of 1882. He won't make concessions, or rather, he can't make them; he can't supply the market. . . . I am learning my business. Literature nowadays is a trade. . . . [Y]our successful man of letters is your skillful tradesman."

(*New Grub Street* 32)

Curiously, this is the one Gissing novel that Q. D. Leavis has admired enough to admit to a marginal standing in the great tradition. Q. D. Leavis, who like her husband is prominent among the descendants of Matthew Arnold in our own time, not surprisingly admires Gissing's exposure of the commodification of culture. The curious part is that she seems to think Gissing, like herself, still believes in the possibility of a core of human "integrity" behind the (uncommodified) cultural ideal despite the degradations of the marketplace (Leavis 87-88), an integrity for which she and F. R. Leavis, of course, persistently fought. But it is by no means clear that Gissing shared this faith. On the contrary, Gissing seems to have faced rather more realistically than the Leavises, the possibility that there may be, after all, no humane integrity underwriting the cultural project.

This, briefly, is Gissing's critique of the ideology of culture, a critique, which in my account of it, would seem to go a considerable way towards reclaiming the novelist for a post-modern readership seeking release from the hegemony of the

humanistic establishment whose values the Leavises and so many other teachers of the last generation have transmitted to us from the Victorians. But things are not quite so straightforward as this. I have so far left out a crucial element of Gissing's intellectual (and emotional) make-up. His early insight into the vacuity of culture as social policy and his later grasp of it as a commodification notwithstanding, he was himself a hopeless devotee of the gospel, a seeker after aesthetic perfection in the inner self no less than in the work of art, a nostalgic worshiper of the Hellenes and ardent admirer of their great interpreters Goethe and Schiller, the German sources of so much of what constitutes the Victorian and early modern apotheosis of culture. What he wanted to be more than anything else was not a novelist at all but an academic, a scholar and teacher of humanistic lore, like Arnold, Pater, or Bosanquet. "The only thing known to us of absolute value is artistic perfection," he wrote at the outset of his career. "The ravings of fanaticism . . . pass away; but the works of the artist remain, sources of health to the world." And again at its close, "Every man has his intellectual desire. . . . [Mine is to] dream myself into that old world which was the imaginative delight of my boyhood. The names of Greece and Rome draw me as no others . . ." (qtd. in Halperin 50, 298). Indeed, Gissing presents us with the striking paradox (I can think of none more striking among the Victorians) of a man precociously able to demystify the intellectual, moral, and social pretensions of culture, and, at the same time, utterly unable to free himself of those mystifications.

We are on our way to resolving the paradox when we realize that for all his insight into the plight of the London poor and the evolution of late-century capitalism, Gissing's underlying theme as a novelist is always a very personal one. He himself identified it nicely in a letter written at about the midpoint of his career. "The most characteristic, the most important part of my work is that which deals with a class of young men distinctive of our time—well-educated, fairly bred, but *without money*. It is [the ] fact . . . of . . . *poverty* . . . which tells against their recognition as civilised beings" (qtd. in Halperin 213). In one novel after another the focus of Gissing's imaginative energy is not so much a particular social conflict or a particular historical moment, but an individual who is "well-educated" and "fairly bred" in the culture of the elite, but whose aspirations to enter the socio-economic enclosure of that elite are blocked by his relative poverty and/or his class origins. These prevent him from being recognized as a "civilised being," that is, as fully human. In the social novels of the '80s this figure is usually an artisan who struggles to read the classics in the interstices of his laboring life but who fails at last to extricate himself from his class or his poverty. In *Thyrza* that figure is Gilbert Grail, the one worker who actually responds to Egremont's mission—and suffers acutely as a result. (It is hardly an accident that his initials are Gissing's own.) When, after 1889, Gissing shifts his social scene to the middle classes, his focus is more identifiably the person in his own particular situation. The failed novelist Reardon in *New Grub Street* is, after all, the real center of the reader's interest as he steadily slides down the social scale towards greater insecurity and alienation despite the fact that he is the most sincerely dedicated apostle of culture in the story.

But it is in the next major novel, *Born in Exile* (1892), that Gissing most subtly explores the psychological drama at the center of his art and his life, the drama of the well-educated, the cultural intellectual alienated from his "natural" place in the class which has generated the values by which he seeks to live. It is a novel remarkable, above all, for the unrelenting honesty with which it expresses, or better confesses, the deep conflict at the heart of its creator's personality. In this it is very close to Charlotte Brontë's *Villette*, a novel Gissing greatly admired, and Dickens's *Great Expectations*, a novel he may in some sense be rewriting. Godwin Peak is a man who suffers from a crippling sense of shame at his lower middle-class origins and an implacable desire to be accepted by the cultured middle class, the class to which, by intellect and, still more, by his superb liberal education, he knows himself to belong. His ambition is encapsulated nowhere more appositely than in the figure of a person who does not actually appear in the book, but whose life Godwin imagines.

The author Justin Walsh, he knew to be a brother of Professor Walsh, long ago the object of rebellious admiration. . . . Justin Walsh was a modern of the moderns; at once a man of science and a man of letters. . . . Now a man like this surely had companionship enough and of the kind he wished? He wrote like one who associated freely with the educated classes both at home and abroad. . . . As Peak meditated, the volume fell upon his knee. Had it not lain in his own power to win a reputation like that which Justin Walsh was achieving? (*Born in Exile* 373-74)

The problem Peak experiences in his actual life, as opposed to the imagined life of Walsh, is that he can enter into free association with the educated classes only by pretending to believe in a latter-day liberal Christianity that he is too much of an agnostic to credit. By adopting this belief Peak becomes eligible to marry the daughter of an independently wealthy, upper-middle-class intellectual. With marriage will come money, social security, and, above all, the leisure to be like Justin Walsh. The novel, in short, is a prolonged exploration of false consciousness or, in the more Victorian word Gissing repeatedly deploys, *hypocrisy*. More precisely, and this is what gives the book a pivotal importance in Victorian fiction, *Born in Exile* proclaims the *necessity* of hypocrisy (see Swann), the necessity in an actual social, political context (as against an idealized vision of some transcendent flow of disinterested Geist) of masking what one really believes in order to survive economically. The doubleness, the radical "exile" from the perfected and unified self, from that Leavisite "integrity," which is the alpha and omega of the ideology of culture, is never overcome. Peak's hypocrisy is exposed; he loses the woman he wants and all she stands for. At this point he has the option of turning to the business for which he is by intellect and education brilliantly prepared, the business, that is, of critiquing the dominant middle-class ideology, liberal Christianity, or just plain liberalism, from outside. But that option, even after he miraculously receives a parodic version of a Dickensian legacy, which preserves him from having to earn a living by labor, cannot satisfy his ineradicable desire for social acceptance. He dies wandering about Europe, literally

of malaria, metaphorically of the sheer spiritual exhaustion of untranscendable self-division. What makes this a pivotal moment in Victorian fiction is precisely Gissing's refusal to allow his character to achieve the kind of inner integrity which can serve as a consolation for the social chaos around him.

The image of Godwin Peak wandering aimlessly around Europe brings me at last to the motif of homes and homelessness that plays so prominently in Gissing's fiction. He is one of the most realistic painters of the late-Victorian slums and, more particularly, the impossibility, among the urban poor, of ever finding a secure home.

With the first breath of winter there passes a voice half-menacing, half-mournful, through all the barren ways and phantom-haunted refuges of the nether world. Too quickly has vanished the brief season when the sky is clement, when a little food suffices, and the chances of earning that little are more numerous than at other times; this wind that gives utterance to its familiar warning is the vaunt-courier of cold and hunger and solicitude that knows no sleep. Will the winter be a hard one? It is the question that concerns this world before all others, that occupies alike the patient work-folk who have yet their home unbroken, the strugglers foredoomed to loss of such scant needments as the summer gifted them withal, the hopeless and the self-abandoned and the lurking creatures of prey. To all of them the first breath from a lowering sky has its voice of admonition; they set their faces; they sigh, or whisper a prayer, or fling out a curse, each according to his nature. And as though the strife here were not already hard enough, behold from many corners of the land come needy emigrants, prospectless among their own people, fearing the dark season which has so often meant for them the end of wages and of food, tempted hither by thought that in the shadow of palaces work and charity are both more plentiful. Vagabonds, too, no longer able to lie about the country roads, creep back to their remembered lairs and join the combat for crusts flung forth by casual hands. Day after day the stress becomes more grim.

(*The Nether World* 247-48)

The endless and hopeless search of the poor for food and for shelter is something that Gissing, like the contemporary social scientists mapping the same inner city, needs to force upon the attention of his cultured middle-class reader.

The more, however, one reads Gissing, not just the early social novels but the whole body of his writing, the more one understands that the homelessness of the urban poor, is, finally, peripheral to a more central preoccupation, one may fairly say, obsession. No Victorian novelist, Dickens included, writes more persistently or more intensely about the anxiety of being without a home. It is, finally, the psychological condition of being homeless, not the social problem, which preoccupies him. Thus Peak meditates at a crucial juncture in his story,

Now, as on the day of his arrival, he was an alien—a lodger. What else had he ever been, since boyhood? A lodger in Kingsmill, a lodger in London, a lodger in Exeter. Nay, even as a boy he could scarcely have been said to

"live at home," for from the dawn of conscious intelligence he felt himself out of place. . . . (*Born in Exile* 322)

What Peak most fears is that he will never find a home but will die at last in a lodging house. That Peak's fears are Gissing's is everywhere evident in the novelist's private writings. "The one thing I greatly envy any man," he wrote in his last letter to his friend Edward Clodd, "is the possession of a home. I have never had one since I was a boy, and now, I fear, I never shall." (qtd. in Halperin 346). He was right. He died just two months later, sadly like his fictional character Godwin Peak, in a lodging house on the continent.

Obviously, the persistent longing for a home in Gissing is the desire to escape poverty, to achieve economic security. But it is more complicated than this, and in a way that I will try to indicate by drawing on some remarks of Immanuel Kant's on homes. The home, he says, is not just a shelter from the elements; it is, in its essence, an expression of the mind's desire for order set against the unintelligible "openness" beyond mind.

The house, the residence, is the only rampart against the dread of nothingness. . . . Its walls contain all that mankind has patiently amassed over hundreds of centuries. It opposes escape, loss, and absence by erecting an internal order, a civility . . . of its own . . . . Man's identity is thus residential and that is why the revolutionary, who has neither heart nor home, . . . epitomizes the anguish of errancy. . . . The man without a home is a potential criminal.

(qtd. in Perrot and Guerrand 4: 342)

The home becomes for Kant, in effect, a materialization of the metaphysic of individual self-realization that lies at the foundation of his critical philosophy, and, arguably, at the foundation of the ideology of culture with which I began. If we consider more closely the nature of the home Gissing's alienated intellectuals are seeking, we find that it has interior space and rampart against the outside world, a significantly recurring feature. It is the space where one arranges and safely keeps one's books, one's instruments of scientific research, and one's pictures. The center of the Warricombe home to which Godwin Peak aspires in *Born in Exile* is the library where the socially unalienated intellectual, who Peak hopes will be his father-in-law, writes his articles and books.

It was a large and beautiful room. . . . One wall presented an unbroken array of volumes, their livery sober but handsome; detached bookcases occupied other portions of the irregular perimeter. . . . Above the mantelpiece hung a few small photographs. . . . On the stand in the light of the window gleamed two elaborate microscopes, provocative of enthusiasm in a mind such as Godwin's." (178-79)

The almost sensual pleasure with which Gissing inventories here the accumulation of cultural *things* is absolutely characteristic; it can be found again and again in the later fiction. No less characteristic is the evocation of the separateness or privateness of this space. It is where the unalienated intellectual passes his hands over his books or his scientific instruments and in secure repose writes more books.

The motif of the home eventually comes to occupy an entire book, *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft* (1902), the most popular of Gissing's novels and also the most fantastic. Its protagonist, like its author, has come to the end of his life but, unlike Gissing, has received a miraculous legacy that enables him at last to realize his greatest expectations, ownership of a private home in a quiet village. The setting is, in fact, the theme: "The unspeakable blessedness of having a home! . . . I never knew how deep and exquisite a joy could lie in the assurance that one is at home forever!" (27). And the essence of home is, again, the "bookroom."

"The exquisite quiet of this room! I have been sitting in utter idleness, watching the sky . . . , letting my eye wander from one framed picture to another, and along the ranks of my beloved books." (27)

What is wrong with this picture and the many repetitions of it throughout Gissing's work? The answer is nicely suggested by the surprising figuration of Warricombe's books in the passage cited just as *liveried*. With that word the books and the culture they contain are appropriated by and subordinated to Warricombe; they are emphatically his private possession. The exquisite joy of home is, after all, the joy of privacy and that joy can be secured only by appropriation, by the ownership of the space and things that separate oneself from others. Insofar as home is identified with the bookroom, *Ryecroft* is the novel in which Gissing perhaps most self-consciously engages the possibility that culture grounds itself at last in the institution of private property.

If we return for a moment to Bosanquet, we can see the connection explicitly drawn. Bosanquet argues eloquently, as does Gissing's Egremont, for inculcating the urban poor with the *disinterested* ideal of culture, an ideal that he takes pains to insist is radically independent of and superior to merely material needs. This is an argument consciously deployed against his capitalist opponent. When he is pressed in debate by his socialist opponent, however, it turns out that while the idea of culture may well transcend the material needs of the poor, it is decidedly not innocent of the material needs of his own class.

Now, private property is not simply an arrangement for meeting successive momentary wants as they arise. . . . It is wholly different in principle. . . . It rests on the principle that the inward and moral life cannot be a unity unless the outward [material] life—the dealing with things—is also a unity.

[T]he social mind cannot be realized in human individuals who are not at liberty to deal with the external condition of life as instruments of permanent self-satisfaction and self-expression. (310, 318)

—and, he might well add, self-possession. That the ideology of culture is inextricably rooted in the capitalist's commitment to the principle of private property, philosophically, emotionally, and historically rooted to that principle, is I suspect what *Henry Ryecroft* is about—and why it is Gissing's most popular book. For all that it pretends to describe a condition

of idyllic retreat from the ways of the modern world, it never really stops being a political statement about that world. "To think," says Ryecroft in the midst of celebrating not just home but the larger glory of English civilization,

"that I at one time called myself a socialist, communist, anything you like of the revolutionary kind! . . . Why no man living has a more profound sense of property than I; no man ever lived, who was, in every fibre, more vehemently in individualist." (99-100)

I do not like leaving Gissing in this position, the position of Henry Ryecroft excessively content in his dream home on his dream island with his dream culture. Gissing is far too complex a personality and writer for Ryecroft to contain. What, in fact, I suspect Ryecroft represents is a deliberate caricature of all that is self-preoccupied, compulsive, fearful and embittered in Gissing, all that lies behind that obsession with finding a home. As Ryecroft says, he is at last enjoying life, "but in what a doddering, senile sort of way" (102). One recalls, in this context, that when Godwin Peak contemplates the best thing he ever wrote, a revolutionary attack on the "New Sophistry," he is struck, above all, by the fact that he wrote it not in the home he never had, but in lodgings. One imagines that Gissing at some level of his struggle with the ideology of culture understood that what enabled the best, the most genuinely critical of his writing, might have been the condition of being on the outside of the home he wanted so much to be in.

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## Mrs. Conyers's Secret: Decoding Sexuality in *Aurora Floyd*

Robert Dingley

In Chapter Two of Mary Elizabeth Braddon's *Aurora Floyd* (serialized in *Temple Bar*, January 1862-January 1863; 3 vols., 1863), the seventeen-year-old heroine leaves home for an exclusive finishing school in Paris. Fourteen months later, "late in the August of 1857" (23), she returns to England. It subsequently emerges that during this time she has absconded from school, married her former groom, "a dashing young fellow" named James Conyers (22), and left him "to the associations he had chosen for himself" (355) after learning from a female acquaintance that he has been unfaithful. Believing him to have died in a racing accident, she then marries the Yorkshire squire John Mellish, but Conyers returns to blackmail her. The evidence for her unintentional bigamy finally emerges after Conyers has been murdered by an unknown hand.

On two occasions after this crisis, Aurora asserts that Conyers's misconduct has provided her with sufficient grounds to begin an action for divorce (a course she has rejected in order to spare her father). To her former suitor Talbot Bulstrode she explains that the discovery of her husband's unfaithfulness "coupled with his brutality to me on more than one occasion, gave me the right to call upon the law to release me from him" (354-55). Later, detailing her movements on the night of Conyers's death, she again tells Bulstrode that her husband's "brutality and infidelity entitled me to be divorced from him" (418). The narrative voice, moreover, appears to confirm Aurora's assessment of her legal position when it announces that "had she, upon the discovery of her first husband's infidelity, called the law to her aid . . . she might have freed herself from the hateful chains so foolishly linked together" (393).

As P. D. Edwards points out in the "Introduction" and notes to his World's Classics edition of the novel, each of these references to the possibility of divorce is dependent for its impact on the passage "of the new divorce law that came into force about the same time as [Aurora's] separation from Conyers" (473n). In fact "An Act to amend the Law relating to Divorce and Matrimonial Causes in England" (20° & 21° Victoriae c. 85) received the Royal Assent on 28 August 1857

(the month in which, it will be recalled, Aurora leaves Conyers and returns to England) and although the new divorce court did not open until the following January, it seems clear enough that Braddon has dated her action very precisely in order to indicate that her heroine's assessment of her eligibility for divorce is correct. Before the passage of the new act, women could sue for divorce only on the grounds of their husband's adultery aggravated either by bigamy or by incest, and in the 186 years since the establishment of Parliamentary divorce only four women had brought successful suits (Horstman 24). The Act of 1857 did not do away with legal inequity (men were still able to bring divorce actions for their wives' simple adultery)<sup>1</sup> but it did considerably extend the number of aggravating circumstances under which a husband's infidelity might provide the basis for a wife's successful petition. In addition to incest and bigamy, Clause 27 introduced rape, sodomy, bestiality, cruelty, and desertion for two years (when coupled with adultery) as possible grounds for divorce actions undertaken by women. Aurora's claim that her husband's unfaithfulness, combined with his brutality to her, would suffice to procure a divorce therefore appears to be incontestable.

But Edwards is, I think, right to distrust Aurora's confidence (he says only that "she may be correct" [473n]). Legal definitions of marital cruelty, in the nineteenth century as now, were extremely imprecise, and although by 1850 progressive judges like Lushington and Brougham were extending the category to include even mental suffering (Stone 205), others seemed bent on finding extenuating circumstances for the misconduct of fellow-males. One such circumstance was proof of previous ill-temper on the part of the wife (Stone 203), a proof which James Conyers can easily adduce: Aurora appears to bear no visible scars from his brutal conduct, but Conyers is still resentful at the mark on his forehead which his wife's violence has imprinted there (208).

Aurora, then, is perhaps fortunate that a divorce action based on adultery aggravated by cruelty never comes to court. But her somewhat uncharacteristic vagueness about the precise nature both of the infidelity and of the brutality,

riage as "a male-dominated institution" principally concerned with sexual relationships and the legitimacy of offspring (369).

coupled with her unshakeable certainty that her action would be successful, may be intended to suggest to alert readers that she could in extremity cite a further category of aggravation recognized by the 1857 legislation.

What has initially attracted Aurora to Conyers is, we are told, his "sensual type of beauty" (180), and this has also served him well as a model in the "artists' studios and life academies for Apollo and Antinous" (185). It has, moreover, helped to obscure his lowly origins: "he sprang from the mire of the streets, like some male Aphrodite arising from the mud" (185). These allusions are, at the very least, suggestive. The phrase "male Aphrodite" surely implies a strong degree of sexual ambivalence, and Antinous was, of course, the beautiful boy with whom the Roman emperor Hadrian became infatuated (and whom, indeed, he posthumously deified); his is among the "certain names" with which nineteenth-century poets (including J. A. Symonds in *The Lotos Garland of Antinous* [1871])<sup>2</sup> coded homosexual love (Fone 106). In immediate association with Antinous, the god Apollo might be recalled principally as the lover of Hyacinthus, the youth whose blood became a flower of purple-blue or violet. Once again, this myth is among the covert signifiers deployed in Victorian writing to denote male homosexual bonding. Dellamora cites Pater's "Apollo in Picardy" (noting, incidentally, that in Byron's Cambridge, sexually available male adolescents were known as "Hyacinths") and quotes Tennyson's evocation of the "April violet" in *In Memoriam* 119 (187, 37); an even more explicit example occurs in J. A. Symonds's long poem "Eudiades" (written in December 1868), in which the athlete Melanthias sings his love for the beautiful youth of the title:

I die for thee and melt  
Like wax away,  
Or like spring violets, which, having felt  
The strong relentless ray  
Of Phoebus, fade in premature decay.

(Reade 111)<sup>3</sup>

It may, then, be more than coincidental that among the most distinctive of James Conyers's beauties are his "dark, violet-hued eyes" fringed with "thick black lashes" and having a "dreamy, semi-sentimental expression" (180-81).<sup>4</sup>

Quite apart from these allusive clues, moreover, Conyers is unique among the book's males in being, apparently, quite impervious to Aurora's sexual charisma, whose power is made explicit at a very early stage in the novel (see, for example the observation in Chapter Two that her head "was set upon the throat of a Cleopatra" [20]) and which was, indeed, one of the principal features of Braddon's text to excite adverse contemporary comment.

Conyers's stony indifference, and his exclusive preoccupation with Aurora's wealth, would alone mark him out as a man apart in Braddon's novel, and there is even an ambiguous

suggestion that when he comes to Mellish Park he finds a more congenial partner than his estranged wife. After his murder, the *Manchester Guardian*, prompted by the vindictive Mrs. Powell, affirms that an insider is responsible for the crime and, we are told, "a nervous footman turned pale as that passage was read which declared that the murder had been committed by some member of the household" (396). Is the nervous footman merely a bit of comic "below-stairs" staffage, or is the narrator hinting that someone at Mellish Park besides Aurora might have reason to dread investigation?

The case for James Conyers's homosexuality is, of course, founded on glancing allusions and telling silences. That, after all, is only to be expected in a mid-Victorian novel designed for popular circulation. What, however, I am suggesting is that Braddon has planted enough hints and clues to enable an informed reader to decode an implicit subtext to the "infidelity" and "brutality" of which Aurora repeatedly speaks. The novel seeks, that is, to exploit an assumed diversity in the levels of sophistication of its wide readership. Such a practice is hardly unprecedented in Victorian fiction (Cockshut, for example, has drawn attention to the way in which Thackeray, in *Vanity Fair*, attaches to Lady O'Dowd's passion for dancing a tag from Juvenal's description of Messalina's insatiable promiscuity [12-13]), but Braddon deploys it to signal a partly alternative scenario to her novel's "official" version of events, to open up the possibility of a final secret about Aurora Floyd's first marriage which she will not divulge even when (like her predecessor Lucy Audley) she appears to confess everything. And because that secret is her husband's homosexuality, her confidence in her ability both to secure a divorce and to exact his silence seems well-founded. For not only was sodomy among the aggravations to adultery introduced by the 1857 Divorce Act; it was also, until 1861, (the year prior to *Aurora Floyd's* serialization), a capital crime.

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"Daedalus and Icarus" (1869) the sunlight which bathes the body of Icarus is metonymically suggestive of Apollo's caress (251).

<sup>4</sup>This detail is repeated later in the novel, when Braddon refers to Aurora's "fancy for a handsome face, for violet-tinted eyes, and soft-brown curling hair" (393).

<sup>1</sup>Mary Lyndon Shanley argues persuasively that, although the Act marked a genuine advance for women, it continued to reinforce assumptions about mar-

Shanley, Mary Lyndon. "One Must Ride Behind": Married Women's Rights and the Divorce Act of 1857." *Victorian Studies* 25 (1982): 355-76.

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## Prophetic Moments in Dickens and Carlyle

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Discussing the discursive chapter headings in *Bleak House*, Jonathan Arac has noted that, like "Carlyle's titles they interrupt the flow of reading and emphasize relations that are paradigmatic rather than syntagmatic. No less than Carlyle in *The French Revolution*, this narrator by both analogy and analysis draws together the social classes and the individual lives that make up the multiple plots of *Bleak House*" (58). He adds that in "this mode both Dickens and Carlyle combined the linearity of narrative with the solidity of completed significance" (59). Michael Goldberg makes a similar point about these writers: "the two most readily identifiable elements in the prophetic quality are preachment and vision: the sense of having a message and the ability to see phenomena in a unique or novel way" (171). He adds that the "sense of a shaping power behind human action finds expression in Dickens' dramatic technique of foreshadowing and his reliance on prolepsis" (176). Because the "tendency to foreshadow, to hint darkly at future events and happenings, [is] one of the main offices of the prophetic voice," it requires the seer to view "the actual physical world as the scene of the human drama . . . made meaningful only in terms of another world which gives it significance. In another way the small units are made significant of the whole; they are almost microcosmic or emblematic" (176). As evidence of an encompassing design disclosed to the prophet, Goldberg cites a procedure typical of *The French Revolution*: "[Carlyle] arranges his puppets, speaks over their heads, points out fragments and details which we ought to notice because of the importance they will later assume, and generally presents his scenes in a suggestive, deterministic way" (176).

Although these facts are demonstrable in Dickens and Carlyle alike, they need a little nuancing, for phrases like "completed significance" and "significant of the whole" impose a fixative pattern on the flux of historical process. Carlyle, after all, acknowledged its *indeterminate* nature in his coda to *The French Revolution*, anticipating Zbigniew Herbert's claim that in "history nothing is ever finally closed" (qtd. in Morgan, *Essays* 68):

Homer's Epos, it is remarked, is like a Bas-Relief sculpture: it does not conclude, but merely ceases. Such, indeed, is the Epos of Universal History itself. Directorates, Consulates, Emperors, Restorations, Citizen-Kings succeed in this Business in due series, in due genesis one out of the other. Nevertheless the First-parent of all these may be said to have gone to air in the way we see. A Baboeuf Insurrection, next year, will die in the birth; stifled by the Soldiery. A Senate, if tinged with Royalism, can be

purged by the Soldiery; and an Eighteenth of Fuctidor transacted by the mere show of bayonets. (3: 321)

No doubt writing with the Elgin Marbles in mind (but discounting the implicit closure and framing of those reliefs designed for pediments), Carlyle offers an early—perhaps the earliest—*tranche-de-vie* conception of history and art. Just as the Marbles are fissured and incomplete and discontinuous, so too are the efforts of the historian. In this particular reading, qualified though it might be at other points of the work, there is no divine *telos* informing the course of human affairs, only a blind recapitulation. Carlyle undercuts the purposive color of "due" in "due series" with the interchangeability of its constituents. This commutability, this ready displacement of one item by another, also emerges in his plural form for unique events, and in his de-individuating use of the indefinite article. Just how many "Directorates" had there been in world history before the advent of Napoleon, and just how many "Citizen-Kings" on the model of Louis-Philippe? (Such reductive multiplications foreshadow an aphorism about the events of 1848: "Plus ça change, plus c'est le même chose.")

At an earlier point of *The French Revolution*, Carlyle also gives a "multiple" treatment to the figure of antonomasia, dissolving its single exemplum into undifferentiated flux: "What a work, O Earth and Heavens, what a work! Battles and bloodshed, September Massacres, Bridges of Lodi, retreats of Moscow, Waterloos, Peterloos, Tenpound Franchises, Tarbarrels and Guillotines;—and from this present date, if one might prophesy, some two centuries of it still to fight!" (1: 133). Here, of course, he *does* envisage some goal for human striving, but he locates it centuries off, suggesting the possibility of its never being achieved. From that perspective, the uniqueness of historical events, like the uniqueness of those in the coda to *The French Revolution*, disappears in their infinite reduplication. Carlyle's gestures thus fail to mesh with the prophet's more usual conception of history, a "sharply defined plot with a beginning, a middle, and an end, and a strongly accented sequence of critical events," one that prompted "the early and repeated Christian assaults against the chief competing doctrine of the *circuitus temporum*, in which there is supposed to be 'a constant renewal and repetition of the order of nature'" (Abrams 35). His reluctance to offer "a sharply defined plot" can be seen *inter alia* in the polite subjunctive "if one might prophesy," a mood very different from the hectoring imperatives say, of Gray's Bard—"Mark the year and mark the night, / 'When Severn shall re-echo with affright / 'The shrieks of death through Berkeley's roofs that ring[']'" (189). Equally punctilious (and dismissive) is his use

of an impersonal pronoun ("one"), as if prophecy were not privileged outpouring, but rather the guesswork of an educated historian. At the end of "The Diamond Necklace" and *The French Revolution*, he goes so far as to mock the prophet as seer by presenting the past as a visionary still-to-come, and ventriloquizing it through the mouth of an acknowledged mountebank:

On the whole, therefore, has it not been fulfilled what was prophesied, *ex postfacto* indeed, by the Arch-quack Cagliostro, or another? (3: 322)

"IMPOSTURE is in flames, Imposture is burnt up: one red sea of Fire, wild-billowing enwraps the World; with its fire-tongue licks the very Stars. Thrones are hurled into it, and Dubois Mitres, and Prebendal Stalls that drip fatness, and—ha! what see I?—all the Gigs of Creation: all, all!

. . . . .

RESPECTABILITY, with all her collected Gigs inflamed for funeral pyre, wailing, leaves the Earth: not to return save under new Avatar . . . . A King, a Queen (ah me!) were hurled in; did rustle once; flew aloft, crackling, like paper-scroll . . . . ["'] This Prophecy, we say, has it not been fulfilled, is it not fulfilling? (3: 322-23)

While Arac's idea of "completed significance" might seem to lodge in the question "has it not been fulfilled," Carlyle goes on to tear it open at the seams, and unleashes an endless cycle of reduplication upon the world—"is it not fulfilling?" The open-ended nature of "vulgar" prophecy, as in fairground clichés about "dark strangers" and "trouble ahead," will *de facto* adapt itself to a cyclical conception of history since, to borrow another fairground cliché, "what goes around, comes around." No surprises, therefore, that Carlyle should heap his scorn on prophecy conceived as fortune-telling. And indeed his mockery of this debased prophetic office might have had an effect on Dickens. Here, for example, is Mr. Pancks's self-dramatizing, mysterious account of his researches into the Dorrit fortune:

"Pancks the gipsy," he observed out of breath, "fortune-telling." . . . In his great self-satisfaction he put his cigar to his lips (being evidently no smoker), took such a pull at it, with his right eye shut up tight for the purpose, that he underwent a convulsion of shuddering and choking. But even in the midst of that paroxysm, he still essayed to repeat his favourite introduction of himself, "Pa-ancks the gi-psy, fortune telling." (385)

One suspects that somewhere behind the comic business of the cigar, Dickens had the fume-induced convulsions of the Delphic oracle in mind, a mock-heroic prophecy not unlike that of Carlyle's Cagliostro.

Indeed both Carlyle and Dickens try to underplay their plastic command of the material in hand, softening the determinism of the narrative past. The tentative process of disclosure in such episodes as Lady Dedlock's flight was

probably based on Carlyle's habit of ducking historical closure at points of *The French Revolution*. The narrative "de-certification" of Inspector Bucket's quest for the fugitive ("Where is she? Living or dead, where is she? If, as he folds the handkerchief and carefully puts it up, it were able, with an enchanted power, to bring before him the place where she found it, and the night landscape near the cottage where it covered the little child, would he descry her there?"—*Bleak House* 767)—this de-certification could be traced to such episodes as the flight of the Bourbons in *The French Revolution*:

Your false Chambermaid must have been mistaken? Watch thou, Gouvion, with Argus' vigilance; for, of a truth, treachery is within these walls.

But where is the Lady that stood aside in gypsy-hat, and touched the wheel-spoke with her *badine*? O Reader that Lady that touched the wheel-spoke is the Queen of France! (2: 161)

The rapid oscillation of viewpoint between revolutionary guards (for whom the flight is treacherous) and the fleeing party (for whom it is escape) dissolves the reader's sense of a controlling presence in the same way as the omniscient narrator in *Bleak House* puts his deity aside and incarnates himself in the baffled detective:

Great; though the future is all vague! If we reach Bouillé? If we do not reach him? O Louis! and this all round thee is the great slumbering Earth (and overhead, the great watchful Heaven); the slumbering Wood of Bondy,—where Longhaired Childerig Donothing was struck through with iron, not unreasonably, in a world like ours. . . . Stars fade out, and Galaxies; Street-lamps of the City of God. The Universe, O my brothers, is flinging wide its portals for the Levee of the GREAT HIGH KING. Thou, poor king, Louis, farest nevertheless, as mortals do, towards Orient lands of Hope; and the Tuileries with *its* Levees, and France and the Earth itself, is but a larger kind of doghutch,—occasionally going rabid. (2: 163-64)

But even as he pretends that "future is all vague" and sweeps up his reader with this assumption, Carlyle stands back to put the enterprise *sub specie aeternitatis*, reminding us of the insignificance of human affairs, and superimposing the tawdriness of a Bourbon levée upon the majesty of dawn.

A not dissimilar passage occurs in *Martin Chuzzlewit*. Here too harmonious natural processes are set at odds with a disharmonious human process:

The fishes slumbered in the cold, bright, glistening streams and rivers perhaps; and the birds roosted on the branches of the trees; and in their stalls and pastures beasts were quiet; and human creatures slept. But what of that, when the solemn night was watching, when it never winked, when its darkness watched no less that its light! . . .

And yet he slept. Riding among those sentinels of God, he slept, and did not change the purpose of his journey. (798)

A short while later, Dickens registers disgust at self-important human littleness, set against the magisterial rhythms of the sun:

The sun was welcome to him. There was life and motion, and a world astir, to divide the attention of Day. It was the eye of Night; of wakeful, watchful, silent, and attentive Night, with so much leisure for the observation of his wicked thoughts: that he dreaded most. There is no glare in the night. Even Glory shows to small advantage in the night, upon a crowded battle-field. How then shows Glory's blood-relation, bastard Murder! (799)

From a cosmic vantage the theoretical distinction between war and murder (as between palace and dog-hutch) is all but effaced.

And that, of course, is a crucial prophetic message, an office of the prophet far more important than that of revealing future events. Many Hebrew writers made a point of exposing the littleness of human endeavor, a point for which the opening chapter of Ecclesiastes is probably the *locus classicus*:

- 2 Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher, vanity of vanities; all is vanity.
- 3 What profit hath a man of all his labour which he taketh under the sun?
- 4 One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh: but the earth abideth forever.
- 5 The sun also ariseth, and the sun goeth down, and hasteth to his place where he arose.
- 6 The wind goeth toward the south, and turneth about to the north; it whirleth about continually, and the wind returneth again according to his circuits.
- 7 All rivers run into the sea; yet the sea is not full; unto the place from whence the rivers come, thither they return again.

Such an utterance is clearly prophetic, even if the design it discloses is not a human destiny made meaningful by an interventive God, but rather the impersonal, anti-human cycle of the natural world. It is a note, moreover, that sounds repeatedly through *The French Revolution* and also through the late fiction of Dickens. Though by no means new to literature—think only of how, according to Herodotus, Xerxes wept at the sight of his troops, remarking “how pitifully short human life is—for of all these thousands of men not one will be alive in a hundred years’ time.” (433)—this prophetic topos seldom figured in the novel before Dickens, who seems to have pioneered its introduction under the probable influence of Carlyle.

Certainly any discourse *sub specie aeternitatis* seldom—if ever—figured in Fielding and Smollet, his eighteenth-century models. Flattering their readers’ appetite for comfort and reassurance, and reinforcing the middle-class work ethic, they habitually rank action above contemplation. It never occurs to them to question the essential premise of their plots, viz. the value of *doing*. Most eighteenth-century novels are suffused with the ethos so memorably caught in Edwin Morgan’s “Coals”:

You get things done,  
you feel you keep the waste and darkness back  
by acts and acts and acts and acts and acts,  
bridling if someone tells you this is vain,  
learning at last in pain. (*Collected Poems* 421)

Eighteenth-century poets, on the other hand, seldom flinched from utterances of this kind. Pope exulted in the expunction of Timon’s villa (“Deep Harvests bury all his pride has plann’d, / And laughing Ceres re-assume the land”—594); Edward Young could have night thoughts about the humankind *dans l’abime* (“and man, whose fate, / Fate irreversible, entire, extreme, / Endless hair-hung, breeze-shaken, o’er the gulf / A moment trembles; drops!”—77); and Gray, contemplating Eton from a Xerxes-like vantage, could exclaim, “Alas, regardless of their doom, / The little victims play” (59). But there is nothing comparable in the metafictional episodes of *Tom Jones*. Indeed, at one point Fielding makes tragic *anagke* yield to a more comforting necessity, the roast beef—or in this case the roast mutton—of England:

And not only the poets, but the masters of these poets, the managers of playhouses, seem to be in this secret; for besides the aforesaid kettle drums, &c. which denote the hero’s approach, he is generally ushered on the stage by a large troop of half a dozen scene-shifters; and how necessary these are imagined to his appearance, may be concluded from the following theatrical story.

King Pyrrhus was at dinner at an alehouse bordering the theatre, when he was summoned to go on the stage. The hero, being unwilling to quit his shoulder of mutton, and as unwilling to draw on himself the indignation of Mr Wilks, (his brother manager) for making the audience wait, had bribed these harbingers to be out of the way. While Mr Wilks, therefore, was thundering out, “Where are the carpenters to walk on before King Pyrrhus,” that monarch very quietly eat his mutton. . . . (152)

By showing “King Pyrrhus” at dinner in an alehouse, and by giving him a retinue of carpenters, Fielding turns back the dropcurtain of neoclassical drama to disclose a bourgeois tableau.

On the other hand, the discursive passages of *The French Revolution* reveal a much greater continuity, say, with the nocturnes of Edward Young. Take, for example, this disquisition on time and human value in Volume 3:

But, on the whole, does not TIME envelope this present National Convention; as it did those Brennuses, and ancient august Senates in felt breeches? Time surely: and also Eternity. Dim dust of Time,—or noon, which will be dusk; and then there is night, and silence; and Time with all its sick noises is swallowed in the still sea. Pity thy brother, O son of Adam! The angriest frothy jargon that he utters, is it not properly the whimpering of an infant which cannot speak of what ails it, but is in distress, clearly, in the inwards of it; and so must squall and whimper continually, till its Mother take it, and it get—to sleep! (372)

Time envelops the Convention, but not in way of those fictive “everlasting arms” conjured up by the AV’s false reading of Deuteronomy 33:27. Instead, its embrace annihilates all that’s made to a black thought in a black shade. Carlyle’s eccentrically plural use of antonomasia dissolves the uniqueness of “Brennus” and the Gaulish “Senate,” and compounds this dissolution by blending them with their eighteenth-century successors. At the same time, their speeches dissipate into the froth of a rabid dog and the droolings of an infant, a noun whose etymology (*infans*=incapable of speech) is activated by the context.

Then consider how, at another point, Carlyle the prophet scans the range of human enterprise to note—and even to revel in—its dissolution:

What a man *kens* he *cans*. But the beginning of man’s doom is, that vision be withdrawn from him; that he sees not the reality, but a false spectrum of the reality; and following that, step darkly, with more or less velocity, downwards to the utter Dark; to Ruin, which is the great Sea of Darkness, whither all falsehoods, winding or direct, continually flow! (3: 138)

Later still, Carlyle’s Night, like Young’s at the start of *Night Thoughts*, all but nullifies the celebration it surveys:

See it, O Night! With cheerfully pledged wine-cup, hobnobbing to the Reign of Liberty, Equality, Brotherhood, with their wives in best ribands with their little ones romping round, the Citoyens, in frugal Love-feast, sit there. Night in her wide empire sees nothing similar. O my brothers, why is the reign of Brotherhood *not* come! It is come, it shall have come, say the Citoyens frugally hobnobbing.—Ah me! these everlasting stars, do they not look down “like glistening eyes, bright with immortal pity, over the lot of man!” (3: 264)

Whereas Fielding goes behind the conventions of neo-classical theatre to reveal the greater “truth” of human appetite, Carlyle does the very reverse when he sets a “frugal Love-feast” against the wide empire of Night, the same Night whose silence and darkness rehearse an imminent death in Young’s *Night Thoughts*: “‘T is as the general pulse / Of life stood still, and Nature made a pause; / An awful pause! prophetic of her end” (65).

Moments like these can be adduced everywhere in the late novels of Dickens. For example, he centers Lizzie’s anguish in *Our Mutual Friend* on an image very like Carlyle’s “Sea of Darkness”:

Then at the best, the beginning of his being set apart, whispered against, and avoided, was a certain fact. It dated from that very night. And as the great black river with its dreary shores was soon lost to her view in the gloom, so, she stood on the river’s brink, unable to see into the vast blank misery of a life suspected, and fallen away from by good and bad, but knowing that it lay there dim before her, stretching away to the great ocean, Death. (70-71)

The fact that death subtends the daily round of life is at once

distressing and consoling, for “the great ocean, Death” democratically encompasses at the same time as it destructively engulfs. To perceive the littleness of life is, in a sense, to inoculate one to the terror of losing it. Dickens also strikes this “prophetic” note in *Little Dorrit*, especially in scenes where Arthur confronts the fact that his age and heritage have disqualified him from ordinary human happiness:

The, lights were bright within doors when he entered, and the faces on which they shone, his own face not excepted, were soon quietly cheerful. They talked of many subjects (his partner had had such a ready store to draw upon for the beguiling of the time), and so to bed, and to sleep. While the flowers, pale and unreal, in the moonlight, floated away upon the river; and thus do greater things that once were in our breasts, and near our hearts, flow from us to the eternal seas. (338)

Not for nothing does Dickens allude to a famous phrase from Pepys—“and so to bed”—reminding us that other confident and happy human beings have been prey to time. The “eternal seas” lapping about the Meagles parlor are like the night suspended above the *citoyens’* fête.

This prophetic sense of dissolution struck a chord in many Victorian breasts, a dark undercurrent coursing beneath their bright, meliorist vision of things. Ten years or so after *The French Revolution* appeared, Fitzgerald made a *sub specie* gesture of his own when, writing to Edward Cowell, he remarked:

Yet, as I often think, it is not the poetical imagination, but bare Science that every day more and more unrolls a greater Epic than the Iliad . . . I never take up a book of Geology or Astronomy but this strikes me . . . So that, as Lyell says, the Geologist looking at Niagara forgets even the roar of its waters in the contemplation of the awful processes of time that it suggests. It is not only that this vision of Time must wither the Poet’s hope of immortality; but it is in itself more wonderful than all the conceptions of Dante and Milton. (qtd. in Morgan *Essays* 3)

The vistas of geological time, opening up behind the cozy span of human history derived from the chronicles of Genesis, engendered both awe and terror. While Dickens offered a comic take on those vistas at the start of *Bleak House* (the Megalosaurus on Holborn Hill), he seems also to have shared Tennyson’s discomfiture over “Dragons of the prime, / That tare each other in their slime” (912). To deal with it, he seems to have adopted a negative capability very different from the foreshadowing and prolepsis that Michael Goldberg has set forth as distinctive hallmarks of his fiction. For example, near the start of *Little Dorrit* he offers pilgrimage as a paradigm for the course of human affairs, and then cuts away the very basis of the metaphor:

And thus ever, by day and night, under the sun and under the stars, climbing the dusty hills and toiling along the weary plains, journeying by land and journeying by sea, coming and going so strangely, to meet and to act and react on one another, move all we restless travellers through the



pilgrimage of life. (27)

Pilgrimages ordinarily have destinations that promise restorative grace, but Dickens remains tight-lipped about any point of arrival. Indeed there is something Sisyphean here. The relentless, restive participles, the temporal necessity of "ever," the random permutations of "coming and going" that are "strange" as much in their estrangement as in their uncanniness—all these suggest an absence of closure, or at best a resolution in that "dark sea, Death." And certainly Arthur, recurring to the same metaphor or a seemingly directed journey, doesn't try to establish its outcome:

The looking at the dark road and its uncertain objects, he would have gradually trailed off again into thinking, "Where are we driving, he and I, I wonder, on the darkened road of life? How will it be with us, and with her, in the obscure distance." (318)

Carlyle's dark seas and dark nights have no doubt played their part in projecting this sense of suspended purpose, of the futility of human striving.

If we turn back to the start of Ecclesiastes, we notice something else about the non-predictive prophet, viz., his readiness to reduce everything to an absolute denominator. We could call this prophetic monism, for like Thales (the first philosopher to claim a common physical identity for reality), prophets boil down the range and variety of life to first principles. "All is vanity," they tell us, or, following Isaiah, "the people is grass." We have seen how, in the coda to *The French Revolution*, Carlyle throws the paper dolls of his *dramatis personae* into an apocalyptic bonfire. At other points, he constructs secondary monisms, catching a fad in an all-encompassing metaphor, as for example in Book I:

Time of sunniest stillness—shall we call it, what all men thought it, the new Age of Gold? Call it at least, of Paper; which in many ways is the succedaneum of Gold. Bank-paper, wherewith you can still buy when there is no gold left; Book-paper, splendid with Theories, Philosophies, Sensibilities,—beautiful art, not only of revealing Thought, but also of so beautifully hiding from us the want of Thought! Paper is made from the rags of things that did once exist; there are endless excellences in Paper.

(1:29)

An analogue for this *ad hoc* satiric reduction would be the "shares" passage in *Our Mutual Friend*, where paper likewise displaces reality, though in a way too light and mocking to be properly prophetic: "Where does he come from? Shares. Where is he going to? Shares. What are his tastes? Shares. Has he any principles? Shares" (114). However, underneath the papery surfaces of recorded history, Carlyle detects a Heraclitean fire, forever surging up and engulfing the semblances of order and good government that humankind has stretched above the gulf:

No, Friends, this Revolution is not of the consolidating kind. Do not fires, fevers, sown seeds, chemical mixtures, men, events,—all embodiments of Force at work in this

miraculous Complex of Forces named Universe,—go on growing, through their natural phases and developments each according to its kind; reach their height, reach their visible decline; finally sink under, vanishing, and what we call die? (1: 239)

This sort of solemn, unitary image, breaking down distinctions by making them allotropes of each other seems to have inspired similar strategies in Dickens. The fog at the start of *Bleak House* always remains distinct from the spaces it occupies and interconnects—"Fog everywhere. Fog up the river, where it flows among green aits and meadows; fog down the river, where it rolls defiled among the tiers of shipping, and the waterside pollutions of a great (and dirty) city" (1). But consider this episode midway through *Little Dorrit*, pendant to the account of staring heat at the start:

Up here in the clouds, everything was seen through cloud, and seemed dissolving into cloud. The breath of men was cloud, the breath of the mules was cloud, the lights were encircled by cloud, speakers close at hand were not seen for cloud, though their voices and all the other sounds were surprisingly clear. . . . In the midst of this, the great stable of the convent, occupying the basement story, and entered by the basement door, outside which all the disorder was, poured forth its contribution of cloud, as if the whole rugged edifice were filled with nothing else, and would collapse as soon as it had emptied itself, leaving the snow to fall upon the bare mountain summit. (433)

While we cannot doubt that Dickens was writing with Prospero's great palinode in mind ("all which it inherit, shall dissolve, / And, like this insubstantial pageant faded, / Leave not a rack behind"—104), one also senses that Carlyle's example underpins the sense of a phantasmal, provisional reality about to collapse on itself. That certainly is how *Little Dorrit* views the splendors of Europe:

It was from this position that all she saw appeared unreal; the more surprising the scenes, the more they resembled the unreality of her own inner life as she went through its vacant places all day long. The gorges of the Simplon, its enormous depths and thundering waterfalls, the wonderful road, the points of danger where a loose wheel or a faltering horse would have been destruction, the descent into Italy, the opening of that beautiful land, as the rugged mountain-chasm widened and let them out from a dark and gloomy imprisonment—all a dream—only the old mean Marshalsea a reality. (463-64)

Little Nell had paved the way for this sort of prophetic meditation, but her *sic transits* seem a touch pedestrian when we compare them with those of the later novel:

Here was the broken pavement, worn, so long ago, by the pious feet, that Time, stealing on the pilgrims's steps, had trodden out of their track, and left by crumbling stones. Here were the rotten beam, the sinking arch, the sapped and mouldering wall, the lowly trench of earth, the stately tomb on which no epitaph remained,—all,—marble, stone, iron,

wood, and dust, one common monument of ruin. The best work and the worst, the plainest and the richest, the stateliest and the least imposing—both of Heaven's work and Man's—all found one common level here, and told one common tale. (*The Old Curiosity Shop* 397)

While Nell simply studies the ravages of *Tempus edax rerum*, for Amy things are so vague that there is no substance for time to devour, only a perceptual flux of phantasms. To that extent she has absorbed one of the lessons of *The French Revolution*, viz., that reality subsists in the "Phenomena, or visual Appearances, of this wide-working terrestrial world: which truly is all phenomenal, what they call spectral; and never rests at any moment; one never at any moment can know why" (2: 159).

Another way of suggesting the essential sameness of things even as they appear to change is to X-ray individual characters and disclose their archetypal bones. Carlyle is fond of invoking Adam as the connecting substrate of all human endeavor (as when in *The French Revolution* he urges the reader to "Pity thy brother, O son of Adam"—3: 72), and Dickens likewise uses prophetic antonomasia to suggest the continuity through the ages of certain impulses—temporal monism, as it were. In *Martin Chuzzlewit*, when Jonas sets out to murder Tigg Montague, a run of rhetorical questions blends him with his biblical analogue:

Did no men passing through the dim streets shrink without knowing why, when he came stealing up behind them? As he glided on, had no child in its sleep an indistinct perception of a guilty shadow falling on its bed, that troubled its innocent rest? . . . When he looked back, across his shoulder, was it to see if his quick footsteps still fell dry upon the dusty pavement, or were already moist and clogged with the red mire that stained the naked feet of Cain! (797)

Blandois, travelling through central France, likewise strikes an archetypal note: "One man, slowly moving on towards Chalons was the only visible figure in the landscape. Cain might have looked as lonely and avoided" (*Little Dorrit* 124). *Our Mutual Friend* makes the same identification through a chapter heading ("Better to be Abel than Cain") and through the picture that (inspired by comparable instances in Hogarth) Marcus Stone has set on a parlor wall. Here Dickens gives an additional twist to Carlyle's repeated invocations of Adam by superimposing a secondary "fall" (Headstone's attempt to murder Wrayburn) on the archetypal fall of which it is the symptom:

. . . perhaps a family resemblance of face and voice between the boy and his sister smote him hard in the gloom of his fallen state. For whichever reason, or for all, he drooped his devoted head when the boy was gone, and shrank together on the floor, and grovelled there, with the palms of his hand tight-clasping his hot temples, in unutterable misery, and unrelieved by a single tear. (713)

Even more oblique and delicate is the way in which, in the same novel, Dickens reconstitutes Sophronia Akkershem and

Alfred Lamble as Adam and Eve cast out from the paradise of their material hopes in each other. He does this by recalling the solitary figures at the end of *Paradise Lost*, ironically glossing their "fall" with the clichés of an epithalamion: "So this happy pair, with this hopeful marriage contract thus signed, sealed, and delivered, repair homeward. . . he escorts her in the light of the setting sun to their abode of bliss" (127).

In Dickens and Carlyle alike, predictive prophecy does not occupy center stage, for both writers take pains to efface a sense of inevitability even as they relay their completed narratives to us. The coda of *Martin Chuzzlewit*, which addresses Tom Pinch with archaic vocative phrases, and which projects the future as a musical fantasia, owes something in turn to the coda of *The French Revolution*. Instead of the trim *oves ab haedis* divisions and predictions of earlier endings, Dickens has opted for something more misty and impalpable. In subsequent novels, moreover, some prophecies (the story of Little Dorrit's princess, say, and Lizzie's contemplation of the coals near the start of *Our Mutual Friend*) prove false to the course of events. The *real* prophetic task, on the other hand, that of arraigning a stubborn people, registers in the way the central marriages of those novels fail to redeem the time: "They went quietly down into the roaring streets, inseparable and blessed; and as they passed along in sunshine and shade, the noisy and the eager, and the arrogant and the froward and the vain, fretted, and chafed, and made their usual uproar" (*Little Dorrit* 836). Far from suggesting that "the scene of the human drama" is "made meaningful only in terms of another world which gives it significance" (Goldberg 176), moments like these imply that all is vanity, and that if there is another world, it is, like Eluard's, "in this one" (qtd. in White flyleaf).

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## "Mr. Gilfil's Love Story" and the Critique of Kantianism

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It has not hitherto been observed that the retrospective chapters of "Mr Gilfil's Love Story," which narrate the eponymous hero's painful past, also represent a searching critique of Kantianism, and by extension the dubious alliance between Christianity and Kantianism which sought to use Kantianism as a focus for Christian apologetics. This appropriation of Kantianism was achieved by superimposing a body of transcendent and externally motivated ethics on what was essentially a negative philosophy.<sup>1</sup> The particular focus of George Eliot's attention seems to be Kant's *Critique of Judgement*, which sought to apply something of the "universality" of the categorical imperative to aesthetics (I: 51), and making use of the sublime, to suggest further that we can gain intimations of a transcendent realm, "on the mere recommendation of a pure practical reason that legislates for itself alone" (II: 113). Although Kant admits "that such a disposition of the mind is but a rare occurrence," he insists that

the source of this disposition is unmistakable. It is the original moral bent of our nature, as a subjective principal, that will not let us be satisfied, in our review of the world, with the finality which it derives through natural causes, but lead us to introduce into it an underlying supreme Cause governing nature according to moral laws. (II: 113)

"Mr Gilfil's Love Story" commences with an introductory chapter, but we are then immediately taken back in time to the Cheveral Manor of 1788, presided over by the pre-Romantic figure of Sir Christopher Cheveral. The narrator uses the discourse of art criticism to describe the Manor, underlining the sterility and artificiality of this historical moment which marks the end of classicism:

And a charming picture Cheveral Manor would have made that evening, if some English Watteau had been there to paint it: the castellated house of grey-tinted stone, with the flickering sunbeams sending dashes of golden light across the many-shaped panes in the mullioned windows, and a great beech leaning athwart one of the flanking towers, and

breaking, with its dark flattened boughs, the too formal symmetry of the front. . . . (133)

The description of the dining room has resonances of a Kantian aesthetic, with the latter's emphasis on the pure frame of the work of art which delineates it from any function or use. It was

less like a place to dine in than a piece of space enclosed simply for the sake of beautiful outline; and the small dining-table, with the party round it, seemed an odd and insignificant accident, rather than anything connected with the original purpose of the apartment. (134, my italics)

In her essay "The Natural History of German Life," George Eliot remarks on the "falsification" of art in a discussion of realism, which points to her sympathy with the Dutch school of genre painting, and a Wordsworthian concern for the extension of our sympathies":

This perversion is not the less fatal because the misrepresentation which gives rise to it has what the artist considers a moral end. The thing for mankind to know is, not what are the motives and influences which the moralist thinks *ought* to act on the artisan or labourer, but what are the motives and influences which *do* act on him.

(*Essays* 271)

This dismissal of the Kantian categorical imperative (or "ought") is followed by a little noticed criticism of Dickens, who is characterized as a "great novelist" in respect to his descriptions of the "external traits" of his characters, but seen as deficient in his being unable to "give us their psychological character." When he does attempt a move into the psychological realm, he becomes "as transcendent in his unreality as he was a moment before in his artistic truthfulness" (271). George Eliot also levels this type of charge at writers of the "oracular" species in her essay "Silly Novels by Lady Novelists," which was completed shortly before she com-

menced writing the *Scenes*. George Eliot observes that

the ability of a lady novelist to describe actual life and her fellow-men, is in inverse proportion to her confident eloquence about God and the other world, and the means by which she chooses to conduct you to true ideas of the invisible is a totally false picture of the visible. (311)

We can also note an oblique attack on Kantianism in George Eliot's discussion of the "mind-and-millinery" species of writers:

Lady novelists, it appears, can see something else besides matter; they are not limited to phenomena, but can relieve their eyesight by occasional glimpses of the *noumenon*, and are, therefore, naturally better able than any one else to confound sceptics, even of that remarkable, but to us unknown school, which maintains that the soul of man is of the same texture as the polypus. (310)<sup>2</sup>

George Eliot herself was charged with "unreality" in respect to her characterization of Sir Christopher and Lady Cheveral, who, according to a contemporary reviewer, "strike us as old acquaintances whom we have known not in real life, but in books" (*Quarterly Review* 478). I would suggest that several of the characters in this story are "unrealistic," simply because they are in the first instance not more than crude philosophical vehicles, rather than fully realized characters.

Sir Christopher Cheveral represents the Kantian concept of good will, which

is good not because of what it performs or effects, not by its aptness for the attainment of some proposed end, but simply by virtue of the volition, that is, it is good in itself, and considered by itself is to be esteemed much higher than all that can be brought about by it in favour of any inclination, nay, even of the sum-total of all inclinations.

(Kant, *Metaphysic* 11)

Sir Christopher has an "inflexibility of the will," but also "some of that sublime spirit which distinguishes art from luxury, and worships beauty apart from self-indulgence" (*Scenes* 159). In Kantian fashion, he has a pure aesthetic, free from all determination and interest. He demonstrates his Kantian detachment and rational adherence to a law for its own sake as he dismisses the entreaties of the widow Mrs. Hartopp: "But it is useless to talk and cry. I have good reasons for my plans, and never alter them" (139). In fact, Sir Christopher "had gone through life a little flushed at the power of his will" (167), and does not see why his plan for the marriage of Captain Wybrow and Miss Assher should not come to fruition:

"Yes Maynard," said Christopher, chatting with Mr Gilfil

in the library, "it really is a remarkable thing that I never in my life laid a plan, and failed to carry it out. I lay my plans well, and I never swerve from them—that's it. A strong will is the only magic." (213)

Sir Christopher's plans seem to have the authority and absoluteness of the Kantian formulation of the autonomous will:

Autonomy of the will is that property of it by which it is a law to itself (independently of any property of the objects of volition). The principle of autonomy then is: Always so to choose that the same volition shall comprehend the maxims of our choice as a universal law. (*Metaphysic* 71)

For Kant, the rational man as "legislator," achieves "a certain dignity and sublimity," and is able to perform actions which have "a moral worth." The autonomous will is the starting point of all true morality:

*Morality*, then, is the relation of actions to the autonomy of the will, that is, to the potential universal legislation by its maxims. An action that is consistent with the autonomy of the will is *permitted*; one that does not agree therewith is *forbidden*. A will whose maxims necessarily coincide with the laws of autonomy is a holy will, good absolutely. The dependence of a will not absolutely good on the principal of autonomy (moral necessitation) is obligation. This cannot be applied to the holy being. The objective necessity of actions from obligation is called *duty*. (70)

Captain Wybrow, who also has a strong will (and a weak heart), is a grotesque caricature of this Kantian concept of duty. It is his *raison d'être*, to which all feeling must be subordinated:

"Why do you push me away Tina?" said Captain Wybrow in a half whisper; "are you angry with me for what a hard fate puts on me? Would you have me cross my uncle—who has done so much for us both—in his dearest wish? You know I have duties—we both have duties—before which feeling must be sacrificed." (145)

Captain Wybrow "was a young man of calm passions, who was rarely led into any conduct of which he could not give a plausible account of himself." While nature "had given him an admirable figure, the whitest of hands, the most delicate of nostrils, and a large amount of serene self-satisfaction," she had also, on account of his weak heart, "guarded him from the liability to a strong emotion." He lacks genuine emotion and sympathy, this relation to self being characteristic of the Kantian doctrine of autonomy, which conflicts with George Eliot's intersubjective humanism, and which manifests itself in his unswerving devotion to his self-serving conception of

<sup>1</sup>Thomas McFarland charts the *Pantheismusstreit*, or the Pantheism Controversy, which dominated the age of the Romantics and beyond, such that only two ontological schemes seemed possible: the "I am" of the Platonists,

Descartes, and an uneasy alliance of Kant and Christianity; and the "it is" of the Aristotelians, Spinoza and the Pantheists (ch. 2).

<sup>2</sup>George Eliot's views on Kant and Kantianism were probably influenced by George Henry Lewes, whose *Biographical History of Philosophy* was published in a revised edition in 1857. He must have been revising the work as George Eliot started the *Scenes*. Lewes (at this stage, at any rate) was a thorough-going empiricist, and claimed that because experience is "the source

of all ideas," and a priori ideas non-existent, "Scepticism is inevitable." He claims that "the veracity of Consciousness, which he [Kant] had so laboriously striven to establish, and on which his Practical Reason was based, is only a relative, subjective veracity. Experience is the only basis of Knowledge: and Experience leads to Scepticism" (Lewes 565).

duty:

... Sir Christopher and Lady Cheveral thought him the best of nephews, the most satisfactory of heirs, full of grateful deference to themselves, and, above all things, guided by a sense of duty. Captain Wybrow always did the thing easiest and most agreeable to him from a sense of duty: he dressed expensively, because it was a duty he owed to his position; from a sense of duty he adapted himself to Sir Christopher's inflexible will, which it would have been troublesome as well as useless to resist; and, being of a delicate constitution, he took care of his health from a sense of duty. (164)

Indeed, Captain Wybrow is only too willing to submit to Sir Christopher's will in the matter of his match with Miss Assher—"from a sense of duty" (165). And as Captain Wybrow becomes the accepted lover, and the courtship commences, Sir Christopher

seemed every day more radiant. Accustomed to view people who entered into his plans by the pleasant light which his own strong will and bright hopefulness were always casting on the future, he saw nothing but personal charms and promising domestic qualities in Miss Assher, whose quickness of eye and taste in externals formed a real ground of sympathy between her and Sir Christopher.

(193)

Sir Christopher's acknowledgement of Miss Assher is dominated by the aesthetic rather than the ethical, the aesthetic for Kant being a detachment from purposiveness and sympathy, and hence the irony of the false sympathy between them. Miss Assher is described like a painting; she "produced an impression of splendid beauty" (169). Caterina, in contrast, is described in natural images (she doesn't wear powder!), usually associated with animals (Hardy 202ff). To Sir Christopher she is "a clever black-eyed monkey" (143); to Captain Wybrow she is his "little singing-bird" (146); and at times of crisis she is "a poor wounded leveret" (184). Caterina is unable to master her feelings, which issue forth in "ungovernable impulses" (198), and she is one of those "emotional natures whose thoughts are no more than the fleeting shadows cast by feeling" (185). Caterina, too, needs to be integrated into a common humanity—her pure "naturalism" proves to be just as inadequate as Sir Christopher's pure "rationalism."

The realization that the missing Caterina might indeed have loved Anthony, and Maynard's revelations regarding the indelicacy of Captain Wybrow's behavior towards Caterina, represent something of an epiphany for Sir Christopher, who is drawn out of his Kantian detachment:

Sir Christopher relaxed his hold of Maynard's arm, and looked away from him. He was silent for some minutes, evidently attempting to master himself, so as to be able to speak calmly.

"I must see Henrietta immediately," he said at last, with something of his old sharp decision; "she must know all; but we must keep it from every one else as far as possible. My dear boy," he continued in a kinder tone, "the heaviest burthen has fallen on you. But we may find her yet; we must not despair: there has not been time enough for us to be certain. Poor dear little one! God Help me! I thought I saw everything, and was stone-blind all the while." (225)

How might we begin to assess Eliot's distribution of the Kantian schema according to the way in which her characters relate to the world? I have already suggested that it makes little sense to criticize the "unrealistic" nature of Eliot's Kantian characters. Indeed, this seems to be just the point. Confronted with a discourse of ethics and aesthetics that is concerned with *arguments* and rational justification, Eliot demonstrates the absurdity of such a way of thinking in terms of *lived experience*.

It is hard to *realize* the implicit character of Kantian philosophy and Eliot's parody of rationalism provides some salutary insight for current ethical concerns. As Andrew Bowie and others have observed, current post-structuralist versions of ethics are heavily indebted to Kantianism and the focus on pure formal structures (and Kantian approaches also dominate liberal theory, in particular the work of John Rawls). What Eliot's style demonstrates is that ethics and aesthetics are not argumentative forms but *ways of life*. Kantianism has often been described as an empty formalism, but Eliot's story fleshes out the character of formalism: its way of viewing the world, the social relations it effects and, ultimately, its highly implausible character as a possible way of life.

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## George Eliot's Challenge to Medusa's Gendered Disparities

Sophia Andres

After an extensive discussion of the distinctions between the sexes, Freud concludes "Some Psychological Consequences of the Anatomical Distinction between the Sexes" (1925) with observations which seem to liberate the human psyche from traditional gender boundaries: "all human individuals, as a result of their bisexual disposition and of cross-inheritance, combine in themselves both masculine and feminine characteristics, so that pure masculinity and femininity remain theoretical constructions of uncertain content" (19: 258). Yet in the same lecture Freud contains sexuality within gendered categories by defining looking or gazing as a process determined by gender: "there is an interesting contrast between the behaviour of the two sexes. In the analogous situation, when a little boy first catches sight of a girl's genital region, he begins showing irresolution and lack of interest; he sees nothing or disavows what he has seen, he softens it down or looks about for expedients for bringing it into line with his expectations" (19: 252). The little girl, on the other hand, Freud points out, upon seeing male genitals for the first time "behaves differently. She makes her judgement and her decision in a flash. She has seen it and knows that she is without it and wants to have it" (19: 252). Thus in the process of distinguishing male from female responses to sexuality, Freud also differentiates between the male and the female gaze. This subject certainly preoccupied Freud in several other lectures on psychoanalysis as, for instance, in "Female Sexuality" (1931), where he connects a girl's discovery of "her own deficiency" to her gaze (21: 233); or in "Femininity" (1932), where he designates the male gaze as active and the female as passive (22: 115-22).

Interpreting Freud's statements on the male and female gaze, feminists like Mary Ann Doane have underscored their implications. According to Freud, a boy, unlike a girl, Doane asserts, "is capable of a re-vision of earlier events, a retrospective understanding which invests the events with a significance which is in no way linked to an immediacy of sight." Yet in Freud's view, Doane argues, "the woman is constructed differently in relation to processes of looking" (79-80).

Freud's gendering of the gaze is further illustrated in his interpretation of the Medusa myth, which registers the male terror of Medusa's direct gaze:

The hair upon Medusa's head is frequently represented in works of art in the form of snakes, and these once again are derived from the castration complex. . . . The sight of Medusa's head makes the spectator stiff with terror, turns him to stone. Observe that we have here once again the same origin from the castration complex and the same transformation of affect! (18: 273)

Thus Freud's psychoanalytical interpretation of the Medusa myth ascribes to an archetypal woman the annihilating, emasculating gaze. Furthermore, Freud's understanding of the myth confirms traditional interpretations which emphasize Medusa's destructive gaze, while disregarding the cause of her

plight, her victimization by the god Poseidon.

In response to Lacan's seminars on the gaze, which refigure Freud's theory on the same topic, and in particular to Lacan's remark that the scopophilic drive "most completely eludes the term castration" (78), Stephen Heath points out that "the scopophilic drive may elude the term castration but the look returns the other, castration, the other—evil-eye." According to Heath, the returning look "from the place of the other disrupts the sense of wholeness" (88); the woman's returning gaze brings with it the threat of castration: "What then of the look for the woman, of woman subject in seeing? The reply given by psychoanalysis is from the phallus. If the woman looks, the spectacle provokes, castration is in the air, the Medusa's head is not far off . . ." (92).

Because the gaze is not simply an act of vision but an ideological arena that encloses and dramatizes power relations, feminist writers of art history (Berger, Nochlin), film theory (Mulvey, Kaplan), and fiction (Cixous, Bauer) have examined its gendered ramifications and implications. Even before Freud's psychoanalytical pronouncements, the gaze had been bound in stories of sexual difference and gender conflicts. It is the gendered implications of the gaze in major Victorian novels which this essay addresses. Indeed Victorian Eros is inseparable from the politics of the gaze, for encounters between male and female characters unfold through the dynamics of the gaze, regulated by the laws of the dominant tradition. In my inquiry I have chosen representative Victorian novels by male writers which deal with the traditional dynamics of the gaze, sanctioning unequal power relations. Almost invariably, such dynamics designate the male as a spectator and the female as a spectacle, creating binaries of active/passive, subject/object. Consequently, when a female character attempts to undermine the power hierarchy of the gaze by returning the gaze, that is, by becoming the spectator, she is transformed into a monster—a Medusa figure.

Unlike male Victorian writers, keenly aware of the male/female, spectator/spectacle, subject/object binaries which the traditional dynamics of the gaze dictate, George Eliot frequently destabilizes the binaries of that ideology. As with other issues, in this case George Eliot subtly undermines her audience's beliefs not by direct confrontation but by seemingly advocating what she simultaneously criticizes. In her major novels Eliot consistently challenges the traditional dynamics of the gaze by dissenting from the dominant tradition. In the process, Eliot compels her readers to reframe the gaze.

But before examining some of these novels, it is worth considering briefly a few iconographic representations of the dynamics of the gaze. An early Pre-Raphaelite painting, John Everett Millais's *Isabella* (1848-49) (fig. 1), captures the traditional interplay of the gaze. By demurely lowering her eyes, Isabella gracefully escapes Lorenzo's direct, intense gaze. And even though socially she is Lorenzo's superior, under his gaze she diminishes to the object of desire. Sexual desire, in turn, threatens social hierarchy, since Lorenzo, a working



man, courts an aristocrat. Unlike Isabella, who seems unperturbed by this challenge to social hierarchy, her brothers viciously register the impact of that threat through their body language, which is "charged with a disruptive sexual force in the phallic thrust of the brother's leg, dominating the composition as it kicks out against the dog but aims at Isabella's womb" (Marsh 48).



Fig. 1 John Everett Millais, *Isabella* (1848-49), oil on canvas, 40 1/2 x 56 1/2 inches; National Museums of Galleries on Merseyside (Walker Art Gallery).

Indeed *Isabella* is not unusual in establishing the hierarchical binaries of the gaze. Even a cursory overview of notable Victorian paintings reveals that a woman's gaze rarely meets the male subject's glance directly, whether the male subject is present, as for instance in Rossetti's *Ecce Ancilla Domini* (1850) and even much later in Edward Burne-Jones's *Pygmalion / The Soul Attains* (1878), or the subject, although absent, remains the presumed male spectator, as in Arthur Hughes's *April Love* (1855) or Rossetti's *La Pia de' Tolomei* (1868-80). Conversely, paintings representing a woman's defiant gaze invariably convey a woman's destructive power, as for instance Rossetti's *Pandora* (1869) or Anthony Frederick Sandys' *Medusa* (1875). Indeed a painting like Edward Burne-Jones's *The Beguiling of Merlin* (1873) (fig. 2) seems to reflect Freud's interpretation of the Medusa gaze. Nimue towering over Merlin transfixes him with her intense gaze. Under its powerful impact, Merlin, "stiff with terror," almost disintegrates, becoming her victim, her prisoner. The snakes in her hair highlight Nimue's transformation into a Medusa figure. Her direct gaze is rendered noxiously destructive. Such paintings iconographically record the dynamics of the gaze, often transformed into or conveyed by literary visual images.



Fig. 2 Edward Burne-Jones, *The Beguiling of Merlin* (1874), oil on canvas, 73 x 43 3/4 inches; Board of Trustees of the National Museums and Galleries on Merseyside, Lady Lever Art Gallery, Port Sunlight.

As late as the turn of the century, Thomas Hardy's *Jude the Obscure* (1895) blatantly establishes the hierarchical binaries of the gaze. When Jude first looks at Arabella, the gendered hierarchy of the gaze is forcefully and undeniably confirmed:

She had a round and prominent bosom, full lips, perfect teeth, and the rich complexion of a Cochin hen's egg. She was a complete and substantial *female animal*;—no more, no less; and Jude was almost certain that to her was

attributable the enterprise of attracting his attention from dreams of the humaner letters to what was simmering in the minds around him. (81, my emphasis)

Later on Jude's glance travels from her eyes to her bosom, as if the narrator were attempting to trace the process which reduces a woman to the object of a man's desire: "It is scarcely an exaggeration to say that till this moment Jude had never looked at a woman to consider her as such, but had vaguely regarded the sex as beings outside his life and purposes. He gazed from her eyes to her mouth, thence to her bosom, and to her full round naked arms, wet, mottled with the chill of the water, and firm as marble" (83).

But what is most striking is not so much Jude's gaze as Arabella's defiance of his gaze, her returning glance: "She brightened with a little glow of triumph, swept him almost tenderly with her eyes in turning, and retracing her steps down the broadside grass rejoined her companions" (83). Such defiance unsettles and disturbs Jude's pleasure, paralyzing his will power, undermining his self-control. Indeed Jude seems to undergo the terrifying effects of Medusa's power evoked by her staring eyes, as he experiences the weakening of his resolution: "the intentions as to reading, working, and learning, which he had so precisely formulated only a few minutes earlier, were suffering a curious collapse into a corner, he knew not how" (84).

On numerous occasions throughout *Jude the Obscure*, the narrator exposes the destructive effects of the female gaze, whether it be that of the voluptuous and mindless Arabella or that of the intelligent and highly sophisticated nonconformist Sue. In fact, it is Sue's direct gaze that galvanizes friendship into sexual desire which eventually destroys Jude's and her own life:

And then they had turned from each other in estrangement, and gone their several ways, till at a distance of twenty or thirty yards both had looked round simultaneously. That look behind was fatal to the reserve hitherto more or less maintained. They had quickly run back, and met, embracing most unpremeditatedly, kissed close and long. . . . The kiss was a turning point in Jude's career." (278)

Although the gaze is mutual, Jude attributes to Sue the dramatic effect which her gaze has upon his life. That evening he digs a hole in the garden and burns all his theological books, while contemplating women's destructive force (originating in their returning gaze): "Strange that his aspiration—towards academical proficiency—had been checked by a woman, and that his second aspiration—towards apostleship—has also been checked by a woman" (279). At no time in his musings does Jude recognize the weakness of his own resolutions.

In this respect, *Jude the Obscure*, published at the end of the century, is not unlike novels which precede it. Images of Medusa in her many disguises of serpents, lamias, sirens and mermaids certainly proliferate in Victorian fiction, displacing male authority, subverting male dominance. Yet Medusa figures are the most memorable Victorian heroines that remain with us as representatives of women who transgress traditional gender boundaries, daring to be the subjects rather than the

objects of the gaze, thus inverting and subverting traditional gender roles. As Nina Auerbach observes in *The Woman and the Demon*, an incisive study of representations of Victorian women in literature and art, "perceptions of power cannot be untangled from the impulse to suppress it" (180). But the very impulse to suppress the power of Victorian heroines has only served as the impetus to animate it and aggrandize it.

Early in *Vanity Fair* (1847-48), William Thackeray expresses the threat of a woman's gaze in a sharp image, the first significant exchange of glances between Osborne and Becky Sharp, when Osborne looks "towards the glass himself with much *naïveté*; and in so doing, caught Miss Sharp's eye fixed keenly upon him, at which he blushed a little, and Rebecca thought in her heart, 'Ah, *mon beau Monsieur!* I think I have *your gauge*'—the little artful minx!" (86). Throughout the novel, Becky's ability to usurp male authority is captured in Medusa images which culminate in the monstrous "singing and smiling" siren at the end of the novel, whose "hideous tail," the narrator informs us, remains under water, "writhing and twirling, diabolically hideous and slimy, flapping amongst bones, or curling round corpses." Endorsing stereotypical representations of aggressive women, Thackeray identifies the corpses as those of male victims on which the siren is "revelling and feasting" when she "disappears and dives below" (738).

Intelligent and witty, extremely attractive and deviously threatening, the memorable Signora Madeline Neroni in *Barchester Towers* (1857), known for her bewitching gaze, is given the best lines in the novel. Yet Trollope incapacitates her by presenting her as an invalid, always confined to a sofa. Nevertheless, her Medusa power, the narrator informs us on several occasions, is not diminished. Throughout the novel she remains the center of attraction, enchanting men like the hypocritical and ignominious minister, Mr. Slope, who though he strives "to tear himself away from the *noxious siren* that had bewitched him. . . he could not do it" (250, my emphasis). But even the intelligent clergyman Arabin, the moral center of the novel, indeed the only clergyman in the Barchester world who combines Christian idealism and worldliness, falls victim to her gaze, for Madeline refuses either to avert her eyes when she catches a man's glance or to be relegated to the stereotypical feminine status of the object of a man's gaze:

"Feminine beauty!" said he, gazing into her face, as though all the feminine beauty in the world were concentrated there. "Why do you say I do not regard it?"

"If you look at me like that, Mr. Arabin, I shall alter my opinion—or should do so, were I not of course aware that I have no beauty of my own worth regarding."

*The gentleman blushed crimson, but the lady did not blush at all.* A slightly increased colour animated her face, just so much so as to give her an air of special interest. . . .

"But your gaze" said she, "is one of wonder, and not of admiration. You wonder of my audacity in asking you such questions about yourself." (367, my emphasis)

These novels are but a few examples which strongly suggest the threatening effect of a woman's gaze. When a woman returns a man's gaze, thus transgressing masculine boundaries of power by becoming the subject, she immobilizes the man,

depriving him of his self-command. Simultaneously, such a defiance is marked with a woman's transformation into a monstrous creature, a victimizer of men—Freud's Medusa. What is mostly curious about this phenomenon is the rare occurrence of the obliteration of these man/woman or woman/man binaries in Victorian fiction. Yet this rare, fleeting, furtive, and elusive occurrence glimmers in George Eliot's fiction.

Whereas George Eliot's novels at times seem to endorse the unequal dynamics of power represented by the gaze, most often they challenge such conceptions by presenting Medusa figures as representative of Victorian anxieties about the emerging roles of women or as paradigmatic of the culture's incongruous perspectives on women. In the notebooks of *Adam Bede* Eliot records the tragic aspect of Medusa's myth, an aspect often overlooked in traditional versions which present Medusa as a victimizer of men:

Her story is a tragic account of the acute jealousy of the ancient gods directed against all splendor and beauty in mankind. . . . According to another version of the story—one which the Roman poet Ovid followed—Medusa's fate was yet more undeserved. The wild god Poseidon raped the incomparably beautiful princess in Athena's temple. . . . Athena's punishment, moreover, fell on the innocent victim, because she was powerless to punish the guilty god. (Wiesenfath 153)

Though traditionally seen as a victimizer, Medusa, in Eliot's understanding, is the victim of absolute, oppressive authority. It is precisely this version of the Medusa myth which Eliot adopts in *Adam Bede*. Although Hetty could be seen as Adam's victimizer, the narrator focuses on Hetty's victimization by Arthur Donnithorne, whose position in the social hierarchy renders him somewhat of a god whom Hetty is powerless to punish. In *Adam Bede*, as in the myth of Medusa, it is the victim, Hetty, not the victimizer, Arthur, who is punished for transgression of social boundaries. When Hetty contemplates suicide, right before she abandons her baby, it is her unjust victimization to which we are drawn: "a hard and even fierce look had come in the eyes. . . . It was the same rounded, pouting, childish prettiness, but with all love and belief in love departed from it—the sadder for its beauty, like that wondrous Medusa-face, with the passionate, passionless lips" (430).

Dark-skinned, with "gleaming black eyes," the precocious young Maggie Tulliver in *The Mill of the Floss* early on refuses to abide by Victorian standards of femininity by cutting her unruly, wild hair, thus in her defiance "looking like a small Medusa with snakes cropped" (161). Later in the novel, when the magnetism between Stephen and Maggie becomes overwhelming, the power of Maggie's defiant look and direct glance immobilizes Stephen, who is "so fascinated by this clear, large gaze that at last he forgot to look away from it occasionally towards Lucy" (489-90). Yet for Maggie, the narrator implies, Stephen is not merely a potential lover but primarily a potential educator. With no institutional outlet, the desire to know one's own self becomes diffused into the desire to love someone else. It is important to note that before any kind of physical attraction to Stephen, Maggie experiences an

intellectual gravitation. During their first meeting, for instance, Maggie ignores Stephen while he is busy talking about himself, until he

became quite brilliant in an account of Buckland's Treatise, which he had just been reading. He was rewarded by seeing Maggie let her work fall and gradually get so absorbed in his wonderful geological story that she sat looking at him . . . as if he had been the snuffiest of old professors and she a downy-lipped alumna. (489)

In this part of the novel it is not Maggie's but rather Stephen's gaze on which the narrator focuses, thus highlighting the unequal power relations which the traditional dynamics of the gaze allow. As Stephen tries to come to terms with his attraction to Maggie, he seeks refuge in the legacy of the male gaze which reduces a woman to an object of desire and condones the spectator/spectacle dynamics: "Had he fallen in love with this surprising daughter of Mrs Tulliver at first sight? Certainly not—such passions are never heard of in real life. Besides, he was in love already, and half engaged to the dearest little creature in the world. . . . *It was perfectly natural and safe to admire beauty and enjoy looking at it*" (491, my emphasis). And later on while trying to reason his way out of the labyrinth of desire, he relies on the dominant/subordinate binaries which the traditional dynamics of the gaze condone: "he would make himself disagreeable to her—quarrel with her perhaps.—Quarrel with her? Was it possible to quarrel with a creature who had such eyes—defying and deprecating, contradicting and clinging, imperious and beseeching—full of delicious opposites. To see such a creature subdued by love for one would be a lot worth having—to another man" (522-23).

Yet while the novel dramatizes the power of the gaze to restrict the range of femininity, simultaneously it offers a powerful resistance to it. In a fleeting trembling moment in Stephen's and Maggie's attraction, the narrator defuses the subject/object, male/female, active/passive traditional binaries, offering an equal exchange of gazes to suggest mutuality and reciprocity. "And they walked unsteadily on, without feeling that they were walking—without feeling anything but that long grave mutual gaze which has the solemnity belonging to all deep human passion" (560-61). The erotic here suspends traditional dynamics of the gaze and unequal relations of power, removing gender boundaries, establishing instead mutuality and reciprocity.

Eliot's challenge to the Medusa myth culminates in her last two novels. More often than in her previous novels, in these last two she explores the conditions which create reciprocity. In *Middlemarch* she indirectly questions traditional interpretations of the myth of Medusa through her feminist treatment of the gaze in important scenes. In this case I have chosen only two scenes from that masterpiece, one in relation to Dorothea's husband Casaubon, and the other to her lover and future husband, Will. The first argument between Casaubon and Dorothea, which takes place in Rome, is reminiscent of the student/teacher betrayal represented in Edward Burne-Jones's *The Beguiling of Merlin*, in which Nimue, a student betrays her teacher, Merlin, by appropriating his ancient book of charms. Dorothea innocently asks

Casaubon, "All those rows of volumes—will you not do what you used to speak of?—will you not make up your mind what part of them you will use, and begin to write the book which will make your vast knowledge useful to the world?" Like Merlin, Casaubon is terrified by Dorothea's potential power which he describes in visual (Medusa) terms as that of "a spy watching everything with a *malign* power of inference" (139, my emphasis). For Casaubon Dorothea on this occasion undergoes a terrifying metamorphosis from a worshiper to a critic: "he now foresaw with sudden terror that this capacity might be replaced by presumption, this worship by the most exasperating of all criticism—that which sees vaguely a great many fine ends, and has not the least notion what it cost to reach them" (139, my emphasis).

It is very likely that Eliot had Edward Burne-Jones's *Beguiling of Merlin* in mind in this scene which records the reversal of a student/teacher relationship in Medusa terms. After all Eliot knew Edward Burne-Jones since 1868, and, as her letters reveal, she often visited his studio and admired his work. In a letter in 1873 she effusively expressed her appreciation of Burne-Jones's work: "I want in gratitude to tell you that your work makes life larger and more beautiful to me" (Burne Jones 2: 31). In the aforementioned scene in *Middlemarch* Eliot reinterprets Jones's *Beguiling of Merlin*. Whereas in Jones's painting Nimue betrays her teacher, Merlin, in the novel Casaubon betrays Dorothea by presenting himself as a teacher, thus exploiting her yearning for higher learning.

On the day following the argument with her husband we meet Dorothea standing in front of the Ariadne statue in the Vatican Museum in the Belvedere Gallery: "She did not really see the streak of sunlight on the floor more than she saw the statues: she was inwardly seeing the light of years to come in her own home. . . . But in Dorothea's mind there was a current into which all thought and feeling were apt sooner or later to flow—the reaching forward of the whole consciousness towards the fullest truth. . . ." (141). Dorothea's inward gaze on this occasion is juxtaposed with Adolf Naumann's and Will Ladislaw's actual gazes directed at Dorothea. Will in turn argues with Naumann about the impossibility of visually representing a woman like Dorothea. In just one scene Eliot defuses the traditional gendering of the gaze by embedding the physical within the psychological, and, since Dorothea stands in front of the statue of Ariadne, by representing the artistic within the literary. As Patricia Johnson observes, this scene finely represents "Eliot's challenge to traditional Western art and its representation of women. . . . Instead of employing a monolithic male gaze, the Belvedere Gallery scene presents a variety of viewing positions and draws attention to the tensions among them" (49).

Indeed, the final scene between Will and Dorothea movingly crystallizes Eliot's reinterpretation of the gaze. When Will enters the room, "he was in a state of uncertainty which made him afraid lest some look or word of his should condemn him to a new distance from her. . . ." Dorothea, on the other hand, "looked as if there were a spell upon her, keeping her motionless and hindering her from unclasping her hands, while some intense, grave yearning was imprisoned within her eyes" (557, my emphasis). Alluding to traditional Medusa terminology, Eliot here drastically revises it, since

Dorothea, not Will, is motionless as if under a spell, but Will also feels unnerved by her presence. Throughout this tense and intensely charged scene, the narrator emphasizes that Dorothea and Will, rather than looking at each other as conventional lovers would, look outside, eluding each other's gaze: "they stood silent, not looking at each other, but looking at the evergreens which were being tossed . . . against the blackening sky" (558); or "they sat in that way without looking at each other, until the rain abated and began to fall in stillness" (559). And later on toward the conclusion of the scene, "Will was looking out of the window angrily. If he would have looked at her and not gone away from her side, she thought everything would have been easier" (560). Even in this erotically charged scene, neither Will nor Dorothea is reduced to an object of desire, for Eliot seeks mutuality, thus undermining unequal power relations.

Eliot returns to the Medusa myth in *Daniel Deronda*; in fact, the novel opens with the male/female gaze, destabilizing traditional gender dynamics through a series of questions: "Was she beautiful or not beautiful? And what was the secret of form or expression which gave the dynamic quality to her glance? Was the good or the evil genius dominant in those beams? Probably the evil; else why was the effect that of unrest rather than of undisturbed charm?" (35). A close reading of this passage reveals that it is Daniel Deronda's male gaze which ascribes contradictory attributes, good and evil, to Gwendolen—a woman. Thus Eliot seems to endorse the traditional binaries of the male as surveyor and the female as surveyed. In her discussion of this scene, Evelyn Ender contends that "it sets the stage for a specularization of the heroine. . . . Gwendolen can be said to 'exist' as surface projection of the images held in the gaze and in the mind of the men who shape her destiny: Deronda, Klesmer, Grandcourt and a more undifferentiated group (made up of Mallinger, Gascoigne and their likes)" (234). Yet Gwendolen's "dynamic glance" in the opening of the novel is not subdued by Daniel Deronda's gaze. In fact, in adopting the role of the spectator, in the opening scene as well as throughout the novel, Gwendolen assumes a dominant position traditionally granted to men. And it is this transgression of traditional boundaries which often transforms Gwendolen into a monster—a Medusa.

At once a fine specimen of the rising middle class and a demon, a calculating person, looking out for her self-interest, seizing the opportune moment to gain an advantage, and a cannibal, "a Lamia beauty" (41), a sorceress who supposedly lives by sucking children's blood, Gwendolen becomes representative of her culture's gendered incongruities (Andres "Fortune's Wheel"). Certainly images of Medusa in her many disguises of serpents, lamias, and mermaids proliferate in Gwendolen's depiction throughout the novel. Indeed the scene of Grandcourt's drowning, which Gwendolen relates to Daniel, seems but a verbal transformation of Burne-Jones's *The Beguiling of Merlin*:

I saw him sink, and my heart gave a leap as if it were going out of me. I think I did not move. I kept my hands tight. It was long enough for me to be glad, and yet think it was no use—he would come up again. And he was come. . . . It was all like lightning. "The rope!" he called out in a



voice—not his own—I hear it now—and I stooped for the rope—I felt I must—I felt sure he could swim, and he would come back whether or not, and I dreaded him. That was in my mind—he would come back. . . . And he cried again—and I held my hand, and my heart said, 'Die!' and he sank. (761)

Like Merlin swooning under Nimue's intense gaze, Grandcourt literally sinks under Gwendolen's "dynamic glance." Gwendolen's glance becomes Medusa's gaze. But Eliot has taken pains up to this point in the novel to show that Medusa's seemingly destructive power is the product of an oppressive society. In marrying Grandcourt, Gwendolen becomes the victim of his sadistic exercise of power—a prisoner without escape. This unequal distribution of power, condoned by the Victorian legal system, becomes one of Eliot's targets of scathing critique. After all, Gwendolen's decision to marry Grandcourt, prompted by her desire to support her impoverished family, follows her discovery that she cannot earn an independent living, that her education has not provided her with such power. As in *Adam Bede*, in her last novel, Eliot concentrates on Medusa's victimization and further demonstrates that the borderline between victimizer and victim is a hazy one. Gwendolen becomes Grandcourt's victimizer after having endured years of abuse.

As the novel progresses, Daniel's gaze moves beyond the established gendered categories, for he cultivates a nurturing friendship with Gwendolen beyond the superior/inferior binaries erotic desire often establishes. Indeed the last exchange between them demonstrates the defusion of the unequal power relations fostered by the traditional dynamics of the gaze. Bitterly inconsolable in response to Daniel's announcement that he is to marry, Gwendolen exclaims: "I said I should be forsaken. I have been a cruel woman. And I am forsaken." Deronda's response thwarts traditional expectations: "He seized her outstretched hands and held them together and kneeled at her feet. She was the victim of his happiness. 'I am cruel, too, I am cruel,' he repeated, with a sort of groan, looking up at her imploringly. . . . His presence and touch seemed to dispel a horrible vision and she met his upward look of sorrow with something like the return of consciousness after fainting" (877, emphasis mine). Tremblingly wavering between the erotic and the empathic, this intense farewell scene destabilizes the traditional binaries of the gaze—subject/object, superior/inferior, surveyor/surveyed: "Sobs rose, and great tears fell fast. Deronda would not let her hands go—held them still with one of his, and himself pressed her handkerchief against her eyes. . . . She bent forward to kiss his cheek, and he kissed hers. Then they looked at each other for an instant with clasped hands, and he turned away" (877-79, my emphasis). Shattering the gendered ambivalences of the gaze, this scene creates consummate reciprocity.

As her novels and letters reveal, George Eliot was keenly aware of contemporary fears of the social and sexual status of women, which seem to have culminated in the 1870s (the years of the composition of *Daniel Deronda*) when women's suffrage and women's rights became major issues. The knowledge of such issues compelled Eliot to expose her culture's gender incongruities in her own interpretation of Medusa's myth which radically differs from that of male con-

temporary writers. But Medusa is only one example of Eliot's attempts to revise stereotypical concepts of women endorsed by a revival of classical mythological figures in Victorian fiction and painting (Andres "Gendered Incongruities"). In revising mythological or gender stereotypes, Eliot sought to represent women as individuals, thus undermining unequal dynamics of power that reduced individuals to objects. A letter to Mrs. John Nassau, dated 4 October 1869, explicitly records what her novels subtly convey—Eliot's strong and eloquent conviction in the importance of mutual understanding and respect:

But on one point I have a strong conviction, and I feel bound to act on it, so far as my retired way of life allows of public action. And that is, that women ought to have the same fund of truth placed within their reach as men have; that their lives (i.e. the lives of men and women) ought to be passed together under the hallowing influence of a common faith as to their duty and its basis. And this unity in their faith can only be produced by their having each the same store of knowledge. It is not likely that any perfect plan for educating women can soon be found, for we are very far from having a perfect plan for educating men. But it will not do to wait for perfection. (*Letters* 5:58)

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## Browning's "Beatrice Signorini" as Portrait Poem

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In the most sustained examination of Browning's "Beatrice Signorini" from *Asolando: Fancies and Facts* (1889), Barbara Melchiori classifies this late Browning poem as an "art poem" and finds it "less interesting" than Browning's earlier art poems "Fra Lippo Lippi" and "Andrea del Sarto" (86).<sup>1</sup> "There is in this poem a touch of weariness, a tendency to reutilize effects which had been successful in former poems" (84). I wish to suggest that instead of an art poem, "Beatrice Signorini" be seen as a portrait poem and that its Browning pre-texts are "My Last Duchess" and the less well known "A Likeness." If we place "Beatrice Signorini" in dialogue with a different set of pre-texts, it becomes, I believe, a much more incisive and original poem than it is for Melchiori. A suggestive precedent for doing this is Antony Harrison's discussion of Dante Gabriel Rossetti's "The Portrait." In this poem Browning's "'My Last Duchess' is the pre-text being simultaneously displaced and admired" (105). Harrison argues that "Rossetti's poem responds directly to Browning's, presenting the positive amatory and aesthetic values absent from 'My Last Duchess'" (106).

It is my argument that "Beatrice Signorini" is a radical revision of Browning's earliest portrait poem, and instead of demonstrating ironically the male impulse to dominate and control living female beauty by objectifying it into art, Browning's last portrait poem demonstrates the impotence and inability of the male artist to control and dominate successfully living female beauty, a failure anticipated in Browning's "A Likeness" (1864).

The genre of the portrait poem or narrative, examples of which include not only Browning's "My Last Duchess" and Rossetti's "The Portrait" but also Poe's "Oval Portrait" and Rossetti's narrative "St. Agnes of Intercession," (see Fontana)

stresses the fatal power of the male artist's portrait over his female subject. In all of these examples, the existence of the finished portrait causes or immediately precedes the death of its female subject. Even Fra Pandolph's homage to the living beauty of the Duke of Ferrara's wife results in her death, since it reveals to the Duke the powerful eroticized gaze of another male, a gaze that the Duke appropriates ("since none puts by / The curtain I have drawn for you, but I") for his own private delectation.

In "A Likeness" from *Dramatis Personae* (1864), the iconic representation or simulacrum of the female is not a portrait as "some people" hang, a portrait "Alone mid the other spoils / Of youth," but an etching or mezzotint "Of a certain face, I never / Saw elsewhere touch or trace of" that the speaker keeps hidden in a portfolio of prints. It is not a "spoil" but a "treasure" that the speaker reveals to only select "cronies":

He stops me—"Festina Lenté!  
What that sweet thing there, the etching?"  
How my waistcoat-strings want stretching,  
How my cheeks grow red as tomatoes,  
How my heart leaps! But heart, after leaps, ache.

For the casual male crony the etching is a "sweet thing," for the speaker an image of "a face to lose youth for, to occupy age / With the dream of, meet death with."

There is no indication that the etched woman is dead. Indeed, it is her power over the speaker that the monologue demonstrates rather than the power of the artist or collector over the represented woman. In fact, the lover-collector is willing to give away the etching to anyone who might respond

<sup>1</sup>Melchiori reads the poem biographically, seeing in the portrayal of Artemisia, the figure of Browning's own wife.



to it with an intensity approximating that of his own. If this were the case,

—why, I'll not engage

But that, half in a rapture and half in a rage,  
I should toss him the thing's self—"Tis only a duplicate,  
A thing of no value! Take it, I supplicate!"

The speaker, unlike the Duke of Ferrara, realizes the etching is merely a duplicate, a simulacrum. The actual woman has not been mummified into the image "Looking as if she were alive." Instead her vitality exists beyond her simulacra, which involve duplicates, multiple images of a unique and actual presence that eludes possession or appropriation.

In "Beatrice Signorini" the gender politics of the portrait poem are even more radically altered. There are here two artists, one male, Francesco Romanelli, and one female, Artemisia Gentileschi. Moreover, the spectator of the finished portrait, a collaborative effort of both painters, is not the Duke of "My Last Duchess," not the Count's ambassador, nor the bachelor and his cronies as in "A Likeness," but the painter's wife, Beatrice Signorini, of whom the poem is eponymously and specifically titled (the duchess is unnamed), shifting the emphasis thereby from the female subject and male painter/collector to the female spectator and her gaze.

"Beatrice Signorini" is a creative retelling of the biographies of Romanelli and Artemisia Gentileschi in Baldinucci's *Notizie de Professori del Disegno* (1767-74).<sup>2</sup> Embedded within the narrative is Romanelli's interior monologue as he imagines subjugating his rival both amorously and artistically: "But the spell / To subjugate this Artemisia—? where?" (66-67). His need to master her recurs throughout the poem; he seeks "To have her his and make her ministrant / With every gift of body and soul" (30-31).

The word *master* and its variants occur five times in the poem. Romanelli was his teacher Pietro Berretini's "master absolute" (8); for Romanelli "Male is master" (96) and with his wife he is resigned "To play the man and master" (135), but with Gentileschi he concludes that she is "no meek sort / But masterful as he" (142-43).<sup>3</sup> Romanelli is attracted to Gentileschi because unlike his wife, as he imagines her, she challenges and resists his impulse to dominate and master her. For example, he imagines correcting Gentileschi's drawing of a shoulder blade and her disdainful response "What surprise / —Nay scorn, shouts black fire from those startled eyes!" (112-13).

Although Romanelli momentarily imagines inverting with Gentileschi the structure of gender power that he is accustomed to with his wife, his pride rejects this possibility as unworthy of a "whole man":

"What if pride

Were wisely trampled on, whate'er betide?  
If I grow hers, not mine—join lives, confuse  
Bodies and spirits, gain not her but lose  
Myself to Artemisia? That were love!

Of two souls—one must bend, one rule above:  
If I crouch under proudly, lord turned slave,  
Were it not worthier both than if she gave  
Herself—in treason to herself—to me?" (80-88)

It is Gentileschi herself who proposes the idea of a collaborative painting in which she would paint the flowery frame for his portrait of a woman of his choice: "Make whom you like best / Queen of the central space" (220-21).

"Will your wife refuse

Acceptance from—no rival—of a gift?  
You paint the human figure I make shift  
Humbly to reproduce: but, in my hours  
Of idlesse, what I fain would paint is—flowers.  
Look now!" (157-62)

Romanelli will later misread the empty center of the canvas, surrounded by Gentileschi's flowers (fruit in Baldinucci's *Notizie*). In an elaborate analogy, drawn from an antique book of travels, he sees the empty space—"This glory-guarded middle space—is mine? For me to fill?"—as like a band of females who combine to carry their prince so that he can view his kingdom

... they formed a band

Of loveliest ones but lithest also, since  
Proudly they all combined to bear their prince.  
Bucks joined to breasts,—arms, legs,—nay, ankles, wrists,  
Hands, feet, I know not by what turns and twists,  
So interwoven lay that you believed  
'Twas one sole beast of burden which received  
The monarch on its back, of breadth not scant,  
Since fifty girls made one white elephant. (195-203)

For Romanelli the painting is not collaborative, but an exercise in masculine domination. For him, Gentileschi is a willing servant, he a prince, whereas for her the painting represents an artistic welding of two equal souls.

Your Art—

What if I mean it—so to speak—shall wed  
My own, be witness of the life we led  
When sometimes it has seemed our souls near found  
Each one the other as its mate. . . . (213-17)

Romanelli—and this is clear from his elaborate analogy—sees the painting as an exercise in domination, his final mastery of Gentileschi into what he believes will be his "masterpiece" (312). As Rudy observes Romanelli "unable to win her [Gentileschi] as a woman, he endeavors to capture her in his art and to hold her beauty in an eternal stasis divorced from earthly love and morality" (89).

It is, however, Romanelli's wife, Beatrice Signorini, who precipitates the climactic action of the poem. Beatrice has

been imagined by her husband as unlike Gentileschi, as passive and subordinate to his mastery: "My gentle consort with the milk for blood" (266), as incapable of Gentileschi's fury and passion. To test and taunt her, Romanelli unveils his portrait of Gentileschi surrounded by her floral border. The unveiling of the secreted portrait of a woman by its male possessor to another, an action that is central to both "My Last Duchess" and "A Likeness," represents the climax of Browning's narrative. Beatrice's response to this unveiling is unexpected by both her husband and the reader. After criticizing Gentileschi's flowers, she removes a pin, a *spilla*, from her hair and with it slashes and destroys the painting.<sup>4</sup>

Whereat forth-flashing from her coils

On coils of hair, the *spilla* in it toils  
Of yellow wealth, the dagger-plaything kept  
To pin its plaits together, life-like leapt  
And—woe to all inside the coronal!  
Stab followed stab,—cut, slash, she ruined all  
The masterpiece. (306-12)

Romanelli's attempt to dominate Gentileschi by transforming her into a visual simulacrum is subverted by his wife, who destroys the image, thereby freeing Romanelli from both his fetish and his fixation with the elusive and indomitable Gentileschi. Freed from his fantasies of sexual domination, the libertine Romanelli suddenly sees his wife with both renewed desire and gratitude. Beatrice by her action achieves a "statuesque" (319) presence; for a moment she becomes a work of art by destroying one.

What Browning does in this last significant long poem is to subvert the conventions of the portrait poem/narrative, a subversion that began with the earlier "A Likeness." Instead of focusing solely, as in "My Last Duchess," on the morbid pathology of the male collector and his attempt to capture and fatally possess his beloved, Browning emphasizes, in both "A Likeness" and "Beatrice Signorini," the elusive or indomitable nature of the visually signified female. Gentileschi survives Romanelli's painting. Furthermore, in "Beatrice Signorini," a female spectator, Beatrice Signorini herself, replaces the passive and silent ambassador of "My Last Duchess" or the insensitive crony of "A Likeness." Instead of submitting to and thereby collaborating with and enabling her artist-husband's obsession, as the ambassador seems to do on "My

Last Duchess," she destroys the painting, the fetishized object of her husband's obsession. She not only frees him (and this seems perhaps too magical) from his obsession, but more importantly frees the reader from the morbid homosocial politics of Browning's earliest portrait poem, "My Last Duchess," that of two living male spectators sharing in a moment of intimacy a hitherto veiled and secreted portrait of a dead female. Here the female subject is not dead, nor the privileged spectator male and acquiescent.

"Beatrice Signorini" ends with the narrator telling us that Romanelli came to love his wife "Past power to change until his dying day" (335). The narrator has seen Romanelli's subsequent oils and frescoes, "work that appears unduly small / From having loomed too large in old esteem" (340-41). Overshadowed by his great Renaissance predecessors, Romanelli's work is scarcely glanced at today. Yet unlike Browning's earlier artistic failure, Andrea del Sarto, Romanelli's life does not seem wasted or sad. Because his wife's destruction of both his one "masterpiece" and of his impulse towards sexual mastery, he is presented as having achieved the singular good fortune of a happy life. "Beatrice Signorini" is thus unique among portrait poems/narratives in that it ends with a tone of achieved domesticity rather than one of tortured Gothic neurosis and pathology. It, in effect, "sanitizes" the genre as Browning, near the end of his life, seems to exorcise the ghost of one of his most powerful early monologues.

#### Work Cited

- Browning, Robert. *The Poems*. Eds. John Peck and Thomas Collins. 2 vols. New Haven: Yale UP, 1981.  
DeVane, William Clyde. *A Browning Handbook*. 2nd ed. New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1955.  
Fontana, Ernest. "Rossetti's 'St. Agnes of Intercession' as Metempsychic Fragment." *Journal of Narrative Technique* (26): 75-84.  
Harrison, Antony. *Victorian Poets and Romantic Poems*. Charlottesville: U of Virginia P, 1990.  
Melchiori, Barbara Arnett. "Beatrice Signorini." *Browning Society Notes* 7 (1977): 81-87.  
Rudy, John G. "Browning's 'Beatrice Signorini' and the Problem of Aesthetic Aspiration." *Browning Society Notes* 7 (1977): 87-94.

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<sup>2</sup>Melchiori's discussion of Browning's use of Baldinucci's *Notizie* here and in *Parleyings with Francis Furini* is very helpful. See also DeVane 542-44.

<sup>3</sup>The fifth occurrence is the word *masterpiece* (312), referred to later in this article.

<sup>4</sup>Melchiori points out that in Baldinucci the painting was not destroyed: "in the original version Beatrice waits until her husband is out of the house and secretly pricks holes round the face of her rival" (85).

## Books Received

- Bilger, Audrey. *Laughing Feminism: Subversive Comedy in Frances Burney, Maria Edgeworth, and Jane Austen*. Detroit: Wayne State UP, 1998. Pp. 261. \$39.95. "I provide a context for understanding feminist comedy in the novels of Burney, Edgeworth, and Austen by drawing on current feminist criticism, comic theory, and the methodologies of literary history. To do justice to the historical specificity of this comedy I refer to a number of eighteenth-century sources, including feminist polemics, conduct literature, letters, and diaries. Throughout this study, I use the term 'comedy' to designate a mode of writing, speech, or behavior that plays with cultural conventions either to affirm them or reveal their inadequacies. Feminist comedy, to be sure, tends toward the latter, even if it recognizes particular conventions as laudable. I will also use, from time to time, terms conventional to eighteenth-century writers in their discussions of comedy and laughter. Each of the writers makes use of a full arsenal of comic weapons—satire, burlesque, parody, among others—to combat patriarchal nonsense. Although these authors seldom offer direct feminist polemics, they make comedy out of the discrepancies between the myths surrounding 'woman' and the lives of real women" (11).
- Bivona, Daniel. *British Imperial Literature 1870-1940: Writing and the Administration of Empire*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1998. Pp. xi + 237. \$59.95. "The chapters . . . examine the narrative construction of a certain type of European bureaucratic subject. . . . While some of the writers I examine [Kipling, Conrad, T. E. Lawrence, Orwell, Joyce Cary among others] wrote in the early parts of the twentieth century, my main interest here is in the Victorian determinations of the type of subject they wrote about, a subject constructed during the high noon of European expansion to accomplish the work which is rule. While I focus my attention here mainly on writers who had some experience working in lands which were, or would eventually become, components of the British Empire, I do so to make a larger point about how an ideology of bureaucratic work was evolving toward crisis by the time of World War I. What I will call here the dual subject position of the European bureaucrat takes a number of forms, all of which are related—agent and instrument, author and character, perpetrator and victim, master and slave" (4).
- Brontë, Patrick Branwell. *The Works of Patrick Branwell Brontë: Vol. 2, 1834-1866*. Ed. Victor A. Neufeldt. Garland Reference Library of Social Science 1238. New York & London: Garland, 1999. Pp. xiv + 697. \$115. "The intention of this edition . . . is both to correct the effects of previous misreadings and 'improvements,' and to provide the reader with what remains of the actual text that Branwell produced. All of the texts in this edition are based on my own transcriptions of the manuscripts. It has not been possible to retain the original page breaks, or the original lining in the case of prose works except for lists, table, titles, title-pages, and contents pages. In

all other respects the text offered is the text as Branwell left it, except for the matter of revisions, where only major canceled lines or passages have been reproduced" (xiii-xiv).

- Buckton, Oliver S. *Secret Selves: Confession and Same-Sex Desire in Victorian Autobiography*. Chapel Hill & London: U of North Carolina P, 1998. Pp. x + 270. \$49.95 cloth, \$18.95 paper. "The study that follows takes as its subject the intersection between secrecy as a narrative strategy deployed in Victorian autobiographical writing, and the emergence of same-sex desire as a particular site, or 'subject,' of secrecy in nineteenth- and twentieth-century British culture. As a genre exploring the possibility of representing forms of subjective experience, autobiography offers rich opportunities for apprehending the ways in which the 'self' is conceived of and constituted in specific historical periods and social contexts. At the same time, it is precisely this 'subjective' mode of autobiographical discourse—often in the form of 'personal' revelations and reminiscences, directed toward the evolution of a particular identity or self—that makes its status suspect, with respect to both historical analysis and literary value. . . . I focus on autobiography as a discourse of the self in which the significant product is not a referential 'truth' but a cultural effect: what we conceive of as the self may, in fact, be derived from autobiography rather than being its prediscursive 'referent'" (1).
- Cohen, Patricia Cline. *The Murder of Helen Jewett: The Life and Death of a Prostitute in Nineteenth-Century New York*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1998. Pp. 432. \$27.50. The result of very careful research, this account of the hatchet murder of a prostitute whose bed was then set on fire in New York in 1838 and the subsequent trial argues persuasively the guilt of Richard Robinson, acquitted of the murder.
- Fortune, Mary. *Mary Helena Fortune: ("Waif Wanderer" / "W. W.") c. 1833-1910: A Bibliography*. Compilers Lucy Sussex and Elizabeth Gibson. Victorian Fiction Research Guides 27. Queensland, Australia: English Department, University of Queensland, n.d. Pp. iv + 48. \$40.00 for seventh series; \$12.00 per volume. "For over fifty years [Mary Fortune] published under pseudonyms 'Waif Wanderer', 'W. W.', and her initials 'M. H. F.', in newspapers and popular magazines. She contributed work in a variety of genres: poetry; memoirs; journalism; serialized novels, ranging from tales of Australian life to the gothic historical romance 'Clyzia the Dwarf'; and, most importantly, over 500 crime stories. Her only book publication during her lifetime was *The Detective's Album* by "W. W." (1871), a collection of her crime writing" (1).
- Gasson, Andrew. *Wilkie Collins: An Illustrated Guide*. Oxford & New York: Oxford UP, 1998. Pp. [xviii] + [190]. \$35.00. This work "aims to present concise details of Collins's life and works as well as introducing just some of his large circle of friends and associates.

Plot summaries are provided for most of his stories, followed by details of their publishing history. There is a strong bibliographical emphasis throughout to provide clear identification of the first English, US and other key editions, as well as information not included in existing sources—for example on translations and pirated editions.

"*The Guide* is copiously illustrated to help recreate Collins's world, to assist the collector in identifying bibliographical points, and to show the work of several leading illustrators of the day. Many of the pictures are unique to this volume" (vii). Includes a list of main works, a chronology, and appendices of characters in the novels, the Collins family tree, a map of Marylebone, and a select bibliography.

- Gates, Barbara T. *Kindred Nature: Victorian and Edwardian Women Embrace the Living World*. Chicago & London: U of Chicago P, 1998. Pp. xv + 293. \$20.00 paper, £15.95 paper. ". . . [A]lthough this book begins with what Victorian men said about Victorian women in the name of nature—a review, in chapter 1, of the context that made it so difficult for women to speak—female voices offer a counterpointing dissent right from the start. Subsequent chapters of *Kindred Nature* then reveal how actively, and with what diverse voices, Victorian and Edwardian women interrupted, revised, ignored, and sometimes disrupted masculine discourse as they participated in conceptualizing, describing, representing, and preserving the natural world of their time. . . .

. . . [T]his is a text-based study, one in which a variety of texts are brought to light and discussed primarily for the sake of the cultural story they make available. *Kindred Nature* is divided into three parts: the first looks at women and natural science, the second women crusading on behalf of nature, and the third digs more deeply into aesthetics and literary forms, relating them to nature writing. Each part highlights trends, conventions, or movements centered in women's differing addresses to nature. Throughout I have brought into prominence not just the words of one, or two, or even a dozen eloquent women who might join hands, bow their heads, and receive a blessing for their contributions to Western cultural history. . . . I have deliberately tried to include the lesser known along with the better known" (7-8).

- Gill, Harold B. Jr., and Joanne Young eds. *Searching for the Franklin Expedition: The Arctic Journal of Robert Randolph Carter*. Annapolis: Naval Institute P, 1998. Pp. 201. \$28.95. "Twenty-four-year-old Robert Randolph Carter, who wrote his 'personal journal' [a 'day-by-day account'] in 1850-51, was first officer of the brig *Rescue* on the U. S. Grinnell Expedition to the Arctic and an 1849 graduate of the Naval Academy at Annapolis, Maryland. The expedition joined British ships in search of British naval captain Sir John Franklin, his two ships, and 129 men of the Royal Navy who had vanished into the frozen region of northern Canada on a quest for the Northwest Passage in 1845" (1).
- Harrison, Antony H. *Victorian Poets and the Politics of Culture: Discourse and Ideology*. Charlottesville & London UP of Virginia, 1998. Pp. 189. \$32.50. "This study is

the second stage of a project to explore poetry as a significant force in the construction of English culture from 1837 to about 1880. . . . The present volume moves away from intertextual issues as such to discuss, more broadly, how the work of particular Victorian poets operated as a mode of cultural intervention. The chapters are heuristic in design . . . ; my goal here is to explore the constitution of cultural power as it is generated within and appropriated from the structures of meaning at work in society and, more specifically, to examine the mechanisms operating within poetic texts as they engage their culture's discursive practices and generate ideological effects.

"This book thus participates in the recent movement to critique the formalist analysis of artworks, specifically poetic texts, as exclusively aesthetic objects. I consider poems as social and cultural artifacts of historical importance in part because they display subtle if not covert attempts to seize describable categories of cultural power by transmitting ideology. They do so under the guise of eliciting pleasure. "A thing of Beauty" may be a "joy forever," but literary texts also act as material forces in the world and mold readers' values, expectations, and behavior in reality; they thus advance not only the fame of their authors but also their power in society. Such a broad formulation of the political operations of artistic works hardly does justice to the subtlety of their activities in the arena of cultural conflict. The particular analyses of such phenomena in the chapters that follow refine upon this formulation, focusing on a specialized set of artistic texts generated by middle-class writers during a historical period when the hegemony of the middle classes was clearly established but nonetheless threatened, both from below and from above" ([1]-2).

- Hendershot, Cyndy. *The Animal Within: Masculinity and the Gothic*. Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P, 1998. Pp. 281. \$42.50, £32.50. "My study addresses the Gothic's representation and revelation of traditional heterosexual masculinity as a veneer that conceals multiplicity and fragmentation. The Gothic exposes the others within and without that give the lie to the notion of such a category as stable masculinity.

"My project relies upon viewing the Gothic as a mode that circulates throughout literature and (later) film from the mid-eighteenth century to the present, as a particular means of resisting and/or revealing the (ideological) "reality" of modern culture, I want to emphasize the Gothic as a mode in order to extend the boundaries of the transgressive Gothic from either a rigid periodization of the late eighteenth century or a rigid definition that spans centuries but which puts forth certain machinery (i.e. haunted castle, a damsel in distress, the presence of the supernatural, etc.) as necessary in order for a work to be Gothic. The Gothic's disruptive potential is partly predicated on its lack of respect for boundaries. In my view, while the Gothic may have been a genre at the end of the eighteenth century, it increasingly became a mode in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The disruptive Gothic resists territorialization by invading other genres. . . ([1]).

- Higbie, Robert. *Dickens and Imagination*. Gainesville: UP of

- Florida, 1998. Pp. 201. \$49.95. "I begin . . . with a brief opening section in which I explain what I have concluded nineteenth-century writers mean not only by imagination but also by belief, and analyze the way these two are related. And since this relationship is especially important in Romantic ideology, in chapter 2 I briefly examine the Romantic theory of imagination and its connection with the spiritual concerns of Romantic idealism, and then relate it to the main tendencies in later nineteenth-century thought. The Romantic idealist concept of imagination underlies the thought of most Victorian writers, Dickens prominent among them; they attempt to preserve, rehabilitate, or transform the Romantic imagination" (6).
- Hoeveler, Diane Long. *Gothic Feminism: The Professionalization of Gender from Charlotte Smith to the Brontës*. University Park: Pennsylvania State UP, 1998. Pp. xix + 250. \$40.00. "In the process of writing this book . . . I discovered that these novelists [Charlotte Smith, Ann Radcliffe, Jane Austen, the Brontës] were not trying to reshape their worlds subversively or benignly through their writings. They were instead constructing a series of ideologies—a set of literary masquerades and poses—that would allow their female characters and by extension their female readers a fictitious mastery over what they considered an oppressive social and political system through the pose of what I am calling 'professional femininity.' . . . The female gothic novel cannot be understood simply as it has been traditionally seen, that is, as a genre that is primarily concerned with depicting women's achievement of psychic maturity or socioeconomic inheritance or some combination of the two. It is, in fact, more accurate to see the female gothic novel functioning as a coded and veiled critique of all of those public institutions that have been erected to displace, contain, or commodify women" (xii-xiii).
- Hunt, Leigh. *Leigh Hunt: A Life in Letters Together with Some Correspondence of William Hazlitt: (422 Hunt Letters, 14 Hazlitt Letters)*. Ed. in intro. Eleanor M. Gates. Essex, CT: Falls River Pubs., 1999. Order from Falls River Pubs., P.O. Box 524, Essex, CT 06426. Pp. xxxi-693. \$44.95. "My selection of Leigh Hunt letters for this work was based on a variety of considerations and aims: (1) to bring to the attention of the public a much greater number of unpublished letters than has appeared for sixty years; (2) to give a more accurate rendering of the previously published letters I chose to include than was given by their original, often interested, editors; (3) to offer a collection that would fairly represent all aspects and periods of Hunt's career and personal history; (4) to illustrate the wide dispersal of Hunt letters by choosing samples from as many institutions and individual collections as possible; and (5) through the letters, to resolve as many of the unanswered questions regarding Hunt as I could—and also to point to some additional riddles that warrant further investigation. . . .
- Each letter [all transcribed from manuscripts] is preceded by an introduction that informs the reader of the context in which it was written, discusses the dating

assigned it when this information is absent from the manuscript, and explains references to persons, places, or things that would otherwise prove a stumbling block to an understanding and appreciation of the letter. These introductions are an integral feature of the book, providing both necessary background information and a wealth of new data, besides solving a number of outstanding mysteries and correcting innumerable errors of the past" (ix).

- Jones, Jo Elwyn and J. Francis Gladstone. *The "Alice" Companion: A Guide to Lewis Carroll's "Alice" Books*. Washington Square, NY: New York UP, 1998. Pp. xii + 319. \$50.00. "The *Alice Companion* is written as a companion to *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865), *Through the Looking-Glass and What Alice Found There* (1871) and the precursor and slightly shorter version of *Wonderland* which was handwritten and later published as a facsimile, *Alice's Adventures Underground* (1864). . . . Aspect's of Carroll's life and writing beyond *Alice* stray into the text where we think they are revealing to *Alice*. Essentially this book does not deal with *The Hunting of the Snark*, *Sylvie and Bruno* and its companion, nor with much other poetic, satirical and mathematical writing" (xi-xii).
- Kaplan, Fred. *Dickens: A Biography*. Baltimore & London: The Johns Hopkins UP, 1998. Pp. 607. \$19.95 (paper). A reprint of the 1988 edition, with a new preface.
- Knoepfmacher, U. C. *Ventures into Childland: Victorians, Fairy Tales, and Femininity*. Chicago & London: U of Chicago P, 1998. Pp. [xxii] + 444. \$35.00, £27.95. "This book takes a very close look at the stories, poems, and illustrations that seven British authors created from the early 1850s to the early 1870s. And it looks just as closely at the interrelations among their texts, all of which are fantasies or fairy tales. . . . I . . . consider [these post-Romantic constructs] as an integral part of the nineteenth-century debate about the nature of childhood that eventually pitted women authors against male predecessors who had already challenged each other on ideological and artistic grounds. Far from being outdated, their disputes are poignant at a time when our inherited notion of childhood as a precious preserve seems seriously threatened.
- "There are considerable differences among John Ruskin and the three male successors I examine here—William Makepeace Thackeray, George MacDonald, and Lewis Carroll. Yet all four writers created constructions of childhood that were shaped by their common longing for a lost feminine complement. That longing, prompted by personal circumstances as well as by the special conditions under which nineteenth-century boys were raised, was embodied in the fantasies and fairy tales these men created and was reflected in their choice of young girls as their prime auditors and readers.
- ". . . The enormous success of Carroll's fantasy [*Alice in Wonderland*] thus presented a creative challenge for the three women writers I consider in the second half of this book—Jean Ingelow, Christina Rossetti, and Juliana Horatia Ewing. By creating fantasies that were covertly anti-fantastic in their emphasis, these women reasserted

their belief in a child's orderly progression towards maturity within a temporal world marked by boundaries and limits. Moreover, by contesting male idealizations of a feminized innocence, they also tried to wrest child-texts away from the fantasists who had come to dominate the market. Their own imaginative constructs thus involve an indirect reappropriation of a literature that had once been their own" (xi-xii).

- Lau, Beth. *Keats's "Paradise Lost"*. Gainesville: UP of Florida, 1998. Pp. [xi] + 215. \$49.95. "Keats's complete two-volume copy of *Paradise Lost* [housed in Keats House in Hampstead] is unique as a formative influence on Keats's poetry and as a major work of English literature that is heavily marked and annotated throughout solely in Keats's hand. . . .
- "I have . . . annotated the notes—explicating difficult statements, documenting allusions, citing critical commentary, and noting parallels to ideas or images in Keats's poems and letters—more extensively than previous editors. In addition I explain physical features of the notes . . . Such information is often helpful in making sense of the notes by distinguishing between an intentional feature of the writing and one accidentally produced by the constraints of the page" (2).
- Logan, Deborah Anna. *Fallenness in Victorian Women's Writing: Marry, Stitch, Die, or Do Worse*. Columbia & London: U of Missouri P, 1998. Pp. x + 236. \$34.95. ". . . [W]hat I argue throughout this study is that the term *unchaste*, during the Victorian period, assumes extra-sexual connotations. The term expands to incorporate alcoholics and anorexics, the insane, the infanticidal and depressed, and even slave women. This book's central projects are to disentangle the many behaviors relegated, for the sake of neatness and convenience, to the category of 'fallenness'; to scrutinize the collapsed boundaries between evangelical, scientific, and ethical rhetoric that characterize the discourses of the period; to complicate critics' (both Victorian and modern) casual or facile use of the term *fallen*; and to consider the implications of assessing all women's behaviors in sexual terms" (9).
- Markus, Julia. *Dared and Done: The Marriage of Elizabeth Barrett and Robert Browning*. Athens: Ohio UP, 1998. Pp. viii + 382. \$15.95 (paper). Includes more than 80 illustrations.
- Monsman, Gerald. *Oxford University's Old Mortality Society: A Study in Victorian Romanticism*. Lewiston, Queenston, Lampeter: Edwin Mellen P, 1998. Pp. ix + 121. \$69.95. "This study highlights a moment in the collective youth of Oxford's 'most remarkable' group [including A. C. Swinburne, Walter Pater, A. V. Dicey, James Bryce, T. H. Green, J. A. Symonds, Edward Caird, C. P. Ilbert, and others] before each individual's moral and social development has become an accomplished fact, a moment in which these young scholars have not as yet passed beyond their youthful idealism and promise" (ix).
- Mulvey-Roberts, Marie, ed. *The Handbook to Gothic Literature*. Washington Square: New York UP, 1998. Pp. xviii + 294. \$55.00 cloth, \$18.50 paper. There are 118

entries by 65 contributors.

- O'Rourke, James. *Keats's Odes and Contemporary Criticism*. Gainesville: UP of Florida, 1998. Pp. xiv + 193. \$39.95. "This study of four of Keats's major odes seeks to show how these poems traverse, and often exceed, the range of our modern critical practices. My readings of the odes focus on how Keats's famed negative capability and his exceptional ear for language enabled him to use the literary exercise of writing odes as a vehicle for exploring how both one's beliefs and one's sense of self can be formed, displaced, and remade through the material base of words.
- "These readings are indebted to the deconstructive methods of reading that flourished in Romantic studies in the 1970s and 1980s" ([ix]).
- Paston, George (Emily Morse Symonds). *A Writer of Books*. 1899. Intro. Margaret D. Stetz; afterword Anita Miller. Chicago: Academy Chicago, 1999. Pp. xiii + 244. \$35.00 cloth, \$15.00 paper. A reprint of the 1899 British edition, of which there are apparently only two copies in libraries in this country, "A *Writer of Books*—the last of Emily Morse Symonds's [George Paston's] six novels—was her boldest feminist work and her finest literary achievement. To read it now is to understand why Arnold Bennett referred to her, in an 1896 journal entry, as 'the most advanced and intellectually fearless woman I have met' (Intro. xiii).
- Sand, George. *The Marquis & Pauline: Two Novellas*. Trans. Sylvie Charron and Sue Huseman; intro. and notes Sylvie Charron. Chicago: Academy Chicago, 1999. Pp. 200. \$22.00. "The two novellas presented here were first published separately in the 1830s, in serial form. They were later grouped in the 1861 Michel Lévy collection entitled *Nouvelles*, along with *Lavinia*, *Mattea*, *Metella*, and *Melchior*. We have chosen to publish these two works together because both were conceived in the same year—1832—and both deal with social questions, with the theater and the condition of women—a subject always at the heart of Sand's work" (18).
- "We have based our translation on the 1861 Michel Lévy first edition, and attempted to retain the flavor of the texts, while making them readable for a modern American audience. We have kept the original punctuation as much as possible, although occasionally semicolons have been replaced by periods or commas" (23). Includes a chronology and selected bibliography.
- Schoch, Richard W. *Shakespeare's Victorian Stage: Performing History in the Theatre of Charles Kean*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1998. Pp. xiv + 208. \$54.95. "This work . . . seeks to demonstrate the centrality of performance and, more broadly, performative acts in nineteenth-century historical thought. More specifically, this work examines the relationship between theatricality, historical consciousness, and nationalism in mid-Victorian Britain, with principal reference to Kean's antiquarian revivals of Shakespeare at the Princess's Theatre between 1852 and 1859. Through a combination of discourse theory, new historiography, and archival research, I seek to produce a work of integrative performance criticism" (2-3).



Stoddart, Judith. *Ruskin's Culture Wars: "Fors Clavigera" and the Crisis of Victorian Liberalism*. Charlottesville & London: UP of Virginia, 1998. Pp. 193. \$32.50. "To search for a coherent center or progressive logic to Ruskin's periodical letters is . . . to resist the force of his project, to read it through the very critical framework against which it reacted. . . . [S]earching only for unity in a set of discourses so deliberately occasional seems to beg a crucial question. Why, in a moment Ruskin felt to be plagued by a lack of order, would he attempt to intervene through a format whose defining characteristic is its diffusiveness?"

"Looking at that question as the starting point for a critical strategy with which to address *Fors Clavigera* involves moving away from an effort to interpret the "meaning" of the work as a whole. . . . With their interruptions and endless deferrals of conclusion . . . Ruskin's letters foreground the fact that they are anything but finished texts. . . . They dramatize what Ruskin saw as the inadequacy of conventional textual interventions in the changing England of the 1870s and 1880s.

"The following chapters elaborate the circumstances of that crisis and dramatize Ruskin's "humours" as deliberate performances. . . . By recreating the context of debate through art journals and working class periodicals, popular criticism, and intellectual history, I try to animate the sense of uncertainty and change in the period. Ruskin's periodical letters provide a special view of culture and politics in the 1870s and early 1880s. This book attempts to show how his cumulative text—published monthly over thirteen years—not only records but revises and redirects the preoccupations of the period. *Fors Clavigera* is more than a document by which we can understand what was involved in the culture wars of the late nineteenth century. With its experiments in form and perspective, its retreading of the boundaries between public and private experience, *Fors* exemplifies the vexed relations between textual and cultural politics. The ways in which those relations were negotiated by Ruskin and his contemporaries set the patterns for discussions of literature, history, and nationality in the new century" (21-22).

Thoms, Peter. *Detection and Its Designs: Narrative and Power in 19th-Century Detective Fiction*. Athens: Ohio UP, 1998. Pp. ix + 176. \$32.95. "This study argues that nineteenth-century detective fiction is an inherently self-reflexive form, which exposes simultaneously the constructedness of its narratives and the motives underlying their creation. For the inventors and earliest practitioners of detective fiction, narrative is not what *is*—an unproblematic mirroring of events—but what *is made*, and that process of construction becomes the very subject of these works. In this context, the detective functions as an authorial figure, attempting to uncover the story of the crime, and the 'case' becomes a story about making a story. Thus the resulting solution confronts us as an artifice, as an intelligible chain of narrative constructed from discovered information and, significantly, from other documents. Indeed, in the number and variety of texts that the fiction contains—letters, newspaper

excerpts, autobiographies, diary entries, reports, advertisements, handbills—we glimpse the very bricks of its structure, the linguistic pieces from which narrative and our apprehension of the *real* are assembled.

"As my title suggests, the *designs* of the detection are not only the neat patterns that investigation constructs, but also the motivations that guide these authorial projects. While the hunt for the criminal and his motives obviously provides a compelling structure for the new form, these early detective fictions become most interesting in the way that they turn back upon themselves to inspect the very motives that inspire the detectives and thus their findings. The detectives figurative writing emerges, I argue, out of a desire to exert control over others and sometimes (as in the fiction of Dickens and Collins in which detection becomes everyone's habit) over himself . . ." (1-2). Authors treated include William Godwin, Poe, Dickens, Collins, Doyle.

Tucker, Herbert F. ed. *A Companion to Victorian Literature and Culture*. Malden, MA & Oxford: Blackwell, 1999. Pp. xviii + 488. \$99.95. "This book has been planned to meet both short-term and long-range needs. To begin with, it is a reference work for consultation. . . . At every chapter's end, a list of capitalized CROSS REFERENCES indicates where else to turn in the book for an additional viewpoint or elaboration. Finally, the bibliographies that round off each chapter gesture beyond the covers of this book to hundreds of others recommended for further reading. . . .

". . . The *Victorian Literature and Culture* embraced by its title identifies a subject of vista so immense, and of crannies so multitudinous, that the student who means to confront that subject whole is likely to want, beyond mere information, the presence of an experienced guide. This long-range need has been anticipated in an overall plan linking the book's chapters into discrete parts, which the student may read in order to grasp, respectively the history of Victorian Britain (part one), the phases in a Victorian life (part two), the leading professions and careers that filled out the phase of mature adulthood (part three), the major Victorian literary genres (part four), and the limits Victorians recognized as defining their persons, their homes, and their national identities (part five). Within parts one, two, and five the editor has embraced as the organizing principle a linear narrative of development and expansion that is itself unabashedly Victorian; and the discerning reader will see how a like principle sustains the march of parts three and four, as they move from traditional cultural formations toward emergent ones" ([x]-xi). There are 29 chapters by 31 different authors, a general subject index and an index of Victorian authors.

Zangwill, Israel. *Children of the Ghetto: A Study of a Peculiar People*. Ed. and intro. Meri-Jane Rochelson. Detroit: Wayne State UP, 1998. Pp. 523. \$27.95 paper. The copy text for this "authoritative text" of the 1892 novel—the "first Anglo-Jewish best seller"—is the American Macmillan 1895 text, from which only obvious typographical errors have been corrected.

## Victorian Group News

### Announcements

The Research Society for Victorian Periodicals will hold its thirty-first annual meeting in New Haven, Connecticut on 17-18 September 1999. The conference will be co-hosted by the Sterling Memorial Library and the English Department of Yale University. Contact Linda H. Peterson, Department of English, P. O. Box 208302, Yale University, New Haven, CT 06520-8302. Fax: 203-432-7066.

The *Carlyle Studies Annual* is the preeminent scholarly periodical devoted to study of the works and lives of Thomas and Jane Welsh Carlyle and their circle, a circle that seems to have included just about everyone on the Victorian scene. Thus while we focus on the Carlyles, we also welcome contributions dealing with such figures as Emerson and Geraldine Jewsbury, or with such pertinent subjects as cultural studies and gender issues during the period.

CSA publishes articles, notes, special topics features, reviews, and an annual review of Carlyle scholarship. Contact Fleming McClelland, Associate Editor, *Carlyle Studies Annual*, Department of English 4240, Illinois State University, Normal, IL 61790-4240.

*The Henry James Review* is pleased to announce the inauguration of the annual Leon Edel Prize for the best essay on Henry James by a beginning scholar. The prize carries with it an award of \$150, and the prize-winning essay will be published in *HJR*. The competition is open to applicants who have not held a full-time academic appointment for more than four years. Independent scholars and graduate students are encouraged to apply. Essays should be 20-30 pages (including notes), original, and not under submission elsewhere or previously published. Please send contributions (submitted in duplicate, produced according to current MLA style, and with return postage enclosed) to Susan M. Griffin, Editor, *The Henry James Review*, Department of English, University of Louisville, Louisville, KY 40292 (email: hamesr@ulkyvm.louisville.edu). Identify essays as submissions for the Leon Edel Prize and include a brief curriculum vitae. Author's name should not appear on manuscript. Deadline: November 1, 1999.

**Call for Papers** *Morris 2000 Conference*, University of Toronto 22-25 June 2000. Following the centenary conference at Oxford in 1996 the William Morris Society of Canada is sponsoring the second quadrennial international conference to bring together scholars and students of Morris as an artist, writer, and socialist. The conference is taking place at the University of Toronto with accommodation at its downtown campus in the centre of the city.

Proposals for 20-25 minute papers on all aspects of Morris are welcomed. Proposals of 300-500 words and enquiries for further information should be mailed to David and Sheila Latham at 42 Belmont Street, Toronto, Ontario M5R 1P8, or emailed to dlatham@yorku.ca. The closing date for the submission or proposals is 30 September 1999.

### Notice

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