

Satirizing Habits in Victorian Fiction: Novelistic Satire, 1830s-1890s

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Abstract

This dissertation argues for a significant presence of satire within Victorian novels from the 1830s to the 1890s – the very decades in which many influential critics, from the early twentieth century to the present day, discern a marked, general decline in the practice of satire. As early as the eighteenth century, writers valued amiable humour over wit and satire; continuing this trend, countless Victorian writers and critics attempted (in David Worcester’s words) to “pus[h] satire into the dunce’s corner” (32). Nevertheless, regardless of their theoretic disavowal of satire, many novelists embraced, in their narrative practice, its mild Horatian, philosophical Menippean, and even stringent Juvenalian possibilities. Charlotte Brontë’s words to Elizabeth Gaskell may be applied to many Victorian writers: “‘Satirical you are – however; I believe a little more so than you think’” (*Letters* 3: 47).

Current studies of satire in the Victorian novel tend to restrict themselves to individual analyses of substantially satiric novels such as *Martin Chuzzlewit* or *The Way of All Flesh*; more generic assessments are deferred. In terms of broader engagements, Frank Palmeri’s view that satire is a form of writing that disappears “underground or into eclipse” (“Thackeray” 770) in the mid-Victorian period, only to emerge in the late decades of the period, is representative. In this dissertation, however, I demonstrate a distinctly Victorian satiric focus on society as the source of moral ills by identifying habit as a dominant, encyclopaedic subject of novelistic satire. The belief that human character is substantially a social creation is exemplified by George Henry Lewes’s observation:

“To understand the Human Mind we must study it under its normal conditions, and these are social conditions” (*PLMI* 128). As well, inspired by Athena Vrettos’s enterprising work on the prevalence of Victorian debates concerning habit and its relevance to psychological realism in terms of Dickens’s *Dombey and Son*, I trace the relations of culturally embedded discourses on habit to the period’s novelistic satire.

Satirists’ preoccupation with habit is strikingly illuminated by Mikhail Bakhtin’s social-formalist assessment of the novel’s steadfast roots in ancient serio-comical literature and Menippean satire – a dialogic form that defamiliarizes habit. Cultural systems – “all the *habitual matrices* [*sosedstva*] of things and ideas” – are exposed in “the menippea” through voracious parody of literary and non-literary genres, and through the “creation of ... unexpected connections” (*Dialogic* 169). Victorian novelists, I argue, continued the traditions of satire (as an evolving mode or genre) through an engagement with omnipresent theories of habit.

Although authoritative nineteenth-century discourses (both of natural science and of moral/social science) implicate habit in the forces of determinism, contradictory theories inveterately identify habit as a *locus* of moral hope (through habits of sympathy, self-control, free will, and free thought). I examine in detail the confluence of satire and this dual discourse of habit through close readings of canonical Victorian novels. The novels I discuss, from *Cranford* (1851-53) and *Silas Marner* (1861) to *The Way of All Flesh* (written between 1873 and 1884, published 1903) and *New Grub Street* (1891), demonstrate either Horatian optimism or Juvenalian cynicism with regard to habit as a source for good or ill. It is a trajectory encapsulated by Edward Bulwer-Lytton’s

transition from optimism and faith in habits of sympathy in *Pelham* (1828) to his cynicism concerning the assimilating powers of habit in *The Coming Race* (1871). Importantly, Dickens's novels of the 1850s and 60s, which target habit in "lines of blood and fire" (30) (to borrow James Hannay's epithet for Juvenalian satire), foreground the theoretical issues beleaguering satire's relations with the novel. The *satira* of *Bleak House* (1852-53), *Hard Times* (1854), and *Our Mutual Friend* (1864-65) is characterized by unrestrained metaphor that targets all forms of institutional (social) and individual (psychological) bad habits. Finally, I investigate misogynist theorizations of both satire and habit, by analyzing the satiric machinery of Charlotte Brontë's *Shirley* (1849) and George Eliot's *Middlemarch* (1871-72). With satiric irreverence, both novels pose a question that is crucial to historic and Victorian theories concerning female mental inferiority: "[D]o you seriously think all wisdom in the world is lodged in male skulls?" (Brontë, *S* 328).

Despite the era's ambivalence to satire, which I explore at length, Victorian novelists were profoundly engaged with its literary and social possibilities. Dissociating and dissenting from the "habitual matrices" of their culture, and engaging with complex moral discourses affirming the "familiar fact, the power of habit" (Mill, *Utilitarianism* 10: 238), novelists wrote philosophically probing and culturally critical Menippean, Horatian, and Juvenalian satire.

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List of Abbreviations**Bain, Alexander**

MS *Mental Science: A Compendium of Psychology, and the History of Philosophy*
S&I *The Senses and the Intellect*

Brontë, Charlotte

S *Shirley*

Bulwer-Lytton, Edward

CR *The Coming Race*
P *Pelham*

Butler, Samuel

WAF *The Way of All Flesh*

Carlyle, Thomas

SR *Sartor Resartus*

Dickens, Charles

BH *Bleak House*
HT *Hard Times*
MC *Martin Chuzzlewit*
OMF *Our Mutual Friend*

Eliot, George

AB *Adam Bede*
M *Middlemarch*
SM *Silas Marner*

Gaskell, Elizabeth

C *Cranford*

Gissing, George

CD Charles Dickens: A Critical Study
NGS New Grub Street

Lewes, George Henry

PLM1 Problems of Life and Mind, First Series: The Foundation of a Creed. Vol. 1.
PLM3 Problems of Life and Mind, Third Series. Vol. 2.

Mill, John Stuart

A Autobiography
ACP Auguste Comte and Positivism
SL A System of Logic
SW The Subjection of Women

Ruskin, John

MP Modern Painters
SL Sesame and Lilies

Spencer, Herbert

PP The Principles of Psychology

Satirizing Habits in Victorian Fiction: Novelistic Satire, 1830s-1890s

Introduction

To laugh with Juvenal or with Swift is to feel more of a bitter malignity than of gaiety. (Sully, *An Essay on Laughter* 381)

So true is it that unnatural generally means only uncustomary, and that everything which is usual appears natural. (J. S. Mill, *The Subjection of Women* 21: 270)

Satire theory, an embattled subject from the second century BCE to the present, is a literary Dark Tower where errant theorists repeatedly encounter failed generic claims. Genre-based assessments of satire lead to such precarious totalizations that one must begin by asserting the historical parameters within which to wage even a limited theoretical campaign. The canonical “Ages of Satire” in Western literature are Ancient Rome of the first and second century BCE – affirmed by Quintilian’s claim, “*satira quidem tota nostra est*” (Satire, at any rate/if nothing else is totally ours) (qtd. in Freudenburg, “Intro” 2) – and the period between 1660-1830, with satire being the dominant mode of Augustan literature until 1750 (Rawson x). Critics are habituated to the notion that the novel of sentimental, comic realism engulfed satire, if not by the 1760s then certainly by the 1830s. After this date, it is customary to say, satire as a verifiable genre with distinct formal properties became extinct. Satire is reported to have lingered in the novel – yet not very prominently in the Victorian novel – as a tone, attitude,

perception, or “negative critical element” (Muecke 34) that has been assigned the term *mode*. Michael Seidel speaks for many critics when he argues, following Northrop Frye, that “satire” became “a mode rather than... a generically fixed form” (xii).¹ Further complicating matters is the notion that formal Roman verse satire (in dactylic hexameters, originated by Lucilius and continued by Horace, Persius, and Juvenal) is widely considered the exclusive generic form of satire. Yet this view not only overshadows satire’s earlier modal incarnations in the vast system of Greek genres (satyr plays, Old Comedy, Stoic diatribe, etc.), but obviates the fact that formal Roman satire, even as Lucilius practiced it, was a “very loose set of formal and thematic characteristics” (Muecke 34). Lucilius, who refers to his work as “something thrown together,” did not settle upon the epic-evoking hexameter for his poetic discourse until his thirtieth satire (Muecke 34, 39). Acknowledging this heterogeneity, Alastair Fowler states that satire is the “most problematic mode to the taxonomist, since it appears never to have corresponded to any one kind” (110). Fittingly, from ancient practitioners such as Juvenal, to contemporary critics, it is customary to refer to satire as a cornucopia or hodge-podge. Etymologically, satire, from the Latin *satira*, specifically the *lanx satira*, a “mixed” or “full platter” (Griffin 6), is linked to concepts of multiplicity. For Quintilian, satire is a “specific set of generic enterprises totaling two in number, formal verse satire and the prosimetric or Menippean satire” (Freudenburg, *Roman Satire* 21) – reputedly a genre first developed by the third century BCE Greek Cynic Menippus (Relihan 109). Although satire’s status as a genre is “cloudy at best” (Guilhamet ix), Leon Guilhamet asserts that, at the very least, all satire (formal verse and Menippean satire) involves the

mixing of forms; he therefore encourages the abandonment of “superficial” divisions between prose and poetry (7-11). Increasingly, it becomes clear that in light of its varied forms, satire eludes overly-narrow formal or structural categorization. Yet, given that satire has been evaluated consistently in its Greek and Roman incarnations (and beyond) as being “an instrument of reform in the battle against human vice or sin,” akin to moral philosophy (Hendrickson 40), the ethical positioning of thematic elements seems to play a larger role in the identification of satire than stable structural components.

Another taxonomically fugitive genre that is similarly (as Freudenberg describes satire) “loose in its habits” (“Intro” 14), is the novel. David Duff explains that the ascendancy of the novel unsettled notions of static generic categories and contributed to an increasing awareness of the historical and evolutionary determination of genres (Duff 4-5). Mikhail M. Bakhtin’s sociology of genre (which I discuss in detail in Chapter 1), posits the novel’s key structural principle as being its receptiveness to literary and non-literary genres. Importantly, shifts in ideologically-encoded subject matter attend the novel’s orchestration or mixing of multiple genres. Similarly, satire, as Guilhamet argues, is a genre whose definitive structural attribute is also generic hybridization. In this dissertation, I hold that satire, predominantly as a mode, but also as a genre in the broadest sense (in that it mixes genres and has a moral/critical function), is a larger presence in the Victorian novel than has been traditionally accepted. My study examines the confluence of satire and the novel from the 1830s (the approximate date at which satire is reputed to be substantially subsumed by the novel) to the 1890s (when satire is considered to be reinstated).

James Sutherland's view (in 1962) that the English Romantic poets except Byron "left satire alone," and that "Samuel Butler is the singular satirist of the period" (15, 161), typifies the New Critical stance towards the fate of satire in the Victorian period. Richard Garnett is similarly dismissive: "In no age was the spirit of satire so generally diffused as in the 19th century"; so diffuse, in fact, that the term satirist cannot be "properly applied" to Dickens, Eliot, or Trollope (4). The claim that the nineteenth century did not provide "a congenial atmosphere" for satire and that the average Victorian reader thought of satire as a low, bullying and unsympathetic genre (Sutherland 77, 102) accords with the thesis of Stuart Tave's *The Amiable Humourist* (1960), and is most influentially articulated by Ronald Paulson's *Fictions of Satire* (1967) and its companion study *Satire and the Novel in Eighteenth-Century England* (1967), which chart eighteenth- and nineteenth-century controversies over the propriety of satire and the "eclipse" of the satirist by the (more sentimental) novelist.² In the Victorian novel, according to Paulson, satire is incidental. In terms of critical assessments, surprisingly little has changed since the dismissive consensus of the 1950s and 1960s.

Redressing New Critical oversights regarding early nineteenth-century satire, Gary Dyer's 1997 study of Romantic verse and prose satire from 1789 to 1832 attends to works neglected by scholars who are "satisfied that satire disappeared in the eighteenth century" (1). He, along with Steven E. Jones, views satire as a kind of generic "Other" against which Romanticism was defined. Yet even to critics interested in problematizing straightforward claims about satire's decline in the early nineteenth century, the Victorian period (particularly its middle decades) appears to many critics to be a kind of non-

negotiable frontier for satire. Dyer, for example, reiterates that satire necessarily petered out in its distinct verse and prose incarnations after the 1820s and 30s, having been consumed by “predominantly non-satiric genres” like the realist novel (14, 139). Echoing Sutherland’s earlier claim, Dyer posits that after Byron’s death, satire became “a moribund literary mode,” a mode which is increasingly cast aside as an “obsolete remnant of crueler ages” (127, 142). By contrast, scholars interested in the relations of satire to the novel, most notably Bakhtin, turn to prose-accommodating Menippean satire for a generic precedent – a lineage that Dryden (following Quintilian) views as being distinct from Roman formal verse satire in its sheer variety of subject, erudition, and invention (K. Combe 2). For Bakhtin, this form, along with the Socratic dialogue, constitutes the generic roots of the novel. In brief, Menippean satire (renamed the “menippea”) involves discursive intellectual satire steeped in colloquy, often with fantastical journeys and inconsistent characters who are essentially mouthpieces for the competing ideologies of the day (Bakhtin, *Dostoevsky* 108-114). Similarly, Northrop Frye finds that although the novel focuses on human relationships and character, while Menippean satire or “Anatomy” (as he renames it) mainly dissects erudition, the two merged to produce hybrids (*Anatomy* 311-12). Yet, Dyer, among others, maintains not only that Menippean satire loses ground to the realistic novel in the eighteenth century, but that the inclusiveness of this form of satire makes its generic boundaries within the novel too hard to delineate (18-19). Thus, the divided, ambivalent state of prose satire theory and criticism, particularly with regard to claims about Menippean satire (both in ancient and modern texts), contributes to a widespread retreat from sustained engagement

with satire's intersections with the novel in general – and specifically, for the purposes of this dissertation, the Victorian novel.³

Recently, Frank Palmeri reaffirms the consensus that the Victorians were simply too prudish for satire. Resolutely, he claims that by 1850, satire had been eclipsed by other forms. Prose satire continued via the Menippean satires of Thomas Love Peacock and Thomas Carlyle's *Sartor Resartus* (1833-4), but by the end of the 1840s satire had become "unavailable as a free-standing genre" (Palmeri, "Thackeray" 753). Palmeri, like Dyer, refuses to follow the Menippean genre into the territory of the novel; his thesis accords with Robert B. Martin's earlier argument that influential interpretations of wit by William Thackeray, George Eliot, and Thomas Carlyle, as something mean-spirited, produced a preference for genial, sentimental humour until the latter years of the century. Palmeri's conclusion concerning satire's mid-Victorian disappearance is based upon a precise definition of narrative satire as a genre that critiques extreme positions and has no interest in the middle ground; he places satire in opposition to "accommodating" genres such as the comic realist novel or the historical novel, which depend on closure and do not emphasize satiric irony or parody (*Satire, History* 11-12). From the 1840s to the 1870s, he argues, the non-satiric form dominates, and not till later in the century does "satire again undercu[t] respectable, middle-class pieties and middle grounds" ("Thackeray" 772). Palmeri's brief assessment of the relationship of Dickens's novels to satire, however, reveals the limits of his theory with regard to Victorian satiric practice. In this dissertation, I challenge his claim that, despite a return by the late 1880s, satire "played almost exclusively a subordinate and episodic role beginning in the 1840s"

("Narrative Satire" 361). As well, I contest the notion that Dickens's novels of the 1850s and 1860s are not "primarily concerned with satiric critique of institutions or dominant ideologies," however "dark" in "tone" (Palmeri, "Thackeray" 772). Instead, I propose that Victorian novelists, often operating against their own professed views of satire, are as much satirists as realists. Novels by Charles Dickens, George Eliot, Charlotte Brontë, and others have substantial, rather than merely incidental or subordinate, satirical aims and elements. Disorientation resulting from satire's increasing generic turbulence as it interacted with the novel, combined with notions of its ostensible relegation (by prominent Victorian writers) to the realm of impropriety, have generated the current critical neglect of actual nineteenth-century satiric practices.

Admiration about the social and moral function of the novel complements the goal (as stated in the programmatic satires) of Roman and Augustan verse satirists: to condemn and correct vice and folly. Satire, a genre founded upon ethics, is readily adaptable to Eliot's realist project (and that of many other Victorian writers): "If Art does not enlarge men's sympathies it does nothing morally" (letter to Charles Bray, 5 July 1859; *Letters* 3: 475). In order to expose recurrent social, cultural, and religious injustices, Victorian novelists recuperated and redefined classical traditions of satire, including the Horatian, Juvenalian, and Menippean.⁴

The techniques and socio-political targets of authors conventionally viewed as satirists – Anthony Trollope, William Thackeray, and Charles Dickens – have been the subject of individual scholarly attention; however, such scholarship has done little to unsettle dominant claims about Victorian realism. In the interest of critical efforts to

categorize the limitations of realism, satire has been sidelined. For example, notions of the “classic realist” text’s tendency towards closure and self-consistent characterizations preclude its generic connections with satire. Lynn Pykett argues that the non-realistic dimensions (such as the fantastic and the Gothic) of canonic Victorian novels undercut the current critical consensus regarding the “hegemony of realism” (192). Pykett’s argument is in keeping with Bakhtin’s insistence that critics avoid the “philistine habit” (*Dialogic* 420) of reading texts monologically. Satire exists in a complex relationship with realism, and its presence in nineteenth-century literature, as Bakhtin and Frye suggest, is pervasive. As of yet, however, satiric modes in the Victorian novel have received little attention as narrative features disrupting claims about realism. In this study, I do not propose a comprehensive taxonomy of Victorian novelistic satire, but instead investigate the complex relationship of representative novels to satire. Far from being incidental, satire is intrinsic to the figurative and structural mechanics of many canonical Victorian texts.

To balance Dyer’s work on early-nineteenth-century satire, a number of literary studies of *fin de siècle* satire have emerged – especially with the resurgence of interest in parody.⁵ Surprisingly, however, more than eight decades have elapsed since Frances T. Russell’s *Satire in the Victorian Novel* (1920) determines the “proportion” of satire in a “baker’s dozen” of Victorian novelists.⁶ Her pioneering work is an effort to balance the “bad reputation” of Victorians for sentimental status-quoism. Importantly, though, she concedes that as realism was “having its day,” it dominated the satiric aspect of the Victorian novel (83). Recently, Aaron Matz re-examines the relationship between late-

Victorian realism and satire, arguing that the two modes “merged inexorably and indistinguishably into one another” (“Satire” 3). Matz situates George Eliot as a key transitional figure, through whom strands of Augustan satire connect to the grim realism of Gissing and Hardy. Thus, Matz’s thesis maintains the Tavean trajectory that postulates a return to satire (harsher forms of wit) and a movement away from amiable humour in the final decades of the Victorian period. Despite his inclusion of Eliot’s satire *Theophrastus Such* (1879), Matz sketches a history and theory of late Victorian realism, therefore bypassing such writers as Dickens, Gaskell, and Brontë. As well, rather than engaging Horatian and Juvenalian modalities or theories of Menippean satire and the novel, Matz attempts “a history of realism, not of satire” (“Satire” iv). There remains a need for a wide-ranging study that surveys the works of satiric novelists dating from the 1830s to the 1890s in conjunction with an evaluation of the deployment of satire as an ascendant mode, or even a genre-constituting component, of the mid-Victorian novel. As well, Russell’s conclusion that, as a result of the forces of democracy and science, there is a shift in the central targets of Victorian satire from the individual to the “collective shoulders of society” (315), is a tentative but resonant insight into a distinctive target of Victorian satires, which requires further substantiation. My goal is to demonstrate that Victorian satirists extended the generic possibilities of satire through an engagement with culturally omnipresent theories of *habit* – theories produced by the various discourses of physical and social science. These culture-suffusing discourses represent habit as being central to the formation and function of both the moral individual and the healthy social organism; as such, they become central to the period’s novelistic satire. One key problem

that Gary Dyer encounters in categorizing the vast realm of fictional prose satire is its plethora of satiric targets. He discounts the possibility of locating targets multivalent enough to offer anything but dubious illumination (Dyer 19). In opposition to this claim, I argue for the constructiveness of locating and assessing a manifold thematic, such as habit – a revealingly pervasive and paradoxical subject of satiric inquiry – for an evaluation of Victorian satiric practices. Importantly, I posit that the conventional modal binary of Horatian and Juvenalian, and the category of Menippean satire (a generic last resort for those wishing to extend satire theory to the novel), remain productive traditions in Victorian novelistic satire. I correlate two crucial aspects of the Victorian novel: its modes of satire, and its engagement with then-contemporary debates – scientific, philosophical, political, and economic – concerning the function of habit. Such a study, I hope, will not only produce a fuller understanding of the Victorian contribution to novelistic satire, but also illuminate the catholicity and complexity of nineteenth-century discourses of habit.

My argument about the relevance of habit to satire is particularly indebted to Athena Vrettos's landmark essay, "Defining Habits: Dickens and the Psychology of Repetition," which situates *Dombey and Son* within the context of Victorian sociological and psychological debates surrounding habit and its effect on individual agency and society as a whole. Vrettos examines habit as a culturally entrenched, multivalent, and rigorously debated strain of Victorian philosophical, psychological, social, economic, literary, and popular discourses. Alluding to the works of G. H. Lewes, J. S. Mill, James Sully, William Carpenter, Henry Maudsley, Alexander Bain, William James, and many

others, she emphasizes that although habit was praised for its role in conserving energy (for learning and elevated productivity), its pathological and dehumanizing potential was also feared (399-400). Debates centre on the question of whether habits are indicative of individuality or mechanization; writers on habit question its role in individual and social reformation (Vrettos 401-406). Locating Dickens's position in the debate, Vrettos finds *Dombey and Son* to be a complex meditation on habit, which ultimately identifies habit as the "central psychological cause of the deadening of humanity in industrial culture" (418). Vrettos's aim is to provide a wider historical context within which to assess Dickensian characterization and elucidate the links between discourses of habit and developments in nineteenth-century psychological realism. In addition to this important historicizing and generic work, I examine Victorian discourses on habit in the context of satire.⁷ As Brian Connery and Kirk Combe assert, "satire can only gain from the resurgence of historicism" (11).

In his recent study of the competing discourses within physiological psychology, Rick Rylance notes "the generalist nature of Victorian intellectual culture" (1). Previously, Gillian Beer remarked that in the mid-nineteenth century, "scientists habitually infused their sentences with literary allusion" (*Open Fields* 174); additionally, Jenny Bourne Taylor and Sally Shuttleworth observe the "overwhelming connection between Victorian fictional narratives and mental science in the nineteenth century" (xiii). As well, influenced by Michel Foucault's view of the nineteenth century as a period that witnessed new paradigms of regulation and control of the individual subject, Shuttleworth observes Victorian ideologies of self-control as they circulate in the fiction

of Charlotte Brontë and George Eliot; their fiction “actively encodes,” subverts, and contributes to “the language and *preoccupations* of mid-nineteenth-century social, psychological and economic thought” (*Eliot* 2). The positivist philosophy of Auguste Comte suggested that laws governing physiological life could govern social life; such organicist notions of science as a source for morality suffused the intellectual and popular spheres (Shuttleworth, *Eliot* 6). The creed of self-improvement, Walter E. Houghton observes, “went beyond church walls” and won over secularists (238). Intellectual radicalism, having been accused of depleting moral life with agnosticism, was especially invested in moral notions of self-improvement (Houghton 239). J. S. Mill, for example, in *Auguste Comte and Positivism* (1865), declares the “moral rule prescribed by the religion of Humanity” to be the formation of the “habit” of “positive virtue” (10: 339). Alongside a scientific model of self-development, economic ideologies of the free agent of laissez-faire capitalism spread in a growing body of literature on the value of self-control – the habit of which became the “sacrosanct principle of Victorian culture” (Shuttleworth, *Eliot* 4-5, 23). For multiple overlapping discourses, habit is a double-edged mechanism of self- (and social) amelioration or demise; accordingly, it is offered both as a cause of social ills worthy of satire or, under what Arnold would call “right reason” and regulation, it is offered as anodyne.

My study of Victorian novelistic satires on habit is articulated from a theoretical position which draws substantially upon Bakhtin's sociological theory of the novel. For Bakhtin, the novel, specifically the nineteenth-century serio-comic novel, is an inherently parodic, multi-voiced, Menippean-inflected genre; it is invested in “laying bare any sort

of conventionality” (Holquist 162). Interestingly, Bakhtin’s view of parodic, Menippean discourse is redolent of Walter Pater’s view of the “genuine humourist” in his discussion of Charles Lamb in *Appreciations* (1889). Pater proposes that the humourist is gifted with a “purged sort of vision” that sees the present generation with the eyes of the future generation and can view the relationship of human nature to custom or “external habit” (176). Both critics regard comedic genres as existing to anatomize intellectual creeds and social values that have become habitual. Bakhtin’s notion of Menippean satire as an “ideational” form that poses “ultimate questions” and is highly syncretic (*Dostoevsky* 115) corroborates Frye’s non-sociological understanding of Menippean satire as a heterogeneous genre that merged with the novel but “deals less with people than it does mental attitudes” (*Anatomy* 309). For Bakhtin, laughter is a necessary ingredient in subversive discourses which aim to demolish the “*habitual matrices*” (*sosestva*) of both literature and society (*Discourse* 169).⁸ “Negative” or Juvenalian satire, he holds, is too atomizing and nihilistic, unlike the comprehensive, regenerative critique of the carnivalesque. Importantly, however, Frye’s acceptance of negative satire permits a continuation of satire’s links with Juvenalian satire, which “produc[es] an elevated, tragic, confronting rather than conciliating kind of [text]. ...its tones will protest decay rather than affirm growth – offering attack more pointed and less forgiving” (Weinbrot, *Alexander Pope* xv). Satire, particularly in its vituperative Juvenalian mode, criticizes society’s power structures; its ironies, more than eliciting laughter, function like “intellectual tear gas” (Frye, “Nature” 82), offering only a perverse form of catharsis. Drawing on the theories of Frye and Bakhtin, I shall attempt to illuminate (at least with

regard to Victorian novelistic satire) a central problem perplexing theorists of satire: If satire is inherently conservative, as some have argued, then why is it perennially subject to censorship by the official culture?⁹

Satire's disciplinarian function is frequently misread as being inherently conservative, for arguably, satire often operates as a "site of resistance to cultural and political hegemony" (Connery and Combe 11), uncovering spaces of dissension from dominant ideology within a given culture. Dustin Griffin repudiates the critical consensus that ancient and Augustan satire are "monologic" in their moral discourse, arguing that satire generally operates subversively as a rhetoric of inquiry, provocation, and paradox (37); this recalls (despite Griffin's reservations about Bakhtin's theory of "the menippea") Bakhtin's idea of the novel as "plasticity itself" (*Dialogic* 39). It is a taxonomically elusive genre, like satire, that is ever questing, ever examining itself and subjecting its established forms to review" (*Dialogic* 39). Influenced by such insights, I argue that Victorian satires on habit reveal satire's pluralistic possibilities while affirming Frye's definition: wit or humour and a target grounded in moral criticism ("Nature" 78). Narratives satirizing habit, I argue, expose prevailing ethics to be little more than codified habit – recalling that ethics derives from the Greek word *ethos*, which invokes simultaneously "custom" or "character," as a "collection of habitual characteristics" (Booth, *Company* 8). Rather than augment cultural norms, such narratives tend to defamiliarize dominant ideology by revealing its reliance on the forces of habit. Habit, like ideology, often operates unconsciously within the individual. Satire and associationist theory have in common (as Rylance observes of associationism) "the

potential to develop a social critique of ideological conditioning” (61). The Victorian anatomization of habit, in many of its Horatian, Juvenalian, and Menippean incarnations, tends to sneak past the conservative, moralistic cant of bourgeois ideology. Conversely, this satire (in even its milder modes) promotes a sociological, more than essentialist, conception of human nature, which transcends Puritan morality – or what Matthew Arnold called Hebraising “stock notions and habits” (*Culture* 6). Instead of engaging in priestly moralizing, such satire takes aim at socially constructed humanity. Satire’s license for transgression is a benefit likely gleaned from the habitual blindness of its subjects; as Swift explains, “Satire is a sort of glass, wherein beholders do generally discover everybody’s face but their own” (Preface, *The Battle of the Books* [1697] 1).

Chapter 1 briefly outlines satiric theory from Horace’s *Apology* in Satire 1 to John Dryden’s *A Discourse Concerning the Original and Progress of a Satire* (1693) – an influential articulation of the differences between Horatian and Juvenalian satire. The eighteenth-century popularity of Horace – despite the abundance of harsh satire – continued well into the nineteenth century. Typically, Victorian satire is neglected by critics who view realism as being monolithic, and who have, it seems, taken at their word protestations against satire by nineteenth-century writers such as Thomas Carlyle, Matthew Arnold, and John Ruskin. Many of the period’s key novelists (including William Thackeray and Anthony Trollope) and leading literary critics, though attracted to satire’s moral function, resisted what they perceived to be its inherent tendency towards untruthfulness, injustice, and lack of sympathy. Satire, especially Juvenalian satire, appeared inimical to the project of moral realism. Horatian satire, as it exhibited

sympathy and moderation, remained esteemed by writers who otherwise were wary of what they regarded as the “bitter malignity” (Sully, *Laughter* 381) of Juvenalian satire. Trollope, for example, defends his idea of the novel as a delightful sermon (with the support of many quotations from Horace), renouncing the indignant exaggerations of stronger satire. Although Victorian novelists often express a preference for kind humour over satire, satire is nonetheless ubiquitously enacted in the period’s novelistic discourse. I argue that the persistence of satire in the Victorian period is best revealed through the lens of both Menippean traditions and the Horatian/Juvenalian dichotomy (an antimony that signals the degree of subversive positioning in a given text). Classical forms and modalities of satire remain valid models for analyzing the critical and satiric arguments of Victorian novels.

As well, in Chapter 1, I summarize the large-scale generic pronouncements of the theorists of the 1950s and 1960s (Alvin Kernan, Edward Rosenheim, and others) and relate these to current discussions of satire’s instability as a genre. Additionally, I trace a common irony in theories of the infamously protean mode or genre: critics repeatedly disavow intentions to suggest taxonomies for such a fluid, even pre-generic “mode,” but proceed to make claims about the essential nature of satire. For example satire, for Rosenheim, “laboured unnecessarily” (306) under formal analysis; as satire is not strictly a “form,” it can be a matter of brief moments in another “species of writing.” Yet Rosenheim proceeds to offer a definitive feature of “satiric presence”: satire “consists of an attack by means of a manifest fiction upon discernible historic particulars” (323). Next I investigate satire’s relationship to the novel in general (Frye, Paulson, Bakhtin, Knight,

and Palmeri) and to the Victorian “classic-realist” text in particular, focusing on debates about the Menippean tradition and its complex relation to the novel. My insistence that Victorian novelistic satire is best illuminated in terms of an overarching target such as habit preserves a generic constant of satire: the subject of attack (a particular human trait or institution); it also foregrounds the fact that traditions of the realist novel are inextricable from those of satire. As Paulson concludes, satire survives in the novel as the “pointing finger that directs the reader back into the real world” (*Satire* 310).

In *Tristram Shandy* (1759-67), Laurence Sterne studies “man” as a “creature born to habitudes” (354); he locates “hobbyhorsical” and habitual absurdity primarily in human physical nature (the animal humours), not in the social organism. Victorian satires continue what Paulson terms the “satiric realism” of eighteenth-century novels, adding a greater sociological emphasis on the phenomenon of habituation. Chapter 2 therefore outlines the various and often paradoxical Victorian discourses (scientific, moral, and economic) that inform (and were informed by) the literary understanding of habit. I focus on notions of habit generated by the “heterogeneous discursive framework” of emergent psychological theory (Rylance 147). Associationist philosophies – traceable to Aristotle and developed by John Locke – held that the mind spontaneously links chains of thought. In the eighteenth century, David Hartley consolidates this notion with a biological argument in *Observations on Man, his Frame, his Duty and Expectation* (1749) that states that the repetition of associations creates physical channels in the brain’s nerves. Victorian physiological physiologists (such as Herbert Spencer, William B. Carpenter, Alexander Bain, and George Henry Lewes), following Locke and Hume, emphasize

associative notions of impression: the brain and nerves are inscribed by channels or pathways of thought made almost indelible by habit. Habit is increasingly represented in terms of evolutionary biology, as a product of social practices that have become instinctive. Charles Darwin, for example, finds support for agnosticism in his certainty that unnatural, “inculcated beliefs” are transmitted in an “inherited effect” (*Autobiographies* 54). I argue that William James’s theories of habit, which emphasize its physicality and its centrality to education and to self- and social control, encapsulate dominant Victorian discourses of habit. Crucially, James argues, like Carpenter, Bain, Spencer, and Mill before him, for the potency of the human will in the formation not only of habits of self-control and sympathy, but also of anti-habitual habits of thought and action which underpin human rationality, free will, and morality; implicitly, such habits enable the cultural criticisms of satire.

Habit also becomes an important site of resistance to what John Ruskin disparagingly calls “Economic man” – an automaton created by the soullessness of habitual money-getting in an emergent capitalist economy. The human propensity to form habits is a concept central to the social, political, and aesthetic thought of Carlyle and Ruskin. Furthermore, competing and intermingling economic and scientific discourses on habit inform the popular discourses of self- and social control epitomized by Samuel Smiles’s bestseller *Self-Help* (1859). I conclude Chapter 2 with a brief assessment of Victorian discussions of the relationship of habit to social custom, evaluating the importance of a dual notion of habit to John Stuart Mill’s social and political ideas,

particularly his ethological belief that character is freely determined and that, like individuals, socio-political institutions need not be habit-bound.

Joining the various scientific, philosophical, and economic discussions of habit, the period's novelistic satire also investigates habit as the driving force of human psychology and society. With varying degrees of Horatian and Juvenalian positioning, many Victorian novelists aligned themselves with Thomas Carlyle in protesting the worship of mechanism and in the recognition that "[h]abit is the deepest law of human nature. It is our supreme strength; if also, in certain circumstances, our miserablest weakness" (*Past and Present* 1843; 126) – a notion that finds full satiric expression in *Sartor Resartus* (1833-34), a Menippean anatomy of British habit. Chapter 3 investigates the paradoxical nature of many satires on habit and offers readings of exemplary texts that demonstrate a general shift in the period from Horatian (genial, non-anarchical) hope in amelioration to Juvenalian (pessimistic, rebellious) disillusionment. I illustrate this trend through a reading of Edward Bulwer-Lytton's earlier novel *Pelham* (1828), which promotes habits of sympathy, in contrast to his vitriolic satire on habit in *The Coming Race* (1871). This anti-utopian satire reflects Bulwer-Lytton's alteration in political thought since his radical idealism of the 1820s and 1830s. Christopher Lane convincingly argues that this text finds "social acrimony" to be humanity's inescapably definitive social state (55). Similar to Bulwer-Lytton's earlier work, however, novels by Gaskell and Eliot emphasize the reformative power of "good" habits and the possibility of individual and social regeneration through the habit of sympathy. Elizabeth Gaskell's *Cranford* (1851-53) offers an anatomy of habits of gentility that is subtly Menippean. As

well, the text partakes of the self-inclusive Horatian tradition, as its narrator playfully criticizes the collective “bad” habit of Cranford: insidiously unsympathetic obsession with “genteel economy” (C 8) and comportment. Unbending, ritualistic adherence to rules of propriety and an overarching policy of no change is the ethos of the provincial town. Similarly, George Eliot’s *Silas Marner* (1861) is a formally multifaceted Menippean text that is distinctly Horatian in its sympathy and optimism. To anatomize “our own egoism” (SM 75), the narrator/social critic surveys an insular town in which parochial habits create a somnambulant mental and moral atmosphere. Silas Marner, the text’s central figure of antisocial habit (and a study in the physiological psychology of non-materialistic miserliness), reforms into a “healthful state of association” (1802 Preface to *Lyrical Ballads* 42) – the Wordsworthian bedrock of social harmony. Overall, *Cranford* and *Silas Marner*, as exemplary Horatian and Menippean satires, remonstrate against morally and socially destructive habits, while promoting the role of habitual sympathy in social cohesion and eventual reform.

Horatian satires expose social excess, and end with what Paulson describes as the conservative “solution of the golden mean, the educated man, and the happy life” (*Fictions* 58). Juvenalian satires, on the other hand, identify immovable habits of egotism and the blind adherence to custom as recalcitrant causes of society’s moral insolvency. Turning to texts that are Juvenalian in their skepticism about the redemptive possibility of habit, I assess Samuel Butler’s *The Way of All Flesh* (written between 1873 and 1884, published 1903) and George Gissing’s *New Grub Street* (1891) as satires that outline the dehumanizing effect of what Butler calls the “inveteracy of habit” (*Notebooks* 187),

specifically the inveteracy of automatic assent to dominant ideology. Both texts are inflected with Juvenalian dissent and pessimism; thus, they emphasize the tragic effects of social constraint.¹⁰ Also demonstrating that Juvenalian satire is more certain than Horatian satire of the moral bankruptcy of habit and custom, *The Way of All Flesh* advocates the habit of free-thinking, but is doubtful about the possibility of acquiring such a rarefied practice. Butler's novel demythologizes Protestant bourgeois morality, along with other habitual matrices of received thought, but reveals that a counter-system of physiological determinism, due to the indomitability of habit, offers little in the way of general social redemption. Similarly, *New Grub Street* anatomizes English society in a manner that is redolent of Frye's sixth level of satire, which "presents human life in terms of largely unrelieved bondage" (*Anatomy* 162). The commercialized landscape of this "realist" text is as despotically inescapable as any fantastic dystopia; its despairing protagonists engage in constant, but fruitless, Menippean colloquy – as seedy habits cannot be refashioned. I argue that Gissing targets habit as an amoral force killing artistic and moral imagination, both in literature and in life.

Although critics are generally uncertain of Dickens's intellectual qualifications, resist the commingling of satire and the novel (a mixture promoted by Dickens in his prefaces), and continue to disavow the magnitude of his engagement with satiric traditions, Chapter 4 explores Dickens's "extreme habit of satire" (Chesterton, *Chesterton on Dickens* 96). Given that Dickens's satire on habit becomes increasingly Juvenalian, and therefore extravagant in its metaphors, I trace the cornucopia of recurring motifs delineating habits of perception in *Hard Times* (1854), *Bleak House* (1852-53), and *Our*

Mutual Friend (1864-65). Even Dickens's most overtly Menippean satire, *Hard Times* – an attack on Utilitarian philosophies – operates mainly through metaphoric criticism of habitual routine. Coketown's machines and Utilitarian reformers are represented as being equally monotonous and antithetical to humanity. *Bleak House*, steeped in political and social contemporaneity, satirizes the destructive ideologies and infrastructures which carve correspondingly pathological grooves in the individual mind. Despite its Horatian elements, the text's anatomy of habit (traceable in metaphors of illness, darkness, paralyzed gazes, and caged birds) reveals a "bitterly satirical truth" (BH 201) about the disabling tendencies of habit. In *Our Mutual Friend*, the inescapability of bad habit is represented primarily through a sequence of cannibalistic Juvenalian feasts, and through mirror imagery that reflects the precariousness of moral transformation in a solipsistic materialist society. Regardless of Dickens's personal politics – Andrew Sanders defines his politics as "no-nonsense, middle-class, middle-brow radicalism" (*Charles Dickens* 51) – his later novels evince, through their metaphorical condemnation of habit, a satirical irreverence for England's mechanisms of social control.

In Chapter 5, questions of genre are related to those of gender and habit. From Juvenal's sixth Satire to Jonathan Swift's expressions of animosity, satire contains a long tradition of misogyny. There remains, however, an astounding gap in satire theory regarding feminist satire, and Victorian novelistic feminist satire is no exception. For example, the expressly satiric machinery of novels such as *Shirley* (1849) and *Middlemarch* (1871-72) have been only cursorily examined. Keeping in mind that Victorian psychologists frequently ascribed to women, more than to men, the

mechanizing tendencies of habit, I explore Brontë's and Eliot's criticism of how patriarchal ideology exposes gendered identity as being largely habit-based. *Shirley* – written by Brontë in her determination to engage in social satire after the manner of Thackeray – explores, in frequently Menippean terms, the connections between literary, theological, and political habits of misogyny. Caroline Helstone's bitter social criticism results from the near-fatal *ennui* of being a vocationless middle-class woman. Through the liberating friendship between Caroline and her intellectual compeer, the Horatian Shirley Keeldar, *Shirley* satirizes and subverts masculinist social and literary custom. *Middlemarch* presents habitual adherence to codes of gender as a mentally and morally corrosive addiction, encouraged by the social medium. For Lydgate's sexism is culturally contracted: "he walked by hereditary habit" (*M* 327). The resiliently Horatian narrator, though self-inclusively attuned to the vanity of all human beings, in company with the text's internal satirists (Mary Garth and Mrs Cadwallader), is intent upon reforming enculturated masculine vanity.

Throughout the Victorian period, Horatian attempts to redeem habit by harnessing its power for the cultivation of sympathy were countered by Juvenalian satirists who predominantly assailed habit for its unsettling ability to naturalize custom into instinct. Bulwer-Lytton's disillusioned narrator of *The Coming Race* is informed by a Vrilyan: "We are all formed by custom – even the difference of our race from the savage is but the transmitted continuance of custom, which becomes, through hereditary descent, part and parcel of our nature" (*CR* 107). Compelled ethically by this alarming but liberating realization, and by the "familiar fact, the power of habit" (*Mill* 10: 238), Victorian

novelists wrote satire that was no less authentic in its deployment of satiric traditions, and no less exploratory, indignant, and subversive, than the celebrated satire of other periods in literary history.

Chapter 1

The Endless Defense: A Brief History of Satire Theory from Ancient Rome to the Twenty-First Century

[S]atire is problematic, open-ended, essayistic, ambiguous in its relationship to history, uncertain in its political effect, resistant to formal closure, more inclined to ask questions than to provide answers. (Dustin Griffin, *Satire: A Critical Reintroduction* 5)

[T]he Victorian reader was not particularly fond of satire, but in fact he got a good deal of it from his novelists. (James Sutherland, *English Satire* 123)

How did the critical commonplace emerge that Victoria's England was, in Humbert Wolfe's words, a "satiric desert" (134)? Satire's "deplorable decline" (Walker 279) in the nineteenth century has been lamented by early twentieth-century critics such as Chauncey C. Loomis and James Sutherland, and by twenty-first-century critics such as Frank Palmeri, who maintains that "narrative satire underwent a period of eclipse by other forms" ("Narrative Satire" 361).¹¹ My first task is to trace in brief the debate-filled, labyrinthine history of satire, both as a genre and as a mode, from ancient Greece and Rome to its reputed "golden age" in Augustan England, through to its dwindling presence in the Romantic period. After assessing the apologetic satires of its earliest practitioners, I focus on two pivotal articulations of satire theory: what C. A. Van Rooy names the Varro-Diomedes etymological definition, and John Dryden's influential definition in "A Discourse Concerning the Original and Progress of Satire" (1692), which consolidates and augments both ancient notions of the didactic function of satire, and the centuries-old comparison between Horatian satire (genial rebuke of folly and vice) and Juvenalian

satire (ireful declamation against vice). Both definitions emphasize satire's moral prerogative. A whirlwind summary of satire's etymology and genealogy is necessary to situate an exploration of the Victorian redeployment of ancient satire – Horatian, Juvenalian, and Menippean. As Mikhail Bakhtin observes, “the historical life of classic works is in fact the uninterrupted process of their social and ideological re-accentuation” (*Dialogic* 420). I suggest several key reasons (other than critical habit) for an entrenched bias against Victorian satire – specifically, novelistic satire. First, there has been a general acceptance that early nineteenth-century and Victorian comic theory offers a reliable litmus test of the period's satiric-novelistic practice. Second, the state of satire theory is, in general, turbulent; as Dustin Griffin argues, the theories of the 1950s and 1960s have not been easily updated – especially by critics who wish to complicate or (rather problematically) to purge satire's association with moralism. Another factor contributing to the persistent neglect of Victorian novelistic satire is the dominance (until recently) of monologic theories of “classic realism,” which occlude satirical elements from critical notice. As well, satire's interfusion with the equally multifarious genre of the novel is fraught with debates about generic and modal classifications. Discussions centre on Northrop Frye and Mikhail Bakhtin's universalizing claims about Menippean satire and the question of the applicability of their theories to such an all-engulfing genre as the novel. Many critics (for example, Gary Dyer) simply abandon the search for generic links between satire and the novel because they find it radically unclear where the demarcation between Menippean (or prose) satire and the novel can be made.

1.i Satire's Protean Reputation: Ancient, Elizabethan, and Augustan

Conceptions and Defenses of Satire

Repeatedly debated in studies of classical satire is the question of which author (if any) should be credited as the originator of satiric writing, and to what degree, or when (if ever), satire legitimately claims generic as opposed to modal status. It is a convention of critics of satire (extending to the twenty-first century) to complain of its generic ineffability while simultaneously endorsing a working definition of characteristic satiric form and content. The earliest grammarians and writers on satire debated its literary status, etymology, and the relative merits of its key practitioners. Kirk Freudenburg aptly observes that the definition of what satire is “has embarrassed professional scholars since antiquity”; it even befuddled the “ancient satirists themselves” (*Satires of Rome* 2). Typically, the adjectives “metamorphic” and “protean” are applied to satire (Kennedy 299). Even Marie Claire Randolph’s essay “The Structural Design of the Formal Verse Satire” (1942) – which argues for its rigorous bipartite structure – begins with an evocation of the mercurial nature of the “genus Satire”: “Fluid and elusive as mercury, the Satiric Spirit almost refuses to be bound by any rigid tenets but easily flows into and fuses itself (especially in periods when it encounters episcopal and legal opposition) with other essentially or even temporarily congenial genres” (171). Nonetheless, Randolph and others continue to participate in the ancient tradition of attempting to sort out satire’s wayward genealogy. “Puzzling and pontificating about satire” (Henderson 316) appears to be the perennial duty of satirists and critics alike.

C. A. Van Rooy's influential 1965 study of classical satire (an authority to which Dustin Griffin, Kirk Freudenburg, and other recent scholars constantly refer) explores the *locus classicus* for definitions of satire. Van Rooy posits that Diomedes, a fourth-century CE grammarian, drew on earlier sources in his *Ars Grammatica* for an etymological elucidation of satire. Diomedes's awareness of satire's reputation for multiplicity is partially gleaned from Marcus Terentius Varro (116-27 BCE), whose *De Compositione Saturarum* is not extant (Van Rooy 1-3). Van Rooy refers to the multivalent meaning of *satura* as the "Varro-Diomedes definition," which includes (in the order stipulated in the *Ars Grammatica*) several possible meanings for satire: either the notion that *satura* is derived from *satyroi* or *satyri* because it is a poem that is as unruly as the Greek satyr plays¹²; or that it derives from *satura* (the Latin feminine singular of *satus*, meaning full), which relates to the *lanx satura*, a platter full with a variety of fruits to be offered to the gods; or that *satura* is related to a kind of stuffing or *farcimen*; or finally, that it derives from the legal *satury* (one bill encompassing multiple provisions) (Van Rooy 1-17). In this summary of the varied meanings, satire's multiplicity is emphasized. Van Rooy translates Diomedes's influential definition of satire as follows: "*Satura* is the name of a verse composition amongst the Romans. At present certainly it is defamatory and composed to carp at human vices in the manner of the Old (Greek) Comedy: this type of satire was written by Lucilius, Horace, and Persius. Previously, however, *saturae* was the name of a composition in verse consisting of miscellaneous poems, such as Pacuvius and Ennius wrote" (xiii). The Roman poet Ennius (239-169 BCE) is credited with being the first to use word *satura* to mean literary medley; fittingly, his *Saturae* is a collection of

poems of varying forms and content (Van Rooy 19-20), which were modeled on Greek works (Freudenburg, "Intro" 2). Moreover, Van Rooy classifies Ennius's poems as satiric in the sense that they are moralizing; they mock "harmful types in society" (33).

Authoritative notions of satire's miscellaneousness and moral ethos derive from this ancient definition.

A century after Varro, Quintilian (c.35-c.96 CE), the Roman theorist of rhetoric, famously claims (in the tenth book of his *Institutio Oratoria*), "*satura quidem tota nostra est*" ("satire, at least/if nothing else is totally ours" [qtd. in Freudenburg, "Intro" 2]). His proclamation dismisses Ennius and ignores the influence of old Greek comedy (Muecke 33).¹³ As G. L. Hendrickson notes, Quintilian patriotically endorses a definition of satire as a special type of Roman literature created by Lucilius and fixed by a series of canonical writers (48). Hendrickson posits that Quintilian does not deny satire its status as a word denoting moral criticism (after the manner of Aristophanes), but wishes to assert that the Greeks did not create a fixed form for satiric expression. Indeed, satire as a mode is found in an assortment of Greek literary genres from iambic poetry to Cynic diatribe (Muecke 34).¹⁴ Quintilian not only downplays the influence of old Comedy to assert Roman satiric singularity, but, Griffin adds, he sidelines another Greek satiric form, Menippean satire (9). Although the Greek cynic Menippus's satire (characterized by its mixture of prose and verse) has vanished, its generic possibilities were carried forward by his Roman imitator, Varro, who wrote one hundred and fifty books of *Saturae Menippeae* (Van Rooy 55-6). Hendrickson, with Van Rooy, regards satire in all its Greek and Roman versions "as an instrument of reform in the battle against human vice and sin"

(Hendrickson 40)—akin to moral philosophy. Griffin posits that Diomedes’s definition of satire led to an emphasis on satire’s moral function that “dominates satiric theory from the Renaissance into the mid-twentieth century” (10). In essentially all of its etymological, generic, and modal incarnations, therefore, satire is associated with miscellany and moral criticism.

In Quintilian’s view, Gaius Lucilius (168-102 BCE) is satire’s true primogenitor. Approvingly, Kirk Freudenburg assesses the Lucilian legacy:

No two satirists produce the same list of models. In fact the only constant explicitly named on all the lists produced by Horace, Persius, and Juvenal is Lucilius. Naming him is thus not simply a cataloguing cue, it is a genre-constituting act. For in a genre so loose in its habits,...we know that we have ‘it’ only when the satirist says...‘I’m writing satire now. You know, the kind of thing that Lucilius wrote.’ (“Intro” 14)

Although Lucilius did not select dactylic hexameter as his primary meter until his thirtieth satire,¹⁵ it thereafter became the definitive meter for all verse satire by virtue of its ability to accommodate epic parody (Muecke 39-41). Lucilius’s satire contains autobiography, literary polemic, philosophical erudition, and speculation (Muecke 39); its “essential function” is moral censure (Van Rooy 51).¹⁶ Van Rooy finds the “Lucilian medley” to be aggressively political and topical in its parody of religious and philosophical debates (52-3). Freudenburg concurs that Lucilius’s aggressive free speech (*libertas*) became the hallmark of the genre; he adds that it was also “a key defining feature of an elite, male self” (*Satires of Rome* 3). Importantly, Frances Muecke notes

that Roman satire, given its lower literary status and reputation for offensiveness, was always a self-conscious and “inherently controversial genre” (34). In Book 26 of Lucilius’s first work of satire, the fictionalized poet defends (to a friend) his right to criticize Roman society (Van Rooy 147); this dramatic defense becomes a trope of future satires and the “the peg for generic self-definition” (Muecke 42).

Yet, just when there appears to be a secure form (dactylic hexameter) to embody the satiric tradition from Lucilius onwards, satiric writers complicate matters. Quintus Horatius Flaccus (65-8 BCE), for example, spread his satire over multiple forms (formal verse satire, epistles, and epodes) and thus “made the job of generic classification and definition more difficult” (Griffin 9). Satire’s narrative in antiquity could be summarized as follows: it functioned as a mode in Greek literature, became a Roman genre, and, never having lost its modal flexibility, sporadically changed back to a mode again.

Horace refashions Lucilius’s satire by outlining how his own style differs from that of the famous poet. Horace’s persona is that of a humble poet and civil servant in the house of Maecenas, who, unlike the aristocratic Lucilius, is not impervious to retaliation (Gowers 48-49). To give a “reconfigurative shake” to the genre (Freudenburg, *Satires of Rome* 39), Horace wrote three programmatic satires: Satires 4 and 10 of Book I, and Satire 1 of Book II. Satire 4 is a dramatic dialogue (between the poet and his friend) explaining why he is compelled to write satire – a kind of poetry that many find ill-natured. Lucilius, the speaker observes, derives his noble goal of moral censorship from Old Attic Comedy, but unfortunately, his poetry is formally and thematically excessive. His poems are “muddy” and “overstuffed”; basically, Horace charges Lucilius with

sloppiness and bad editing (I.4.11). He proposes that his own style is less grand, “a style rather close to prose” (I.4.42) – he is not even sure if it is genuine poetry.¹⁷ To mark his opposition to Lucilius further, Horace vows to avoid nasty, personal invective (I.4.101-2). Instead, his gentler method will emulate parental wisdom: “My good father gave me the habit; to warn me off/he used to point out various vices by citing examples” (I.4.106-7). Horace then vows to continue his “habit” of writing satire (I.4.140). In Satire 10, Horace implores his audience to agree that Lucilius lacks poetic excellence and is too harsh in his censure. Contrastingly, Horace promotes himself as an advocate of restraint and reserve both in writing and in moralizing anger; he insists that humour “is often stronger/ and more effective than sharpness in cutting knotty issues” (I.10.14-15).

Satire 1 of Book II contains yet another justification for why Horace continues to write satire – this time in the form of a conversation with the celebrated lawyer Trebatius Testa. Horace, the speaker, claims to be a follower of Lucilius (I.3.34), one who wielded his pen as sword and “indicted the foremost citizens and the whole populace” (I.2.68-9), but Horace promises to use his pen in self-defense alone; in this way he hopes to avoid the ills of personal abuse. Van Rooy affirms that Horace (fairly true to his word) satirized only unimportant people by name, dwelling instead on discussions of human nature (Van Rooy 62, Gowers 51). The Horatian persona of a self-parodying “imperfect moralist” is a “composite of comic types – the cowed son, the parasite, [and] the slipshod, bumbling Cynic philosopher” (Gowers 55). Generally, Horace’s his favorite satiric theme is selfish and sensual ambition: “there are certain people, you see, who detest this kind of writing,/ for most men deserve a scolding. Pick anyone you like/ from a crowd: he’s plagued with

avarice or else the disease of ambition” (I.4.23-26). Emily Gowers nominates Horace’s signature phrase (denoting his satiric ethic of moderation) as being, “That’s enough now” (57). She stresses the delicacy of Horace’s position as a self-made man in a moderate political atmosphere trying to write satire; effectively, his programmatic satires position him prudently as a genial satirist who redresses Lucilius’s stylistic and moralistic harshness.

The next widely-recognized satirist after Horace is Aulus Persius Flaccus (34-62 BCE). Persius professes to follow the Lucilian ideal of derisive satire, but his poems are more like Stoic sermons (Van Rooy 73-74). Freudenburg and other classicists speculate that it was too dangerous to write overt satire under Nero, thus Persius’s satires do not contain overt allusion to contemporary politics, focusing instead on generalities about human nature (*Satires of Rome* 125, Cucchiareli 76).¹⁸ Possibly as a result of John Dryden’s condemnation of Persius as unworthy of comparison to Horace or Juvenal – his satire is dismissed as being too obscure (out of fear of Nero) and un-poetic (*Dialogue* 118-119) – Persius’s satiric legacy has had relatively less impact on the evolution of satire than that of Horace or Juvenal.

Decimus Iunius Juvenalis (c.55-c.135 CE) defines “the primary impulses of Horatian satire by ruthlessly departing from them” (Burrow 245). Praising Lucilius’s high style and combative ethos, Juvenal enthusiastically figures the older poet as the hero of satire, wielding his pen like a powerful sword: “when fiery Lucilius rages with satire’s naked sword / His hearers go red; their conscience is cold with crime” (1.166). Juvenal regards satire as a high form (like rhetorical declamation) and not as Horace positioned it

– as a prosaic, self-parodying form. Invested in an impersonal, objective voice like that of the epic, Juvenal’s satire takes the form of an “‘epic’ rant” (Barchiesi and Cucchiarelli 220). Ronald Paulson finds that compared with Horace’s “admonitory and subjective” mode, Juvenal’s satire is “presentational and objective” (*Fictions* 29). Horace addresses fellow fools, whereas Juvenal implicitly addresses the virtuous (Paulson, *Fictions* 29). Of his satires – unlike Horace, Juvenal did not write odes or epistles – Satire 1 contains his most polemical justification for the necessity of writing satire. Further differentiating himself from Horace, he does not thematize and defend his style of satire. He is so outraged about Rome’s epidemic of vice that he appears unconcerned about writing literary exhortations on satiric methodologies. After complaining of the inanity of epics in a world empty of heroes, he claims that satire is the only mode of culturally viable truth-telling. Thus, Juvenal commands rather than defends the writing of satire:

Who can sleep easy today? If your greedy daughter-in-law
Is not being seduced for cash, it’ll be your bride: mere schoolboys
Are adulterers now. Though talent be wanting, yet
Indignation will drive me to verse, such as I – or any scribbler –
May still command. All human endeavours, men’s prayers,
Fears, angers, pleasures, joys and pursuits, these make
The mixed mash of my verse.

.....

When has the purse
Of greed yawned wider? When was gambling more frantic

Than it is today? (1.77-90)

As this passage demonstrates with its surfeit of rhetorical questions and catalogue of rampant vice, Juvenal opposes his satire implicitly with the reticent “just enough” of Horace (both in form and content). Angry hyperbole aligns Juvenal’s satire with that of Lucilius. Broadly speaking, Juvenal’s “farrago” or “mixed mash” serves the passionate ethical function of assailing vice – particularly, the hypocrisy and material and sensual excesses of Rome’s elite citizenry. Moral outrage without restraint is Juvenal’s satiric *modus operandi*.¹⁹

Van Rooy argues that in the third century, verse satire is no longer a living genre (168). After Juvenal, satire follows a confusing path of occasional rebirth, or as Bakhtin would say, reaccentuation. The first use of the word *satyricus* to denote a satirist is found in the work of scholar Pomponius Porphyrius (third century CE). Increasingly, as Christian apologists (such as St. Jerome) write satirical prose, from the fourth century to the seventh, there is a tendency to derive *satira* from *satyroi* (Van Rooy 171). This tendency culminates in the assumption by Elizabethan and Renaissance scholars and satirists alike that satire was derived from *satyr* and thus was a necessarily obscene genre, much like the mythological beast in Greek satyr-plays. Critics of medieval theories of satire have argued that satire in the Middle Ages – particularly in the writings of Geoffrey Chaucer and *Piers Plowman* – was singularly unshaped by classical traditions; works criticizing vice could be described only informally as “satiric.” Following John Peter’s 1956 study, the argument that satire truly emerged only in the sixteenth century, after the rediscovery of Latin precedents, has been contested by critics such as Ben Parsons, who

acknowledges that “the ancient satirists were widely studied in the grammar schools and universities” of the period (Parsons 105-6).²⁰ Interestingly, though, if Latin medieval satires acknowledge classical models, they tend to disavow the indignant anger associated with Juvenalian texts (Kendrick 52). Both Thomas Lodge’s *Defence of Poetry* (1579) and George Puttenham’s *Arte of English Poesie* (1589) link satire to satyrs and urge practitioners to do the same (Griffin 10). Alvin Kernan, in his study of Renaissance satire from 1590 to 1620, asserts that bitterness and invective were thought to characterize both satyrs and satire, and thus Juvenal, not Horace, was favoured for imitation (64-65). The rhetorical tradition of positioning Horace and Juvenal as competing antimonies is inaugurated in this period.²¹

Counterbalancing the fact that satire was an ill-defined term, Horace and Juvenal became a “centre of reference” (Elkin 34) for critics of the genre. John Marston (1575-1656), Joseph Hall (1574-1656), and Thomas Middleton (1580-1627) associated themselves more with Juvenal than Horace (Burrow 248). Yet as Howard Weinbrot argues, even Horace’s satire was styled as Juvenalian; for example, Thomas Drant’s 1566 translation of Horace’s satires represents him as a biting satirist (*Alexander Pope* 5-6). Late Elizabethan satirists were anxious about satire’s status as literature; their satire was aggressively topical in its subject matter (Burrow 249-50). Hall’s forceful satires on contemporary abuses led to the genre being banned in June 1599 by the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Bishop of London, who ordered that no satires (or epigrams) be printed (Burrow 253). The preference for Juvenalian aggression and moral outrage did not diminish after 1660, for John Oldman and Robert Gould continued the traditions of

Marston and Hall (Weinbrot, *Pope* 9-10).²² It is a testimony to the capaciousness of *satira*/satire that from the early sixteenth to the late seventeenth century, satire accommodated a misguided etymology (from *satyr*) and was modeled almost exclusively on the Juvenalian ethos of ferocious disdain. It is clear that alongside the farraginous quality of satire, moral indignation was construed as a generic constant.

A central text in Renaissance theory of satire is Isaac Casaubon's *De Satyrica Graecorum poesi & Romanorum satira* (1605). Casaubon is credited with disentangling the etymological error of attributing satire to the Greek *satyr* instead of the Latin *satira* (Weinbrot, *Pope* 13). Casaubon found Juvenal and Horace to be equal in quality, but their achievement was disputed by two camps: Nicolas Rigault (rejecting Horace in preference for Juvenal), and Julius C. Scaliger, André Dacier, and Daniel Heinsius (rejecting Juvenal in preference for Horace) (Griffin 13-14). John Henderson effectively contextualizes this dispute: "the genre of satire breeds bouts of dialectical positioning in terms of polarity between Horace and Juvenal" (310). As well, Charles Martindale notes that from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century, when "Roman verse satire was regularly translated and imitated" and propagated throughout Europe, Horace and Juvenal constituted a "mutually defining pair" (287).²³ Howard Weinbrot concurs that comparisons between Horace and Juvenal were a convention of the Renaissance and later seventeenth- and eighteenth-century theories of classical satire (*Pope* 129); the result was a definitive polarity between the "drolling" and "hectoring" modes (*Pope* 130). Continuing this fixation on a Horatian/ Juvenalian binary, John Dryden's "A Discourse Concerning the Original and Progress of Satire" (1692) ambitiously attempts the impossible: to "give the

definition and character of true satires” – an aim that is cautiously reduced to an attempt to “describe if not define the nature of that poem” (Dryden 78, 95). Cannily, Dryden begins his defense of satire by arguing (against Aristotle’s notion of the generic preeminence of tragedy) for the epic’s superiority to tragedy; next, he honorifically designates satire as a “species” of poetry related to epic (82).

Significantly, before launching his disquisition on Horace and Juvenal, Dryden defines “another kind” of satire descended from the ancients: “’Tis that which we call the Varronian Satire, but which Varro himself calls the Menippean, because Varro...imitated, in his works, the manners of Menippus the Gadarenian” (113). The latter, he explains, mixes prose and verse, and Latin with Greek, and various philosophies (114). Dryden identifies the distinctive quality of Varronian/Menippean satire as its variousness of subject, and outlines a tradition for prose satire that includes Lucian’s dialogues and the works of Apuleius, Seneca, and Erasmus. Dustin Griffin finds that Dryden diminishes Menippean satire as being less important than the formal satire (which is his main theme), yet Dryden places his own “Absalom and Achitophel” (1681) and “Mac Flecknoe” in this tradition (115).²⁴

Dryden reinforces Casaubon’s notion that two elements constitute Roman satire: “moral doctrine” and “well-mannered wit” (122). The essential function of satire is “the scourging of vice and the exhortation to virtue,” for “Satire is of the nature of moral philosophy, as being instructive” (122). To reinforce this claim, Dryden quotes from his preface to “Absalom and Achitophel”: “The true end of satire is the amendment of vices by correction. And he who writes honestly is no more an enemy to an offender than the

physician to the patient when he prescribes harsh remedies to an inveterate disease” (114). Dryden admits that although Horace is “perpetually moral” (128), Juvenal pursues a more noble aim: the lashing of vice (129). Juvenal is also a more “delightful” author to read (127): “his expressions are sonorous and more noble” and sublime. Horace’s “low style,” by contrast, is often “groveling” and lacking in manly vigour (130-131). Importantly, Dryden deems Juvenal’s satire to be admirably masculine because it is strongly political: Juvenal “has more of the commonwealth genius” which fights against tyranny, whereas Horace is “a temporizing poet, a well-mannered Court slave” (132). Dryden does concede that Horace’s era (under Augustus Caesar) was not characterized by the “enormous vices” which demand a satirist to be as virile and vengeful as Juvenal. In his aesthetic discussion of ideal satiric form, Dryden offers a recipe for “true,” “manly satire” (147). Paradoxically, satire’s etymological connotations of variety are preserved in Dryden’s definition, despite his ideal structural prescription for formal verse satire: “unity of theme, or subject” (146). The satirist ought to caution against one vice/folly and explicate on precept of moral virtue (146).²⁵ Ultimately, Dryden’s polemical project is nothing less than to win for satire its true status as high art – as moral art.²⁶

Dryden’s “Discourse” influenced critics and practitioners alike and became the most important English discussion of formal verse satire (Weinbrot, *Formal* 59-60, 65). Thomas Warton’s *The History of English Poetry* (1774-81) finds in Elizabethan satire the same pattern of attacking a central vice and praising of its opposite (Weinbrot, *Formal* 74); there are allusions to the “Discourse” by Richard Addison, Sir Richard Blackmore, John Dennis, and Samuel Johnson (Weinbrot, *Formal* 68-9).²⁷ For eighteenth-century

writers, the “Discourse” consolidated the didactic, aesthetic, and moral function of satire. Furthermore, Dryden’s insistence that Horace excelled in comic satire and Juvenal in tragic was widely accepted (Weinbrot, *Eighteenth Century* 7). Harkening back to the Varro-Diomedes definition, Dryden preserves notions of satire’s variegated nature (accepting both its prose and verse incarnations), while simultaneously promoting it as an artistically unified genre that is morally motivated. Significantly, Dryden politicizes the Horatian/Juvenalian dichotomy, aligning Juvenal with bold subversion and Horace with sycophancy. Dryden’s view of Juvenal as the more bravely political of the two has been recently undermined by Kirk Freudenburg, who argues that Juvenal’s satire was unabashedly located in the recent and remote past (it was not written under Domitian) and is therefore not defiantly political and Lucilian (*Satires of Rome* 212-213).²⁸ Yet, regardless of whether or not Dryden’s assessment of Juvenal and Horace is accurate, his judgment of each satirist held literary authority. Similarly, although Griffin criticizes Dryden’s theory as being “distinctly partial and polemical,” for having limited application to the practicing satirists of his day, and for being weighted against prose satire, he agrees that it exerted an “extraordinary influence on subsequent theoretical thinking about satire, both in the age immediately following Dryden and in the mid-twentieth century as well” (14-15).

Similar to Dryden’s “Discourse,” much satiric theory in the eighteenth century was a defensive reaction to attacks made on the genre’s morals, motives, and literary status (Griffin 24). P. K. Elkin posits that as a result, the milder satire of Horace was celebrated over that of Juvenal in the Augustan period (16, 146). Alexander Pope’s

poems, for example, were considered an *imitatio Horatii* (Elkin 3). Howard Weinbrot, however, finds this position too simplistic, arguing that Pope is a “synthesizing satirist” (*Pope* 4) who looked to Lucilius, Horace, Juvenal, and Persius as models – after the manner of Nicholas Boileau,²⁹ who combined notions of each of the classical satirists (*Pope* 5). Furthermore, Pope’s contemporaries often perceived his satires to be Juvenalian (Weinbrot, *Pope* xv). According to Weinbrot, Pope adapted Horatian devices (but not necessarily values) because they were well-suited to his political aim of criticizing the Whig ministry in the 1730s (*Pope* 43). Yet, Weinbrot categorizes “An Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot” as being Juvenalian, for it “lacks the community of values between satirist and monarch essential for the solid base of the Horatian epistle and satire” (*Pope* 240).³⁰ Vincent Carretta explains Pope’s strategic assumption of a Horatian persona in his translation of Horace’s first satire (of the second book), published in 1733 at Henry Bolingbroke’s suggestion (93). Horace’s opposition of court and country values offers an ideal analogy for Tory satirists. After the manner of Horace, Pope’s poetic persona defends his satiric practice to his lawyer and declares that his poems will focus on actions, not men (95). Yet despite his Horatian pledge to avoid personal abuse, Pope, as Carretta points out, proceeds to name names (such as Sir Robert for Walpole) (102). As well, the poem ends bereft of Horatian gaiety (Carretta 103).³¹

Pope’s 1735 “Advertisement” for his *Satires and Epistles of Horace Imitated* (1733) appeals to the authority of both Horace and John Donne, who were accepted by the “Princes and Ministers under whom they lived,” and warns against the foolishness of “mistaking a *Satyr*ist for a *Libeller*; whereas to a *true Satyr*ist nothing is so odious as a

Libeller" (212). In the imitation of the first satire of Horace's second book, Pope's fictionalized lawyer warns that the poet's life will be shortened by his desire to write satire; Pope replies with what amounts to a promise to engage in personal satire:

What? arm'd for *Virtue* when I point the Pen,
 Brand the bold Front of shameless, guilty Men,

Hear this, and tremble! you, who 'scape the Laws.

Yes, while I live, no rich or noble knave

Shall walk the World, in credit, to his grave. (105-6, 118-20)

Pope too evinces a Juvenalian interest in naming names. In the *Epilogue to the Satires* (1738), "Dialogue II," he zealously defends the noble necessity of specific as well as general satire:

Yes, I am proud; I must be proud to see

Men not afraid of God, afraid of me:

Safe from the Bar, the Pulpit, and the Throne,

Yet touch'd and sham'd by *Ridicule* alone.

O sacred Weapon! left for Truth's defence,

Sole Dread of Folly, Vice, and Insolence!

To all but Heav'n-directed hands deny'd,

The Muse may give thee, but the Gods must guide.

Rev'rent I touch thee! but with honest zeal;

To rowze the Watchmen of the Publick Weal[.] (208-217)

Like Juvenal before him, Pope declares more than he defends satire as his god-given right. Thomas Lockwood finds that the tradition of satiric apologia – the negotiation with satire’s critics that Lucilius inaugurated – is exemplified, not only in Pope’s “Arbuthnot,” but also in Jonathan Swift’s “Verses on the Death of Dr Swift” (1731) (21). Both “apologetic set pieces” reveal culturally current anxieties about the ability of satire to serve the public interest (Lockwood 34), and both stage a moral defense of the genre. Swift’s cynical and self-elegiac poem offers the various subjective viewpoints of his friends whom he imagines meditating on his career – after his death. In their mixed reactions to his works, there is the occasional defense of his satiric ethos. One friend writes:

As for his Works in Verse or Prose,
 I own myself no judge of those:
 Nor can I tell what critics thought ’em;
 But this I know, all people bought ’em,
 As with a moral view design’d
 To cure the vices of mankind. (Swift 308-313)

The absence of the satirist persona from the poem places Swift’s claim that he is a satirist and not a libeler in the legitimizing voice of a critic:

Perhaps I may allow, the Dean
 Had too much satire in his vein,
 And seem’d determin’d not to starve it,
 Because no age could more deserve it.

But malice never was his aim;
 He lash'd the vice, but spared the name.
 No individual could resent
 Where thousands equally were meant. (455-62)

Ironically, in the same poem Sir Robert Walpole and Colly Cibber are implicated by name – a Juvenalian tactic. Paulson speculates that Swift's persona became less and less Horatian and shifted to the Juvenalian one of "ethical hero" (*Fictions* 207). The contradictions within Swift's poem reveal a critically current tension between the practice of satiric propriety (regarding personal abuse) and the more general moral duty of satire "to cure the vices of mankind." This poem certainly contributes to what Elkin observes as the "considerable body of theoretical opinion on the nature and function of satire" (1-2) amassed in the eighteenth century; the theories were not monologic, but "haphazard," and engaged with the ethical concerns of particular and personal satire, as opposed to safer, generalizing satire (Elkin 3).

Although the need for rhetorically savvy apologies remained, satire was a dominant literary art in the eighteenth century. "By the middle of the eighteenth century," James Sutherland observes, "satire had become a literary habit" (68); it became the Augustans' "paramount mode of expression" (Elkin 6). David Nokes also purports that "the literature of the early eighteenth century, indeed the literature of the entire century from the Restoration of Charles II to the ascension of George III, is dominated by satire" (1). By the end of the eighteenth century, there is a marked shift towards a preference for the gentler manner of Horace (Martindale 286). This heightened valuation of Horace is

exemplified by James Beattie's statement in "On Laughter and Ludicrous Composition" (1776): "I find that the generality of critics are all for the moderation and smiling graces of the courtly Horace, and exclaim against the vehemence and vindictive zeal of the unmannerly Juvenal'" (qtd in Weinbrot, *Pope* 22). As Stuart Tave influentially notes in *The Amiable Humorist: A Study of the Comic Theory and Criticism of the Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries* (1960), the counter-current favouring the milder Horatian mode began early in the eighteenth century and was linked, at one level, to theories opposing humour (deemed natural, sympathetic, and good-natured) with wit (which is demoted artificial and unkind). Wit was associated with satiric humour, and thus the notion of the "viciousness of satire was as much a commonplace of the eighteenth century as its virtues" (Tave 23). Sir Richard Blackmore's "Essay upon Wit" (1716) defines wit as being malignant (Tave 11); Corbyn Morris's "An Essay Towards Fixing the True Standards of Wit, Humour, Raillery, Satire, and Ridicule" (1774) finds humour to be closer to nature and the feelings of the heart than satiric wit is (Tave 117). William Hazlitt's "On Wit and Humour" (1818) admires humour as natural and wit as the "product of art" (425);³² Jean Paul Richter, in *Vorschule de Aesthetik* (1804), refutes Hobbes's theory of laughter as being scornfully superior and develops instead a theory of good-natured humour – which influenced Coleridge's, and later Carlyle's, views on the subject. Literary historians agree that Richard Steele and Joseph Addison's model of gentlemanly rhetoric became ascendant (Martindale 286). Steele's argument in *Tatler* No. 242 (1710) was "a standard eighteenth-century account of the art of satire" (Tave 24). "[G]ood nature [is] an essential quality in a Satyrists" (*Tatler* 182), Steele declares, and

advocates “Delicacy of Scorn, without any Mixture of Anger” (*Tatler* 183). Horace and surprisingly Juvenal are offered as exemplary satirists in opposition to the current “Coxcombs” whose satire is petty and personal (*Tatler* 183-185). Paulson notes the Horatian and barely satiric nature of the Whig *Spectator*, which positioned itself against the excoriating practice of Tory satire (*Fictions* 216).

Critics interested in post-Augustan satire and the decline of verse satire after Pope, such as Thomas Lockwood, argue that satire became more concerned with the subjectivity of the satirist (8-11). Paulson speculates that this shift is linked to the privileging, in Lockean epistemology, of the mind of the individual over and above external truths – a belief that was “dangerous to satire” (*Satire* 4-5).³³ Yet, despite the frequent diminishment of satire’s credibility in the early nineteenth century, critics have recently contested the notion that the Romantic period was devoid of satire. Gary Dyer’s pioneering acknowledgement of the hundreds of verse and prose satires published between 1789 and 1832 redresses calcified notions of satire’s dilution and disappearance in this period. Aside from Marcus Wood’s *Radical Satire and Print Culture 1790-1822*, which acknowledges populist radical writers such as William Hone, there are only piecemeal evaluations of satiric works by major authors (such as Wordsworth’s unfinished imitation of Juvenal’s eighth satire; Shelley’s fragment against satire; and Byron’s *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers* [1809]), while hundreds of satirical works in poetry and prose by less canonical writers remain unnoticed (Dyer 8-9). Dyer dates satire’s decline not at Charles Churchill’s death in 1764, but closer to Byron’s in 1824 (11); he attributes satire’s diminished popularity, in part, to the financial crisis of 1826,

which caused booksellers to avoid both satire and poetry (14).³⁴ Furthermore, the Puritan demotion of comedy (and by implication, satire), is attributed by Robert Martin to the middle-class “hatred of laughter” (5). For example, *The Bridgewater Treatise* of 1862 advises that the “habit” of comical perception is unmanly, unhealthy, and un-Christian (Martin 7). Exploring the work of three verse satirists – William Gifford, Thomas James Mathias, and John Wolcott (“Peter Pindar”) – Dyer concludes that the Horatian/Juvenalian antimony gains “specific political resonances” (3) in this period.³⁵ Steven E. Jones’s *Satire and Romanticism, 1760-1832* unearths the canon-forming relationship between satiric and Romantic modes, which he argues were mutually defining; satiric forms played an overlooked role in the dialectical constitution of the concepts of Romanticism (Jones 1-5). Many Romantic works (such as those of Wordsworth) are fashioned in a sentimental, counter-satiric mode (set against the satiric discourse of authors such as Thomas Crabbe) (Jones 16-17). Furthermore, the notion that Wordsworth, Byron, Shelley, and Keats displaced Augustan rationality with sentiment, imagination, sincerity, and natural feeling eschews a large number of romantic parodies (Jones 5-6).³⁶

Although critics such as Dyer and Jones contest straightforward narratives of the disappearance of satire after Charles Churchill, they generally accept that satire as a genre (or at least as a dominant feature of a work) did not persist much beyond the 1830s. Dyer is convinced: “unquestionably, satire had almost ceased to exist as a distinct genre by the 1830s” (13):

To some extent the satiric was absorbed into predominantly non-satiric genres like the novel: instead of Moore or Henry Luttrell, the Victorians had Thackeray; instead of Peacock, the mature Disraeli. Though I run the risk of appearing to endorse a hydraulic or a “zero-sum” model of genre history, I am claiming that writers increasingly were forced by market considerations and other cultural factors to channel their satirical impulses into forms where satire merely exists alongside other strands, *to which it usually is subordinate*. The disappearance of satiric forms did not signal the extinction of the satiric spirit; in fact, it arguably cleared space for its survival, particularly in the novel, although there satire often stands in an uneasy alliance with comedy, and usually lacks the topoi conventional in the verse satire or the Menippean satire. (14; my italics)

Despite his acknowledgement of prose satire, Dyer concludes that “satire in the strong sense began to fade” (144) in the nineteenth century as it was absorbed into and dominated by the novel, only to be linked with the gentler, less offensive, comic tradition extending from Cervantes to Fielding, Sterne, and Dickens (144). Thus Dyer appears to accept Stuart Tave’s central thesis that satire was supplanted by sentimental humour in the novel. If satire exists in this form, it is found in a benign Horatian mode – a mode which, being both prosaic and “lenient,” is easily adapted, unlike the Juvenalian, to the English comic tradition (Dyer 96). The “Juvenalian spirit,” being suited to oratory and

formal verse, “translated into prose poorly” (Dyer 97). Although Paulson, Dyer, Griffin, and Palmeri agree that the novel is a prose form that demonstrates singular suitability to satire, they accept Tave’s thesis of the general dominance of sentiment over satire in the novel. After 1830, satire receives from many critics a near-death sentence – only to find resuscitation late in the century. Yet, just as the critical preference for Horatian satire (beginning in the eighteenth century) did not result in the extinction of Juvenalian satire (which was practiced by leading satirists such as Pope and Swift), so the preference for gentle humour in the nineteenth century did not destroy the harsher, satiric sensibility which, I argue, *did* thrive in the Victorian novel. Furthermore, this strongly satiric sensibility was not universally subordinated to the “sentimental” aspects of the novel. Satire, in the more purely satiric, Juvenalian mode, persists in the Victorian novel, but requires the age-old hallmark of satire, a defense.

1.ii Satire “may be very well in its place”: Victorian Comico-satiric

Theory and its Uncertain Practice

Tave’s conclusion that sentimental forms such as the novel engulfed satire has been applied influentially to Victorian comic theory by Robert B. Martin. Martin complicates Tave’s proposition by suggesting a shift later in the nineteenth century away from amiable sentimental humour (promoted by Carlyle and ostensibly practiced by Dickens, Trollope and others) to the comedy of wit and paradox. Wit’s negative reputation – for being coldly intellectual compared with the empathetic geniality of humour – began to abate around the 1870s, Martin argues, influenced by such works in

comic theory as Leigh Hunt's *Wit and Humour* (1846), which defends the pleasures of (kindly intended) witty comedy (Martin 70). For example Hunt praises Swift as the "grand master of wit and humour" (*Wit* 287). As well, Leslie Stephen, in "Humour" (*Cornhill* 1876), prefers the intellectual wit and "virile" comedy of the eighteenth century to the sentimental humour currently popular (Martin 80). Martin interprets George Meredith's "Essay on Comedy" (1877) as a culmination of this increasing regard for the value of wit in late Victorian literary culture. For Martin, the essay is an attack on sentimental humour (92), but it is, perhaps more importantly, an attack on satire; for example, Meredith's ambivalence towards satire animates his comic theory. Apparently, Meredith promotes the civilizing comedic spirit at the expense of the barbaric aggression of satire. Although Martin's thesis implies increasing Victorian approval of satire in the later part of the century (when associated with wit), it neglects to address the debates about satire which are encoded in Victorian comic theory. Following Martin, Jennifer Wagner-Lawyer unhelpfully conflates the terms satire, humour, and comedy; in this way, she also ignores the influential conflict surrounding satire.³⁷ Victorian comic theory, however, is inflected with century-long debates of the satiric tradition.

Charles Martindale finds verse satire to be in desperate straits in the nineteenth century, for it is omitted from Palgrave's *Golden Treasury* (1861) (295). Certainly, eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century ideas of wit and satire as inferior to humour and sentiment held sway well into the Victorian period. Early nineteenth-century anxiety about the morality of wit and satire is expressed by William Wordsworth, who, as Sutherland points out, aimed to awaken people from the moral apathy of custom, but

ironically disliked satire (12). With the exception of the “philosophical” satires of Horace and Juvenal, most satire, according to Wordsworth, is occasional and personal, “rarely comprehending sufficient of the general in the individual to be dignified with the name of Poetry” (“Preface to Poems of 1815” 142). Victorian writers who were influenced by Wordsworth’s poetic theory, such as George Eliot, Matthew Arnold, and Thomas Carlyle, were likely aware of Wordsworth’s resistance to the “Artificial School” of poetry that made Pope’s epigraphs the epitome of immoral literary discourse. Leigh Hunt’s words reveal that even advocates of satire tended to qualify their praise: “Wits and satirists may write in verse in order to concentrate their powers and sharpen their effect; but it will never be of any high or inspired order (“On Wit” v). As well, Thomas Babington Macaulay’s view of the prurient nature of Juvenal’s satire is evidence of satire’s tarnished reputation in the Victorian period. Although he did not wish to see the work of Juvenal banned, Macaulay felt, with Samuel Johnson, that many of the Roman’s satires were “too gross for imitation” (*Essays and Lays* 164).³⁸ Juvenal and Lucien, like all “teachers of virtue had all the vices of their neighbours, with the additional vice of hypocrisy” (Macaulay, *Essays and Lays* 403).³⁹ Furthermore, Macaulay found Leigh Hunt’s praise for Restoration comedic wit to be morally inexcusable. Rather than arguing for a wholesale rejection of satire, however, Macaulay, in “The Life and Writings of Addison” (*Edinburgh Review*, July 1843), praises the moral genius of Addison’s style of ridicule (the “grace, the nobleness, the moral purity, which we find even in his merriment”) in contrast to the temperamental Tory satirists, such as Swift, who abused the power of ridicule by creating misanthropic works (*Essays and Lays* 725). Thus,

writers such as Macaulay, who were not invested in a wholesale rejection of satire as a genre, specifically rejected unsympathetic, Juvenalian satire. As Chauncey C. Loomis asserts, Juvenal “was almost universally condemned” (5).⁴⁰ It appears that the age-old juxtaposition between Horace and Juvenal still held Victorian critical purchase.

After the eighteenth century, the direct influence of Roman verse satire abated (297). Whereas the Augustans “look[ed] wholly to the ancients, and to Rome rather than Greece” (Elkin 42), the Victorians looked to ancient Greece for cultural and literary ideals. George Henry Lewes, for example, in his biographical history of philosophy, declares: “We omit Rome; the Romans, confessedly, had no philosophy of their own; and did but feebly imitate that of the Greeks” (xvi). As Frank M. Turner notes, many Victorian writers considered the ancient Greeks to be kindred spirits: this was a “fundamental opinion of Victorian intellectual life” (11). Enamoured of Greek ideals of heroism and art, they were also enthusiastic about parallels between Athenian democracy and modern democracy (11). Ancient Rome, by comparison, was considered to be more thoroughly pagan and politically corrupt. Thomas Carlyle, for example, showers scorn on the Roman period in *On Heroes, Hero-Worship and the Heroic in History* (1841) when he compares the detestable “scepticism, simulacra and universal decadence” (175) of the eighteenth century with that of ancient Rome.

Despite the general Victorian neglect of ancient Rome, the Roman poet Horace “was the best-remembered classical author in nineteenth century England” (Vance 199). Norman Vance posits that Horace became a kind of “honorary Victorian” (216) partly because he translated Greek poetry into Latin and thus exemplified the Roman

enchantment with Greece (199). Sir Theodore Martin's series, *Ancient Classics for English Readers* (1870), among others, popularized Horace's works for easy assimilation by the "well-educated, sociable nineteenth-century man-about-town which middle-class readers without much Latin wished to be" (Vance 206).⁴¹ In "Horace's Art of Conduct" in *The Cornhill Magazine* (1876), the author argues that in contrast to Horace, Juvenal "grows monotonous" (40), for "Horace is the most quotable of ancient authors" (44): "There are Byronians, Shelleyans, Wordsworthians; everybody is a Horaceite" (44). Bulwer-Lytton's essay "Charles Lamb and Some of his Companions" (*Quarterly Review*, January 1867) compliments the essays of Elia by proclaiming them to be reminiscent of the verse of Horace, with Lamb resembling Horace in economy of style and the "intense sympathy" that he has with the world (106-7). This essay reveals Bulwer-Lytton's early preference for Horatian/sympathetic humour: "Humour in itself is among the most popular gifts of genius; amiable humour among the most lovable. The humour of Charles Lamb is at once pure and genial; it has no malice in its smile" (Bulwer-Lytton 107).⁴² Despite a preference for benign humour over wit and satire, and a turning to Greece and not Rome for literary models, Horatian satire was categorized with genial humour, and revered by many. James Sully's discussions of satire in his *An Essay on Laughter* (1902) seem at once a culmination and a summary of Victorian esteem for "tolerant" "good-natured" humour and corresponding resistance to the virulence of "the satire of antiquity" (*Laughter* 385, 382). Sully observes that the "mirthful spirit," when utilized for "demeaning attack" or "serious exposure," is transformed: "To laugh with Juvenal or with Swift is to feel more of a bitter malignity than of gaiety. We may say that satire

takes us back to the brutal laugh of the savage standing jubilant over his prostrate foe” (*Laughter* 381). George Eliot, for one, though wary of Juvenalian forms of satire, as well as disapproving of personal satire (that “bastard kind of satire”), embraced genial Horatian satire.⁴³ Importantly, Loomis identifies James Hannay’s *Satire and Satirists* (1854) as the “only extensive defense of satire in the mid-Victorian period” (4). Hannay attempts to re-fashion satire so as to make it more palatable to Victorian readers. Defending the “humanity” of satire, the treatise demonstrates that “the great Satirists have been good and lovable men,” and that satire is an artistic and moral art (Hannay 4). Satire, Hannay claims, is the one art in which the Romans were not mere imitators of the Greeks: “*We* derive our satirical forms from Horace and Juvenal” (8). Thus he concludes that “you can classify all the great satirical writers with one or the other” (23). Yet, despite the general acceptance of Horace as a genial satirist, satire remained in a suspended state of grace – distrusted and regarded with ambivalence by Victorian writers, critics, and readers. Not surprisingly, as Loomis notes, Hannay’s tract was “received coolly by the critics who clearly thought that the defense of satire was not a noble cause” (5).

Although Thomas Carlyle is dismissive of eighteenth-century writers (including the satirists), he speaks more favourably of the humourist. In the eighteenth century, the “Man of Letters” was “half-paralyzed” by the skepticism of his age: “Scepticism means not intellectual Doubt alone, but moral Doubt; all sorts of *infidelity*, insincerity, spiritual paralysis” (Carlyle, *Heroes* 170). In an age dominated by “Mechanical life,” heroism was absent (170-171). In Carlyle’s review of Heinrich Döring’s *Life of Richter* (*Edinburgh*

Review [1827]), Sterne and Cervantes are praised as true humourists, but the humour of Swift, Ben Jonson, and Voltaire is dismissed for being “encased” in a “most bitter and caustic rind” (Carlyle, “Richter” 16). Carlyle regards Jean Paul Richter as a “Philosopher and Moral Poet” (10) whose “ruling quality” is humour: “the essence of humour is sensibility; warm, tender fellow-feeling with all forms of existence” (15). Richter’s paternal “soul rushes forth in sympathy with gladness and sorrow, with goodness and grandeur over all Creation” (Carlyle, “Richter” 14). Irony and caricature, Carlyle argues, offer only “superficial distortion” (“Richter” 15) of their subject and are a soulless “habit.” “True humour springs not more from the head than from the heart; it is not contempt; its essence is love” (Carlyle, “Richter” 15-16). By inverting the sublime, humour “exalt[s] into our affection what is below us” (Carlyle, “Richter” 16). The only style of satire that elicits the affection (of which Carlyle approves) as well as anger, is Horatian. Yet, just as the Whig writers (such as Addison and Steele) who defined their work in opposition to satire nonetheless wrote satire (Paulson, *Satire*, 60), Carlyle’s comic-satiric doctrine and practice do not necessarily accord. Emphatically, he disapproved of Juvenalian satire; hence, his famous injunction: “Close thy *Byron*; open thy *Goethe*” (SR 145). But his caustic rants against the “gross, steamengine Utilitarianism” (*Heroes* 172) are not exactly consistent with his paternal model of the humourist. *Sartor Resartus* (1833-34), which he declared to be a “Satirical Extravaganza on Things in General” (xiii), denounces the somnambulism of the unenlightened life and the soul-deadening effects of Utilitarianism. Professor Teufelsdröck’s philosophy of clothes (an allusion to Swift’s *Tale of a Tub*) reduces human beings (in a society founded

on cloth) to various suits of clothes (the mental habits of materialism) which “tailorize and demoralize us” (SR 38). H. A. Taine, complaining of Carlyle’s “gloomy cast” and indignant anger, declares: “[Carlyle] despises his epoch” (574). Anthony Trollope also finds fault with the pessimism and satiric excesses of Carlyle (and Ruskin): “The loudness and extravagance of their Lamentations, the wailing and gnashing of teeth which comes from them over a world which is supposed to have gone altogether shoddy” (*Autobiography* 224). Ironically, Juvenal’s non-affectionate, doom-and-gloom mode of satire is decidedly present in the writings of Carlyle – the self-styled advocate of Horatian benignity.⁴⁴

Currently, many critics assume “[i]t is easy to account for satire’s rejection by the Victorians simply on the basis of its tastelessness” (Connery and Combe 4). Yet Matthew Arnold is perhaps the single Victorian sage who unequivocally disliked satire. He even found Horace to be over-rated and not serious enough (Vance 200). Certainly, in his Preface to the first edition of *Poems* (1853), Arnold asserts that poetical art in its highest form (which is both “serious” and “grand”) ought to portray a noble and significant action (after the manner of the ancient Greek poets, who followed Aristotle). The Greeks wisely apprehended that “an action of present times was too near them” to be a grand enough subject “for a tragic poem” (Arnold, *Works* 1: 6). Contemporary matters belong instead to “the domain of the comic poet, and of the lighter kinds of poetry” (Arnold, *Works* 1: 6). His view that the “spiritual discomfort” (Arnold, *Works* 1: 14) and general cultural turmoil of his age produces no great subjects for the poet implicitly denounces satire – a vigorously topical genre. In Arnold’s poetic hierarchy, reminiscent of

Wordsworth's, satire, insofar as it is a comic genre, lacks the "moral grandeur" of higher forms.⁴⁵ Additionally, Arnold's promotion of Goethe's view of the ideal modern poet implies a rejection of the anger of satire, particularly of the Juvenalian mode. The true poet

will not, however, maintain a hostile attitude towards the false pretensions of his age: he will content himself with not being overwhelmed by them. He will esteem himself fortunate if he can succeed in banishing from his mind all feelings of contradiction, and irritation, and impatience; in order to delight himself with the contemplation of some noble action of a heroic time[.] (Arnold, 1853 "Preface," *Works* 1: 14)

Arnold discredits the distemper of satire in the interest of his poetic project to banish "morbid" poetry (even his own "Empedocles on Etna") in order to ensure that art creates joy, not vexation (1853 "Preface," *Works* 1: 3). In accordance with this view (and also his complaint that "modern" poets are more concerned with expression than subject matter), Arnold dismisses the poetry of Pope and Dryden as being incapable of possessing "truth" and "seriousness" (Arnold, "The Study of Poetry" (1880); *Works* 9: 176). He complains that although "our whole eighteenth century" flattered itself that it produced classics, its poets did not reach a standard of critical high seriousness: "Dryden and Pope are not classics of our poetry, they are classics of our prose" (Arnold, "Study," *Works* 9: 178, 181).⁴⁶ Arnold even dismantles Addison's reputation as a great moralist by pronouncing his ideas "provincial" (despite his classic style) ("The Literary Influence of Academies" [1864]; *Works* 3: 248). In *Culture and Anarchy* (1869), Arnold employs Swift's idea

(from the *Battle of the Books*) that “sweetness and light” are the most noble qualities with which to articulate an ideal of culture; ungenerously, however, he chastizes Swift for having “too little” of these qualities himself (54). Additionally exposing his dislike of satire, Arnold finds that Byron’s poetry has “little endurance in it,” being “empty of matter” (*Works* 3: 262). In Arnold’s scathing assessment, comedy and satire will never qualify as true poetry.

In “The Function of Criticism at the Present Time” (1864), Arnold rigorously separates the realms of creative art and criticism.⁴⁷ Such a view necessarily excludes satire from the domain of high art, as its critical function is primary. Arnold’s decree that the “world of ideas” and the “world of practice” remain separate (“Function,” *Works* 3: 265) renders him an enemy to satire. In the “burning matters” of “politics and religion,” Arnold warns, literature “is most likely to go astray” (“Function,” *Works* 3: 282); therefore “direct political action is not the true function of literature” (“Heinrich Heine,” *Works* 3: 118). Satiric genres, for Arnold, are Philistine in that they work against the highest cultural goal: the promotion of the “free disinterested treatment of things” (“Function,” *Works* 3: 275).

Francis O’Gorman and Katherine Turner resist the commonly accepted notion that the Carlylean/Arnoldian rejection of Augustan literature straightforwardly summarizes the Victorian relationship to eighteenth century literature; they suggest a more complex relationship. Yet, similar to Martin, they stress the increasing acceptance of eighteenth-century wit towards the end of the century.⁴⁸ For example, in the “climate of interest in the functional value of literature,” Johnson’s *Rasselas* gained in popularity

and appeared in editions designed for schools and colleges (K. Turner, "Samuel Johnson" 130). As well, according to Macaulay's 1856 entry in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Samuel Johnson's the "Vanity of Human Wishes" remained in strong circulation (K. Turner, "Samuel Johnson" 120). Contradicting the seemingly universal Victorian distaste for Juvenalian satire, Johnson's imitation of Juvenal's tenth satire still found popularity with a nineteenth-century audience. Dismissing "the habitual model of the relationship between the Victorians and Alexander Pope as one of disapproval" ("High Priest" 76), Francis O'Gorman argues that despite Pope's exclusion from Palgrave's *Golden Treasury* (1861), he was admired and read in the Victorian period (by the Brownings, Tennyson, Ruskin, and others) ("High Priest" 77-78). Significantly, his stylistics became a model for composition, and educational editions of his work grew in number after 1870. Readers were, however, urged to ignore his morals, wit, and religious notions (O'Gorman, "High Priest" 87).⁴⁹

John Ruskin is the Victorian sage whose attitude to eighteenth-century writers epitomizes this ambivalent admiration. Dinah Birch has specialized in decoding Ruskin's conflicted assessments. Ruskin's initial conclusion about the Augustan period was that it lacked a sense of the sublimity and moral force of nature. Later, however, he commended novelists such as Henry Fielding for their moral work (Birch 163-64). Pope's poetry is initially rejected in "Of the Pathetic Fallacy" (1856) as being utterly bereft of imaginative power, and is offered as an example of the very worst kind of affected poetry, which "has set [his] teeth on edge" (Ruskin, *MP* 5: 207-8). Yet in "Lectures on Art" (1870), Ruskin presents Pope as a kind of heroic moral poet and master of English literature (Birch 167);

according to Birch, this more flattering assessment reflects Ruskin's increasing interest in the "moral and political ethics of writing" (168). Yet a persistent ambivalence towards satiric forms seems to characterize Ruskin's thought overall. He perceives the ideal of moral "truth to nature" in art to be handicapped in his century both by capitalistic corruption and by the inherent limitation of English character, which easily finds "delight in forms of the burlesque" (Ruskin, *Lectures on Art* 20: 29). The English love of Chaucer, Ruskin observes, betrays the inveterate desire of the English imagination to "stoop to play with evil" (*Lectures on Art* 20: 30). An immature "earthly instinct" (*Lectures on Art* 20: 30) infects even the most moral English writers and prevents them from achieving the sublime in art. Regrettably, an evaluation of Ruskin as a satirist himself exceeds the scope of this study, but Ina Rae Hark has evaluated *Unto this Last* (1862) as a satiric work. She aligns Ruskin's role as a Victorian sage who rages against *laissez-faire* capitalism and the dunces who promote it with that of the indignant satirist-prophet (Rae Hark 22-23). Ruskin's recurrent portrait of "Economic Man" as a dead man employs, as do many of his hyperbolic analogies, the satirical device of *reductio ad absurdum* (Birch 24). Ruskin, it seems (like Carlyle), was both attracted to and repulsed by the satiric bathos of the eighteenth century.

Another literary figure whose writing reflects the contradictory relationship between Victorian satire theory and its practice is William Makepeace Thackeray. In his lectures on "The English Humourists of the Eighteenth Century" (delivered in 1851, published 1853), Thackeray renounces his association with harsh satire, and declares instead a preference for culturally viable Horatian humour.⁵⁰ A humourist, as defined by

Thackeray, scorns hypocrisy and untruth, while also awakening the reader's pity and love for humanity. Fulfilling these precepts, Matthew Prior's poetry is praised for its "happy easy turns" and charming humour, which resemble Horace, the "most delightful and accomplished master" (221). Juvenal he regards as a "truculent brute."⁵¹ Thackeray's object in "The English Humourists" is "rather to describe the men than their works; or to deal with the latter only in as far as they seem to illustrate the character of their writers" (228). Yet this declaration betrays the necessary link (in Thackeray's mind) between the moral character of a satirist and the moral quality of his satire. Though he deems Jonathan Swift "our great satirist," Swift's character is assessed as being dangerously skeptical: he lived his life "tearing, like a man possessed with a devil" ("English Humourists" 137, 135). Thackeray selects *Gulliver's Travels*, with its "unmanly blasphemous moral" ("English Humourists" 140), as the work which most reflects Swift's personal character. Swift is portrayed more as a madman who had a genius for "roasting a subject with a vengeance" ("English Humourists" 137) than as a true writer or moralist. Another eighteenth-century wit, William Congreve, is dismissed as a man of fashion who was inspired by a morally ungrounded comic muse. But Joseph Addison's happy moral satire is praised, in sharp contrast to Swift's melancholy wit or Congreve's shallow comedy. Addison is revered by Thackeray as the "Great moralist of the last age" ("English Humourists" 168). Not surprisingly, Alexander Pope elicits the most ambivalence. Although Thackeray deems Pope's works to be "the best satire that ever has been penned," he is resentful on behalf of all authors whom Pope libeled as "Grub Street" hacks, thus "depreciat[ing]" the "literary calling" ("English Humourists" 243, 253). Yet

surprisingly, Thackeray's sketch of Pope concludes with an analogy between Pope and Bonaparte; their vices were of the meanest kind, but they nonetheless had "great soul[s]"; reluctantly, Thackeray "do[es] homage to the pen of a hero" ("English Humourists" 255). The aggressive satire and personalities of Swift and Pope unsettle Thackeray's comic/satiric ethic, while the milder satire and manner of Addison (as well as Hogarth and Smollett, whose satire is "manly, kindly, honest, and irascible" ["English Humourists" 273]), effectively conjoin satire, manliness, and morality.

Thackeray's ambivalence in "The English Humourists" towards satire culminates in his assessment of Henry Fielding, whom he cannot "hope to make a hero of" (279). Distaste for *Tom Jones*, who is "not half punished enough before the great prize of fortune and love falls to his share" ("English Humourists" 284), is ironic for the author of *Vanity Fair* (1847-8) and *Pendennis* (1848-50), given that both are novels without heroes. *Pendennis* (after the manner of *Tom Jones*) wins Laura Bell's devotion without having proven himself to be anything but a libertine. As well, in the preface to *Pendennis*, Thackeray praises Fielding's unconventionality: "Since the author of *Tom Jones* was buried, no writer of fiction among us has been permitted to depict to his utmost power a MAN. We must drape him, and give him a certain conventional simper. Society will not tolerate the Natural in our Art" (lvi). For this reason, "A little more frankness than is customary has been attempted in this story" (lvii). Despite links between Thackeray's satire and that of Horace – Sir Theodore Martin positioned Thackeray as the modern Horace (Vance 207) and David Masson praised the "Horatian strictness" of his prose

(*British Novelists* 246) – critics of his novels found them replete with Juvenalian pessimism and castigation.⁵²

Frank Palmeri's initial observation that Thackeray's increasing adherence to a Victorian doctrine of decency weakened his satire, and Dyer's view that he is the representative Victorian writer under whom satire "grew up and acceded to the values of domesticity" (167), do not accord with contemporary criticism of Thackeray's unsettling satiric method, particularly in *Vanity Fair*. Recently, in 2007, Palmeri revises his opinion to claim that *Vanity Fair* is "the last instance" of "narrative satire in early Victorian Britain" ("Narrative Satire" 367).⁵³ Although John Forester (in the *Examiner*, 22 July 1848) approved of the novel's satire, he wished that such "stifling ingredients" as unremitting satire could have been relieved by lighter moments (57). Similarly, Robert Bell (in *Fraser's Magazine*, September 1848) found that although the moral of the novel is admirable, "More light and air would have rendered it more agreeable and more healthy" (Tillotson and Hawes 65). Revealingly, undercutting both Palmeri and Dyer's view of Thackeray as a sentimentalist, Thackeray himself also remarks: "Pathos I hold should be very occasional indeed in humorous works" (Tillotson and Hawes 69). George Henry Lewes, in the *Leader* (21 December 1850), regrets what can only be called the Juvenalian tone of *Vanity Fair*: "we felt the scoundrelism and pretence oppressive" (Tillotson and Hawes 109).⁵⁴ It is certainly true that Thackeray's *Vanity Fair*/London is as inveterately corrupt and money-grubbing as Juvenal's Rome. The implied reader of *Vanity Fair* is accused of avariciously desiring the death of rich aunts, excessive amounts of roast beef, and even Amelia Sedley. From the aristocratic Crawleys to the middle-class

stock-broker Mr Sedley, scoundrels – of whom Becky Sharp is the arch-example – preside in every class. No character is offered as a model of heroic virtue. The two least offensive characters in the novel are Amelia Sedley and George Dobbin, but Amelia is an insipid, strangling vine and George is her sycophant; even the narrator is merciless and equivocal. The closing words of the novel underline the dystopic inescapability of *Vanity Fair*: “Ah! *Vanitas, Vanitatum!* Which of us is happy in this world? Which of us has his desire? or, having it, is satisfied?” (*Vanity Fair* 878). This expression of resignation to a condition of general corruption seems an echo of Juvenal’s cynical warning: “Today every vice / Has reached its ruinous zenith” (1.147-8). Thackeray’s illustration of the novelist himself (appearing after the narrator’s assertion that all members of the British middle-class – including himself – are corrupted by materialistic desires) with the smiling, Horatian jester’s mask discarded on the ground and a frown on his face is a dramatic assertion of Juvenalian pessimism. Yet, it was to Thackeray’s great indignation that he be viewed as a “dreary misanthrope” (“Charity” 282).

Anthony Trollope’s opinion of *Vanity Fair*, in his 1879 biography of Thackeray, also reveals culturally current anxieties about the morality of satire. He defends the novel as one which proved an exception to the rule of anti-satire critics and general readers, about whom he observes: “There was no doubt a feeling ... that though satire may be very well in its place, it should not be made the backbone of a work so long and so important as this” (*Thackeray* 93). In view of this injunction, Trollope marvels that Thackeray, in his first serious attempt at a novel, “dared to subject himself and Sir Pitt Crawley to the critics of the time” (*Thackeray* 96). For Trollope, the novel announces

Thackeray's investment in "the business of castigating the vices of the world" (*Thackeray* 90). Fundamentally, he admires Thackeray's effort to convey a key truth about the human condition: what he later terms the "absence of the heroic" (*Thackeray* 108). Amelia Sedley and George Dobbin are commended for being absolutely true to nature in their faulty but well-meaning impulses. Yet, although Trollope proclaims *Vanity Fair's* moral teachings to be unimpeachable, there is more than a hint of censure in his suspicion that Thackeray's concentration on vice for the purposes of moral instruction (over and above the revelation of virtue) capitalizes, somewhat improperly, on the fact that "goodness and eulogy are less exciting than wickedness and censure" (*Thackeray* 104). Similarly, *The Newcomes* (1855), Trollope complains, is over-brimming with declarations of "how vile and poor a place this world is" (*Thackeray* 115). Yet despite his criticism of Thackeray, and despite concluding his own *Barchester Towers* (1857) with the message that good always wins over evil – Mr Slope is evicted and Mr and Mrs Proudie return to London, the proper *locus* of sin – Trollope is the novelist whose explicitly contradictory opinions and practice of satire epitomize (even more than Thackeray's) a position of extreme ambivalence about the genre.

Moreover, Trollope's defense of satire's place in the novel as a method of anti-heroic representation and a source of the "physic" of moral teaching is undercut by his exploration of the dangers of satire in *An Autobiography* (1883). In this work, Trollope self-consciously struggles to reconcile his view of satire with his novelistic practice; he reveals both his high regard for and his anxiety concerning satire. Trollope's preoccupation with the etiquette of satire is reflected particularly in his troubled view of

his own novel *The Way We Live Now* (1874-5). The latter, in which he had “ventured to take the whip of the satirist into [his] hand” (*Autobiography* 225), scourges the commercial practices of his day through the story of the crass Mr Melmote, the gambling spendthrift Sir Felix, and the literary charlatan Lady Carbury. Roger Carbury, the novel’s only virtuous character, is unable to redeem (even in a small way) his hopelessly debauched social environment. Not surprisingly, the novel was roundly criticized for its satiric harshness.⁵⁵ In line with his critics, Trollope himself charges the novel with the fault he considers endemic to satire: exaggeration. Alluding to his own guilty hyperbole, he concludes: “Who when the lash of objurgation is in his hand, can so moderate his arm as never to strike harder than justice would require?” (*Autobiography* 225). Subverting his self-criticism, he maintains that in many ways his novel was a “powerful and good” satire [*Autobiography* 225]. In this grudging admission of a crime against truthful characterization, Trollope advocates what David Skilton identifies as the mid-Victorian demand for moral balance in characterization (xi).⁵⁶ Referring to *The Warden* (1855) he advocates temperate satire, which complements realism, as the elusive ideal: “Satire though it may exaggerate the vice it lashes, is not justified in creating it in order that it may be lashed. Caricature may too easily become slander and satire a libel. I believed in the existence neither of the red nosed clerical cormorant, nor in that of the venomous assassin of the journals” (*Autobiography* 65). Trollope had come to be regarded as a novelist who specialized in balanced representations of ordinary men, and he did not want satiric distortions to destroy his reputation for “true to life” portraiture. Concerns regarding caricature are at the root of Trollope’s (and his contemporaries’) discomfort

with satire. Trollope's objections to Dickens's novels also stem from his ambivalence about the truth claims of satire; Dickens's worst infraction regarding the proper humour and pathos of the novel is his exaggerated and inhuman characters or "puppets" (*Autobiography* 159). For Trollope, ungenerous caricature betrays a jaded view of society at large.⁵⁷ In a May 2 1870 letter to Alfred Austin, Trollope scathingly demolishes Austin's *The Season: A Satire* (1869) (an attack on the London marriage market) and proposes a theory of satire. He charges Austin with writing "general" and "unmixed satyre" that is wholly censorious of a world "presumed by the satyrist to be so grievous as to oppress the virtues, – I doubt the use, and generally doubt the truth" (*Letters* 515). (Trollope finds the attack too general in its omission of virtuous female exceptions.) He admits this is a judgment upon all such wholesale satire: "And satyre runs ever into exaggeration, leaving the conviction that not justice but revenge, is desired" (*Letters* 515). Such exceedingly "strong" "modes of expression" obliterate truth for the reader, "as the eater loses the flavour of his meat through the multiplied uses of sautes and pepper" (*Letters* 516). Similarly, in "On English Prose Fiction as a Rational Amusement" (1870), Trollope justifies his condemnation of *Gulliver's Travels*: "Satire may be virtuous, – may also be useful. To be the first it should spring from a hatred of vice, and not from disappointed hopes. To be the latter it should at least be true" ("English Prose Fiction" 106). Trollope's concerns about untruth and injustice in satiric works of fiction stem from a contradictory tension between satire and realism inherent in his theory of the novel.

Although Trollope commits to the Carlylean idea of the novelist as a producer of "sermons" to warn of evil conduct and promote a "system of Ethics" that makes "virtue

alluring and vice ugly” (*Autobiography* 143), a novel should also “give a picture of common life enlivened by humour, and sweetened by pathos” (*Autobiography* 84). The novel should be both “moral and amusing” (*Thackeray* 184). As guide and tutor, the “novelist creeps in closer than the schoolmaster, closer than the father, closer almost than the mother” (*Thackeray* 203). Given that satire’s aim is moral correction, which Trollope also views as the aim of the novel, then why is he so resistant to satire? Trollope’s Ruskin- and Eliot-approved moral realism requires truth to nature; therefore, novelists should steer a “middle course” between “romance” and “burlesque” (*Thackeray* 186-87). In other words, satire, with its immoderate, pessimistic, and caricatural tendencies, counters its own moral objectives, jeopardizing the high art of moral realism. For example, according to Trollope, Thackeray’s chief fault was that (at the expense of truth) he could never “abstain from that dash of satire” (*Autobiography* 121). According to this formulation, satire is a guilty pleasure that contaminates the noble truths of realism. Further complicating Trollope’s view of the problem of satiric restraint is his inability (like Thackeray before him) to separate authors from their satire.

Trollope agrees with Thackeray that *Gulliver’s Travels* is “the most cynical, the most absolutely illnatured, and therefore the falsest” satire “in our language” (*Thackeray* 161); the ill-natured cynicism he speaks of is Swift’s. Trollope’s equivocal assessment of Thackeray’s own cynicism further reveals a discomfort with satire as a form of writing which betrays, and possibly augments, a personal habit of cynicism – a habit that is ungenerous and unhealthy.⁵⁸ Trollope struggles with the fact that cynicism and the cynic have always had the negative connotation of reflecting an unkind disposition.⁵⁹ Yet

Trollope is puzzled that Thackeray, with his kindly disposition, actually wrote satire (a fundamentally cynical form):

Any satirist might in the same way be called a cynic in so far as his satire goes. Swift was a cynic certainly. Pope was cynical when he was a satirist. Juvenal was all cynical, because he was all satirist. If that be what is meant, Thackeray was certainly a cynic. But that is not all that the word implies. It intends to go back beyond the work of the man, and to describe his heart. It says of any satirist so described that he has given himself up to satire, not because things have been evil, but because he himself has been evil. ... If Thackeray be judged after this fashion, the word is as inappropriate to the writer as to the man. (*Thackeray* 207)

Trollope feared “giving himself up to satire” because of its implications for his personal character: “The satirist who writes nothing but satire should write but little, – or it will seem that his satire springs rather from his own caustic nature than from the sins of the world in which he lives” (Trollope, *Autobiography* 121).⁶⁰ Preoccupation with the moral integrity of the novel as a genre, his sense of the ethically close relation between author and text, and the problematic quality of cynicism, tainted – even confused – Trollope’s view of satire as a moral genre. His suspicion of satire (like Thackeray’s) was a dominant critical trend. For example, in *Partial Portraits* (1888), Henry James offers mixed praise for Trollope’s plodding realism, but commends his “wholesome mistrust of morbid analysis” (“Anthony Trollope” 528). As Stuart Justman argues, Trollope, “a sometimes satirist” (84), belongs more to the line of Addisonian moderation (i.e. Horatian satire), for

continually he qualifies his satiric criticism with an “endorsement of things as they are” (90). Trollope’s investment in the truth-based integrity of the novel as a moral genre and his sense of the ethical kinship between author and text chastened his attraction to satire – especially the guilty pleasure of Juvenalian satire, which tempts the writer toward the evils of unamiability and a view of the world as “going straight away to darkness and the dogs” (*Autobiography* 224). Like many of his contemporaries, Trollope was a most reluctant satirist.

Another novelist aspiring to keep satire in its place was George Meredith; unlike Trollope however, Meredith seems less conscious of the frequent contradictions between his published views of satire and his unwitting satiric practice. In “An Essay on Comedy and the Uses of the Comic Spirit” (1877), he extols what he names the “Comic Spirit” as a form of “clear Hellenic perception of facts” of the “actual world” (443, 433). As “a fountain of sound sense,” it is an anodyne to the modern social ills of egoism and ennui. Meredith rejects Puritan notions of comedy as a “jade” or “vile mask” (“Essay on Comedy” 433, 434); these descriptions more accurately characterize satire, which, by contrast, is too harsh and misanthropic for salutary effects. In place of the priestly “pain of satirical heat, and the bitter craving to strike heavy blows,” Meredith advocates a genial moralism, which he personifies as a mischievous sprite who chases folly not with angry contempt but with calmly intellectual “sunny malice” (“Essay on Comedy” 447, 446). Arguably, Meredith’s comic spirit is the ideal Horatian satirist who is temperate and laughing. The vengeful, unamused Juvenalian satirist, by contrast, is too bitter about inexorable corruption to be morally effective. True “comic intelligence” is above the

angry contempt of satire; unfortunately, according to Meredith, the English excel at satiric forms because of a “national disposition for hard-hitting, with a moral purpose to sanction it” (“Essay on Comedy” 443). The degrading metaphor throughout the essay for satire is that of a vulture, a “social scavenger” whose beak “smells like carrion” and is full of destructive bile and the base desire to scourge (“Essay on Comedy” 445); contrastingly, the heavenly “Comic Spirit” is restrained and “humanely malign” – the embodiment of reason (“Essay on Comedy” 446). Robert Martin argues simply that Meredith promotes intellectual wit over sentimental humour, but, importantly, Meredith rejects the cold and narrowly self-righteous cruelty of satire. Meredith’s comic theory is infused with the centuries of debate (detailed in this chapter) about the moral and artistic integrity of satire; his essay evokes the “comic spirits” of Aristophanes, Rabelais, Voltaire, Cervantes, and Fielding (“Essay on Comedy” 442) – interestingly, a mixture of Horatian and Juvenalian satirists. Furthermore, Meredith’s *The Egoist: A Comedy in Narrative* (1879), which begins with an evocation of the “Comic Spirit,” is far more satiric (even Juvenalian) in its mode of anatomizing egoism than is permitted by Meredith’s own theory of comedy. “The Book of Egotism” appears throughout the narrative (blasphemously evoking the patrilineal customs of the Bible) to satirize the incurable egoism that reduces “the English Gentleman” to a destructive artifice. The astoundingly successful influence of “The Book of Egoism” – as “few people are in the habit of thinking for themselves” (“Essay on Comedy” 434) – is a Juvenalian criticism of the ineffectiveness of the forces of pure intellect.

Just as there were strong counter-currents of anti-satiric theory in the eighteenth-century alongside the abundant production of strong satire, the Victorian theoretical distaste for satire did not annul its literary practice. Thus, although theorists of Victorian political, social, and literary culture such as Arnold, Carlyle and Ruskin, and more importantly for this study, Victorian novelists, often express a preference for kind humour over cruel wit, the Juvenalian mode (which is more securely satiric rather than comic) is ubiquitously enacted in the period's novelistic discourse.

1.iii Theoretical Disorientation: Twentieth-Century Satire Theory

Victorian satire requires a defense, not only because it has been condemned in the comico-satiric theory of many of the period's influential writers, but because it has been overlooked in the crossfire of contemporary generic debates about satire, both in general, and particularly in the novel. Dustin Griffin contends that after the "hostility of Victorian criticism" (29), theorists and critics of satire in the twentieth century found it necessary to resuscitate and defend satire as a literary art. As previously discussed, satire's fluctuating status (in literary circles) as a mode and/or genre, and the nature of its distinguishing characteristics, has been the subject of incessant debate from the ancient period to the present. The confusing narrative of satire's evolution is as follows: it is an ancient mode that became a Roman genre and then, as some believe, reverted to its modal status, while others (such as Leon Guilhamet) maintain that it has always been a genre – admittedly, a protean genre of mixed forms. Against Guilhamet, P. K. Elkin argues that satire is not a form as much as an "informing spirit" (11). For example, in the Augustan era, anything

that “smacked of censure and was delivered in a mocking, ironical, derisive, censorious, abusive, or a jesting manner,” was construed as satire (Elkin 11). Similarly, Northrop Frye observes that satire “hardly exists now” as a form, but instead thrives mainly as a “tone” or “attitude” (“Nature” 75).⁶¹ Yet, despite the modal focus of many critics of satire, there is a widespread tendency to revert to generic conclusions. Fredrick Bogel refers to this critical trend in satire studies as “fence sitting” (5) between genre and mode.

Like many critics of satire, Edward and Lillian Bloom, while determined to embrace satire’s complexity as a mode, still promote quasi-essentialist claims about its nature. Although the Blooms acknowledge that satire is “like the god Mercury...wearing many guises” (5), they determine that it is fundamentally a “persuasive art” (20-21) “prompted by the realistic and topical” (23). George Test’s *Satire: Spirit and Art* (1991) also exemplifies the contradictions and confusions characteristic of satire theory. His goal is to examine satire as “merely the aesthetic manifestation of a universal urge too varied as to elude definition” (ix). Defining satire as a “bent,” he nonetheless offers four elements that are “basic to satire”: attack, laughter, play, and judgment (Test 12, x). In a similar vein, John Snyder argues confusingly that satire, the “most shape-shifting of all genres,” is a “semi-genre” – or rather an “unstable genre” (11, 15) without an essence. In fact, he asserts it is a method more than a genre, which has “its own characteristic deployment of power” (Snyder 15) – namely rational superiority. Snyder then proceeds to define satire as the “*genre* most resorted to for political critique” (132; italics mine). Charles A. Knight also tries to avoid labeling satire as either a mode or a genre, concluding that it transcends both in its status as an attacking “frame of mind” or to

become “pre-generic”: “a mental position that needs to adopt a genre” (1-5). Arguably, this definition necessarily positions satire as a mode. All of these critical positions demonstrate that thematic and tonal (or modal) analyses of satire tend ultimately toward formal assessments.

Edward W. Rosenheim assesses satire as both a mode and a genre, but places his emphasis on the satiric target: “All satire is not only an attack; it is an attack upon *discernible, historically authentic particulars*” (317-18). Knight adds literary subjects to the satiric target or “referent”: “satire straddles the historical world of experience and the imaginative world of Ideas and insists on the presence of both” (45). Many critics concur that topical referentiality and factuality are central to satire (Bogel 9, E. Bloom and L. Bloom 34, Test 29, Snyder 97, and Hooley, *Roman Satire* 169). The relatively greater importance of the historical-referential world outside the text further distinguishes satire from comedy. Elkin finds that satire elicits “responsible laughter,” not the “liberating” laughter of comedy (13). As well, David Worchester distinguishes between comedy and satire by the specificity and “intensity of condemnation” (37). Comedy’s laughter is comparatively purposeless (Worchester 38). Rosenheim’s conviction that “the essence of the satiric procedure is attack” (321) appears to hold sway. Dyer, for example, updates this view in his definition of satire as “sophisticated discursive assault” (10). In various critical accounts of satire, past and recent, the object of attack remains definitive, or even as Bogel calls it, a “generic imperative” (9). Whether the attack is ascribed as being moral or not is another issue that perplexes critics of satire.

Dustin Griffin regrets that twentieth-century theory has not substantially revised Augustan or even ancient notions of satire (28). Drawing attention to the partisan nature of all critical commentary, he condemns the efforts of scholars of the 1950s and 1960s for being too attached to hopelessly outmoded assessments of satire as a narrowly moral and didactic art. Mary Claire Randolph's landmark 1942 essay on verse satire, for example, reasserts Casaubon and Dryden's views (Griffin 28). Certainly Northrop Frye, "the most influential modern theorist" of satire (Spacks 361), does maintain Dryden's essential definition of satire as wit or humour combined with an object of attack; as well, he reiterates the notion of a Horatian and Juvenalian polarity, but reconfigures this as a continuum whose boundaries are comedy (humour without attack) and tragedy (attack without humour) ("Nature" 75). Fundamentally, however, Frye differs from Dryden by associating satire overall with tragedy and not epic ("Nature" 86-87). Contrary to Patricia Meyer Spacks, Frye refuses to "dismiss moral purpose as a necessary component of satire" (Spacks 362); instead, along with Dryden, he suggests that satire contains "an assertion and defense of a moral principle" ("Nature" 78). Frye argues that satire's "moral norms are relatively clear, and it assumes standards against which the grotesque and absurd are measured" (*Anatomy* 223). Selection of a satirical target is a "moral act" (*Anatomy* 224). The overall critical consensus of the 1950s and 1960s, according to Griffin, is that satire is monolithic and clear-cut in its aims and moral standards (35). Yale satire scholars, for example, including Maynard Mack, Alvin Kernan, Robert C. Elliott, and Ronald Paulson, produced a rhetorical theory of satire – related to the then-ascendant New Criticism – invested, as Dryden was, in defending satire as an art (Griffin 28-29),

specifically a moral art. (That satire still needed defending is evidenced by the opening sentence of Gilbert Highet's *Anatomy of Satire* (1962): "Satire is not the greatest type of literature" [3].) In the 1960s, University of Chicago satire theorists, such as Sheldon Sacks, and Edward Rosenheim challenged the purely rhetorical focus of the Yale school and emphasized historical context, but still the moral imperative of satire remained *the* dominant generic signifier (Griffin 31).

Griffin would undoubtedly reject pronouncements such as Maynard Mack's in "The Muse of Satire" (1951): satire "asserts the validity and necessity of norms, systematic values, and meanings that are contained by recognizable codes" (as opposed to tragedy, which tends to show the limits of ethical codes) (194). Similarly, Kernan posits that the satirist "sees the world as a battlefield between a definite clearly understood good, which he represents, and an equally clear-cut evil" (21-22). P. K. Elkin observes that satire increases the reader's awareness of "norms, conventions, traditions, and established standards" (7). Griffin avidly rejects what he interprets as being biased views of the satirist having moral tunnel vision; satiric rhetoric, he insists, need not be categorized as "simply ... the communication of previously codified moral knowledge," but can be identified instead as "a rhetoric of inquiry and provocation" that creates a more complex relation to satiric targets than simple rejection (39, 64). The satirist, he argues, is rarely in full control of the satiric work – even its moral message. Interestingly, however, Griffin is unable to dispense fully with moral positioning in satiric rhetoric. He concedes that the moral element is present as "one strand" in satire; most of satire's moral ideas "are often so elementary... as to be a kind of irreducible moral minimum for

sentient beings” (37). Griffin’s basic point, however, is that satire is a genre which tends to challenge the orthodoxies of received opinion, and thus is not necessarily a politically conservative genre entrenched in the status quo (60). Fredrick Bogel also calls for a “more adequate theory” with which to assess the “complexities of the satiric mode” (vii-viii). In his post-structuralist approach, he wishes to dispense with the “secure” binary (based on authorial intention) between satirist and satiric object; he troubles this dualism by arguing that the satirist exists in an angst-ridden relationship with the satiric target. His goal is to subvert the “alleged clarity of satire’s norms of judgment” that have given satire “generic stability” (Bogel 3). Bogel, however, like Griffin, disregards the moral complexity ascribed to satire by earlier critics. Both critics, in their efforts to challenge satire’s status as a moral art, over-simplify the conclusions of the theorists of the 1950s and 1960s, who grappled with satire’s variegated moral ethos in their efforts to explore its contradictory nature (for example, its simultaneous tendencies towards both the conservative and rebellious).

Griffin and Bogel believe that to conceive of satire as being narrowly moral or ethical necessarily reduces it to a monologic, conservative genre. Linda Hutcheon makes a similar critical conflation in her theory of parody.⁶² It is important to note, however, that many theorists do not agree that the Varro-Diomedes-Dryden notion of satire as a moral art is *necessarily* yoked to a conservative investment in the status quo. In my view, much of the critical confusion in current satire theory results from varying interpretations of the concept of moral/ethical positioning in satiric texts. For example, Robert C. Elliott acknowledges the ostensible conservatism of the Tory satirists (who, ironically, saw

themselves as the “true” Whigs [Carretta 35]), but also notes the revolutionary potential of satire. Swift, he argues, as a Tory could not have wished to dismantle the political and social structures in place, but his art “[i]nstead of shoring up foundations, it tears them down. It is revolutionary” (275).⁶³ As well, for Frye, the moral quality of satire does not preclude its revolutionary potential, due to the pragmatic nature of many of its “moral sentiments” (“Nature” 78) (for example, its position against greed and hypocrisy). Furthermore, the “innate nihilism of satire can be put to revolutionary use” (Frye, “Nature” 88).⁶⁴ Charles Knight argues that satire, concerned primarily with the well-being of a community, is inherently neither conservative nor liberal (226). Yet, Knight, like Griffin, Bogel and others, is equivocal about the moral aspect of satire. Ideally, he suggests, satire is independent of moral purpose but “insofar as satire is moral at all, it tends to create its own values” based on an ironic perspective towards the “historical subject” (Knight 5, 6-8). According to this approach, satire often implicitly involves moral resistance to moral norms. Similarly, the Blooms note that “every satire is built on some form of reproach” (120), even if it is reproach of current moral norms. It appears that George Levine’s description of the term *realism* as being “dangerously multivalent” and provoking “sticky self-contradictions” (*Realistic* 102-3), applies equally to the word *moral*.⁶⁵

Griffin calls for a “new theoretical consensus” (2) in satire theory, but admits that this is far from being achieved. Satire theory remains in a disjointed state, it seems, due to its incompatibility with post-structuralist rejections of intentionality, and what Wayne Booth refers to as a ubiquitous ban on moral criticism based on the “conflation” of

narrow “moral codes” with “total ethical effect” (242). Satire studies, as Kirk Combe predicts, benefit from trends in new historicism – the identification of Rosenheim’s “historically authentic particulars” – yet satire theory seems beleaguered as much as ever by terminological confusion related to morality and ethics. Reduced to its perennial elements in terms of centuries of haphazard consensus, satire is a mode and/or genre; it is parodic and variegated in its form and subjects; involves a critical attitude, or attack that is moral (in the various senses of that troublemaking word); and is often politically oriented (towards either the preservation or, quite often, the destruction of dominant ideology) – utilizing for its critique ironic elements of wit or humour. Yet, the genealogical chaos surrounding satire in general is only unleashed in full force when satire’s relationship to the novel is confronted, “[a]nd Universal Darkness buries All” (Pope, *Dunciad* IV 656).

1.iv The Menippean Abyss: Satire and the Novel

A central site of satire’s theoretical and practical dislocation continues to be the novel. Although rigorous divisions between prose and verse satire have been condemned as “superficial” (Guilhamet ix), prose fiction in the form of the novel has been perceived to be scattering the remains of satire as a genre (and even as a mode) beyond theoretical recuperation. Many critics would like to see a revised theory of satire as it functions in prose fiction. Despite this hope, there is a surprisingly widespread tendency among critics of satire to avoid the novel altogether. Gary Dyer, for example, omits the novel from his assessment of satires written between 1789-1832, arguing that satire’s borders with the

novel are generally too vague. Griffin's remarkable statement also exposes this trend: "In the last two hundred years satire in the Western tradition is most commonly found not as an independent form or parody; it is found in the novel. But what happens when satire invades the novel is a subject so vast and unwieldy that I do not attempt to treat it here" (3). In 2005, Duncan Kennedy quotes this declaration and adds in wistful overstatement, "sadly no one else does either" (308).

For Guilhamet, satire as a genre has a definitive structural attribute: the tendency to mix, absorb, appropriate, and blend other genres, to "deform" and transform them into satire (11-16). In similar terms, Terry Eagleton's panoramic study, *The English Novel: an Introduction* (2005), assesses the generic elusiveness of the novel, asserting that it "is the most hybrid of literary forms" – it is a "maverick form" (*English* 6). The novel has clear roots in romance (including texts of ancient Mediterranean cultures): "Novels are romances – but romances which have to negotiate the prosaic world" (Eagleton, *English* 2). Yet, the novel's ties with romance are contradictory, for, according to Eagleton, novels are "wedded to the common life" and must reject "rhetoric and fantasy" (*English* 5, 4). Novels, in fact, are "a satire on romance, and thus a kind of anti-literature" (Eagleton, *English* 3). Paulson would agree: "Satire's realism, violent exaggeration, [and] discursive expository," he suggests, are rooted in anti-romance (*Satire* 23). Specifically, George Levine concurs that "nineteenth-century realism defined itself against romance because that form implied wish fulfillment rather than reality" (*Realistic* 9). Eagleton, however, focuses on the novel's ambivalent relationship with romance and does not explore the generic cross-fertilization of the novel and satire.⁶⁶ Both the realist novel and

satire, it seems, are held to be literature's most generically hybridic forms, and both (critics claim) have a similar relationship to reality. What Levine states as the crux of realism applies to both: the "self-conscious effort, usually in the name of some kind of moral enterprise of truth telling" (*Realistic* 8).⁶⁷ Juvenal, for example, insisting upon the veracity of the sexual immorality that he exposes in Satire VI, protests that he is not "making the whole thing up": "How I wish that it *was* all nonsense!" (6.635, 638). Satire and the novel, particularly the "realist" novel, exist in confusingly close correlation.⁶⁸

One critic who has braved the disorienting generic overlap between satire and the novel is Paulson, whose *Fictions of Satire* (1967) and *Satire and the Novel* (1967) consider the ways in which satire was transformed and absorbed by novelists in the mid-eighteenth century. For Paulson both the novel and satire find common ground in realism (*Satire* 11). The similarity of novelistic representational realism and satire is revealed, for Paulson, by the fact that just as realism is a practice which aims at "truth to life"⁶⁹ the premise of satire is that it is not fiction (*Satire* 20-23). Both forms rely on dramatic and mimetic structures and conventions. Essentially, for Paulson, satire involves "fictions" which engage in the "mimesis, exploration and analysis" of evil – usually in the form of excessive order or chaos (*Fictions* 78, 20). Both the novel and satire are topical genres, despite the novel's aim of truth to actual experience and satire's ideal of ironic detachment (*Satire* 7). Paulson observes, however, a drift in the eighteenth century away from discursively formal satire to satire that foregrounds its fictionality while maintaining the conventions of verisimilitude (*Fictions* 76). Augustan satire, according to Paulson, evolves by focusing less on the satirist as a detached "normative satiric commentator"

(*Fictions* 143) (as in Swift's *Tale of a Tub*). This creates an interesting paradox: "as satire increases in rhetorical effectiveness it draws less and less attention to itself as satire; ultimately the most effective satire (given its satiric aims) would be the one that passed as something else" (Paulson, *Fictions* 152). Paulson's evocative suggestion that satire may often simply be passing as novelistic realism reinforces the perplexing generic contiguity of the forms.

Paulson asserts that the satirist "customarily regards reality as something that the ordinary person can see only if he takes off the glasses of convention" (*Satire* 18). In tacit agreement, Elkin observes that satiric writers from Dryden to Goldsmith, wishing both to delight and instruct, believed that in order to educate successfully, satire must be realistic: "the goal of the satirist was to show people as they were and the age what it was like" (81). In fact, it cast itself as "superior realism" (Elkin 82). In the preface to *Joseph Andrews* (1742), for example, Fielding insists that, in opposition to the distortions of romance, everything in his novel/"comic Epic-Poem in Prose" "is copied from the book of Nature" ("Preface" 8). Regretfully, Paulson concludes that satire in the novels of Fielding and Smollett is, for the most part, "domesticated" (*Fictions* 222) or "sublimated" (*Satire* 291); it is reduced to one element of a larger whole (*Fictions* 222). Key differences between the novel and satire are summarized as follows: the novel typically promotes new values, whereas satire is usually conservative; the novel is more concerned with character, satire with action; novelists search for "ultimate truths," while satirists "see[k] at best a provisional truth" (*Fictions* 230). Furthermore, Paulson discerns a structural tension between the sentimental and satiric content of novels. There is a

continual alternation between the angry demolition of the satiric object and the sentimental evocation of pathos (*Fictions* 237-239). This novelistic structure extends “deep into the nineteenth century” – and is best exemplified by the “satiric logic” of Dickens’s novels (*Satire* 236). Paulson concludes that satire’s extinction as a major genre is related to its envelopment by the sentimental novel; both claim to be morally improving, and both employ melodramatic scenes of strong feeling (*Satire* 239). The crucial difference is that satire emphasizes the agency of evil, while sentimental novels emphasize that of good (*Satire* 237). Paulson concludes that English authors from Fielding onwards increasingly exhibit a sentimental focus on good (*Satire* 245-6); whereas, satire, in Guilhamet’s words, “sets its gaze squarely on the worst of what is real” (16).

Paulson’s thesis concerning the similarities yet ultimate divergence of the forms, influenced by Stuart Tave’s earlier conclusions about the ascendancy of humour over wit, has been widely accepted. For example, Charles Knight agrees that relations between the novel and satire are difficult to assess due to the “generic closeness of the forms” (203). Both forms exhibit abundant similarities; for example, formal self-consciousness, parodic intertextuality, assertions of originality, and a concern for the relationship between the individual and society (Knight 203, 206). The key difference between them, however, is the complexity of characters and the degree of readerly sympathy generated for them in the narrative (Knight 232). When criticism of society is secondary to the depiction of psychology, he insists, satires become novels (and vice versa) (Knight 204-5). Frank Palmeri, in *Satire, History, Novel: Narrative Forms* (2003), holds a similar view. Satire

was a strong element in comic-realistic narrative in Britain until the 1780s; after this date, satire gradually “assumed a subordinate and local role in the narrative as a whole” (32). More sentimentality in the novel resulted in the increasing accommodation of distinctly un-satiric middle grounds.⁷⁰ Smollett, for example, sacrificed satire for a realistic, domestic focus on his characters (Palmeri, *Satire, History* 41, 185, 293).⁷¹

It is important to note that critical efforts to identify the ideological limitations of representational realism have necessarily sidelined satire. Satire complicates the notion that realism is a “predominantly conservative form” (Belsey 51). Generally, satire is an unsettling mode/genre whereas, as Catherine Belsey argues, “[t]he experience of reading a realist text is ultimately reassuring” and reflective of the “world we seem to know” (51). Francis O’Gorman notes that theories of realism prevalent in late 1970s and 1980s which engaged in post-structuralist arguments (influenced by Barthes’ theories of language and Althusserian notions of ideology) interpreted Victorian realists as “naïve and dangerously conservative” (*Victorian Novel* 94). O’Gorman considers Belsey’s assessment of “classic realism” to be typical of the trend in the 1980s towards politicized readings of realism (*Victorian Novel* 94-95). According to Belsey, the “empiricist-idealist” position encoded in realist texts is founded on a conception human nature as unchanging, “transcendent” (7), and not socially constituted. A “classic realist” text is ideologically incapable of accepting contradiction. Thus, its characters are self-consistent and their natures reflect a “system of character-differences existing in the world” (Belsey 74). Maggie and Tom Tulliver in Eliot’s *Mill on the Floss* (1860), Belsey argues, are depicted as having “essential differences” (74). Yet, this conclusion necessarily ignores

the novel's overt critique of the gendered social influences forming character. "Classic realism" also preserves its lack of contradiction through a narrative in which disorder is ultimately replaced by order (Belsey 91). The latter is necessary to lull (or "interpellate") the reader into a non-contradictory subject position (usually of that the omniscient narrator) (Belsey 91). This subject position is a construction that confirms a middle class vision of social reality. Insistence upon the "classic realist" text's requirements of self-consistent characterizations and enactment of closure – a position articulated not only by Belsey, but also by Terry Eagleton, Toril Moi, Elizabeth Deeds Ermarth, and others – preclude its generic connection with satire.⁷²

According to Brian Connery and Kirk Combe, one aspect of satire that consistently confuses critics is its frequent lack of satisfying closure: its "open-endedness, irresolution, and thus chaos" (5). This quality of satire squarely opposes a key tenet of "classic realism" yet pervades the realist novel. Arguing against the assumption that Victorian novelists were naïve about the constraints of realism, Levine asserts that they "were already self-conscious about the nature of their medium" (*Realistic* 100). "With remarkable frequency," he argues, "they are alert to the arbitrariness of the reconstructed order toward which they point" (Levine, *Realistic* 101). Novelists reveal this awareness "through self-reference and parody" (Levine, *Realistic* 101). The notion that Victorian realist texts are inherently opposed to indeterminacy discounts the prevalence of self-reflexive narrative techniques which ironize realism and satirize its narrative conventions. In works by Trollope, Thackeray, and Brontë, satiric narrators frequently comment upon the artificial constraints of the three-volume novel and critique the limitations of their

middle-class audience. Henry James, for one, resented this habitual destruction of the realist illusion, particularly in Trollope's novels. In *Barchester Towers* (1857), closure is orchestrated with jocular irony: "These leave takings in novels are as disagreeable as they are in real life; not so sad, perplexing, and generally less satisfactory. What novelist, what Fielding, what Scott, . . . can impart interest in the last chapter of his fictitious history. Promises of two children and superhuman happiness are of no avail" (*Barchester Towers* 251). As well, Thackeray's narrator in *Vanity Fair* (1847-48) describes the various genres in which he could have portrayed the subject of his Vauxhall chapter and then settles parodically upon realism: "Let us then step in the coach" (despite the fact that there is "barely room") (*Vanity Fair* 61). In Chapter 5, I discuss Brontë's satiric reduction of *Shirley*'s ending to a business transaction. Theories of realism's reliance on uncomplicated closure repeatedly disregard the Victorian satire on narrative conventions of realism.

"Classic realist" novels frequently employ allegorical or picaresque modes to devastate habits both of literary realism and the world it claims to represent. Such narrative modes are characteristic of Menippean satire (a definition of which is forthcoming). The picaro/satirist is a changeable figure whose plasticity extends the critique of human society as far as narratively possible. Inconsistent characters are effective vehicles of satire, and, ironically, are quite populous in "classic realist" texts. Furthermore, Sally Shuttleworth points out that theories insisting upon a unified psychological subject as being critical to the form of the realist novel "fail to take into account the complexity of nineteenth-century social and scientific thought"; the

individual subject was not represented in these discourses as necessarily coherent or self-directing (*Eliot* 12-13). Shuttleworth's statement calls to mind many central characters of Victorian novels. In *Great Expectations*, Pip's hazy awareness of his masochistic habit of self-suppression results in numerous proclamations of a divided self ("restlessly aspiring discontented me" [135]). Hardy's Jude Fawley is a self-proclaimed "chaos of principles groping in the dark" (*Jude* 399). Even Arthur Donnithorne of *Adam Bede*, George Eliot's prototypical realist text, wavers between the deeds that will determine his character due to that psychological source of inconsistency, the "backstairs influence" or "small unnoticeable wheel" (173) of the unconscious. In fact, Victorian "classic realist" texts are preoccupied with divided, inconsistent characters who are directed by motives and habits of mind of which they are not fully aware. Far from opposing satire in the novel (as Paulson claims), psychological realism creates inconsistent characters who are apt vehicles of satire.

Despite Paulson's articulation of fundamental differences between novelistic realism and satire, he acknowledges the continuance of what he terms "Lucianic satire." The latter, evident in the novels of Cervantes and Fielding, involves a (corruptible) *picaro* character (often of low birth) who journeys through a world of robbers and charlatans (or even journeys to another world entirely) to show the "multifarious complexity of experience" and to "ridicule the over-formalized" (*Satire* 24-25). Paulson's acceptance of Lucianic/Menippean satire as "one branch of satire more or less parallel to the aim of the novel" (*Satire* 157) seems at odds both with his view of the novel and satire as two discontinuous traditions (*Satire* 10), and with his previous definition of the

novel as sentimental and character-based. Yet it accords with Mikhail Bakhtin and Northrop Frye's generic conclusions about Menippean satire.

Duncan Kennedy asks if Greek and Roman satiric traditions are truly "dead in the water" (299), or if the prevalence of referring to satire as a mode has simply clouded genealogical connections between ancient and modern forms of satire. Kennedy commends Bakhtin and Frye for their assessment of the formal features of prose fiction and for their "construct[ion of] genealogies that extend back to the Roman satirical tradition" (301). I contend that Bakhtin and Frye's theories, if combined, reveal satire to be far more than an incidental mode in the novel; specifically, Horatian, Juvenalian and Menippean satire are modal and generic properties of the Victorian novel.

1.v Dialogic Genres: The Novel and Satire

Together with Paul Medvedev in *The Formal Method in Literary Scholarship* (1929), Mikhail Bakhtin criticized Russian Formalist's neglect of the ideological aspects of language and literature (Striedter 3). Victor Shklovsky, for example, in his landmark essay "Art as Device" (1916), focuses on the purely formal or aesthetic function (at the expense of the ideological) of what he determines to be the key device of all literary art: *priem ostroneniya*, the device of defamiliarization (Striedter 23). Defamiliarization, for Shklovsky, "impedes the kind of perception automatized by social convention" (Striedter 23-24), and thus renders the familiar unfamiliar. Furthermore, defamiliarization draws attention to the literariness of literary art by disrupting the reader's habitual perception of reality. This technique exposes perceptual illusions (created by habit/convention) and

promotes the “deautomatization” of the reader (Striedter 25). Shklovsky and other Formalists increasingly applied such poetic theories to prose, specifically the novel. In “Discourse in the Novel,” Bakhtin argues for the unification of formalism and ideological criticism (*Dialogic* 259). He promotes Shklovsky’s notion of literary art as estranging and therefore destructive of convention, but adds, through his concept of dialogization, a diachronic approach which considers socio-cultural ideology and thus politicizes this formal property – particularly of the novel.

For Bakhtin, novels magnify and expose the cultural system from which they emerge by artistically exploring “the internal dialogism of discourse” (*Dialogic* 285). Given that language is “ideologically saturated” (*Dialogic* 271) with a world view, the existence of many languages (heteroglossia) in a text implies “the co-existence of socio-ideological contradictions” (*Dialogic* 300). The “novelistic word... registers with extreme subtlety the tiniest shifts and oscillations of the social atmosphere” (*Dialogic* 300). By contrast, closed forms (such as epic poetry) adhere to unitary or monologic language, and therefore “serve to unify and centralize the verbal-ideological world” (*Dialogic* 270).⁷³ Heteroglossia is absent from all literary forms invested in the centripetal forces “of sociopolitical cultural centralization” (*Dialogic* 271). The novel, by virtue of its heteroglossic language, is connected to the contradictory flux of authentic social variety and therefore promotes decentralizing, centrifugal forces which counter dominant ideologies (*Dialogic* 271). Bakhtin argues that the novel subverts the “*habitual matrices*” (*sosedstva*) or conventions of both society and literature (*Dialogic* 169). “Dialogization” – a “diversity of social speech types (sometimes even diversity of

languages) and diversity of individual voices, artistically organized” (*Dialogic* 262) – is the distinctive feature of the novel. Bakhtin clarifies that novelistic language is stratified, for it includes genres both literary (short stories, poems) (*Dialogic* 264, 323) and extra-literary (letters, diaries, confessions, forms of rhetoric, political manifestos) (*Rabelais* 33); it also includes language reflecting social stratification (such as professional jargon and age-specific language). Most importantly, the novel is infused with the discourse of characters, whose speech is always an “ideologue” that blends the speech of both other characters and the narrator (*Dialogic* 333, 319). Yet another language that is refracted in the novel is that of the author. In short, the novel offers generic and social diversity through heteroglossia (*Dialogic* 368). Famously, Bakhtin also asserts that the novel “gets on poorly with other genres” (*Dialogic* 5). Unlike “straightforward genres,” the novel “is always criticizing itself” and is parodic and “double-voiced” (*Dialogic* 49, 273). Parody requires the “stratification of literary language into generic languages” (*Dialogic* 76). Being the antithesis of hegemonic discourse, the novel undermines the authority of not only social but literary custom.

Bakhtin theorizes that the serio-comic, heteroglossic novel developed out of the “Second Line” of the European novel (in contrast to the “First Line” or Sophistic novel, which is not heteroglossic but “purely monologic” [*Dialogic* 372]). Serio-comic authors such as Cervantes and Rabelais excelled in juxtaposing everyday language with rhetorically ornate romantic discourses (*Dialogic* 383). Parodically stylized, the comic novel became an “encyclopedia of all strata and forms of literary language” (*Dialogic* 301). A distinctive aspect of the serio-comic novel, Bakhtin proposes, is the presence of

the “direct authorial word” (sentiment or a moral, didactic discourse) which “directly embodies (without any refracting) semantic and axiological intentions of the author” (*Dialogic* 301). Yet the main language infusing the comic novel (through which the author’s voice *is* refracted) is that of the “common language” or the “going point of view” (*Dialogic* 301) – the general, habitually held opinion of the body politic.

Furthermore, the novels of Fielding, Smollett, and Sterne parody multiple discourses – scholarly, moral, rhetorical, professional, and poetic. Perhaps most importantly, they parody novelistic discourse itself – a “means for refracting new authorial intentions” (*Dialogic* 309). In this way, the novel preserves its open-endedness and plasticity: “the generic skeleton of the novel is still far from having hardened” (*Dialogic* 3). Although the novel develops in the Hellenic period, late Middle Ages, and the Renaissance, Bakhtin holds (along with Ian Watt) that it does so “with special force and clarity at the beginning of the second half of the eighteenth century” (*Dialogic* 5). Due to its serio-comic heritage, the novel is “flexible, dialogized, permeated with laughter, irony, humour, elements of self-parody” (*Dialogic* 330); it is actively affixed to the historical reality in which it is evolving. In the novel, the official languages of the status quo are “unmasked” as being insufficient to express the plasticity of contemporary reality (*Dialogic* 26-27). Unquestionably, Bakhtin’s recognition of the ideological basis of the novel as a dialogic, parodic and thus critical form, affirms its generic links with satire.

Throughout his writings, Bakhtin evinces a special interest in the genealogy of the novel and its relations to inherently dialogic genres such as satire. He asserts that “the germs of novelistic discourse” (*Dialogic* 371) are found in satires, autobiographical

forms, some purely rhetorical forms (like the diatribe), and historical and epistolary genres (*Dialogic* 371). Ancient serio-comical literature (referred to by the Greeks as *spoudogeloion*) included mimes, fables, memoirs, Socratic dialogues, Roman satire (Bakhtin refers to Lucilius, Persius, and Juvenal), and Menippean satire: “All these genres, permeated with the ‘serio-comical,’ are authentic predecessors of the novel” (*Dialogic* 21, 22).

Bakhtin draws a parallel between the festivals of the Roman Saturnalias and mediaeval carnivals in which the traditional hierarchal relationships were temporarily reversed (*Rabelais* 10). Menippean satire, in particular, was associated with the “freedom of Saturnalian laughter” (*Dialogic* 26). As well, Roman literature was inherently dialogic, for it contained an awareness of Greek language and forms; the words of Latin literature were always words “with a sideways glance” (*Dialogic* 61). Importantly – and likely due to his rejection of what he calls “negative satire” – Horace, and not Juvenal, is singled out by Bakhtin as an exemplary dialogic satirist who parodically stylized his own voice as well as the voice of general opinion (*Dialogic* 371 n. 38).⁷⁴ Most relevant to the history of the novel is the fact that its “double-voiced” elements “coalesced in the ancient period” in the Menippean genre, which influenced novel types from the Middle Ages to the twentieth century (*Dialogic* 372).⁷⁵ Bakhtin finds elements of Menippean satire in the works of Lucilius and Horace, but does not mention Juvenal. Arguably this is another significant omission of Juvenal which perhaps hinges on Bakhtin’s general rejection of uncongenial, un-laughing, or “purely negative satire” (*Rabelais* 120). Laughter is central to Bakhtin’s definition of Menippean and novelistic dialogization.

Menippean satire is “genetically related” to the Socratic dialogue – a genre invested in the dialogical pursuit of the truth (*Dialogic* 26, *Dostoevsky* 109). Socratic dialogues provided a prose model for the novel based on the concept of the hero turned jester, whose paradoxical motto is, “I am wiser than everyone because I know that I know nothing” (*Dostoevsky* 25). Menippean satire maintains the “intense spirit of inquiry” and utopian speculation of the Socratic dialogue, but interrogates truth with a greater quantity of laughter and crudity (*Dostoevsky* 26). Evincing a “joyful relativity,” the genre remains one of the key “channels for the carnival sense of the world in literature” (*Dostoevsky* 107, 113). Menippean satire, like all serio-comic genres, has contemporary reality as its focus; as a result, its subject matter is rendered not with “epic distance” but with familiarizing laughter (*Dostoevsky* 22, 23). The subjects in Menippean satire are “stripped” of “‘empty’ clothing” (or habit) and made ridiculous (*Dostoevsky* 24). Appropriately, Bakhtin (similar to Carlyle) chooses the metaphor of clothing for socio-ideological habits of mind; “all existing clothes are always too tight” (*Dialogic* 37) for the heroes of serio-comic genres. In dialogic genres, the hero is an ingénue who is alienated from a society’s “authoritative discourse” and who thus fails to understand the “habitual way of conceiving the world” (*Dialogic* 402). The “uncomprehending fool” is a parodic/satiric tool to “make strange” the world of social conventionality (*Dialogic* 404). The fool/ingénue functions to “destro[y] every nook and cranny of the habitual picture of the world” (*Dialogic* 177). Laughter destroys hierarchical habits of seeing the world.

Bakhtin identifies fourteen features of Menippean satire – renamed “the Menippea”: a comic element; extreme freedom of plot; the testing of a received truth

through the “bold use of the fantastic” (more than the adventure of any one character it is “the adventure of an idea or truth in the world” [*Dostoevsky* 115]); an organic combination of the fantastic and lofty with settings of “slum naturalism” (brothels, prisons, marketplaces); wrestling with ultimate philosophical questions; often a journey to a different plane of existence (frequently the nether world); frequently the exploration of abnormal (fragmented) moral and psychic states; the use of “scandal scenes” to dramatize departures from social norms; the celebration of oxymoronic “mésalliances of all sorts” (*Dostoevsky* 118); elements of social utopias with voyages to unknown lands; and the parodying of inserted genres, dialogization, and critical engagements with the ideological currents of the day (*Dostoevsky* 114-118). Relihan notes that Bakhtin’s gesture of renaming the genre “menippea” acknowledges that Menippean satire proper is a much narrower genre (8). Certainly, Bakhtin conceives of the “menippea” as a plastic category which preserves traits of the ancient. A genre’s “archaic elements,” according to Bakhtin, are renewable: “Genre is reborn and renewed at every new stage in the development of literature and in every individual work of a given genre” (*Dostoevsky* 108). Bakhtin does not propose that Dostoevsky consciously reworked the ancient genre of Menippean satire, but that its characteristics were “renewed” in his work (*Dostoevsky* 121). More generally, the novel itself preserves certain features of the ancient genre (*Dostoevsky* 121).

Northrop Frye also renames Menippean satire – Frye’s preferred term is “anatomy” – in recognition of his choice to recast the ancient genre as a kind of “supergenre” (Relihan 8). Frye’s overarching view of satire, as literature that falls

generally under the narrative category (prior to genre) of irony (satire is “militant irony” [Anatomy 223], contains six “phases.” The latter are redolent of categories of Horatian, Juvenalian, and Menippean satire. The first phase, satire of the “low norm,” accepts that human beings are flawed, but does not challenge “accepted codes of behavior” (Anatomy 227); in fact, the reader is advised to uphold social conventions. In this phase “gaiety predominates” (Frye, Anatomy 227). This category of satire (which offers “conventional satire on the unconventional” [Anatomy 227]) contains the hallmarks of Horatian satire – although Frye does not refer to it as such. The second phase or “quixotic satire” targets social convention and “fossilized dogma” often in the form of a picaresque narrative in which the rogue/hero levels systems of philosophy and exposes the romantic folly of “imposing” “oversimplified ideals on experience” (Anatomy 230-231); advocating detachment, “quixotic satire” analyzes and “breaks up the lumber of stereotypes, fossilized beings, superstitious terrors, crank theories, pedantic dogmatisms, oppressive fashions, and all other things that impede the free movement... of society” (Anatomy 233). The third phase is similar to the second, but is more skeptical of common sense as an alternative to dogmatism. Frye’s phases two and three satire correspond to his definition of Menippean satire or what he later terms “anatomy.”

In his assessment of Swift’s *Gulliver’s Travels*, Voltaire’s *Candide*, Butler’s *The Way of All Flesh*, and Huxley’s *Brave New World*, Frye defines Menippean satire (which he renames “anatomy”) as a genre concerned less with character than with mental attitudes and intellectual ideas (it brims with pedants, cranks, and *philosophi gloriosi*) (Anatomy 309). Unlike the novel, the “chief interest” of which he claims is “human

character as it manifests itself in society' (*Anatomy* 308), Menippean satire's characters are "stylized" mouthpieces for current intellectual trends (*Anatomy* 309). Importantly, he stresses that "no sharp boundary lines can or should be drawn" between Menippean satire and the novel, but, generally speaking, anatomy (dissection or analysis) is the organizing principle of Menippean satire, whereas "naturalistic," less "occupational" rendering of human beings is integral to the novel (*Anatomy* 309). This satire, like Bakhtin's "menippea," is loose-jointed in its narrative form, involves marvelous journeys, and is a highly "intellectualized" form which unsettles systems of knowledge (*Anatomy* 311). Reminiscent of Bakhtin's link with the Socratic dialogue, Frye finds the shortest form of Menippean satire to be the colloquy. Juxtaposing Menippean satire/anatomy with the novel opposes Bakhtin's emphasis on their generic continuity; yet such distinctions between the forms are overturned by Frye's later assertion that anatomy is one of the four chief "strands" in the novel (confession, anatomy, romance, novel). Many characters in novels, he acknowledges, have "Menippean blood in them" (*Anatomy* 309). Frye's further qualification of his previous distinction between Menippean satire and the novel exposes the insufficiency of attempts to segregate the genres, especially using character as a primary basis of distinction (as Paulson, Knight, and others have attempted). What prevents, for example, a character such as Thomas Hardy's Jude Fawley from being simultaneously a psychologically complex portrait of a failed idealist and an anatomy of "the grind of stern reality" (*Jude the Obscure* 473)? George Eliot's Edward Casaubon is simultaneously a man whose inward trouble "claims some of our pity" (*M* 78) and a vehicle for satire on misogynist egoism and erudition. The "Menippean blood" of many

characters disrupts monologic notions of the novel's boundaries with satire – as Frye himself acknowledges. Interestingly, in keeping with Bakhtin's notion of the deheroization of the individual as central to novelistic discourse (*Rabelais* 35), Frye observes that one of the central themes of satire is the disappearance of the heroic (*Anatomy* 228). For Bakhtin, in dialogic genres such as satire and the novel, deheroization is humanization through laughter; for Frye, however, this phenomenon complements his notion of satire's links with tragedy: satire “at its most concentrated... is tragedy robbed of all its dignity and nobility” (“Nature” 86-87).

Frye's fourth to sixth phases of satire represent less a strict division of levels than a continuum of depleting meliorism in terms of social and psychological reasons for human tragedy. Phase four satire involves the pessimism of tragic realism (as in the novels of Thomas Hardy and Joseph Conrad), in which the “fall of the tragic hero” is explained by “social and psychological” cause; it is a phase characterized by “explicit realism” (*Anatomy* 236, 237). In this phase (as in phase five, which is “fatalistic” and “resigned” to tragedy) idealists are still revered, but by phase six, no redeeming human trait is represented, and human life is depicted “in terms of largely unrelieved bondage” (*Anatomy* 237, 238). Crazy and miserable *desdichado* characters in scenes of madhouses and prisons dominate texts of this kind, and religion is parodied fiercely; but most importantly, “laughter has evaporated” (*Anatomy* 238). Frye's fourth to sixth phases of satire acknowledge the un-laughing word banned by Bakhtin. Frye's porous categories implicitly acknowledge the Juvenalian mode of satire (even in its most extreme form) as

a legitimate “phase,” mode or category of satire in the novel; by contrast, Bakhtin rejects tragic, Juvenalian negativity.

Bakhtin differentiates between the laughing “grotesque realism” (*Rabelais* 8) epitomized by the Rabelaisian carnival scene, with its focus on change and renewal, and what he calls “the purely formalist parody of modern times which has a solely negative character and is deprived of regenerating ambivalence” (*Rabelais* 21). “Grotesque realism” continues to exist in the Renaissance (in the work of Cervantes, for example) but the three centuries that follow are only “strewn with” its fragments (*Rabelais* 24).⁷⁶ Like Carlyle, Bakhtin denounces the skepticism of the eighteenth century along with satirists such Voltaire, and Swift, who merely formalized grotesque images and created laughter that was didactic in its skepticism and “bare mockery” (*Rabelais* 37, 119). Laughter lost its rejuvenating potential and was utilized instead for the narrow, individualistic purposes of “dogmatic negation” unrelated to the culture at large (*Rabelais* 101). “Bare negation is alien to folk culture,” Bakhtin maintains, and laughter is inherently anti-dogmatic and anti-authoritarian (*Rabelais* 11, 95). In Bakhtin’s view, negative or un-laughing satire focuses on a single target and anatomizes this singular subject, but does not engage in carnivalesque negation of an entire order of life (*Rabelais* 306-307). To repudiate a whole worldview through laughter implies apocalyptic renewal, and for Bakhtin, negative satire is too piecemeal to be truly revolutionary.

Although the dialogic features of the novel were developed significantly in the eighteenth century, Bakhtin claims: “It could be said that in the nineteenth century the distinctive features of the Second Line [of the European, serio-comic novel] become the

basic constitutive features for the novelistic genre as a whole” (*Dialogic* 414). In keeping with his selection of Fyodor Dostoevsky’s works for his extensive study of the dialogic novel, Bakhtin designates the nineteenth century as the age in which the novel reached an evolutionary apex. The Dickensian text, for example, is “washed by heteroglot waves from all sides” (*Dialogic* 307). Fielding, Smollett, and Sterne are cited along with Cervantes and Rabelais as Dickens’s “predecessors” (*Dialogic* 308). Bakhtin highlights Dickens’s mastery of “parodic stylization” of the voice of general opinion (*Dialogic* 303) (particularly in *Little Dorrit*, in the exemplary speech of Mr Merdle). Interestingly, Bakhtin argues that the Victorians only produced “negative rhetorical satire” (*Rabelais* 45) in the second half of the nineteenth century. Renaissance grotesque imagery, which utilizes regenerative laughter, influenced Balzac, Hugo, and Dickens (*Rabelais* 52), but later in the nineteenth century the novel, in Bakhtinian terms, is de-novelized; it engages in negative satire, the “laughter that does not laugh” (*Rabelais* 45). Bakhtin’s theory of the regenerative, ambivalent laughter of grotesque realism that opposes negative satire appears, in some aspects, to be an articulation of the traditional Horatian/Juvenalian binary.

Bakhtin, with his acceptance and promotion of Horatian and Menippean satire as dialogic genres related to the novel, and Frye, with his view of Horatian, Menippean, and Juvenalian satire, reveal that the age-old preference for either the Horatian or Juvenalian satiric mode, based on arguments which nominate one over the other as the most effective artistically and even socio-politically, continues implicitly in the theories of the two most influential twentieth-century theorists of satire. As the following chapters

demonstrate, the argument that Victorian novelistic satire is linked to ancient satire (of all varieties) can be augmented by the work of both critics. Fundamentally, both theorists interpret satiric genres as being crucial for an assessment of social and literary habits and conventions. For Bakhtin and Frye, genre is essentially habit, and Menippean satire and the novel stand in a special relationship to habit. Frye evocatively names his *Anatomy of Criticism* after the genre that he defines as being especially free of social habits of mind, in an effort to highlight his critical project: to place literary criticism in a realm of intellectual freedom from “current social values” (*Anatomy* 348). His ideal, like Matthew Arnold’s, is that criticism should escape being a slave to “compulsions of habit, indoctrination and prejudice” (*Anatomy* 348). Frye’s goal of a non-partisan criticism – which like the Menippean genre itself, “relies on the free play of intellectual fancy” (*Anatomy* 310) – is unattainable to Bakhtin, who, more radically, elevates the novel as the only genre that is inherently anti-canonical, self-critical, and therefore Menippean. Yet, the negative or anti-Rabelaisian mode of novelistic satire (what appears in Bakhtinian terms to be the Juvenalian mode) is unproductive in its assault on habit. Unlike the Rabelaisian forms of the novel, which parallel the Horatian satiric tradition, Juvenalian or pessimistic forms destroy potential anarchy by generating fear: “All that is ordinary, commonplace suddenly becomes meaningless, dubious and hostile. . . . Something frightening is revealed in that which was habitual and secure” (*Rabelais* 39).

Contrastingly, for Frye, Horatian satire (seemingly phases one three) does not generate enough denunciation of the habits of mind which “impede the free movement...of society” (*Anatomy* 233).

As the next chapter will demonstrate, concepts of habit, which pervade multiple Victorian discourses (scientific, moral and economic), provide a satirical target multivalent and paradoxical enough to accommodate Horatian, Juvenalian, and Menippean methods of satire in Victorian novels. An ethical preoccupation with the possibilities and problems of habit predisposes Victorian novelists to satire, a mode or genre of literature that was – from Horace’s playful criticism of people’s “seeds of wickedness,” planted “by nature or by some bad habit” (1.3.35-36), to Juvenal’s enraged exposure of “[u]pper-class Roman habits” (2.170) – founded on the anatomy of individual and social habit.

Chapter 2

Habit in Victorian Physiological Psychology and Related Moral, Educational and Social Discourses

As years advance, example and imitation become custom, and gradually consolidate into habit, which is of so much potency that, almost before we know it, we have in a measure yielded up to it our personal freedom. (Samuel Smiles, *Character* 65)

The study of psychology in the nineteenth century is in essence a study of habit. (Philip Fisher, "The Failure of Habit" 5)

2.i A Victorian Subject for Satire

As I have argued in Chapter 1, Victorian satiric practices in the novel have been de-emphasized and misrepresented as a result of a critical consensus that the Victorians, preferring sentimental realism to satire, discarded this unruly genre (especially its wrathful Juvenalian mode) as a crude pastime of unempathetic eighteenth-century writers such as Pope and Swift. Thus the narrator's statement in Thackeray's *Vanity Fair*, "Satire and Sentiment can walk arm-in-arm together" (200), has largely been ignored. Studies of satire in the Victorian novel tend to be restricted to piecemeal analyses of substantially satiric novels such as *Martin Chuzzlewit* or *The Way of All Flesh*. Palmeri's view that satire is a form of writing that disappears "underground or into eclipse" ("Thackeray" 770) in the mid-Victorian period is representative. Importantly, Frances T. Russell's *Satire in the Victorian Novel* assesses the "Victorian contribution" to satire in a sweeping

manner.⁷⁷ Her study of Victorian satire's "distinctive features" explores the work of a "baker's dozen" of key figures: Thomas Peacock, Bulwer-Lytton, Benjamin Disraeli, Elizabeth Gaskell, William Thackeray, Charles Dickens, Charles Reade, Anthony Trollope, Charlotte Brontë, Charles Kingsley, George Eliot, George Meredith, and Samuel Butler (45-46). Her broadly-stated goal is to "discover the proportion and nature of the satiric element in Victorian fiction" (45). Works such as *Vanity Fair* are "satire soaked" (88), but in most Victorian novels, she argues, satire is present in diverse ways. Russell identifies the global object of satire as deception in its many forms.⁷⁸ Yet, most evocatively in her concluding chapter, Russell identifies a distinctive Victorian contribution to satire: namely, that satire's target shifts from effects to causes, and the argument that economic and social factors share the blame for human folly (297): "In proportion however, as the individual is spared, the burden of responsibility is shifted to the collective shoulders of the society he has bound himself to" (315). Forces of science and democracy influence this adjustment in satire's moralism (Russell 294). The "democratization of objects" in satire increases its criticism (which, Russell finds, is rarely Juvenalian) of institutions, including "Society, Church, School, and State" (315, 294). Russell's identification of a sociological emphasis in Victorian satiric practices is a profound and resonant insight into a new focus for the period's satire. The belief that human character is substantially a social creation – a revolutionary concept, according to G. H. Lewes – becomes a Victorian preoccupation. Lewes's observation is exemplary: "To understand the Human Mind we must study it under its normal conditions, and these are social conditions" (*PLMI* 128).

In this chapter, I endeavour to further Russell's argument concerning a Victorian satiric focus on society as the cause of moral ills by including habit as a dominant, encyclopedic subject of novelistic satire. Satiric assessment by target alone, as Gary Dyer points out, is often reductive in the extreme, but Victorian conceptions of habit are singularly all-embracing, multivalent, and paradoxical. Furthermore, multiple discursive fields were invested in habit as the driving force of human character. From physiology to psychology, established and then-emerging scientific discourses isolated habit as the key to the functioning of all organisms. In social, moral, and economic discourses (of self-help and sympathy), habit was discovered to be the mechanism of progress not only of the individual but also of the state, as Samuel Smiles asserts: "National progress is the sum of individual industry, energy, and uprightness, as national decay is of individual idleness, selfishness, and vice" (*Self-Help* 18). Crucial, however, to the complexity and omnipresence of satiric investigations of habit in the period's fiction is the paradoxical nature of habit as it was variously theorized. Writers on habit fluctuate between Juvenalian cynicism and Horatian optimism. Across various Victorian disciplines, habit is identified as being simultaneously a grim, deterministic agent transforming humans into machines, and also a redemptive locus of ethical and intellectual possibility through "the habit of willing," self-discipline, reflexive sympathy, and the habit of free thought. Additionally, theories of habit form the basis not only of conservative middle-class values of incremental social change, but also of more radical concepts involving non-customary thought and sweeping change.

As I stated at the outset, my focus on habit is indebted to Athena Vrettos's pioneering essay "Defining Habits: Dickens and the Psychology of Repetition," in which she explores *Dombey and Son* within the context of widespread sociological and psychological debates concerning the "function and implications of habitual behavior" (399).⁷⁹ Discussions of habit in magazine articles, religious tracts, psychological treatises, literature of self-help and character formation, and biographies of the period, as Vrettos observes, offer habit as a "guiding psychological mechanism of social structure" (399). Writers on habit, she notes, either maintain or question the reformatory power of this force, which shapes and propels human character; debates centre on the question of whether habits are indicative of individually empowering forces or debilitating, anatomizing mechanization. Importantly, Vrettos outlines a double discourse concerning habit: one that is simultaneously hopeful of its potential for good (i.e. its usefulness in learning, and general productivity) but concerned about pathological potential. Notions of habit derive from associationist philosophers John Locke, David Hume, and David Hartley, and are specifically advanced in the nineteenth century in the works of G. H. Lewes, J. S. Mill, James Sully, G. F. Stout, William Carpenter, Henry Maudsley, Alexander Bain, and William James (Vrettos 399). Maxims concerning habit's powers for good or for ill, she observes, saturate the period's advice literature; Vrettos highlights Sarah Stickney Ellis's *The Women of England* (1838) and Samuel Smiles's *Self-Help* (1859) as exemplars of this popular discourse. Framed by such cultural discussions, *Dombey and Son*, Vrettos argues, displays the (culturally current) tension between habit as the simultaneous basis for individuality (in the form of eccentric routines or

behaviours) or as the basis of mechanicality, conformity, and “deadening routine” – particularly in industrial culture (417). Vrettos not only contextualizes Dickensian characterization, but also, through her evocative commentary on culture-suffusing notions of habit, she initiates an investigation of an overarching preoccupation in Victorian culture. I will expand upon Vrettos’s important assessment of the period’s multivalent and embedded discourses of habit within novelistic prose (her focus is psychological realism) by adding the modal or generic consideration of satire. In this chapter, I analyze further the cultural significance of habit in the Victorian period, paying particular attention to scientific discourses explicating its mechanics (discourses which increasingly validate psychology as a science of human character). Ultimately, my interest is in the coalescence of moralized discourses of habit and the novelistic satire of the period.

In Chapter 3, I will examine in detail the confluence of satire and habit through close readings of an array of canonical Victorian novels; presently, however, I would like to offer a suggestive example of the overlap between Victorian satiric concerns and dualistic thought on habit (as a virtue or a vice). The anonymous essay “Horace’s Art of Conduct” (1876) concludes that conduct is the central theme of the exemplary ancient satirist’s work, specifically that which results from the habits tyrannizing men – habits which reduce men to “narrow consistency” (25). The writer contemporizes Horace’s ideal of the “golden mean” as being akin to the “habit of self-management” (“Horace’s Art” 37, 28). Horace’s ideal habit, interpreted as the conscious control of all experience (“habitually seeking a permanency of self-consciousness” [“Horace’s Art” 29]), accords

with the habit of consciously controlling one's will, a habit promoted by novelists and Victorian physiological psychologists alike. Habituality is a cause either of failure or, when harnessed by the powers of the will, salutary change. Similarly, Victorian discourses relentlessly present habit as a double-edged mechanism of personal and social management; it is either a force of progress, or one of stagnation – a force of dignified control or debauched chaos.

In this chapter, I do not claim to comment comprehensively on the manifold discourses of habit in Victorian culture, however much such an expansive project would be a fruitful contribution to Victorian studies. Instead, I present an overview of the pervasive conceptions of habit that saturate Victorian scientific, educational, moral, and economic discourses (often at fundamental levels). My focus is on physiological psychology, which claimed to authenticate older theories of associationism that identify habit as a pivotal mechanism controlling thought. Theories of habit are a vital component of Victorian thought in both its orthodox and heterodox manifestations. The word *habit*, as it pertains to theories of human character and social function, acquires explicatory authority in so many nineteenth-century fictional and non-fictional works that studying its function as a flexible and “many-sided” (to use an Arnoldian descriptor) subject of Victorian satire requires an accordingly wide-ranging survey of its importance.

2.ii The Law of Habit, from Moral Philosophy to Mental Science

As defined in the *OED*, the English word *habit* is derived from the Latin *habitus*, the stem of which is *habere*: originally to have, hold, to be constituted, or to be. The word

developed a dual application either to external qualities (the manner in which one displays physical appearance, bodily constitution, or way of dressing⁸⁰), or to internal, ontological qualities (a person's mental and moral constitution, character, disposition, or customary way of acting). The development of the word from associations with "to hold" to suggestions of acquired tendencies was completed in ancient Latin. In English, the most common usage noted by the *OED* is to denote the frequent repetition of an act until it is nearly involuntary. In biology, the word applies to the instinctive practices of animals; in psychology, it denotes an automatic action acquired by learning/repetition. Necessarily, the word *habit* as it describes the human constitution, either innate or acquired, is tied to theories of human nature, and thus moral philosophy. Writers on habit tend to quote William Paley's 1875 axiom: "man is a bundle of habits" (48). William B. Carpenter, for example, justifies his interest in habit with an assertion that man's "tendency to Habitual action is so universally recognized" that we are said to "be a bundle of habits" (350). William James declares, in the opening sentence of his famous chapter on habit in *The Principles of Psychology* (1890; originally an essay in *Popular Science Monthly*, 1887), "When we look at living creatures from an outward point of view, one of the first things that strike us is that they are bundles of habits" (*Principles* 109).⁸¹ Habit is critical, perhaps even foundational, to theories of human character formation. Because of its acquired aspect, it is also of central concern to theories of human social and ethical practice.

Aristotle's moral theory, particularly as it is expounded in *Nicomachean Ethics* (350 BCE), informs centuries of thought on habit. In this treatise, which offers practical

advice on how to become a good man through virtuous action (Malikail 3), Aristotle emphasizes the importance of *hexis* (translated into Latin as *habitus*, which is generally termed *habit*), a characteristic, a trained ability, a second nature or “firmly fixed possession of the mind” (Ostwald 308).⁸² For Aristotle, *hexis* is the sum of a man’s knowledge and his moral character (Malikail 5-6). Natural or inherent character is altered by the habits we form in our youth; therefore habit, according to Aristotle, determines one’s *hexis*, which is more resistant to change than a mere disposition; it “is a compound product of nature, habit (repeated practice) and reason” (Malikail 13, 9). Aristotle emphasizes the role of education in cultivating moral virtue “just as land must be cultivated before it is able to foster the seed” (*Ethics* 296). Moral goodness is the result of habit, for virtue consists in habitual good actions (*Ethics* 143); yet it is also possible to be “depraved by habit” (*Ethics* 256). Aristotle’s theories of habit contain the fundamental paradox of future habit theory: habit is automatic and unconscious, but voluntariness is a prerequisite for human moral action. According to Aristotle’s moral philosophy, we are partly responsible, through our choice of habit/automatic action, for our character. In Victorian discourses of habit, filaments of the Aristotelian conception are pervasive, particularly in their focus on the importance of self-determined habituation to moral virtue expressed through action, and on the recalcitrance of habitual dispositions.⁸³ A neo-Aristotelian emphasis on the all-determining, character-constructing powers of habit gains further authority in the nineteenth century once a biological basis for habit is confirmed.

In the late seventeenth century, John Locke (1632-1704), expanding upon Aristotle's notions of thought by habitual association,⁸⁴ held that the mind spontaneously links chains of thought. Locke speculated that habit is not restricted to the determination of moral character, but influences both the content of the intellect and the reasoning process. Further, Locke warned that doctrines are "fastened by degrees" and "riveted" in the mind "by long Custom and Education beyond all possibility of being pull'd out again" (712). Even more insidious to notions of human beings as self-directing creatures, "*Habits, especially such as are begun very early, come, at last, to produce actions in us, which often escape our observation*" (Locke 147). In Locke's association theory, "Chance or Custom" produce a "Connection of *Ideas*" which have no "Correspondence or Connection with one another" (395) except by chance association. The latter affects cognitive faculties and the will:

Custom settles habits of Thinking in the Understanding, as well as of Determining in the Will, and of Motions in the Body; all which seems to be but Trains of Motion in the Animal Spirits, which once set a-going continue on in the same steps they have been used to, which by often treading are worn into a smooth path, and the Motion in it becomes easy and as it were Natural. (Locke 396)

Thus, Locke articulates a psycho-physical way of conceiving habit.⁸⁵ (Laurence Sterne's narrator in the Menippean satire *Tristram Shandy* parodies Locke's physical metaphors for habit with a bawdy description of the "hobby-horsical" (55) humours which disrupt rationality and tether a man to his passionate habits.⁸⁶)

Habit, for Locke, is an unseen dictator of perception.⁸⁷ In “Of the Association of *Ideas*,” Locke links madness to the general idea of prejudice and customary associations. The fact that perception is insidiously distorted and determined by habit is disconcerting, because it is the faculty of perception which “puts the distinction betwixt the animal Kingdom, and the inferior parts of Nature” that operate through “bare mechanism” (Locke 147). Not only did Locke lay the groundwork for future assessments of mental association, but he also set in motion subversive strains of habit theory that emphasize habit’s role as a naturalizer of the artificial constructions of society;⁸⁸ he grappled with the determinist fear that habit-based thought reduces human beings to the “bare mechanism” of other animals.

David Hume (1711-1776) is another English empiricist who advances a philosophy of habit. John Biro argues that despite Hume’s skepticism about positive knowledge, he outlined a new science of human nature in his *A Treatise of Human Nature* (1739-40) (Biro 33). Belief, for Hume, is the product of our non-rational faculty – variously labeled as imagination, instinct, habit, or custom (Biro 39). As well, reason has roots (like madness and prejudice) in custom and habit; it forms our notions of causality, for without “sensible violence” (Hume 175) we cannot view any other relation of cause and effect than that which is habitually associated. Probabilistic reasoning, according to Hume, has roots in custom and association (Wright 121).⁸⁹ In the wake of Locke and Hume, habit is no longer, in Aristotelian terms, limited to the formation of moral habits; it is equally a foundation of reason; it becomes a force influencing (even determining) morality and rationality.

With David Hartley (1705-1757), associationist notions of habit are further anchored in scientific evidence. Hartley consolidates notions of the biology of association in his neurophysiological theory put forth in *Observations on Man, his Frame, his Duty and Expectation* (1749).⁹⁰ The repetition of associations, he insists, excites “the propagation of vibrations along the course of the nerves and brain” (Hartley 15). In Hartley’s “doctrine of vibrations,” impressions, with enough repetition, change the “natural vibrations” of a part of the brain; thus, both reason and affection are “the mere Result of Association” (60, 61, 90). Importantly, Hartley equates the “power of habit” with association (60); his research reinforces theories that habit is destructive to the complexity of human being for it operates in the “medullary Substance of the Brain and Nerves” (6) with a kind of indomitable physical necessity.

As if to announce the successful advance of association theory to the Victorian era, Herbert Spencer states his absolute compliance with the “Law of Association” (his succinct definition of the phrase highlights its basis in habit):

All theories and all methods of education take it for granted – are alike based on the belief that the more frequently states of consciousness are made to follow one another in a certain order, the stronger becomes their tendency to suggest one another in that order. The sayings – ‘Practice makes perfect,’ and ‘Habit is second nature,’ remind us how long-established and universal is the conviction that such a law exists. (*PP* 1: 421)⁹¹

Associationist theories of habit, increasingly biologized – as Hartlean physicalism was furthered by Alexander Bain, who “incorporated associationism within a neurophysiological framework” (Daston 197) – advanced well into the nineteenth century as philosophical theories of mind evolved into the field of mental science, psychology.

The word “psychology,” coined in the mid-seventeenth century by William Harvey, was immeasurably fertile with variable connotations (Rylance 13-14). In the British *Cyclopaedia* (1788), “psychology” was defined as the “science of the soul,” but by the mid-nineteenth century, the meaning had shifted from “soul” to “mind” (Smith 24).⁹² In the 1830s and 1840s, there was a clear, Cartesian distinction between the reflex functioning ascribed to the spinal cord and brain stem, and the cerebral hemispheres associated with complex consciousness (Danziger 124). In the mid-Victorian period, Kurt Danziger argues, there is a new interest in medical psychology, an interest linked to developments in knowledge of the anatomy and physiology of the nervous system, and to the fact that, by the 1840s, the psycho-social effects of industrial capitalism (such as mass alcoholism) were obtrusive (121). In the 1850s, there was a substantial increase in the number of medical psychology textbooks; between the mid-1850s and the 1870s, a physiological approach to psychology was increasingly stressed (Smith 81).⁹³ Bain, Darwin, Spencer, Maudsley, Carpenter, and Lewes were among those who turned to biology and not metaphysics for a new science of physiological psychology, which flourished from 1850 to the 1880s (Ryan, “Material Mind” 22). For Lewes, psychology without biology is like astronomy without mathematics; he declares “an almost universal agreement” that physiology must be attended to in matters of the mind (*PLMI* 117).

Spencer classifies psychology as a “sub-science” of biology, “the science of physical life” (*PP* 1: 390); James Sully asserts, in *The Human Mind: A Text-Book of Psychology* (1891), that psychology is now a positive science “fully separated from philosophy” (3).

To demonstrate the “generalist nature” of Victorian intellectual culture, Rick Rylance emphasizes the contribution of diverse forms of writing (specialist psychological tracts, political polemics, essays, periodical reviews, novels, and poems) to the “unfolding public network of debate over psychological problems” (3).⁹⁴ Psychology was an “open discourse” (Rylance 7) “filled with dispute”; yet for Rylance, “habit” is merely one of the myriad terms that populate the debate. Arguably, however, habit underpins an interdisciplinary anxiety about the ultimate loss of free will that scientific inquiry into the mechanisms of the mind might prove.

Theories of habit are inextricable from perennial debates between traditions of thought that can be broadly categorized as spiritualist or materialist. Customarily, spiritualists or idealists emphasize free will, volition, consciousness, and an idea of innate (*a priori*) qualities (of soul or mind); materialists promote utilitarian, empiricist (*a posteriori*) associationist ideas, including a belief that the mind is constituted substantially by experience (Rylance 40-42, Smith 85-87). The idealist “Common sense school” (developed from Thomas Reid’s *An Inquiry into the Human Mind* [1764]) maintained the Cartesian separation of mind and body and rejected associationist theory as leading to materialism and skepticism (Rylance 44).⁹⁵ An esteemed editor of Reid, William Hamilton, developed a transcendental conception of consciousness in opposition to physical theories of mind that he considered to be immoral (Rylance 45).⁹⁶ In response,

G. H. Lewes and J. S. Mill label thinkers such as Reid and Hamilton as belonging to the “*a priori* school” (Rylance 46) of unscientific, metaphysical psychology. Mill praises instead the “mental habits” of thinkers who, having banished metaphysical thinking, are no longer in the habit of referring to the inherent nature and essence of phenomena (*ACP* 10: 271, 273). Mill’s two-volume *A System of Logic* (1843) aims to extricate moral science from a theory of innate ideas (7: 9). He defends physiological psychology, and champions Alexander Bain for merging associationism with new knowledge of the nervous system (Smith 88-89). Mill also credits Bain for the “physiologizing of classical associationist mental philosophy” (Danziger 123-4). Yet biologized notions of habit continued to give (ironic) fuel to the so-called materialist school by inadvertently aligning human beings with soulless machines.⁹⁷

Danziger identifies Thomas Laycock and William Carpenter as exemplars of opposing positions within the materialist/spiritualist debates. Their work, he argues (which other psychologists tend to repeat), crystallizes debates concerning the psycho-physical relationship in terms of concepts of reflex action (124). In 1845, Laycock (Professor of Medicine, University of Edinburgh) wrote “Reflex Functions of the Brain,” the flagship work that “initiated the whole psycho-physiological trend” (Danziger 122). In his later work, *Mind and Brain* (1860), Laycock applies to the human mind a purely physical idea of reflex action and demotes consciousness and will to mere properties of the nervous system (Danziger 126-127, 133).⁹⁸ Rejecting the “Materialist hypothesis,” William B. Carpenter (Professor of Physiology, the Royal Institution) maintains a dichotomy between purely automatic, reflex function and voluntary action (Danziger

128); to explicate his ideas, he invents a new set of automatic cerebral activities called “Ideomotor actions,” which are controlled by voluntary attention (Danziger 121, 129, 131).⁹⁹ Acknowledging both animal automatism and human agency, Carpenter’s followers, including Lewes, Mill, and William James, reject both *a priori* essentialism and the extreme Laycockian notion of the human mind as an assemblage of base habit – animal instincts and machine-like reflexes.

Scientific concepts of habit as a physiologically inevitable phenomenon are further augmented by evolutionary discourses. Long-standing, complex debates surround and sometimes confound the differences and similarities between Lamarckism and Darwinism – a discussion of which exceeds my purpose in this chapter. I wish only to observe Darwin’s influence on the biologization of habit, while acknowledging that it was Jean-Baptiste Lamarck (1784-1829) who identifies habit as *the* mechanism of evolution. In 1809, Lamarck noted that the “changing environment and changing needs of the organism, fosters alterations of habit, which slowly involve changes to bodily structures which are then inherited” (*Zoological Philosophy* 45). Yet, as Robert J. Richards points out, a theory of inherited habit is also postulated by Darwin in *On the Origin of Species* (1859) (143). Darwin’s mechanism of evolution is not habit *per se*, but natural selection; his hypothesis, despite well-documented resistance, superseded that of Lamarck. Natural selection – the random preservation of favourable adaptations through “infinitesimally small modifications” (Darwin, *Origin* 115) – either maintains or dismantles the habits of an organism; instincts and habits (like structures) increase or decrease with habitual use or disuse.¹⁰⁰ Habits which are due to innate tendency (that is,

inherited by natural selection) are called instincts and are the habit of generations. Instincts can be lost under domestication; occasionally, habits are made permanent by natural selection (*Origin* 236-243). Yet, the “effects of habit are of quite subordinate importance to the effects of the natural selection of what may be called accidental variations of instincts” (due to “unknown causes”) (*Origin* 236). Darwin insists that in the “Great Battle of Life” all organisms are to some degree plastic – susceptible to change in structure or habit (*Origin* 127, 140). Unlike Lamarck’s focus on the volitional behaviour of individuals, however, Darwin focuses on the random force of natural selection as it operates in the evolution of communities. Nonetheless, regardless of such distinctions, habit remains instrumental to Darwin’s theory of evolution.

Samuel Butler observes in his aptly titled *Luck, or Cunning?* (1886) that Darwin’s natural selection, when applied to human evolution, insultingly diminishes human consciousness and volition. Preferring Lamarck’s teleology, Butler finds that Darwin “denied design” (*Luck* 17).¹⁰¹ Darwin was routinely accused of demoting the human mind as drastically as he diminished the human body – perhaps best epitomized by his dramatic analogy between the hand of a man and the wing of a bat (*Origin* 415). Thus, when William James speaks of the “darwinizing” (*Principles* 143) of the human mind, this is shorthand for what he views as Darwin’s reduction of the role of human will in evolution. Ironically, Darwin himself resisted associationist psychology’s emphasis on nurture over nature, regretting Mill’s (and Bain’s) rejection of innate qualities (*Descent* n. 121). In contrast, he considers social morality to be innate in lower animals and therefore innate in men (*Origin* 119). Yet natural selection, with or without Darwin’s consent, proved a

“death blow” to teleological arguments and a great support to mechanistic determinism (Danziger 134). Evolutionary biology, as theorized by Darwin, Spencer, and Lewes, further consolidates habit as a subject of scientific scrutiny for psychology.

For Lewes, evolutionary biology provides a ground for reconciliation between the warring empiricist and transcendental schools. Lewes, like Darwin, recuperates a notion of innateness through a biological doctrine of the inheritance of acquired modified structures and instinct. He rejects the traditional meaning of innate ideas as being “untenable”: “There are no innate ideas, no innate truths, no thoughts having a metaempirical source, – simply innate *tendencies*, congenital *aptitudes*, which cause us to respond in certain ways to certain stimuli” (*PLMI* 152). Furthermore, according to Lewes, the “daily facts of Habit” demonstrate how “tendencies become organized” and actions that were once laborious become easy and “inevitable” (*PLMI* 210). Once a habit has been organized, it can be transmitted to descendents; for Lewes, this “process underlies all development” (*PLMI* 211). In brief, “voluntary actions become involuntary, the involuntary become automatic, the intelligent become habitual, and the habitual become instinctive” (Lewes, *PLMI* 211);¹⁰² Most pointedly, “the sensitive subject is no *tabula rasa*; it is not a blank sheet of paper, but a palimpsest” (*PLMI* 149): “There is thus what may be called an *à priori* condition in all Sensation, and in all Ideation. But this is *historical*, not *transcendental*” (*PLMI* 149-50).

The centrality of notions of habit to the perennially raging spiritualist/materialist dispute is confirmed in the late nineteenth century by William James. The associationist idea (which he equates with materialism) is, James argues, just as problematic as the

spiritualist. The human intellect cannot be reduced to crude mechanical constituents; he illustrates this (as is his rhetorical habit) with a literary example: “Romeo wants Juliet as the filings want the magnet” (*Principles* 20), but Romeo, unlike the filings, can find many different ways around an obstacle: the “*pursuance of future ends and the choice of means for their attainment are thus the mark and criterion of the presence of mentality in a phenomenon*” (James, *Principles* 20). Habit is integral to this process, for actions “prompted by conscious intelligence may grow so automatic by dint of habit as to be apparently unconsciously performed. Standing, walking, buttoning and unbuttoning, piano-playing, talking, even saying one’s prayers, may be done when the mind is absorbed in other things” (James, *Principles* 19). James posits, as does Lewes before him, that “such machine-like yet purposive acts” should be included in the science of psychology, as all “nervous centres” function to produce “intelligent action”: “They feel, prefer one thing to another, and have ‘ends’” (*Principles* 19, 85); they evolve from ancestor to descendent either downward towards “unhesitating automatism” or “upwards into larger intellectuality” (*Principles* 85-86). James concurs with Lewes that instinct is habituated, fixed intelligence. By the logic of such circuitous arguments, human choice is not eradicated from behaviour. In the tradition of Victorian mental physiology, and eighteenth-century association philosophy, James places the problem of determination and freedom on the physiological fact of habit. He maintains that the “aptitude of the brain for acquiring *habits*” is the most important aspect of brain physiology for psychological theory (*Principles* 108). For James, as for most Victorian mental physiologists, habit is a psycho-physical law that retains at least some element of choice.

James's chapter on habit in *The Principles of Psychology* (1890) carries forward the ideas of many earlier nineteenth-century psychologists on habit, its very real physiological implications, and its impact on human thought and volition. I would argue that his famous chapter exemplifies the Bakhtinian notion of dialogic prose by re-accentuating the habit theory of William Carpenter, Alexander Bain, Mill, and others through direct incorporation of their texts and terminology. In fact, significant portions of the essay are actually quotations from Carpenter's *Principles of Mental Physiology* (1874). James's synthetic discussion, which provides a kind of *summa* of Victorian thought on habit, can be divided into three general phases: firstly, he asserts the physical fact of habit (utilizing associationist philosophy's tropes of paths, tracks, and channels); secondly, the paradoxical possibilities of habit, involving either the stultification or enactment of human will, are emphasized, along with habit's centrality to education; finally, his discussion ironically addresses the relation of habit to social custom – highlighting its ultimate role as a force of conservatism.

One vital component of the Victorian tradition of mental physiology, which James reinforces, is the physical basis of habit. The "philosophy of habit," as he calls it, is "at bottom a physical principle": "*The phenomena of habit in living beings are due to the plasticity of the organic materials of which their bodies are composed*" (*Principles* 110). Habit is thus a biological fact of all organisms.¹⁰³ The brain contains "currents" which either "deepen old paths or to make new ones" (*Principles* 112): "the entire nervous system is nothing but a system of paths" (*Principles* 113). Habits take root in the brain because paths, once frequently traversed, are more easily travelled in future and "do not

easily disappear” (*Principles* 112). Even complex habits are “discharges in the nerve-centres” (*Principles* 112). Notably, despite his resistance to associationism, James imports a traditional associationist lexicon of habit – paths, currents, channels, tracks, and routes – to denote habit’s physicality, its linearity, and its inherent motility and momentum.

James’s declaration of the biological reality of habit serves to reinstate Carpenter’s earlier assessment of the “Physiology of Habit”: we are “automatically prompted to *think, feel, or do* what we have been before accustomed to” (Carpenter 344), because “every state of ideational consciousness which is either *very strong* or is *habitually repeated*, leaves an organic impression on the Cerebrum” (Carpenter 344). Similarly, Alexander Bain accepts a biologized version of the “Laws of Association.” He defines “nerve force” (*S&I* 57) as a current generated, conveyed, and discharged in the nervous system like electricity through the telegraph wire. Any movement “struck out by central energy leaves as it were a track behind, and a less amount of nervous impulse will be required to set it on a second time”; these tracks are “cultivated and confirmed by repetition” (*S&I* 320-1). Bain compares the nervous system to an “organ with bellows constantly charged, and ready to be let off in any direction, according to the particular keys that are touched” (*S&I* 291). Despite these noteworthy metaphors of technology and music, Bain’s language of habit is steeped, like Carpenter’s and later James’s, in images of tracks or tracts, currents, and streams.

Lewes was “an influential disseminator of physiological knowledge” (Reed 11) and mental physiologist in his own right, and his ideas are implicitly invoked in James’s

habit chapter. Lewes's conception of habit reflects his theory of organicism: no thing can excite one part without indirectly catalyzing the whole (*PLMI* 131). The law of irradiation requires that "every excitation must be propagated" (*PLMI* 131); each excitation is diffused throughout nervous tissue following "the lines of least resistance" (*PLMI* 132). In this way, a "neural tract" or "pathway of discharge becomes more or less defined" (*PLMI* 136, 132). These paths restrict irradiation, "which would otherwise be indefinite" (*PLMI* 132); they "prevent new acquisitions, and resist new combinations" (*PLMI* 133). Similarly, notions of habit as primarily a process of restriction are promoted by later in the century by James Sully, who notes that habit often opposes the new actions required by environment (*Human Mind* 232). Ironically itself a product of development, habit tends to oppose growth by "diminish[ing] the plasticity of the neuro-muscular apparatus" – the "characteristic note of habit is mechanicality" (*Human Mind* 231, 225).¹⁰⁴ Habit, defined in neuroscience as a potentially constricting, rigidifying law of mental existence, had, as James, Carpenter, Bain, Lewes, Sully, and others discern, profound ethical implications.

Verification of the physical reality of habit transformed an ancient philosophical concept of human nature into a newly significant mechanism shaping human character. New knowledge of the reflex functioning of the nervous system, along with evolutionary biology, further legitimized the scientific basis of habit. In addition, influenced by the discovery of the laws of thermodynamics, theorists of habit after the 1840s relied increasingly on the necessity of conserving energy. The mind was conceptualized "as a closed system, driven to repetitive, automatic behaviors in order to conserve energy for

more difficult or novel tasks” (Vrettos 400).¹⁰⁵ In the Victorian period, science surpassed philosophy as the principle discourse authenticating habit as an inescapable “law” of human thought. The next difficulty, for materialist and spiritualist psychologists alike, was reconciling the linear, restrictive, and mechanical nature of habit with the complexity of human consciousness.

2.iii “Walking bundles of habits” or Creatures of Volition?: Self-discipline and Sympathy in Victorian Theories of Character Formation

According to Renée Tursi, William James instigates a “uniquely American” engagement with habit, which is “refreshingly paradoxical” and not yoked to the “simple Victorian reliance upon habit to assuage the risks of an unsafe world” (19). Tursi wants to establish habit as a “philosophical and rhetorical force of American early modernism” (2).¹⁰⁶ Following Philip Fisher, she assents to a monologic notion of the Victorian faith in self-control and habits of earnest industriousness; her statement avoids the complicating fact that Victorian discourses on habit were no less paradoxical. In fact, doctrines promoting salutary habits of self-help and sympathy, and even the role of habit in higher orders of thought, were driven by fear of dehumanizing habits. Competing positive discourses surrounding habit emerged to oppose the moral and intellectual decay that habit facilitates. The counterforces that aimed to defeat habit by habit itself prescribed the moral habits of the ascendant will and self-discipline, sympathy, and excursive, original thought. Furthermore, habit was enlisted simultaneously to promote a conservative Victorian ethic of controlled change, and to reinforce more radical values of free thought

and non-customary truth. Habit, in Bakhtinian terms, contains both monologic and dialogic potential.

William James, along with many of his nineteenth-century predecessors, asserts an Aristotelian emphasis on the importance of education in habit formation. In wild animals, he notes, habits are innate, but in humans, habits “see[m], to a great extent, to be the result of education” (*Principles* 109). For this truism, James cites William Carpenter’s proposition that the “ganglionic substance” of the brain, in its plasticity, was readily developed by education (James, *Principles* 114-15). Adults possess habits that were acquired in their youth, for what is learned early is “branded” upon the brain (James, *Principles* 117). A central maxim of habit theory (that James accepts) from Aristotle onwards is that for mature people, acquiring habits and discontinuing old ones is a struggle, for “[b]oth the Intellectual and the Moral character have become in great degree fixed” (Carpenter 345). Bain agrees that the early years are favourable to forces of plasticity (*S&I* 448-9), but that the alteration of habits in later life requires near impossible amounts of self-control; it involves “terrific struggles, which prove how hard it is to set up the volitions of the day against the bent of years” (*E&I* 515). Subsequently, James specifies that between the ages of twenty and thirty, one’s character essentially congeals into fixed habits:

Could the young but realize how soon they will become mere walking bundles of habits, they would give more heed to their conduct while in the plastic state. We are spinning our own fates, good or evil, and never to be undone. Every smallest stroke of virtue or of vice leaves its never so little

a scar. The drunken Rip Van Winkle, in Jefferson's play, excuses himself for every fresh dereliction by saying, 'I won't count this time!' Well! He may not count it, and a kind Heaven may not count it; but it is being counted none the less. Down among his nerve-cells and fibres the molecules are counting it, registering and storing it up to be used against him when the next temptation comes. Nothing we ever do is, in strict scientific literalness, wiped out. Of course, this has its good side as well as its bad one. As we become permanent drunkards by so many separate drinks, so we become saints in the moral, and authorities and experts in the practical and scientific spheres, by so many separate acts and hours of work. (*Principles* 130-31)

The double discourse surrounding habit is stated overtly: it "has its good side as well as its bad one." Habit, for James, as well as for Victorian mental-physiologists, is a psycho-physical mechanism most changeable in youth, acquiring its force by incremental action and serving either to elevate or to destroy morality and constructive action. Once entrenched, however, its influence for good or ill is ominously immovable. As James Mill (1733-1836) asserts, "trains of association" may become "so habitual as to be uncontrollable by any habits which the subsequent period of life could induce" (qtd. in Carlisle 19). Within this framework, the goal of all education is to instill the paramount virtue of self-control; in this way, volitional agency is maintained over the wayward forms of association. Victorian discussions of habit, to which James generally assents, are, in Aristotelian fashion, generally skeptical of changing bad habits once they are

installed in the character. For James, “Dr Carpenter’s phrase that *our nervous system grows to the modes in which it has been exercised* expresses the philosophy of habit in a nutshell” (*Principles* 117). Writers such as Samuel Smiles capitalized upon the double-edged possibilities of habit and promoted the overarching importance of “training the young to virtuous habits. In them they are the easiest formed and then formed they last for life; like letters cut on the bark of a tree grow and widen with age” (*Self-Help* 220). In nineteenth-century habit theory, dystopic fears regarding the very physical implacability of bad habits that are “never to be undone” in the character are palliated by near utopian hopes attached to the grace period when character is pliant and educable

Furthermore, James selects Carpenter to reinforce his views on habit because Carpenter explicitly champions free will in the formation of character. In this, Carpenter continually opposes himself to T. H. Huxley (whose name became a catchword in psychology for radical materialism) as being a believer in the volitional nature of human action and not an advocate of the “Determinist doctrine” (Carpenter xxv), which annihilates human moral judgment. Importantly, Carpenter acknowledges the “palpable inconsistency” between the idea that the automatic activity of the mind exists alongside the controlling power of the “Will” (liii-liv). Yet, he asserts that despite “congenital Constitution and external influences,” the individual’s character is significantly formed by the power of the will (Carpenter 366); so that, ultimately, human beings are not “mere thinking automata, mere puppets to be pulled by suggesting-strings” (Carpenter 27). Paradoxically, however, the ascendancy of the will must be “*habitually* maintained” (Carpenter 366). The “Will,” Carpenter argues, “may either oppose or concur with the

automatic tendencies,” but it only renders the individual a “*free agent*,” “according as it is habitually exerted” (27): “There is, in fact, a continual action and reaction between Habit and Will, in our *mental*, just as there is in our *bodily* life” (366).¹⁰⁷ Such statements by Carpenter inform the central tenets of William James’s theories of the human mind. James rejects the Lamarckean view (held by Spencer and others) that acquired habit may become a congenital tendency, holding instead that “in man the negation of all fixed modes is the essential characteristic” (*Principles* 990). This is humankind’s distinguishing characteristic; man, James declares, is “*par excellence*, the *educable* animal” (*Principles* 990). Repetition alone is insufficient to explain that which prevails upon one’s consciousness; it does not account for the spontaneous forces of “selective attention,” subjective interest, and association by similarity that shape human thought and volition (*Principles* 380).

Complicating and even contradicting James’s belief in the relative permanence of acquired habits is his theory of “selective attention”: it is more likely to be the novel thing, rather than the habitual thing, that captures our attention and interest. Attention renders the least frequent associations more vivid in our consciousness; and, as Bain had argued, fixing attention is the “main function of volition” in intellectual association (*S&I* 560). James posits that association by similarity (as opposed to frequency and contiguity) is absent in so-called “brutes”: “They are enslaved to routine” (*Principles* 977).¹⁰⁸ Habitual actions have an “appointed order” (*Principles* 120) unlike “strictly voluntary act[s],” which are guided by ideas and perceptions (*Principles* 120). Consciousness is only concentrated “when nerve processes are hesitant”; in automatic, habitual action it is

diminished (*Principles* 145). For James, the dynamic, conscious, centrifugal forces in the human mind oppose habit; yet, ironically, they must be habitually maintained by attention (a habit of the will). Habit, with this qualification, is not a monologic force controlling volition; it operates in dialogic tension with more pluralistic forces in the human mind. The natural flexibility of human thought, however, must be protected from the enslaving automatism of habit by an education which instills the habit of self-discipline.¹⁰⁹

Victorian mental physiologists agree about the consummate importance of self-discipline. In *Education: Intellectual, Moral, and Physical* (1861), Spencer endorses “self-development” (99) through an education which creates “moral culture”: “Human beings are at the mercy of their associated ideas,” he acknowledges and thus, “grave moral consequences depend upon the habitual pleasure or pain which daily lessons produce” (101-2). The improvement of knowledge must be made “habitually gratifying” and not “habitually repugnant” (Spencer, *Education* 103). Repetition is, in Spencer’s opinion, crucial for producing “deep ... impression[s]” (*Education* 113) on the mind about consequences. Children should be accustomed to the daily practice of self-control; they must “habitually experience the true consequences of their conduct” (Spencer, *Education* 117). Similarly, Carpenter advises duty and restraint in a household or a school so that “the preference of duty to pleasure comes to be the general habit” (358). He recommends the use of military drill exercises in order to instill self-discipline, and Samuel Smiles concurs: “Habit is formed by careful training. And it is astonishing how much can be accomplished by systematic discipline and drill” (*Character* 159). According to Bain, in both mind and body, “*the present is the resultant of the past*” (*MS*

351). Thus an individual cannot escape the “unconscious persistence of early habits” (*MS* 354). This theory posits the extreme moral importance of “orderly discipline” (*MS* 354). Cultivation of emotional restraint is critical to “every well-ordered mind” (*MS* 388), for “a bad set of Habits,” once established, requires “far stronger effort of Volition” (*MS* 351) to deracinate. The individual, Bain posits, will be particularly subjugated to bad habits of an emotional nature. To dissociate thoughts that have “grown together in the mind” (*Emotions* 580), one requires a powerful will.¹¹⁰ Within this psychological framework, the goal of all education is to instill the paramount virtue of self-control; in this way, volitional agency is maintained over the habit-based mechanisms of “associative growth.”¹¹¹ This near-proverbial associationist wisdom informed utilitarian educational theories of education (put forth by Mill himself, Jeremy Bentham, Joseph Priestly) that capitalized on the idea of controlling habitual mental associations in the individual for universal social advancement (Olson 169-73; I expand upon this branch of utopian habit theory, and its dystopian practice, in my discussion of Charles Dickens’s *Hard Times*.)¹¹² James’s view of the primacy of the will, through the mental process of association by similarity, and selective attention and interest, aligns with that of Victorian mental physiologists, who stress the moral need to preserve the power of the will through the disciplined habits of a “well-ordered mind.”

An evocative word circulating in habit-based discourses is *energy*. The productivity of good habits is linked to their role in conserving intellectual energy: “*habit diminishes the conscious attention with which our acts are performed*” (James, *Principles* 119). Energy is saved as our “lower centres” manage daily routines automatically, while

our “higher thought-centres hardly know anything about the matter” (James, *Principles* 115).¹¹³ James cites Henry Maudsley’s playful observation that, without the benefit of habit, a man could exhaust himself getting dressed for the day (*Principles* 113-114). Spencer’s analogy between a drainage-system and the nervous system is also quoted approvingly by James: streams of water will drain efficiently through the unclogged paths of escape (*Principles* 113). Similarly, productive habits “economize the expense of nervous and muscular energy,” keeping certain knowledge in the “effortless custody of automatism” (James, *Principles* 18, 126).

Discourses of mental science, defining the mind as energy to be harnessed, also reinscribe notions of virility and mental cleanliness (codified masculine). Psychologists assert that it is noble and manly to economize productive energy through prudent habits; yet, ironically, habit itself – considered an unconscious and non-rational process – is coded feminine. Nowhere is the representation of habit as a feminized mental function more overt than in James’s theory of volition. With his doctrine of energetic, intellectual, and volitional action he argues that women are closer than men to “brutes” with regard to the limitations of their mental plasticity and their ready consolidation into mere bundles of habit. In Chapter 5, I discuss in detail James’s explicit and implicit analogies between the mental functioning of women and that of “brutes” or “lower species”; what is relevant to this immediate discussion is the way in which James deplors the enervated, “nerveless sentimentalist” who “never does a manly concrete deed” (*Principles* 129).¹¹⁴ Effort, along with attention, is thus an enabling “habit of the will,” producing action, whereas desultory habits of inaction enervate the masculine will (*Principles* 130). James offers

practical maxims about how to keep the “faculty of effort alive... by a little gratuitous exercise every day” (*Principles* 130).¹¹⁵ His formula for productive masculinity is unattached to a Victorian doctrine of sympathetic, moral concern for others; instead, it encrypts competition between men. James argues, for example, that a man who has “daily inured himself to the habits of concentrated attention, energetic volition, and self-denial... will stand like a tower when everything rocks around him, and when his softer fellow-mortals are winnowed like chaff in the blast” (*Principles* 130). Habit, although feminized for its negative aspects, is nevertheless presented as *the* mechanism driving the practical competitive economy of masculine character.¹¹⁶

J. S. Mill, although not invested in the masculinist gender encoding of habit, also bases theories of character formation on concepts of habitual energy aligned with volition. Like James, Mill promotes methods of education aimed at preserving the will through energy, action, and practical self-improvement. As an avid supporter of associationism and physiological psychology, Mill is necessarily steeped in habit theory. Psychology, for Mill, is a moral science (along with economics, sociology, and political science) concerning the “Laws of Mind” and “Ethology” – his name for the science of the formation of character. “Ethology,” he proposes, could be developed as an “ulterior science” to psychology, which would “correspon[d] to the art of education; in the widest sense of the term, including the formation of national or collective character as well as individual” (*SL* 8: 869).¹¹⁷ His ultimate rejection of Auguste Comte is spurred by the philosopher’s refusal to accept psychology as a science; for Mill, this entails a rejection of investigations of the degree to which mental character is created by circumstances:

“since no one supposes that cerebral conformation does all, and circumstances nothing” (*ACP* 10: 297). Comte fails, in Mill’s view, to accept the “twofold point of view of physiology and psychology” (*ACP* 10: 298). For Mill, the mental mechanisms of habit are critical to this “twofold point of view.”

Mill identifies individual freedom to form one’s own character as the basis of human moral freedom (*SL* 8: 841).¹¹⁸ In Mill’s estimation, human behaviour can be explained by invariable laws of causality, but this does not obviate free will, since decisions are a product of an individual’s character and one’s character is changeable. “[W]e have real power over the formation of our own character,” he insists; “by influencing some of our circumstances, [we] can modify our future habits or capabilities of willing” (*A* 1: 177).¹¹⁹ Mill defines philosophical necessity as the notion that, given the character of an individual, his or her actions “might be unerringly inferred” (*SL* 8: 837). He clarifies that the word “Necessity,” when applied to the will (and actions, “when habitual” [*SL* 8: 839]), misleadingly implies “irresistibleness” as well as “uniformity of sequence” (*SL* 8: 839), whereas in fact human actions are not ruled despotically in this way. For not only are human beings are *more than* the sum of their sequential, atomistic mental associations and “Necessity” is “very remote from fatalism” (*SL* 8: 839). Mill objects to the extreme determinist idea that there is no use struggling against one’s environment (education and circumstance) as strongly as he rejected the dominant metaphysical assumption that mental differences are an unexplainable, “ultimate fact” of one’s character (*SL* 8: 840, 859). In both *A System of Logic* and his *Autobiography* (1873), the word *habit* appears at key points in Mill’s discussion of Necessity to support

his notion of the non-deterministic pliability of human character. When “our habits are not too inveterate,” he asserts, we can will to “make ourselves different” (*SL* 8: 840):

A person feels morally free who feels that his habits or his temptations are not his masters, but he theirs: who even in yielding to them knows that he could resist; that were he desirous of altogether throwing them off, there would not be required for that purpose a stronger desire than he knows himself to be capable of feeling. (*SL* 8: 841)

Feelings of pleasure and pain create mental associations, but become secondary to the association; this explains why “habits of hurtful excess continue to be practised although they have ceased to be pleasurable; and in this manner also it is that the habit of willing to persevere in the course which he has chosen, does not desert the moral hero” (*SL* 8: 842). This statement expresses clearly Mill’s sense of the paradox of habit as it applies to a doctrine of causation. Thus, through a theory of habit, Mill negotiates a place for individual agency within a Necessitarian doctrine of causation. Mill’s “habit of willing” (*SL* 8: 842), offered as the secret to self-discipline and control over the formation of one’s moral character, aligns with the thought on habituation of Carpenter, Bain, Spencer, and James. Yet, underneath the hopes Mill places on the humanizing “habit of willing,” there is an unflinching acknowledgment of the ease with which bad habits insidiously and inveterately wreck one’s moral disposition.

Physiological psychology, Vanessa Ryan observes, became popular due to a cultural need for a practical science to strengthen the culture of self-education (“Material Mind” 107). Victorian periodicals were replete with articles aimed at improving one’s

moral habits (Smith 71); as well, numerous youth societies formed to promote habits of Christian manliness.¹²⁰ Manuals advising domestic self-help were also popular: for example, Sarah Stickney Ellis's *The Women of England* (1838), Maria Grey and Emily Shirreff's *Thoughts on Self-Culture, addressed to Women* (1850) – a tract suffused with maxims concerning habit that promote it as a kind of miracle cure for women's socially weakened faculties (63) – and Elizabeth Beaton's *Book of Household Management* (1859-60). It is, however, Samuel Smiles's best selling work *Self-Help* (1859) that best demonstrates the prevalence of common-sense notions of productive habit.¹²¹ Habit is promoted by Smiles as the magical ingredient required for the moral and economic success of the individual and the nation. As Anne B. Rodrick observes, *Self-Help* “codified the supremacy of aspiration over occupation as a maker of identity for thousands of readers” (39). Smiles (who, of course, tells his reader that “man is a bundle of habits” [319]) articulates an optimistic theory of habitual self-help that eradicates any need for radical social change. Ironically, however, Smiles's mobilizing habit of self-assertion requires a habit of acquiescence to the status quo.

Smiles claims that productive habit is the mechanism behind the maxim that character is fortune – in other words, economic success is proportional to the industriousness of one's character. To illustrate this, he selects heroes of habit liberally from the peasant class to the aristocracy, providing a democratic theory of heroism which advocates the ease with which one can traverse the road from factory boy to Member of Parliament with the right habits in hand – particularly perseverance. Smiles's text is saturated with anecdotes of successful soldiers, scientists, inventors, and literary men,

whose indefatigable industry has been the secret to success. The biographical sketches and maxims of famous men illustrate the “power of self-help, patient purpose, resolute working, and steadfast integrity, issuing in the formation of a truly noble and manly character” (*Self-Help* 21). Smiles’s ideal man, supposedly a real and possible “Everyman,” raises his social rank by “preserving application and energy” (*Self-Help* 28); he operates mechanistically by utilizing methodical habits to conserve energy. Even the structure of *Self-Help* illustrates the power of habituation; the book’s “iterative mode” and “loose structure” encourage repetition as a mode of effective instruction (Sinnema xvi-xvii).

Imported (in part) from discourses of physiological psychology, the habit of self-discipline is the mechanistic basis of the Smilesean moral man. In fact, “the machinery of moral existence should be carried on principally through the medium of the habits, so as to save wear and tear on the great principles within” (Smiles, *Self-Help* 252). Smiles engages overtly with habit theory in his final chapter, “Character – the True Gentleman,” in which he defines character as “moral order embodied in the individual,” and asserts that good habits are mandatory, as they “compose the best part of a man’s moral conduct” (314). Synthesizing conventional wisdom and contemporary psychology, he reminds his readers that man is said to be a “bundle of habits,” that habit is “second nature”; for a contemporary source, he cites Bishop Butler’s idea that virtue itself can become a habit (*Self-Help* 319). Enthralling powers of habit are highlighted: “a portion of our free activity and individuality becomes suspended in habit” (Smiles, *Self-Help* 320). Habits are “benefactors or tyrants, according as they are good or evil” (Smiles, *Self-Help* 320).

Smiles's axioms are a hodgepodge of philosophical, psychological, and proverbial theories of habit; they are amassed to create a rhetorical barrage promoting the habits of self-help – producing a textual effect that emulates his figuration of habit as a powerful avalanche.

In *Self-Help*, moral success, and its attendant economic success, are paradoxically rooted in the anti-materialist idea that character is the noblest of possessions. Yet despite his moral framework, Smiles promotes the self-interested, self-promoting character (particularly his pragmatic man of business) that Thomas Carlyle and John Ruskin would find hard to distinguish from their detested “Mechanical man” – the anti-hero of the theories of political economy that they despised. An acknowledgement of the human propensity to act habitually or mechanically is central to the social and aesthetic thought of Carlyle and Ruskin.¹²² In “Signs of the Times” (1829), Carlyle condemns his own era as the “Age of Machinery” (34), in which a transcendental moral sense reflecting the “dynamical” nature of men has been overpowered by mechanizing forces of utilitarianism (inferring associationist assessments of the human mind) and *laissez-faire* capitalism. All institutions have been mechanized, including religion and education: “[f]or the same habit regulates not our modes of action alone, but our modes of thought and feeling. Men are grown mechanical in head and in heart, as well as in hand” (Carlyle “Signs” 37).¹²³ In tandem with the gospel of work and duty, Carlyle had hoped that great men, specifically literary men, would act as anti-materialist prophets rekindling the lost emotion of the populace. He particularly approved of the humourist's power to generate sympathy. Rhetorically engaged in equating habit with the anathema of mechanism,

Carlyle did not emphasize a positive doctrine of habit. Ruskin, however, sees habit as both social curse and panacea.

Ruskin joins Carlyle in blaming the science of political economy (the individualist creeds of Smith, Bentham, and Malthus) for replacing social sympathy with avarice. In Ruskin's words, expressed in "The Roots of Honour" (1860), the desire for economic gain reduces men to "covetous machine[s]" that are "all skeleton"; accordingly, political economy is "an ossifiant theory of progress" based on the "negation of the soul" (*Unto This Last* 17: 25-6). Ruskin's writings espouse a hatred of mechanized habit similar to Carlyle's, yet he promotes curative habits in the form of enlightened thought and sympathy. Healthy habits of thought are Ruskin's mode of resistance to "Economic man" – an automaton created by the soullessness of habitual money-getting. In his lecture "Of Kings' Treasuries" in *Sesame and Lilies* (1865), he decries the immorality of a nation in which men pour their "whole *masculine* energy into the business of money-making and have no other true emotion" (18: 97). The working poor are as lobotomized by this as are the middle class: "they are only the body and nervous force of [the nation], acting still from old habit in a convulsive perseverance, while the mind is gone" (*SL* 18: 96-7). According to Ruskin, lack of thought, and particularly of feeling, engenders "every sort of bestial habit and crime.... It is in the blunt hand and the dead heart, in the diseased habit, in the hardened conscience, that men become vulgar; they are for ever vulgar, precisely in proportion as they are incapable of sympathy" (*SL* 18: 80). For Ruskin, only moral, intellectual, and aesthetic habits (based on sympathy with fellow men and nature itself)¹²⁴ can counter the vulgar, puerile habits (such as materialism, selfishness, and

mindlessness) of Englishman who evince “childish illiterateness and want of education in the most ordinary habits of thought” (*SL* 18: 98). Enfolding a rant against an epidemic of insensibility, “Of Kings’ Treasuries” begins and ends by asserting the importance of books to the sympathetic habits of the nation.

Many others joined Ruskin in the hope that literature could aid in the battle against utilitarian values through the “cultivation of the sympathies and imagination” (Houghton 267). The “Religion of Humanity,” in which humanity replaces God as the object of love and service, attracted the English followers of its “High Priest” (according to Mill [*ACP* 10: 328]), Auguste Comte – John Morley, Harriet Martineau, Mill, Lewes, and Eliot – who embraced its doctrine of sympathy (Houghton 271).¹²⁵ The moral function of literature, these writers postulate, is to heighten sympathy. William Wordsworth, in preface to *Lyrical Ballads* (1802), theorizes that the duty of the poet (in the modern age of habituated desensitization) is to promote the “habitual and direct sympathy” that will connect “us with our fellow beings” (52). Famously, Wordsworth’s poetry had this inspiring effect on J. S. Mill. Mill confesses in his *Autobiography* that reading Wordsworth taught him that the “habit of analysis,” despite its centrality to “dissolving” prejudice and specious associations, “has a tendency to wear away the feelings” (1: 141), creating a mechanical engagement with life (1: 142). Contrarily, the “habitual exercise of the feelings” leads to passion and virtue (*A* 1: 61).¹²⁶ George Eliot is the novelist who theorizes most explicitly that “awakening social sympathies,” the key to social amelioration, is the moral duty of the novelist (“Natural History” 111). Eliot’s novels evince that “[t]here is no general doctrine which is not capable of eating out our

morality if unchecked by the deep-seated habit of direct fellow-feeling with individual fellow-men” (*M* 582). She perceives in Dickens’s works a lack of psychological realism which, she argues, dilutes the sympathetic effects and social impact of his novels. As George Levine, Gillian Beer, Sally Shuttleworth, and many others have observed, Eliot participated in debates concerning physiological psychology; certainly her promotion of habits of sympathy dovetail with the then-current assessment of altruism in psychology.

The doctrine of sympathy was also well-supported by physiological psychologists. Carpenter, for example, affirms the necessity of social sympathy as expressed by “habitual *kindness*” (360). As well, Bain argues that the “Sentiment of Power” (which drives material desires, egoism, jealousy, and vanity) should be undermined by empathetic habits: the “strongest counter-forces are the sympathies with other men’s feelings and freedom of action; and by entertaining these habitually, we may keep a check upon the domineering spirit, and at least attain a habitual control over ourselves” (*Emotions* 512). Sympathy, he asserts, is a natural endowment, which may be improved by education (*MS* 393). Similarly, Lewes insists that, “Moral life is based on sympathy: it is feeling for others, working for others, aiding others, quite irrespective of any personal good beyond the satisfaction of the social impulse” (*PLMI* 153).¹²⁷ He equates sympathetic feeling (as does Ruskin) with intelligence, finding that altruistic mental impulses require more cognitive power (than the more emotional egoistic forces): “Hence so much immorality is sheer stupidity” (*PLMI* 153).¹²⁸

According to Darwin’s evolutionary psychology, explicated in *Descent of Man* (1871), sympathy “is the “foundation-stone” of the social instinct and therefore of

morality (122). Ambitiously, Darwin interweaves psychology, ethics, and evolutionary science together in this treatise through a theory of habit, arguing that the higher faculties (ratiocination, abstraction, self-consciousness, and morality) develop through social instinct (*Descent* 163). Importantly, the instinct of sympathy was “originally acquired, like all other social instincts, through natural selection” (*Descent* 156); our moral conscience “originates in the social instincts” and is then “confirmed by instruction and habit” (*Descent* 157). The notion that sympathy is reinforced by habit recurs in *Descent*: “habit in the individual would ultimately play a very important part in guiding the conduct of each member; for the social instinct, together with sympathy, is, like any other instinct, greatly strengthened by habit” (122). Darwin postulates that moral action depends on the “strength of [a man’s] innate or acquired feeling of sympathy; and on his own capacity for reasoning out the remote consequences of his acts” (*Descent* 138) – like Lewes, he finds morality to be proportional to intelligence. The “higher” moral rules “relate to the welfare of others” and the lower ones “relate chiefly to self” (*Descent* 147). As Darwin explains: “the habit of performing benevolent actions certainly strengthens the feeling of sympathy which gives the first impulse to benevolent actions” (*Descent* 148-9). Darwin places utopian hopes in the inheritance of good habits (such as temperance), postulating that individuals possessing such habits will succeed in the struggle for life: “[W]e may expect that virtuous habits will grow stronger, becoming perhaps fixed by inheritance. In this case, the struggle between our higher and lower impulses will be less severe, and virtue will be triumphant” (*Descent* 148-150). Darwin’s hopes for an evolved humanity, “triumphant[ly]” virtuous and moving towards moral perfection through

evolution, is, as I will discuss shortly, tempered by his observation about the regrettably slow rate of intellectual evolution.

Victorian educational, moral, and scientific discourses (evolutionary psychology and biology), by promoting ameliorative habits of self-disciplined volition, and sympathy, aim to subdue the dehumanizing mental mechanics of habit. Such positive approaches to habit were theoretically less disruptive to the cultural status quo than the intellectual and moral habit of non-customary thought.

2.iv Custom and Habit

In his controversial “Conclusion” to *The Renaissance* (1873), Walter Pater re-emphasizes the Lockean estimation of habit as a source of prejudice when he proclaims that habit kills perception: “To burn always with this hard, gemlike flame, to maintain this ecstasy, is success in life. In a sense it might even be said that our failure is to form habits, for, after all, habit is relative to a stereotyped world” (60-1).¹²⁹ For Pater, habit is speciously conventional, and “what is only conventional, has no real claim upon us” (60-1). In keeping with this sentiment, Pater commends Wordsworth in *Appreciations* (1889) for being a critic of habit/received ideas and the “value placed on customariness, upon all that is habitual, local, rooted in the ground” (134). Within Pater’s aesthetics, the practice of fine, passionate, original perception is the only habit (if it can even be termed a habit) worth having. In his approving assessment of Charles Lamb (also in *Appreciations*), he lauds the humourist for the “habitual apprehension” of fine perceptions (176). Habit, in

the conventional sense is, according to Pater, an obstacle to thought, just as the systematization of philosophical speculation deadens perceptions.

Matthew Arnold predates Pater in his unhesitating contempt for habit.¹³⁰

Throughout his writings, the word *habit* is a synonym for the axiomatic, stereotypical, and unreflecting thought that is the antithesis of culture (which is founded on “a stream of fresh and free thought” (*Culture* 6)).¹³¹ Repeatedly in *Culture and Anarchy* (1869), Arnold accuses the English of following “stock notions and habits... staunchly but mechanically” (6). Habit is associated with “unintelligent routine” (*Culture* 162), provincialism, Philistinism (defined as the worship of machinery), and Puritanism; it is the substance of the mundane, “ordinary self” (*Culture* 202) that follows conventional wisdom, instead of the disinterested “right reason” of the “best self” (*Culture* 202). Arnold regrets that the English, unlike the French, are not characterized by the free play of the intellect: “We like to be suffered to lie comfortably in the old straw of our habits, especially of our intellectual habits, even though this straw may not be very clean and fine” (“Academies,” *Works* 3: 235). Arnold’s livestock metaphor for his habit-based countrymen is strikingly unflattering. In another rhetorical attack, habit becomes the mental engine of the thoughtless “mob” which Arnold fears will destroy the framework of society. Throughout Arnold’s defense of culture, habit is rejected as a principle of stasis; yet, ironically, the social change which he approves is lawful, slow, and does not advocate a radical break from the status quo of habit. Arnold’s theories of original perception (like Pater after him) remain divorced from the messy, aggressive realities of class strife and political change.¹³²

Victorian psychologists, as well as cultural critics, carefully examine the role of habituation in cultural transmission and social regulation. William Carpenter, for example, argues that custom, transmitted by tradition, becomes part of one's unconscious nature, "a standing habit of mind, or fixed set of mental tendencies" (362-3). Policed by fear of judgment by the "orthodox public," the individual generally assents to social creed (Carpenter 363). Similarly, for Lewes, habits of thought are gleaned from the "Social Medium" (*PLMI* 118). As a believer in an *a posteriori* assessment of character, Lewes concludes that the current state of social evolution "will be one of the necessary determinants in every individual mind" (*PLMI* 148); the intellect and conscience are "social functions" (*PLMI* 160): "We breathe the social air; since what we think, greatly depends on what others have thought" (*PLMI* 160). Furthermore, Lewes's theory of social inculcation accords with Darwin's argument that habits of belief, like physical habits and instincts, undergo intergenerational transference. Darwin found scientific support for agnosticism in his certainty that "unnatural," "inculcated" beliefs (such as those of Christianity) are transmitted in an "inherited effect" (*Autobiographies* 54). Unsettling, however, to Darwin's counter-faith in social evolution is the fact that "senseless customs" and "senseless habits" – the example he gives is the "horror of the Hindoo for unclean food" – are often transmitted along with the sensible ones (*Descent* 148-149). As well, in *On the Origin of Species*, Darwin repeatedly voices his regret that old traditions are inveterately impervious to new knowledge. The persistent authority of the doctrine of special creation, for example, illustrates the ascendancy of inflexibility, prejudice, and received opinion (*Origin* 453). Cannily, at the close of *Origin*, Darwin

blames social habit as the reason why his theory of natural selection is resisted; as creatures of habit, human beings are “slow to admit change” (452). In the evolutionary psychology of Darwin, Lewes, and others, habit is synonymous with custom.

Habituation, and not the noble, *a priori* principles of nature or reason, is established as the logical foundation of social custom.

To return to William James, it is significant that, after outlining the physiology of habit, he shifts his attention to its “numerous and momentous” (*Principles* 124) social, political and ethical implications. To illustrate that habit functions ideologically like a cage – paradoxically a place of safety and confinement, a sanctuary and a prison – James tells the story of a tiger who, upon his release, surprisingly creeps back into his cage. Interestingly, at this point in his discussion, when habit is politicized as a structure which restrains and controls, James’s authorial voice emerges clearly from the discursive environment of quotations from earlier writers on habit. Whereas Smiles postulates that habit could be *the* tool for social progress, and others select its mechanics for social sympathy, James seizes upon its convenience in social constraint:

Habit is thus the enormous fly-wheel of society, its most precious conservative agent. It alone is what keeps us within the bounds of ordinance, and saves the children of fortune from the envious uprisings of the poor. It alone prevents the hardest and most repulsive walks of life from being deserted by those brought up to tread therein. It keeps the fisherman and the deck-hand at sea through the winter; it holds the miner in his darkness, and nails the countryman to his log-cabin and his lonely

farm through all the months of snow.... It dooms us all to fight out the battle of life upon the lines of our nurture or our early choice, and to make the best of a pursuit that disagrees, because there is no other for which we are fitted, and it is too late to begin again. It keeps different social strata from mixing. Already at the age of twenty-five you see the professional mannerism settling down on the young commercial traveler, on the young doctor... You see the little lines of cleavage running through the character, the tricks of thought, the prejudices, the ways of the 'shop,' in a word, from which the man can by-and-by no more escape than his coat-sleeve can suddenly fall into a new set of folds. On the whole, it is best that he should not escape it. It is well for the world that in most of us, by the age of thirty, the character has set like plaster, and will never soften again.

(Principles 125-6)

In James's evocative language, habit "prevents," "holds," "nails," "dooms," and entraps all individuals from escaping their social and economic "folds." Read alongside his belief in the fundamentally alien nature of rigidity and confinement to the human intellect and will (the "essential" "negation" of "fixed modes" [Principles 990]), his promotion of habit as a "fly-wheel" supporting the engine of society is a deeply ironic, even satiric, assent to conservatism. Despite James's overarching machine metaphor, habit functions in this passage as a kind of mass anaesthetic, easing the social pain of the unnatural calcification of the human will. This numbing of the democratic will might be "well for the world" (or things as they are), but it is unhealthy for the individual. Arnold, in his

denunciation of habit, ignores what James recognizes: its authoritarian utility as a yoke on free thought in the populace.

In his *Autobiographies*, Darwin emphasizes the sheer hard work of free thinking: “I have steadily endeavoured to keep my mind free” (56). The mental difficulty of free thought is assessed by Bain as being linked to the laws of association: “The mere effort of analysis [or dissociation] is itself something considerable, so much so, that this is not a favourite avocation of the untutored mind, with which associative growth is more genial than disassociating surgery” (*S&I* 581). The fact that disassociative thought is even possible, is, James argues, a distinctively human phenomenon, for other animals are incapable of non-habitual, creative associations (association by similarity not contiguity). Mill concludes that original thought, and the tremendous energy it takes to maintain it, is the vital quality without which men and women are merely machines of habit. Although Mill subscribes to associationist mental theory based on the utility of habit, his ideal of the energetic individual (of either sex), unanaesthetized by habit, opposes the Smilsean ideal – a man whose character is a collection of moral habits. In Comte’s religion of humanity, Mill finds the same “ethical mistake as the theory of Calvinism”: too much energy expended on self-restraint and altruism (*ACP* 10: 337-38), resulting in the diminishment of individualism, and thus free thought. Thus, his oxymoronic ideal for humanity is the habit of non-habitual thought.

Mill theorizes that human character is formed mainly by circumstances – even instincts can be changed or eradicated by “other mental influences, and by education” (*SL* 8: 859). This belief prompts him to provide the pedagogical example of his own especial

education in his *Autobiography*. Revealingly, Mill asserts that his own “natural” ability was below average, but his education (as directed by his father) James was not one “of cram”; it did not involve imbibing received opinions and thinking like those who do not think “except in the furrows traced for them” (*A* 1: 33-35). From his father’s “mode of education,” he learned the “habit of thinking for [him]self” – specific proof of this being his lifelong disagreement with his father on the issue of suffrage for women (*A* 1: 189, 106). The socio-political and moral teaching of Mill’s “Ethology” is that ignorance about the *a posteriori* formation of human character has prohibited a universal habit of freethinking. Ignorance, he declares, is the “greatest stumbling block” to the moral and “rational treatment of social issues” (*A* 1: 270); as a result, the conservative interests (served by “intuitional metaphysics”) have inflexibly ruled the thought of Europe through the philosophy of innate ideas (*A* 1: 270).

Mill’s *On Liberty* exposes the tyranny of the majority over the individual through the power of prevailing opinion. Mill’s central thesis is that uncontested, received wisdom violates true liberty, which resides in the “inward domain” – characterized by consciousness and by liberty of thought, feeling, and opinion (18: 225-35). To achieve this true liberty, Mill advises the “steady habit” of correcting, correlating, and collecting opinions (18: 232), after the free-minded manner of Socrates, Jesus, Marcus Aurelius, Luther, and those who have been persecuted for their “free and daring speculation” (18: 242). It is a vested interest of ruling powers to inculcate habitual thought based on simple, passive, hereditary truths (to create what Mill terms, following Sir Arthur Helps, the “deep slumber of a decided opinion” [18: 250]), instead of active, progressive, and

competing partial truths. Mill regrets that the quality of “many-sidedness” which is required for non-habitual thought is rare, for in society as it stands, eccentricity is practically a crime (particularly for women) (18: 252, 265). Individual minds are clipped and cut like trees (or bound like women’s feet are in China), and individuality is destroyed, “maim[ed] by compression” (18: 271). Like other Victorian organicists, Mill believes that the quality of the state is that of the sum of its individuals. It is thus “the fatal tendency of mankind” that habituated mediocrity is routinely ascendant (18: 250, 253). In essence, Mill’s polemic of progress and liberty opposes customary ideology through the habit of mental freedom. His grandest oxymoronic ideal for humanity (despite his deep cynicism about the ability of his generation to think freely [Carlisle 13]), is the habit of non-habitual thought.

As in *On Liberty*, the main arguments of Mill’s *The Subjection of Women* (1869; created in collaboration with Harriet Taylor) are based on the notion that human beings cannot be extracted from their social condition or “the whole habit of a life” (21: 320).¹³³ The refusal to acknowledge this logic in the case of women, he proclaims, is one of the “chief hindrances to human improvement” (21: 261) (Mill and Taylor are in awe of the sheer stupidity of banning “one-half of the whole sum of human intellect” from contributing to the service of society [21: 326].) The polemical treatise opens with a complaint against the near-smothering weight of customary, “universal opinion” upholding the *a priori* justification of women’s oppression through artificial conceptions of their innately inferior character. In Mill’s estimation, the fundamental premise of modern society – the fluidity of social position – requires an *a posteriori* “Ethology” and

a corresponding politics. For Mill, unlike Arnold and Pater, it is impossible to divorce a belief in the necessity of free thought from a belief in necessity of political action, in the form of either polemical tracts or direct action. Inspired by Wilhelm Humboldt's reformist aim to give political voice to minorities, Mill became a Member of Parliament. As a member of the House of Commons during the sessions of Parliament which passed the Reform Bill of 1867, Mill strove to gain suffrage for working men and defended their right to protest in parks (*A* 1: 278-9). Interestingly, he declares that his most important public service as an MP was his motion to strike out the words limiting the electoral franchise to males (*A* 1: 285); this engagement of his most unconventional idea is self-confessedly his proudest political moment. Parliamentary experience confirmed Mill's contentious view that "stupid persons are generally Conservative" (*A* 1: 277) – for Mill, stupidity is not ignorance or lack of intelligence *per se*, but automatic, habit-bound thinking. Mill's social and political ideas are underpinned by a paradoxical assessment of habit as being both critical to the maintenance of conservatism and vital to the preservation of free-thinking radicalism.

As I have discussed in Chapter 1, no genre or mode of literature is more predicated in attacking the stupidity of authoritative custom from the point of view of free thought than satire. Northrop Frye, for example, personifies satire as the forces of intelligence engaged in battle with the monster of stupidity ("Nature" 80). As well, Hume's observation that habits of thought can only be leveled by "sensible violence" (*Treatise* 175) justifies the aggressive habit-breaking agenda of satire. Association theories "carried radical hopes" (Rylance 61) in ascribing so much of human thought to

customary experience. Spencer, despite his notorious anglophilia and racism, was both a dedicated association psychologist and a political radical.¹³⁴ He observes that “the questioning habit” (*Principles of Sociology* 133) is the key to social evolution; it works against individual “submission” to political or ecclesiastical powers. Two core beliefs of Spencer’s social psychology, expressed in “On Manners and Fashion” (1854), are that “political independence and independence of personal conduct are linked,” and that for society to develop, old social forms must be “thrown off” (*Essays* 199-200). Consequently, Spencer declares a need for “protestantism in social issues,” identifying satire as a harbinger of revolutionary change:

Signs are not wanting that some change is at hand. A host of satirists, led on by Thackeray, have for years engaged in bringing our sham festivities, and our fashionable follies, into contempt; and in their candid moods, most men laugh at the frivolities with which they and the world in general are deluded. Ridicule has always been a revolutionary agent. That which is habitually assaulted with sneers and sarcasms cannot long survive.

Institutions that have lost their roots in men’s respect and faith are doomed; and the day of their dissolution is not far off. (*Essays* 234)

The habitual assaults of satire both signal and prompt revolutionary change. Spencer praises a “host of satirists” for seeing through the sham and delusion of current customs and institutions. His approval of satire as a literary form associated with the mental habit of seeing clearly accords with Pater’s later compliment to the humourist for the ability “to look upon the tricks and manners of the life about him with that same refined purged sort

of vision, which will come naturally to those of a later generation” (*Appreciations* 176). Although Pater is against explicit political agendas in art, his praise for a de-habituated, “purged sort of vision” aptly describes the project of satire. Certainly William James approves of the mental clarity (which he calls “focalization”) that satire entails. In his discussion of the marvel of conscious thought in human beings, he associates satire with the voluntary, non-habitual thought that epitomizes selective attention. The state of mind of the satirist best approximates clear, free thought:

When not ‘focalized,’ we are scatter-brained; but when thoroughly impassioned, we never wander from the point. None but congruous and relevant images arise. When roused by indignation or moral enthusiasm, how trenchant are our emotions, how smiting are our words! The whole network of petty scruples and by-considerations which, at ordinary languid times, surrounded the matter like a cobweb, holding back our thought, as Gulliver was pinned to the earth by the myriad Lilliputian threads, are dashed through at a blow, and the subject stands with its essential and vital lines revealed. (*Principles* 990)

With words commonly ascribed to satire (“indignation,” “moral enthusiasm,” “trenchant,” and “smiting”) and with a reference to Swift’s *Gulliver’s Travels*, James signals a generic subtext to his opposition of “focalized” and vital reason to the network of restraining mental habits. Satire is implicitly evoked as a genre morally engaged in an anatomy of habit.

To summarize, this chapter explores the “law of habit” in associationism and the Victorian physio-psychological discourses that emerged from it, in order to provide the foundation for my argument that Victorian novelists continued the traditions of satire (as an evolving mode or genre) through an engagement with omnipresent theories of habit. Although authoritative discourses (both of science and of moral/social science) implicate habit in the forces of determinism (and also in the dehumanization that accompanies materialist culture), contradictory theories inveterately identify habit as a locus of moral hope (through habits of sympathy, self-control, free will, and free thought). Generally speaking, satire, as Chapter 1 outlines, is a mode or genre founded upon notions of moral judgment; fittingly, moral conceptions of habit are intrinsic to Victorian satiric novels. Narratives satirizing habit expose prevailing ethics as little more than regimes of habit; custom and ideology, like habit itself, may operate unconsciously within the individual. Victorian novelists make persistent rhetorical and symbolic use of the fact that habit describes both individual and social custom. Furthermore, the “focalization” (James), “dissociating surgery” (Bain), and “dissociating force” (Mill), all of which describe free or anti-habitual thought in psychology, complement both Bakhtin’s notion of the dialogizing, dehabituating, and Menippean forces of the novel, and Frye’s concept of “anatomy.” In the chapters that follow, I examine the ways in which many Victorian novelists, critically engaged with culturally flourishing theories of habit, use satire to interrogate the customary associations of what Lewes evocatively terms the “Social Medium.”

Chapter 3

“Making habit omnipotent”: Satire on Habit in *Cranford*, *Silas Marner*, *The Way of All Flesh*, and *New Grub Street*

“I have at least succeeded in establishing a habit of mind which keeps watch against my self-partiality and promotes a fair consideration of what touches the feelings or fortunes of my neighbours.” (George Eliot, *Theophrastus Such* 10)

The habit was ominous. (George Gissing, *New Grub Street* 104)

Victorian satiric texts, while demonstrating a plethora of Menippean characteristics, frequently utilize Horatian and Juvenalian modes of social critique. Anatomies of habit vary in both their assessment of the degree of individual and social damage created by bad habits, and also in their optimism concerning the curative possibilities of good habits. Edward Bulwer-Lytton’s increasingly Juvenalian cast, observable in the contrast between *Pelham*’s jaunty Horatianism in 1828 and *The Coming Race*’s expression of vitriolic disillusionment in 1871, encapsulates the general trend in Victorian satiric novels towards a decidedly non-utopic view of habit. George Eliot’s *Silas Marner* (1861) and Samuel Butler’s *The Way of All Flesh* (written between 1873 and 1884, published 1903) explicitly engage with contemporary scientific conjecture on habit, whereas Elizabeth Gaskell’s *Cranford* (1851-53) and George Gissing’s *New Grub Street* (1891) satirize habit without overtly signaling contemporary scientific or economic discourses. In critiquing habits of genteel illusion, puritan moralism, and habits of misplaced industry and materialism, the novels I explore typically suggest palliative,

even productive, habits to counter humanity's psychological propensity to acquire and maintain destructive behaviours. In *New Grub Street*, however, neither the counteractive habit of industry, nor of free-thought, nor even of sympathy alleviate Gissing's Juvenalian negativity.

In Chapter 1, I posited that Victorian novelists (even in the middle decades of the era) are as much satirists as realists; in order to qualify this expansive claim, I identified one possible cause of satire's general neglect in studies of Victorian novels to be the theory of "classic realism." By invoking this embattled subject, my project joins current critical efforts to widen conceptions of nineteenth-century realism.¹³⁵ Matthew Beaumont has recently suggested that all-encompassing arguments about formal and ideological naiveté in canonical Victorian texts have succeeded in narrowing definitions of Victorian realism. The idea that many canonical Victorian "realist" novels are considerably satirical undercuts not only elements of "classic realism," but also theories of sentimental comic realism, and assumptions regarding satire's modal relation to the novel. Critics who attempt a taxonomic reconciliation of satire with the novel, including Paulson, Palmeri, and Dyer, conclude that when criticism of society is ascendant in a text, satire dominates; when psychological descriptions of character predominate (along with other moderating and domesticating factors), satire has become eclipsed. Yet, what happens to this distinction when individual psychology is revealed to be socially inscribed is a question that leads to a re-negotiation of satire's relationship to the novel. I began this investigation with an attempt to reconcile classical definitions of satire with Victorian novelistic practices through Frye's and Bakhtin's theories of Menippean satire. To

summarize, both theorists view the central goal of Menippean satire – and in some sense, satire in general – to be the exposure and defamiliarization of habit (personal, social, and literary). Hence, in Chapter 2, I explored the Victorian preoccupation with the moral repercussions of habit, a philosophical concept increasingly understood as a psycho-physical force directing human behaviour for good or for ill. Paradoxically, habit is theorized across multiple discourses (most notably in physiological psychology) as both a force mechanizing the human will (and reinforcing soulless egotism and materialism) and a force which preserves humanity through habits of an empowered will, industry, free-thought, and, most importantly, sympathy. This chapter focuses on four Victorian novels in which habit is a key site of the recuperation of Menippean satire and Horatian and Juvenalian modalities of satire. Arguably, as these texts imply, satire does not simply re-emerge late in the period; it shifts, substantially in accordance with its representation of habit, from a predominantly Horatian investment in habits of sympathy to a more Juvenalian suspicion of altruism – and this shift is notable even at mid-century.

As I outlined in Chapter I, numerous critics, including Sutherland, Paulson, Tave, Palmeri, and Dyer, argue that satire, having been overpowered by amiable humour, all but disappeared after the death of Byron in 1824.¹³⁶ This is currently the dominant position regarding novelistic satire in the Victorian period – adjusted slightly by Palmeri, who extends the date of satire’s “occlusion” to the 1840s, but maintains its reemergence in the 1880s (“Narrative Satire” 371, 361). Eliding the contentious issue of satire, Robert B. Martin influentially argues that genial humour is characteristic of early Victorian texts, and harsher wit and paradox are prevalent later in the period. Trajectories of satire’s

decline, however, may be challenged by the supposition that satire exists in the early and mid-nineteenth century as a narrative component that is difficult to distinguish from genial comic humour, but which is recognizable as Horatian or Menippean satire. Critics tend to classify less overtly indignant Horatian satire as comic realism, tacitly importing the Victorian identification of satire proper with the Juvenalian mode. Horace was valued as a benign humorist more than as a satirist *per se*, but Juvenal was regarded (negatively) as a thoroughgoing satirist.

Michael Wheeler describes the 1830s and 1840s as experimental decades in prose fiction, in which novel sub-genres proliferate, including historical, silver-fork, Newgate, social problem, and sporting texts (15).¹³⁷ William Thackeray, for example, experiments with a variety of forms in order to “observ[e] the social hierarchy from a wide variety of angles” (Wheeler 20) and to parody the sub-genres he rejects on moral grounds.¹³⁸ Dickens’s *Pickwick Papers* (1836-37), rambling in form and theme and jovial in its social criticism, is a key Horatian text from this period. The most influential model of satiric fiction before mid-century, however, is Thomas Carlyle’s *Sartor Resartus* (1833-34): the magnitude of its influence is avowed by writers such as George Eliot, who declares in 1855 that even for writers who disagree with Carlyle, the book “was an epoch in the history of their minds” (“Thomas Carlyle” 344).

Sartor Resartus is a paragon of relentlessly intellectual and comical Menippean satire; its meditations upon metaphysics, the philosophy of science, ethics, education, and politics, are, as the Editor admits, often inscrutable, like Professor Diogenes Teufelsdröckh himself. *Sartor Resartus* is “like some mad banquet” (SR 26) or satiric

farrago, written in a fittingly “piebald, entangled, hyper-metaphorical style” (SR 215). Teufelsdröckh’s “Philosophy of Clothes” addresses a vast array of satiric targets – from literary genres to materialism and Utilitarian philosophy¹³⁹ – culminating in the famous injunction: “Close thy *Byron*; open thy *Goethe*” (SR 143). The Professor demands a rejection of self-involved melancholy, isolation, and bitterness, not an abandonment of satire – at least not in its conciliatory, non-Byronic, Horatian form (it is rumoured that Teufelsdröckh laughed only once, and that “was of Jean Paul’s doing” [SR 25]). As John Reed verifies, the text’s central lesson is the promotion of self-disciplined subordination of the will to higher duty and social connectivity (*Victorian Will* 15-16). Teufelsdröckh asserts that even “splenic humour” is the result of “inverted Sympathy” (SR 181), for “Mankind,” like nature, is “an indivisible whole” (SR 182). Those who deny sympathy, and who do not “habitually wonder” (SR 52), have traded “Mysticism and Mystery” for worthless clothes – the habits of materialism. Carlyle’s “mad banquet” of a text provides a template for subsequent (and diverse) Victorian satires. Before proceeding to a detailed discussion of the novels featured in this chapter, all of which carry forward Carlyle’s critique in both Horatian and Juvenalian-themed, Menippean satires on habit, a glance at Bulwer-Lytton’s shifting satiric practices, as reflected in *Pelham* (1828) and *The Coming Race* (1871), will demonstrate the shift from Horatian to a Juvenalian representations of habit.

3.i From Horatian Hopes to Juvenalian Disillusionment: Habit in

Bulwer-Lytton's *Pelham* and *The Coming Race*

Carlyle denounces and parodies *Pelham; or the Adventures of a Gentleman* (1828) in *Sartor Resartus* by personifying Bulwer-Lytton's text in as a "Mystagogue" of the "Dandiacal Body" who clarifies for Teufelsdröckh the "Articles of Faith" for clothes-worshipping – such as "There is safety in a swallow-tail" (SR 204-205). Ironically, however, Bulwer-Lytton's novel sustains a Carlylean-compatible Horatian goal (as expressed in the 1828 preface to *Pelham*): "every weed in the great thoroughfares of life has a honey, which Observation can easily extract; and we may glean no unimportant wisdom from Folly itself, if we distinguish while we survey, and satirise while we share it" (P 5). Carlyle, it seems, ignored the many self-reflexive announcements in *Pelham* declaring the text's status as satire – including footnotes by the "author" which plainly refer to the "satire of this chapter" (P 79). *Pelham* even signals that his list of the twenty-two articles of faith is satirical; he expresses confidence that the "sagacious reader" will determine what is ironic and "what is in earnest" (P 94).¹⁴⁰ The final article of faith announces Pelham's true opinion: one who esteems fashion for itself "is a trifler," but he who "esteems" it for "the advantage" it can give "is a philosopher" (P 94). Pelham's statement confirms Lauren Gillingham's observation that he "keeps himself distinct from the social forms in which he traffics" (77); in effect, he re-inscribes the figure of the dandy with habits of sympathy.¹⁴¹

Of Henry Pelham's many personae, one is that of the Horatian, self-critical satirist. Admittedly, Pelham is at first more of a voluptuary than a moralist. Addicted to

change and also to fashion (an ideal register of change), he decides strategically to “set up ‘a character’” (P 24) as a means of resisting the cultivation of a characteristic disposition. Settling upon a type that is most generally offensive, he styles himself as an “egregious coxcomb: accordingly, I arranged my hair in ringlets” (P 25). Obnoxious self-satisfaction is a theatrical choice to register himself as one of the “dissenters of society” (P 50); his hedonistic philosophy is essentially a vow to defy socially and mentally constricting habit – which he mocks continually (the parochial habits of the English and the snobbery of the French are frequent subjects of his condescension). His addiction to observing the character of others, his ensuing chameleonic social savvy, his utter lack of a moral education at Eton or Cambridge, and his mother’s advice “to never have a single idea which does not terminate in yourself” (P 23), lead him to campaign for a seat in parliament. He attains the borough of Buyemall by the typical means: committing to no principle “yet profess[ing] principles which all parties would allow were the best” (P 76). Yet, his subsequent authentic education – undertaken by Lord Glenmorris, who directs him to read James Mill’s *On Government* and Jeremy Bentham’s theory of political economy – leads him to a radical shift in his habits of thought: he “obtained a clear knowledge of moral principle” and “no longer divorced the interests of other men from [his] own” (P 81-82).¹⁴² Like Russelton, Pelham remains strategically “*coated* and *cravatted*” (P 73) to perfection, but unlike Russelton, he keeps his “mind not only capable of the most solid and important affairs, but habituated by reflection to consider them” (P 170).

Regarding the secret to noble character, Bulwer-Lytton's advice in *Pelham* is similar to the "true secret of creative genius" developed in his 1838 essay "On Art in Fiction": "the intenseness of [the] sympathies" (38). Underneath its many surface forms, *Pelham* is a Horatian-themed satire that complements Bulwer-Lytton's belief, expressed in "Faith and Charity" (1863), that authors – after the manner of Horace and Cervantes – should "conciliate our sympathies even where they expose our infirmities" (*Caxtoniana* 320-21). In sharp comparison, *The Coming Race* (1871) is Juvenalian satire, uninterested in promoting the habit of sympathy as a locus of utopian hope.

Emphasizing Bulwer-Lytton's awareness of cultural currents, Christopher Lane playfully calls him "a Victorian weather vane" (35); certainly he participated in the pervasive debates about habit that, as Vrettos asserts, were "operative in [Victorian] culture as a whole" (404). Typically, Bulwer-Lytton's earliest writings, such as *Pelham*, reveal a fairly straightforward acceptance of notions of habitual self-control and sympathy. His *Caxtoniana: A Series of Essays on Life, Literature, and Manners* (1863) also contains multiple meditations on the utility of habit. The "habit of loving [one's] neighbor as himself," for example, is described in "Faith and Charity" as the key to mental and moral "grandeur" (*Caxtoniana* 191). Another article, aptly entitled "On Monotony in Occupation as a Source of Happiness," asserts that "for health," the mind, like the body, "needs a certain clockwork of routine; we like to look forward with a tranquil sentiment of security" (*Caxtoniana* 31-2). Importantly, however, a more ominous tribute to the psychology of habit informs the argument of "On the Spirit of Conservatism," an essay in which Bulwer-Lytton justifies conservative political practices

on the basis of the obduracy of a nation's customs or habits. In brief, the government of a nation (its "dynasty" and "institutions" [*Caxtoniana* 434]) determines the habits of its citizenry, which in turn maintain the governing structures. The habituated individual, Bulwer-Lytton argues, necessarily experiences a salutary fusion of social liberty and order. Habit is therefore a nearly imperturbable mechanism (William James will later agree) of conservatism, for enforced sudden change brings instant social chaos.

Demonstrating this idea in *The Coming Race*, Bulwer-Lytton describes a people whose habits are radically incompatible with and thus inimical to humanity – despite the fact that they are also descendents of the "great Aryan family" (*CR* 134). The text's political moral is that the English should avoid democracy as they would hell itself. Yet, complicating matters in Bulwer-Lytton's ambivalent estimation, habit is at once a foundation for social liberty and a dangerously mechanizing force in the human personality.

Unlike T. H. Huxley's later vision of a new garden of Eden ("Evolution & Ethics," 1893), in which the civilized world suppresses acrimony through the forces of habitual altruism, *The Coming Race* inverts the chaotic and overtly despotic underworld (envisioned, for example by John Milton in *Paradise Lost*, 1667), describing instead a version of hell that is peaceful and utterly civilized. The desultory American narrator falls down a mine-shaft and finds himself to be "alone in [a] strange world, amidst the bowels of the earth" (*CR* 5); during his adventures in Vril-ya, he fluctuates between being the target of and the vehicle for a satire on progressive Victorian thought: democracy, Darwinism, and feminism.¹⁴³ The text's anti-utopian argument reflects not only Bulwer-

Lytton's altered political philosophy (from the radicalism of Godwin and the Mills, to the conservatism of Benjamin Disraeli [Campbell 13]), but also his thoughts on the psychology of habit. Convincingly, Christopher Lane argues that this text demonstrates "humanity's failure to sustain its best ideals, including sympathy and disinterestedness" (37). I would add that for Bulwer-Lytton, William Paley's axiom, "man is a bundle of habits" (48), a philosophical and psychological truism upheld by Victorian moral science, offers prospects that are more destructive than ameliorative.

In the labyrinthine crevices beneath the earth (analogous to the nervous networks of the brain that conduct unconscious, habitual impulses) Bulwer-Lytton imagines a new humanoid species that has harnessed the forces of habit (what they term *vril*) to a *superhuman* degree.¹⁴⁴ The Vril-yans appear to have achieved the habits of self-control idealized by Victorian psychologists and social critics. In contrast to the "wholesale immorality" of the human race, all Vril-yans are "tacitly habituated" (*CR* 72, 34) to conduct that is so uniformly good that the human moral scale is rendered meaningless. The population is "temperate" in its emotional comportment and even children are easily taught to avoid strong emotion. Furthermore, immaculate self-possession results in faultless control over *all* physical and social environments. Yet this transformation of habit into an overriding coercive power magnifies the undignified fact that the vaunted will of the Vril-yans is not free, but utterly mechanical. Aph-Lin explains: "We are all formed by custom – even the difference of our race from the savage is but the transmitted continuance of custom, which becomes, through hereditary descent, part and parcel of our nature" (*CR* 107). The Vril-yans have been dehumanized by inherited mental habits

of rational egalitarianism. Imperturbable, they have evolved to manifest perfectly the energizing forces of habit (or *vril*), but unappealingly utopic habits have mechanized volition, gutted sympathy, and lobotomized thought. Through this satire of a lifeless underworld, Bulwer-Lytton devastates Hegelian and evolutionary concepts of “theoretical perfectibility” (*CR* 131) and assails the mental understructure of habit for its insidious ability to naturalize custom into instinct. Ultimately, egoistic habits – the Hobbesian “vanity and ambition [in] our upper world” (*CR* 109) – remain the only viable and truly human habits. *The Coming Race* is a Juvenalesque Menippean satire concerning the failure of utopian hopes placed by numerous Victorian writers (from novelists to physiological psychologists) on the powers of habit. Yet, as *Pelham* and *The Coming Race* reveal, habit is a key site for the recuperation of Horatian and Juvenalian and Menippean satire.

3.ii The Horatian Anatomy of Gentility in Elizabeth Gaskell’s *Cranford*

Contemporary reviewers of *Cranford* (1851-53) praised its moral and domestic lessons; tellingly, the novel was admired by Ruskin and never held to contain offensive satire.¹⁴⁵ Critical consensus remains that it is a light-heartedly affectionate critique of parochial values in pre-industrial rural England. Critics observe narrative “tension between sympathy and judgment” (C. Mitchell xxi),¹⁴⁶ but typically, the novel’s satiric elements are not discussed in depth or linked with any particular tradition of satire. Barbara Hardy, for example, although agreeing with Arthur Pollard’s conclusion that Gaskell is “a propagandist for sympathy,” observes in her canon an “absence of satire”:

“Mrs Gaskell is unusual as a social novelist in her avoidance of satire” (174). Despite David Cecil’s sexist assessment of Gaskell in 1934 – both she and her novels are, he concludes, “gentle, domestic, tactful, unintellectual” (194) – he does acknowledge her position within satiric traditions. Her “snobbish small-town spinsters,” he contends, represent snobbery “as well as Thackeray himself” – although Gaskell has a “rosier outlook on human nature” (198). Referring to Mrs Forrester’s desperate lace economy (its rescue from her cat’s intestine), he observes: “This is not the caustic satire of *Emma*, but the sympathetic satire of *Tristram Shandy* and *The Vicar of Wakefield*. Like theirs, too, its humour is not exclusively satiric. It has... a strong strain of the whimsical, exuberant ‘pure’ humour of Lamb or Dickens” (210). Effectively, but not influentially, Cecil situates Gaskell’s novels within traditions of novelistic Horatian satire.¹⁴⁷

Arguing in favour of sympathetic satire, Horace asserts, “what harm can there be/ in telling truth with a laugh, as teachers sometimes give/ their children biscuits to coax them into learning their ABC?” (I.1.23-25). The satirical subject, according to Horace, should be gently chastised, as if by a parent. Cranford’s infantilized population is also instructed, yet it is through the maternal reprimands of its satiric narrator Mary Smith. *Cranford* is a Horatian text primarily because it offers benign and ultimately conciliatory criticism of socially-supported human foibles. The Horatian satiric rule is moderate, friendly criticism that avoids socially divisive, angry satire. Horace, for example, warns against habitually criticizing one’s friends behind their back and advises instead the practice of tolerant understanding of their bad habits – even trying to see the positive side of faults: “I really believe that this habit both joins and cements friendships” (I.3.54).

Snobbery, in particular, is frequently mocked by Horace as an alienating social practice; he praises his noble friend Maecenas for not “curl[ing] his nostril, as most people do” at men (like Horace) who have “freedman fathers” (I.6.5-6). Similarly, in Gaskell’s novelistic satire, habitual snobbery (which is systematized in communal codes of gentility) is the central fault of the Cranford population that is singled out for benign criticism. Judgmental adherence to regulatory social forms, as Herbert Spencer argues, destroys “sympathetic converse with our fellow-creatures” (*Essays* 232). Gaskell’s satire on snobbery in *Cranford*, however, is tempered by a Wollstonecraftian understanding that superficialities, such as codes of propriety, are among the few socially condoned varieties of knowledge for female minds.¹⁴⁸

Complementing its Horatian mode, *Cranford* is a Menippean text in several of its key formal features,¹⁴⁹ but also in an overarching Bakhtinian sense, in that it exposes the mentally restricting “habitual matrices” (*sosedstva*) of society. Gaskell’s *Cranford* is less engaged in science-of-mind debates than, for example, the novels of George Eliot or Samuel Butler, but fixity of mental habit is detailed in the text through the unchanging manners and fashions of Cranford’s inhabitants, each of whom is obsessed with genteel codes of behaviour.¹⁵⁰ Household items appearing in the novel, from iron fire-shovels to new rugs (which must be ritualistically preserved), signify the immovability of customary behaviour and can be interpreted as metaphors of habit replacing the tracks, grooves, and paths of physiological psychology. Deborah Jenkyns’s copy of *Rasselas* (emblematic of her infallible taste), Mrs Jamison’s sedan chair (symbolic of her worship of aristocracy), and Miss Matty’s precious candles (on which her eyes are “habitually fixed”) denote the

communal obsession with “genteel” economy (C 24). Yet, from Mrs Forrester’s precious lace collars to every woman’s carefully chosen caps, brooches, and dresses, articles of fashion are the primary signs of Cranford’s envelopment in habits of gentility.

Of all the fashionable accessories showcased in *Cranford*, the cap is the most extensively detailed. (Mary explains that new caps, unlike new dresses, were affordable in the “elegant economy” [C 3]) Certainly, few emblems could be more appropriate to evoke mental culture than that of a covering for the head. The narrator observes, “If the heads were buried in smart new caps, the ladies were like ostriches” (C 73); the ostrich, hiding its head in the sand, is another perfect symbol for blind habit. Miss Deborah Jenkyns, the town’s “dragoon” of decorum, appropriately wears a formidable black silk bonnet, which looks like a helmet to Mary. Miss Matty’s bonnet-wearing habits also expose her mental machinery. Grieving Mr Holbrook’s death, she routinely wears a cap in public like Mrs Jamieson’s widow’s cap. In private, however, she wears Deborah’s best cap. Matty’s mind is so laden with social strictures that one day she receives an unexpected guest with both caps on. Furthermore, Miss Pole determines to attend the insultingly belated invitation to meet Lady Glenmire mainly because of her purchase of a new cap for the occasion; in this instance, moral censure of unkind behaviour is overpowered by habitual vanity. The nuances of bonnet selection narrated in *Cranford*, far from being trivial, reflect the psychological limitations of characters whose thoughts are continually directed by inflexible social custom and whose lives are circumscribed by gender-inflected emphases on physical appearance.

Cranford's population is surveyed by Mary Smith, who, acting as a humble, self-critical Horatian commentator, observes their "daily habits" (C 10). As the complicit friend of her satirized subjects, Mary is implicated in her own ironical observations. Self-reflexive knowledge of Cranford's cap-propiety, for example, is evident in her insistence that Matty wear a cap that is age-appropriate; Mary herself wears the outmoded "calash" (C 65) over her genteel bonnet. Although Mary, as revealed by her often repeated (and confessional) "even I," is also addicted to Cranford's status quoisms, she is like a typical Menippean ingénue – an outsider who becomes a temporary insider, but never fully fits in. Also, like Horace in Maecenas's circle, her status is somewhat subservient. As Gillooly points out, Mary is frequently told to fetch items such as Deborah's *Rasselas* and the encyclopedia (133). Therefore, despite Mary's frequent use of the inclusive pronoun – "we ... always," "we constantly," "we felt very genteel" (C 25-26) – she occupies a social position that preserves the ironic perspective of an outsider. In her perennial visits to Cranford ("I had vibrated all my life between Drumble and Cranford" [C 154]), she critically, but fallibly and fondly, observes the customs of the small town.

As I argue in Chapter 5, satiric texts that ridicule patriarchy typically utilize the figure of the female satirist; Mary Smith is an example of this tradition. Like the humble Horatian persona, Mary, despite her self-depreciation, is an opinionated and deliberately literary observer. Just as Horace's capacity for literary allusion undercuts his prosaic claims, Mary's narrative is highly intertextual. Her account of "the honorable" Mrs Jamieson's tea party is teeming with mock-heroic allusions. Like Odysseus, who famously steers a course between Scylla and Charybdis, all guests must carefully "steer

clear between Mrs Forrester's deafness and Mrs. Jamieson's sleepiness" (C 67). As Mrs Jamieson's crimes against decorum mount, the scene culminates with Mary's satiric apostrophe: "Oh, gentility!... can you endure this last shock?" (C 67). Mary's domestic satire on a world in which bread-jelly and cherry brandy have precise social meaning functions like Alexander Pope's in "The Rape of the Lock" (1714) (a satire that also targets the vanities of the feminized private sphere) through inverted epic hyperbole. Mary's comment that "[g]reat events spring out of small causes" (C 72) echoes the opening lines of Pope's poem: "What mighty Contests rise from trivial Things" (2). In her comprehensive, Augustan-like survey of Cranfordian vanity, Mary is particularly angered at social insults to Matty, on whose behalf she becomes "very indignant and warm" (C 70). Her anger has been interpreted psychoanalytically as female defiance (Gillooly); yet in her role as a satirist, anger is both a traditional and productive emotion.

Being a satirist, Mary is necessarily capable of non-habitual/non-customary thought (and, as I discuss in Chapter 5, the figure of the female satirist is unsettling to masculinist conceptions, both of society and satire itself). Appropriate, however, to the Horatian and non-radical nature of the novel's feminist critique, it is typically Cranford's *male* visitors and inhabitants who demonstrate the ability to dissent from the overriding ethos of gentility and who think somewhat freely. Although, as critics have noted, male characters have a high mortality rate in *Cranford*, they at least tend not to be automatons of Mrs Grundy. Interestingly, Mary, who loves to report that Cranford is "going on much as usual" (C 149), and "dread[s] the changed aspect of things" (C 23) after Deborah's death, is associated nonetheless with custom/habit-breaking male characters who disrupt

Cranford's intricately harmonized systems of propriety. For example, Mary sympathizes with Captain Brown, who is accused of "disregard of the genteel proprieties of life" [C 157]), and enjoys his reading from *Pickwick Papers* far more than Deborah's reading from *Rasselas*. (Deborah classifies the democratic tendencies of Dickens as vulgar, favouring her precious and proper Dr Johnson.) As well, Mr Holbrook, who defies current codes of gentlemanly dress and manners, is emulated by Mary, who follows his lead by eating her peas on the unrefined two-pronged fork ("I saw, I imitated, I survived!" [C 33]). As well, Mary overlooks fashionable prohibitions and joins him on an after-dinner walk. Significantly, Mary's fault of "indiscretion" (C 111) is arguably related to her habit of uncustomary behaviour. Her secret letter to Peter Jenkyns, her business plan for Matty, and her strategic orchestration of Cranford's social atmosphere in general, align her with the masculine sphere of action, industry, and freedom from habits of gentility. As the voice of Horatian moderation, Mary resists parochial terror of the new.

As an honorary drone in the Cranford hive, Mary accesses the private thoughts of "all our minds" (C 77). Similar to many Menippean texts, *Cranford* is less about individual characters than about the ascendant social script to which individuality has been sacrificed. As Bakhtin argues generally of the comic novel, *Cranford* parodies and de-familiarizes the "going point of view" (*Dialogic* 301). Mrs Jamieson, Miss Pole, the Miss Jenkynses, and the Miss Barkers are practically interchangeable; all possess the "self-control which seemed habitual to ladies of Miss Matty's standing in Cranford" (C 125). Their notions accord with the feminized (though, of course, patriarchal) voice of the

Victorian propriety, Mrs Grundy, whose despotism, as Spencer claims in his discussion of social restraints, is “worse than any other tyranny we suffer under” (*Essays* 226).

Mary, whose own voice often merges with the conspiratorial and judgmental “we” of Mrs Grundy, recasts the words and even thoughts of her friends by ironically accenting their exact lexical choice with quotation marks. In addition, subversions of Cranfordian habits of speech and thought are frequently found in parenthetical commentary. Mary observes, for example, how Matty obsesses about the visitors who “might come in ... (but who never did)” (C 41). Repeatedly, Mary substitutes euphemistic with mundane language; for example the delicately named “Over Place” is deflated by her word “suburb.” Effectively, Mary de-genteelizes the world of Cranford.

Demonstrating Bakhtin’s observation that dialogization (of literary genres) in the novel exposes the mental habits of a society, *Cranford* contains quotations from Samuel Johnson, Alfred Tennyson, and, most revealingly, private letters.¹⁵¹ Mary juxtaposes the language of the love letters exchanged between Matty’s father (a conceited rector) and mother (a childish bride). The mother’s missives are full of simple diction, spelling errors, and present-tense constructions, which reflect the daily realities of the household (like Bakhtin’s chronotype of novelized discourse itself) and her lack of formal education. The rector’s prose style, on the other hand, like his “stiff and stately” [C 43] portrait, is monologic, abstract, and full of what Mary terms “that tiresome Latin” (C 50). Eventually, the de-sensitizing language of the rector finds its way into the young wife’s lexicon, epitomized by her transition from “my dearest John” to “my honoured Husband” (C 45). The son’s letters, although also garnished with Latin, occasionally reveal his

“animal nature,” which “broke out” (C 49) with expressions like “mother, dear.” Peter’s subversive (even Rabelaisian) jester’s antics of impersonating his father and Deborah to mock their egoism destroy his gentlemanly prospects. Upon being caught by his father, he receives a public flogging which leads to the eventual break-up of the family. Yet the rector, unlike Samuel Butler’s Pontifex patriarchs, is repentant, and reforms his system of values to prioritize love. In short, *Cranford*’s dialogic narrative anatomizes the codes of conduct which demote and destroy emotion.

As Bakhtin clarifies with regard to Dostoevsky, it is important to note Gaskell does not necessarily rework the Menippean genre purposefully, but many of its characteristics are renewed in *Cranford*. Several of the constituent elements of Bakhtin and Frye’s definitions of Menippean satire are absent in a strict sense from the novel; for example, there is no fantastic journey to a netherworld, nor are intellectual issues of the day showcased.¹⁵² In fact, far from a Peacockean parody of philosophical and scientific debates, *Cranford* is a resolutely non-intellectual satire (but not for Cecil’s misogynistic reasons); arguably, the text is a parody of traditional, masculine Menippean colloquy. Cranford’s female citizens are as oblivious to the intellectual debates of the day as they are to the mysteries of commerce. Mary, in fact, complains that her friends are inveterate non-readers and consequently their conversation is often lacking. The “literary dispute” (C 14) between Miss Jenkyns and Captain Brown concerning which novel is superior, *Rasselas* or *Pickwick Papers*, is the most authentically Menippean dialogue in the novel. Deborah is Cranford’s sole intellectually aspiring woman, but her life’s aspiration, like Dorothea Brooke’s in *Middlemarch*, is pure bathos: to be the letter-writing wife of an

archdeacon. Instead of debating political matters, the women debate the “etiquettes of high life” (C 70) and hold a “great Cranford parliament on the subject” (C 78) of the correct term of address for Lady Glenmire. Even without the intellectualized conversation of traditional Menippean satire, however, *Cranford*’s discourses on the minutiae of gentility tackle the same general target: the vanity and futility of prescribed thought.

The Cranford women are termed Amazons by Mary, in her role as mock-epical narrator, less because of their fabled self-sufficiency, but because of their “unfeminine” lack of sympathy – unfeminine by the standards of the woman-as-domestic-goddess cult of Ruskin, Smiles, Patmore, and others. Gaskell invokes the dominant Victorian ethics of gender to create further irony in her Horatian satire on the heartlessness incurred by habits of gentility. Several key episodes reveal how the women, despite their habitually enacted charities, are not as kind-hearted as they strive to appear. Upon the death of her father, Miss Jessie Brown, instead of being the recipient of affectionate empathy, is inundated by Miss Jenkyns’s rules of funereal propriety. As well, the social ostracism of those considered ill-bred is common practice in Cranford. Mrs Fitz-Adams, for example, is ritualistically excluded by Miss Jamieson, Miss Pole, and Miss Betty Barker (the daughter of a servant, and thus a complete hypocrite). Similarly, Cranford’s surgeon, Mr Hoggins (of farmer stock like Mrs Fitz-Adams), is condemned for his coarse manners. Ironically, the text’s sole aristocrat, Lady Glenmire, far from being a snob, is industriously occupied with little “errands of kindness” (C 93); like Captain Brown (with his “infinite kindness of heart” [C 8]), she is subjected to alienating social scrutiny. The most morally condemning instance of Amazonian coldness is Miss Pole’s decision to

shut the door in the face of an Irish beggar (with starving children). Repeatedly, the Cranford women demonstrate a lack of communal feeling and honest, charitable industry. Instead their social and moral energies are directed to upholding a warlike code of gentility.

Genteel habits of mind have disabled the women's morality; yet, befitting an ultimately optimistic satire, they are redeemed by their love for Matty. The moral climax of the narrative involves the formal gathering of Matty's friends in "unaffected sorrow" (C 109) and their generous resolution to help her financially. The satiric narrative itself is a product of the friendship between Matty and Mary: "We all love Miss Matty, and I somehow think we are all of us better when she is near us" (C 128). Initially, however, Matty is unworthy of such high praise, for her own values are warped by those of her gentility-obsessed family. Abiding by her family's judgment, she rejects her youthful lover Mr Holbrook for his low rank and "uncouth habits" (C 27). Ironically, Holbrook is the ideal Horatian-Victorian gentleman, noble in spirit, if not in birth. Furthermore, Holbrook is associated with a developed sense of sympathy that corresponds with his literary imagination and love of nature. His death inspires Matty's moral rebirth. Immediately, she allows Martha to have "followers," burns the family letters, and begins to undo a lifelong practice of concealing her true feelings and thoughts. Her confession to Mary about her sadness confirms the bodily evidence of her destructive mental habits: her tremulousness and the "well-worn furrows of [her] cheeks" (C 35). Matty's unhappiness, like that of many women in Cranford, is the product of the reflexive repression of authentic, spontaneous emotions. She is the first of the Amazonian clan to

find in sympathetic action a true source of happiness. Her first significant act of sympathy is her offer of money to the poor farmer (“I saw my duty this morning” [C 101]). Amidst her own financial ruin, Matty fixates on the feelings of others. Her journey from childlike self-absorption and snobbery to the healthy habit of sympathy is catalyzed by the dramatic change in her material means, which transforms her genteel parlour to a tea shop and brings her “into kindly intercourse with many of the people round about ” (C 119). As the emotional centre of the community, Matty’s mental and moral reform initiates the reform of the Cranford collective.

The fact that *Cranford* is ultimately a satire that rejuvenates the community aligns it, not only with the conciliatory Horatian tradition, but also with Bakhtin’s productive “Menippea.” Both affirm social interconnections and depict the rebirth of a society. Bad habits of gentility are demonstrably reformed in the final chapter of *Cranford*, for the entire community, including Mrs Fitz-Adams, is peaceably brought together at a merry feast. Miss Matty is delivered from the tea-trade and social order is restored. Furthermore, like the Horatian Holbrook, Cranford remains peacefully secluded from the divisively Darwinian world of Drumble. The evolution of custom, the narrative suggests, will take place at the conventional Cranford pace – a moral revolution is the Horatian “just enough” for now.¹⁵³

**3.iii “The seed brings forth the crop after its kind”: Horatian Satire on
Habit in George Eliot’s *Silas Marner***

Virginia Woolf’s assessment of George Eliot’s attitude to her characters expresses succinctly the critical view that sympathy moderates and even overwhelms Eliot’s ample social satire. Eliot, Woolf insists, “makes us share [her characters’] lives, not in a spirit of condescension or of curiosity, but in a spirit of sympathy. She is no satirist” (186).¹⁵⁴ Yet such firm distinctions leave little room for the reconciliation of judgmental criticism with sympathy that characterizes Horatian (and even Juvenalian) satire. Initially, it is baffling that current-day discussions of Eliot continue to minimize her satirical bent, but it appears that her clearly-stated doctrine of sympathy dissuades discussions of satire in her novels.¹⁵⁵ Recently, however, Aaron Matz argues for a surprising amount of satire in her fiction in conjunction with her avowed doctrine of sympathy.¹⁵⁶

Matz astutely notes that Eliot’s programmatic statement in *Adam Bede* (1859) concerning moral realism – that realist fiction does not gloss over human imperfection, yet affirms that human nature is “loveable” and brimming with “sublime mysteries” (*AB* 183) – is echoed in her evaluation of satiric modes in *Theophrastus Such* (1879), her last and “most explicitly satirical work” (Matz, “Satire” 30-31). Specifically, Matz references the chapter entitled “Debasing moral currency,” in which Theophrastus (an archetypal Menippean scholar and narrator) upholds the dignity of humour that is void of “habits of contempt” (Eliot, *Theophrastus* 85). Without invoking the terms Horatian or Juvenalian, Matz argues that sympathetic perception co-exists with satire in Eliot’s canon. Certainly, Theophrastus utters what amounts to an Horatian apology for satire:

Why should we make our delicious sense of the ludicrous, with its invigorating shocks of laughter and its irrepressible smiles which are the outflow of an inward radiation as gentle and cheering as the warmth of morning, flourish like a brigand on the robbery of our mental wealth? – or let it take its exercise as a madman might, if allowed a free nightly promenade, by drawing the populace with bonfires which leave some venerable structure a blackened ruin[.]

(Eliot, *Theophrastus* 83)

Instead of Juvenalian disdain, Theophrastus (like the narrator of *Adam Bede*) advocates moderate criticism, “sympathetic insight,” and “justice of perception” (Eliot, *Theophrastus* 85). Despite occasional Juvenalian “bonfires,” Eliot’s satiric preference and practice is generally compatible with Theophrastus’s Horatian ethic. Matz interprets Theophrastus’s statement as “the clearest statement of satirical attitude” in Eliot’s writing (“Satire” 30). Yet a more direct expression of Eliot’s satiric theory is found in her article “German Wit: Heinrich Heine” (1856). In this essay, wit is aligned with ratiocination, and described as being “an electric shock, which takes us by violence” (71). Humour is related to the “sympathetic emotions” and “continually passes into poetry” (“Heine” 71). Ideally, for Eliot, wit and humour “overlap and blend with each other” (“Heine” 72), as they do in Heine’s writing. Thus, as the “Heine” essay confirms, the Horatian blend of sympathy and satire, evident in *Silas Marner*, is Eliot’s theoretically preferred mode of social satire. She wishes, following the epigraph of *Theophrastus Such* (the prologue to

Phaedrus's *Fabulae*), not to "brand any individual person,/ But rather truly to show life itself and the habits of men."¹⁵⁷

While supporting Eliot's Horatian satiric theory, *Silas Marner* is Menippean in its generic plurality. U. C. Knoepfelmacher determines this novel, with its echoes of the book of Job and *Paradise Lost*, to be both a fable and a myth – a "medium of timeless legend" (*Early Novels* 231). But equally present is Eliot's brand of moral realism, which celebrates the "sublime mysteries" (*AB* 183) of the commonplace. In a February 1871 letter to publisher John Blackwood, Eliot expresses her belief that the psychological matter of *Silas Marner* is best suited to metrical form; yet, in order to achieve a "more realistic treatment" and "an equal play of humour," she ultimately chose prose (*Letters* 3: 475). Interestingly, Eliot's generic selection complements Bakhtin's notion of novelization and his insistence that Menippean comic writing, with its engagement of everyday life, suits prose. Fittingly, the epigraph for *Silas Marner* is from Wordsworth's "Michael, A Pastoral Poem" (1800), which installs an implicit allusion to Wordsworth's poetics of habitual sympathy. Importantly, the epigraph also announces a psychological and biological "law" that is upheld in the novel: humanity's saving grace is the fact that offspring function to unsettle devolutionary, or unprogressive mental habits by inspiring "hope" and "forward-looking thoughts." *Silas Marner* (the novel in which R. H. Hutton could not find "a single cynical Thackerayism")¹⁵⁸ is a formally multifaceted Menippean text that is distinctly Horatian in its sympathy and optimism.

The narrator, far from being a practitioner of Juvenalian aloofness, is self-implicated in habits of egoism. Frequently, inclusive pronouns such as "we" or "our"

populate descriptions of bad habits – particularly of egoism – observed in the rural community of Raveloe:

I suppose one reason why we are seldom able to comfort our neighbours with our words is, that our goodwill gets adulterated, in spite of ourselves, before it can pass our lips. We can send black puddings and pettitoes without giving them a flavour of our own egoism; but language is a stream that is almost sure to smack of mingled soil. There was a fair proportion of kindness in Raveloe; but it was often of a beery and bungling sort[.] (*SM* 75)

In this self-inclusive, moral assessment of Raveloan moral mediocrity, the narrator adopts the Horatian ethic of an enlightened, un-self-righteous understanding of folly. “For,” Horace claims, “no one is free / from faults; the best is the man who is hampered by the smallest./ A kindly friend will weigh, as is fair, my virtues against my failings” (I.3.67-69). The narrator of *Silas Marner*, like that of *Cranford*, aims to be a “kindly friend” to the persons satirized. Additionally, one notable instance of the narrator’s playful representations of animals’ thoughts reinforces the interpretation of the novel as Horatian satire. For reasons related to the etymological slip linking satire with satyrs, donkeys are a traditional literary code for satire. (Thackeray’s narrator in *Vanity Fair*, for example, dons his “ass’s ears.”) Thus, the sudden appearance of a Horatian satirist in the form of a donkey allusively announces *Silas Marner*’s satiric philosophy: “Eppie was now aware that her behaviour was under observation, but it was only the observation of a friendly donkey, browsing with a log fastened to his foot – a meek donkey, not scornfully critical

of human trivialities, but thankful to share in them, if possible, by getting his nose scratched" (*SM* 136). "Scornful" or Juvenalian criticism, by this logic, signifies withdrawal from affectionate social connection. The satirist/narrator of *Silas Marner*, like the "friendly donkey," is "thankful to share" in human society and unwilling to take a fully pessimistic view of human psychology.

As Sally Shuttleworth and others have observed, debates concerning physiological psychology were of particular interest to Eliot; certainly, her belief in the ameliorative effects of sympathy was well-supported by physiological psychologists such as Carpenter, who promoted the individual and social need for "habitual *kindness*" (360). Shuttleworth finds Eliot's organicist evolutionary philosophy and connections to physiological psychology (emphasizing the influence of Comte, Carpenter, Maudsley, Spencer, Lewes) to be reflected in her novelistic vocabulary of forces, channels, and pathways (Shuttleworth 22, 72).¹⁵⁹ Eliot's engagement with habit exists in necessary conjunction with the theories of physiological psychology articulated and evaluated in her fiction. *Silas Marner*, in particular, with its allegorical brevity, is her most streamlined anatomy of habit.

In its depiction of the "the slow current of Raveloe conversation" (*SM* 73), *Silas Marner* is not an overtly Menippean satire brimming with learned, topical debates. The mock-Menippean colloquy at the Rainbow Inn, where the rural inhabitants gather to re-articulate opinions and anecdotes like "familiar tune[s]" (recalling similar scenes in *Cranford* and *Pickwick Papers*), and the convivial exchanges of the more affluent at the Red House, where the "annual Christmas Talk" (*SM* 85) is changeless, convey the

thoughtless nature of thought among all classes in Raveloe. Arguably, the ludicrous debate as to whether the “tinder-box” theory (*SM* 73) or the supernatural theory best explains the disappearance of Silas’s money is a parodic rendition of the century’s most fraught epistemological divide: the materialist/spiritualist debate. *Silas Marner* is thus, like *Cranford*, a Menippean satire in terms of its overall focus on mental inflexibility.

The narrator of *Silas Marner* is both an Horatian satirist and physiological psychologist whose satiric target is the mental landscape of Raveloe’s habit-driven population, of which Silas Marner – despite his seeming eccentricity – is representative. Psychology of habit is examined through the lens of the “primitive” past of rural Raveloe, which provides an almost allegorical distance from urban mid-Victorian England. Habit is further evaluated as it functions specifically in the mind of two human specimens: Silas Marner and Godfrey Cass. Failing to evaluate Silas’s mind as an appropriate case study of the human mental constitution, E. S. Dallas in *The Times* (April, 1871) was mystified as to why Eliot would choose to delineate “a hero whose mind is nearly a blank” and who is “a singularly unaccountable being” (Carroll 183, 182). Nevertheless Silas’s character, when viewed representatively, provides non-hyperbolic evidence that human beings are “bundles of habit.” The narrator’s anatomy of the mind-states of Silas and (the more socialized) Godfrey exposes the typical moral war that takes place on the ground of habit between one’s dialogic, “better self” (the ascendant and morally directed will theorized by Bain, Carpenter, Mill, and James) and the version of oneself that is a monologic, “thinking Automat[on]” (Carpenter 27) – the battle between the search for greater truth

and human connectivity, and grooves of destructively self-focused habit. Silas and Godfrey, in their pre-reformed states, are exempla of the solipsistic folly of habit.

The opening pages of *Silas* contain a satirical meditation on the regularity of life experienced by the rural generations of “Merry England” (*SM* 5) in the “early years” (*SM* 4) of the nineteenth century. It was a life of ceaseless toil characterized by the fear of change – of all that was “unwonted, or even intermittent” (*SM* 3). The narrator’s assessment is verified experientially: “I once” asked an ill labourer if he could imagine something that he would like to eat, but without the faculty of “fancy” he could not summon “the phantasm of appetite” (*SM* 5). This anecdote illustrates how customary thought precludes imaginative and un-habitual thought (what Bain would term association by similarity). Similarly, the fact that “no brain in Raveloe” can imagine the thief of Silas’s money to be a member of the blue-blooded Cass family (despite obvious incriminating evidence) underscores how custom (here, in the form of class ideology) mobilizes thought: “Christmas puddings, brawn, and abundance of spirituous liquors, throwing the mental originality into the channel of nightmare, are great preservatives against a dangerous spontaneity of waking thought” (*SM* 73). The narrator’s assessment of the individual psychology sustaining the status quo is reminiscent of the phrase that John Stuart Mill adopts for this eradication of free discussion through the somniferous force of cultural habit: the “deep slumber of a decided opinion” (*On Liberty* 18: 250). Furthermore, Silas’s especial formative social context, the even-more remote Lantern Yard (where the minister “delivered unquestioned doctrine” [*SM* 14]) explains why he does not rebel against the drawing of lots: “this would have been an effort of independent

thought such as he had never known” (*SM* 13). Silas, whose habit-constricted mind is offered as a distillation of the human mind in general, is one of “many” who suffer inculpably from “false ideas” (*SM* 13). His solitary existence, like life generally in Raveloe, is without new events or people to counter the narrowing “influence of habit” and “keep alive... the idea of the unexpected and the changeful” (*SM* 39). In line with mid-century physiological psychology and its emphasis on habit’s socializing role, Eliot explains how custom becomes, in the words of Carpenter, “a standing habit of mind, or fixed set of mental tendencies” (363). The social creed that takes root in individuals through the force of repetition prescribes and circumscribes individual thoughts, entrapping them in a set of *habitudes* that influences all social relations.

The “logic of habit” (*SM* 39) – automatic inferences that characterize habitual thought – is targeted by the narrator as being responsible for a ubiquitous anaesthetizing of active thought and feeling. By opposing change, habit denies time itself and the changes that time brings. It is therefore formally fitting that a narrative exploring habit-submerged personalities operates through an accelerated chronology: the story begins fifteen years after Silas arrives in Raveloe and eventually jumps forward to sixteen years after Eppie is found. Representation of protracted time in condensed terms is a formal enactment of the theme of timeless habit. As well, it demonstrates textually Silas’s removal (like all monologic forms in life and literature) from an evolving and dialogic lived reality (Bakhtin, *Dialogic* 312). The narrator, once again linking Marner’s seemingly eccentric condition of isolation with that of general humanity, describes how

habit enables and sustains the transfer of the energetic and passionate regard human beings ought to have for one another to inanimate objects:

Do we not wile away moments of inanity or fatigued waiting by repeating some trivial movement or sound, until the repetition has bred a want, which is incipient habit? That will help us to understand how the love of accumulating money grows an absorbing passion in men whose imaginations, even in the very beginning of their hoard, showed them no purpose beyond it. (*SM* 18)

Both popular and academic discussions of habit in nineteenth-century texts propound, in similar terms, the soul-deadening effects of the habit of money-getting. Samuel Smiles, for example, echoing Carlyle, warns against the destruction of moral character by following “no higher logic than that of the shilling” (257). Silas’s mental and emotional machinery is likened to that of even “wiser men, when they have been cut off from faith and love – only, instead of a loom, and a heap of guineas, they have had some erudite research, ... or some well-knit theory” (*SM* 19). Again following a discussion of Silas’s reflexive weaving, the narrator concludes: “Every man’s work, pursued steadily, tends in this way to become an end in itself, and so to bridge over the loveless chasms of his life” (*SM* 15). Although not addicted to gain in the typical sense of money-love (he is not interested in the status and goods that money buys), Silas’s miserly materialism is equally selfish and emotionally misguided; money has, as in the minds of all jaded materialists, become “an end in itself.”¹⁶⁰ Eliot joined Ruskin, Carlyle, and others in determining an endemic lack of empathy to be the malady of the age; thus Silas’s habitual thoughts of

money-getting, devoid of “love and fellowship” (*SM* 15), are satirically representative of the more general psychological condition of the English, addicted, like the ancient Romans (according to both Horace and Juvenal), to ““misery-making money”” (Dickens, *OMF* 379).

To elucidate the function of habit, Eliot’s narrator employs the metaphorical language of associationist-inflected physiological psychology: channels, pathways, grooves, and tracks. Silas’s thought, for example, is described as being stuck: “its old narrow pathway was closed, and affection seemed to have died under the bruise that had fallen on its keenest nerves” (*SM* 15). Also, Dunstan’s disappearance is described as being “away from the track of every one’s thought” (*SM* 72). Yet, such delineations of mental linearity are only one metaphorical strand in the text. Figures for habit fluctuate between inorganic and organic objects.

Dramatizing the fact that habit is, in James’s words, “a physical law” (and also Sully’s observation that the “characteristic note of habit is mechanicality” [*Human Mind* 225]), Silas’s physical form reflects his machine-like mind: “Strangely Marner’s face and figure shrank and bent themselves into a constant mechanical relation to the objects of his life” (*SM* 19). Silas’s loom is an extension of his body. Furthermore, his “catalytic fits” render his body inanimate. During one fit, for example, his arms clutch his bag of gold “as if they’d been made of iron” (*SM* 6). The gold coins Silas that worships in heretical service to Mammon instead of humankind are the perfect symbol for habit-bound lack of plasticity – recalling that for James, the quality of plasticity defines living matter.

Epitomizing the fact that Silas is “thinking without thinking” and living without living, the gold he loves is a “dead disrupted thing” (*SM* 74).

As effective as such inanimate metaphors are for invoking the sheer mechanism of habit, it is possibly the text’s botanical metaphors that accrue greater satirical and rhetorical force for conveying the deadening effects of habit. Words associated with the death and decay of organic matter, such as “withering” “shrinking,” and “bending,” describe the barrenness of Silas’s “inward life” (*SM* 7) so long as he remains un-vitalized by any connection to other human beings. Silas weaves “like the spider, from pure impulse, without reflection” (*SM* 15). In opposition to the self-directed industriousness celebrated by psychological discourses of habit, his version of industry is akin to the “unquestioning activity of a spinning insect” (*SM* 15). Similarly, after the loss of his money, his mental state is compared to that of a confused insect: his “thoughts could no longer move in their old round, and were baffled by a blank like that which meets a plodding ant when the earth has broken away on its homeward path” (*SM* 74). Silas’s affinity with such “lower species,” which (in Darwin’s assessment) function purely by instinctive habit, is a paradoxical kinship: it suggests humanity’s biological, insect-like reliance on habit for survival while also denoting a devolutionary perversion in a human organism’s unrealized potential for imaginative, non-reflexive thought. De-vitalizing impulses of habit dominate Silas’s life (before Eppie), which is “like a rivulet that has sunk far down from the grassy fringe of its old breadth into a little shivering thread, that cuts a groove for itself in the barren sand” (*SM* 21). Few sentences could more comprehensively evoke the vocabulary of psychological psychology. Bain’s and

Spencer's "grooves" of habit are evoked along with Lewes's "stream of consciousness."¹⁶¹ Appropriately as a novelist and spinner of tales, Eliot is partial to the words "thread" and "fibre" (for Silas, Eppie "stirred fibres that had never been moved in Raveloe" [*SM* 109]) for associative thought patterns of thought and feeling.

Alternating between an analysis of the habitual thoughts of Silas and Godfrey, the narrator reveals that susceptibility to habit transcends differences of class and education.¹⁶² Godfrey's habit-driven conduct, however, is actively damaging to the lives of others. This is a key moral difference between Silas's hermetic miserliness and Godfrey's chronic lying. Godfrey's hope that his opium-addicted wife is dead is explained by the narrator's wide view of human fallibility: "no disposition is a security from evil wishes" (*SM* 112). Furthermore Cass, being himself indisposed to sympathy, does not attribute depth of emotion to the labouring classes and cannot imagine Silas's love for Eppie. The psychological satire on Godfrey's equivocation between noble and ignoble thoughts and actions, though tending at times to Juvenalian cynicism and determinism, is ultimately Horatian, as he eventually does "stop short" (*SM* 64) of complete scoundrelism by belatedly beginning to practice truthfulness and sympathy.

Particularly through the delineation of Godfrey Cass, *Silas Marner* illustrates the constant tension between habit and will that characterizes mid-Victorian psychological discourses. Unlike his brother Dunstan Cass, whose dull mind operates exclusively through habit and egoism, Godfrey at least struggles against the loss of his self-directing will. Dunstan walks to his death holding Godfrey's whip; the latter, a classical symbol of the moral lashings of satire, also alludes to the Platonic analogy of a horse and rider

popular in nineteenth-century psychology texts to explain the battle in the human mind between thoughts and emotions and the will.¹⁶³ It is appropriate that, lacking a controlling will, Godfrey loses his whip; Dunstan, having lost his human emotions, remains an unseated rider. Both brothers were deprived of a moral education, but only Godfrey has a “vague looking for some discipline that would have checked his own errant weakness, and helped his better will” (*SM* 69). Nonetheless, his “better will” is continually reined in by his practice of “prevarication and deceit” (*SM* 69, 71), his “habitual irresolution” (*SM* 64-5), and his “usual” hope that some “favourable chance” (*SM* 71) will rescue him from the consequences of his actions. His mental state of “bitter rumination” is “unbroken from day to day save by the excitement of sporting, drinking, card-playing” (*SM* 28).¹⁶⁴ In other words, bad habits are mutually reinforcing; as psychologists frequently warned, reformation and re-education are rare achievements. Importantly, the symbolic portrayal of Godfrey’s nearly-lost battle against selfish habit culminates in the paradoxical metaphor of the seed.

The morally explicit and satiric passage comparing Godfrey’s bad habits to seeds is rhetorically distinctive. Invoking a preacher’s rhetoric of forceful anaphora, numerous sentences begin with the imperative word “Let.” The narrator follows an imaginary “Everyman” down Godfrey’s path and finds that “his mind will be bent” worshipfully on the same hope of being delivered by that “same cunning complexity called Chance” (*SM* 72). The “evil principle,” or rather, the psychological principle, “deprecat[ed] in that religion [of “blessed Chance”], is the orderly sequence by which the seed brings forth a crop after its kind” (*SM* 72). Recalling that for James the philosophy of habit is

encapsulated by “Dr Carpenter’s phrase that *our nervous system grows to the modes in which it has been exercised*” (*Principles* 117), and that Mill refers to the “Laws of Mind” which are the basis of psychology as being “the uniformities of succession” (*SL* 8: 851), Eliot’s organic metaphor of the seed which grows incrementally into the plant is ideal for the formative power of habit. Furthermore, the seed motif evokes both Horace’s Aristotelian philosophy of habit and Christ’s New Testament injunctions: “So give yourself a shaking / in case the seeds of wickedness have already been planted in you/ by nature or by some bad habit” (I.3.34-36; Matthew 13: 31-32). At the same time, seeds of habit, although associated with the irrevocability of succession, also intimate the possibility of change. Ultimately, shocked by the discovery of his brother’s crime and awed by a new understanding that “[e]verything comes to light” (*SM* 157), Godfrey confesses to Nancy and is unburdened of his habitual guilt. (It is also implied that Nancy primes her husband for this revelation by having successfully domesticated his wild oats.) In keeping with text’s implicit assent to physiological psychology’s “laws of habit,” and also to organicist laws of growth and evolution of character, natural motifs (such as the seed) representing the inveteracy of self-diminishing habit are alternatively suggestive of the possibility of life-affirming habit.

“That Life is Change, and that Consciousness is Change, has always been affirmed” (*PLMI* 111), observes G. H. Lewes, as if offering the psychological lesson of *Silas Marner*. The novel’s botanical metaphors, while effectively signaling the negative trajectory of habit, also serve to support its fundamentally positive evolutionary belief: “human beliefs, like all other natural growths, elude the barriers of system” (*SM* 152).

Physiological psychology, in conjunction with evolutionary theory, also informs the narrator's observation of the beginning of Silas's transformation. By parenting Eppie, Silas necessarily becomes connected to the Raveloe community and to "the fountains of human love and divine faith" (*SM* 84); reciprocally, the community displays "kindlier feeling" towards him (*SM* 74). The process is incremental: "Our consciousness rarely registers the beginning of a growth within us any more than without us: there have been many circulations of the sap before we detect the smallest sign of the bud" (*SM* 54-55). As Bain argues, a "sea change" of habit is rare and likely to happen only once in one's life (*Emotions* 503). From the instant of Eppie's introduction into the story as the "bright living thing" (*SM* 107) toddling in the snow, she is associated with images of nature; fittingly, by becoming Silas's "precious plant" (129), she literally reunites him with nature. As a child, she drags him through the meadows; as a young woman she insists that he help her to grow a garden. Through association with Eppie, seeds of good, empathetic habit grow in Marner's character, connecting him both to Raveloe and to nature. A liberating habit of sympathy is successfully cultivated in Silas (and his hermetic rigidity is rooted out) by the act of parenting a little girl, who in words redolent of the Wordsworthian epigraph, is "compact of changes and hopes" (*SM* 123). As an adult Eppie, like all human beings, is habit-bound; for example, she dreads any change in her happy life with Silas and her social station in Raveloe. Yet importantly, habit functions in Eppie's mind to produce healthy habits of love and duty. Reflexively, her moral choice to remain with Silas is made by her habitually ascendant "better will," thereby countering the culturally ascendant and adverse social habits of material aspiration. Thus, habit in

Silas Marner is championed as having paradoxical potential; if properly channeled, it counters life-denying and will-destroying habit.¹⁶⁵

Eliot's fable of habit – the aim of which, as she declares in her letter to February 1861 letter to Blackwood, is to demonstrate “the remedial influences of pure, natural human relations” (*Letters* 3: 475) – closes with a community-consolidating wedding feast ordered by Godfrey, the newly benevolent patriarch. Harmoniously, Silas, Eppie, and Aaron happily inhabit their cottage (with its pretty garden) and their humble social station, bound in sympathetic connectivity with the inhabitants of Raveloe. They enact the Horatian ideal of rural contentment from “a piece of land – not so very big,/ with a garden,” and are “spared the accursed struggle for status” (Horace II.6.1-2).¹⁶⁶ In *Silas Marner*'s conclusion, the garden (T. H. Huxley's symbol for the stabilizing force of habitual altruism) is shown to dominate the mental wilderness of solipsistic habit. Keeping in mind William James's unsettling politicization of habit's utility as a “fly-wheel” of conservative ideology, Eliot's satiric ethic, enacted in *Silas Marner*, is to promote not radical change, but “the deep-seated habit of direct fellow-feeling with individual fellow-men” (*M* 582); although not directly political in its effects, habit in its positive incarnations, in Eliot's view, provides a moral counter to the regrettably slow rate of social evolution.

3.iv “Reflex reflections”: Butler's Juvenalian *The Way of All Flesh*

Children in *Silas Marner* tend to inspire “forward thinking,” whereas in Samuel Butler's *The Way of All Flesh*, offspring as a rule reinforce the backward thoughts and

customs of the preceding generation.¹⁶⁷ In contrast to Eliot's text, the evolutionary theories informing *The Way of All Flesh* postulate biological forces requiring a near-extminating degree of wasted human life. The Horatian bent of *Silas Marner*, encapsulated by Silas's statement, "There's good i' this world" (*SM* 141), is opposed by Edward Overton and Ernest Pontifex's contemptuous, Juvenalian view that the world, as it currently stands, is essentially void of systems supporting goodness and truth. Butler, whom Frances T. Russell observes to be "more a Juvenal," comes nearer than other Victorian satirists to "an unqualified pessimism" (67, 273-274). Russell's pronouncement that he is "more akin to Swift than to any Victorian" alludes implicitly to Butler's scorn for "things as they are," his devaluation of human reason, and his notorious anger (145). Leaving aside the question of Butler's own alleged Swiftian or Juvenalian personality traits,¹⁶⁸ anger decidedly informs Ernest Pontifex's development as a satirist. Ernest confirms that he has the prerequisite habit of "a sense of humour and tendency to think for himself" when his "blood began to boil" with indignation at his parents' ill-treatment of a pregnant servant (*WAF* 229, 181). Ultimately, like Edward Overton, Ernest remains aloof from the social institutions that he criticizes (including the literary industry), especially his most hated organization: the "family system" (*WAF* 388). Significantly, Ernest, like Overton, and like Juvenal himself (who denounces Roman habits from a similarly removed yet scornful perspective), preserves his bachelorhood as a symbolic reminder of his disconnectedness from the ignorant and materialistic, dogma-addicted society surrounding him.

Lacking Juvenal's nostalgia for the past, Ernest and Overton place their modicum of hope in the future. Convinced that the falsehoods of Christian teaching have "blighted" the lives of too many and that it is "worthwhile to be angry," Ernest tries to "do something towards saving others from such years of waste and misery" (*WAF* 284). His effort, revealing a belief in the efficacy of satire, amounts to writing a book of satiric and philosophical essays that parodies the voice of cultural authority and interrogates subjects from multiple viewpoints. Yet Ernest implicitly denies Juvenalian extremity and claims to be writing Horatian satire: "we become persecutors as a matter of course as soon as we begin to feel strongly upon any subject; we ought not therefore to do this" (*WAF* 393). The ideal of "lukewarm" or "indifferent" opinions, though consonant with Victorian anxiety about the propriety of harsh satire, conflicts with his previous expressions of outrage. Certainly, Overton finds his godson's book to be "conservative, quietistic, comforting" (*WAF* 395) and "abounding with humour, just satire, and good sense" (*WAF* 396). Importantly, however, Butler's (and Overton's) satiric production, *The Way of All Flesh*, is a predominantly discomfiting Juvenalian text – regardless of its suggestion of potential mental evolution. The novel's depiction of the sheer tortuousness of the struggle against convention, and the rarity of success, outlines a pessimistic, even dystopic, view of the present.

Like Ernest's subversive first book, *The Way of All Flesh* is itself a literary hodgepodge, a generic farrago: it is a motley text of fictional biography (an education novel, or *Bildungsroman*; a transparent autobiography of Butler; an epistolary novel;¹⁶⁹ and also an historical novel that charts broad shifts in Victorian intellectual paradigms,

documenting successive “storms” of heterodoxy (the Tractarian movement, German Biblical criticism, and, most importantly, Darwinism). As a pointedly intellectual novel, *The Way of All Flesh* is a Menippean satire *par excellence*.¹⁷⁰ Its characters are, as Frye observes, animated by “Menippean blood” (*Anatomy* 309). Reverend Hawke’s (Evangelical) sermons, and Pryor’s (high Anglican) lectures are parodically presented. Such characters, including Mr Shaw the free-thinker, are Menippean mouthpieces for the intellectual trends that Ernest zealously embraces on his “snipe-like flights” (*WAF* 227) from one belief system to another. Overton’s essayistic meditations linking Ernest’s exploits to his (and Butler’s) “freethinking evolutionism” (*Paradis* 315) enact a central feature of Bakhtin’s Menippea: “the adventure of an idea or truth in the world” (*Dostoevsky* 115). Within its Menippean generic variegation, *The Way of All Flesh* – the manuscript adds, “*A Story of English Domestic Life*” – anatomizes an all-inclusive satiric target: systematized deception. According to the narrator, an “atmosphere of lying and self-laudatory hallucination” (*WAF* 274) mandated by the dogma-producing authorities of England legitimates and perpetuates morally unsound cultural practices, “whether it be cannibalism, or infanticide, or even habitual untruthfulness of mind” (*WAF* 281). Consonant with Frye and Bakhtin’s notion of Menippean traditions, Butler’s text defamiliarizes the habitual truth claims of Victorian society.

Like *Erewhon* (1872), *The Way of All Flesh* is what Matz would term comprehensive or absolute satire. It consigns an all-inclusive effigy of Victorian habits of thought (that are foundational to institutions of family, education, and religion) to the bonfire of satire, as symbolized by the portrait of Theobald Pontifex burned at

Roughborough. Overton, like the narrator of *Erewhon*, is mortified by the degree to which the culture in which he finds himself displays an “extraordinary obliquity of mental vision” (*Erewhon* 92). Erewhonians and bourgeois Victorians alike embrace customs that are so arbitrary and cruel that all citizens are required to be reflexive dissemblers, who, suppressing any originality, function automatically by habit. Instead of “Musical Banks,” Overton describes an epidemic of Mammonism among clergymen; in place of the Colleges of Unreason, which “do more to suppress mental growth than to encourage it” (*Erewhon* 192), Overton describes Ernest’s education at Cambridge (and elsewhere) as being designed “not so much to keep him in blinkers as to gouge his eyes out altogether” (*WAF* 267). Finally, instead of the Ydgrundites, cant is represented in *The Way of All Flesh* by the “compound animal” (*WAF* 102) Pontifex. Overton describes the culturally sanctioned practice of physically beating the willfulness out of children as a kind of trans-generational habit. Similarly, inherited habit is a mechanism assuring that social customs are mindlessly and globally accepted, and that free will is eradicated through a false “equilibrium of habit” (*Notebooks* 50).

Cultivating habits of sympathy is not Butler’s solution for the suffering of humanity. In *The Way of All Flesh*, wasted and painful human lives are depicted as being the necessary byproduct of the laws of human development. The evolution of the human race is detectable only in the pitifully incremental advances made by singular individuals in whom the habit of free thought and will has, against all odds, become unconscious and inveterate. Butler, Overton, and Ernest put their “faith” in this practically miraculous achievement. As if to demonstrate Butler’s assertion in *Life and Habit* (1877) that “[i]t is

one against legion when a creature tries to differ from his own past selves” (52), Ernest, despite painful and continual backsliding, manages (just barely) to extricate himself (with the aid of luck) from convention. Dissenting from the religion of humanity, sympathy is not his salvation. The Horatian-compatible, Ruskin-endorsed gentlemanly ideal of habitual sympathy is only one aspect of Overton’s “perfect gentleman” (*WAF* 299), who, regardless of his system of beliefs, is ennobled by the mental practice of “charitable inconsistency” (*WAF* 299). This principle of mental generosity requires the automatic avoidance of dogma and “uncompromisingness” (*WAF* 299). The culturally advanced or evolved gentleman, like Overton’s description of Ernest’s book, automatically steers “between iconoclasm on the one hand and credulity on the other” (*WAF* 395); in his paradoxically habitual plasticity, the gentleman remains “far too consistent not to be inconsistent consistently” (*WAF* 318). Habit therefore has the potential to consolidate not only dogmatic thought, but also original, flexible, evolved thinking; it is a mechanism both of stasis and extinction, and of evolutionary vitality. Just as chance is a lesser factor than habit in evolutionary processes, the habit of sympathy is secondary to the mental habit of anti-dogmatism and “amiable indifferentism” (*WAF* 300). Significantly, Ernest rejects the Christian model of empathetic engagement with the poor; instead he elects to travel the world to exercise his “sympathetic curiousness” (*WAF* 355). For Overton and Ernest sympathy is less an emotional sentiment connecting human beings than a necessary mental disposition for intellectual leniency and liberation from cant – which is, however, a first step toward authentic human connectivity. Freedom from false systems of belief precedes sympathy.

Like his character Ernest, who decides to dissent from culturally ascendant creeds and to differ from those who “shir[k] difficulties instead of facing them” (*WAF* 284), Butler voiced his antagonism to the newly-consolidated regime of Darwinism. “It is impossible,” Sally Shuttleworth observes, “to separate Butler’s scientific writings from his novel: the same anxieties, and sheer love of paradox fuel both forms of experiment” (148). Bernard Lightman situates Butler’s four popular-science books – *Life and Habit* (1879), *Evolution, Old and New* (1879), *Unconscious Memory* (1880), *Luck, or Cunning?* (1886) – and his essay “The Deadlock in Darwinism” (1890) within the context of Victorian popular-science writing that opposed the “new pseudo-priesthood of scientists”: “In each of these books Butler returned repeatedly to the development of his own neo-Lamarckian theory of evolution and to a critique of Darwin’s theory of natural selection” (Lightman, “Conspiracy” 117).¹⁷¹ Specifically, he refused to assent to the glorification of luck implied by natural selection. According to Butler, Darwin’s theory is “dysteleological” (Lightman, “Conspiracy” 120), and thus denies evolving organisms intelligence, will, memory, “heroism,” and “all the elements of romance” (*Life* 253). Appropriately, given that William B. Carpenter’s physiological psychology preserves volition, Butler quotes Carpenter extensively in the fourth chapter of *Life and Habit* to support his notion that all habitual or unconscious actions of an organism (such as an amoeba, embryo, or chicken) are a kind of “reasoning power” (73). Expressing Butler’s dismissal of non-volitional natural selection in *The Way of All Flesh*, Overton evokes Juvenal’s rejection (in the last line of Satire X) of the conventional wisdom that Fortune is “a blind and fickle foster-mother, who showers her gifts at random” (*WAF* 17).¹⁷²

Quoting Juvenal's proclamation, "it is we who make thee, Fortune, a goddess" (*WAF* 18), Overton adds that we make *ourselves* as well.

Specifically, Butler scorned Darwinism's diminishment of the agency of habit. In brief, Darwin isolated natural selection, and not inherited habit, as *the* salient mechanism of evolution. In *Luck, or Cunning?*, for example, Butler accuses Darwin of mistakenly rejecting habit as the source of instinct and trying to "obliterate the doctrine of inherited habit as advanced by Lamarck" (59) – to which Darwin himself, in Butler's view, subscribed hypocritically in 1839.¹⁷³ In *Life and Habit*, Butler claims to update the work of Buffon, Erasmus Darwin, and particularly Lamarck with the ideas of Ewald Hering and his theory of inherited memory (Lightman 121); his thesis is that instinct consists of hereditary habits which become "deeply impressed upon the memory" (*Life* 221). Habit, as a form of inherited reason, volition, and memory, is, in Butler's estimation, omnipotent. Darwinian dogma, *The Way of All Flesh* insinuates, forces the will out of the evolutionary equation, just as belligerently as middle-class Christians thrash the will out of their children. *Life and Habit*, along with *The Way of All Flesh*, upholds the central tenets of Victorian physiological psychology: that habit is a physical phenomenon, and that repeated actions are inscribed by habit and remembered unconsciously. Thus, the older the habit, the "less power of conscious self-analysis and control" (*Life* 13) an organism has over it. Importantly, habit functions simultaneously in *The Way of All Flesh* as a neo-Lamarckian mechanism of evolution, and as the enabler of adherence to the status quo.¹⁷⁴

In *The Way of All Flesh*, character is delineated through the associationist language of habit. For example, Theobald's jealous remarks about Ernest's fortune "instantly brought the whole train of ideas which in Ernest's mind were connected with his father" (*WAF* 369). As well, Overton frequently uses the word "groove" to explain his characters' behaviour (his own included); for example, his friendship with Theobald continues only because he is caught in a "groove" (*WAF* 56). Also in keeping with the language of Victorian psychology, Dr Skinner is rumoured to have "stamped an impression" (*WAF* 111) on his students' minds, and Mr Shaw's words concerning the gospels left a "deep impression" (*WAF* 279) on Ernest. In short, Overton explains much of his characters' behaviour through concepts of association and habit. He describes his hero in the mock-epical dilemma of being held captive on his mother's sofa "through the sheer force of habit" (*WAF* 173). As well, the unconscious "momentum of old habits" (*WAF* 262) overpowers the influence of Mr Shaw. Upon leaving prison (wearing his old clothes, and walking in old surroundings), Ernest is "carried away by association" and "dragged back to his old self" (*WAF* 304). Explicitly, Overton concurs with Victorian psychology's investment in notions of "unconscious cerebration" or reflexive thought:

How little do we know our thoughts – our reflex actions indeed, yes; but our reflex reflections! Man, forsooth, prides himself on his consciousness! We boast that we differ from the winds and waves and falling stones and plants, which grow they know not why, and from the wandering creatures which go up and down after their prey, as we are pleased to say without the help of reason. We know so well what we are doing ourselves and why

we do it, do we not? I fancy that there is some truth in the view which is being put forward nowadays that it is our less conscious thoughts and our less conscious actions which mainly mould our lives and the lives of those who spring from us. (*WAF* 22)

With his final emphasis on offspring, disavowal of pride in conscious reasoning, and assertion of the ascendant agency of reflexive mechanisms of thought, Overton articulates a neo-Lamarckian physiological psychology compatible with Butler's. Updated by Victorian mental science (of "nowadays"), Overton's conclusions about the pre-moulded nature of human lives anticipate William James's pronouncements on habit's clandestine ruling function.

In both his literary and scientific works, Butler is the most theoretically explicit Victorian satirist of habit. The impetus behind Butler's works of literature and popular science parallels the bluntly expressed corrective aim of Ernest's essays: "there are a lot of things that want saying which no one dares to say, a lot of shams which want attacking, and yet no one attacks them" (*WAF* 387). According to Lightman, Butler became the "most outspoken critic of scientific naturalism from the secular wing of the British intelligentsia" ("Conspiracy" 132). In *Luck, or Cunning?*, Butler even mocked his scientific critics (who advised him condescendingly to confine himself to literary satire) for not recognizing their status in the work as satiric subjects (*Luck* 35). James Paradis notes that in *Life and Habit*, "satirical digressions" constantly "erupt" throughout the work in "a demotic language of jokes and witty asides," which disrupt the decorum of scientific language (312). Emphasizing the "biting" tone of attacks on Darwin's

“scientific and moral stature” in *Evolution, Old and New*, Lightman highlights Butler’s insult to Darwin and his *Origin*: it was ““discharged into the waters of the evolution controversy, like the secretion of a cuttle fish”” (qtd. in Lightman, “Conspiracy” 129). The comparison of Darwin’s work to the cuttle fish’s paralyzing poison is a debasingly apt analogy. In this instance, Butler’s rhetoric embodies the general satiric method of *The Way of All Flesh*: the use of deflating and deliberate anticlimax involving surprising analogies. “[U]nexpected analogy” is, in George Eliot’s definition of wit, “the enemy of monotony” (“Heine” 70, 72). Thus, Butler’s satiric tool to undermine convention is, in principle, antithetical to customary habit.

Butler’s characteristic method of satiric exposure is also, confusingly enough, his method for theorizing evolution. Butler’s analogies “satirize the abuses and follies of the age” (*Luck* 35) while also expressing his evolutionary, non-Christian cosmology.¹⁷⁵ In what Lightman refers to as Butler’s “fantastic vision of the unity of all life” (“Conspiracy” 118), the human organism is unconsciously connected to, even “fused” with, all of creation (*Life* 200). As Hans-Peter Breuer suggests, Butler “invest[s] all matter with an increment of mind” (366). Knowledge and volition are not exclusive to the higher species, but (in an analogy that is deliberately mundane) they “slee[p] in every hen’s egg upon a kitchen shelf” (*Life* 75). It is not surprising, therefore, that in all seriousness, Butler refers to the “gorillahood” (*Notebooks* 48) of the human race. His seemingly playful comparisons between the mind and body, and between humans and all creation, demonstrate his evolutionary theories while humorously defying traditional exemplars of the sublime. In a similar manner, Ernest finds the dogs at Mount St. Bernard

to be more awe-inspiring than the Alps. Similarly, Overton is not wholly in jest when he expresses regret for the “indelible impression” left on Ernest’s character by his regrettable prenatal experiences, including his experiences as a “little zoosperm” (*WAF* 276) suffering from Theobald’s drinking bouts. Unreservedly, Butler’s texts explore the comic implications of his own evolutionary beliefs.¹⁷⁶ The comparison, for example, between disowning Ernest’s parents and losing “an aching but very loose and hollow tooth” (*WAF* 296) is a scientifically sound satiric conflation of human life (Theobald and Christina) with rotten matter. Paradoxically, this satiric analogy devaluing the clergyman and his wife invokes the biological dignity of the evolutionary process. Furthermore, in keeping with his rhetoric of unexpected analogy, Overton likens Ernest’s developmental acceleration in prison to that of silkworms, which, when “sent by rail, hatch before their time through the novelty of heat and jolting” (*WAF* 278). Again, this comparison deflates human superiority over the natural world and at the same time expresses Butler’s evolutionary thought.¹⁷⁷ Finally, Overton’s seemingly ludicrous meditation on the unconscious knowledge of survival that drives the progeny of a fly to engage in an heroic battle with death in a cup of coffee articulates (in a burlesque manner) Butler’s theory of inherited memory. Throughout *The Way of All Flesh*, Butler’s teleological, evolutionary theories inspire playfully eccentric and frequently non-Juvenalian analogies which concurrently satirize human vanity.

Yet *The Way of All Flesh*, being a predominantly Juvenalian satire, contains unequivocally condemnatory analogies. When Theobald (“red-handed” from thrashing Ernest) reads his daily batch of punishment-themed prayers, the congregation – and by

extension, all who believe in the Bible's literal truth – are likened to the bees that fruitlessly search the flowered dining-room wallpaper for honey. In *Notebooks* (1912), Butler asserts that the bee, remaining stuck in its “unchanging civilization” (50), has reached the apex of its evolution. These creatures of habit and “fixity” (*Notebooks* 50) are akin, not so much to humankind, but to the average citizen of England, especially clergymen who mechanically adhere to the “mean” (in both senses), non-evolving moral ideals of the “happy, united, God-fearing family” (*WAF* 27). Also, likening Ernest to a foal that eats garbage because it is the only food it has ever known illustrates the degree to which middle-class Victorians are debasingly habituated to the mental refuse of cant. Young people, Overton observes with cynical admiration, adapt easily to the “absence of a congenial mental atmosphere” (*WAF* 26). Continuing his analogy of starvation, he observes Ernest's obsession with the painting of ravens (perpetually) “trying to feed Elijah” (*WAF* 376) that hangs in the dining-room – the symbolic *locus* of violent patriarchal practices. As a child, Ernest expresses his latent satiric inclination by attempting to feed Elijah (tracing a “greasy line” of bread and butter to his mouth); as an adult writer, he ultimately offers the *lanx satura* or “mixed mash” of satire as mental nourishment for his starving culture.

Ernest's story of becoming a social satirist (significantly, a well-dressed one, whose excellent tailoring accurately reflects the quality of his mental fabric) is at once an illustration of the habit of human evolutionary development, and a Juvenalian satire on Victorian moral, social, and intellectual habits. To achieve de-habituation from prevailing opinion, the “true self” must be free to express and discuss opinions (Mill, *On Liberty*

225-35). As an aid to unconventional thought, J. S. Mill advises the “steady habit” of collating and collecting opinions (*On Liberty* 18: 232). Overton, who extols Mill’s *On Liberty* for its participation in the “storms” of dissent, approves of Ernest’s habit of writing in his notebook in order to exercise his “literary instinct” (*WAF* 377); the notebook is a tool to catch routinely his real thoughts. Rather cryptically, Overton personifies these honest thoughts as being Ernest’s true god – a god whose injunction parodies the retributive register of the god of the Old Testament: “‘Obey me, your true self,’ do not listen to your father or ‘I will rend you in pieces even unto the third and fourth generations as one who has hated God; for I, Ernest, am the God who made you’” (*WAF* 131). Through Overton’s developmental *bildungsroman*, Butler suggests a kind of secular Calvinism in which only a select number of “embryo minds,” or “zoosperms,” will, given current cultural circumstances, evolve enough to break into the “Kingdom of Heaven” – into a life of free, honest thought. There is a cynical Juvenalian exclusivity in Overton and Butler’s notion of human dignity as the exclusive property of a small number of elite thinkers-for-themselves who are, more often than not, defeated in their battle against the ascendant mental and moral habits of their culture’s incarnation of Roman hypocrites, the Theobald Pontifexes of the world.

3.v Seedy Habits: Juvenalian Satire in George Gissing’s *New Grub Street*

In a gesture to discard idealizing notions of reflexive heroism, Edward Overton imagines the real St. Michael to be an apathetic procrastinator who tried to “shirk his famous combat with the dragon” (*WAF* 173). Overton’s deflation of a heroic archetype

recalls Frye's and Bakhtin's shared conclusion that satire is a genre or mode that discredits, and even discards heroism. Along similar lines, Walter E. Houghton identifies Victorian literature's broadest thematic preoccupation to be the disappearance of heroism (320). Certainly in 1841, Carlyle famously proclaims his age to be deficient in heroes, expressing a hope that the "Man of Letters" would fight a modern-day battle against materialism (*Heroes* 157). Fulfilling their Carlylean duty to "resist despair," mid-century novelists, according to U. C. Knoepfelmacher, refuse to "make negation the essence of their work" (*Religious Humanism* 203), whereas late Victorian novelists, such as Samuel Butler (and also Thomas Hardy), descended closer to unmitigated despair. Arguably, George Gissing completes the fall. Unconvinced by a Lamarckian theory of human agency – in fact, rejecting evolutionary science as a source of hope whatsoever – Gissing demonstrates in *New Grub Street* (1891) that the "humane order of society" (*NGS* 352) is beyond recuperation. In *New Grub Street*, the figure of the would-be hero/writer is transposed from a mid-Victorian context that offers a tolerably sympathetic audience to a late-Victorian environment in which the writer and the reader (like the idealist Edwin Reardon and the pragmatic John Yule) have "no common criterion" available for communication. Their moral systems of reference are like "alien tongues" (*NGS* 209). The question of whether literary realism (let alone satire) will appeal to a nation in confirmed denial of day-to-day social realities is answered in the novel with an emphatic *no*. In the dominant moral order, virtue is identified with practicality, money, and fine clothing, whereas vice is akin to idealism (impractical creativity, conscientiousness, and unconventionality), penury, and seedy attire. *New Grub Street's* "Men of Letters," Edwin

Reardon and Harold Biffen, do not belong to the “heroic class” (NGS 108); instead, they are foolish idealists whose novels are forgotten, and whose dead bodies are, as Reardon had speculated, trampled by those (like Jasper Milvain) who are “borne onwards by the resistless pressure” (NGS 212) of the inhumane march of (so-called) progress. The final chapter of the novel, anticipating Hardy’s *Jude the Obscure* (1895) – in which crass cultural forces (symbolized by Arabella Fawley) vanquish the hero’s “fantasy of a mighty undertaking” (*Jude* 60) – presents the most selfish un-idealistic characters thriving in “dreamy bliss” (NGS 425).¹⁷⁸ *New Grub Street* is a text that is Juvenalian and anti-heroic in the most extreme sense of the terms.

Any attempt to connect *New Grub Street* with traditions of satire must commence with an exploration of Gissing’s involvement with theories of “realism” and “naturalism.” Critics vary in their assessments of Gissing’s pronouncements concerning “realism” (in the novels themselves, and in his essays and letters) and the relevance of the term to his novelistic practice. Accordingly, the label “naturalist” is either applied or removed. Sally Ledger, for example, includes Gissing as a practitioner of literary naturalism, a school influenced by Darwinian tenets: humans are not divine and existence is a struggle (69). As well, the “poverty, brutality and drunkenness of the urban poor” (Ledger 69-70) are presented as being inescapable and hereditary.¹⁷⁹ Similarly, Constance Harsh finds that Gissing, if “classified as an English naturalist” (912), produced “an essentially determinist literature that focuses on the impingement of natural processes on human agency and consciousness” (912). For both critics, deterministic themes are enacted formally in “naturalism” through a narrative method of scientific detachment.

Countering this view of Gissing, Jacob Korg insists that the novelist aimed “to achieve, not mere objectivity, which he distrusted as a literary counterpart of science, but the personal and self-exposing variant of it which is called honesty” (242). According to Korg, Gissing rejected Émile Zola’s “self-effacing” version of naturalism, which “limits itself to flat observation and forbids interpretation” (267).¹⁸⁰ Importantly, Korg’s analysis of Gissing’s “naturalism” leaves room for a view of Gissing’s style as being ambivalent, idiosyncratic, and even satiric. Indeed, *New Grub Street*, after the manner of *Sartor Resartus*’s Diogenes Teufelsdröckh, exposes the “fair tapestry of human Life” by “turn[ing] out the rough seems, tatters, and manifold thrums of that unsightly wrong-side, with an almost diabolical patience and indifference,” while also suggesting “something of intended satire” (SR 210).¹⁸¹

Harold Biffen’s “mission of literary realism” (NGS 495) is frequently used as a spring-board for general discussions of representational strategies, and also for evaluating Gissing’s equivocal position as a naturalist and satirist.¹⁸² Stephen Arata, for instance, posits that Gissing’s novel contains both a Biffen-approved “narrative stance of studied detachment” (179) and a parody (through Biffen’s extremism) of the scientific method of the new realistic mode. Similarly, Aaron Matz argues for Biffen’s status as both a satiric and a sympathetic subject. Matz finds that Biffen’s questionable theories (including the suspect title of his novel), his dismal life, and inevitable suicide function to satirize the viability (even desirability) of realism; this criticism is, however, “counterbalanced by [Biffen’s] very real suffering” (Matz, “Ambivalent” 219) and his valiant artistic sincerity. Matz’s interpretation of Biffen as the embodiment of Gissing’s “ambivalent realism”

(“Ambivalent” 246) is informed by the novelist’s words about the illusion of objectivity in “The Place of Realism in Fiction” (1895): “Realism, then, signifies nothing more than artistic sincerity in the portrayal of contemporary life; it merely contrasts with the habit of mind which assumes that a novel is written ‘to please people,’ that disagreeable facts must always be kept out of sight” (220). Unlike Biffen’s systematic, impartial realism, Gissing’s expansive definition does not disqualify satire and its opinionated exposure of “disagreeable facts” and illusory habits of thought.

Biffen’s version of literary realism aims to depose idealizations (particularly the Smilesean social myth of a journey from rags to riches fueled by moral character) by demonstrating (in excruciatingly precise detail) the “paltry” material circumstances that determine “unheroic” (*NGS* 119) human lives. Biffen’s theory of object verisimilitude requires the absence of a satiric narrator, for he positions himself as an anti-humourist, rejecting Reardon’s notion that “[l]ife is a huge farce” (*NGS* 120). Instead, he intends to write novels from a serious, “impartial standpoint”: “I want to take no side at all” (*NGS* 120). Although Reardon never explains his theory of realism – Biffen pronounces his fellow writer to be “a psychological realist in the sphere of culture” (*NGS* 120) – he rejects Biffen’s version of realism in favour of maintaining a mocking view of the “monstrously ludicrous” (*NGS* 120). Arguably, *New Grub Street* itself, in both its Biffenesque reportage of mundane subjects (such as where to find twopence halfpenny bread in London) and its Reardon-approved “psychological realism” that details characters’ habits of thought, embodies the theories of both unconventional writers. The combination creates a Juvenalian satire that exposes the unpleasant minutiae of then-

contemporary urban life (matching Juvenal's grubbiest depictions of Rome), while differentiating the mental habits of both its conventional and its iconoclastic characters. Just as Biffen abandons his neutrality, and comes to view the world with "resentful scorn" (*NGS* 374), *New Grub Street*, as a satiric text, must take sides. Just as in a farce, a noble genre is travestied by the introduction of degraded subjects, so in life high-minded human ideals (such sympathy, art) are travestied by what Hardy will later term "the grind of stern reality" (*Jude* 473).

New Grub Street's characters reveal their mental constitutions mainly through their chapter-long conversations and the focalized discourse of the narrator. The narrator's direct and omniscient evaluations are thus rare and pointed. An important and glaring instance of an opinionated address to the reader occurs in the opening sentence of Chapter 31 (in which Biffen risks his life to save his manuscript).¹⁸³ The reader, addressed jarringly as "you," is asked to temper her or his "unmingled disdain" (*NGS* 352) for Reardon and Biffen. Matz interprets the plea as authorial advice not to emphasize the text's satire at the expense of its sympathetic realism. Yet this passage makes plain the narrator's cynical assumptions about the reader's crass and chronic lack of sympathy for non-materialistic values:

The chances are that you have neither understanding nor sympathy for men such as Edwin Reardon and Harold Biffen. They merely provoke you. They seem to you inert, flabby, weakly envious, foolishly obstinate, impiously mutinous, and many other things. You are made angrily contemptuous by their failure to get on; why don't they bestir themselves,

push and bustle, welcome kicks so long as halfpence follow, make a place in the world's eye – in short, take a leaf from the book of Mr. Jasper Milvain?

But try to imagine a personality wholly unfitted for the rough and tumble of the world's labour-market. From the familiar point of view these men were worthless; view them in possible relation to a humane order of society, and they are admirable citizens. (NGS 351-2)

The narrator's dialogic parody of commercial jargon ("push and bustle," "rough and tumble") reveals an assumption that the reader is an average devotee of the "world's labour-market" – part of "the great new generation" (NGS 379), fit only to consume mindless periodicals such as *Chit-Chat* – and thus comprehends a moral language that is alien to that of the "kindly," "imaginative," and "admirable" (NGS 352) protagonists. In the futile interests of satire, *New Grub Street's* narrator breaks the realist illusion in order to announce that novel's readers are incapable of sympathy – and of the redemptive act of recognizing themselves in the mirror of satire.¹⁸⁴

New Grub Street's Juvenalian affinities are further substantiated by Gissing's analysis of Dickens's own interfusion of realism and satire. In both *Dickens, A Critical Study* (1895) and *Immortal Dickens* (1903), Gissing aims to reconcile Dickens's commercial success with his subversive status as an artist and satirist. In doing so, he isolates two habits – in both works, Gissing refers repeatedly to Dickens's "habits of mind" – of Dickensian literary representation: his realism (defined as his persistent representation of characters, especially lower-middle-class Londoners, not as "types" or

“abstractions,” but as “aggressively individual in mind and form, in voice and habit” [CS 12-13]), and his irrepressible “comic vigour”(CS 201). According to Gissing, this alchemical combination of traits permits Dickens’s dual success as a realist and “England’s satirist” (CD 128). Gissing insists upon both Dickens’s unflinching moral and satiric purpose and the realistic nature of his portraiture of human beings and their social conditions (CD 12).¹⁸⁵ He finds Dickens’s narrative practice to be guided by a “sympathetic vision” (*Immortal* 214), one which dispels “gall” with the humour created by “farcical extravagance to soften the bitterness of truth” (CD 201). A memorable example of this alleviating strategy, for Gissing, is the depiction of the starving child Sally Brass cutting out “two square inches of cold mutton.” Gissing maintains that it is the “two square inches” that “makes all the difference between painful realism and fiction universally acceptable” (CD 201).¹⁸⁶ In *New Grub Street*, however, Gissing refuses to offer the “two square inches” of Dickensian optimism, humour, and sympathy – which essentially translate to Horatian critique. Instead, he devises a predominantly “unlaughing” and “negative satire” (Bakhtin, “Discourse” 372) that complements the Juvenalian mode.

According to Gissing, the “habit of mind” that opposes the democratic, sympathy-cultivating forces of realism and Dickensian satire is that which characterizes *laissez-faire* commercialism. In the competitive, Darwinian culture of late-Victorian society, *New Grub Street* attests, the seedy ethics of business have replaced sympathy as the foundation of positive morality. In many ways, the novel pillories the conventional satiric subject: the inordinate value of appearances in materialistic society and the attendant

habits of solipsism and enmity. The satiric portrait of Mrs Edmund Yule, for example, describes not just a particular individual, but a representative psychological template; like the “majority of London people” (*NGS* 195), she fears poverty and the accompanying social scorn. Thus, “[l]ike her multitudinous kind, Mrs Yule lived only in the opinions of other people” (*NGS* 199) and in habitual “bold denial of actualities” (*NGS* 199) (such as the poverty of her “domestic slaves” [*NGS* 198]). She is an avid Darwinist, for whom “life was a battle. She must either crush or be crushed” (*NGS* 195). Amy Reardon, also an exemplary citizen of her time, is cold, practical, and glares at her husband “like the animal that defends itself with tooth and claw” (*NGS* 189). As well, the summary of Amy’s reading tastes alludes to the application of evolutionary laws to the social state, and also to the tenets of physiological psychology. A “typical woman of the new time ... who has developed concurrently with journalistic enterprise” (*NGS* 298), Amy reads articles of “specialism popularised” (*NGS* 298). As a result, for example, she is “intelligently acquainted” with the ideas of Herbert Spencer, and her knowledge of Darwin’s “main theories and illustrations was respectable” (*NGS* 298). Thus, Gissing’s text suggests that the popular consumption of evolutionary sociology functions to reinforce the culturally prevalent habit of viewing society as a collection of self-interested combatants – a perversion of Spencer’s own altruistic moral science.¹⁸⁷ In a society of Mrs Yules, Amy Reardons, and Jasper Milvains, realism and satire, both of which expose and question “the brutal realities of life” [*NGS* 205], are (to use Jasper’s words regarding satire) “little profitable” (*NGS* 5).

Asserting that the “the sum of [Biffen and Reardon’s] faults was their inability to earn money” (352), *New Grub Street*’s narrator confirms Edward Overton’s cynical conjecture in *The Way of All Flesh* that human beings would be better off entering the world wrapped in Bank of England notes. Throughout the novel, precise tabulations of characters’ fluctuating annuities match graphic depictions of their attire. The text’s emphasis on the sartorial habits of materialism echoes not only Carlyle’s *Sartor Resartus* (and the religion of the “Dandiacal Body”), but also Juvenal’s Satire III. Adeline Tintner argues that Gissing reworks the “classical form” of satire in his “realistic novel” (3); specifically, she identifies the influence of Satire III, which describes the effect of (specifically urban) poverty on the poet Umbricius.¹⁸⁸ Tintner’s original insight has abundant intertextual implications. In Juvenal’s poem, the satirical writer Umbricius explains why he must flee to the country. In the city, he complains, people are valued only for their material possessions – slaves, property, dinner-services, and particularly their clothes (3.162-82). In the country, even a magistrate will wear a plain white toga, “[b]ut here in Rome we must toe / The line of fashion, living beyond our means, and/ Often on borrowed credit: every man jack of us / Is keeping up with his neighbours” (3.182-85). As well, Umbricius identifies an epidemic of misplaced satire: “[t]he poor man’s an eternal / Butt for bad jokes, with his torn and dirt-caked top-coat, / His grubby toga, one shoe agape where the leather’s / Split” (3.149-52). Gissing’s *New Grub Street* describes the same social and moral dilemma (created by an ascendant ethos of materialism) and examines its sartorial expression.¹⁸⁹

Clothing in the novel signals social branding as well as self-inscribing habits of thought. Like “habit,” the word “seedy,” which recurs in the text, contains both material and moral connotations; it refers either to one’s external appearance (clothing or physical state) or to one’s internal, moral disposition. Seedy clothing is unkempt or of poor quality and associated with poverty. To have a “seedy” appearance implies a lack of health (often from excessive drinking); to have a “seedy” character is to be disreputable, or derelict in one’s moral conduct (*OED*). A sustained irony in *New Grub Street* is that seedy clothing is not an accurate signifier of seedy morality. Yet the conventionality of characters’ attire does accurately declare the nature of their habitual thoughts. Clothing reflects the physiological psychology of Jasper, Biffen, and Edwin. This symbolic strategy recalls William James’s identification of sartorial habit as *the* symbol for the social function of psychological habit. Habit, James determines, maintains the conservative framework of society by “keep[ing] different social strata from mixing” (*Principles* 126). It achieves this socio-political function by preserving the prejudicial, customary thoughts “from which the man can by-and-by no more escape than his coat-sleeve can suddenly fall into a new set of folds” (*Principles* 126).¹⁹⁰ Habit is thus as constraining as the material conditions of life. Reardon’s anti-Darwinian, non-seedy habits of mind are as unlikely to render him a man of fashion as they are to fashion him into a successful writer, whereas Jasper’s habitual upkeep of both his personal appearance and his confident view of himself assures his success – “however seedy” (*NGS* 8).

Jasper’s sartorial habits, reflecting his materialistic mentality, are engineered to announce and attract success. He is introduced the opening chapter, “A Man of His Day,”

as being an exemplary modern man who self-consciously “cultivates the art of success” (*NGS* 216). Appropriately, even before he is actually successful, he wears clothes that are made of “expensive material” (*NGS* 5). Significantly, the fact that “his necktie was lilac-sprigged” (*NGS* 5) flags his Dandiacal inclinations; yet unlike Pelham’s superficial self-presentation, which masks hidden reformist sympathies, Jasper flagrantly (even semi-satirically) commodifies his own humanity, and that of others, without a more noble motive than to avoid the further degradation of his character. In a moment of self-mechanizing parody, for example, he expresses a hope that his future wife will continually prompt him to make money and “keep [him] at it like a steam-engine” (*NGS* 345). As well, he admits that he “disregarded priceless love ... to go and make himself a proud position among fools and knaves” (*NGS* 415). Boasting that he “isn’t a heroic type” (*NGS* 99), he incessantly takes pride in his lack of idealism and artistic conscientiousness. During his frequent, self-analytical monologues, he tilts his head back haughtily – “a habit of his” (*NGS* 153). Cannily, Jasper habitually discourses upon his “good deal of will” (*NGS* 410) as a method to maintain it: “Never in my life shall I do anything of solid literary value; I shall always despise the people I write for. But my path will be that of success. I have always said it, and now I’m sure of it” (*NGS* 62). Without genius, and in fact being “rather despicable” (*NGS* 152) in his own estimation, he becomes a reputable literary man by the sheer force of his will to look and act the part. Furthermore, having abandoned Marian Yule (repulsed by her weathered clothing and ink-stained fingers), Jasper ultimately adorns his success with a wife who routinely dresses with “scrupulous personal refinement” (*NGS* 41) and “consummate grace” (*NGS*

422), and whose mind is equally habituated to thoughts of productive sociability.¹⁹¹ The union of Jasper and Amy is the fittest to reproduce the sartorial and self-representational values of a materialistic environment.

The Jamesian “lines of cleavage” (*Principles* 126) running throughout Reardon’s character also determine the condition of his attire and his social standing. Unlike Jasper’s “bureaucratic” (*NGS* 5) mindset and appearance, however, Reardon’s habits of thought are (in Jasper’s words) “hopelessly unpractical” (*NGS* 419); not surprisingly, he spends the bulk of his life “shabbily attired” (*NGS* 49), carrying books with him at all times. “The habit was ominous” (*NGS* 104). Reardon’s statement, “I never in my life encountered and overcame a practical difficulty” (*NGS* 66), reflects his routine manner of speaking and thinking about himself as a failure. The narrator observes, “[h]e had got into the way of thinking of himself as too weak to struggle against the obstacles” (*NGS* 185). Confident thoughts are a laborious effort for Reardon, for he thinks of himself automatically as being a doomed idealist. Biffen’s metaphor for the self-destructive mental propensities of his friend is that of a razor (Reardon persists in cutting his bread, pauper-style, with a razor). Upon hearing yet another of Reardon’s rants about poverty, Biffen exclaims, “There goes the razor again!” (*NGS* 364).¹⁹² In contrast to Jasper’s programme of self-aggrandizement, Reardon is committed to self-pathologizing. Referring to his artistic conscientiousness, Reardon laments, “This habit of mine is superstitious” (*NGS* 45). His hopelessness is registered physically, not only by his ratty and dwindling wardrobe (which “began to declare him poverty-stricken” [*NGS* 158]), but also by his prematurely aging and ailing body. Reardon’s constant colds (“my old

habit” [NGS 367]) mirror his beleaguered mental condition. His habit of refusing “adapt” inwardly and outwardly to the “inferior public” (NGS 171) that desires piecemeal articles about Gladstone’s collars, is registered by his bodily enfeeblement and his sartorial declarations of unconventionality.

In *New Grub Street*, clothes both create and signal the farce that Reardon and ultimately Biffen determine human life to be. The condition of their clothing plays a role in each of their untimely deaths, dramatizing Biffen’s belief in the “fateful power of trivial incidents” (NGS 120). When Reardon visits Amy for the purpose of reconciliation, she is physically repulsed by “the seedy habiliments” which are “tokens of his degradation” (NGS 281). Finally, Amy decides that her husband’s “livery of poverty” actually “symbolise[s]” (NGS 286) his mental disease – his non-survivalist habits of mind. The narrator links this failed encounter explicitly to Biffen’s theory of realism, by confirming that if Reardon had worn a “decent suit of clothes for this interview, that ridiculous trifle might have made all the difference in what was to result” (NGS 287). In short, Reardon’s fatal journey (poorly clad) in the snow to visit his dying child would never have occurred.

Biffen’s death is equally farcical. Before the “fatal day” (NGS 402) when he falls in love with Amy, he is all but oblivious to his lack of decent clothing; in fact, he is pleased to have a second-hand overcoat with “starting seams” (NGS 176) and an ill-fitted morning coat, rather than none at all. Ironically, Biffen, who lacks “conventional clothing” (NGS 174) and therefore cannot find a “decent position” (NGS 174) in society, owns instead a relatively worthless “cultivated mind and graceful character” (NGS 117).

Once before he had felt “too seedy in appearance” [NGS 175] to approach Amy, but smitten with lovelorn sympathy, he “don[s] his best clothes” (NGS 404) to visit her; however, because of his “shabbiness” (NGS 404), he is not warmly received. Sardonicly, the narrator observes that Biffen is, like many unfashionable types, “permitted to perish” (NGS 409). Biffen’s realization of his (and his friend Reardon’s) worthless ideals of love and sympathy, together with his “inflamed imagination” (NGS 402), cause him to lose the habitual self-control that permits him to “think with resignation of the injustice which triumphs so flagrantly in the destinies of men” (NGS 374). This leads to the inevitable loss of his “innate will-to-live” (NGS 405), a phrase that invokes the language of Schopenhauer.¹⁹³ The morbidly farcical, wardrobe-related deaths of both writers epitomize Frye’s definition of satire as a genre committed (more than realism) to exposing the “seamy side” of tragedy.

Corresponding with its Juvenalian tendencies, *New Grub Street* is, in many ways, a Menippean satire that depicts the “adventure of an idea”; in this case, the idea narrativized is the effect on humanity of the interfusion of Darwinism and *laissez-faire* capitalism (accompanied also, as Fredric Jameson proposes, by the bourgeoisie fear of *déclassement*).¹⁹⁴ The novel’s opening sentences describe Jasper in the act of consuming a “fresh egg” (NGS 5) at the moment that city-bells announce that a man is being hanged. Jasper further reveal his self-centred and predatory character by declaring the particular pleasure he takes in being alive at such moments. Similarly, when he discovers that his literary friends have “fallen in the battle” (NGS 412), he is unaffected emotionally (nor does he care about Marian’s impending penury). Instead, his sense of himself as a select

individual is augmented, and he formulates new mercenary plans. Jasper's lack of sympathy attends his fear of poverty. By being a mouthpiece for the ethics of social Darwinism, Jasper joins other characters who also reveal tell-tale Menippean blood by partaking in topical debates about the production and market value of emergent and ephemeral literary genres, and the backstabbing rituals of periodical politics. Biffen and Reardon's debates about Sophocles, Greek metrics, and the nature of realism provide an ironic foil to such pragmatic discussions. Many New Grub Street-themed conversations revolve upon one overarching subject: the "rough and tumble" commercialism of London (described as being "only a huge shop, with an hotel on the upper storeys" [NGS 362]). The social, economic, and psychological environment in which *New Grub Street's* characters "[go] forth to fight for daily food" (NGS 50) is as monologic and inescapable as any allegorical hell; condemned to the historic reality of *fin de siècle* London, where evolutionary ideology merges with capitalism, they need not travel to a fantastical Menippean inferno.

Stuck in fog-infested "lodgers' London" (NGS 146), Reardon is incessantly harassed by the dual bells of the nearby church and workhouse, which spark his sympathy for the "wretched millions" (NGS 184). Despairingly, he estimates the numbers of "hopeful" writers like himself who fall into the "abyss" (NGS 164): "Penury and despair and a miserable death" (NGS 164).¹⁹⁵ London's "Men of Letters," in *New Grub Street*, are the antithesis of Carlyle's vision; they are voiceless and obsolete. The "habitual gloom" (NGS 86) of Alfred Yule (a model of literary failure) matches the atmospheric gloom of the main Grub Street haunt: the British Museum's Reading Room.

With its fog-laden atmosphere, the Reading room is the “true home” (NGS 50) of Reardon, Hinks, and other abandoned and condemned literati, but far from providing a sanctuary from the literary market, it is figured as the intellectual graveyard of the English nation: the “valley of the shadow of books” (NGS 18) (invoking the desert inimical to human life in *Jeremiah* 2:6 and stripping Psalm 23:4 of the comforting offer of godly guidance). Marian Yule, a daily resident of the library, recurrently meditates on the futility of a literary life. Her visions of literature “threatening to become a trackless desert of print” (NGS 89) are reminiscent of the chaos imagined in Pope’s *Dunciad*, in which literary hackwork is described as an apocalyptic threat. Another subtextual allusion to Augustan (and Juvenalian) representations of corrupt literary production occurs in Marian’s fantasy that Edison will create a “Literary Machine” (NGS 89), her speculation recalling the book-creating machine that Gulliver encounters in *Laputa*. This “true automaton” (NGS 89), she fantasizes, would rescue her from her own mechanistic non-life. The fog that encumbers the Reading-room forebodingly hinders Marian and Jasper’s initial courtship-walk (the “lurid fog” gets in their throats), and invades her night’s vigil upon the loss of her fortune, providing tangible evidence of Marian’s mental and material hell.

While Marian, Reardon, Biffen, Hinks, and Yule are associated with the hellish atmospheres of London and New Grub Street, “Jasper of the facile pen” (NGS 375) is linked with perverse energy and the “sunshine of progress” (NGS 185). Fittingly, the chapter confirming Jasper’s consummate success is titled “The Sunny Way,” whereas Reardon, with his habit of sitting in the dark, and Biffen, in his dim-lit lodgings, are

associated with the fading light of sunsets. Reardon dies remembering a sunset in Athens; Biffen extinguishes his own life while contemplating the sunset. Their deaths, juxtaposed ironically by Jasper's effulgent prosperity, illustrate what Jameson identifies to be a "narrative paradigm" of naturalism, in which the "dynamic of capitalism" is "registered as progress," while "the deepest social anxieties take the form of an omnipresent perception of entropy on all social levels" (NGS 266). In a society ruled by the "gladiatorial principle" (Huxley), entropic habits that dissipate rather than conserve life energy, are those of conscientious, sympathetic, artistic, and moral striving. To have a characteristic habit of "native delicacy" (NGS 409) or "bookish habits" (NGS 105) translates to extinction (Reardon and Biffen are without progeny, and the children of the kind Christophersons are all "happily buried" [NGS 85]). Edwin Reardon explains that empathetic pursuits are futile, and against all reason, for the cultivation of altruism requires "twice as much faith in it as is required for assent to the Athanasian Creeds" (NGS 282). *New Grub Street* pessimistically observes that in a materialistic society, altruism is equivalent to non-sobriety – and the perpetual seediness of alcoholism. As if to announce the text's mordant message, which is an absolute perversion of Carlyle's moral hopes for literature, John Yule (a successful businessman and hater of literature) advises that the populace "abstain" from reading and writing, just as alcoholics are banned from liquor (NGS 17). According to Frye, the most advanced stage of negative satire embodies a confirmed lack of hope; *New Grub Street*, in its categorical pessimism, describes an inescapable social environment stripped of sympathetic heroism and restorative, humane satire.

The variable, yet all-important role of habit in both specialized and popular Victorian discourses has a complex connection to sustained generic/modal resuscitations of satire – Menippean, Horatian, and Juvenalian – in *Cranford*, *Silas Marner*, *The Way of All Flesh*, and *New Grub Street*. The conventional binary of Horatian and Juvenalian themes and devices is sustained by the texts themselves and to some extent by the satiric theory of the authors. *Cranford* and *Silas Marner* accommodate Bakhtin's notion that remedial, laughter-infused deheroization is central to novelistic (or Menippean) discourse (*Rabelais* 35), and evince a Horatian view of habit; whereas, complementing Frye's observation that satire's function is to announce the disappearance of the heroic (*Anatomy* 228) with "more than comic seriousness" ("Nature" 85) and even grimness, *The Way of All Flesh* and *New Grub Street* cultivate Juvenalian pessimism towards habit. As Bulwer-Lytton's satiric trajectory (from *Pelham* to *The Coming Race*) suggests, Carlylean reformist hopes in anti-materialistic habits of wonder, sympathy, and thought are eclipsed by cynical satires that announce a (near) irreversible decline of non-mechanical values. Although Gissing insists that Dickens's satire was fundamentally uplifting in contrast to his own non-jovial brand of realism, revealingly, Gissing declares that he was haunted throughout his writing career by the image of Amy Dorrit staring from her little window at the rooftops of London – a moment echoed in *New Grub Street* by Reardon's garret-view of the Crystal Palace.

Chapter 4

The Dearth of “every-day virtues”: Dickens’s Metaphorical Satire on Habit in *Hard Times*, *Bleak House*, and *Our Mutual Friend*

We cannot, however, assent so easily to his habit of interspersing controversial remarks, and direct passages of social criticism and remonstrance, through his fictions. ... Prison-discipline, the constitution of the ecclesiastical courts, the management of schools, capital punishments: Mr. Dickens’s opinions on these, and many other such topics of a practical kind, are to be found explicitly affirmed and argued in his novels. Nor is he content with expressing his views merely on practical points. Modes of thinking, doctrines, theological and speculative tendencies, likewise come in for a share of his critical notice. (David Masson, *North British Review*, 1851; Collins 258)

“Who is this man who is so much wiser than the rest of the world that he can pour contempt on all the institutions of his country?” (James Fitzjames Stephen, *Saturday Review*, January 1857; Collins 348)

In Chapter 3, I situated *Cranford*, *Silas Marner*, *The Way of All Flesh*, and *New Grub Street* within culturally embedded discourses of habit and argued that each text’s thematization of habit reveals a distinctive deployment of satiric traditions – Menippean, Horatian, and Juvenalian. Metaphors for the psychology of habit, from relatively benign bonnets and seeds to more ominous objects such as refuse and razors, were evaluated as key rhetorical indications of each satire’s optimism or pessimism regarding the plausibility of reformation. Habit is presented in each novel as an agent that determines individual and social conditions and tends either to be ameliorative or to be an anathema from which only the rarest of individuals escapes. This chapter focuses on Charles Dickens as a Victorian novelist whose analysis of habit is distinctively inveterate and metaphorically diverse – a novelist who, in fact, declares a writer’s addiction to observing habit.¹⁹⁶ The link between habit and perceptual distortions – and the resulting

multiplicity of psychic and social disorders – is Dickens’s overarching satiric interest, particularly during the phase of novel-writing typically referred to as his “darker” period.¹⁹⁷ Representatively, in *Hard Times*, the personified World is depicted as wearing a monocle and still “scarcely” being able to perceive its inhabitants accurately (*HT* 302). Dickens’s acrid satires of the 1850s and 60s reinforce John Locke’s suggestion that there may in fact be little difference between entities that operate through “bare mechanism” (147) and human beings, whose precious potential for complex ideas (by virtue of their faculty of perception) has been mechanized. Dickens’s Lockean pronouncement on the “association of ideas” confirmed by habit is that human beings generally do not alter perspectives with which they have become familiar. Just as Coketown admits the sun for a meagre half an hour each day, *Bleak House*, *Hard Times*, and *Our Mutual Friend* barely allow the possibility of individual, let alone societal, redemption through the counteractive habit of sympathy.

Given the plentitude of Dickens’s metaphorical, satiric rhetoric for repetitive mind-states and behaviour, this chapter could restrict its focus to just one pervasive and multivalent metaphor for habit. Sartorial details, for example, constantly convey the phenomenon of mental fixation – from Mr Vholes’s appropriately vampiric attire to every aspect of Bradley Headstone’s “decent” clothing.¹⁹⁸ In this chapter, however, in order to reinforce my argument that Dickens’s later novels are, on balance, Juvenalian (intensely rhetorical, hyperbolic, miscellaneous, allusive, and pessimistic), I will identify the foundational metaphors for habit in three of his most condemnatory texts.

Before commencing this analysis, however, it is instructive to situate the critical reception of Dickens's novels within the context of Victorian generic ambivalence to satire. As well, the persistent image of Dickens as a non-intellectual is relevant to the author's surprisingly precarious status as a satirist. Furthermore, it is necessary to discuss Dickens's apologetics (in his novels' prefaces) for satire, to address his Juvenalian deployment of visual detail and metaphor, and finally to illustrate his awareness and acceptance of the centrality of habit to the psychological and socio-economic discourses of his day.

4.i Dickens and Satire: Critical Predicaments

Dickens's critics tend to equivocate about his status as a satirist. This hesitation is typically founded upon a view of satire as being not only too harsh a tradition to describe the work of such a genial and comic novelist, but also as too intellectual and self-conscious a genre or mode to describe accurately Dickens's "instinctive" art. G. K. Chesterton, for example, was one of the first twentieth-century critics to promote the implicitly condescending myth of Dickens as a natural genius – a "lonely and unlettered man of genius" who hated Utilitarians "instinctively" (*Victorian* 23).¹⁹⁹ Humphry House's disparaging summation of Dickens's intellectual powers – "[he] did not understand enough of any philosophy even to be able to guy it successfully" (24) – has been widely reinforced by critics who emphasize Dickens's lack of formal education.

In 1863, Hippolyte Taine's influential complaint against affective excesses in Dickensian narration helped to set in motion an academic habit of de-intellectualizing,

feminizing, and infantilizing²⁰⁰ not only Dickens's writings, but also, following the tradition of conflating an author's personality with her or his writing, Dickens himself. Taine regrets that Dickens's satiric and sentimental excesses betray "the feverish sensibility of a woman who laughs loudly, or melts into tears at the sudden shock of the slightest occurrence" (349). (In Chapter 5, I shall discuss the gendered paradoxes of satire – a genre persistently tagged as feminine in its associations with immoderate emotion and artistic weaknesses and yet considered to be masculine in its associations with intellectual clarity.) "'Who, it may be asked, takes Mr. Dickens seriously?'" (Collins 345), quarreled James Fitzjames Stephen in his famously derisive article for the *Saturday Review* (January 1857), in which he pronounced Dickens to be as scatterbrained and unruly as a female gossip (Collins 347).²⁰¹ Thus, despite Dickens's many supporters among the literati (Francis Jeffrey, Thomas Hood, Sydney Smith, and Walter Savage Landor [56-57 Ford]), he was often regarded by the intellectual elect as an unmanageable interloper on the literary scene, who needed to be kept in his place – like the uneducated and children, like women, and like satire itself, given that for many Victorian writers and critics, "satire may be very well in its place" (Trollope, *Thackeray* 93).²⁰²

Although George Gissing reverently dubbed Dickens "England's satirist" (*CD* 128), many readers ignored the "astringent" social satire in the novels and Dickens's "reputation for cheerfulness persisted" (Ford 82, 86).²⁰³ Many reviewers, however, did note the ascendancy of caustic criticism in his novels of the 1850s and 60s, and many regretted the loss of Pickwickian "zestful humour" (Ford 4) – specifically, the "Pickwickian bonhomie of feasting, sporting, and courting" (Pykett 39).²⁰⁴ Richard

Simpson's oft-quoted chastisement of Dickens's new-found seriousness (*The Rambler*, October 1854) reveals anxiety about the presumed intellectual superiority of the novelist's self-appointed status as a social critic: "It is a thousand pities that Mr. Dickens does not confine himself to amusing his readers, instead of wandering out of his depth in trying to instruct them" (Collins 303). Also drawing upon a classist view of Dickens as an undereducated man elevated to prominence by an ignorant populace, Stephens (revealing his anxiety about satire) fearfully asked: "Who is this man who is so much wiser than the rest of the world that he can pour contempt on all the institutions of the country?" (Collins 348). Similarly, Edwin P. Whipple responded to the novels' increased theoretical and politicized social content by negating Dickens's intellectual grasp of "generalities" and "abstractions."²⁰⁵ In a similar vein, Justin McCarthy complained of Dickens's "want of analytical power" (Collins 448) and expressed a generically explicit fear that he was "perverting the novel from a work of art to a platform for discussion and argument" (Collins 447).²⁰⁶ In short, Taine speaks for many critics (past and present, from Henry James to Harold Bloom) when he identifies a problem of compatibility between satire and the novel: to "transform the novel" (a psychological form) into satire (a moral and didactic form characterized by anger) is to "deform it" (390). Thus, the status of Dickens's novels as satire is complexly and detrimentally affected not only by Dickens's own self-authorizing, pariah-like presence in the world of *belle lettres*, but also by the generic predicament of satire's customary relegation to the status of unruly, second-rate art.

It is, of course, absolutely commonplace to refer to Dickens's satire. From Trevor Blount's historicizing assessments of topical satire in *Bleak House* in the 1960s,²⁰⁷ through Michael Cotsell's elaboration, in the 1980s, of Dickens's specific targets in *Little Dorrit* and *Our Mutual Friend*,²⁰⁸ to current contextualizing articles by David M. Wilkes (Dickens's mockery of temperance societies), Holly Furneaux (the centrality of the New Poor Law satire to *Oliver Twist*),²⁰⁹ and Leslie Mitchell (Dickens's indictment of administrative ignorance, Red Tapism, and jobbery),²¹⁰ numerous essays uncover the rhetorical tactics and historical specificities of his expansive topical satire. Generally, though, such studies aim to contextualize the abuses that Dickens satirized, and do not tend to delve into the taxonomic problem of the novels' relation to satire.²¹¹ An exception is Alexander Welsh's historicizing examination of Dickens's criticism of London. Welsh describes Dickens's initial approach to the metropolis as satiric, but ultimately argues that satire (on account of the satirist's necessary detachment) became an inadequate literary vehicle for Dickens's mature understanding of the city. Michael Hollington, also interested in Dickens's representation of the city, finds that in the novels, "the romantic, the fantastic or the gothic comes into collision with the 'real' world of the city to produce the paradoxically mixed and contradictory art of the grotesque" (24). His theoretical study of Dickens's rhetorical use of the grotesque for satire utilizes Bakhtin's novel theory (and earlier theories of the grotesque), but does not specifically address traditions of satire.²¹² Intriguingly, the most thorough attempts – for example, by Sylvia Manning and Frank Palmeri – to situate Dickens's novels formally within a history of satire have shied away from pronouncing satirical traditions to be dominant in the works,

even when satire is held to be, as Manning states, the “main stem” of his novels of the 1850s.²¹³ One symptom of this trend is the characterization of Dickens’s satire as being fundamentally moral and ethical rather than political, pragmatic, or philosophical. In this light, his novels are often considered to be less taxonomically authentic “satire.” But, as Chapter 1 outlines, satire’s moral emphasis is one of its few formal markers. Moreover, satire’s political and pragmatic aims are usually allied with its moral claims. Recurrent and restricting qualifications of Dickens’s use of satire, I contend, stem not only from the generic chaos obfuscating satire’s links with the novel in general, but are also rooted substantially in the resilient tradition of de-intellectualizing Dickens, and the novels by extension.

Taxonomic assessments linking Dickens’s novels to satiric traditions must contend with the general debates that have informed critical discussions of his works, while keeping in mind the dominant theoretical postulation of an *exclusively* modal existence of satire after the 1830s. Satire’s perpetual underdog position, both classically and in the Victorian period (reflected in one of its key elements, the programmatic defense), illuminates the perplexing question of what happened to satire when the novel, overturning its own subordinate status, became the dominant literary form. In Chapter 1, I discussed ascendant critical trends that reinforce the generic exclusivity of the novel and satire. In brief, an oppositional positioning of satire and the novel, promoted by Tave, Martin, Paulson, Dyer, Palmeri, and others, is generally understood to be a clash between “amiable” and “sentimental” humour, and the crueler criticism of satire or wit. Reflecting and sustaining this binary, influential critics (from then-contemporary reviewers to

current studies) tend to isolate two central and ostensibly contending forces in Dickens's canon: genial comic sentimentalism and acerbic satire. The apprehension of a bifurcation in the novels between their comic, sentimental, or even "realistic" content, and their objectifying satire, has inspired decades of critical wrangling over the precise degree of satire in each novel.

Early in the Dickens critical tradition, Gissing forms a notion of the split identity of the novels. Puzzling over Dickens's nearly alchemical ability to combine appealing good-humoured and sympathetic "realism" with disturbing satiric realism, Gissing creates a theory of Dickensian satire based on the "two square inches" of sympathetic humour that he argues undercuts the novels' satiric pessimism (*CD* 201).²¹⁴ Dickens's novels, he concludes, are defined, above all else, by a "sympathetic vision" (*Immortal* 214). (He implies that Dickens would be incapable of the sustained acerbity of *New Grub Street*.) Gissing's critique offers an early example of what could be called a proportional approach that aims to measure the amount of comic and sentimental material in Dickens's novels, in opposition to the content deemed to be satire – often tagged "set-pieces." Many Dickens critics follow a similar model. F. R. Leavis, for example, opposes the texts' "satiric irony" against their other "modes" – "melodrama, pathos, and humour," that are all "thrown together" in a "large and genial Dickensian way" (228). H. P. Sucksmith contrasts the novels' satire with their "higher forms of comedy" (318); Robert Newsom describes a narrative alternation between "skepticism and sentiment" (67), and Welsh finds generic or modal divisions between the narrative moments involving the "affective" centres of the novels (usually female characters such as Amy Dorrit or Esther

Summerson) and the disaffected critical content found in the jaded omniscient narration (*Redressed* 19).²¹⁵ Kate Flint also subscribes to the idea of a Dickensian divide: in the novels, “[t]he satiric is juxtaposed with the coyly sentimental; the censorious with the frivolous” (*Dickens* 6). The works reflect a “duality” between belief in the human heart and change and despair (Flint, *Dickens* 42-3).²¹⁶ Atypically, Martin Price finds the comic and satiric “exuberance” in the novels “to be equal”: Dickens, he asserts, is at once the “strongest satirist in the language” and the most overtly compassionate (2). A. O. J. Cockshut, however, preserving the notion of Dickens’s genius as more comic than satiric, observes that Dickens’s “best humourous writing is only mildly satirical. When he became deeply satirical, his humour declined” (16).

Recently, Frank Palmeri describes the competing poles of non-satiric and satiric elements or features in Dickens’s narratives as the presence of comic reconciliation (and acquiescence to middle-ground positions) in opposition to the inhospitable extremes of unmediated satire. Maintaining his previous claim that Dickens’s novels of the 1850s and 1860s are not “primarily concerned with satiric critique of institutions or dominant ideologies,” however “dark” in “tone” (“Thackeray” 772), Palmeri concedes that in *Bleak House*, satire “comes close[r]” than in the other novels to “determining the genre” of the text (“Narrative Satire” 368).²¹⁷ Yet, there is simply not enough satire in the novels to define them as such: “Although narrative satire does not extend beyond passing and localized effects in most of Dickens’s novels, satiric social criticism of institutions does play an important role in the plot and the significance of several of them. Nevertheless, even in most of the novels where it is employed, the satire does not exert a constitutive

effect on the genre of the narrative” (Palmeri, “Narrative Satire” 367-68). Thus, in terms of the dominant trends in Dickens’s critical heritage, the genial, comic, and sentimental aspects of the texts are considered to outweigh (constitutively) their satiric elements.²¹⁸

Sylvia Manning’s full-length analysis of Dickens’s novels in relation to satire, *Dickens as Satirist* (1971) – the sole study of its kind – also promotes a ratio-based approach to the satiric and comic-novelistic elements of the texts. But for Manning, satire surpasses comic realism in the majority of the later novels.²¹⁹ It is important to note, however, that Manning accepts the dominant theory of satire in the 1970s, which defines satire as having an unequivocally modal existence after the eighteenth century. She is also indebted to Price’s observation of the affinity between Dickens’s satire and that of Hogarth and Swift.²²⁰ Offering a thorough exposition of Dickens’s knowledge of satire, Manning gleans evidence from his novels, shorter fictional pieces, journalistic articles, letters, and prefaces. With the aid of Harry Stone’s 1965 dissertation, “Dickens’s Reading,” Manning amasses a plethora of overt and subtextual allusions to satiric traditions. Among the highlights: Dickens’s 1841 Preface to *Oliver Twist*, in which he aligns his work with that of the English satiric, comic and novelistic tradition through “Fielding, Defoe, Goldsmith, Smollett, Richardson, Mackenzie” (“Preface” 53);²²¹ in terms of graphic satire, he identifies the influence of “Hogarth, the moralist and censor of his age” (35). For examples of classical influences, Manning showcases Stone’s finding that Dickens not only read Juvenal, but *habitually* read Juvenal (on his travels through Italy). In a June 1845 letter to John Forster, Dickens muses about why Juvenal “(who I have been always lugging out of a bag, on all occasions) never used the fire-flies for an

illustration” (*Letters* 4: 322-23).²²² Moreover, Manning buttresses Dickens’s link with Juvenalian satiric tradition (while simultaneously downplaying it as merely a “hint of felt relationship” [234]) with a weighty example from *Martin Chuzzlewit*, in which an American warns Martin: “I believe no satirist could breathe this air. If another Juvenal or Swift could rise up among us to-morrow he would be hunted down” (237).²²³ Furthermore, Manning affirms that Dickens’s reading of Horace, Swift, and Pope was extensive. Surprisingly, however, as if to undermine her own exhaustive evidence, she concludes that “Dickens did not see himself as the inheritor of their tradition” (7). This pronouncement is anchored both in a steadfast view of Dickens as an unconscious artist, and also in a theoretical understanding of satire as part of novelistic discourse *exclusively* as a “tone or attitude” – or in Dickens’s case, a “distinct satiric vision”:²²⁴

Classical satire is a highly literary genre whose practitioners are very conscious and proud of its long tradition. In this regard Dickens’s work is not satire. In the sense, however, of the term satire as a mode of vision, defined less formally by tone and attitude, the work does have fundamental affinities with what is accepted as traditional satire, exhibiting satiric traits that in the later novels become dominant. (Manning 7)²²⁵

Regardless of the limitations of Manning’s theoretical model, and the contradiction between her view of Dickens as a singularly unselfconscious satirist and the bounty of learned evidence, her study provides an important acknowledgment of the prevalence of satire in Dickens’s later novels.

To complement the contextualizing arguments of Chapter 1, I propose that it would be productive for Dickens studies, and for studies of satire generally, to break with the customary binary of satire and sentiment, or satire and novel – divisions encoded with ambivalence towards satire. A more comprehensive, dialogic view of the novel and satire, as forms syncretically engaged, would accord with Dickens’s own understanding of their coalescence. Dickens, as many of his novels’ prefaces reveal, did not perceive a rift between the satiric and the sympathetic, comic, or “realistic” aspects of his novels. Remarks in an 1843 letter to Douglas Jerrold, regarding his ridicule of the Young England movement in *Dombey and Son*, that “[t]here is nothing in it but wrath; but that’s wholesome – so I send it to you” (*Letters* 3: 481), intimate the view set forth in Dickens’s prefaces: the moral wrath of satire is not destructive. For Dickens, even Juvenalian satiric rage is not unwholesome, unsympathetic, or unsuited to the novel form. His prefatorial pieces offer a non-antagonistic theory of satire and the novel that defends his narrative methods and the moral necessity of satire.

4.ii Dickens’s Apology for “extreme exposition”

Lyn Pykett, in her superb analysis of the divisions propelling the Dickens critical industry, concludes that debates generally centre upon the formal enigma of his novels – what F. R. Leavis terms their “varied characteristic modes” (228). Incisively, Pykett identifies the key conundrum of the texts to be their “failure to conform to the aesthetics of realism” (*Dickens* 7) – particularly with respect to the delineation of human character. Pykett’s observation clarifies the relation of Dickens’s fiction to satire, for satire is

customarily one of the “otherized” genres or modes in Dickens’s writing that are “variously termed unreal” (romance, melodrama, sensation) (10).²²⁶ Furthermore, Ford, upon examining mid-Victorian reviews of Dickens’s novels, concludes that an increased awareness of the “aesthetics of fiction,” which “[b]ecause it was often associated with the development of realistic standards... generally tended to Dickens’s disadvantage” (128). Satire, known for its production of less “lifelike characters” (215 Taine), is reputed to exist at generic cross-purposes with the novel for the fundamental reason of its aims and methods of representing human character.²²⁷ In essence, Dickens’s literary misdemeanor amounted to a transgression of the aesthetics of realism promoted by Trollope, Eliot, Lewes, and others. Their notion of a writer’s moral duty to copy nature without exaggeration necessitated a rejection of Dickens’s flagrantly grotesque satiric methods.

Constant accusations of implausibility with regard to the characterization of both human beings and social institutions compelled Dickens to defend his representations of important social and moral truths (Ford 132). Dickens’s satirico-realist project is to expose social structures and discourses (political, legal, and educational) as agents that induct human character into dehumanizing habits of solipsism and materialism. Contentious prefaces, reminiscent of classical apologies for satire, argue for the validity of satire as a literary vehicle for delineating such a “stern truth” (*Oliver*, Preface to the Third Edition 35).²²⁸ Dickens’s *Oliver Twist*, like Henry Fielding’s *Tom Jones* (174), was attacked upon “moral grounds” because of its “low subjects” (criminals). In Dickens’s judgment, expressed in his Preface to the third edition of *Oliver Twist*, by presenting their “miserable reality” and “show[ing] [criminals] as they really are,” he (along with

Fielding) provides a “service to society” (35-36). Arguably, this preface is a landmark nineteenth-century proclamation of the moral “need” for the continuance of the eighteenth-century English comic-satiric novel and its tradition of presenting sterner and uglier truths than the “going point of view” will authorize. I will briefly address significant prefaces that argue for the legitimacy of satire’s place in the novel.

The several prefaces for *Martin Chuzzlewit* (1844) – the first of Dickens’s novels to receive severe censure for “violent exaggerations” (1850; Preface to the Cheap Edition 716) – stage a more detailed defense of Dickens’s novelistic satire. Dickens’s 1844 preface explains the irony of the satiric novel’s magnifying brand of realism: “the commoner the folly or the crime which an author endeavours to illustrate, the greater is the risk he runs of being charged with exaggeration; for, as no man ever yet recognized an imitation of himself, no man will admit the correctness of a sketch in which his own character is delineated, however faithfully” (xxiii). This reader-satirizing statement cannily echoes Jonathan Swift’s realization of satire’s (interpretive) precariousness in the preface to *The Battle of the Books* (1704): “Satire is a sort of glass, wherein beholders do generally discover everybody’s face but their own” (1). Dickens, however, one-upping Swift, doubts the reader will even discover “everybody’s face.” He charges his readers and critics with impercipient in yet another preface for *Martin Chuzzlewit* (Charles Dickens edition; 1867):

What is exaggeration to one class of minds and perceptions, is plain truth to another. That which is commonly called a long-sight, perceives in a prospect innumerable features and bearings non-existent to a short-sighted

person. I sometimes ask myself whether there may occasionally be a difference of this kind between some writers and some readers; whether it is *always* the writer who colours highly, or whether it is now and then the reader whose eye for colour is a little dull? (719)

In this remonstrative assertion of the underlying “plain truth” of his satiric realism, Dickens accuses readers of having “dull” perceptions.²²⁹ The preface justifies Dickens’s intention to expose a cultural phenomenon of myopic moral vision and the foreshortening of the human personality (not to mention bad literary criticism) that accompanies it.²³⁰

Furthermore, in the 1850 preface to *Martin Chuzzlewit* Dickens reveals that his satiric method and satiric subject are conjoined. “Selfishness” (718), the universal cause of impercipient, is his central target. He reiterates that it is impossible for the real-world “Pecksniffs” to recognize themselves in fiction as realistically portrayed human beings – although supposedly, Pecksniff admires “a habit of self-examination, and the practice of – shall I say of virtue?” (MC 415). As well, Dickens grounds his claim that Jonas Chuzzlewit is a plausible being in a theory of habit. Having been taught vice “in the cradle” (MC 716), Jonas’s “early education” secures his inveterate viciousness. Dickens stresses that the social ramifications of an individual’s early induction into unsympathetic, solipsistic habits cannot be underestimated as a social catastrophe: “there is nothing more common in real life than want of profitable reflection on the causes of many vices and crimes that awaken the general horror. What is substantially true of families in this respect is true of a whole commonwealth. As we sow, we reap” (MC 717) (This parabolic view of habit resonates throughout the later novels.) The preface not only

suggests that acquired bad habit is a cause of moral distortion, but it also contains a theory of satiric representation (of both characters and institutions) in opposition to dominant notions of the desirability of strict verisimilitude in prose fiction. Dickens declares his narrative method to be the “extreme exposition of a plain truth” (Preface, *MC* 717). Satire, this implies, in its severity does not *fundamentally* distort or deform its target (for example, “American character”), but offers an “extreme exposition” of the worst or “most ludicrous” “side” or “truth” of a character, institution or society.²³¹ For the sake of clarity, this intensified mode of representation magnifies psychological and social realities that are radically out of focus to the general perception. In an 1867 Postscript to *Martin Chuzzlewit*, Dickens declares that it is his authorial “duty” to present “profitable reflection” on the institutions of any society (English, American, French or otherwise). Similarly, many of his paratextual pieces argue for the moral need for the novel to expose vice stringently for social betterment; they justify the emboldening methods of satire that jar and disrupt habitual perceptions, and declare them to be consonant with the novel form and the avowed imperative of its practitioners to represent “things as they are.”

As with Horace and Juvenal’s apologetics, Dickens’s prefaces themselves are satiric. The oft-quoted 1853 preface to *Bleak House*, for example, opens with the dramatic address of a Chancery Judge (a personal satire on Vice Chancellor Sir William Page Wood) to a large audience on the subject of Chancery and the “trivial blemish or so” (a tactical litotes) “in its rate of progress,” that was “exaggerated” by a certain author at whom he glares (the homodiegetic Dickens) (5). With the aid of a quotation from Shakespeare’s “Sonnet 111,” the authorial Dickens accuses the ostensibly fictional judge

of habitually deformed perceptions: “My nature is subdued / To what it works in, like the dyer’s hand: / Pity me then, and wish I were renew’d!” (qtd. in Preface *BH* 5). Although the judge is mentally “subdued” by the perversions of his profession, the public “should know” that “everything set forth in these pages concerning the Court of Chancery is substantially true, and within the truth” and in “no essential altered” (5). Threatening a Juvenalian superfluity of incriminating evidence, Dickens offers to “rain on these pages” further “authorities” for Jarndyce and Jarndyce (6). Next follows his novelist’s pledge “not [to] abandon fact,” despite having “purposefully dwelt upon the romantic side of familiar things” (6). Dickens once again defends his position as a satirical novelist who has a generic license for the emphatic elaboration of “essential,” “substantial,” and “familiar” but unacknowledged and out-of-focus truths.

Dickens’s rebuttals to his critics insist that the “extreme exposition” of satire comes closest to achieving the “the faculty (or the habit)” of “correctly observing the characters of men” (*Dombey*, 1867 Preface 43) and institutions. They announce a formal and thematic coherence: a defamiliarizing or “extreme” delineation of things “as they really are” (*Oliver* Preface 34) is required to capture the attention of impercipient readers.

4.iii Dickens as a Metaphorical Satirist

Sergei Eisenstein famously assesses “the keenness of perception” (210) that characterizes Dickens’s omniscient narrators as the literary equivalent of a camera lens. As well, J. Hillis Miller influentially stresses Dickens’s visual emphasis when suggesting that *Bleak House*’s impersonal narrator is a kind of impressionist painter (177). *Bleak*

House's opening description of Thebes-like London plagued by retrogradation spans the entire city, yet also describes such minutiae as fog invading the "stem and bowl of the afternoon pipe of the wrathful skipper" (*BH* 11). A comprehensive albeit shifting view, Alvin Kernan argues, is a "primary quality of formal satire," in which a key rhetorical strategy is to present the whole through a great number of its parts (73). As Thomas Lockwood notes, satirists represent their subject "kaleidoscopically, setting it forth in all its special habits and forms" (13). Dickens's delineations of crowded London, with its "quickly changing and ever-varying" "procession" of life roaring through the city streets "mingled up together in one moving mass like water" (*Nicholas Nickleby* 488), are similar to Juvenal's vivid descriptions of Rome's tumultuous, "narrow twisting streets" (3.235). To demonstrate the pervasiveness of corruption, Juvenal and Dickens's satiric personae offer endless and farraginous evidence of greed and selfishness.

It has often been noted that (as with Dickens) Juvenal's representations "foretell the techniques of cinematic montage" (Green 44). Both satirists anatomize their urban environments and seize upon manifold evidence of contradiction, injustice, corruption, and suffering. Also akin to Juvenal's often indignantly aloof satiric persona, Dickens's over-seeing narrators are at once detached recorders of a community's daily rituals and enraged declaimers of vice; they enact what Paulson identifies as Juvenal's "presentational and objective" (*Fictions* 29) mode, in contrast to Horace's "subjective," personalized mode. Furthermore, Green observes that Juvenal's authoritative voice imitates the scope and point of view of epic: "the world at large his subject-matter" (23), and Dickens is similarly ambitious: "From *Oliver Twist* to *Edwin Drood*, this satirist

spreads his attacks over more ground... than anyone else” (Russell 270). Bagehot backhandedly praised Dickens’s ambitious (though immoderate) attempts to delineate the frenzied entirety of British national life (Collins 391). The Juvenalian narrators of Dickens’s late novels, with their posture of visual and moral objectivity, and resulting over-abundance of examples of injustice, access a narrative field of vision that contrasts radically with the fallible perceptions of the novel’s characters. Thus, from their epic-like vantage-point they provide, akin to Juvenal’s lofty persona, the ideal vehicles to expose cultural impercipient. ²³²

Arthur Pollard categorizes Dickens’s brand of satire as symbolic and pictorial (51). As many critics observe, Dickens’s characteristic visual emphasis supports his relentlessly emblematic methods. William Hogarth – the pictorial satirist who most influenced Dickens – uses emblems as his main “weapons of graphic allegory” to demonstrate that “human beings have permitted themselves to become stereotypes” (Paulson, “Pictorial” 294, 296). ²³³ Michael Steig usefully assesses the Hogarthian-emblematic influence in *Bleak House*, noting that the novel’s frontispiece displays a symbolically apt game of blind man’s buff across the top of the illustration (165). ²³⁴ Dickens’s use of pictorial symbolism complements the general analogical satiric method of his written texts. In the novels, scenic descriptions abound – in Walter Bagehot’s phrase, “telling minutiae” (Collins 393) provide a surplus of material for expansive metaphorical analogy. Steven Marcus observes that Dickens’s “satiric mode” dramatizes and symbolizes “abstract ideas” and themes “through locally related images” and through the analogical “modulation of one theme and image into another (63, 295). Moreover,

Marcus characterizes Dickens's prose as being "poetic" in its use of repetition and "emphasis on objects and images" (297).

H. M. Daleski, following Marcus, finds that the full development of Dickens's narrative machinery is observable in the complex "analogical strategy of the late novels" (167). Analogy, he explains, is implicit metaphor, thus "images and symbols are used analogically as... unifying devices" to emphasize the constant relation of "individual and social spheres" (48). Numerous critics refer to the dense matrices of metaphor that characterize Dickens's later satires. Ford, for example, summarizes Dickens's critical method as an oscillation between "crude, direct sermon" and the "masterful channeling of comparable indignation into symbolical devices" (82). His examples include *Bleak House's* fog, *Our Mutual Friend's* dustheap, and such "symbolical characterizations" as the Murdstones and the Gradgrinds (82). The structural importance of the hyper-generation of metaphor to Dickensian narrative is reminiscent of Juvenal's satire. Juvenal, as Green postulates, structures his satire "through images rather than by logic" and through the "vivid and often haphazard accumulation of examples" (43-44). Again, the catalogue of "quickly changing and ever-varying" objects that "flit by in motley dance" (488-9) of life and death in the marketplace depicted in *Nicholas Nickleby* comes to mind as one of many examples of the cataloguing habits of Dickensian narrators. Ford discovers a thematically apt justification for Dickens's rhetorical reliance on dehumanizing and objectifying metaphors for human life in a letter that Dickens wrote to Forster describing the core theme of *Our Mutual Friend*. Dickens condemns the English paintings on exhibit in Paris in 1855: "There is a horrid respectability about most of the

best of them – a little, finite, systematic routine in them, strangely expressive to me of the state of England itself” (*Letters* 7: 743). The “horrid” circumscription of human multifariousness into the “finite, systematic routine” that Dickens scorns is tantamount to habit.²³⁵

Importantly, Northrop Frye, in “Dickens and the Comedy of Humors,” analyses habit both as a Dickensian thematic and a mode of characterization with generic implications. He explores the novels in terms of their re-deployment of classical New Comedy.²³⁶ Dickens’s characters, he posits, “are humors, like the characters in Ben Jonson”; “humors” that support a New Comedy plot and are wholly “identified with a characteristic, like the miser, the hypochondriac, the braggart, the parasite, or the pedant.” Such a character “bound to an invariable ritual habit” is “obsessed by whatever it is that makes him a humor” (Frye, “Dickens” 56). As well, applying Henri Bergson’s idea that an “obsessed person” inspires laughter, Frye adds that in Dickensian narrative there is a tacit recognition that we are all “creatures of ritual habit” (“Dickens” 59).²³⁷ Without Vrettos’s historicizing context, Frye pinpoints habit to be Dickens’s central subject, suggestive of generic implications.²³⁸ His observation that “[s]tock-response humors” such as Podsnap or Gradgrind “represent the fact that an entire society can become mechanized like a humor” (“Dickens” 77) explains why what Van Ghent terms being “thinged”²³⁹ is a universal social-psychological reality in Dickens’s texts – a reality depicted through extensive objectifying tropes.²⁴⁰

It is pertinent to note that David Masson, in his contrast of Dickens’s “luxuriant” prose style to Thackeray’s “Horatian strictness” (*British Novelists* 246), implicitly links

Dickensian copiousness to Juvenalian rhetorical plentitude. Masson finds that Thackeray's association with the "Real school" affirms his "sure habit" of correctness, "self-possession," and "habitual" "knowingness," in contrast to Dickens's more "original" and "poetic mind of looser and richer, and freer texture" (*British Novelists* 253, 246). Significantly, Masson's assessment of Dickens's artistic mind and method corresponds intriguingly with nineteenth-century habit theory. Metaphor, a product of "association by similarity," is a rhetorical figure that embodies anti-habitual thought. Appropriately, the association of ideas by similarity, Bain argues, is particularly ascendant in artists; Shakespeare, he insists, had the "greatest intellectual reach of similarity that the mind of man ever attained to" (*S&I* 534). For Bain, and later for William James, mental forces such as "association by similarity," as opposed to mechanical association by contiguity, contravene fixity in the human mental constitution. Thus, metaphor, in literary terms, is the equivalent of the mental process of "association by similarity." Conceived of as an enactment of unhabituated thought, it is the ideal formal device for satires on habit.

4.iv Dickens and Theories of Habit: Mental Science and Utilitarianism

Vrettos's watershed essay on *Dombey and Son* argues for a conception of habit as "operative in the culture as whole" (404).²⁴¹ Interested in situating Dickens's texts within a generic and historical context of the development of psychological realism, Vrettos outlines a general cultural discussion of habit that Dickens absorbed and to which he contributed. Her work is part of a large array of recent historical and context-focused

studies – by scholars such as Gillian Beer, George Levine, Jenny Bourne Taylor, Sally Shuttleworth, and Bernard Lightman – who find that Victorian discursive practices encouraged the cross-fertilization or “two-way traffic” (Lightman, “Introduction” 9) of science and literature. Self-consciously, Dickens contributed to the myriad forms of Victorian discourses linking individual, social, and medical pathologies.

G. H. Lewes, keenly aware of Dickens’s lack of formal education, appraised the popular novelist’s library and pronounced his knowledge to be “‘completely outside philosophy, science and the higher literature’” (qtd. in Sanders, *Dickens* 81).²⁴² Recent assessments contradict this famous conclusion. The supposition of Dickens’s lack of erudition in literature and science has been strongly contested, not only by the well-known fact that Dickens read voraciously in the British Reading room from the age of eighteen, when he acquired his reading ticket, but by scholars who have produced evidence of his wide-ranging reading habits. Susan Shatto notes that Dickens “read widely in the literature of psychopathology” (“Havisham II” 81); his library at Gads Hill had numerous volumes on the subject (Oberhelman 10). Joanne Eysell’s *A Medical Companion to Dickens’s Fiction* (2005) lists numerous medical and “medicine-related” books from both the Devonshire Terrace house and Gads Hill (241-244).²⁴³ Furthermore, Michael Kearns situates Dickens in the trans-generic exploration of physiological psychology; and David Oberhelman elucidates his active support for John Conolly’s theories of moral management (instead of the use of restraints) in asylums (11). Dickens’s enthusiasm for asylum reform is reflected in multiple articles on subjects of psychological interest in *Household Words*.²⁴⁴ “A Curious Dance Round a Curious Tree”

(*Household Words*, January 1852), which records an admiring visit to St Luke's, was reprinted as an advertisement for the institution in 1860 at the asylum's request (Shatto, "Havisham" 44). In *Dickens and Mesmerism*, Fred Kaplan explores the connections between Dickens's fiction and the mesmerism of John Elliotson. Having cultivated a friendship with the Professor of Medicine, Dickens attended mesmeric experiments and even became a mesmeric operator himself (acquiring Madame de la Rue as a patient) (Kaplan 52). Dickens's interests in the curative potential of the self-developed will were fuelled by a key notion of the physicians he admired: there is no firm division between the sane and the insane. With his informed interest in mesmerism, phrenology, and associationist theory, Dickens was definitively engaged in shrewd analyses of psychological debates. Thus, his assessment of human psychology is inadequately described by the word *instinctive*.

Dickens was incisive in his understanding of the interrelations between theories of human mind and ascendant political and economic theories. As discussed in Chapter 2, notions of habit as a force influencing (even determining) morality and rationality derive from associationist philosophers John Locke and David Hume, and become, John Passmore argues, central to Enlightenment notions of perfectibility (162-3). "Locke-based perfectibilism" (Passmore 166) supported the limitless possibilities of education, reinforcing that, to use William James's optimistic phrase, "human beings are "*par excellence*, the *educable* animal" (*Principles* 990) Practical progress of both the individual and the state was regarded as the inevitable result of a will disciplined by habit. The centrality of habit to theories of education was touched upon in Chapter 1, but

here I would like to emphasize that Utilitarian theories of education (articulated by Jeremy Bentham, Joseph Priestly, James Mill) capitalized on the idea of controlling habitual mental associations in the individual for universal mental and moral advancement (Olson 169-73). Dickens understood this pedagogical project to be harmful indoctrination. Revealing Dickens's thorough knowledge of Utilitarian writings, Newsom discusses an allusion, in the preface to *Oliver Twist*, to Thomas Malthus's *Population: The First Essay* (1798), a classic text that influenced the New Poor Law of 1834. Although Malthus admits that his ideas have a "melancholy hue," he insists that this is not the result of "jaundiced eye or an inherent spleen of disposition" (qtd. in Newsom 76). Echoing this ironically, Dickens asserts that the "real hues are delicate, and need a clearer vision" (*Oliver Preface* 34). In summary, although Whipple's 1849 conclusion (in the *North American Review*) that Dickens's "fellow-feeling with his race is his genius" (Collins 238) appears to be the satire-diluting general consensus regarding Dickens's novels, his satires consistently yoke individual mental imbalances and moral failings to institutional malpractice and political and philosophical "modes of thinking."

4.v "They took De Foe to their bosoms, instead of Euclid": *Hard Times*'s Satire on Utilitarian Habits

Just as *Silas Marner* is George Eliot's most distilled examination of habit, *Hard Times* is Dickens's most concentrated anatomy of destructive habit. Although it was published one year after *Bleak House*, I shall discuss *Hard Times* first, as not only is it an overtly philosophical and Menippean satire on materialist habits, but because it is also a

revealing *locus* of Victorian (and beyond) distrust of satire. Finding the novel singularly illustrative of the fact that “[a]t bottom, Dickens is gloomy, like Hogarth,” Taine pronounces it an “abstract of the other novels” (446, 455). For Taine, this text convicts Dickens of committing the key aesthetic error of a satirist: being more of a moral judge than an artist. Opposing Taine’s condemnatory view, F. R. Leavis elevates *Hard Times* above Dickens’s other novels, based on its “comprehensive” and “critical vision,” something which is merely “casual and incidental” (229) in the other novels. Put differently, he praises its sustained satire.²⁴⁵ Significantly, both of these landmark criticisms are rooted in an assessment of Dickens’s satiric method. With its notoriously compressed scope and emphatically satirical characterizations, metaphors, and dramatic incidents, *Hard Times* is decidedly unmediated by Gissing’s “two square inches” of Dickensian humour.

Victorian critics reacted to the unrelenting gloom of *Hard Times* with an array of politicized aesthetic complaints. Dickens’s representation of industrial life and political economy was attacked for being untruthful by critics such as Richard Simpson, who charges Dickens with an inability “to pierce the depths of social life, to fathom the wells of social action” (Collins 319).²⁴⁶ Moreover, *Hard Times* inspired Whipple’s harshest assessment of Dickens’s intellectual limitations. Whipple, who, as I have outlined, questions the validity of satire in general, accuses Dickens (in company with Arnold, Carlyle, and Ruskin) of being an embarrassingly “unscientific” writer, blind to the “beneficent” and “scientific” truths and laws of political economy (Collins 331).²⁴⁷ In addition, an important review by Jane Sinnett in the October 1854 *Westminster* claims

that Dickens's satire on education is entirely fallacious.²⁴⁸ Tellingly, Sinnett denounces the novel's "cold and uncongenial atmosphere" and the "disfigurement" of its characters (Collins 306). Her resistance to *Hard Times*'s satiric method is evident in her denunciation of Gradgrind as the most implausible of Dickens's "puppets." An intellectual, "cultivated" man, she argues, requires complex representation: "Beneath the apparent uniformity lurk thousand-fold shades of difference, indicative of the mind within" (Collins 307).²⁴⁹ In essence, Sinnett attempts to undermine Dickens's criticism of Utilitarianism by attacking his satiric mode – his aesthetics of "extreme exposition." Assessments of *Hard Times* continue to bear the critical imprint of Dickens's reputation as a non-intellectual, and of general anxieties regarding the unsettling and uncongenial polemics of satire.²⁵⁰

4.vi *Hard Times*'s Anatomy of Utilitarianism

Although it is not episodic after the manner of classical Menippean satire, *Hard Times* is structured upon the genre-constitutive component emphasized by both Frye and Bakhtin: the "adventure of an idea or truth in the world" (*Dostoevsky* 115) – in this case, the misadventures of Utilitarianism (Coketown provides the requisite journey to Hell). Understood to be Dickens's most "philosophically ambitious" novel (Goldberg 79), *Hard Times* attacks reformist schemes for the cultivation of exclusively rational habits of thought in the working population. As Vrettos convincingly argues, an acknowledgement of habit, or the power of reiterated mental associations to determine thought and behaviour, is fundamental to Dickens's view of human character. In *Hard Times*,

Benthamite James Mill's most important doctrine is condemned by Dickens as being the most dangerous: the utopic possibilities of education based "formation of all human character by circumstances, through the universal Principle of Association" (J.S. Mill, *A* 1: 111). In essence, *Hard Times* indicts indoctrination and the Utilitarian abuse of association psychology.²⁵¹ In Tom and Louisa Gradgrind's cave-like bedroom, the narrator outlines a "shadow" (allusively linking Utilitarian precepts to the false reality described by Plato's "cave" allegory) that descends upon the children's lives "in the form of a lowering association" (*HT* 68): the mental disfigurement of a rationalist education. Tom's moral debauchery and Louisa's living death illustrate that the "graft of circumstances upon nature" (*HT* 280) destroys human character when Utilitarian habits provide the "graft." The text offers at once a quintessential Menippean satire on the absurdity, vanity, and folly of systematization, and a Juvenalian indictment of a catastrophic social and moral error.

Hard Times exposes and condemns the interrelationship between associationist Utilitarian pedagogy and mid-Victorian economic and industrial practices. Paul A. Olson succinctly explains the link that Dickens apprehended: "Bentham's pedagogical principles derive from the school application of an Associationist psychology, reformulated by James Mill and perfectly suited to the construction of a regime of surveillance, temporal control, rote drill, and examination. This psychology empowered the dream that education could reinvent human nature for the machines of industry, science, and competitive work" (169). *Hard Times* is a satiric anatomy of this dream. The text's exposure of the dehumanizing material and commercial values installed by

Benthamite education begins with a dramatic teaching performance by Utilitarian systematizers Thomas Gradgrind, Mr M'Choakumchild,²⁵² and Josiah Bounderby. To these men, the children are “little vessels” to be “arranged in order” and “filled with facts” (*HT* 2). Book One’s title, “Sowing” (an allusion to the Biblical parable, and another allusion to the “seed” motif), is itself an irony-laden condemnation of the unnatural, unfruitful habituation of human beings into money-making machines.²⁵³ Often found in *Hard Times*’s chapter titles, biblical allusions provide the overarching intertextual condemnation of the Utilitarian assault on “immaterial” values.²⁵⁴ A plethora of fairy-tale allusions provide the next level of attack. The multi-discursive echoes – religious, folkloric, philosophical, and economic – of *Hard Times* are one of its Juvenalian features, for the ancient satirist’s “stuffed-to-the-gills” style is distinguished by “massive intertextuality” (Hooley, *Roman Satire* 115). Chapter Two, entitled “Murdering the Innocents” (a bloody allusion to the slaughter of the first-born children of Israel by Herod [Matthew 2:16-18]), depicts object lessons in the unpardonable sin of the cult of Fact. “Girl number twenty” (*HT* 5), Cecilia Jupe, having grown up around horses, is confounded by the fact that their existence is officially summarized by the phrase *Graminivorous quadruped*.²⁵⁵ Appropriating (and mocking) the delusively objectifying language of Utilitarians, the narrator extends his attack to political economists (referred to as numbered bodies): “Body number three, wrote leaden little books for them, showing how the good grown-up baby invariably got to the Savings-bank, and the bad grown-up baby invariably got transported.”²⁵⁶ This parody of Utilitarian reformers (such as Harriet Martineau) and their “leaden” replacements for fancy- and empathy-enriching fairy tales

also charges political economy with promulgating the fiction that “good conduct” is rewarded monetarily. Habit was the “how to” of such myths of market capitalism.²⁵⁷ Rather than being “a little simplistic” (Humphreys 191) in his criticism of Utilitarians, Dickens interrogates the ethic that necessarily (if not consciously) informs and undermines their theories and good intentions: “the Good Samaritan was a bad economist” (*HT* 398, 286). To demonstrate this un-Christian and unacknowledged truth of political economy, Stephen Blackpool’s seemingly model conduct leads to poverty, ostracism, and death. In Dickens’s moral philosophy, virtue – associated with mysterious, immaterial human qualities (empathy, imagination, and love) – cannot be cultivated by inducting the population into a material estimation of life.²⁵⁸

The narrator dialogically enacts the Benthamite’s systematic scorn for wonder, referring to “the spring of the mechanical art and mystery of educating the reason without stooping to the cultivation of the sentiments and affections. Never wonder” (*HT* 64). The paradoxical absurdity of the phrase “mechanical art and mystery” alludes to Professor Teufelsdröckh’s argument, in Carlyle’s *Sartor Resartus* (1833), that “Wonder” – an ineffable sense that activates imagination and creates receptivity to “Mysticism and Mystery” – opposes the mechanizing forces which seek to destroy it (*SR* 52). Significantly, the Gradgrind children’s first mental “association” is the “black Ogre of a chalkboard,” and “[n]o little Gradgrind had ever *associated* a cow in the field with that famous cow with the crumpled horn... or with that more famous cow who swallowed Tom Thumb” (*HT* 12; my italics). Deprived of fanciful stories their “minds,” modeled upon the Utilitarian educational ideal, were “practically formed by rule and line, from the

cradle upwards” (*HT* 25). Not surprisingly, Louisa is banned from associating with Sissy Jupe. *Hard Times*’s circulating lexicon of habit (*cultivate, associate, form, accustom, and train*) creates a multitude of ominous narrative connections. As well, Louisa Gradgrind’s graduated “descent” down Mrs Sparsit’s imaginary “spiral staircase” into adultery provides a metaphor that enriches physiological psychology’s horizontal images of tracks and pathways by suggesting the gravitational pull of habitual associations. Louisa confesses that it was by insensible “degrees” (*HT* 290) that she descended. Analogously, the British social system, seduced by “hard philosophy,” is envisioned as being close to a “pit of ruin” (*HT* 273). Dickens’s satire on Utilitarian perversions of the associationist philosophy of habit warns against the replacement of habitual, sympathetic, imaginative thought by self-interested and material fixations (to be made, as M’Choakumchild hopes, as automatic as walking). Because of the potency of habit, the narrator prophesizes the permanent loss of humane qualities and practices. Encrypted on the human mind, constricting habit is the “Writing on the Wall.”

In keeping with Whipple’s reluctant praise for Dickens’s “wonderful power of individualizing abuses in persons” (Collins 316), *Hard Times*’s Utilitarian characters are self-incriminating Menippean mouthpieces who reveal reductive views of psychology, politics, morality, education, and economics.²⁵⁹ In particular, Thomas Gradgrind is a multi-faceted symbol of Unitarian philosophy and practice. In what Newsom identifies as the “central intellectual debate of the age,” the “contest between the mechanicals and the spirituals” (61), the mechanical contingent (Gradgrind, M’Chokumchild, Bounderby, Tom, and Bitzer) is the dominant power. Michael Goldberg observes that “Signs of the

Times” (1829), the tract in which Carlyle defines the contemporary “Mechanical Age,” is “an ideological prospectus to the novel” (79).²⁶⁰ More specifically, in *Hard Times*, the machine is the keynote emblem for the Utilitarian abuse of the power of habit. Human beings, like all aspects of Coketown – except Steven, Rachel, Sissy, and her Circus family, who are associated with fugitive nature and “immaterial” values – are mechanized. Coketown’s citizens, like its Utilitarians, are connected with manifold linear, inflexible objects that suggest mechanization. The text’s Juvenalian surfeit of incriminating detail – its repetition and associative expansion of anatomizing figures – is its central method of critiquing dehumanizing habit.²⁶¹ *Hard Times*’s profound reliance upon repetition and mechanistic metaphor, some critics find, undercuts its own anti-mechanical moral; it “defeats itself” (Welsh 155). But, rather than narrative hypocrisy, repetition, viewed as a textual enactment of the force of habit, is a rhetorical strategy to counteract Utilitarian induction. Through the re-habituating of the reader to anti-mechanical thought, *Hard Times* aims to enlist the laws of association on the side of life, literature, and satire itself.

Thomas Gradgrind, like the text’s proliferating machine emblem, has a manifold existence: he is an intellectual, an education reformer, a statistician, a former man of commerce, and an M.P. As such, he is a composite symbol, or rather, a complex Menippean and Juvenalian exemplum of the philosophical, educational political thought behind Utilitarianism.²⁶² Gradgrind and Josiah Bounderby – a man-machine who allegorizes the lies of the *laissez-faire* system – are symbolically appropriate associates.²⁶³ Through his “square wall of a forehead,” “square forefinger,” and “square

coat, square legs, square shoulders” (*HT* 2, 4, 1), Gradgrind corporealizes what Carlyle terms the “vast blockheadism” of the “mechanists.”²⁶⁴ Every physical aspect of Gradgrind functions as a perfectly anatomizing signifier of his devitalized existence, for, as Steven Connor phrases it, he is steeped in “an excess of metaphor” (115). His symmetrical physicality, the narrator insists, gives “emphasis” to his unbending philosophy. Ironically appropriating Gradgrind’s rote method of teaching his students, the narrator (employing satiric anaphora) begins four sentences with the word “emphasis.” As well, the narrator parodies Gradgrind’s “dry and dictatorial” (*HT* 1) language: “With a rule and a pair of scales, and the multiplication table always in his pocket, sir, ready to weigh and measure any parcel of human nature and tell you exactly what it comes to” (*HT* 3). Being a “man of Realities,” Gradgrind is associated with various codifying tools, graphs, “Blue books,” and “tabular statements” (*HT* 3, 65). Appropriately, as he aims to control, quantify, and therefore dominate the external world, he is likened to a military weapon: a “cannon loaded to the muzzle with facts” (poised to “blow [his students] clean out of the regions of childhood” [*HT* 3]). Obliviousness to his systematic inhumanity allows Gradgrind to function as an unwitting murderer, not only of his students, but also his wife (who is “crushed” by his “ological studies” [*HT* 136]), his children (Tom’s disgrace, illness, and death, and Louisa’s “conscious death” [287]), and (through his status as a “deaf, honourable” M.P.) the population at large. His “inflexible theory” is articulated in a series of Menippean conversations – the most critical of which is his interview with Louisa, in which he discounts love as a “misplaced” expression in the scientific question of matrimony (*HT* 130).²⁶⁵ Ironically, Gradgrind “meant well”: “In

gauging fathomless deeps with his little mean excise-rod, and in staggering over the universe with his rusty stiff-legged compasses, he had meant to do great things. Within the limits of his short tether he had tumbled about, annihilating the flowers of existence with... singleness of purpose” (*HT* 295). Gradgrind’s “tethered,” one-track mind is a multivalent emblem of the misguided mental, ethical, and practical habits of Utilitarian reformers of all kinds.

The annihilating amalgamation of Utilitarian theories and practices symbolized by Gradgrind are figured textually not only by the matrix of empirical devices associated with Gradgrindery, but also by the industrial wasteland that is Coketown. Like *The Coming Race*, *Hard Times* is a dystopic text; but unlike Bulwer-Lytton’s *Vril-yan Hell*, there is, as yet, “No Way Out” (as a chapter describing Coketown proclaims) of the “muddle.”²⁶⁶ The “Keynote” chapter represents Coketown as both a “triumph of fact” and “a town of machinery”: “Fact, fact, fact, everywhere in the material aspect of the town; fact, fact, fact, everywhere in the immaterial” (*HT* 28-29). This forceful claim justifies the narrative’s recurring “de-anthropomorphizing comparisons” (Lane 80)²⁶⁷ between the Coketown inhabitants (aptly signified by the class-inflected, dehumanizing synecdoche, “the Hands”) and the machines.

The machine operating Coketown’s mill is presented in the form of a simile that, in its non-rejuvenating (and therefore non-Bakhtinian) grotesque hybridity, suggests the populace’s mental enslavement to habit, and counterpoints the jubilant life and habits of Sleary’s Circus: the “piston of the steam-engine worked monotonously up and down like the head of an elephant in a state of melancholy madness” (*HT* 28). The mad machine

symbolizes both the insanity of viewing the human mind as a machine and the distortion of the human mind by an excess of automatic and singular thought. The melancholy machine also suggests that human and machine life are indistinguishable under Utilitarian rule. Like the steam-powered piston, the people work “long and monotonously” (*HT* 32) and are also possessed by sullen discontent that is, as Tamara Ketabgian argues, potentially violent and rooted in automatic action.²⁶⁸ Moreover, the narrator employs zeugma (a favourite Popean device) to equate further machine and human existence: “The looms, and wheels, and Hands all out of gear for an hour” (*HT* 92). Finally, the physical aspects of the town provide apt metaphors for the effect of industrial-capitalist practices: the narrow, labyrinthine streets; the trains running along iron roads, coal-paths, and pits; the mine shafts that threaten the inhabitants with the same living entombment that Steven experiences. Appropriately, the melancholy river, “black and thick with dye” (*HT* 148), is the antithesis of the rivers that, in discourses of Victorian mental science, symbolize rejuvenating and changeable habit. Moreover, the town’s interchangeable red-brick buildings provide a suitable *habitus* for the de-individuated minds of the citizens.²⁶⁹ The summary of Coketown as a place of “wholesome monotony” (*HT* 149) betrays its antiphrastric monotony by recalling the “monotony” of the melancholy machine that is the text’s central symbol for diseased Utilitarian habits, or humours.

Despite the “triumph of fact” (*HT* 28) in Coketown, a small cluster of characters, including Sissy Jupe and her horse-riding family, embody the counter-philosophy: “the Sleary philosophy” (*HT* 54).²⁷⁰ Sleary reminds Gradgrind of the need for a balance between practical occupations and the fact that “[p]eople must be amuthed” (*HT* 53-54).

Later he will explain to Gradgrind that there is “a love in the world not all Thelf-intereth after all, but thomething very different,” that “hath a way of ith own” and is “hard to give a name to” (HT 390). Sleary’s philosophy, which opposes limiting codifications, is not only modeled, as Manning argues, upon “the fluidity of life itself” (142), but is also informed by a theory of habit. The story of Merrylegs’s unflagging devotion to his master epitomizes the “athtonithing” power of habit to reinforce love. Mr Gradgrind calls Merrylegs’s devotion “instinct,” but Sleary is unwilling to classify this mysterious combination of habit and love (HT 388). Providing a radical contrast to Coketown’s “unnatural family” (perpetually “shouldering, and trampling, and pressing one another to death” [HT 83]), the circus family is structured upon mutuality: “the father of one of the families *was in the habit* of balancing the father of another of the families on the top of a great pole” (HT 45; my italics). Circus life, the narrator declares, is founded upon “everyday virtues” that stem from an “untiring readiness to help and pity one another” (HT 46). The Sleary or circus philosophy is an ethics of habitual sympathy.²⁷¹

Although Sleary articulates the counter-philosophy of habit to Gradgrind, Sissy Jupe embodies the philosophy. Unfathomable and disruptive, she baffles her would-be indoctrinators. In a Menippean conversation with Louisa (in the Hogarthian chapter, “Sissy’s Progress”), Sissy is the agent of the text’s most condemnatory satire on political economy. Her lesson to “Hard Fact men” (HT 340) begins with a Christianizing redefinition of the “first principle” of political economy in terms of Matthew 7:12: “To do unto others as I would that they should do unto me” (HT 73). Subversively, she renames “National Prosperity” “Natural Prosperity” (HT 74), implying that it is the

prosperity of the *common* citizen that measures the nation's prosperity. Her next blow to the "deadly statistical" basis of political economy is her insistence that the starving population "matter[s]" and that its suffering is not "nothing" (*HT* 127, 76). Gradgrind is correct that Sissy's "early life" is "unfavourable" (*HT* 121) to her acceptance of Utilitarian precepts, for her intelligence, imagination, and "multitude of emotions" (*HT* 137) are immovable. Her character signifies the rare paradox of healthy and anti-mechanical habit. Just as she asks for her father's letters "over and over again," so she vows that she will always try to be closer to Louisa: "I will never tire of trying" (*HT* 82, 299). Not only does Sissy win Louisa with her "sympathetic hand" (*HT* 299), but heroically (in the fairy-tale role of Louisa's knightly saviour), she "vanquish[es]" habitual cynicism incarnate "at all points" (*HT* 312), in the form of James Harthouse, Esquire.²⁷² Like the satire itself, she functions through her habit of "truthfulness" (*HT* 307) to make villainy ("the very Devil") "ridiculous" (*HT* 239). Counteracting Coketown's mechanistic keynote, Sissy – Cecilia is the patron saint of musicians – strikes the vital note of clear-sighted humanizing habit.

As an agent of sympathetic imagination, truth, and satire, Sissy also symbolizes an ideal of reparative communication between the classes. In her empathetic habits, she not only "tr[ies] hard to know her humbler fellow-creatures," but she also manages to "modif[y] by daily associations" the Gradgrind system, creating "some change" (*HT* 397, 297, 298). Sissy's character is a metaphor for a paradoxically fluid, imaginative, and benevolent form of habit. She demonstrates an alternative application of association theory that is, as in *Silas Marner*, socially ameliorative. In her active sympathy for

Stephen and Rachael, and her astute observation of Tom's middle-class culpability, she demonstrates enlightened interclass communication. With habitual resilience, Sissy attempts to subvert mechanizing routine:

Day and night again, day and night again. No Stephen Blackpool. Where was the man, and why did he not come back? Every night, Sissy went to Rachael's lodging, and sat with her in her small neat room. All day, Rachael toiled as such people must toil, whatever their anxieties. The smoke-serpents were indifferent who was lost or found, who turned out bad or good; the melancholy mad elephants, like the Hard Fact men, abated nothing of their set routine, whatever happened. Day and night again, day and night again. The monotony was unbroken. Even Stephen Blackpool's disappearance was falling into the general way, and becoming as monotonous a wonder as any piece of machinery in Coketown. (*HT* 340)

Sissy's methodical consolation of Rachael is presented as a singularly healthy routine. The rhetoric of repetition that typifies the text is abundantly evident in this passage. Reduplication of "day and night again" naturalizes the force of habit in terms of the rhythms of the earth; yet not only are the text's keynote images for unnatural habit present in this passage ("melancholy mad elephants" and "smoke serpents"), the text's resonant lexicon of habit is also present – "routine," "monotony," and "machinery."²⁷³ Demonstrating another of the text's satirical practices, Tom's recurring guilty thought, "where was the man?," is dialogically imported into the narrator's voice. As well, the

theme of habitual indifference and apathy (antonyms of wonder) is reinforced by the declaration that Stephen's disappearance has become a "monotonous wonder," further revealing the inhumanity of the "general way." Also, the "smoke-serpents," "indifferent" to who "turned out bad or good," are symptomatic of the cultural decay of interest in morally enriching stories, a regression that is accompanied by a loss of sympathy and imagination. This paragraph exemplifies the multivalent forms of repetition that characterize Dickens's extreme exposition. Sustained thematic, imagistic, and linguistic repetitions function rhetorically to re-induct the reader to the Sleary Philosophy, rather than to implicate the narrative in a complicit use of Utilitarian methodology (as some critics have argued).²⁷⁴ The satire's main rhetorical strategy, echoing Sissy's strength, is to harness the power of habit. In the same way that Louisa's discontented repetition of the question "'What does it matter?'" strikes "some little discord on [Gradgrind's] ear" (*HT* 134), the persistent repetitions of the narrative serve to disrupt Utilitarian indoctrination by dissonantly reinforcing the association by similarity that characterizes imaginative narrative in general.

Hard Times consistently suggests flexible, imaginative mental associations through fairy-tale language and stories. Circus members ritualistically celebrate an un-Benthamite quality of wonder through their love of the very narratives that Gradgrind denounces as "'imaginative sentimental humbug'" (*HT* 42). From their mythically named tavern, the Pegasus Arms, to fairy-tale pantomimes, their lives reveal a communal practice of imaginative association. Sissy, a lover of "childish lore," is in the "habit" of reading *Arabian Nights* to her father (*HT* 63). Revealingly, the narrator also demonstrates

allegiance to the party of lore-lovers by excoriating Utilitarian wickedness in fairy-tale terms. The factory contains malevolent “Fairy palaces” (*HT* 84); Utilitarianism is a “monster in a lecturing castle, with Heaven knows how many heads manipulated into one” (*HT* 11), and Gradgrind is likened to Bluebeard; Mrs Sparsit is (as one of her evil incarnations) a “Bank Dragon” (*HT* 149); and Bounderby’s coarse anti-aestheticism is summarized by his similarity to a commercial Aphrodite “who had risen out of the mud instead of the sea” (*HT* 327). Implicitly, the Utilitarian reformers (infantilized for their ignorant philosophies) are collectively likened to Little Red Riding Hood:

Utilitarian economists, skeletons of schoolmasters, Commissioners of Fact, genteel and used-up infidels, gabblers of many little dog’s-eared creeds, the poor you will have always with you. Cultivate in them, while there is yet time, the utmost graces of the fancies and affections,...
or...[r]eality will take a wolfish turn, and make an end of you.” (*HT* 216)

This angry warning echoes the psychological assessment of Louisa’s habituation to selfishness and nihilistic apathy: “All closely imprisoned forces rend and destroy” (*HT* 298). Louisa’s request that her father nurture the “immaterial part of [her] life” (*HT* 288), which has been starved of narrative sustenance, parallels *Hard Times*’s version of the Carlylean injunction to “close thy *Byron*; open thy *Goethe*” (*SR* 143): close thy Euclid; open thy Defoe.²⁷⁵ Significantly, the individual and cultural need to “habitually wonder” (*SR* 52) is evidenced by the working populace’s persistent attraction to imaginative works – especially subversively parodic and satiric forms. Yet laughter, as Sissy Jupe’s quipping and significantly absent father laments, is diminishing in his audiences.

Similarly, the narrative associations that oppose mechanicality in *Hard Times* are persevering but not predominant.

Despite the attempts of Sissy and the narrator to counteract bad habit with good, a Juvenalian pessimism prevails in the satire about the inevitable ruin of Coketown, of London, and even of the British empire. Ultimately, Sissy's indefatigable goodness does not eradicate the material habits that make Coketown a "town of machinery" (*HT* 28). Unpolluted nature, for example, survives in a small portion of land outside Coketown; however, even this fragment of land is infiltrated by treacherous coal pits. Furthermore, Tom, in his defeat, is an atypical representative of his fellow rose-destroying, self-interested Smilesean men habitually "at work on number one" (*HT* 81). The "honourable gentlemen" – like James Harthouse, ultimately not morally reclaimed by Sissy – who remain in Parliament, victoriously laughing at train accidents (and likely the mill accidents too), are more representative. As well, Stephen Blackpool (his name alludes to the 'first' Christian martyr) is depicted as a moral rarity – although even he finds that circumstances alter "his character for the worse every day" (*HT* 108). Ultimately, regardless of Stephen's loyal participation in the cult of self-discipline, culturally ascendant habits of self-interest reduce him to a "poor, crushed, human creature" (*HT* 361). Significantly, the human circle that unites in a futile attempt to rescue him, like the fringe-dwelling Circus community, appears miniscule and precarious next to the giant forces of political and economic coercion. Finally, although her heroic appearances punctuate the narrative, and she provides a kind of anti-mechanical *dea ex machina* to cure Gradgrind, Sissy is absent for the bulk of the narrative. Throughout *Hard Times*,

examples of the defeat of good habit, like the forceful thoughts of Bounderby, “accumulate[e] with turning like a great snowball” (*HT* 391), overwhelming the instances of defeated mechanical habit.

The narrator’s effort to revive wonder seems doomed, for wonder is repeatedly personified as a dying creature. Fancy, defeated by “somethingological” forces, is depicted as “struggling on in convulsions,” “strangled in his cradle” or “hiding in solitary places” like a “banished creature” (*HT* 23, 32, 175, 76). Like Mrs Gradgrind herself, “propped up, from mere habit, on a couch” (*HT* 263), wonder is in a chronic state of decline. Ultimately, it is likened to Mrs Gradgrind’s “feeble” voice, which echoes faintly as if from the bottom of a well when she is “nearer Truth than she ever had been” (*HT* 264). Her weak utterance of an indecipherable but transcendent principle implies there is scant hope for altruistic, imaginative habits. The *hexis* of the narrative itself, with its combination of rage and elegiac pessimism, is well-summarized by Leavis: “No simple formula can take account of the various elements in the whole effect, a sardonic-tragic in which satire consorts with pathos” (242). Leavis’s final assessment of the novel could be a definition of Dickens’s reformulation of Juvenalian satire. Certainly, *Hard Times* closes with a slew of rhetorical questions – a tactic that Juvenal favoured to convey his near-incredulous horror at the pervasiveness of corruption. The narrator wonders about England’s future, what “things shall be or not” (*HT* 398), and in doing so, considers the respective fates of key Menippean characters. As Harold Bloom suggests, the novel’s final words, “to see the ashes of our fires turn grey and cold” (*HT* 398), affirm the text’s ultimate negativity – though, for Bloom, the “horror” of *Hard Times* lies in its

psychological implications and not in its satiric “social vision” (10). The final image of ashes, however, recalling hellish soot-blackened Coketown, confirms that the textual constitution of Juvenalian trenchancy presides over the narrative embodiments of sympathetic (or Horatian) habit.²⁷⁶

4.vii “Bitterly satirical truth”: Disabling Habits of Perception in *Bleak House*

Immediately preceding *Hard Times*, *Bleak House* (1852-53) is less concentrated in its Menippean elements. Rather than attacking the contradictions of Utilitarian philosophy, it focuses on the links between institutional and bureaucratic ineptitude and the psychology of the individual. Anticipating the “muddle” of *Hard Times*, the majority of *Bleak House*’s characters suffer from the habitual inability to perceive clearly. For Dickens, viewing the world myopically is an aberrant perceptual habit – a form of blindness engendered by malfunctioning social-political institutions whose unjust ideologies co-opt the individual.²⁷⁷ Just as the machine is *Hard Times*’s enveloping emblem for destructive habit, in *Bleak House*, illness (of mind and body) is the foundational metaphor for disabling habits. Blindness and darkness are used as metaphors for institutionalized impercipient; fittingly, an elaborate ocular symbology of mental myopia suffuses the text. Those who are connected with Chancery, the Gorgon’s head of the British judicial system, gaze ritualistically at one object of study and assume a paralytic state of moral insanity. In addition, a motif of caged birds emphasizes the carceral effect of the social medium upon the individual mind. A character’s fixated and

feverish gazes reveal her or his degree of induction into the caged-bird psychosis (frequently some variety of materialistic addiction). Forecasting *Hard Times*'s Juvenalian satire, the Horatian habits of duty and empathy that are embodied in Esther Summerson's autobiography are severely undermined in the face of unalterable habit. Ultimately, her character does not straightforwardly provide an example of the potential victory of healthy habit. In a culture catastrophically occluded by perceptual disabilities, the feat of changing destructive habit is nearly impossible. Perhaps more disturbingly, sympathetic habit is equally unmanageable and damaging to personal happiness.

Much has been written about the fervent topicality of the novel. John Butt and Kathleen Tillotson investigate the text's expansive engagement with contemporary abuses in politics, law, and social welfare; they declare *Bleak House* to be a "fable for 1852" (108) – a fable that does not significantly distort the facts of reform issues discussed in *The Times* (123). Butt and Tillotson view the novel as a kind of anti-Great Exhibition, a notion inspired by Dickens's "Last Words of the Old Year" (*Household Words*, 1851), in which he asserts (revealing his preoccupation with perception) the need for an alternative spectacle "of England's sins and negligences, to be, by steady contemplation of all eyes, and steady union of all hearts and hands, set right" (110).²⁷⁸ Furthering the generic truism that satire drags the real world into art, Susan Shatto, in her *Companion to "Bleak House,"* resorts to using a chart in order to describe the complex topicality of the text. From the personal satire directed against philanthropist Caroline Chisholm (Mrs Jellyby) and artist Leigh Hunt (Harold Skimpole), to the reformist anger directed at inept sanitary systems, an inert legal system, and electoral and Parliamentary

corruption, *Bleak House* is saturated with topical allusion (Shatto 1-4), centred particularly on the ills of London.²⁷⁹ Dickens, like Juvenal, attacks the corruption that is evident everywhere in crowded, Rome-like London.

Bleak House satirizes the distorted perceptions of social reality that inscribe London's institutions in the same manner that grooves of habit impress upon the brain. Tangible results of the diseased minds and morality of the ruling classes are evinced by what John Jarndyce describes as the "Great Seal's impressions.... all over England," referring to the fact that his great uncle's property in London (now the ruin that is Tom-all-Alones) and the country estate, Bleak House, are "stamped with the same seal" (*BH* 110). In *Bleak House*, thoughtless routine characterizes all realms of power – aristocratic, political, and legal. Chesney Wold and Chancery are both depicted (in refrain) as places of languid repose and restless, unprogressive repetition.²⁸⁰ Lady Dedlock, with her "habitual air of proud indifference" (*BH* 536), and Tulkinghorn, with his unremitting mechanical reserve, engage customarily in a cat-and-mouse game of reticence; this pastime is described in appropriately anaphoric sentences beginning with "Every day" (*BH* 175) or "Daily" (*BH* 595). The "Dedlock mind" (of which Sir Leicester is the mouthpiece) daydreams of "Merry Old England" and lives in perpetual and passive fear of middle-class (or worse) threats to the framework of society. The Carlylean third-person narrator labels this ruling delusion "Dandyism," which, in its customary blindness to all but fine surfaces, "would make the Vulgar very picturesque and faithful, by putting back the hands upon the Clock of Time" and serve to "put a smooth glaze on the world, and to keep down all its realities" (*BH* 173).²⁸¹ The impassive Dedlock set, including

parliamentary luminaries (as predictable and linear as the alphabet) such as Lord Boodle, Coodle, and Doodle, and William Buffy, M. P. Cuffy, and Duffy, are, like all monologic forms, careful not to “receive any impress from the moving age” (*BH* 173). Constrained by hierarchic notions and practices, the controlling corporate mind of England is depicted as being suspended in a necromantic circle (*BH* 174). The judicial system is conspiratorially habituated to the circularity and stasis of unproductive routine:

The one great principle of the English law is, to make business for itself. There is no other principle distinctly, certainly, and consistently maintained through all its narrow turnings. Viewed by this light it becomes a coherent scheme, and not the monstrous maze the laity are apt to think it. (*BH* 573)

Self-interested institutions, satirized for being self-conscious “circumlocutory agencies” (D. A. Miller 143), create and maintain an incessantly self-consuming society through their “narrow turnings.”

“Smouldering combustion” (*BH* 583) describes the perennial state of all hermetic institutions, for there is a similarly suffocating “want of air” in Chesney Wold, Chancery, and the slum district Tom-all-Alone’s. As Krook (a Bakhtinian, honorary Lord Chancellor) insists, participation in the Jarndyce and Jarndyce suit – and, by implication, the society it represents – guarantees incremental decline, like “being drowned by drops; it’s going mad by grains” (*BH* 65). The narrator pronounces Krook’s spontaneous combustion to have been inevitable: “inborn, inbred, engendered” in the closed system of “the corrupted humours of the vicious body itself” (*BH* 479). With his “intemperate

habits” (*BH* 480) of gin consumption, Krook, a character that Frye would term a “pure humor” (“Dickens” 56), expresses in microcosm the destructive habits of the social mind and body politic of England. This is “baldly asserted” (Daleski 176) in the narrator’s irreverent claim that Krook “has died the death of all Lord Chancellors in all Courts, and of all authorities in all places under all names soever, where false pretences are made, and where injustice is done. Call the death by any name Your Highness will” (*BH* 479).

Krook, in his retributive anatomization, is the text’s centripetal figure for bad habits. *Bleak House*’s depiction of an entropic culture consumed by habit corroborates Vrettos’s observation that Victorian “[t]heories of habit conceptualized the mind as a closed system driven to repetitive, automatic behaviors in order to conserve energy” (400). England’s imprudent central institutions are depicted as having over-conserved their energy; consequently, they have disabled and shut down the nation. Thus, atrophy, suffocation, and subsequent combustion are *Bleak House*’s apocalyptic answer to “the Condition of England Question.” Krook’s death is a comprehensive Juvenalian exemplum of Britain’s infrastructures, which, though variously figured as enclosures such as mazes and circles, are rendered conspicuously horrific when depicted as an incurable perversion of the nervous and circulatory systems of the human mind and body.

4.viii Habit as Illness: Mental, Physical, and Moral

The psychology of habit is critiqued in *Bleak House* through dominant metaphors of physical and mental illness.²⁸² Mental physiology’s conception of the brain’s neural paths imprinted by habit is echoed by the narrator’s prediction that “not a drop of Tom’s

corrupted blood but propagates infection and contagion somewhere,” and that it will “work its retribution, through every order of society...to the highest of the high” (*BH* 654-57) via the “pestilential” channels in the slums. In this prophesy, bloodstreams, blood-lines, and grooves of thought are ominously analogous. The pathways of the ruling apparatus, traversed in corrupted institutions, inveterately transmit diseased mind-states to all necessarily associated social levels. Furthermore, as Graham Benton suggests, the text’s dominant present-tense narration (Esther Summerson’s narrative is only partially in the past tense) emulates syntactically the suspension of time that a person experiences when sick (75); thus, the use in both narratives of the historic present reinforces the theme of paralyzing habit. Esther feels estranged from her life during her illness, not due to the “effect of time, so much as of the change in all [her] habits” (*BH* 513).

Convalescening, Esther expresses a habit-disrupting thought: “I had never known before how short life really was, and into how small a space the mind could put it” (*BH* 513). Esther’s revelation about the de-vitalizing and numbing effects of habit applies not only to her own life, but also to her country’s political and legal habit (akin to Mr Podsnap’s mortality-rate-denying arm flourishes in *Our Mutual Friend*) of dismissing human life from consideration.

Deservedly, the double narrative structure of *Bleak House* has received much critical attention.²⁸³ Lyn Pykett effectively explains its key function, arguing that *Bleak House*’s social criticism functions by structurally defamiliarizing the “world of habit,” forcing the reader to participate in the perceptual shifts between two narrators (131). Fittingly, the narrators represent extremes of visual and mental perception. The

omniscient narrator is capable of mythic flight from one social world to another (from aristocratic parkland retreats to maggot-infested slums), and observes both unflinchingly. Surprisingly, Esther's earthly and subjective observations (often of people's eyes and gazes) serve to corroborate this authoritative account of universal mental malady. For example, she predicts Richard Carstone's decline by noting how his eyes, like those of Miss Flite, have a "clouded, eager, seeking look" (*BH* 548); she perceives that Hortense has "too-eager eyes" (*BH* 338) that always look sideways with jealous alertness.

Allusions to aberrant gazes or obstructed vision permeate *Bleak House*, as both narrators (engaged in directing the gaze and responses of their readers) take particular note of the perceptual follies of their characters and critically assess the information contained in eyes and eye contact. The text aligns with Locke's view that, "Perception is the first Operation of all our intellectual Faculties, and the inlet of all Knowledge into our Minds" (149); its ocular emphasis signals diseased perception to be the overarching illness of humanity in general.

Given that Dickens observed the principles of phrenology to be more or less true (Kaplan 69), the phrenological notion (held by John Caspar Lavater) that "the intellectual life has the eye for its centre" (Taylor and Shuttleworth 8) resonates in Dickens's novelistic psychology – in *Hard Times*, for example, Louisa's seduction is "plain to the dark eyes of [Mrs Sparsit's] mind" (*HT* 279). In *Bleak House*, the omniscient narrator's observation that Mrs Snagsby's gaze "enters at [Mr Snagsby's] eyes, the windows of his soul" (*BH* 382), is comically truthful. As well, the eye is a "key organ of transmission" for the "visual ray" of mesmeric influence (Kaplan 128). Fred Kaplan compellingly

tracks the language of mesmeric attraction in descriptions of the Jarndyce and Jarndyce case; it entrances people and “[d]raw[s] peace out of them. Sense out of them” (BH 523). Appropriately, the monstrous legal case is personified as a Gorgon whose eye in the head of Chancery casts a daemonic gaze on its victims. Miss Flite knows that she is “drawn” against her full consent to “look at the Monster” (BH 523). The case is described as contaminating Richard’s blood and causing “objects [to] lose their natural aspects in his sight” (BH 517) – including his love for Ada and his guardian, John Jarndyce. Dickens frequently employs the language of mesmerism to suggest the unconscious, almost somnambulistic operations of habit. Just as hypnotic repetition immobilizes thought and suspends perception, the habit of hoping for justice is the source of Chancery’s mesmeric power.

Connected to the case or not, most characters in *Bleak House* are transfixed by a single object. Tony Weevle observes Krook’s obsessive behaviour: ““It’s a monomania with him, to think he is possessed of documents”” (BH 475). Mr Smallweed’s “secretly glistening eye” (BH 488) glows with a lust for money, as do all of his “phrenological attributes” (BH 307). Mr Tulkinghorn is preoccupied by the wills upon which he secretly meditates; Mrs Jellyby, whose myopia is paradoxically “telescopic,” has a “curious habit” (BH 47) of fixating on a mental picture of Africa and not on her children. Vholes, Snagsby, and Guppy, all affiliated with the law, are blinded by the “distrustful eye of business” (BH 576). Monomaniacal habits are detectable in Sir Leicester as he fusses abstractedly with his double eye-glass (a symptom of habitual self-involvement), as do other bespectacled personages such as Conversation Kenge and the Lord Chancellor

himself. Harold Skimpole's childishness is, like the old man in "A Curious Dance Round a Curious Tree," "so dreadfully-unchildlike" ("Curious" 325). His commitment to irresponsibility blinds him to a moral life, much like the text's other flagrant dandy, Mr Turveydrop (whose "puffed-out eyes," Esther observes, reflect his "absorbing selfishness" [BH 209]). Most characters, excepting those with "bright" eyes (such as George Rouncewell, John Jarndyce, and Mrs Bagnet), are stuck in the murky perceptions of excessive subjectivity. Their eyes and gazes reveal their perception of a singular, solipsistic reality. Habitual selfishness, resulting in perceptual and moral opacity, is a near-universal condition in *Bleak House*.²⁸⁴

Metaphors of blindness and darkness permeate the novel, augmenting its visual focus. Jarndyce's description of Tom-all-Alone's as "'a street of perishing blind houses, with their eyes stoned out'" (BH 109) mirrors this condition. The omniscient narrator, in an initial survey of London (in which mud and fog make everything indistinguishable), notes that "the death of the sun" (BH 11) is a plausible fancy. In keeping with the theme of poor visibility, a series of dark plates literally darken the published text.²⁸⁵ Chancery's courtroom is dimly lit with wasting candles and stained-glass windows that "admit no light of day" (BH 12) (like Coketown's sooty windows that keep "sun eternally in eclipse though a medium of smoked glass" [HT 219]), and the High Chancellor peers into an unlit lantern. Even spiritual light is out of bounds in this hellish underworld, in which Reverend Chadband, with his "pulpit habit" (BH 378), blocks the light of divine truth from Jo, and St. Paul's is "the crowning confusion of the great, confused city" (BH 290). Inescapable darkness is an appropriate analogue to the habitual obstructionism of British

jurisprudence. Just as the human eye adjusts to a lack of light, the citizens of London are habituated to corrupt political, economic, legal, and ecclesiastical practices.

4.ix The Caged-Bird Phenomenon and the Problem of the Human Will

Stuck in what the narrator of *Little Dorrit* calls the “prison of this lower world” (102), individuals in *Bleak House* are circumscribed materially and perceptually by political and legal systems.²⁸⁶ One key motif for characters thoroughly entrapped in the morally blinding customs of the nation is that of a caged bird. Appropriately, given that birds in Egyptian and Christian mythologies symbolize the human soul, and that until the late nineteenth-century, psychology was closely associated with discourses of the soul (Rylance 24), a caged bird epitomizes the idea of humanity’s spiritual and/or mental aspect cruelly restricted by its material conditions. The first notable appearance of this motif is Miss Flite’s bird collection. Each bird has a name (appropriately, one is named Madness) and only sings when exposed to light. In an especially resonant gesture, when the case ends the birds are set free. Aptly, all lawyers are “dingy London bird[s]” (*BH* 611) who nest in documents. Vholes is a “bird of ill-omen” (*BH* 643); Tulkinghorn is “like a larger species of rook” (*BH* 175). “[L]ike a hideous bird of prey” (*BH* 489), Mr Smallweed entraps George with money; Rosa, who does not benefit from Lady Dedlock’s attention, is her little “bird” (*BH* 414). The previous John Jarndyce “blew his brains out” sitting in a chair that looks to Esther like “a great bird-cage” (*BH* 78). Repeatedly, bird-cages and caged birds in *Bleak House* signify the mental habits that accompany social strictures.

Demonstrating Dickens's habit of maximizing metaphor, the Dedlock family, under the spell of class ideology, are not even live birds, but rather "a large collection, glassy eyed, set up in the most approved manner on their various twigs and perches, very correct, perfectly free from animation, and always in glass cases" (*BH* 559). Fittingly, the mercurial satirist and liberal aristocrat, Boythorn, does not cage his pet canary but lets him perch on his head. Finally, as if to summarize the bird motif, a bird looms emblematically over Jo's head in the illustration "Jo, the Crossing-Sweeper," signaling his social entrapment and vulnerable "mental condition" (*BH* 236). When stricken with fever, Jo holds his hat as if it were a mangy bird that he plucks to eat raw. The mangy, bird-like Jo, himself consumed by social forces, claims that he "'don't know nothink'" (*BH* 235); yet, being one of the few characters in the novel who is morally intact, he manages to be clear-sighted about who is good to him and who is not. Nonetheless, after having been relentlessly persecuted, his will is finally broken like a cart "shaken all to pieces" (*BH* 677). He cannot overcome the chronic mental and bodily state that society has manufactured for him; nor can the multitudes of the dispossessed, whom the narrator didactically asserts are "dying thus around us, every day" (*BH* 677). The caged-bird epidemic is a habit-based disease that physically and mentally disables and de-animates all social levels, from paupers to aristocrats.²⁸⁷

4.x Esther's Problematic Horatian Habits

Armed with her "noticing way" (*BH* 24), Esther Summerson is not only immune to the materialistic attractions of Chancery, but exhibits the superior mental and moral

perspicacity of a satirist.²⁸⁸ Repeatedly, Esther's judgments – for example, her inadvertently sardonic and scathing catalogue of old Mr Turveydrop's artificialities – harmonize with the satiric evaluations of the omniscient narrator. But, because of her contrastingly autobiographical, conciliatory, and consistently sympathetic viewpoint, Esther's narrative could be described as being Horatian.²⁸⁹ The conversational Horatian "*sermo*" (Rimell 86) is a moderate, colloquial, and even equivocal register compatible with Esther's narratorial voice, contrasting with the emphatic, grandiloquent, and condemning third-person narration – what Welsh terms the "satirical overvoice" (*Redressed* 126). Given her steadfast perception of light (symbolic of intellectual and moral clarity) in the darkened settings of the novel, it is tempting to view Esther as the text's Horatian *locus* of humanitarian hope. Esther is, for example, happy to leave the metropolis which she associates with darkness – the site of Juvenalian satire – to follow the light that she associates with John Jarndyce: "all this happiness shone like a light, from one central figure" (*BH* 638); she sees the windows of his country estate "sparkling on the top of a hill," "beaming brightly" (*BH* 75). Noticing how light hurts Richard's eyes, she predicts his decline, but when he is morally redeemed at his death-bed, she observes a "light in his eyes" (*BH* 857, 904). In her sympathy for Ada and others, Esther catches glimpses of the "clear light of integrity and love" (*BH* 869) in the moral darkness of her surroundings. She herself, as her surname implies, reminds others of "sunshine and summer air" (*BH* 448). D. A. Miller finds in Esther's "absolute refusal to be touched by the suit," "another line of attack" on Chancery (along with the "Detective Police)" (134).²⁹⁰ Miller envisions Esther, not as a genial satirist who is self-inclusive (to a fault)

in her observations of human fallibility, but the *locus* of a non-socially critical, domestic safe-haven.²⁹¹ Welsh, however, does posit a generic interpretation of the two narrators. He identifies Esther's autobiographical narrative as both the "affective center of the novel," and also the generic site of a new comedic mode (*Redressed* 124). Contrastingly, the "primarily visual... impersonal present-tense narrative" is timeless and satiric; thus, formally, the novel is structured by "a generic division between comedic and satiric modes" (Welsh, *Redressed* 26-27, 133). Ultimately, however, Welsh diminishes the satiric authority of both Esther and the omniscient narrator, finding that in the final chapters, "the satirical present-tense voice relents and relinquishes its authority to comedy" (127).²⁹² Arguably, when considered within the text's discourses of habit, Esther's character and her narrative (if not her moral observations) confirm the predominance of the text's Juvenalian psychological, social, and moral pessimism.

In *Bleak House*, the rarity of an individual's self-willed escape from the (internal and external) forces of automatization is illustrated primarily by Esther's narrative. Esther's own view of habit is reminiscent of William B. Carpenter's; for example, idealist notions of volition are reflected in her response to John Jarndyce's assessment of Richard's "indecision of character" (*BH* 180).²⁹³ Richard's lack of self-directing will is interpreted by Jarndyce as having originated in the impressions of Chancery that branded him in his boyhood and "engendered or confirmed in him a habit of putting off" (*BH* 180). (Jarndyce insists that the character of "much older and steadier people may be even changed by the circumstances surrounding them" [*BH* 180].) Esther, who believes in the efficacy of a well-trained will, thinks that Richard's bad habit could have been changed:

“I felt this to be true; though, if I may venture to mention what I thought besides, I thought it much to be regretted that Richard’s education had not counteracted those influences, or directed his character” (*BH* 180). In Esther’s view, it is not surprising that Richard, untutored as he is in “habits of application and concentration” (*BH* 244), is unable to re-channel his misdirected constancy into productive work. Instead, Richard detests the notion of steady application: “‘it’s monotonous, and to-day is too like yesterday, and to-morrow is too like to-day’” (*BH* 248). Esther’s response to Richard’s horror of routine further reveals her religion of habit: “‘But I am afraid,’ said I, ‘this is an objection to all kinds of application – to life itself’” (*BH* 249). For Esther, productive habits are fundamental to life and virtue. This doctrine, compatible with Aristotelean and Victorian mental physiology, is expressed in her “‘quiet habit of method and usefulness’” (*BH* 86).

Routinely, Esther attempts to be rid of her old sense of being unlovable and sinful by conditioning her mind to re-encode these “shadowy speculations” (*BH* 95) with a productive script of “duties and accountabilities” (*BH* 83). Repeatedly, she commands herself, “‘Esther! Duty, my dear!’” (*BH* 95). This injunction stems, in her own estimation, from her individual will and her “childish prayer” to “be industrious” and, if possible, to “win some love” (*BH* 520). Yet in her sympathetic and dutiful good will towards others – Richard and Ada, the brick-makers’ wives, Charley, Jo, Caddy, and Peepy – she habitually obviates her own troubles. Gradually, her “childish prayer” warps into a dogmatic gendered mandate of self-sacrificing sympathy and dutifulness. It becomes a version of Mrs Rachel’s puritanical pronouncement of the need to counter

sinfulness with a woman's only tools: "Submission, self-denial, diligent work" (*BH* 26). As Janet Larson suggests, Esther's faith in redemption through duty and love is a way of using religion to "authorize her mechanisms of evasion" (110). Throughout her narrative, Esther follows Carpenter's edict to "divert the current of [her] thought and feeling from a morbid into a healthful channel" (674). For example, when Lady Dedlock's name is mentioned, Esther practices conscious thought-control: "'I mentally counted, repeated something that I knew, or went out of the room'" (*BH* 618). As a result of her mental drills, Esther fluctuates between clear-sightedness and a myopic fixation on her house keys.

The productive habits that Esther has acquired do not fully erase her inscribed guilt – having been indoctrinated by Puritan notions of essential female sin. Old associations of her birth with sinfulness are inexpiable and linked to her "old face" and "old self" (*BH* 639, 653). Ironically, this self, which she envisions as being dead, is also the vital and desiring self. Standing before her looking glass after Jarndyce's proposal, she considers "how often had I considered within myself that the deep traces of my illness, and the circumstances of my birth, were only new reasons why I should be busy, busy, busy – useful, amiable, serviceable" (*BH* 640). Her temporary blindness from smallpox is symbolic (as is her habit of hiding her face) of her trained self-effacement. Habituated to her fairy-tale identity of the "methodical, old-maidish" (*BH* 105) Dame Durden, she suppresses an authentic and spontaneous self; but, just as Esther "can't be kept out" (*BH* 126) of her own autobiography – for writing is an expression of agency – she cannot prevent Allan Woodcourt (who represents her deeper desires) from entering

her thoughts and narrative. No matter how often she asserts that she has “nothing to regret or to desire” (*BH* 868), still her desiring, guilt-ridden self, analogous to (but more permanent than) the “deep traces” left by her illness, remains to be detected by the reader, and fleetingly by Esther herself. Esther is able to ignore the “first wild thought” (*BH* 869) of accepting Woodcourt’s proposal only because – reflecting Lewes’s proposition that the mind is like a palimpsest – she has written over her authentic, willful self.²⁹⁴

Esther’s self-habitation to virtuous duty and her enduring guilt both serve to dramatize William James’s reaffirmation of nineteenth-century psychology’s consensus regarding the difficulty of altering nerve channels in the brain: “that nerve-currents propagate themselves easiest through those tracts of conduction which have been already most in use” (*Principles* 531) – routes that Alexander Bain terms “preference track[s]” (*Mind* 117). By training her thoughts to follow a “preference track” of duty, Esther bypasses the channels of thought traversed by her perspicacious self – which had already been inducted into a narrative of female guilt and self-immolation. Virtuous mental myopia is expressed most acutely when, as Mrs Woodcourt, she maintains her habitual relationship with Jarndyce: “I have never lost my old names, nor has he lost his; nor do I ever, when he is with us, sit in any other place than in my old chair at his side. Dame Trot, Dame Durden, Little Woman! – all just the same as ever; and I answer, Yes, dear guardian! – just the same” (*BH* 913). Patricia Ingham classifies Esther as one of Dickens’s “nubile” or desexualized girls, who provides an “unsullied page” for the author to as a medium for the transmission of gender ideologies (*Dickens* 37). She concedes, however, that Dickens’s texts often suggest the “undesirable implications that underlie

his own sexist representations” (Ingham, *Dickens* 38). Arguably, through *Bleak House*’s satire on habit, Dickens (in a move akin to unconscious cerebration) critiques Esther’s (and his own) self-suppressing, automatizing ideal of productive femininity. Frye argues that Dickensian “norm-figures” such as Esther generally do not “appear in the ridiculous or self-binding role of the humor” (“Comedy” 70). Yet, by rejecting Esther’s renunciation of Woodcourt, the narrative implicitly discounts Esther’s doctrine of habit and the mechanicality of her female self-erasure. Fittingly, Esther is not exempt from association with the entrapped-bird motif, for she leaves Mrs Rachel’s with her caged bird as her companion, symbolic both of the puritanical imprint of sinful womanhood and the trappings of habit. So thoroughly is she imprisoned by her mental habits that, despite urgings towards her truer impulses, she accepts Jarndyce’s marriage proposal. It is only because Jarndyce, the novel’s Horatian country-gentleman and “superior being” (*BH* 913), overcomes the negative habit of his East wind syndrome and reverts to his temperate “bachelor habits” (*BH* 891), that Esther does not become a gendered caricature of moral mania perched on her usual chair in the cage of Bleak House.

The relentless physicality of habit, as it is depicted in *Bleak House*, renders mental programming ominously obstructive to individual and social change. The novel’s opening description of London’s melancholy, ill-regulated populace slipping and sliding in post-deluvian levels of “ooze” and “mud” suggests the devolutionary failure of the English to find “regulated channels” (Eliot, *Daniel Deronda* 132) for habit.²⁹⁵ As well, the “muddle” of British culture is blatantly analogous to Krook’s reduction to a “stagnant, sickening oil” and “hateful soot” (*BH* 476, 474). The social body and environment in

Bleak House are depicted as being “nervous throughout” (Van Ghent 132), but like the neural networks of a mind formed by habit, they are more grossly physical than metaphysical. Ultimately in *Bleak House*, a Juvenalian and apocalyptic position within competing mechanistic and metaphysical assumptions about the mind and will leaves less determining power for the will than for social forces. Narrative representations of the machinery of the mind seem to accord with Henry Maudsley’s philosophy of social determinism: “Lunatics and criminals are as much manufactured articles as are steam-engines and calico printing machines” (*Responsibility* 28).

In dialogue with Victorian debates about the physiological basis of the mind, *Bleak House* targets habit as the key mechanism circumscribing and anaesthetizing human identity. Steeped in political and social contemporaneity, the satiric novel exposes and denounces the demented ideologies and infrastructures which carve correspondingly pathological grooves in the individual mind. Influenced by associationist and physiological psychology, phrenology, and mesmerism, Dickens is skeptical about the regenerative powers of moral habit (in contrast to his asylum journalism); in *Bleak House* he postulates a state of near-universal psychiatric disability. The hopeful Horatian position of moderation and faith in the habit of sympathy is left, like the last words of Mrs Gradgrind, and like Esther Summerson’s authentic self, trying unsuccessfully to be heard. England’s “smouldering combustion” reveals a “bitterly satirical truth” (*BH* 201) about the implacability of habit, and the crass materiality of the human mind and its ready adaptability to an insane social world.

4.xi “The Roman yoke”: Juvenalian Reflections on Habit in *Our Mutual Friend*

Bleak House depicts madness as implacable habit; its critique of habit is ensconced in an overarching trope of illness that relies heavily on the ocular imagery of myopia, blindness, and darkness. In *Our Mutual Friend*, however, Dickens returns to *Hard Times*'s explicit parallels between capitalist processes and the mechanizing tendencies of habit. But whereas *Hard Times* scrutinizes the various dehumanizing fictions of Utilitarianism with fable-like focus (London is an *indirect* target), *Our Mutual Friend* crowds its satiric canvas with the multitude of ways that the collective mental life and habits of Londoners (and the English generally) betray their ruling obsession: ““money, money, money, and what money can make of life!””(OMF 460). The “depraved appetite” (OMF 654) for money is exposed to be a self- and society-consuming habit. Yet, importantly, *Our Mutual Friend* emphasizes that human beings are dehumanized not just by the desire for money, but *all* things that are thought about to the exclusion of all else. Monstrous Silas Wegg, murderous Bradley Headstone, and devilish Eugene Wrayburn are socially representative in being “chained heavily to” an overriding idea and exhibiting “ungovernable selfishness” (OMF 709-11). As in *Bleak House*, Dickens's satire suggests that the human mind, in its neural proneness to “irresistible tricks of thought and act” (Lewes, *PLM3* 54), adapts readily to caricatural circumscription. In *Our Mutual Friend*, the English empire, like its Roman predecessor, is depicted as declining into corruption in the same way that “many a man lapses into many a condition, without perceiving the accumulative power of its separate circumstances” (OMF 379). Just as an

individual over-determined by habit loses command over her or his will, the nation loses its ability to self-govern.

Our Mutual Friend contains Dickens's bleakest deployment of habit as a mode of characterization. Not surprisingly, the novel's contemporary critics tended to depreciate its characters as humours, caricatures, or, in Bagehot's words, "monstrous exaggerations" (Collins 394). Henry James's condemnation in *The Nation* (21 December 1865) was famously wholesale: "every character put before us is a mere bundle of eccentricities, animated with no principle of human nature whatever" (Collins 470) – an echo of Paley's "bundle of habits." More unforgivably, in James's view, characters such as Eugene Wrayburn and Bradley Headstone fail, not simply because they are the "the habitual improbable of Mr. Dickens," but because their stories centre upon "complete and unconscious subjection" to "elementary passions" (Collins 473). James insists that to explore successfully such profound subjects in fiction, an author must be a philosopher, and Dickens is "nothing of a philosopher." As a result, *Our Mutual Friend* is "infinitely depressing and unprofitable" (Collins 472-3). Essentially, James (like Bagehot, Whipple, and Lewes before him) denies simultaneously the intellectual and literary legitimacy of Dickens's satiric characterization, and Dickens's philosophy of habit as an all-powerful and "unconscious" "principle of human nature." As if to summarize James's resistance to Dickens's satiric project in *Our Mutual Friend*, Eugene Wrayburn complains of the "unlimited monotony of [his] fellow-creatures," who "are so incessantly boring and buzzing at their one idea till Death comes upon them – that don't you think they overdo it?" (*OMF* 145, 94).²⁹⁶ Just as Lewes's complaint that Dickens's characters are wooden is

an unwitting echo of the novelist's own satirical pronouncements concerning Mrs Podsnap (who is "like a rocking-horse" [OMF 10]) and Silas Wegg (who is "so wooden a man that he seemed to have taken his wooden leg naturally"[OMF 46]), so James's claim that "one of the chief conditions of [Dickens's] genius is not to see beneath the surface of things" (Collins 472) absolutely misses the moral message of *Our Mutual Friend*: human beings lack psychological depth (or "moral being" [OMF 13]) once they have succumbed, through the mental mechanism of habit, to a materialistic and solipsistic "Social Voice." They become like Rogue Riderhood, who, in both his death-like and living state, is an anatomizable "lump of humanity," fit only to be hung like "mutton in a butcher's shop" (OMF 443-4). Despite his distinct social station as a "Waterside character," Riderhood's recurrent hypocritical cant about the "'sweat of an honest man's brow,'" (OMF 150, 144) and his predatory greed, represent all social levels (Rogue's façade, like Bradley's, is merely less polished than that of a Veneering guest). Just as the Inspector's intimate knowledge of Gaffer's daily habits, right down to the characteristic way that he carried his rope, aids in the diagnosis of the cause of the waterman's death, *Our Mutual Friend*, an "infinitely depressing" exposition of English habits of life and mind, serves as a coroner's inquest into a dead civilization.

Two of the central symbols for habits of mental and moral insolvency in *Our Mutual Friend* are food (or feasts) and mirrors (or reflections). Both arch-metaphors for destructive habit are also generic, taxonomic symbols for satire itself, recalling on the one hand Roman satire's "stuffing" (*farcimen*) or *lanx satura*, and on the other, Swift's famous view of satire as a mirror: "wherein beholders do generally discover everybody's

face there, but his own" (1). Figuratively, food and the act of consumption are associated with such objects as money (targeted in Victorian psychology as being supremely dangerous), drugs, alcohol, and various other commodities, from fiction itself, furniture, and palatial residences, to dead bodies and live human beings. Furthermore, the text's rhetoric of generalized zeugma formally underlines the fact that humanity is absent in human beings, who have through habit become utterly predictable, interchangeable, replicable, and marketable. Grotesquely, English society is depicted as the colossal waste-product of "omnipresent cannibalism" (Stone 158) – signified by a series of Juvenalian satiric feasts, and also by the ever-present dust mounds containing the by-products of consumption. Another of the text's main motifs for solipsistic English habits is that of reflective surfaces. Throughout the novel, surfaces – either human-made (shiny objects such as varnished furniture, mirrors, and windows) or natural (rivers, human eyes) – act as a matrix of personified mirrors depicting the product of, or process of, identity formation through habit. *Our Mutual Friend's* narrator-satirist (whose direct, trenchant voice rarely surfaces) is a near redundancy in a world where every reflected image is itself a satire of human vice and folly. Few of the text's "principals" escape an annihilating merger with their mirror image. Bella Wilfer manages to escape, but her victory requires not only sympathetic habit (and an element of free will), but also the aid of John Harmon's (ominously obsessive) moral ambition and Boffin's pantomimic satire of avarice. Bradley Headstone and Eugene Wrayburn, both of whom are associated with the forceful current of the river, mirror one another in their incapacity for self-willed moral transformation. Their characters symbolize England's decline and fall into self-

consumption and inanition. Furthermore, the moral energies of Juvenalian satire – exemplified by Jenny Wren – are crippled in a nation beyond curative satire, doomed by habit, and, like Mr Doll’s, “every day grew worse and worse” (*OMF* 714).

4.xii The Juvenalian Perspective: Feasts as Fasts

H. M. Daleski suggests that “Dickens’s major theme from *Martin Chuzzlewit* onwards is the corrupting power of wealth, and this theme is constantly developed and amplified until its conclusive statement in *Our Mutual Friend*” (14). Similarly, Peter Green identifies Juvenal’s overarching concern to be the destructive power of money (24). Like Dickens, Juvenal aimed his satire at both aristocrats and the “get-rich-quick crowd” and was morally outraged at the governing elite’s “abrogation of responsible behaviour” (Green 24). For Juvenal, Rome’s political habit – successions of corrupt emperors who exploit rather than protect their citizenry – epitomizes the patron-client relationship in a materialistic society (Green 31).²⁹⁷ The cultural crisis Juvenal describes, in which “genuine mutual relationship based on trust, obligation and service” (Green 32) is replaced by money-based relations,²⁹⁸ complements the social milieu in *Our Mutual Friend*, in which Podsnappery (the social irresponsibility of the rich) and Weggery (fortune-hunting retainers) are omnipresent. The novel’s ironic title alone satirizes chronic disingenuousness. Dickens shares with the Roman satirist a hatred of “pernicious Cash” (Juvenal 1.113), an awareness that ““misery-making money”” (*OMF* 379) destroys human happiness, and the belief that “virtue” is the “one true nobility” (Juvenal 8.21-22). Bella Wilfer turns out to be ““true golden gold at heart”” (*OMF* 772); Lizzie Hexam,

who, in her low social station, is deemed “worthless” by her brother, is, in terms of virtue, the novel’s richest character. Explicitly, through the constant intertextual presence of Edward Gibbon’s *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (1776-1788), the novel promotes a return to the lessons of Rome.²⁹⁹ Thanks to Boffin’s interest in how Rome “worked out its destruction” (*OMF* 476), Gibbon’s historic profligates are mythopoeically depicted in the historic present tense, alongside *Our Mutual Friend*’s own swindlers, who are constantly legacy-hunting, murdering, and “declining and falling” (*OMF* 52).³⁰⁰

In a telling slip, Boffin refers to his eight “gorging” volumes of Gibbon’s masterpiece (“misled by association of ideas” [*OMF* 50]), initiating the text’s relentless conflation of materialistic habits with food. Juvenal’s Satire IV describes an emergency Privy Council, convened, not in responsible reaction to “[p]anic-stricken dispatches [that] might have been pouring in / From all parts of the empire” (4.149-50), but to address the bathetic dilemma of how to serve a gigantic fish to the emperor. Daniel Hooley explains that the fish, which exceeds the bounds of any plate, is emblematic of Rome’s monstrously corrupt political and social body/state (Domitian himself is “soon to be cut up”) (*Roman Satire* 112). The *topos* of the satiric feast (*cena*) recurs in Juvenal’s satires; for example, Satire V depicts a dinner party in which luxurious dishes are served to the magnate Virro, while his guests, “well inured to the whip,” are fed such rank foods as a “grey-mottled river-pike, born and bred in the Tiber, / Bloated with sewage” (5.103-4). The satire’s main message is that Rome’s citizens are abject slaves (Hooley, *Roman Satire* 119).³⁰¹ In *Our Mutual Friend*, Mr Veneering’s servant, a “melancholy retainer”

(like Juvenal himself, and like the guests in Satire V), is a gloomy, satiric presence (an “Analytical Chemist”) at the Society feasts. His announcement, “Dinner is on the table!” is translated to the morbid injunction: “Come down and be poisoned, ye unhappy children of men!” (OMF 9). *Satura*, a literary form designed to accommodate the miscellaneous overabundance of moral wrongs that characterize a declining society, is well-suited to Dickens’s aim in *Our Mutual Friend*, which, as Knoepflmacher states, is to “portray the debility of an age” (*Laughter* 137).³⁰² The text is a Juvenalian satire complete with a “gaping salmon” (which looks at wealth admiringly) and a mock privy-council. (In the final satiric feast, a “Committee” forms in judgment of Eugene’s “bad catch,” Lizzie Hexam.) Ostensibly, satire offers corrective nourishment to society, or at the very least, like the pill Twemlow takes to ease his digestion of society dinners, aims to moderate the ill effects of over-consumption; *Our Mutual Friend*, however, offers the indigestible fact of an unsalvageable civilization – a society more moribund than that represented in either *Hard Times* or *Bleak House*.

4.xiii Victorian Psychology: Habit and Cravings for Money, Food, and Other Substances

A significant root meaning of habit is *habere*, to “have or hold”; thus, etymologically, habit is linked to the desires, pleasures, and practicalities of possession. “[A]ll-purchasing Money,” observes Alexander Bain, is “the institution of civilized communities” (*Emotions* 428). Furthermore, Spencer warns: “[W]hen money comes to be the representative of value in general – value as abstracted from special objects – the

miser shows us how the desire of possession in the abstract may become almost independent of those from which it arose; and may exceed in strength any of them individually” (*PP* 1: 489). In Victorian psychology texts, money is frequently targeted as the object that best exemplifies the morally and mentally ruinous potential of habit; the figure of the miser is paramount. Alexander Bain summarizes the habit-based pathology of avarice thus: “The sum total of purchasable enjoyments becomes linked in the mind with the universal medium of purchase, and this medium grows into an end of pursuit” – and “sordid avarice” is its most extreme form (*S&I* 398).³⁰³ Desire for money, Bain asserts, is easily detached from original ends or associations. In *Our Mutual Friend*, Bella’s fear that she will no longer be able to keep the avarice out of her eyes, as she is “always avariciously scheming” (*OMF* 320), illustrates in microcosm, as does Silas Wegg’s insomniac and malnourished condition, the psychic unmanageability of money-love. The narrator’s ironic injunction – “Have no antecedents, no established character, no cultivation, no ideas, no manners; have Shares” (*OMF* 114) – satirizes not only the mid-century mania for capital and unstable investments in “these times of ours,” but also the assertion that character is money (parodying Samuel Smiles’s axiom that “character is habit”). Reinforcing culturally prevalent notions about miserliness, *Our Mutual Friend* finds the intrinsic value or “moral being” (*OMF* 13) of human beings to be particularly endangered by money.

Moreover, in a capitalist system, money, replicating the self-propulsive process of habit itself, generates money; Dickens’s assault on economic practices in *Our Mutual Friend* is thus linked to his anatomy of habit. P. Jarvie argues that the text’s critique of

capitalism “is rooted in the difference between use-value and exchange-value and in the difference between productive circulations and mere accumulation” (2).³⁰⁴ Dickens’s rejection of empty accumulation “parallel[s]” Karl Marx’s idea (in *Capital*, 1867) that, under capitalism, distinctions between things of differing intrinsic value (such as corn and iron) are lost in their equalizing reduction to “exchange-value” (Jarvie 120). As Jarvie observes: “*Our Mutual Friend* presents the Marxian nightmare of an irretrievably commodified world where capital is autonomous, self-referential, and self-replicating, and where humans have been all but absorbed into an all-encompassing circulation turning everything into money” (123). Dickens’s depiction of the habit-like mechanisms of capital production resonates with the representation of money in key texts of Victorian social criticism and psychology (including *Past and Present*, *Sesame and Lilies*, and *Senses and the Intellect*), in which the desire for money is analogous to perverted eating habits – either starvation or gluttony.³⁰⁵ The “phenomena of habit,” Spencer concludes, deaden the feelings that accompany our actions – even repugnance; as a result, unhealthy, self-destructing habits remain unchecked, and human vitality is perversely siphoned into habit (*PP* 1: 579-80).

Overtly thematizing the controlling power of habit, the majority of the characters in *Our Mutual Friend* have substance addictions (to tea, wine, snuff, opium). For example, Mr Venus daily submerges his lovelorn thoughts by “floating his powerful mind in tea” (*OMF* 780) (and roasting muffins). More fatally, characters like Riderhood’s wife “succum[b] to ... snuff and gin” (*OMF* 350). Such addictions, the narrator warns summarily, are “incompatible equally with coherence and existence” (*OMF* 350). A

legion of alcoholics, from the “shrieking” liver that disrupts the Inspector’s office, to the “drunken tribe” in Covent Garden, are represented by the text’s central alcoholic, Mr Dolls – for whom “rum [is] the only meaning of which he [is] capable” (*OMF* 24, 729). In his non-human status as “[t]he wretched spectacle” (*OMF* 241), he, like Krook in *Bleak House*, is the text’s centerpiece figure of ruinous habit. His “mental decrepitude” (*OMF* 729) is visible; he is seen “dropping half-a-dozen pieces of himself while he trie[s] in vain to pick up one” (*OMF* 539). Since money-getting is figured as alcoholic addiction throughout *Our Mutual Friend*, it is appropriate that Mr Dolls crashes the dinner celebrating the Lammlers’ “total smash” (*OMF* 626) in order to collect money from Eugene. Moreover, alcohol flows at the Veneering table to blur reality further (such as debt) and fictions (such as Veneering’s Parliamentary campaign), and Wegg plies Venus with rum and water “again and again” to facilitate the “friendly mov[e]” (*OMF* 306). Further signifying the general loss of social sobriety and coherent consciousness, Veneering is a speculator in drugs; the town of Millbank (like the “drug-flavoured” Mincing Lane), has an atmosphere of “a deadly kind of repose,” as if it had rather “taken laudanum than fallen into a natural rest” (*OMF* 603, 221). Disorienting substances function, as John Harmon knows from having consumed “hocussed wine” (*OMF* 363), to destroy or submerge the conscious self. In a dizzying blend of substance metaphors, the narrator likens the societal mania for money (and shares, its adulterated equivalent) to an addiction to “henbane or opium,” which causes “us smaller vermin” to “cry out night and day, ‘Relieve us of our money, scatter it for us, buy us and sell us, ruin us, only we beseech ye take rank among the powers of the earth, and fatten on us!’” (*OMF* 114).

Dickens's satire associates habit with an assortment of "artificial cravings" analogous to the desire for money which mechanize, deaden, and consume human consciousness.³⁰⁶

4.xiv The Satiric Procession of Cannibalistic Feasts

Silas Wegg's protest, "'You can't buy human flesh and blood in this country, sir; not alive, you can't'" (*OMF* 297), is ironized throughout *Our Mutual Friend*.

Cannibalism epitomizes the inhumanity of the habit-perpetuated and money-inspired practices that capitalism condones. The miser Fledgby, who is the "perfection of meanness," is described as a strange kind of cannibal. Love for money has replaced his desire for food; he often "half starve[s] himself" on "scanty rashers of bacon" (*OMF* 268, 271, 269). Instead, the bill-broker's hunger is transposed onto cruel bargains that bring "somebody's ruin" (*OMF* 271).³⁰⁷ His derogatory nickname, "Fascination Fledgby," mocks his lack of social instincts, but also underlines his predatory use of the near-mesmeric, coercive force of habit. Although Fledgby is not the text's most conspicuous cannibal (Lammler, Wegg, and Riderhood are more violent), his occupation as a discount bill-broker is iconic. His character symbolizes the general financial mayhem of the 1860s – what Mary Poovey describes as the dangerously "unregulated system of discounting to generate a self-perpetuating cycle of borrowing and debt" (*Making* 158).³⁰⁸ Not simply an individual, Fledgby is a cultural phenomenon: the world has much "stock in hand" of his kind (*OMF* 432). A foggy tour through London ends at its hellish, dead centre: Fledgby's company Pubsey and Co, where "flayers" and "grinders" of human skin have their victims "peppered and salted and grilled on a gridiron" (*OMF* 427-28). The narrator's

Juvenalian depiction of “unpromising” London with its “giant” “money-mills” (*OMF* 603) that (metaphorically speaking) eat its inhabitants alive, supports the text’s central, horrific syllogism: money is food; human beings are a source of money; therefore human beings are food.³⁰⁹ As Harry Stone argues, cannibalistic motifs are central to *Our Mutual Friend* (156).

Both the feast-as-generic *topos* and the routine nature of eating render dinner scenes an ideal *locus* for a satire on humanity-consuming habits. *Our Mutual Friend* depicts a series of perverse feasts (six major society dinners and breakfasts) at which guests maintain an ironic social habit: “the calamity of being in the society of everybody else” (*OMF* 410). Veneering’s dinner-parties “habitually star[t]” with Twemlow, who exists tenuously in a chronic invitation to dine, and “Mr Podsnap [goes] out to dinner, and to dinner, and yet to dinner” (*OMF* 6, 255). The well-oiled “dinner society” is composed of friends who are “old and dear” in proportion to the ever-shifting amount of money each is worth. In multiple satiric feasts, characters like Mr Podsnap, who is observed “prosperously feeding” (*OMF* 10), are not only figured as cannibalistic, but are equated with consumable substances (food, money, and other objects). Dinner guests, in their “showy and gaudy” (*OMF* 411) materialism, are metonymically equivalent to the pretentious objects in the dining room.³¹⁰ Reflected in Veneering’s side-board mirror (a satirizing medium to which I will return), dinner-guests are not only objectified as mere reflections, but their physical features are itemized in sentence fragments that lack personal pronouns: “Reflects mature young lady; raven locks, and complexion that lights up well when well-powdered” (*OMF* 10). Significantly, the food offered at this dinner is

not mentioned; instead, guests gobble up Mortimer Lightwood's scandalous story about the miser John Harmon, which culminates in the meal's final offering: a drowned human body. Veneering profits from sating his financial connections' unwholesome appetites for human suffering. In this initial feast, an explicit parallel is formed between elite businessmen and lower-class dredgers who traffic in dead bodies: human beings provide "meat and drink" for everyone (*OMF* 15, 3).³¹¹

The Lammles' wedding provides the next excuse for a society dinner. Again, human beings, and not the "indigestible" cake (*OMF* 122), are the real food consumed at the feast. Initially the festivities are described from Lady Tippins's cutting point of view.³¹² Although she herself is not an appetizing candidate for consumption (Gaffer's decomposing body is described as being "[n]ot *much* worse than Lady Tippins" [*OMF* 24]), she enjoys dismembering others.³¹³ Aptly, as she herself is entirely self-consumed, her report contains no autobiographical "I". As well, the mutilated victims in her report lack personal pronouns or definite articles: "Bride; five-and-forty if a day, thirty shillings a yard, veil fifteen pounds" (*OMF* 119). Once again, a scene of feasting displays English habits of consumption, and the perfunctory wedding echoes Gaffer's "business-like" (*OMF* 2) habit of dredging human corpses from the Thames.

The third society dinner marks the occasion of Georgina Podsnap's eighteenth birthday. In her "pinioned attitude," Georgina is "swallowed up" by the Lammles – who are always "scheming together for to-day's dinner and to-morrow's breakfast" (*OMF* 137, 624).³¹⁴ Guests, depersonalized as "bathers," "take a haunch of mutton vapour-bath at half-past nine" and dip equally into their food as they do into the "waters" of the

Harmon murder (*OMF* 130,134). The guests anatomize one another: “bathers of the gentler sex sat silently comparing ivory shoulders” (*OMF* 135). (As Alfred complains to Sophronia, “We have both been biting, and we have both been bitten” [*OMF* 125].) In a grotesque epitome of Dickensian satiric parallelism, the guests are equated through the verb “to bathe” with the mutton, while the meat enjoys the upper-class activity of a social bath. Furthermore, mutton is a perfect signifier for the dehumanizing indoctrinations of capitalism, for Boffin equates a sheep’s market-value with that of a secretary.³¹⁵ Even the dinner plate is personified as cannibal-bait: “Wouldn’t you like to melt me down?” (*OMF* 131).

Importantly, it is at this feast that an anonymous, “meek” man mentions the people who have lately died of starvation in the streets; for Podsnap, “[i]t was clearly ill-timed, after dinner” (*OMF* 140). The Juvenalian context of an opulent meal for attacking the upper class’s neglect of the starving poor creates a Swiftian accusation: the rich, like the absentee English landlords in *A Modest Proposal* (1729), are more than metaphorically feeding off of England’s poor (the victims of political economists, poor laws, and *laissez-faire* ethos). Also anticipated in this feast is the forthcoming exposure of murderous governmental fictions (such as the humanity of the Poor Law) through Betty Higden’s Hogarthian moral “progress” towards death-by-starvation. Conclusively, the national pastime of exploiting the poor is targeted in the novel’s final dinner, when Mortimer Lightwood comments to Lady Tippins that, on his last adventure, he noted that the island savages “were becoming civilized At least they were eating one another,

which looked like it” (OMF 816). *Our Mutual Friend*’s procession of satiric feasts provides a Juvenalian indictment of the cannibalizing materialism of English society.³¹⁶

4.xv The “moral sewage” of British Habit

Not only are there intimations of Swift’s *A Modest Proposal* in *Our Mutual Friend*’s critique of the fatalities and moral horrors of the free-market economy, but the “excremental vision”³¹⁷ of *Gulliver’s Travels* is also implicitly evoked. The Dust Mounds – which, as many critics have noted, are a symbolic constant in the text – contain “[c]oal-dust, vegetable-dust, bone-dust, crockery-dust, rough dust, and sifted dust – all manner of Dust” (OMF 13), including human and animal excrement.³¹⁸ As Harmon’s enormous mounds are carted off piece-meal, the image of Gulliver (the humiliated representative of British pride) shamed by his colossal pile of excrement (as it is painstakingly removed by the Lilliputians) resonates subtextually. At one level, *Our Mutual Friend*’s “dust” signifies the inescapable “intersection of capitalism and biology” (Jarvie 128). Catharine Gallagher notes that Dickens’s depiction of the mounds contributed to then-current moral criticisms of political economy by writers such as Ruskin (who argued that wealth and value are linked fundamentally to human vitality) (107).³¹⁹ Yet I would like to emphasize the mounds’ metaphoric function of linking habit (itself a physiological process) and the necessary by-products of over-consumption. In *Our Mutual Friend*, Dickens recycles the image of the garbage mound that he had previously used in *Hard Times* to satirize systematic governmental ineptitude and the “sifting and sifting” at London’s

“parliamentary cinder-heap” (*HT* 202) that reduces and equates human life with waste-matter – the true product of England’s so-called progress.

Mr Podsnap, a Menippean mouthpiece for the cant of progress, routinely dismisses repellant subjects (such as the mortality rates of the poor) with an ostentatious flourish of his right arm. With his characteristic gesture, he dramatizes that habit is the crux of Podsnappery: the ideology proclaiming English moral and financial superiority. Podsnap is an anglophile who ritualistically performs and promotes the “stock notions and habits” (Arnold) of Englishness: “the world got up at eight, shaved close at a quarter-past, breakfasted at nine, went to the City at ten, came home at half-past five, and dined at seven” (*OMF* 128). This invariable sequence (a “grand chain riveted to the last link”) is narrated four times to convey textually the “dead-weight” and “thralldom of Podsnappery” (*OMF* 138, 129, 255). Like Gulliver in Lilliput, who cannot be “disemburthened” of his “uneasy load” (*Gulliver’s* 12) beyond the limits of his chain (his English habits), the English, Dickens suggests, cannot flee the noxious products of their monstrous national machinery. Appropriately, the French dinner guest enrages Podsnap by noting, not London’s greatness, but the abundance of horse dung in the streets. As well, the tales of *escritaires* found in Boffin’s books of abject misers provide further proof that all that separates human beings from the merely physical – the dung, dust, and habit to which they are biologically yoked – are qualities that do not define English character and conduct: morality, sympathy, and benevolence.

4.xvi Moral Transformation and the Mirror of Satire

In Chapter 1, I suggested congruencies between “realism” and satire; now, I would like to borrow the symbolic mirror from the repertoire of Victorian “realism” in order to highlight its role in satire’s representational rhetoric. In Chapter 17 of *Adam Bede*, the narrator, echoing the novel’s introductory sentence that presents the novel as “a single drop of ink for a mirror” (*AB* 5), influentially defines the highest duty of the novelist as the rendering of the “most faithful account of men and things as they have mirrored themselves” in their minds (*AB* 75).³²⁰ Among the many genres and modes “lurking in realism” (Levine, “Literary Realism” 16), satire offers an equivalent epistemological claim to mirror social reality. Satire’s mental mirror, however, is conspicuously coloured by authorial moral anger (*indignatio*); rather than aspiring to “exact likeness” (*AB* 177), it claims to offer (as Dickens’s prefaces insist) a magnified, but not necessarily distorted, version of the truth. In their programmatic defenses, satiric writers boast a singular accuracy of vision. Thus, in traditions of both realism and satire, the mirror is an important metaphorical tool for genre-based truth claims. *Vanity Fair*, a text which Levine has recently evaluated as an “exemplary realistic fiction” (“Literary Realism” 14), is also a paramount example of Victorian narrative satire (Palmeri, “Thackeray” 770). The novel’s title page depicts a satirist (a jester in motley) gazing into a mirror; the image reinstates Swift’s notion of the incapacity of satire’s written reflections to dislodge the selfish hypocrisies of the reader/viewer – or even of the satirist. Certainly, Becky Sharp sees her own ill-nature reflected back at her, not in the form of self-knowledge, but as an overriding perception of ill intent in others.

Thackeray's version of Swift's axiom is that "[t]he world is a looking-glass, and gives back to every man the reflection of his own face. Frown at it, and it will in turn look sourly upon you; laugh at it and with it, and it is a jolly kind companion" (*Vanity Fair* 15). Similarly, in *Our Mutual Friend*, the mirror functions to expose the habit-reinforcing and reiterative insularity of the human mind. Charley Hexam, for example, cannot help but identify selfishness, his own ruling quality, in others (even in his "self-forgetting" sister): "What is there but self, for selfishness to see behind it?" (*OMF* 401, 712).³²¹ In *Our Mutual Friend*, mirrors – reflective surfaces of all varieties from glass windows and ornamental mirrors to "the great serene mirror of the river" (*OMF* 522) – reveal human habit.³²²

A paradoxical concept of death-in-life is effectively figured in the novel by the two-dimensional mirror image. The Lammles, as they scheme before a mirror, illustrate the dehumanizing and self-alienating effect of money-mania: "There was a mirror on the wall before them, and her eyes just caught him smirking in it. She gave the reflected image a look of the deepest disdain, and the image received it in the glass. Next moment they quietly eyed each other, as if they, the principals, had had no part in that expressive transaction" (*OMF* 260). Similarly, in the satiric portrait of the Veneering dinner party, reflected in the "great looking-glass above the sideboard" (*OMF* 10), characters are de-personified and introduced as mirror reflections; there are no "principals" present.³²³ Like Fanny Dorrit, whose death-like descent into "society mania" (*Little Dorrit* 538) is reflected by her image in a looking-glass, such characters are defined by a "loss of self-governing will" (*Little Dorrit* 646).

Bella Wilfer's moral role in the novel is to overcome narcissistic habits of money-love. Rather simplistically, materialism alone, without the aid of misogyny, is identified as having reduced Bella to "a horse, or a dog, or a bird" (*OMF* 377) to be purchased. Misconstruing her object-status, she regards herself as having the agency to "capture" a good sum/man. Despite her self-consciously mercenary goals, her sympathetic nature habitually disrupts her selfish practices. Both her habit of introspection – dramatized in her routine of self-scolding before her looking-glass – and her habit of confessional conversations with her father contribute to her incremental progress away from materialism and self-speculation. Furthermore, she recognizes her shameful reflection in the symbolic glass of Lizzie Hexam's noble character. Ultimately, in "great things" such as sympathy (evidenced by her outpouring of love for the dying orphan John, her affection for Lizzie, and her ultimate defense of Rokesmith), she is not "little" (*OMF* 745). The self-willed moral transformation of Bella Wilfer is the text's most hopeful argument for the human will's potential to overcome destructive habit. Yet, importantly, her success (highlighted by her emblematic surname *Wilfer*) requires Harmon's protracted pedagogical scheme involving Boffin's dramatic satire. Boffin's parody of miserly meanness inspires Bella's angry denunciation of "Pounds, Shillings, and Pence!" (*OMF* 593), demonstrating that in combination with *pre-existent* habits of sympathy, satire may be an instructive mirror to a wayward individual will.

Lizzie Hexam functions as an ironic mirror not only to Bella, but also to Eugene and Bradley. Except for being female, she is a paragon of William James's ideal of active, healthy, and virtuous habit: she is "[a]ccustomed from her very babyhood

promptly to do the thing that could be done” (*OMF* 71). As such, she is the antithesis of Eugene, who, like James’s effete dreamer, installs through his systematic inaction a habit of irreversible idleness.³²⁴ Lizzie, by evading and challenging masculine injunctions, serves to diminish masculine egotism. Through her virtuous self-regulation, she resists commodification like no other character in the text. Although Eugene purchases her whereabouts for fifteen shillings, and Fledgeby, Bradley, and Charley all try to buy or sell her, Lizzie “cannot authorise” and “cannot allow” (*OMF* 403) the loss of her self-governing will. Two key moral practices idealized in Victorian economic and physiological discourses of habit are epitomized by her character: energetic self-reliance and active sympathy. In her various vocations (dredgerwoman, seamstress, and factory worker) she is indefatigable – even maintaining her goal of literacy. She is “fixed” (*OMF* 67) in her devotion to her father, Charley, Jenny Wren, and Eugene; significantly, it is because of her “practised hand” and “[h]er old bold life and habit” (*OMF* 698-99) that she unhesitatingly rescues Eugene. A model of industrious, redemptive habit, Lizzie (like Sissy Jupe) is also associated with the habit-transcending possibilities of the imagination. Her thoughts, for example, “rus[h] out” like the “tidal swell of the river” (*OMF* 70), whereas Eugene’s move “like the stream, and all tending one way with a strong current” (*OMF* 698). Fittingly, as a visionary who dreams over fires (not mirrors), she is exempt from restless battles with mirroring doppelgängers. Lizzie is a rare embodiment of Dickens’s utopian hopes for habit, but her less singular suitors, Eugene Wrayburn and Bradley Headstone, embody the all-too-common extremes of pathological (and, for

James, emasculating) habit: excessive self-regulation, on the one hand, and wayward indolence on the other.

Unlike Bella, Eugene is not vainly attracted to mirrors in his lackadaisical efforts to understand the “embodied conundrum” (*OMF* 286) of his character. Other reflective surfaces document his chronically divided identity. In the language of mesmerism, he is “drawn” – through a blend of spontaneous sympathy and rakish cynicism – to look “long and steadily” (*OMF* 164) through the window at Lizzie as she cries in front of the fire. A life-long habit of passive spectatorship is suggested by his tendency to gaze aimlessly out of windows. At society dinners, Eugene stands moodily by the window; when challenged by Mortimer Lightwood to resolve the riddle of his character, he evasively smokes a cigar by the window. Furthermore, it is symbolically apt that he routinely stares out of his apartment window to look for Bradley. His animosity towards Bradley is like Gulliver’s aversion to the Yahoos, for he is unable to recognize his affinity with this man whom he deems to be a “creature of no worth” and a “curious monomaniac” (*OMF* 288, 294). Staring out of windows that serve as self-satirizing mirrors, Eugene unconsciously recognizes both his moral antithesis (Lizzie) and his moral likeness (Bradley).

Plagued by chronic apathy, Eugene, like James Harthouse Esq. in *Hard Times*, represents a privileged class of men who dissent from the ideals of Utilitarianism, but who lack sufficient energy and sympathy for reform. Defined by selfish disaffection, their most abominated cultural catchword is “energy.” Eugene denounces the cult of earnestness as “parrot gabble,” claiming that he would be energetic for ““something really worth being energetic about.”” Yet his vow is undercut by the narrator’s startling

and cynical judgment: “And it is likely enough that ten thousand other young men... made the same hopeful remark” (*OMF* 20). As Eve Sedgwick has shown, gender and class ideologies enable Eugene’s exploitive abuse of both Lizzie and Bradley; they augment his “moral ugliness” (183).³²⁵ As well, like Harthouse, Eugene exploits the force of habit. He uses his knowledge of Lizzie’s daily routines (her routes to and from work) to catch her off-guard, and he lures her to accept his patronage by appealing to her love for her father (and also Jenny Wren, whom he argues will benefit from her instruction). His logic resonates with her habitual associations, causing “subtle string[s] to sound” (*OMF* 236). Moreover, by virtue of his knowledge of Bradley’s Smilesean habits of mind, he “goad[s]” the schoolmaster to “madness” (*OMF* 542). Eugene’s most cynical acknowledgment of the power of habit is his comment to Mortimer as he washes his hands after Mr Dolls’s visit: ““Observe the dyer’s hand, assimilating itself to what it works in”” (*OMF* 541). Thus, he admits his awareness that his new fixations, that have supplanted his façade of a vocation, are dangerously constitutive. Just as Mr Dolls is driven to rum, Eugene is addicted to wayward exploitation. In his sadistic power over both Bradley and Lizzie, Eugene mobilizes class and gender advantages in conjunction with the psychology of habit. Embodying the Victorian moral paradox of habit, Eugene (with the satiric narrator’s approval) scorns the mechanistic mind-set of Podsnappery and Utilitarianism, but is undercut by his own chronic immorality.

As the physical world in *Our Mutual Friend* satirizes human habit, it is not surprising that “the great serene mirror of the river” (*OMF* 522) monitors Eugene’s ethical crisis. After his attempt to seduce Lizzie, Eugene saunters by the riverside,

looking at the reflection of the stars in the river. Next, mirroring the motion of the water, there is a “correspondent stir in his uneasy reflections” and his thoughts “revea[l] their wickedness” (*OMF* 698). Eschewing, as usual, his moral culpability, he stops to “look down at the reflected night” (*OMF* 698), which suddenly distorts to match his monstrous moral identity. Both his assailant (Bradley) and the river are manifestations of his fragmented self. But significantly, the “living waters,” which have witnessed *many* “scene[s] of horror or distress” (*OMF* 751, 522) – including Betty Hidgen’s death as she stares at lighted windows reflected in the water – reflect not only Eugene’s moral errors, but also the unsympathetic and irresponsible habits of the ruling classes in general. Vrettos argues that Dickens’s novels tend to present moral transformation as being not merely inhibited, but blocked by the determining power of habit.³²⁶ Eugene, like Bella, escapes (just barely) from a fixedly immoral identity, but he also requires external assistance to promote and secure moral transformation. Together Eugene and Bradley function as a manifold mirror reflecting an ungovernable, self-consuming “Society”; each is an “individual condensation”³²⁷ of their nation’s bad habits. Despite their idiosyncratic traits – Eugene’s epigrammatic wit and Bradley’s clenching tic – both signify society’s collective incapacity for self-willed moral transformation.

Bradley, who is described as having “consumed himself” (*OMF* 546) in his obsession for his rival Eugene, is the most visibly habit-harassed character in *Our Mutual Friend*. “Racked and riven” (*OMF* 791) by his repetitive thoughts, he has been primed by his education of cram to be plagued by one-track-mindedness: his mind was formed to be an anti-Millsean “place of mechanical stowage” (*OMF* 217). In fact, his character is a

common product of a mid-Victorian pedagogical phenomenon: the Utilitarian “Educational Character” (OMF 214). The epithet applies to “multitude[s]” with “weak, imitative natures” who are “ready to go mad upon the next wrong idea that may be broached” (OMF 341). As a “highly certificated stipendiary schoolmaster,” his “teacher-habit” has been mass-manufactured (the word *mechanically* is used five times in the initial summary of his character) (OMF 216, 224). Moreover, he demonstrates the ineradicability of James’s “folds” of habit, for his “decent” schoolmaster’s clothes (*decent* is strenuously repeated seven times) fit him awkwardly, like “holiday clothes” (OMF 217). Often seen walking with his head bent, “hammering at one fixed idea” (OMF 341), Bradley’s passionate nature is captive to the power of habit; his energy lacks an outlet, and, to use Spencer’s notion of the physiology of laughter, must therefore “overflow” into other “channels” (*Essays* 300-8). For example, it is physically expressed in chronic nail-biting, chair-wrenching, wrist clenching, and finally in “ungovernable rage and violence” (OMF 398). Bradley’s “horrid,” “dreadful” (OMF 397) earnestness and routinized respectability are analogous to the national routine of Podsnappery, and his “smouldering natur[e]” (OMF 341) is a distillation of the combustible social atmosphere that Dickens targeted in *Hard Times* and *Bleak House*. *Our Mutual Friend* insinuates that English society is (like Bradley) ritualistically self-mutilating and self-consumed by Utilitarian doctrines that have backfired. England’s genteel, bourgeois classes (the Eugene Wrayburns) and working classes (the Rogue Riderhoods) alike are being borne “down with a dread unchanging monotony” (OMF 791) of fixed systems.

Descending into one's mirror image, according to Frye, involves an exchange of the authentic self for the mirror image; drowning is the appropriate end to a narcissistic existence, for Narcissus is the child of a river god and "almost drowns in his own watching eyes" (Frye, *Secular* 108; Ovid 71). Appropriately, once Bradley and Rogue become replicas of one another – through Bradley's mimicry of Rogue's appearance and Rogue's assimilative desire for Bradley's "spectable" goods (*OMF* 799) – they drown together. Riderhood's mania for money and Bradley's obsessive passion for social standing are equivalently habit-based and solipsistic. Their dead bodies are practically welded together in the "ooze and scum" of the river bed; the words "ooze" and "scum" evoke, once again, the predatory "Dismal Swamp" of society, with its "greedy, armour-plated crocodile[s]" (*OMF* 802, 409). Rogue's non-moral resurrection from drowning (his daughter's hope that "the old evil is drowned out of him" proves to be "short-lived delusion" [*OMF* 445-46]), together with Eugene's passive and precarious moral conversion, transmits a nihilistic prophesy of society's moral dissolution in its own mirror image. The "iron ring" (*OMF* 802) of Bradley's earnestness, compounded with Rogue's raving materialism and the destructive solipsism of Eugene, implicate all social levels in annihilating retrogradation; together they form the novel's Juvenalian position on habit. Additionally, Mr Doll's prominence at the end of the novel – his spectacular dereliction and public death-march habited in "vegetable refuse" (*OMF* 729) is iconic – encapsulates the satire's moral message: an incoherent nation will follow its habits to death.

4.xvii Jenny Wren: The Satirist's Opera-glass Vision

Sylvia Manning finds little direct satire in *Our Mutual Friend*. In its place, she observes that a “good deal of satiric attack and ridicule” is transferred to its characters – for example, to Jenny Wren (213).³²⁸ In *Household Words*, Dickens expressed a wish for his periodical to realize the satirical possibilities of a rehabilitated Asmodeus,³²⁹ who, in offering a bird’s-eye view of London, could expose hidden abuses. Jenny Wren, *Our Mutual Friend*’s benign Asmodeus, also has a penchant for roof-top dreaming; daily from the roof of Riah’s lodgings she surveys London’s “close dark streets,” where people are “alive, crying, and working” (*OMF* 281). Her fancies of flowers, singing-birds, and kind children (who do not mock her crippled body) provide a death-like escape from the hardships of her life. Her vital imagination also sustains her “inventive,” “catechizing” habit of scolding – a practice that Pam Morris argues is a strategy of survival that contrasts with Bradley’s destructive rage (208-210). The “prodigiously knowing” (*OMF* 224) Jenny incisively mocks the self-defining habits of everyone she encounters: “‘I know their tricks and their manners’” (*OMF* 234).³³⁰ Having been “surrounded by drunken people from her cradle” (*OMF* 227), she comprehends the destructive power of habit. Manning places her in the tradition of “primitive” satirists who, as R. C. Elliott explains, curse their victims with various physical punishments: “She is honest and good, but she threatens with a primitive cruelty and vindictiveness” (Manning 222). Jenny’s habitual ire, expressed in cutting invective, is matched in regularity and intensity by the industriousness with which she plies her art.

A “Doll’s Dressmaker,” Jenny creates her dolls out of scraps of garbage. Like the narrator, who is self-styled as a “fanciful observer” (*OMF* 46), she employs her dolls as tools of satire (in the manner that Dickens uses his characters). When she ventures into the streets of London/Vanity Fair, she keenly observes the follies of its citizens, “mentally cut[ting] them out and bast[ing] them” (*OMF* 724). In the personifying lexicon of her “doll-fancy,” the real “fine ladies” (who are both her patrons and her models) and her dolls (their habits and matching habiliments) are utterly conflated. Although she mimics female vanity through her art, her satiric anger is pointedly feminist. Characteristically, she rages, not at humanity’s general sins, but at the specific social sins of the male sex; for instance, she constantly infantilizes men to highlight their irresponsible selfishness. Along with her father (whom she makes “dismally ridiculous”), and her future husband, “Him” (down whose throat she plans to pour scalding liquid if he turns out to be a “drunkard” [*OMF* 242-243]), Eugene, Charley, and Bradley all come under the fire of her “vehement sharpness” (*OMF* 241). Correctly, she foresees that if Eugene “set[s] up a doll,” he will “break it. All you children do” (*OMF* 238). She accuses Charley of selfishness, and she brandishes her doll, the Honourable Judge “Mrs. Truth,” at Bradley when he denies a selfish interest in Lizzie. Above all, in her relentless scavenging for truth, she rejects a view that habit necessarily abnegates “moral being” (Mortimer’s important phrase, *OMF* 13). Instead, she insists upon moral accountability – particularly for the empowered sex. When her father blames “circumstances” for his alcoholism, she quips: “I’ll circumstance you and control you too” (*OMF* 241). As well, with her incessant question “*What* do you mean by it?” (*OMF* 241), she judges her

father to be responsible for his loss of self-governance. Combative, commanding, and questioning, Jenny, with the “keen chop” (*OMF* 346) of her jaws (she, like satire itself, is associated with cutting instruments, such as scissors and knives), is a mercilessly moral Juvenalian satirist. In her rage, she is the antithesis the girl in the *Adventures of Little Margery* who promoted the principles of political economy and “morally squashed” the miller with her meekness (*OMF* 214). With her habit of angrily holding up her two hands “like an opera-glass” or “double-eye glass” (*OMF* 226), she brazenly broadcasts the hypocrisy and selfishness of her targets – “as who should moralise, ‘Oh this world, this world!’” (*OMF* 224). Sedgwick argues that the name Jenny Wren is a “childishly deflationary name” (180),³³¹ but this self-selected name connotes not only femaleness – *Jenny* is a “prefix to denote a female animal” (i.e. *Jenny-wren* [bird]), but also, underscoring her status as a satiric artist, it is short for *Jenny-ass* (*OED*) or donkey: satire’s iconic animal. Yet for all of her energetic denunciations, in the degenerate environment of *Our Mutual Friend*, Jenny (moral perspicacity incarnate) is a necessarily fugitive and relatively powerless character.

Not surprisingly, as the text’s most Juvenalian character (“inclined to be bitter” [*OMF* 224]), Jenny’s perspective is prominent at the close of the novel. Four of the novel’s final chapters detail her revelations about Fledgby’s villainy, her father’s death, Riah’s enslavement, and her nursing role in Eugene’s convalescence.³³² Ironically, through her prominence in the story’s dénouement, Jenny’s ultimate lack of agency assumes a kind of centre stage. Aside from “peppering” Fledgby – with “spiteful satisfaction” and a “judicious hand” she puts pepper in his plaster dressings (*OMF* 723-

24) – Jenny’s ire is essentially futile.³³³ Her father’s illness is beyond her healing invective, which she defends nonetheless: “But I hope I did it for his good. And besides, I felt my responsibility as a mother so much. ... Where would have been my duty to my poor lost boy, if I had not tried everything?” (*OMF* 732). The clashes between Jenny and her father exemplify Dickens’s rhetorical alchemy of indignant satire and pathos-inciting sentiment. In a key scene that makes the intertwining of satire and sentiment dramatically apparent, Jenny shares with Lizzie her ecstatic vision of kind children (who, unlike real children, do not mock and hurt her), summoning her to play and relieving her of her misery. But her happy memory (and the intimacy of the communication) is interrupted by the entrance of her drunken father and the “world of scolding” (*OMF* 240), for Jenny must inveigh against her father with “vehement sharpness,” indignant rhetorical questions, and punitive threats. Mercilessly, she exposes what the narrator terms the “dire reversal” of parental responsibility (*OMF* 241, 242). After the scolding, Jenny fulminates against drunkards, and the “charm” of her visionary “better state” is “broken” (*OMF* 243). Further fusing the scene’s pathos with *indignatio*, the narrator interposes with an anguished apostrophe: “Poor dolls’ dressmaker! How often so dragged down by hands that should have raised her up; ... Poor, poor little dolls’ dressmaker!” (*OMF* 243). Jenny is imaginatively inclined to be “made light” by wonderment and empathy, but she is habitually dragged back, like the text itself, to the necessity of satiric rage, to being “a little quaint shrew; of the world, worldly” (*OMF* 243).³³⁴ Manning observes of the novel that “there is yet no vision of a reformed society, but the hope of individual regeneration is bright” (226). As I have argued, however, individual moral reform is presented in the

novel as being tentative at best, even with the aid of satire. Twemlow, Eugene, Lizzie, Mortimer, Jenny, and the Harmon and Boffin families form a small, new society of mutual friends who resist the loss of their free will to self-centred habit. But, as Manning notes, “the ‘Voice of Society’ is still heard in the present tense at the end of the novel” (227). In *Our Mutual Friend*, “free will,” or “the *habits of not yielding to our habits*, when a vision of injurious effects has been connected with the actions” (Lewes, *PLM3* 78), is shown to be as impossible for England as it was for ancient Rome. More ferociously than either *Hard Times* or *Bleak House*, the novel is a pulverizing satire on habit. In his insistence upon the novelist’s duty of “extreme exposition” (or “opera-glass” satire), and in his association with “feminine” sensibilities, child-like wonder, and lower-class rebelliousness, Dickens himself seemingly has much in common with his satirist-character Jenny Wren. Most accurately and crucially, their art shares a paradoxical fusion of sympathy and incinerating satire.

Thackeray’s praise for Dickens as a humourist who bequeathed to the world a “feast of love and kindness” (“Charity” 286) reveals that, like many of his ironically anti-satiric fellow satirists, Thackeray resisted Dickens’s apocalyptic assessments of English society – its imminent “spoliation” (*OMF* 501) and the invariable cannibalism of its commerce. As this chapter has argued, habit in Dickens’s “dark novels” is more destructive than redeeming; it is like Jenny Wren’s father: “My bad child is always dangerous, more or less” (*OMF* 434).

Chapter 5

Gendered Habits: Feminist Satire in Charlotte Brontë's *Shirley* and George Eliot's *Middlemarch*

Shirley stood behind the Rectors, leaning over their shoulders now and then to glance at the rules drawn up, and the list of cases making out, listening to all they said, and still at intervals smiling her queer smile – a smile not ill-natured, but significant: too significant to be generally thought amiable. Men rarely like such of their fellows as read their inward nature too clearly and truly. It is good for women, especially, to be endowed with a soft blindness: to have mild, dim eyes, that never penetrate below the surface of things – that take all for what it seems: thousands, knowing this, keep their eyelids drooped, on system; but the most downcast glance has its loophole, through which it can, on occasion, take its sentinel-survey of life. (Brontë, *Shirley* 273)

There is no general doctrine which is not capable of eating out our morality if unchecked by the deep-seated habit of direct fellow-feeling with individual fellow-men. (Eliot, *Middlemarch* 582)

In *Our Mutual Friend*, Jenny Wren's display of satirical resistance notably undercuts the patriarchal authority of many of the novel's male characters. But unsurprisingly, in a text that is not feminist in its main moral and social criticism, Jenny does not fundamentally reject gendered norms/habits. Nevertheless, her status as female satirist transgresses a customary generic prohibition, that satire is not a "feminine" practice. In Chapter 1, I outlined satire's historical status as a "masculine" genre and mode, highlighting not only the exclusively male, educated, and upper-class circles within which ancient satirists circulated their writings, but also John Dryden's seminal argument that Juvenal's satire demonstrates purer, "more vigorous and masculine wit" than Horace's. Thackeray's Victorian quest for a comic and satiric tradition that is both

“manly” and moral was also discussed.³³⁵ Similarly, I suggested that discourses of habit are inflected by those of gender – from Mill’s (and Taylor’s) radical argument that *a priori* notions of gender restrict the minds of both sexes (and the nation as a whole) to William James’s Spencerian proposition that habit is a mental phenomenon more debilitating to women than to men. Recalling Frances T. Russell’s insight that Victorian satire targets the formative contributions of culture to individual and social identities, this chapter postulates that Victorian feminist, novelistic satire on habit attacks patriarchal doctrines and institutions for circumscribing the “life and habits” of each sex through gendered codes that are absorbed, as the narrator of *Middlemarch* suggests, through the “social air” (*M* 306). In such texts, binary habits of masculine authority and egotism, in contrast to feminine self-suppression and subservience, are identified as underpinning Victorian separate sphere ideology; they are revealed to be intellectually and emotionally stunting to the individual, and politically and socially destructive to the nation. In other words, novelistic satires targeting masculinist ideologies argue that, like generic practices (such as satire), gendered identity is *substantially* habit-based.

Given that satire has been largely marginalized in discussions of Victorian literature, it is not surprising that feminist satire in the Victorian novel has received minimal scholarly attention. Although the resistance to patriarchal hegemony that saturates Victorian fiction has absorbed the attention of many influential feminist critics (Gilbert and Gubar, Showalter, Langland, Armstrong, and Poovey, among many others), “satire,” if identified as a feminist critical practice, is not typically explored in a detailed or generically weighted fashion.³³⁶ Thus, the central aim of this chapter is to sketch

taxonomic links to satire, as evinced through an interrogation of habit, through the examples of Charlotte Brontë's *Shirley* (1849) and George Eliot's *Middlemarch* (1871-72). An exploration of the possibility of generic differences between feminist and "masculinist" (or, more accurately, misogynist) satire exceeds the scope of this chapter. Furthermore, although patriarchal ideologies and prohibitions have had a distinctive impact upon the satiric production of female authors, I do not restrict the term to female writers or seek to identify the features of a distinctive "female" tradition.³³⁷ Instead, I will explore the denaturalizing emphasis that feminist novels – with substantial, even dominant, satiric elements – place on the phenomenon of habituation.

5.i Gender and Satire: Misogynist Traditions and Feminist Revisions

G. K. Chesterton, referring to satire generally and to Dickens's prophetic satire in particular, inadvertently exposes not only why Dickens's "extreme habit of satire" (*Chesterton on Dickens* 96) was transgressive for an informally educated man, but one key reason why the very concept of female-authored satire in a culture that systematically denied women equal intelligence would be, to use Charles A. Knight's words, "virtually unthinkable" (7):

You may have the dullest possible intelligence and be a portrait painter; but a man must have a serious intellect in order to be a caricaturist. ... True satire is always of this intellectual kind; true satire is always, so to speak, a variation or fantasia upon the air of pure logic. The satirist is the man who carries men's enthusiasm further than they carry it themselves.

He outstrips the most extravagant fanatic. He is years ahead of the most audacious prophet. He sees where men's detached intellect will eventually lead them, and he tells them the name of the place – which is generally hell. (*Chesterton on Dickens* 93-94)

Chesterton's assertions about "true" satire provide an evocative springboard for a discussion of satire's gendered associations. He associates satire with powerful and masculine authority founded upon a "serious intellect" (excelling in "pure logic") that authorizes "audacious" prophetic power. Anaphoristic use of the male pronoun further emphasizes his acceptance of the genre's association with exclusively masculine agency. Chesterton's praise for the heroically regenerative male satirist augments and exposes satire's long-standing status as a gendered discourse – one that reinforces the traditions of patriarchy. Feminist theologian Mary Daly asserts that within patriarchy, "plausible" authority is constituted exclusively by male/paternal figures (57). Like many Anglo-American feminist academics of the 1970s, Daly maintains (in an assertion troubled by many post-structuralist feminists, who emphasize white middle-class women writers' contribution to dominant cultural formulations) that *on the whole*, "[women] have been foreigners not only to the fortresses of political power but also to those citadels in which thought processes have been spun out, creating a net of meaning to capture reality" (6). Such a comprehensive claim is congruent with the fact that nineteenth-century women were systematically denied ecclesiastical, political, and cultural authority.³³⁸ The logic of this exclusion derived substantially from discourses of biological essentialism defining women's "nature" as being weak, susceptible to vice and folly, passionate, unruly, and

(with great relevance to their exclusion from satire) profoundly non-intellectual. Within the enduring philosophical binary of body/spirit (Block 11), misogynist constructions position women as body/matter.³³⁹ In masculinist thought, as Alexander Pope memorably reveals, women are regarded as “[m]atter too soft a lasting mark to bear, / And best distinguish’d by black, brown, or fair” (3-4).³⁴⁰ In short, women, as a sex, are the essentialized arch-scapegoat for human weakness, irrationality, and fallibility. Thus, far from being the authorized agents of satire, they are its inveterate subject.

S. E. Jones declares that “one of the perennial conventions of satire as a genre has been misogyny” (139). The word *misogynistic* relates to “or is characteristic of misogynists or misogyny; that hates or is prejudiced against women” (*OED*).³⁴¹ Discussing misogyny as a “prominent theme in all periods of English and American literature” and all literary forms, Katharine M. Rogers emphasizes that “manifestations of misogyny” include “not only direct expressions of hatred, fear, or contempt of womankind,” but also its indirect expressions (x-xi).³⁴² Her study reveals that although misogyny, mercurial like satire itself, covertly inhabits most genres, it ostentatiously suffuses satire. Rogers argues that there is a notable proliferation of harsh satire on women in the Restoration and the eighteenth century: Jonathan Swift and Alexander Pope were both “Juvenalian satirists” whose “particular stress on female failings, betray a definite misogynistic animus” (K. Rogers xv). Traditional themes of misogynist literature, Rogers argues, are abundant in Augustan literature: misogamy (a rhetorical tradition of advice against marriage),³⁴³ contempt for women who aspire to learning and a vocation, attacks on the shrewish wife or virago, and disdain for old maids. Similarly,

Felicity Nussbaum, in her landmark study *The Brink of All We Hate: English Satires on Women, 1660-1750*, also observes a “burgeoning of satires against women” in the period between the Restoration and mid-eighteenth century, rooted in the “patriarchal assumption of the natural inferiority of women” (7, 8). Nussbaum also pinpoints primary archetypes of “anti-feminist satire” (many of which overlap with Rogers’s misogynistic themes): the whore, the Amazon, the learned lady or “writing whore,” and the angelic ideal (*Brink* 4, 75).³⁴⁴ Many enduring anti-feminist satiric tropes, she argues, were consolidated in Juvenal’s sixth Satire – a work that “exert[ed] a powerful influence on the literary tradition of antifeminism” through various imitations and translations (Nussbaum, *Brink* 92).³⁴⁵ Importantly, women in the “myth of satire” are “a metaphor for all that is threatening and offensive to the society at large,” indeed, a metaphor for chaos itself (Nussbaum, *Brink* 19-20).³⁴⁶ In addition, Northrop Frye’s allegorical vision of satire as the definitive male hero (akin to Odysseus, David, St. George) – who represents “intelligence” locked in perennial battle with “stupid power” (figured as a “gigantic monster”) (“Nature” 80) – further suggests how the generic binaries of satire conveniently align with those of gender to preclude female writers from satiric authorship. From Juvenal to Swift, canonical male satirists satirize women’s *inherent* weakness, more than the bad habits or indoctrinations of custom; they do not quarrel with the sex-based hierarchy of society.

It is important to note that the work of Nussbaum and other feminist critics of satire remains peripheral to mainstream satire theory.³⁴⁷ In Chapter 1, I sketched a canonic-text- and preeminent-critic-based history of satire theory and practice that

reflected the masculinist focus of satire studies (past and present). Further, I described the satiric tradition as it stands outlined in important theoretical accounts of satire from the New Critical studies of the 1960s and 70s to the more historicized accounts of the 1980s and 90s. As Lorraine York plainly states, the indices in such key theoretical texts – by Pollard, Highet, Test, Kernan, and others – reveal the marginal status of women’s satire and feminist satire; the gendered history of satire is evident in indexed topics such as “Women satirized” or “Women, attitudes toward” (York 44).³⁴⁸ I would also add that the concept “feminist satire” is absent.³⁴⁹ In her 2001 dissertation on modernist women’s satire, Kathleen Lipovski-Helal argues that twentieth-century theorists “have consistently avoided discussions of gender,” observing a fairly “uncritical acceptance of satire as a masculine genre or mode” (5-6)³⁵⁰ Critics of satire tend to note the male-dominated history of satire, while deferring a feminist evaluation of the genre and mode.³⁵¹

Nussbaum argues that Mary Wollstonecraft’s *Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792) “launched an attack aimed squarely at antifeminist male satirists”; in so doing, she “dared to intrude into the masculine territory of reasoned public and political debate” (“Feminism” 83). Wollstonecraft usurped the masculine position of all-knowing authority – a claim that is the crux of masculinist satire – through her assertion, “Let me now as from an eminence survey the world stripped of all its false delusive charms” (*Vindication* 110). Discussing Johnson’s elevated register in his imitation of Juvenal’s *Satire* 10, “The Vanity of Human Wishes,” Nussbaum observes:

The onlooker whose gaze encompasses the world takes the broad and superior view. From his stance on high, he can see the relations among

things and can comprehend them whole. This privileged moral stance hinges on wide-ranging experience and broad education. It is, thus, a gendered one: for many centuries, only the polite and aristocratic European gentleman could make claims of impartiality. The special insight that writing women demonstrated in reading character and reporting intimate private knowledge was culturally authorized within the domestic novel [.] (“Feminism” 82)

Consistently associated with less capacity for the comprehensive knowledge that engenders the “broad and superior view” and “serious intellect,” women have been dissociated and unofficially debarred from intellectual and public discourses such as satire.³⁵²

5.ii Gendered Forms: Satire and the Victorian Novel

Claudia Thomas Kairoff observes that the novel was indeed a vehicle for women’s satiric expression: “As women helped develop the novel, satire was among the genres they incorporated into this new prose hybrid” (285).³⁵³ Arguing that the exclusion of women from the public political sphere had “consequences for the genres in which they wrote,” Frank Palmeri postulates that this exclusion “provided an impetus for their continued writing of satire” as a means of accessing the cultural public sphere (*Satire, History* 220). Palmeri finds that British women writers from Manley to Frances Burney retain “strong elements of satiric form,” for “satire retained its usefulness to a greater extent for them than for their male counterparts” (*Satire, History* 220, 41). Critics like Palmeri who broach the subject of satire and gender agree that the novel form offered

female writers a forum for relatively covert satiric critique. Yet it is important to recall that Palmeri regards “narrative satire” as being in a general state of recession for the bulk of the Victorian period, as a result of having been “domesticated” by the novel.³⁵⁴

Although the novel proved a productive ground for women’s satire, critics often cite the “growing feminization of literary taste” as a cause of satire’s generic decline (Jones, *Satire* 140). “Feminization,” from the Augustan perspective, meant literary culture’s descent into either hack writing or increased sentimentalism (Jones, *Satire* 140).³⁵⁵ Gary Dyer affirms that satire was coded masculine and sensibility, feminine; yet, significantly, he does not de-naturalize this encoding.³⁵⁶ Sensibility, he observes, was regarded as a “distinctly feminine virtu[e]” that was “incompatible ... with ridicule,” and its “success” “necessarily restrained satire” in the later eighteenth century (152); simply put, “traditional satire had become a casualty of the regendering of the reading public” (Dyer 167). Eileen Gillooly also notes a gendered literary shift at the end of the eighteenth century towards politer forms of expression suited to an “evangelically influenced” middle class, in which readers were “disproportionately female” (3). Revealingly, Thackeray, in “The English Humourists,” simultaneously feminizes the novel and asserts the eternal masculinity of satire: “mere satiric wit is addressed to a class of readers and thinkers quite different to those simple souls who laugh and weep over the novel. I fancy very few ladies, indeed, for instance, could be brought to like ‘Gulliver’ heartily, and ... to relish the wonderful satire of ‘Jonathan Wild’” (256). Thackeray’s words emphasize that the novel was conventionally viewed as a “feminine” form – a form which battled for respectability in the masculinist culture of letters. No doubt the

persistent gendering of both satire and the novel contributes to the resilient critical view of the novel as a mainly non-satiric form. Appropriately, female writers and audiences, and that which is symbolically deemed to be “feminine” (including the novel), are the scapegoats not only for general human folly, social disorder, and decay, but also for satire’s supposed decline.

Given its formal heterogeneity and potentially subversive political, social, and moral content, satire was, for many Victorian novelists and their critics, an uncouth, improper, and ungentlemanly genre. Contradictorily, though, satire was also regarded as being highly intellectual and vigorous, and therefore manly. In either incarnation, satire was deemed an improper form of critique or expression for women. Masculinist culture prescribed that women and satire, like oil and water, could not mix. Yet, as Laurie Fink and others note, ideological disjunctions and contradictions in patriarchal representation result in semi-authorized opportunities for writing women. Satire’s historical status as a moral genre, in conjunction with women’s license to write novels – and thereby wield a qualified and domestic form of moral authority³⁵⁷ – resulted in partially legitimated productions of satire that ran counter to prescriptions of intellectual disqualification.

The eighteenth-century trend to distance women from satire increased in the nineteenth century. Francis Hodgson, in his translation of the *Satires of Juvenal* (1807), insisted that he was not writing for “the ladies” (qtd. in Dyer 151). Similarly George Gissing, referring to female readers, observed that “the humourist never strongly appeals to that audience” (*Critical Study* 155). Feminine and genteel values were considered incompatible with ridicule, and women were thought to be too good-natured to

comprehend “masculine cynicism” (Martin 7), or so Leslie Stephen and others asserted.

³⁵⁸ Satire was positioned as being particularly off-limits to women, due to both its “coarseness” and its intellectuality. Thackeray’s words once again provide a touchstone for the gendered restrictions of satire as an art cleansed of its unruly habits by a feminized reading public:

How savage the satire was – how fierce the assault – what garbage hurled at opponents – what foul blows were hit.... Whilst we live we must laugh, and have folks to make us laugh. We cannot afford to lose Satyr with his pipe and dances and gambols. But we have washed, combed, clothed, and taught the rogue good manners; ... and he has put aside his mad pranks and tipsy habits; and, frolicksome always, has become gentle and harmless, smitten into shame by the pure presence of our women and the sweet confiding smiles of our children.... Comus and his wicked satyrs and leering fauns have disappeared, and fled into the lowest haunts; and Comus’s lady (if she had a taste for humour, which may be doubted) might take up our funny picture-books without the slightest precautionary squeamishness. (*Works* 648-49)³⁵⁹

According to Thackeray, women, like Comus’s lady, by their “gentle and harmless” and genteel presence, police the rude and “tipsy habits” of satire. As Nancy Armstrong has argued, the domestic novel itself was one of the complex discourses orchestrating and consolidating the period’s domestic ideology and ideal of “bourgeois national hegemony” (21) – a fantasy in which the coarseness of masculine competition and capitalism was

redeemed by the “pure presence” of women. Other influential feminist critics, including Bodenheimer, Ingham, Langland, and Poovey, have argued for the overlapping of class and economic ideology and gender in the nineteenth-century domestic novel, noting the utility of a peaceful, moral domestic sphere to legitimize and support a burgeoning capitalist society. For an examination of the intersections of gender and satire, however, I will emphasize the novel’s participation in non-hegemonic and subversive practices. Feminist satiric novels, for example, question the key masculinist cultural binary that supported the gendering of domestic and public spheres as well as women’s prohibition from writing satire – a binary eloquently summarized by Smiles: “Man is the brain, but woman is the heart of humanity; he its judgment, she its feeling; he its strength, she its grace, ornament, and solace” (*Character* 38).³⁶⁰ Smiles, whose words epitomize this banal cultural script, argues that women do not need political power, for they exercise influence in private life by helping to form the characters of men, and therefore of the nation (*Character* 61).³⁶¹ Paradoxically, the head/heart dichotomy simultaneously banned and sanctioned women’s employment of satire – an intellectual but moral genre.

Gillooly observes that “[w]hile political satire, comic drama, and the ‘Big Bow-wow strain’ remained off-limits to female users for most of the nineteenth century, ‘scenes of domestic life, treated humorously’ – that is, with humor that was sympathetic and restrained, tender and tactful – came to signify ‘the feminine note in fiction’” (4). Women were thought of as being “sharp-eyed observers of the social scene,” and having a “natural taste for the trivial”: “Victorian critics agreed that if women were going to write at all they should write novels” (Showalter 82). In his 1853 review of *Ruth* for the

North British Review, J. M. Ludlow theorized that the novel was well-suited to the delineation of human feeling, “a sympathetic form” addressed more to feeling than to “judgment, or reason”: “We know, all of us, that if man is the head of humanity, woman is its heart” (qtd. in Showalter 83). In the twentieth century, Chesterton’s insistence that the novel of the nineteenth-century was a “peculiarly feminine” (38) mode of art (unlike the masculine, satiric novels of the eighteenth century), because it was founded upon sympathy, has proven to be a resilient masculinist assumption. In this chapter, I argue that feminist satiric novelists attempted to dismantle the binary categories of both gender and genre, pronouncing them to be *substantially* based upon masculinist and misogynistic habit.

5.iii The Gendering of Habit

Just as Victorian feminist satire awaits further investigation, the gendered discourses of habit in the nineteenth century have yet to be examined substantially. I will therefore offer a brief survey of habit theory’s paradoxical utility both to the period’s misogyny, and also to the feminist thought of Wollstonecraft and Mill and Taylor. In doing so, I aim to contextualize the intersections of feminist novelistic satire and habit that I pursue in this chapter. As I outlined in Chapter 2, numerous scientists and psychologists, sociologists, political economists, and “men of letters” contributed to nineteenth-century discussions of culture as being sustained by habit. Powerfully, Darwin concluded *On the Origin of Species* with a lament concerning restrictions placed upon intellectual evolution by retrograde habits of thought, such as Creationism. Notions of

biological and social evolution catalyzed redefinitions of “man’s” relationship to God, to the natural world, and to “fellow men,” and the formative agency of the “social medium” over and above *a priori* epistemology gained cultural acceptance. Yet, “man’s” customary superiority over “woman” remained a particularly immovable convention that proved useful to what Mill terms “conservative interests” (*A* 1: 270).³⁶²

Many theorists of habit, who were also inveterate masculinists, postulated a scientific loophole through which to maintain customary notions of female inferiority in the face of increasingly general acceptance of theories of social habituation. Evolutionary sociologists and physiologists such as Herbert Spencer and Henry Maudsley (and later William James) proclaimed that although *all human beings* are subject to mechanistic forms of habit, men’s brains, being not only larger, but more complex, transcend the simple processes of repetitive thought more readily than women’s brains. The inferior social and biological status of women was thus further fashioned as a logical, intransigent reality underscored by the natural laws of habit. Gendered theories of habit simultaneously explained women’s presupposed weaker capacity for logic, originality, and even free will (and thus moral judgment) by claiming their greater mental subservience to grooves of habit. Such theories harmonized with what Sally Shuttleworth observes generally of the period: “medical science” and “mental science” “presided” over theories of gender division, constantly contrasting male self-control with “female subjection to the forces of the body” (*Brontë* 4).

Though not a scientist himself, John Ruskin felt entitled to pronounce women’s minds unsuitable not for “invention or creation” but perfect for daily conjugal helpfulness

and sympathy if “trained in habits of accurate thought” (*SL* 18:122, 126). Ruskin’s notion of the female mind accords with authoritatively scientific mid-Victorian “sex in mind” theories; as Rachel Malane observes, “the pairing of scientific findings with cultural beliefs made the resulting theories particularly solid and resistant to alternative viewpoints” (2).³⁶³ Biological psychologists such as Laycock, Spencer, and Bain were influenced by the “phrenological dictum that the brain was the organ of the mind” (Russett 109); numerous scientists proffered evidence that men’s brains were superior to women’s. Darwin himself asserted that men’s brains will always out-evolve women’s, for the competitive struggles of men will perpetually “keep up or even increase their mental powers” (*Descent* 565).³⁶⁴ As well, Russett notes the “almost universal acceptance” in evolutionary biology of the “notion of the greater variability of the male” and “concomitant, female conservatism”: “Masculine variability closed off to women the higher ranges of mind” (92, 94) Hermann Schaaffhausen proposed that the diameter of the human cranium corresponds with the intellect development of the brain and that the female skull showed “more signs” of the “scant development of the mental power” (qtd. in Malane 7). This kind of “scientific” evidence of female inferiority routinely appeared in the work of prominent physiologists, and buttressed anti-feminist political theory. James Allan, for one, argued in “Woman Suffrage Wrong in Principle and Practice” (1890) that women lacked the intellectual capacity for the most abstract virtue, “Justice” (219), and therefore for political responsibility. Such theories were invested in the inequality of the sexes as a fact relatively untouched by the laws of human changeability that evolutionary theory proposes; as George G. Romanes famously observed, it would

take ““many centuries to produce the missing five ounces of the female brain”” (“Mental Differences Between Men and Women” [1889], 395). Lewes, Darwin, Romanes, and others agreed that women’s limited accomplishments *in literature* – their lack of true originality or “poetic genius of the first order” (Romanes 384) – provided further evidence of their innate mental deficiencies.³⁶⁵ Thus notions of the female brain’s relative smallness, reduced intellectual capacity, and evolutionary conservatism buttressed misogynist theories of habit.

Significantly, in *Principles of Psychology* (1872), Herbert Spencer pronounces women to be biologically bound to less sophisticated processes of habit. Displaying his characteristic bigotry, he compares women to “lower races,” claiming that they are like “uncivilized” men when compared with civilized, “larger brained” men; their less developed neural systems are less capable of the “habitual representation of more various possibilities of cause, and conduct, and consequence.” Thus, they are less skilled than men in “balancing evidence” and modifying or suspending judgments, for they are quick to draw conclusions to which they “pertinaciously” adhere (Spencer, *PP* 1: 581-3). Generally speaking, women are emotionally “impulsive,” “simple,” and less profound (Spencer, *PP* 1: 583). Crucially, Spencer also insists that intelligence is measured by the “degree of remoteness from primitive reflex action” and “irreversible conclusions,” for “actions become less automatic as they become more complex” (*PP* 1: 584, 580). The “growth of intelligence” is dependant upon the laws of association or habit, whereas “reflex action” is “the lowest form of psychical life” – instinct, for example, is “compound reflex action” (Spencer, *PP* 1: 425, 428, 432).³⁶⁶ In short, Spencer concludes

that men are more *physically* capable of the “comparatively-hesitating” thoughts and emotions that characterize advanced intelligence (*PP* 1: 584), and which are a prerequisite for the “questioning habit” (*Principles of Sociology* 133). Women’s minds predominantly operate through “uncivilized,” uncultivated instinct (reflexive habit): their “psychical life” (intelligence and morality) is less evolved.

Similarly, Henry Maudsley argues in *The Physiology of Mind* (1877) that women’s minds, more so than men’s, operate through unconscious habit. Maudsley distinguishes between two classes of mind, a “subjective class” (feeling-based) and an “objective class” that utilizes the “dry light of reason” (*Physiology* 377). The lobes of the brain relegated to feeling, “more than the understanding,” are larger in women (Maudsley, *Physiology* 261-2). “[U]nconscious factors” of “mental function” (here implying the operations of habit) are stronger in those of weaker intellect, “as we plainly see by the examples of women and children, of persons labouring under sickness, and or those who are dying” (Maudsley, *Physiology* 378). Women’s characters, Maudsley acknowledges, are formed by their state of dependence and subjection and have “been made feeble by a long habit of dependence”; their sexual nature, he posits, has developed at the expense of their intellect (Maudsley, *Physiology* 203). Like children and animals, women are yoked to “present pleasures and present pains” (Maudsley, *Physiology* 256).³⁶⁷ The latter point advances David Hume’s assertion, in *A Treatise of Human Nature* (1739-40), that women are less endowed with free will – a capacity that involves forethought of future repercussions of present temptations. Either explicitly or implicitly,

women's minds were considered to be intellectually and morally yoked to the more mechanized functions and forms of habit.

William James, whose chapter on habit in *The Principles of Psychology*, as I have argued, is nearly a compendium of Victorian habit theory, supports the masculinist notion of women's greater propensity for simple habit.³⁶⁸ Importantly, James accepts the paradox that although human beings are "bundles of habits," "man" "owes his whole pre-eminence as a reasoner, his whole human quality of intellect, we may say, to the facility with which a given mode of thought in him may suddenly be broken up into elements, which recombine anew" (*Principles* 990). By contrast, "fixed habit" in animals "is the essential and characteristic law of nervous action," and, similarly,

A young woman of twenty reacts with intuitive promptitude and security in all the usual circumstances in which she may be placed. Her likes and dislikes are formed; her opinions, to a great extent, the same that they will be through life. Her character is, in fact, finished in its essentials. ... [Yet in the boy of twenty, the] absence of prompt tendency in his brain to set into particular modes is the very condition which insures that it shall ultimately become so much more efficient than the woman's. The very lack of preappointed trains of thought is the ground on which general principles and heads of classification grow up; and the masculine brain deals with new end complex matter indirectly by means of these, in a manner which the feminine method of direct intuition, admirably and

rapidly as it performs within its limits, can vainly hope to cope with.

(*Principles* 991)

According to James, women think and act more automatically (mechanically and instinctively); their minds are “formed” earlier, and in “preappointed trains of thought” sooner than men’s minds. The “masculine brain,” with its greater plasticity, is capable of more efficient, and unfixed, highly intelligent thought required for generating “general principles.” Furthermore, in an effort to cull all the positive effects of habit for masculine benefit alone, James implies that not only higher abstract reasoning, but productive habit (in the form of concentrated attention and energetic volition), are exclusively masculine. Thus, when men utilize brute habit, it is a powerful resource for the performance of “manly concrete deed[s]” (*Principles* 129), rather than the mental flaw that it is for women. For James, then, habit is simultaneously a debilitating and a feminine weakness (in its less productive forms), and a source of masculine endurance, strength of thought, and action. In summary, although physiological psychologists agreed that the exact degree to which the average man was a “walking bundl[e] of habits” (*Principles* 130) was unclear, masculinist theorists of habit nevertheless asserted confidently that *women* were creatures of habit.

James’s conclusions concerning female psychology and habit are a culmination of the position of mainstream Victorian mental science on the subject. Yet, a feminist counter-tradition, also grounded upon associationism, developed from the ideas of Mary Wollstonecraft, culminating in the conclusions of Mill and Taylor. Wollstonecraft, the harbinger of Anglo-American feminist thought (Russett 9), seizes upon Lockean

association theory and the liberating possibilities of an empirical science of the mind to argue that improvements were vital to women's education. In the chapter "The Effect Which an Early Association of Ideas Has upon the Character" in the *Vindication of the Rights of Women*, Wollstonecraft concludes that, although the "animal spirits" determine the poetic and sympathetic sensibility of an individual,

[T]here is an habitual association of ideas, that grows 'with our growth,' which has a great effect on the moral character of mankind; and by which a turn is given to the mind that commonly remains throughout life. So ductile is the understanding, and yet so stubborn, that ... [it] can seldom be disentangled by reason. (116)

Evidence of this, Wollstonecraft posits, is one's "habitual slavery" to "first impressions" (116). She regards the incipient mental science theorized by Hume and Locke as an opportunity to argue for the necessity of change in the traditional education and relations of the sexes. In this way, she prefigures John Stuart Mill and Harriet Taylor's utilization of habit theory to justify socio-political change. Fittingly, Wollstonecraft concludes this chapter – which argues that women's inferior traits have been *trained* into their character through the "cruel" (117) mental associations enforced by patriarchal society – by chastizing the Augustan satirists for ridiculing women for faults that are societal in origin.

Wollstonecraft's disciple Mill "was among [the] minority who strongly disputed the idea that men's larger brains were an indication of higher cerebral activity" (Malane 9). In *The Subjection of Women* (1869), Mill (with Taylor) declares the claims of physiological psychologists on the matter of "sex in mind" to be entirely specious and

“ridiculous,” asserting instead that women’s minds are shaped by their “entire domestic and social position and the whole habit of a life,” which provides a “complete explanation” for the perceived differences between the sexes (21: 313, 330). Women’s greater personal sympathy and focus on the present, for example, is a “habit inculcated by their whole life” and education rather than inherent qualities of the sex (21: 330). Moreover, “if” some of the “hypothetical” observations are “true,” Mill suggests, then men’s brains are demonstrably more habit-based (21: 312).³⁶⁹ This contentious tract contests patriarchal *a priori* philosophical and psychological theories concerning the “nature” of women. Far from accusing women of possessing an innate tendency towards “preappointed trains of thought,” Mill accuses male scientists and physiologists of illogical reasoning based on sheer hereditary habits of custom: “so long as the psychological laws of the formation of character have been so little studied, even in a general way, and in the particular case never scientifically applied at all; so long as the most obvious external causes of difference of character are habitually disregarded” (21: 312), we remain in complete ignorance of human psychology. Mill’s radical ethology of female character dismantled the misogynist, epistemological habit of “scientifically” consigning women to the thrall of habit.

As this brief survey of the Victorian gendering of mental science demonstrates, habit theory was employed to reinforce women’s biologically-based preclusion from greater social and political power, and also to disqualify them from the title of first-rate practitioners of any art (even the novel) – and implicitly, from the practice of satire, a form of art founded upon expansive knowledge, the “questioning habit,” and the

“sentiment of justice.” Ironically, discourses of habit, which more generally acknowledged the adaptation of human beings to their social environment, informed static and masculinist definitions of female nature. Feminist satirists, following Wollstonecraft, seized upon the scientifically and culturally recognized power of habit both to attack notions of inherent female weakness, and to expose the destructive egotism resulting from masculinist induction. An emphasis on the role of custom in “render[ing] habitual, and therefore natural” the character of the sexes (Mill, *SW* 21: 295), harmonizes with Frances Russell’s notion of the general movement of Victorian satire towards the “democratization” of targets. Feminist satiric fiction resists essentialist ideas that women’s minds are inherently anti-intellectual and reliant upon the lesser mechanisms of habit. Not only are the habits of each sex to a large degree problematized and denaturalized, female characters (often figured as satirists) working in concert with comprehensively satiric omniscient narrators challenge the mainstream Victorian conclusion that women are less capable of the un-habitual thought required for “habit of spontaneous criticism” (Spencer, *PP* 2: 531). In fact, following the tradition of the marginalized satirist, it is incumbent upon them to attack the “going point of view” (Bakhtin, *Dialogic* 301).

5.iv The “Bitter herbs” of Revisionist Satire in Charlotte Brontë’s *Shirley*

The current trend in criticism of *Shirley* is to emphasize Charlotte Brontë’s Tory and paternalist view of working-class reform over and above the novel’s subversive arguments. Many critics, it seems, have lost sight of the audacity of Brontë’s satiric

criticism of mid-Victorian, gendered ideological systems and structures.³⁷⁰ Due to its variable narrative voice, dual subjects (historical and domestic), and parodic mode of feminism,³⁷¹ *Shirley* (1849) has been cast regularly as a species of the “problem novel” in the Brontë canon. I argue that *Shirley*’s generic links with satire, a genre or mode regarded by many critics (then and now) with general ambivalence and gender-coded anxiety, is an important source of long-standing interpretive confusion. *Shirley*’s Menippean critique of totalizing systems, including High Toryism, undermines a myriad of inimical social, political, and literary conventions, or “*habitual matrices*” (*sosedstva*; Bakhtin, *Dialogic* 169). As the “adventure of an idea,” in Bakhtin’s phrase, the novel recounts “the condition of women in the English middle-class” (Forçade 143).³⁷² Yet, unlike Thackeray’s *Vanity Fair*, with its sexist bachelor narrator and demonized female satirist (Becky Sharpe, with her “monster’s hideous tail” [*Vanity Fair* 812]), Brontë’s social satire undermines the conventional subjects of misogynist literature: misogamy (the rhetorical tradition against matrimony), monstrous old maids, an undiscerning Eve, and the “unsexed” “Blue Stocking.” Such myths are interrogated to expose their social destructiveness and artificial basis in convention. As well, gendered divisions of labour and love are contested, as *Shirley* satirizes a cornerstone of patriarchal culture, the denial of female intellectuality.

Shirley’s trespass into a customarily masculine genre constitutes both a tribute to and a revisionist critique of Thackeray’s *Vanity Fair* (1848) – a novel recently dubbed the “the last instance” of “narrative satire in early Victorian Britain” (“Narrative Satire,” Palmeri 367). In her 1848 Preface to the second edition of *Jane Eyre* (written during the

composition of *Shirley*), Brontë commends “the satirist of *Vanity Fair*” for being “the first social regenerator of the day.” Approvingly, she likens Thackeray to an Old Testament prophet who displays “the Greek fire of his sarcasm” and the “Levin-brand of his denunciation” in order to “restore to rectitude the warped system of things.” (Preface, *Jane Eyre* 2). In a letter to W. S. Williams (11 December 1847), she commends Thackeray for waging war against the “falsehood and follies of ‘the World’” (*Letters* 1: 627). Thackeray, who did not regard satire as a genre compatible with female writers or readers, may have been surprised at Brontë’s enthusiasm for his “scalping humour” and his “keen, ruthless” satire (Brontë, *Letters* 1: 627).³⁷³ But not only did Brontë value the socially curative possibility of Thackeray’s satire, she attempted in *Shirley* to expose inimical social and literary conventions for the purpose of social regeneration.³⁷⁴ Unlike Thackeray’s Augustan *Vanity Fair*, however, with its derisive critique of women’s innate monomania for love, matrimonial mercenariness, false friendships, and Eve-like duplicity, Brontë’s satire assails such stereotypes for being the product of societal convention.³⁷⁵ As well, Brontë attempts to revise Thackeray’s Juvenalian misanthropy in favour of a more Horatian humanism.³⁷⁶ Encouraged by *Jane Eyre*’s acceptance by pre-eminent critics – “Sir John Herschel, Mr Fonblanque, Leigh Hunt and Mr Lewes” (Allott 172) – Brontë braved the “avenging stones” (*S* 352) of her censors (the Elizabeth Rigbys), and staged the private satire of her heroines Caroline Helstone and Shirley Keeldar in the public and traditionally masculine form of panoramic social satire. Brontë’s novel appropriates Thackeray’s Carlylean prophetic and comprehensive register

(that of the “legitimate High Priest of Truth”)³⁷⁷ to threaten a *gendered*, as well as a working-class, “spirit of disaffection against constituted authorities” (S 54).

Satire is perennially charged with inartistic disunity and *Shirley* is no exception. *Fraser’s Magazine* (December 1849) declared that the novel was “deficient in connection and interest” (Allott 153); *The Britannia* stated that “more than one half of the work has little or no connection with the main story”; and G. H. Lewes found “all unity” “wanting” (Allott 139, 164). Similarly, the influential twentieth-century critic Terry Eagleton maintains that “formally the book is ripped apart between poetry and documentary” (*Myths* 85). Countering this time-honoured consensus, Andrew and Judith Hook argue for a unifying theme: the denial of sympathetic understanding between the middle-classes and the working classes, and also between men and women. This overarching theme, they propose, conjoins the topic of Luddite unrest with the novel’s feminist criticisms.³⁷⁸

Yet a more formal answer to the charge of disunity – one that does not obviate the novel’s narrative changeability – is offered by Gisela Argyle in her exploration of the “distinct” novelistic subgenres present in *Shirley*: historical romance, psychological romance, and comedy of manners. Argyle proposes that the novel shifts between genres, thereby altering the narrator’s relation to the characters and to the reader (744).³⁷⁹

Argyle’s assessment of the novel’s use of the comedy of manners, however, does not accommodate adequately its various satiric modalities (Menippean, Juvenalian, and Horatian), which dominate the opening and closing chapters and which consistently resurface, not only in the narrator’s moral and political commentaries, but also through characters’ internal monologues and sustained colloquy. In fact, direct and indirect satiric

registers permeate the novel, even in Shirley Keeldar's mystic vision of Eve, a textual moment that Argyle classifies as belonging exclusively to "psychological romance," but which actually parodies the misogyny of Judeo-Christian traditions. A more capacious view of *Shirley*, one that emphasizes its Menippean qualities, serves both to accommodate its generic variability (intertwining novelistic and non-novelistic genres) and to highlight its trenchant ironic and parodic representations of literary and social convention. *Shirley*'s formal miscellaneity, dense intertextuality (ranging from the Bible to Shakespeare and French and English poetry), historical allegory,³⁸⁰ and, above all, its ascendant Menippean theme of the limits of ideological systems and conventions, are all narrative dimensions that are reconcilable with both Frye and Bakhtin's conceptions of Menippean breadth and parodic criticism.

Shirley's characters, engaged in explorations of what Forçade termed a "thousand moral situations" (145), typically express allegiance to mind-narrowing social ideologies, political factions, and religious sects.³⁸¹ Through extended colloquy, characters reveal their restricted and recurrent habits of thought, and are at once satirized for, and humanized by, their imperfect judgments and perceptions. Reverend Matthewson Hellstone, for example, is a hero-worshipping "high Tory" and "a man almost without sympathy" either for operatives, or for women ("he neither respected nor liked the sex") (*S* 37, 114-15).³⁸² His opponent, Hiram Yorke, is a Whig who favours revolt and speaks of equality, but lacks an "Organ of veneration" – and "there are many Hiram Yorkes in the world" (*S* 48). Politically inconsistent, Robert Moore will support any party that promotes his "own interest" as a tradesman and "thoroughgoing progressist" (*S* 31).

Robert discovers that ignoring his affection for Caroline is a “new system” that is “easier to practice” in his “mill-yard, amidst busy occupations” (S 122). In the novel’s opening chapters, the three men assert their political positions in “wordy combat” (S 56), only to find unanimity on one subject: women and marriage. Each is a misogamist who mistrusts marriage for other than mercenary purposes. Helstone and Yorke’s ambivalence towards Mary Cave and matrimony in general is echoed by Robert, who reveals, in a chapter-long conversation with the ostentatiously misogynist Peter Augustus Malone, that his antagonism to the mill workers is equal to his antipathy to domesticity and matrimony. There are shades of Pope’s “Of the Characters of Women” in Robert’s condemnation of the “tribe of the Misses Sykes” – “first the dark, then the light one. Now the red-haired Miss Armitage,” and in his curse: “*Oh, que le diable emporte – !*” (“the devil take them away”) (S 23, 25). Each man’s views are held “on system,” revealing that misogamy, unlike Toryism and Whiggism, is a unifying historical and rhetorical practice.

Other characters, endowed with even more “Menippean-blood” (Frye), represent diverse forms of bigotry. The Luddite rebel and religious zealot Moses Barraclough predictably delivers his hate-inciting invectives; Michael Hartley, the drunken Antinomian and “violent Jacobin” weaver, is particularly maddened by fanaticism (“his mind is always running on regicide” [S 15]). Additionally, the Sympsons are “Church people” who are caricatured for their “narrow system”; they exhibit “exactly-regulated lives, feelings, manners, habits,” and their daughters follow “a certain young-ladies’-school-room code of laws” (S 453-54).³⁸³ Yet, despite the narrator’s Horatian reluctance to curse and condemn characters for their habits of thought, the text alternates between

gently rebuking and acridly denouncing figures such as the “Puseyite” curates, who epitomize a general social practice: the habitual loss of sympathy to narrow systems and selfish interests.³⁸⁴ *Shirley*’s Menippean satire also fluctuates between a lenient Horatian analysis of Robert’s Smilesean materialism and knee-jerk misogyny, and a comparatively Juvenalian denunciation of the mental rigidity of those such as Yorke, Barraclough, Malone, and Mr Sympson. In summary, the majority of *Shirley*’s characters express a reductively prejudicial and restrictedly sympathetic approach to their many-sided social milieu; their dialogic interactions dramatize the dangers of monologic, systemically truncated thought.³⁸⁵

5.v “Levitical”: A *Précis* of *Shirley*’s Satire

Not surprisingly, given how forcefully it establishes the overarching satiric tenor of the novel, *Shirley*’s archly scornful first chapter, “Levitical,” raised a critical storm that, in retrospect, revealed a great deal concerning mid-Victorian anxieties about female-authored and feminist satire.³⁸⁶ *Shirley*’s battle against conventionality is formally apparent in the initial chapter’s parody of novelistic decorum. The narrator lampoons the representational systems of both “romance” and “realism” by abandoning the realist illusion in order to warn readers not to expect sensational “romantic” subjects, but “something unromantic as Monday morning” (*S* 5). Moreover, in a classical gesture of satire, the novel is offered as a “meal” in which the “first dish” will be ungarnished “cold lentiles and vinegar without oil; it shall be unleavened bread with bitter herbs and no roast lamb” (*S* 5). In other words, the novelist promises a *lanx satura* filled with

unappealing but nourishing truths. Along with the characters, the reader is implicitly accused of being “starved on a few prejudices” (S 453). The narrator returns to this blatantly ironic metafictional mode in the final chapter, “Winding-up,” in order to “dispos[e]” of both the reader and the characters in the crass language of a business contract: “Yes, reader, we must settle accounts now” (S 632). Additionally, the narrator proposes a contemptuous (more than playful) challenge to the reader, to discover a moral. This gesture is very much an attack on convention-bound moralists like Rigby. How could critics who wished to avoid “coarse” and “vulgar” subjects (and genres, such as satire), and who chastise Caroline Helstone for “the unfeminine display of her feelings,”³⁸⁷ comprehend the “moral” of a text that asserts that, to quote Brontë’s 1847 Preface to the second edition of *Jane Eyre*, “Conventionality is not morality” (1). Both at the outset and the conclusion of the novel, *Shirley*’s predominantly satirical narrator mocks a hidebound readership that will resent and resist unromantic truths.³⁸⁸

“Levitical” describes not a sacred, but a satirical feast. Providing a spectacle of unruly convivial habits, Joseph Donne, Davy Sweeting, and Malone demonstrate both their lack of basic table manners and their ineptitude as curates who “ought to be doing a great deal of good,” but instead “quibble” routinely over ecclesiastical “frivolities which seemed empty as bubbles to all save themselves” (S 5, 9). Inveterately negligent curates debase their link to the apostolic dignity of the honorable Levites (priests of Israel). Even Helstone regards his curates “sardonically,” condemning their lack of “chivalric sentiments” (S 18). Thus, *Shirley*’s opening satiric feast displays a perennial theme of satire: “the disappearance of the heroic” (Frye, *Anatomy* 228). Discredited in intellectual

and moral stature, the curates are stripped of patristic authority. In their unsympathetic insularity, they symbolize the clerical and patriarchal structures of England that are systematically blind to the “moral earthquake” that is brewing. And, as the narrator cynically observes, “as is usual in such cases, nobody took much notice” (S 30).

Importantly, “Levitical” adumbrates *Shirley*’s exposure of another bad habit of England’s patriarchy: misogyny. The first consciousness the satiric narrator focalizes is that of Mrs Gale. “[A] spark of the hot kitchen fire is in her eye” (S 7) as she privately condemns the curates’ scornful, misogynistic ways. Tellingly, the first words spoken in the text are Malone’s rude demand for more bread – “Cut it, woman” – but the housekeeper revolts privately: “Had she followed her inclinations, she would have cut the parson also” (S 8). The trenchantly satiric treatment of the curates in “Levitical” is carried forward in the narrative through Caroline and Shirley’s disdain for this chorus of unsuitable bachelors. Buffoonishly, Donne (and Malone) attempt to court Shirley for her money; however, Donne’s anti-Yorkshire egotism and crass materialism spur Shirley to evict him from her home. Sustained satirical representation of the curates encapsulates the text’s anatomy of both public and domestic patriarchal authority.

G. H. Lewes, among others, did not appreciate the opening chapter’s allegory of derelict patriarchal authority; instead, he argued that the representation of the “vulgar and offensive” curates “betrays a female and inexperienced hand” (Allott 169). With its portentous heading “Mental Equality of the Sexes? Female Literature” (*Edinburgh Review*, January 1850), Lewes’s review of *Shirley* demonstrates his own curate-like sexism. The critique begins with the argument that because maternity is women’s chief

biological function, women's intellectual and artistic achievements are necessarily curtailed.³⁸⁹ Significantly, Lewes discredits the possibility of an intellectually authoritative female novelist (in his pre-George Eliot era), for he dismisses both Brontë's subject matter and the novel's aggressive style as expressions of "over-masculine vigour" – inexcusable in a "lady novelist."³⁹⁰ Revealingly, Lewes stipulates that women cannot be successful humourists; they have never matched Swift, Fielding, Smollett, or Thackeray, for they are incapable of "comic energy." At the very most, they can achieve a "quiet smile" (Allott 162). In both "Levitical" and the novel as a whole, Lewes disapproves of Brontë's "unladylike," satiric representations of historical and political subjects.³⁹¹ Furthermore, as his preoccupation with "sex in mind" debates suggest, Lewes is stung by *Shirley's* ridicule of misogynistic myths, particularly the one in which he is so clearly invested: female unintellectuality.³⁹²

5.vi Caroline and Shirley's "Bluestocking club"

Satiric inclination and intellectual affinity are central to Caroline Helstone's character and her friendship with Shirley Keeldar. Thus, not surprisingly, Lewes denounces the verisimilitude of both Caroline's character and her relationship with Shirley, pronouncing Caroline's meditations on the condition of women to be radically discordant with her quiescent character. He considers Shirley's "remarkable tirade" against Milton to be "destroyed by the unlikelihood" of it occurring in the context of a "quiet conversation between two young ladies" (Allott 168). Thus Lewes's negative review inadvertently uncovers the degree to which Caroline and Shirley's satiric colloquy

subverts culturally current and masculinist notions of realism structured upon the assumed general weakness of the female intellect. Fundamentally, Lewes rejects Caroline and Shirley's intellectual rapport (their like-minded engagement with literature and politics). Yet, their mental connection is praised by the narrator: "The minds of the two girls being toned in harmony, often chimed very sweetly together" (*S* 225).³⁹³

Despite her gentle demeanour and retiring "habits" (*S* 220), Caroline scorns mindless custom. Her thoughts are consistently unconventional and frequently satiric; she disdains the curates, the genteel Misses Sykes, and the mindless "feminine" tasks of darning and sewing (especially the coercive charity of the "Jew's Basket"). Hortense observes that her student is "not sufficiently girlish and submissive"; in fact, she catches Caroline "curling her lip, absolutely with scorn" at Racine's poems (*S* 67-8). Although not formally educated, Caroline is self-taught and "ha[s] a knowledge of her own – desultory but varied" (*S* 76). Thus energetic, amateur intellectualism jars with her culture's feminine ideal of being "uniformly sedate and decorous, without being unaccountably pensive" (*S* 67). A key illustration of Caroline's intellectual rigour is her instruction to Robert to read "the haughty speech of Caius Marcius" to the starving in Shakespeare's *Coriolanus*, hoping that his identification with the inflexible hero will expand his moral sense and help him to "ste[p] out of the narrow line of private prejudice... [and] revel in the large picture of human nature" (*S* 91). Essentially, Caroline warns Robert of the bad mental habits that undermine his character: "Certain ideas have become too fixed in your mind" (*S* 72). Nancy Armstrong regards Caroline's (and also Shirley's) moral redemption of Robert as a prime example of the ideological

role of domestic fiction to redeem the middle-class capitalist male through the moral discourses of domesticity. This view, however, de-emphasizes the fact that Caroline's instruction is not solely based upon sentiment: it is philosophical, political, psychological, and literary. Externally and superficially, Caroline is regarded by her community as an exemplary young lady, docile and gentle; yet privately, she is an "intellectual bo-constrictor,"³⁹⁴ who rages against the status quo. Both Shirley and Robert are aware (and Mrs Yorke learns) that Caroline is not as tractable as she appears. "I have seen her flash out," Robert insists (*S* 363). Caroline's enraged criticism of life-curtailling convention is comparable to what Brontë observes of the surprising severity of Thackeray's satire: the "electric-death spark" is hidden by "lambent sheet-lightening" (1847 Preface, *Jane Eyre* 2).

In her fearless clear-sightedness, Caroline shares with the narrator the stern vow of a satirist: "to see things as they [are]" (*S* 172).³⁹⁵ Juvenalian inclinations surface as she ruminates (in a series of Wollstonecraftian internal monologues) upon instituted inequities of her social environment. Mainly, she resents the "wide and deep chasm" (*S* 102) that exists between the male public domain (rich with varied interests) and the female domestic realm (characterized by a "mental condition" of "wondrous narrowness" in which love "always" dominates [*S* 172, 391]). She meditates continually upon the culturally entrenched mental estrangement between the sexes. Evincing what Spencer regarded as an exclusively masculine trait, the "questioning habit," she spends "long, lonely" days "talking inwardly in the same strain" (*S* 389, 175). In the commanding monologue that provides the climax to Volume Two, Caroline denounces the

complacency with which social “ills” are regarded; she apprehends that social habit supports the “stagnant state of things,” ironizing the ascendant view:

Old maids, like the houseless and unemployed poor, should not ask for a place and an occupation in the world: the demand disturbs the happy and rich: it disturbs parents. Look at the numerous families of girls in this neighbourhood.... The brothers of these girls are every one in business or in professions; they have something to do: their sisters have no earthly employment, but household work and sewing.... This stagnant state of things make them decline in health: they are never well; and their minds and views shrink to wondrous narrowness.... The gentlemen turn them into ridicule: they don't want them; they hold them very cheap: they say – I have heard them say it with sneering laughs many a time – the matrimonial market is overstocked. (*S* 391)

Caroline discredits the logic of her society's misogynistic practices, including the commodification and destruction of women (“they are never well”). In classic satiric form, her anatomy of inequitable society accrues angry rhetorical questions, and culminates in an admonishing and prophetic apostrophe to “the Men of England,” demanding that they unfetter the minds of their daughters for society's well-being. Caroline holds that women have the right to self-improvement, economic self-sufficiency, and mental culture. Importantly, her angry meditation also demystifies chivalry, the crux of masculine heroism. Instead of adoring and protecting women, men satirize them with “sneering laughs.” In this philosophical tirade, Caroline's ireful

contempt for social injustice matches the comprehensive criticism frequently displayed by the omniscient satiric narrator. For example, in the Carlylean chastisement of the English merchant classes that launches the chapter “Old Maids,” the narrator diagnoses England as being “sick at heart” from the class-estranging cant of “cold-hearted” Mammonism (*S* 167). Epitomizing *Shirley*’s persistently gendered satire on political (and mental) economy, the chapter then shifts to focalize Caroline’s assessment of Robert’s unsympathetic “state of mind” as a “man of business” whose “thoughts were running in no familiar or kindly channel” (*S* 171-72). In a way that typifies the text’s dialogic interaction between the narrator’s satire and Caroline’s, the evaluation of the habitual intellectual and emotional estrangement of the sexes merges with the narrative’s class criticisms. Both Caroline and the narrator are critics of the dehumanizing socio-economic habit of “Cash-Payment” as the “universal sole nexus” of human relations (Carlyle, *Chartism* 1839; 193).³⁹⁶

Caroline’s satiric acuity is catalyzed by social entrapment and marginality. As a woman, not only is she a “cheap” commodity, but by remaining single she will “come under the lash of [society’s] sarcasm” (*S* 177). Voicing the “going opinion,” for example, Robert demonizes the “old maids” Miss Mann and Miss Ainley, calling them monstrous Medusas. Caroline confesses that she too accepted this stereotype, but upon visiting Miss Ainley (“the complete old maid” in appearance) she realizes that “in real life” Ainley has a “serene, unselfish, and benignant mind” (*S* 181-83). Miss Mann, however, is a fiercely retaliative satirist who routinely “flay[s] alive certain of the families in the neighbourhood” with “pitiless... moral anatomy” (*S* 179). Recalling that Juvenalian satire

from Dryden onwards shares a kinship with tragedy, the narrator cautions readers to remember that cankers naturally grow in those inured to long suffering, declaring that only those who lack a proper sense of truth would find Miss Mann herself “a proper subject for satire” (*S* 182).

Caroline’s affinity with the bitter Miss Mann, through her own Juvenalian insularity and pessimism (Shirley speculates that her friend might “weep gall” (*S* 233]), is countered by her hope for curative social change. She predicts that new practices will slowly “alter” the malaise of mill-workers and women. In the meantime, she prescribes for herself a life of self-sacrifice which “needed only habit to make it practicable and agreeable” (*S* 183). It becomes clear, however, that for Caroline (unlike Dickens’s Esther Summerson), a regime of self-denial is untenable. Instead, her unsatisfied desire for change, which runs counter to Victorian theories of the female mental affinity for sameness, guarantees her “habitual sadness” (*S* 422). It is crucial to note that Caroline’s despair is not rooted exclusively in unrequited love. Instead, it is catalyzed by the “brain-lethargy” (*S* 120) created by her lack of vocation and compounded by the absence of parental love. Starved on the “light literature” of her uncle’s library, and “[c]loseted” in the “narrow chamber” of her bedroom at the Rectory, her daily life offers a limited range of habitual associations (*S* 389, 173). Despising the death-like monotony of her life, she insists, “I am not well and I need a change”: “I wish it fifty times a day. As it is, I often wonder what I came into the world for. I long to have something absorbing and compulsory to fill my head and hands, and to occupy my thoughts” (*S* 229). Prohibited by her uncle from seeking “a situation,” she resolves to have agency over her habitual

thoughts. For example, she trains her mind not to think of her affection for Robert: she “always now habitually thought of it and mentioned it in the most scanty measure” (*S* 228). Yet, without other “absorbing and compulsory” pursuits, she succumbs to “old associations” and the “power of habit,” routinely walking by Hollow’s Mill and waiting by the window to catch a glimpse of Robert (*S* 233). The power of disciplinary habit proves insufficient to “stun” her anguish (*S* 229, 184), and, true to the axioms of Victorian mental theory, her body and mind decline in unison. Interrupting this debilitating trajectory, however, Caroline’s Horatian hopes materialize through the “happy change” (*S* 223) of meeting Shirley Keeldar.

The narrator imports the language of Victorian habit theory to describe how the friendship gives “a turn...to [Caroline’s] thoughts; a new channel was opened for them, which, diverting a few of them at least from the one direction in which all had hitherto tended, abated the impetuosity of their rush, and lessened the force of their pressure on one worn-down point” (*S* 223). Shirley, a “gallant little cavalier,” functions (in conjunction with Mrs Pryor) like a romance hero to save Caroline from what Rose Yorke refers to as her ““long slow death in... Briarfield Rectory”” (*S* 229, 399). In doing so, she parodies defunct masculine heroism.³⁹⁷ Their friendship, which develops in the natural setting of Nunnwood (where, both agree, the “presence of gentlemen dispels the charm” [*S* 214]), permits the exploration of their feminist and satiric inclinations, which are prohibited in public. (Even Mrs Pryor wishes to censor their subjects.) Shirley’s declaration to Caroline summarizes the license of their privacy: ““Cary we are alone, we

may speak what we think” (S 214, 318). In multiple scenes involving extensive and rapid verbal exchanges, the friends dismantle their culture’s misogynist stereotypes.

In contrast to Caroline, however, Shirley is typically a light-hearted critic. This is exemplified by her attempt to alleviate Caroline’s gloominess by proposing an excursion to the Faroe Isles; proud of her fanciful efforts, she exclaims, “*I made her laugh: I have done her good*” (S 244). Caroline, with her faded appearance and bitter wisdom – “[w]inter seemed conquering her spring” (S 184) – is reminiscent of Frye’s association of winter with annihilating irony and satire, whereas Shirley’s vibrant appearance signals the regenerative, spring-like Horatian mode. She gives Fieldhead’s workers a “good-humoured rating” (S 355), and similarly rebukes the curates and their rector, while offering them nosegays of spring flowers. Importantly, when she upbraids Robert for proposing to her like a “brigand who demanded [her] purse,” she shames and reforms him: “Her words were like a mirror in which I saw myself” (S 534). In her habitual persona of “Captain Shirley Keeldar, Esquire,” she exposes, through mimicry, the substantially economic nature of masculine authority. Having been ostracized from decisions made by the district’s male authorities regarding the Luddite unrest, she realizes that, despite her monetary power, her authority in Yorkshire’s West Riding is merely titular. In retaliation, she attempts to avert an uprising through the domestic means at her disposal: “good works.” Shirley is transgressively active and opinionated (even Helstone enjoys her repartée, despite his fear “that something in petticoats was somehow trying to understand and to acquire too much influence” [S 272]). Yet, despite Shirley’s merry plotting, socially unifying spirit of charity, and outspoken reprimands to

Donne, Malone, Yorke, and Sympson, she remains, on balance, immured (like all women) in the domestic world – compelled to keep a covert “sentinel survey of life” (*S* 273). As Gilbert and Gubar cogently state, “Shirley seems condemned to play the roles she parodies” (588). Ultimately, Shirley’s clipped freedom (as the mistress and not the master of Fieldhead) dramatizes that female social and political authority is, at best, inescapably indirect. Her steadfast belief in the goodness of humanity, however, is thoroughly Horatian – as is her role as guardian of her beloved Yorkshire community.

In contrast to Caroline’s indignant critique of the “mental gulf” between the sexes, Shirley playfully denounces misogynist literary mythography. Agreeing that poetry “refines vision,” she and Caroline are clandestine literary critics (as well as potential poets). Caroline, for example, is merciless in her biographical criticism of Cowper and Rousseau: “I scorn them. They are made of clay and gold. The refuse and the ore make a mass of weakness: taken together, I feel them unnatural, unhealthy, repulsive” (*S* 228). Shirley mimics “masculine” surprise at Caroline’s verdict and wonders who “taught her” such ideas; Caroline replies that “[t]he voice we hear in solitude” told her all that she knows, and returns the masculinist jab: “you are not learned, Shirley” (*S* 228, 343). Shirley’s reply is a hyperbolic and self-parodic contestation of men’s estimation of women: “I’m as ignorant as a stone” (*S* 353). Undercutting such overstated modesty, Shirley stands before her looking glass and anatomizes literary convention. The context of her critique functions to reclaim the mirror, a customary symbol of female vanity and masculine satire, for feminist critical reflection:

‘If men could see us as we really are, they would be a little amazed; but the cleverest, the acutest men are often under an illusion about women: they do not read them in a true light; they misapprehend them, both for good and evil: their good woman is a queer thing, half doll, half angel; their bad woman almost always a fiend. Then to hear them fall into extasies with each other’s creations, worshipping the heroine of such a poem – novel – drama, thinking it fine – divine! Fine and divine it may be, but often quite artificial... [I]f I gave my real opinion of some first-rate female characters in first-rate works, where should I be? Dead under a cairn of avenging stones in half an hour.’ (*S* 352)³⁹⁸

This disquisition identifies a systematic error across most literature: a mythical evaluation of women. Such falsifying patriarchal fantasies, she asserts, “always” impede the judgment of the “cleverest of men.” Shirley’s speech not only contests the exclusivity of the masculine capacity for “first-rate” genius – cavalierly insisted upon by Darwin, Romanes, Lewes, and others – but charges all literary patriarchs with the habituated incapacity to comprehend half the human race. Although the allegorized poet, whom the narrator associates with originality and truth, is figured as a man who “laughs in his sleeve” (*S* 49) at the folly of the world, *Shirley* typically associates women with the truth-seeking poetic imagination. In the Yorke family, for instance, it is Rose and Jessie whose original ideas are “trampled on and repressed” – Jessie, in particular, “had something of the genius of humour in her nature” (*S* 148, 407). Shirley will never write the poems of which she is capable (or the magazine article), but in the company of Caroline, she is a

secret bluestocking whose feminist criticisms are freely expressed.³⁹⁹ Her hyperbolic argument concerning the certainty of public execution if she were miraculously to print her literary criticism of the “first-rate” male authors of the day satirically foregrounds the mid-Victorian textual necessity of disguising feminist dissent.

The chapter title, “Which the genteel reader is recommended to skip, low persons being here introduced,” ironically and self-reflexively announces the chapter’s heterodoxy to conformist readers who deny rationality to both the “lower” classes and to women. Fulfilling its promise of subversion, the chapter showcases Shirley’s vision of Eve as a powerful Titan, who, being Adam’s equal, is not “Milton’s Eve” (S 319):

‘Milton’s Eve! Milton’s Eve! I repeat. No, by the pure Mother of God, she is not! ... Milton was great; but was he good? His brain was right; how was his heart? He saw Heaven: he looked down on Hell. He saw Satan, and Sin his daughter, and Death their horrible offspring. . . . Milton tried to see the first woman; but, Cary, he saw her not.’ (S 320)

Caroline is awed by her friend’s literary heresy: “you are bold to say so, Shirley” (S 320).⁴⁰⁰ Implicitly referencing Book V of *Paradise Lost*, in which Eve prepares “dulcet creams” and various refreshments for Adam and the Archangel Raphael, Shirley proposes with satiric bathos: “it was his cook that he saw; or it was Mrs Gill” (S 320). Eve was not a secondary creation, Shirley insists, but a “heaven-born” Titan who “yielded the daring which could contend with Omnipotence” (S 320). After this satiric disclaimer of Milton’s decree that, as Eve is Adam’s intellectual inferior, “nothing lovelier can be found / In woman, than to study household good” (*Paradise Lost* IX, 232-3), Shirley falls

into rhapsodical contemplation of her matriarchal progenitor.⁴⁰¹ Her vision, rather than an instance of “embarrassing” visionary feminism (Eagleton, *Myths* 58), is an excoriating feminist exegesis of Milton. Once again, *Shirley* offers intellectual and moral criticism of public patriarchal practices from the margins of the private sphere.⁴⁰²

Aptly, following Shirley’s (re)vision of Eve and rebuke of Milton, the friends encounter the misogynist Joe Scott, who rails against “petticoat government” (S 327) and refuses to talk to them about politics. Citing Pauline disparagement of the female intellect, Joe declares that women lack judgment, because Eve was the first to sin. Shirley retaliates by stating, ““more shame to Adam to sin with his eyes open!”” (S 329). Caroline is then provoked to reject St Paul’s injunctions, insisting on the possibility of wrongful translation from the original Greek.⁴⁰³ In this chapter, signaled as being subversive, Miltonic and patristic exegesis are satirized for misrepresenting female intelligence. It must be emphasized that Caroline and Shirley’s mutual vow to marry men whom they intellectually esteem – men to whom ““mind is added”” (S 219) – and the scarcity of contenders for their respect, rebelliously contravenes Victorian assumptions concerning women’s inherent (and “scientifically” proven) intellectual inferiority.

In *Shirley*’s notoriously ambivalent final chapter, Horatian and Juvenalian elements exist in tension.⁴⁰⁴ The metafictional narrator expresses parodic awareness that the implicit rules of the nineteenth-century novel militating against satire mandate that “the unvarnished truth does not answer” and that “plain facts will not digest” (S 632). Unpleasant social facts remain as unpalatable as Malone’s debauchery and the “dark truth” (S 541) of Helstone’s (and others’) misogyny. If temporary peace exists between

managers and the operatives in the West Riding, nineteenth-century readers would have known that unrest would be reborn in the Chartist agitations of the 1840s. The equivocal narrator hints that the economic stabilization from the repeal of the Orders in Council “might be delusive” (*S* 637). Furthermore, the perpetual social grievances of women are hardly palliated by Caroline and Shirley’s successful marriages to men who are not of the Helstone type. Critics such as Juliet Barker, who argue that the feminist trajectory of the novel is overthrown by Shirley’s protracted, even masochistic, submission to her “master” Louis, ignore the narrator’s flagrant narrative advice to read the ending suspiciously.⁴⁰⁵ The final chapter’s Juvenalian implications are well-supported by Gilbert and Gubar’s excavation of the “ominous” inferences surrounding Robert’s proposal to Caroline; for example, he likens her to the Virgin Mary, recalling Madonna-like descriptions of the condemned Mary Cave. Thus, in the imperfect social landscape of the text, where the “powerful effects of public myths” (Gilbert and Gubar 376) hold sway, Shirley and Caroline’s relationship is relegated to its socially sanctioned, secondary place. Likely, trips to Nunnwood and the Faroe Isles will never materialize. Instead, the friends assist with one another’s wedding dresses and, rather than embarking upon “learned professions” (*S* 229), they will teach Sunday school. Through the quotidian future of its heroines, the narrative tacitly acknowledges the lack of a social place for a re-visioned Eve in “mercantile, postlapsarian England” (Gilbert and Gubar 398). As Shuttleworth acutely argues, the text “persistently offers radical visions of female potentiality... only to then expose the illusory nature of such dreams” by leaving Caroline and Shirley as “rigorous guardians” of the edicts of the male order (*Brontë* 213)

– rather than its satirical censors. In addition, the narrator apocalyptically predicts that nature itself, which is consistently feminized throughout the narrative, will be further trampled upon by “manufacturer’s day-dreams embodied in substantial stone and brick and ashes” (*S* 645). Eventually, the fairies (as figures of the dialogic imagination) will be evacuated.

At one level, then, the stifling of feminist possibility in *Shirley* is itself the “bitter herbs” of satiric realism promised in “Levitical.” Yet, amid these signs of social stasis and the industrial destruction of nature, *Shirley*’s conclusion simultaneously provides evidence of social amelioration. Robert and Caroline’s courtship is represented through the surprising medium of Martin Yorke’s inward reflections as he embarks upon a conversion from misogamy and misogyny to non-sexist sympathy. Temporarily Martin becomes a central character as he gains affectionate sympathy for Caroline – and, by extension, her sex. His original vow – “I mean always to hate women; they’re such dolls: ... I’ll never marry: I’ll be a bachelor” (*S* 158) – is broken, and he becomes an adoring groomsman at Caroline’s wedding. His “transfiguration” (*S* 151) parallels and invokes the text’s primary one: Robert Moore’s retraction of misogyny and lack of general social sympathy. Even Helstone, sobered by the near-death of his niece, condescends to make her tea; and Shirley defies socially ascendant bigotry and the “domestic vice” of mercenary marriages to wed for love. Arguably, what Forçade refers to as the novel’s “satirical shafts” at the institution of marriage, are, on balance, Horatian, for the “young people marry just the same” (Allott 145). As well, the novel’s Juvenalian rage and pessimism is countered by demonstrations of curative sympathy, for many

events within the narrative function rhetorically to moderate the “temper” of overly bitter satire, the kind of satire that the narrator implicitly (and rather hypocritically) censures. Miss Mann, after all, is chastised for performing her satire “like some surgeon practicing with his scalpel on a lifeless subject” (S 179). Thus, the seeming victory of domestic novelistic convention and Horatian satire permits the passage of the novel's more ideologically disruptive and Juvenalian satire past the “violent censure” (Forçade 145) of critics, safely into literary history. A strongly satiric novel, replete with Menippean themes, *Shirley* links the domestic and public social spheres in overarching ideological and social criticism, and conducts, through a subversively intellectual female friendship, a scathing feminist critique of literary and social misogyny.

5.vii The Unflattering Mirror of Feminist Satire: Hereditary Habits of Masculine Egotism in *Middlemarch*

If Charlotte Brontë – of whom it was declared, “[n]ever was there a better hater”⁴⁰⁶ – is *rarely* associated with satire, it is unsurprising that George Eliot, the sage of social sympathy, has been critically distanced from the genre. Recalling the discussion in Chapter 3 of the traditional taxonomic polarity of satire and sympathy, and also Eliot’s use of Horatian satire in *Silas Marner* as a mode compatible with the religion of sympathy, I will position *Middlemarch* as a feminist satire on gendered habits of egotism within the Horatian tradition of satire – excepting, as always, occasional Juvenalian dialogism. Selfishness is *Middlemarch*’s broad satiric subject; but more specifically, inurement to societal misogyny is exposed as the source of debilitating and sympathy-

disabling “spots of commonness” (*M* 141), particularly among the town’s male population.

As I discussed in Chapter 3, critics who focus on Eliot’s theory of realism often presume her novelistic practice to be antithetical to satire. Yet Eliot’s contemporary critics were keenly (and adversely) attuned to the satire pervading her novels. Reviewers of *Middlemarch* routinely measured its relative proportions of combative satire and disarming sentiment. The reviewer for *The Daily News* (28 November 1871), for example, was displeased to find Dorothea Brooke’s “fond aspirations” depicted “with what looks to the reader painfully like sly and yet half sympathetic sarcasm” (Holmstrom and Lerner 78). R. H. Hutton, who commended *Silas Marner* for its lack of “a single cynical Thackerayism,” complained that occasionally the “bitterness of [*Middlemarch*’s] commentary on life is almost cynical” (Carroll 175, 297). The reviewer for *Blackwood’s Magazine* (December 1872) found that the novel reveals the “unrealities of religion” with “a satire whose lash is not the less cutting because it is laid on with the most delicate wrist-play” (92).⁴⁰⁷ Finally, *The Academy* (1 January 1873) characterized the novel’s moral and “satirical insight” as being “at once so charitable and so melancholy” (Carroll 325).⁴⁰⁸ Recently, Christopher Lane, in his relentless exposure of the unresolved misanthropy lurking in avowedly altruistic Victorian novels, persuasively explores the dialogic interruptions of enmity within Eliot’s amity-promoting texts. *Middlemarch*, he posits, despite the narrator’s assertions of the ideal of fellow feeling, “endlessly catalogs what destroys sympathy” (Lane 134). Although Lane does not address satire, his observations highlight the satiric component of Eliot’s realist project. The Horatian satiric

ideal – as articulated in Eliot’s essay on Heinrich Heine (1856) and by her persona of Theophrastus Such – blends the “electric shock” of wit that “takes us by violence” with palliating sympathy to produce moral humour (“Heine” 71). Also illuminating Eliot’s satiric practice is a letter to John Blackwood (11 June 1857) in which she defends the verisimilitude of *Scenes of Clerical Life* (1858) and addresses Blackwood’s notion that the work is Thackerayan in its view of human nature.⁴⁰⁹ Eliot defines her true-to-life use of irony: “My irony, so far as I understand myself, is not directed against opinions – against any class of religious values – but against the vices and weaknesses that belong to human nature in every sort of clothing” (*Letters* 2: 513). Her goal, she explains, is not to be “offensive,” but to “touch every heart among [her] readers with nothing but loving humor, with tenderness, with belief in goodness.” Trenchantly, however, she insists upon the moral importance of presenting “disagreeable truths”: “In this respect, at least, I may have some resemblance to Thackeray, though I am not conscious of being in any way a disciple of his, unless it constitute discipleship to think him... on the whole the most powerful of living novelists” (*Letters* 2: 513). Eliot’s letter suggests that, contrary to Jerome Meckier’s argument in *Hidden Rivalries*, she did not radically oppose Thackerayan satire in the “realism wars of the 50s and 60s” (8).⁴¹⁰ Rather, Eliot’s regard for the moral importance of sympathetic yet intrepid satire parallels Brontë’s notion that “sentiment” “extracts the venom from that formidable Thackeray, and converts what might be only corrosive poison into purifying elixir.”⁴¹¹

Aaron Matz observes that Eliot’s “satirical temper” has been “overlooked or misunderstood” in the last century of criticism (“Satire” 6). Interested in the under-

studied intersection of satire and realism, he argues that Eliot's theory of realism shares a complementary goal with satire's moral "obligation" to present a "fundamentally accurate view of the world" ("Satire" 32).⁴¹² Also, George Levine's assessment of Eliot's "moral realism" implies the imbrication of satire and realism. Levine asserts that "[t]he energizing principle of George Eliot's art was realism"; this, he insists, is a "mode that depends heavily on reaction against what the writer takes to have been misrepresentations" – and is thus a "rebellious mode" ("George Eliot" 7).⁴¹³ Furthermore, Levine links Eliot's "witty and even caustic" critical essays to her fictional method.⁴¹⁴ This gesture recalls a contemporary review of *The Impression of Theophrastus Such* in the *New York Times* (16 June 1879), which insists that Eliot's later novels, "nine-tenths essays," resemble the philosophical and critical mode of *Theophrastus Such*, with its "peculiar kind" of "sub-acid satire" ("George Eliot's Essays"). One target of Eliot's persistent satiric interest that also reflects upon her critical method is what Levine proclaims to be the paramount theme of her fiction: "There is no general doctrine which is not capable of eating out our morality if unchecked by the deep-seated habit of direct fellow-feeling with individual fellow-men" (*M* 582). For Eliot, the humanizing importance of habitual sympathy is critical to all "general doctrines" and practices – perhaps especially to corrosive satire.

5.viii "[H]ard grains" of Habit

As revealed by her journalism and letters as well as her fiction, Eliot engages in constant dialogue with the intellectuals of the period who are particularly invested in the

multivalent role of habit in the processes of social and psychical evolution: Lewes, Spencer, Mill, Carpenter, and others. Her writings, like those of her peers, regularly investigate the constitutive and habit-sustained links between the individual mind and the social medium: “It is the habit of my imagination to strive after as full a vision of the medium in which a character moves as of the character itself.”⁴¹⁵ All of her novels depict the minute operation of “irreversible laws within and without [the individual], which, governing the habits, becomes morality” (Eliot, *Mill* 288). *Middlemarch*’s focus on the subtle interactions of organic interdependence, however, is so pronounced that Sally Shuttleworth terms the text “a work of experimental science” (Eliot 143).⁴¹⁶ As Nancy Paxton outlines, Eliot supports a theory of science which contests *a priori* assumptions but acknowledges that the human mind is capable of inspired insight. Aptly, Lydgate’s scientific theory and practice support the notion of an “inward light” that transcends tradition (and even reason) to discover truth through the painstaking habit of “provisionally framing” the object “and correcting it to more and more exactness of relation” (*M* 154). Ironically, Lydgate’s scientific method also comments on his own provisional nature, for the formation of his character is described as a kind of gamble, based on the probable outcome of the interactions between his inward traits, free will, and outward circumstances:

He was at a starting-point which makes many a man’s career a fine subject for betting, if there were any gentlemen given to that amusement who could appreciate the complicated probabilities of an arduous purpose, with all the possible thwartings and furtherings of circumstance, all the niceties

of inward balance, by which a man swims and makes his point or else is carried headlong. The risk would remain, even with close knowledge of Lydgate's character; for character too is a process and an unfolding. The man was still in the making... (*M* 140).

The narrator's assessment of Lydgate's character is redolent of J. S. Mill's discussion, in *System of Logic* (1843), of "Ethology," which, as a science of character formation, must accommodate both environmental circumstances and the psychological laws of association. Mental laws or mechanisms – in Eliot's suggestive phrase, "all the niceties of inward balance" – either assist the individual (envisioned as a swimmer) to gain her or his destination, or function like a current that "carries [her/him] headlong." The metaphor of the current of water, or energy, is common in Victorian psychology texts for the pathways or grooves that are the conduits of thought – deepened by habit to become "lines of least resistance" (Lewes, *PLMI* 134). The perplexingly entangled interactions of established traits, environmental circumstance, and the laws of habit or association create a complex web of association – an oft-noted central metaphor of *Middlemarch*. The web connecting human minds to past and present environments, and to each other, is composed substantially of threads (or Carlylean "filaments") of habit. As well, recalling *Silas Marner*'s key traditional, organic metaphor for habit as a germ or seed, *Middlemarch*'s narrator sententiously asserts: "the most glutinously indefinite minds enclose some hard grains of habit" (*M* 8). For Eliot, as for many of her contemporaries, habit is an inescapable mental function molding human thought and action – that may

enclose human lives, like all the subjects of science, in “long pathways of necessary sequence” (*M* 154).

As Vrettos summarizes, theorists of habit ambivalently address its larger function as a mechanism of social constraint or conservatism. Bulwer-Lytton, for example, in “On the Spirit of Conservatism,” justifies his conservative politics on the basis of the obduracy of a nation’s customs or habits. He reasons that the government of a nation (its “dynasty” and “institutions”) determines the habits of its citizenry, which in turn maintain the governing structures (*Caxtoniana* 434). The habituated individual necessarily experiences a salutary fusion of social liberty and order, but enforced sudden change, Bulwer-Lytton warns, brings instant social chaos. Bulwer-Lytton was a liberal politician turned cynical conservative, but even the inveterate liberal John Stuart Mill acknowledged, in his discussion of “Political Ethology” (the laws of national character), that collective character is anchored by customary habit. Thus reformers “should not violently shock the pre-existing habits and sentiments of the people” (Variouxakis 396, 376).⁴¹⁷ Although Eliot and Mill disagreed as to which changes would “violently shock” the nation – as a “conservative reformer,” she refused to sign Mill’s petition for women’s suffrage (Levine, “Eliot” 2) – she supported graduated evolutionary change. Upon the publication of Darwin’s *Origin*, Eliot assessed tellingly: “So the world gets on step by step towards brave clearness and honesty!”⁴¹⁸ Together with Bulwer-Lytton and Mill, Eliot held that the framework of society could not bear a radical alteration of the customs that inform and buttress the mental infrastructure of the popular mind. Thus, Eliot’s social organicism, evolutionary gradualism, and “ethology” are grounded in a psychology

of habit. Eliot would likely concur with Mill's pronouncement upon the mental character of the English: "England has never had any general break-up of old associations & hence the extreme difficulty of getting any ideas into its stupid head."⁴¹⁹

Eliot's understanding of habit sheds light on *Middlemarch's* "Finale" – an ending that notoriously troubles feminist critics. Just as critics of *Shirley* grapple with the narrative's ultimate containment of female rebellion, readers of *Middlemarch* confront Dorothea Ladislaw's failure to fulfill her great potential. The "Finale," however, like *Shirley's* "Winding Up," is a closure replete with ambivalence and "disturbing doubleness" (Brady 167) regarding the "Woman Question," rather than a "cop-out of some magnitude" (Austen 49).⁴²⁰ Dorothea's complete satisfaction with giving "wifely help" to Will Ladislaw's public career and being a "foundress of nothing" (*M* 783, 4) is satirically extreme. Even her rural community finds it "a pity that so substantive and rare a creature should have been absorbed into the life of another, and be only known in a certain circle as a wife and mother. But no one stated exactly what else that was in her power she ought rather to have done" (*M* 783). The syntactical and semantic awkwardness of this last sentence underscores Eliot's satire of what is understatedly termed the "imperfect social state" (*M* 784). In "Margaret Fuller and Mary Wollstonecraft," Eliot praises Fuller's argument for the removal of the "unjust" and "artificial" restrictions placed on women, "so that the possibilities of [women's] nature may have room for full development" (200). But in *Middlemarch*, Eliot depicts graduated evolution in play; therefore, the most environmentally compatible occupation for Dorothea's philanthropic character is to be the wife of an "ardent public man" who seeks

reforms for the “immediate good” (*M* 782).⁴²¹ The narrator refers to the “lives of many Dorotheas”; Dorothea’s failure thus conforms to the standard of her social environment and its characteristic “meanness of opportunity” (*M* 785, 3). Furthermore, Dorothea’s ultimate occupation upholds *Middlemarch*’s socio-psychological law: “there is no creature whose inward being is so strong that it is not greatly determined by what lies outside it” (*M* 784-5). Nineteenth-century English society, however, is designed to accommodate its Celia Brookes, who “cannot bear notions” (*M* 30).⁴²² That stated, evolutionary variation – “inconvenient indefiniteness” – is unstoppable. Even Celia, who has “always worn a yoke,” strives for influence; so much so, that the narrator asks pointedly, “is there any yoked creature without its private opinions?” (*M* 3,14). In this way, dissent, dialogue, and debate, orchestrated by the forces of physiological and psychological evolution, are presented as perpetually disrupting the stasis of habit and convention, to favour progressively what *The Mill on the Floss*’s narrator encapsulates as “that complex, fragmentary, doubt-provoking knowledge which we call truth” (476).

Although Eliot favoured slow social change in women’s roles, she flatly rejected “scientific certitude” about the limits of female mental evolution. The narrator of *Middlemarch*, after the manner of Mill and Taylor, declares “sex in mind” assumptions to be ridiculous:

[I]f there were one level of feminine incompetence as strict as the ability to count three and no more, the social lot of women might be treated with scientific certitude. Meanwhile the indefiniteness remains, and the limits of variation are really much wider than any one would imagine from the

sameness of women's coiffure and the favourite love-stories in prose and verse. (*M* 3-4)

Despotic custom (of which fashion is the clearest, least socially shocking example) must not, the narrator insists, be confused with biological truth. The tendency to conflate science and custom in evaluations of female "nature" is soundly satirized. As well, the narrator's ironic maxim – "A man is seldom ashamed of feeling that he cannot love a woman so well when he sees a certain greatness in her: nature having intended greatness for men" (*M* 365) – is scathingly antiphrastic in the context of Dorothea's display of acumen juxtaposed with one of Arthur Brooke's "severe mental scamper[s]" (*M* 24). Compellingly, Paxton claims that *Middlemarch* "is profoundly shaped" by Eliot's feminist assessment of (post-Darwin) arguments for innate female mental inferiority and their compensatory role in sexual selection (put forth, for example, by Herbert Spencer) (173-5).⁴²³ Eliot attacks the notion of female agency in sexual selection as ludicrous in a social *milieu* in which "poverty of choice and meanness of opportunity" govern the marital choices of even beautiful and wealthy women, such as Dorothea (Paxton 173). Furthermore, putting Spencerian conclusions about the "lightness of the female mind" in the mouth of the mentally flighty Brooke – who believes that "masculine knowledge" is "too taxing for a woman" (*M* 59-60) – effectively diminishes masculinist "scientific certitude" about female "nature."

5.ix Selfishness in General and Male Egotism in Particular

The perspective of most characters in *Middlemarch* is distorted by the lack of empathy that accompanies self-absorbing, habitual thoughts. The chronically self-advancing and self-preoccupied “mental make” of all Middlemarchers, including Dorothea, is declared a universal human trait: “We are all of us born in moral stupidity, taking the world as an udder to feed our supreme selves: Dorothea had early begun to emerge from that stupidity,” for she comes to realize that Casaubon “had an equivalent centre of self, whence the lights and shadows must always fall with a certain difference” (*M* 198). Although the parable of the pier-glass and the candle recalled by this analogy is introduced to illustrate Rosamond Vincy’s superlative selfishness, it also illuminates the habitual selfishness of *all* human beings: “the candle is the egoism of any person now absent” (*M* 248).⁴²⁴ The scratches, “minutely and multitudinously scratched in all directions,” are instantly arranged into “concentric circles” by the candlelight (*M* 248). Such “scratches” are events, and the “exclusive optical selection” (*M* 248) is analogous to the circuitous mental revolutions created by grooves or etchings of habit; they are, at once, the contextualizing environmental circumstances of life and the subjective simplifications of an individual’s habitual mental associations. The metaphor of the pier-glass (a form of satiric mirror) applies to Dorothea, whose Quixotic and hobby-horsical humour is to “regulat[e] life according to notions” (*M* 9). Unlike Rosamond, however, Dorothea’s “exclusive” mental “selection” or “favourite themes” are not status and material luxury, but a philanthropic and spiritual aim: a “higher inward life” (*M* 31, 21). Paradoxically, her vanity is selflessness; it is morally redeemed by habitual sympathy:

“All her eagerness for acquirement lay within that full current of sympathetic motive in which her ideas and impulses were habitually swept along” (*M* 80). Furthermore, the misplacement of Dorothea’s innate “Puritan energy” is explicitly impersonal and social in origin, for her false estimation of Casaubon’s “mental wealth” is plainly proportional to her “great mental need” for knowledge (*M* 8, 30, 26). The narrator explains that, as Dorothea, being human, had not achieved saintly levels of renunciation (an ironic jab at the culturally approved “pattern of a lady”), she aspired to be delivered “from her girlish subjection to her own ignorance” (*M* 21, 27). The mock epic narration of Dorothea’s and Casaubon’s courtship proves a “realistic” mode of satire, as Dorothea truly regards him as a modern-day Locke, a “living Bossuet,” and a “modern Augustine” (*M* 23) rolled into one. Her elevation of Casaubon’s mental acuity is accompanied by extreme self-deprecation; she regards her own mind as a “twopenny mirror” compared with his “whole world” of thought, a “little pool” compared to a lake. Dorothea’s hyperbolic evaluation is ludicrously logical, an inevitable *reductio ad absurdum* of her “toy-box” education (*M* 23, 79).⁴²⁵ Thus, even *Middlemarch*’s study of female vanity and folly is filtered through the overarching anatomy of the subjugation of women.

The opening chapters of *Middlemarch* are a superb Bakhtinian parody of the “going opinion” that intelligence is not an admirable or even plausible female trait. Importantly, this is not simply “the rural opinion” (*M* 9) of Eliot’s fictional towns of Freshitt and Tipton; Eliot’s satire is directed at England’s intellectual elite. The narrator declares that Dorothea’s “nature [was] altogether ardent, theoretic, and intellectually consequent,” but, as post-Darwinian social science is religiously committed to female

unintellectuality, Dorothea's genius is "alarming" to the community (*M* 26, 9). The narrator's ironic maxim likening uncustomary ideas to lunacy is a dystopic and Juvenalian gesture: "Sane people did what their neighbours did, so that if any lunatics were at large, one might know and avoid them" (*M* 9). Dorothea's act of "throwing herself, metaphorically speaking, at Mr Casaubon's feet, and kissing his unfashionable shoe-ties as if he were a Protestant Pope" (*M* 47) exposes, with a sense of the sacrilegiously bathetic, the consummate vanity of the secular religion of male superiority. As J. S. Mill explains: "All the selfish propensities, the self-worship, the unjust self-preference, which exist among mankind, have their source and root in... the present constitution of the relation between men and women" (*SW* 21: 324). The automatic superiority that "deeply" "sinks into the immense majority of male minds," Mill suggests, is destructive to men's characters: "[i]s it imagined that all this does not pervert the whole manner of existence of the man, both as an individual and as a social being?" (*SW* 21: 324-5).⁴²⁶ Just as the prospect of being rejected by Dorothea escapes Sir James Chettam's imagination, Casaubon, despite his physical inadequacies, is unsurprised to be the recipient of Dorothea's love. *Middlemarch* describes monologic thought in general and patriarchal premises in particular, through satiric reflections that anatomize the patriarchal image by "correcting it to more and more exactness of relation" (*M* 154).

Even *Middlemarch*'s study of the great vice of female vanity rests upon an anatomy of culturally inculcated misogyny, for Rosamond is a parody of the Victorian ideal of womanhood. A blatant "pattern-card of the finishing-school," she adheres flawlessly to the womanly social script. Incapable of any other role, she "acted her own

character, and so well, that she did not know it to be precisely her own” (*M* 602, 109).⁴²⁷ Like a collection of dehumanized parts, Rosamond’s angelic features are represented with disturbing atomism; the turn of her neck, her “infantine blondness,” and her flower-blue eyes are clichéd features that render her an “exquisite ornament” in any drawing room (*M* 406, 550). The nature/art binary is harnessed by the narrator to highlight the unnatural cultural practices that make Rosamond desirable to men: “Nature had inspired many arts in finishing Mrs Lemon’s favourite pupil, who by general consent (Fred’s excepted) was a rare compound of beauty, cleverness, and amiability” (*M* 252). Aptly, as an embodiment of patriarchal rather than inherent feminine vanity, Rosamond is constantly gazing in the mirror, preening herself in anticipation of her desirable reflection in the minds of men.⁴²⁸ Recalling Caroline Helstone’s condemnation of the poverty of female mental associations, the narrator explains Rosamond’s thoughts in terms of the social psychology of habit:⁴²⁹

Poor Lydgate! or shall I say, Poor Rosamond! Each lived in a world of which the other knew nothing. It had not occurred to Lydgate that he had been a subject of eager meditation to Rosamond, who had neither any reason for throwing her marriage into distant perspective, nor any pathological studies to divert her mind from that ruminating habit, that inward repetition of looks, words, and phrases, which makes a large part in the lives of most girls. (*M* 155)

Rosamond’s narrow fixations are the cultural norm. Ironically, her socially inculcated, pier-glass habits of thought prevent her (along with “most girls”) from sympathizing with

men. The Ruskinian ideal of the angelic, sympathetic helpmate is shown to be systematically precluded by the mental estrangement effected by the gendering of domestic and public spheres. As the “Finale” reveals, despite Rosamond’s flash of spontaneous sympathy for Dorothea, she remains almost inveterately impassible.

The unnatural stolidity of Rosamond is paradoxically emblematic of the “natural” laws of habit. As Paxton notes, Rosamond operates by “inflexible” laws of association.⁴³⁰ Her selfish fixations are unstoppable: “the circumstance called Rosamond was particularly forcible by means of that mild persistence which, as we know, enables a white soft living substance to make its way in spite of opposing rock” (*M* 324). Instead of an ornamental vine, she is a species of parasitic moss, colonizing weed, or strangling ivy.⁴³¹ As the product of a backfiring experiment in the domestication of species, Rosamond is an unnaturally selected, “man-made” organism that disables its creator/host. Initially, Lydgate sees Rosamond as a kind of delicate flower in need of transplantation, but later he discerns her kinship with the basil plant, which consumes a “murdered man’s brains” (*M* 782). An inexorable force of cultural cultivation and habit, Rosamond is a walking satire on women’s social and mental curtailment.

In radical contrast to Rosamond, Mary Garth possesses an ironic and questioning habit of mind that transcends societal conditioning. She shares with the narrator what Knoepflmacher summarizes as a Fieldingesque satiric style that is “human and tolerant” (*Laughter* 177).⁴³² Automatically wary of her own vanity, “Mary was accustomed to think rather rigorously of what was probable, and if a belief flattered her vanity she felt warned to dismiss it as ridiculous, having early had much exercise in such dismissals” (*M* 543).

Importantly, although she is “inclined to sarcasm and to impulsive sallies,” her habitual sympathy prevents her from Juvenalian pessimism: “Her shrewdness had a streak of satiric bitterness continually renewed and never carried utterly out of sight, except by a strong current of gratitude towards [others]” (*M* 227, 104-5). Enacting Eliot’s ideal of balancing wit and humour, Mary Garth, alongside the narrator, anatomizes human egoism in her “study of provincial life.” In fact, Horatian satire is her habit: “She sat to-night revolving, as she was wont, the scenes of the day, her lips often curling with amusement at the oddities to which her fancy added fresh drollery: people were so ridiculous with their illusions, carrying their fool’s caps unawares” (*M* 295). Yet Mary, though a general and genial social critic, is particularly attuned to how *men* carry their “fool’s caps unawares.” For example, her lifelong affectionate but ironic commentary on Fred Vincy’s habitual waywardness and semi-dereliction is informed by her outsider’s cognizance of the inequities of class and gender. She is “unable to repress her sarcasm” (*M* 131) towards the minimal requirements for lazy, well-born curates like Mr Cowse to take a degree, while, being a woman, she is forced to become a school teacher in order to help pay for her brother’s education. In the same spirit of resistance to unmerited masculine authority, she mocks Casaubon, proposing that his codicil has “perhaps got mixed up with the habits of spiders” (*M* 562). A Horatian satirist *par excellence*, Mary’s habitual sympathy both refines her satire and saves her character from feminist misanthropy.⁴³³

Mrs Cadwallader, a more consistently caustic critic, is also a humourist who blends biting wit with good intentions. Her favourite pastime is to tease and test her male acquaintances. She scolds Brooke, as has been her “habit of years,” with the “friendliest

frankness” on many subjects, especially his political ambitions (he blushes with the sting of her “prophetic” knowledge that he will make a “fool of himself”) (*M* 56, 49). As well, she upbraids him for letting Dorothea marry Casaubon, whose pedantry she mocks with high-burlesque epithets such as “our Lowick Cicero,” or simply, “Thomas Aquinas” (*M* 49, 357). Engaging in whimsical diminution, she speculates that Casaubon’s blood is composed of commas and parentheses, and that footnotes have run away with his brains; however, her boldest objectifying witticism is that his soul is a “great bladder for dried peas to rattle in!” (*M* 54). Her personal satires against Casaubon do not contradict the narrator’s mockery of his “cuds of erudition,” and the eviscerating pronouncement that the scholar’s soul is “too languid to thrill out of self-consciousness into passionate delight” (*M* 262). Though stuck in her narrow world of town gossip, Mrs Cadwallader’s “clearest chiseled utterance[s]” often coincide with those of the omniscient narrator, who approves of her “socially uniting” and entertaining satire (*M* 48). Paralleling the “telescopic watch” of the witty narrator, Mrs Cadwallader traverses Middlemarch in her pony phaeton, “retain[ing] details with the utmost accuracy, and reproduc[ing] them in an excellent pickle of epigrams” (*M* 55). More than a representative of female egoism, Mrs Cadwallader’s larger narrative function, like Mary’s, is to satirize the particularities of masculine egotism. Both characters trouble the Spencerian notion that “[d]oubt, or criticism, or calling-in-question of things that are established” is unlikely among women (*Study of Sociology* 347). Outside of narratorial commentary, *Middlemarch*’s satiric criticisms are voiced mainly by female characters.

In implicit alliance with Mary Garth and Mrs Cadwallader, the narrator investigates the social psychology of male vanity, subverting the dominant view that women's minds are more narrowly yoked to habit. Recalling descriptions of the female mind by Maudsley and Spencer, Brooke's chaotic mind is prone to lower forms of habit. Characterized by a "too rambling habit of mind" (M 8), Brooke's erratic, vague trains of thought are indicated by his Dickensian signature phrase "and that kind of thing." Conversationally, Brooke relies on his automatic repertoire of all manner of received masculine wisdom. The narrator's satirical analyses of his character expose how elite access to "provinces of masculine knowledge" (M 59) encourages the reduction of knowledge to a superficial adornment denoting male authority. Ironically, Brooke's quote from Virgil concerning the mental flightiness of women – "Your sex are not thinkers, you know – *varium et mutabile semper* – that kind of thing. You don't know Virgil" (M 50) – displays his own unoriginality. His routine depreciation of the female intellect is shown to have a damaging effect when Dorothea, while struggling to learn Greek, seriously considers the plausibility of women's inherent mental weakness. Overall, Brooke's "masculine consciousness" (M 365) is devastated by the association, made throughout the novel, of foolish male vanity with inherited systems of misogynistic thought.

Sir James Chettam, like Brooke, is characterized in Horatian terms as being fundamentally good-natured – a man of "excellent human dough" (M 20). Interested in horsemanship over and above intellectual pursuits, he represents the "red-whiskered type" (M 15) of conceited gentleman, whose chivalrous treatment of women originates

from an unstudied and unconscious sense of superiority.⁴³⁴ Offering an antiphrastic metaphor from nature, the narrator ironizes James's egoism, revealing its roots in the *custom* of male intellectual superiority:

A man's mind – what there is of it – has always the advantage of being masculine, – as the smallest birch-tree is of a higher kind than the most soaring palm, – and even his ignorance is of a sounder quality. Sir James might not have originated this estimate; but a kind Providence furnishes the limpest personality with a little gum or starch in the form of tradition.
(*M* 20)⁴³⁵

Patriarchal structures grant potency to all men, regardless of merit. When James becomes Dorothea's brother-in-law and is thus personally invested in her widow's honour, he informs her: “a woman is bound to be cautious and listen to those who know the world better than she does” (*M* 693). James's quick temper (he is “overmastered by anger” upon learning of Dorothea's engagement to Ladislaw) and desire for mastery (he is often seen “whip in hand”) are depicted as being typical of the masculine “life and habits” of his epoch (*M* 765, 52). Initially, he “had no idea that he should ever like to put down” Dorothea, but his transformation into the kind of man who “likes to be master” exposes misogyny to be a cultural current or habit that, similar to the Greek rivers to which Brooke likens female intelligence, “runs underground” (*M* 20, 38, 42). This habit, like the narrow prejudice that characterizes Tom Tulliver in *The Mill on the Floss*, “is at once a staff and a baton” (476). Narrow-minded male characters in *Middlemarch* (from Brooke

to Bulstrode) do little to support the Spencerian (and later Jamesean) hypothesis that the male mind runs less on “preappointed trains of thought” than the female mind.

Reverend Edward Casaubon’s misogyny is more consciously refined than James’s, for he preaches the doctrines of Thomas Aquinas and John Milton and thus embraces the patriarchal belief that female minds are lacking in the manly and godly quality of reason; instead, they are characterized by the “play of female fancy” (*M* 58).⁴³⁶ Dorothea wishes to help Casaubon just as Milton’s daughters famously aided their father. Furthermore, in her unwittingly mock-epical estimation, Casaubon is a demigod “instructive as Milton’s ‘affable archangel’” (*M* 22). Casaubon could not be more declaratively associated with misogyny; in *Paradise Lost*, Raphael’s theology lessons to Adam and Eve include a disquisition on female subservience and intellectual inferiority. Casaubon’s words to Dorothea are Miltonic: “‘The great charm of your sex is its capability of an ardent self-sacrificing affection, and herein we see its fitness to round and complete the existence of our own’” (*M* 46). Adolf Naumann’s portrait of Edward Casaubon, posing as Aquinas staring into a book, while Saint Bonaventure is depicted in a state of effulgent enlightenment, further lampoons misogynistic egoism. Naumann’s words affirm the target: “‘I dare say the great scholastic himself would have been flattered to have his portrait asked for. Nothing like these starchy doctors for vanity!’” (*M* 204).⁴³⁷ In this way, Aquinas is parodied; not only is he rendered as having the facial characteristics of Casaubon, but he is accused of the vanity that he himself (and all patristic writers) ascribe to the “weaker sex.” Eliot delivers an unmistakable jest at the

expense of both the patriarch himself and intellectual habitude of misogyny that provides for educated men like Casaubon “a little gum or starch in the form of tradition.”⁴³⁸

Brooke, Chettam, and Casaubon are imbued with and sustained by social, literary, and theological discourses of masculine superiority. Along with Casaubon, Lydgate demonstrates Mill and Taylor’s assertion that even “cultivated minds” (*SW* 21: 269) are hostage to this habituated brand of self-idolatry, for he also believes that women exist to adorn male achievement. Like Mr Chichely, the vain and “purple-faced bachelo[r]” who prefers that a woman “lays herself out a little more to please us,” Lydgate, by favouring Rosamond over Dorothea, demonstrates that his “spots of commonness lay in the complexion of his prejudices” (*M* 86, 82, 141). According to Lydgate, Rosamond is “perfectly lovely and accomplished,” but Dorothea does not “look at things from the proper feminine angle,” and is too inquisitive to excel at “wifely functions” (*M* 87-88), whether ornamental or otherwise. As the narrator implies, satire cannot exaggerate the irony of this unfortunate preference and the “necessary sequences” of events that it precipitates: “Destiny stands by sarcastic with our *dramatis personae* folded in her hand” (*M* 88). Lydgate chooses his wife with as much conformity to “the established order” as he chooses his furniture:

We may handle even extreme opinions with impunity while our furniture, our dinner-giving, and preference for armorial bearings in our own case, link us indissolubly with the established order. And Lydgate's tendency was not towards extreme opinions: ... he was no radical in relation to anything but medical reform and the prosecution of discovery. In the rest

of practical life he walked by hereditary habit; half from that personal pride and unreflecting egoism which I have already called commonness, and half from that *naïveté* which belonged to preoccupation with favorite ideas. (*M* 327)

Bound by “hereditary habit,” Lydgate does not question his culture’s Miltonic ideal of woman – epitomized by Eve’s submissive words in *Paradise Lost*: “God is thy law, thou mine; to know no more/ Is woman’s happiest knowledge and her praise” (IV 638-9). Lydgate’s sexism, a form of prejudice “carried in the air, adopted by hearsay, caught in through the eye” (*Mill* 456) – and absorbed from his scientific readings – undercuts his professed humanitarianism. In this way, his potentially great mind joins the ranks of Mr Chichely, Mr Brooke, Sir James, and Casaubon as a satirical exemplar of delusive male vanity in subjugation to the unreflecting despotism of habit.⁴³⁹ It is one of *Middlemarch*’s key satirical and rhetorical gestures that Lydgate’s zeugmatic “judgment” concerning “furniture, or women” (*M* 141) affirms that he, like the dross of humanity, is largely a “bundle of habit.”⁴⁴⁰

Throughout *Middlemarch*, male supremacy is figured as a habituated reliance outside of conscious control. Referring to Lydgate’s marriage, the narrator observes, “the mistake was at work in him like a recognized chronic disease, mingling its uneasy importunities with every prospect, and enfeebling every thought” (*M* 555). Lydgate regards addiction to drinking and gambling as the vice of ordinary men; yet the habitual view of women that primed his attraction to Rosamond, like the series of events leading to his marriage, was “woven like slight clinging hairs into the more substantial web of his

thoughts” (*M* 282). Ultimately, his domestic association with Rosamond renders him physically and mentally “bruised and shattered” (*M* 660); “shattered” is the same word that is used to describe Raffles’s debauched state. Lydgate is as powerless against the “creeping paralysis” (*M* 723) of mind and body as an alcoholic – or any addict, such as Joshua Rigg, who is caught in the “iron lattice” of “Cupidity” (*M* 488). Lydgate’s loss of self-control is further evidenced by the “fierceness in [his] eyes” (*M* 612). Obliquely, it is suggested that Lydgate is close to using his “powerful tender hand[s]” (*M* 627) to subjugate Rosamond physically, but instead his anger is vented in routine misogynistic scorn. A bathetic treatise on gout and an early death suffice to render him a parody of his former self. And so, through the widespread disease of socially conditioned “masculine” desire for mastery over unnaturally enfeebled femininity, the world loses a scientist of substantial humanitarian potential.

Once again, the realist narrator’s affiliation with the prophetic and satiric rhetoric of sages is apparent. The images of disease and addiction surrounding Lydgate’s demise not only signal the “satirist’s expert medical eye” (to use Barchiesi and Cucchiarelli’s phrase, 221), but are redolent of Wollstonecraft’s warning about the apocalyptic effects of enforcing a “womanly limit” on the female mind: “Make them free, and they will quickly become wise and virtuous,... for the improvement must be mutual, or the injustice which one half of the human race are obliged to submit to, retorting on their oppressors, the virtue of men will be worm-eaten by the insect whom he keeps under his feet” (*Vindication* 175).⁴⁴¹

Lydgate's "emmet-like" fate warns of the ironic disablement of male achievement obtained through degradation of the female sex (Eliot, *Mill* 272). For Robert Louis Stevenson, the pathos of Lydgate's failure moderates the satiric force of Rosamond Vincy: "My compliments to George Eliot for her Rosamond Vincy; the ugly work of satire she has transmuted to the ends of art by the companion figure of Lydgate; and the satire was much wanted for the education of young men" (38).⁴⁴² In *Middlemarch*, adherence to customary codes of gender – modeled upon the routine depreciation of the female intellect – is presented as a nationally degrading habit. *Middlemarch*'s "sub-acid satire" reveals "male and female mortals" (*M* 67), already besieged by the human folly of vanity, caught in a matrix of misogyny through the "iron lattice" of habit.

Middlemarch and *Shirley*, like many canonical, "classic realist" Victorian novels, are panoramic social satires that target individual and social habitudes for mentally and morally denigrating and estranging human beings. They contain more than just undercurrents or securely subsidiary elements of satire, a genre or mode steadfastly associated in masculinist culture with the comprehensive learning and judgment of men. Distinctively, as feminist novelistic satires, they counter the misogynist traditions of literary satire, which offer, as Hooley affirms (with reference to ancient formal satire), the "explicit patriarchal discourse, of generically empowered male voice, telling things as they are" (*Roman Satire* 41); they gather strategies of Horatian, Juvenalian, and Menippean satire to admonish, anatomize, and amend gendered habits of thought and custom. Both texts utilize female internal satirists to inveigh against empathy-eroding and

intellect-deadening habits of egotism in general, and culturally engendered masculine egotism in particular.

Conclusion

Dehabituation: The “ugly work” of Victorian Satire

‘Habit a second nature! Habit is ten times nature!’ the Duke of Wellington is said to have exclaimed. (William James, *Principles of Psychology*, 124)

It is the humor of many heads to extol the days of their forefathers, and declaim against the wickedness of times present. Which notwithstanding they cannot handsomely do, without the borrowed help and satire of times past; condemning the vices of their own times, by the expressions of vices in times which they commend, which cannot but argue the community of vice in both. Horace, therefore, Juvenal, and Persius, were no prophets, although their lines did seem to indicate and point at our times. (Sir Thomas Browne, *Pseudodoxia Epidemica*, Book V, Chapter XLV 414; epigraph for Eliot, *Middlemarch*)

In this dissertation, I argue for a significant presence of satire within Victorian novels from the 1830s to the 1890s – the very decades in which many influential critics, from the early twentieth century to the present day, discern a marked, general decline in the practice of satire. As early as the eighteenth century, writers valued amiable humour over wit and satire; continuing this trend, countless Victorian writers and critics attempted (in David Worcester’s words) to “pus[h] satire into the dunce’s corner” (32). Nevertheless, regardless of their theoretical disavowal of satire, many novelists embraced in their narrative practices its mild Horatian, philosophical Menippean, and even stringent Juvenalian possibilities. Charlotte Brontë’s words to Elizabeth Gaskell may be applied to many Victorian writers: “‘Satirical you are – however; I believe a little more so than you think’” (*Letters* 3: 47).

Inspired by Athena Vrettos’s enterprising work on the prevalence of Victorian debates concerning habit and its relevance to psychological realism, I trace the relation of culturally embedded discourses on habit to the period’s novelistic satire. The

preoccupation of satirists with habit is strikingly illuminated by Mikhail Bakhtin's social-formalist assessment of the novel's steadfast roots in ancient serio-comical literature and Menippean satire – a dialogic form that defamiliarizes habit. Cultural systems – “all the *habitual matrices* [*sosedstva*] of things and ideas” – are exposed in “the menippea” through voracious parody of literary and non-literary genres, and through the “creation of ... unexpected connections” (*Dialogic* 169). Or, as Northrop Frye proposes, Menippean anatomy breaks up social and intellectual conventions, all the “lumber of stereotypes” (*Anatomy* 233). Furthermore, the notion of habit as a secondary or acquired trait complements Frances T. Russell's discernment in Victorian satire of a distinctively democratic and scientific emphasis on the role of society in the formation of human vice and folly.

Throughout the previous chapters, I question the ascendant critical notion (postulated by Dyer, Palmeri, and others) that satire exists in the mid-nineteenth-century novel as a curtailed and subsidiary accompaniment to the character-focused, conciliating comic and realist aspects of the novel. Whereas Matz finds more “continuum than discordance” between realism and satire in the *late* Victorian novel, I note that earlier Victorian “realist” fiction also evinces this commingling of objectifying satire and sympathetic insight. For example, R. H. Hutton, in an 1872 review of *Middlemarch*, proposes that the ethically anatomizing element of Eliot's prose “always runs on in a parallel stream with her picture of character” (Carroll 302). The concomitancy of satire and realist traditions, both of which are literary expressions invested in (often

disenchanted) representations of “historically authentic particulars” (Rosenheim 318), requires further theorization; this study offers preliminary insights.

Taxonomic confusion begins, as Chapter 1 explains, in the ancient Roman definitions of satire (e.g., by Diomedes and Quintilian), and extends to Augustan and twenty-first-century assessments. Critics and practitioners alike struggle fruitlessly to stabilize the formal elements of satire and to determine if satire is a mode or a genre. Yet relative consistency regarding two perennial formal and thematic features of satire is discernable: the farraginous appropriation of other genres, and the moral presence of critical attack (as Frye clarifies, “denunciation contributes morality to satire” [“Nature” 80]). It is a convention of satire’s critics to acknowledge its protean modal status while simultaneously reverting to generic definitions, but satire’s informing and informative presence in the novel – which constantly undercuts the constraints of “classic realism” – remains an issue of critical frustration. With discernible exasperation, Jerome Meckier asks of the “satirical novel”: “Is there such a classification, or must one speak of satire *in* the novel, as if it were an added ingredient instead of an essential part of the recipe?” (“Satirical Novel” 3). Arguably, Frye and Bakhtin’s theories of Menippean satire create a bridge linking ancient modes and genres of satire to the novel. Bakhtin extols the Rabelaisian grotesque as a Menippean form, and in doing so, appears to accommodate Horatian (congenial, remedial, and non-atomizing) satire, whereas Frye’s linkage of satire with tragedy and nihilism suggests the novelistic persistence of the Juvenalian mode. I draw upon Bakhtin and Frye to support my thesis that many representative and canonical Victorian novels re-accentuate (to use Bakhtin’s verb) the ancient mode or

genre, recuperating Menippean, Horatian, and Juvenalian techniques and themes. As Victorian novels affirm, and as Dan Hooley asserts compellingly, “[i]t is plainly impossible to mark a closure to the afterlife of [ancient] satire” (*Roman Satire* 168).

Throughout the preceding chapters, I discuss how even popularly recognized and self-confessed satirists such as Thackeray and Trollope, together with writers not commonly recognized as satiric, such as Gaskell, Eliot, and Brontë, articulate ambivalence to strong satire. Though attracted to the moral and rhetorical aspects of satire, Victorian novelists were cautious and critical of what they perceived to be its unseemly lack of disinterestedness. Not surprisingly, this revealing, hyperbolic mode or genre often conflicts with the restrictive moral aesthetics of mid-Victorian realism (as articulated by Ruskin, Trollope, Eliot, G. H. Lewes, etc.) – particularly its curative, Arnoldian commitment to representing “things as they are.”⁴⁴³ It is telling that Robert Louis Stevenson praises Eliot for transmuting the “ugly work of satire” into art in *Middlemarch*, for if satire receives praise from Victorian literary critics, it is typically for its Horatian moderation. The centuries-old Horace/Juvenal antimony is re-articulated, for example, by James Hannay, who explains that Horace, “with all his satirical bias,” remains a “well-balanced,” “cheerful humorous man,” but “Juvenal has usually a most unmistakable intention to lash something and somebody” (35). Horace’s *sermo cotidianus* (“everyday talk”) (Hooley, *Roman Satire* 30) could easily pass in the period’s prose under the rubric of humorous or comic writing. Margaret Oliphant, epitomizing this conflation, posits that “the satirist need be no sharper than the humourist and may almost fulfill his office lovingly” (*Victorian Age* 148). Unloving Juvenalian satire,

however, was definitively and disparagingly tagged as “satire.” Like the dual Victorian discourses of habit, satire was perceived as either a potentially dangerous habit, or, if regulated, a beneficial one.

In Chapter 2, I investigate how the “familiar fact, the power of habit” (Mill, *Utilitarianism* 10: 238) is a perennial concern to philosophical, scientific, and, later, evolutionary theories of individual character formation, and social and ethical practice; habit is the crux of association psychology from Aristotle, through Locke and Hartley, to Spencer, Lewes, Carpenter, Bain, Mill, and even James. “[D]ebated extensively in nineteenth-century psychology” (Vrettos 399), habit foregrounds long-standing divisions between the “materialists” and “spiritualists.” William James’s theory of habit’s physicality, and its centrality to self-control, productive action, rationality, morality, education, and social control, synthesizes and reinstates the ideas of numerous Victorian mental scientists. In a bluntly mechanistic analogy for the brain, James states that the “ultimate physiological law of habit among the neural elements is what *runs* the train” (*Principles* 547). Despite this mechanistic metaphor (which, being a metaphor, he notes, demonstrates his mind’s associative flexibility), James holds, along with Carpenter, Mill, and others before him, that despite determining forces, men’s characters are formed *by* them and not *for* them. The dynamic, conscious forces in the human mind oppose the rigidity of habit, but require *habitual* maintenance by the will. Similarly, as writers such as Smiles, Grey, and Shirreff were pleased to report, “We cannot lessen [habit’s] power, though we can bend it to our will” (Grey and Shirreff 75). Control over “habits of association” is represented in such popular works as a form of “moral power” (Grey and

Shirreff 239). For idealists (such as Carlyle and Wordsworth), for evolutionary physiological psychologists (such as Spencer and Lewes), for scientists (such as Darwin and Huxley), and also for many novelists, habit is an inbuilt instrument for individual and social amelioration. But attending the hopes that Victorian writers place on the humanizing habits of free will and free thought, there are many melancholy acknowledgments of the power of habit to unhinge individual character, and by extension, society at large. Mill, for example, despite his faith in one's freedom to form the habit of virtue, and that of thinking for oneself, regrets that automatous acquiescence to custom is an all-too-common habit characterizing the heads of state.

Unsurprisingly, as habit is presented in multiple, interfused Victorian discourses as a powerful mechanism of human moral character, habit is an expansive subject for satiric novelists.⁴⁴⁴ *Sartor Resartus*, Carlyle's profoundly Menippean treatise on the wonder-deadening habits of selfishness and materialism, sets the stage for the period's satiric encounters with the problem of habit. The novels I discuss in Chapter 3 demonstrate either Horatian optimism or Juvenalian cynicism with regard to habit's powers as a source for good or ill. It is a trajectory best encapsulated by Bulwer-Lytton's radical optimism and faith in habits of sympathy in *Pelham* (1828) and the cynicism concerning the assimilating powers of habit in *The Coming Race* (1871). Moreover, the novels contain varying degrees of engagement with then-contemporary discourses of habit – from Gaskell's subtle intimations, to Eliot and Butler's explicit invocation of evolutionary physiological psychology. Habit is illuminated, promoted, and critiqued with mainly Horatian gentleness through an array of apt metaphors from the bonnets of

Cranford's genteel population, to the organic and inorganic metaphors that orchestrate *Silas Marner's* critique of narrow fixations that thwart communal empathy.

Contrastingly, in *The Way of All Flesh* and *New Grub Street*, advanced moral and mental habits are represented as renegade virtues within a perversely successful materialist culture. Instead of Horatian hopes of amelioration through sympathy, these novels resonate with Juvenalian disenchantment and disdain for the victory of “pernicious Cash” (Juvenal 1.113) and paralyzing cant.

Dickens's preoccupation with habit is well known, from Frye and J. Hillis Miller to Vrettos's historicizing criticism of *Dombey and Son*. Yet in Chapter 4, I observe that Dickens's enduring status as a non-intellectual, together with the contested status of satire in the mid-Victorian novel, contribute to the ascendant critical supposition that Dickens is not a full-fledged satirist. Although, as his novel's prefaces reveal, Dickens expresses no compunction about the validity and utility of satire's role in the novel, there is an intransigent critical habit of regarding his novelistic expressions of strong sentiment and acerbic satire as being mutually exclusive. Dickens, however, follows ancient and Augustan satirical traditions in his novels of the 1850s and 60s, *Bleak House*, *Hard Times*, and *Our Mutual Friend*. Each of these novels is a *satira* in the Juvenalian (and often Menippean) vein; their rhetoric is characterized by unrestrained metaphor that targets all forms of institutional (social) and individual (psychological) bad habits. Furthermore, Dickens's satiric novels reveal his conversance with medical, psychological, and economic discourses of habit – and with the Utilitarian reliance upon association psychology. From the machines of Coketown (including its Menippean

Utilitarianists), through the images of darkness, disease, caged birds (and a habit-blinded heroine), to the series of cannibalistic feasts and mirroring devices that figure wholesale retrogradation in the apocalyptic *Our Mutual Friend*, Dickens's anatomy of habit is boldly Juvenalian.

Finally, I investigate misogynist theorizations of both satire and habit – two subjects that require further study. Rogers and Nussbaum's excavation of the myths that structure misogynist satire, from Juvenal to Swift and beyond, provides a template for my investigation of Brontë's *Shirley*. I explore the text's retaliatory satire of anti-feminist conventions (both literary and social): misogamy, the myth of the old maid, the "Blue Stocking," and inferior Eve. Eliot's *Middlemarch* also targets misogynist Miltonic and scientific traditions of female intellectual inequality. Both novels pose a question that is satirically irreverent to both historic and Victorian theories concerning female mental inferiority (arguments which decree women's status as a satiric subject and not as a satirist): "[D]o you seriously think all wisdom in the world is lodged in male skulls?" (Brontë, *S* 328). Eliot's narrator, who, like Horace, avoids the "acid of malevolence" (*Satire* I.3, 101), is still, like several of *Middlemarch*'s female characters, satirically inclined to expose vanity and selfishness. Female satirists within each text denounce the divisive cultural habits (trained masculine egotism and feminine ignorance) that are destructive to both sexes. Enveloped in irony, each novel concludes by fulfilling masculinist realist expectations, highlighting the fact that "uncustomary opinions" – even those expressed by male authors – "receiv[e]" strong censure (Mill, *SW* 21: 279). Once again, Dan Hooley's assessment is relevant: "Whatever its politics, satire redraws

perspective on the stuff of the world, channels resistance, reservation, second thought. It processes and reacts against the larger forces that drive events” (*Roman Satire* 169). Similarly, despite the era’s ambivalence to satire, Victorian novelists, dissociating and dissenting from the “*habitual matrices*” (Bakhtin) of their culture, and engaging with complex moral discourses of habit, wrote philosophically probing and culturally critical Menippean, Horatian, and Juvenalian satire.

Endnotes

¹ In “The Nature of Satire” (1954), Frye explains that satire “hardly exists now” as a genre: “The word now means a tone or quality of art which we may find in any form.” It thrives mainly as an “attitude” of criticism (“Nature” 75, *Anatomy* 310). Kirk Freudenburg summarizes this notion: “we think of satire in functional terms, as something that satirizes; that is, not a specific form in itself, but an attitude or critical operation performed by a work that can inhabit a vast number of forms” (“Roman Satire” 21). David Duff clarifies the concepts of genre, form, and mode as follows: genre is “a recurring type or category of text, as defined by structural, thematic and/or functional criteria” (“Key Concepts” xiii). Form is “often used synonymously with genre to mean simply a type or category of literary work” (“Key Concepts” xii), but is also frequently used to refer to structural as opposed to thematic characteristics of a work. Mode also has a dual sense: it refers either to a manner of representation (usually the Aristotelian triad: narrative, dramatic, and lyrical) or to categories such as tragic or comic, which are “thematically specific but *non*-specific as to literary form or mode of representation” (“Key Concepts” xv).

² In *Fictions of Satire*, Ronald Paulson explains what he refers to as a “drift” in the eighteenth century away from formal satire to the satiric realism of the novels of Fielding, Smollett, and Sterne. Satire, he claims, was “domesticated” in the “partly satiric works” of the “developing form of the long prose narrative, the novel” (Paulson, *Fictions* 222).

³ Bakhtin and Frye have exerted less influence on recent satire theory in part because their theories are nearly as capacious and pliable as satire itself. Bakhtin’s theories (of the 1920s and 1930s) did not influence satire studies in the West until the appearance of the English translation of *Rabelais and His World* in 1968 (Freudenburg, “Intro” 17). Like most classics scholars who are less interested in the after-life of ancient satire and therefore in its merge with the novel, Kirk Freudenburg is dismissive of Bakhtin. Similarly, Joel C. Relihan, whose interest lies in examining classical examples of the Menippean genre, finds that Bakhtin “casts his net” too wide to be useful in establishing the classical origins of the genre (6). Both Frye and Bakhtin, according to Relihan, use ancient Menippean writers overzealously as “springboards from which to leap into modern times” (8). Echoing this view, Howard Weinbrot’s 2005 study, *Menippean Satire Reconsidered: From Antiquity to the Eighteenth Century*, finds that Frye and Bakhtin’s definitions “allow too many texts at too many times to be Menippean” (296). Daniel Hooley, however, while acknowledging that Frye and Bakhtin “apply the term ‘Menippean’ to a broad range of works dating from the Renaissance,” concludes that “species of Menippean, in modified forms, [are found] on up to the present day” (*Roman Satire* 155-156).

⁴ The satires of Juvenal and Horace have been contrasted for centuries. The terms Horatian (for genial and conciliatory satire) and Juvenalian (for harsh and pessimistic

satire) evolved from the debates of grammarians, practicing satirists, and literary critics about the relative merits and features of each satirist's work. Post-structuralist critics advocate the abandonment of such polarized categories. Fredric V. Bogel, for example, in addition to rejecting the fundamental binary of satire (satire vs. satiric object), views the "long-lived" opposition between Juvenalian and Horatian modes as merely a strategy to contain the "potentially disruptive energies of satiric aggression" (29-30). Similarly, Steven E. Jones avoids these "larger-than-history" (9) labels, preferring to evaluate each satiric work as self-defined. By contrast, Dyer retains the Horatian and Juvenalian dichotomy for its usefulness in evaluating the political orientation of satire. Dyer describes Horatian satires as being less political than "intensely political" Juvenalian "radical" satires (41). As Robert C. Elliott notes, the works of Juvenalian satirists, in their derisive zeal, often work against the "shoring up" of existing social structures and suggest the necessity of radical reform (273).

⁵ See, for example, Carolyn Williams's "Parody, Pastiche, and the Play of Genres: The Savoy Operas of Gilbert and Sullivan" (2000). Late Victorian utopian satiric novels have been surveyed by Ann-Barbara Graff in "'Administrative Nihilism': Evolution, Ethics and Victorian Utopian Satire," and by Susan Kahn, in her 1981 dissertation entitled "The Intellectual and Aesthetic Evolution of the British Satiric Novel, 1879-1928: A Comparative Study of Works by George Meredith, H.G. Wells and Aldous Huxley," which examines attitudes towards realism in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century – noting an increased intensity of satiric attack. David Nash's "Laughing at the Almighty: Freethinking Lampoon, Satire, and Parody in Victorian England" (2000) evaluates periodical satire (focusing on the pictorial), and James G. Paradis's "Satire and Science in Victorian Culture" (1997) explores the ways in which comic periodicals such as *Punch* routinely "played with the progressive ideology of science by contrasting grand ambition with a meager reductive result" (155). As well, Alan Richardson explores a hitherto understudied territory: children's literature and satire. In terms of verse satire, there have been many studies, particularly of Robert Browning and Arthur Hugh Clough.

⁶ Russell's list ranges from Peacock and Disraeli, to Meredith and Butler (45-6). She acknowledges that Gaskell, Brontë, and Kingsley are "never thought of as satirists," but finds them "far from being innocent" of practicing satire (48). Her study measures the "satiric strain" (47) (defined as "a union of criticism and humor" [5]) in a selection of novelists.

⁷ Two recent theses have followed Vrettos in linking the period's discourses of habit to realist fiction. Shawn O'Toole's 2006 dissertation, "Technologies of the Self: Habit and the Victorian Novel," promises to explore "the realist novel within a larger cultural debate about the social and psychological effects of habitual behavior, retracing the tradition of writing on habit in Victorian philosophy, psychology, and popular advice literature" (iv), but his study does not further Vrettos's assessment of this cultural context. His analysis of Victorian discourses of habit is little more than a reiteration of Vrettos's salient points and specific examples. More recently, Kristie M. Allen's 2008 dissertation "Second Nature: The Discourse of Habit in Nineteenth-Century British

Realist Fiction” (which I was able to access in 2009) contains a more substantial assessment of the ways that “realist writers sought to reconceive the relationship between social determination and self-improvement” (ii). Allen adds nuanced explorations of George Eliot’s *The Mill on the Floss* and Thomas Hardy’s *The Woodlanders* to support her claim that “[t]he nineteenth-century realist novel imaginatively responded to the assumptions behind and investigations into the discourses of habit that were integral to the debates about moral reform, about evolution, about human subjectivity, and about the course of human history” (61). Following Vrettos, Allen focuses on the intersections of discourses of habit and the genre of the realist novel.

⁸ For Bakhtin, although Roman and Menippean satire are the generic roots of the second line of the heteroglossic serio-comic novel, they depart from parody’s strategy of “the laughing word” when their satire is not characterized by ambivalent laughter and positive incarnations of the grotesque.

⁹ Linda Hutcheon, for example, in *Theory of Parody: the Teachings of Twentieth-Century Art Forms* (1985), claims that “[s]atire does not authorize but ridicules the transgression of social norms” – it “tends to defend norms” (78-79).

¹⁰ George Eliot, in “The *Antigone* and its Moral” (1856), defines Sophoclean tragedy as the “dramatic collision” between the individual’s “elemental tendencies” and established social laws and conventions (245). This concept of tragedy is compatible with the social criticism found in Juvenalian satire.

¹¹ Palmeri’s central thesis is that “satire did not determine the overall genre of [Victorian] narratives”: “In the course of the nineteenth century, narrative satire underwent a period of eclipse by other forms, but it also experienced a return.... Displaced by other forms, it played an almost exclusively a subordinate and episodic role beginning in the 1840s. However, by the late 1880s, works again began to appear with the generic features of narrative satire predominant” (“Narrative Satire” 361).

¹² Satyr plays were performed after a trilogy of tragedies and often involved travesties of heroes and philosophers, and scurrilous subjects (Van Rooy 135). They were comic parodies of myths and not bitter or caustic in tone, as the Elizabethans later believed (Griffin 11).

¹³ Quintilian’s dictum that satire is wholly Roman is, according to Freudenburg, a rather desperate attempt to define an especial Roman literary achievement. Freudenburg argues that the *quidem* (“at least/if nothing else”) in the famous statement signals Roman cultural insecurity in the realm of literature (“Intro” 2-3).

¹⁴ The iambic poetry of Archilochus (7th century BCE) is characteristically abusive; iambs are a form associated with social criticism (Muecke 35). Two Greek verbs may be translated as “to satirize”: *iambizein* and *komoidein*. The first is associated with personally abusive iambs, and the second is associated with the ridiculing aspect of comedy (Muecke 34). Satire could be found in Old and New Comedy, Stoic diatribe, and fables (Muecke 37-38, Griffin 8-9).

¹⁵ The first volume had varied meter, the second was hexameter, and the third volume was in elegiac couplets (Van Rooy 51).

¹⁶ His satire shared with comedy the mockery of character types (greedy courtesans, etc), popular moralizing, and political and moral attacks on contemporaries. However, the polemical moral focus of Lucilius is also likely inspired by Greek Old Comedy (Van Rooy 146).

¹⁷ Frances Muecke claims that satire was seen as a low, “almost...prosaic” genre (34). Horace’s verse satire is “a prose-like means of cataloguing and commenting on his social experience” (Barchiesi and Cucchiarelli 217). Furthermore, Horace discussed the genre as if it were prose (Van Rooy 65).

¹⁸ However, his six satires advocate the tenets of Stoicism, and in the age of Nero, Stoicism had anti-imperial connotations (Cucchiarelli 75).

¹⁹ According to Daniel Hooley, Juvenal’s satire is characterized by a “magnitude of words” to match the monstrous abundance of Roman vice (*Roman Satire* 112). He observes that scholars tend to characterize Juvenal by his “use of rhetorical questions, *loci communes* (commonplaces) on riches, on contemporary corruption, on fortune, etc., dramatic shifts in stylistic level, and *exempla*,” and also his *sententiae* (aphorisms) and overall “big, dramatic effects” (Hooley, *Roman Satire* 114-115).

²⁰ For example, Juvenal, Persius, and Horace are found within Conrad of Hirsau’s *Dialogus super auctores* (c. 1140), which introduced important classical authors to grammar students (Parsons 106). The terms *satiricus* and *satura* were used widely in commentary about poetry, and discussions of satire even extended to vernacular texts (107). Satire was generally seen as a didactic, “highly moralized” tool to combat immorality (Parsons 107-8); however, Parsons argues that satire’s link with unruly satyrs carried forward its rebellious elements throughout the middle ages. Hooley asserts that, though “aware of classical prototypes,” medieval satirists were “constrained” by a “Christian ethical frame”; moreover, Juvenal and Horace were not “invoked as models for the vernacular language” (*Roman Satire* 156-7).

²¹ Comparisons of Horace and Juvenal were absorbed into the rhetorical tradition of *synkrisis* (the central trope of which was antithesis): a rhetorical exercise of comparison, often between poets such as Virgil and Homer (Martindale 287).

²² Griffin points out that Kernan’s thesis does not accommodate the satire of John Donne, who used the Horatian persona in the early 1590s (11).

²³ In *The Formal Strain* (1969), Weinbrot investigates the qualities of Augustan imitation verse satire, stressing the importance of notions of uniformitarianism (the eternal quality of human nature) to the ethos of imitation.

²⁴ Kirk Combe argues that, complementary to Bakhtin’s theory of the carnival roots of Menippean satire, Dryden was influenced by the experience of Christmas revels at the Inns of Court (which derived from the festivals of ancient and medieval Europe) (2).

²⁵ Dryden openly acknowledges the influence of Renaissance commentators Casaubon, Heinsius and Dacier on his formula for formal verse satire.

²⁶ Catherine Connors observes that Lucilius, Horace, Persius, and Juvenal all use epic to claim social authority (either overtly or subtextually, as in the case of Persius) (144). They select a fairly standard range of epic motifs (mainly battle scenes and councils of

the gods), typically to juxtapose a glorious epic past with contemporary corruption (Connors 138).

²⁷ Dryden's "Discourse" "set out the ways in which the Roman satirists were to be read and adapted right through the eighteenth century"; for example, Alexander Pope's and Samuel Johnson's ideas about satire derive from Dryden's typology (Hooley, "Alluding" 261).

²⁸ Freudenburg situates Juvenal's writing within the context of Rome's early second century. He assesses this period as being characterized by a cultural obsession with the traumatic past of the first century (*Satires of Rome* 231). According to Freudenburg, Juvenal's satire is anti-Lucilian in that it is retroactive satire – thus, satire that is cowardly and "stuck in the graveyard" (*Satires of Rome* 235).

²⁹ Boileau (whom Dryden called a living Horace and a Juvenal ["Discourse" 81]) wrote between 1658 and 1700 and defined satire in his *Art Poétique* (1674). He offered a balanced view of each of the satirists and aimed to join Horatian and Juvenalian techniques – but the weight of borrowing was on the Horatian side (Weinbrot, *Formal Strain* 87, 97).

³⁰ The poem opens with a Juvenalian complaint about bad poets (Weinbrot, *Pope* 243). Dr Arbuthnot is represented as the *adversarius* who needs to be convinced about the need for the "more severe tragic masks of Persius and Juvenal" (Weinbrot, *Pope* 243).

³¹ Carretta's project is to understand why there is little significant satire between 1743 (the death of Pope) and the advent of Charles Churchill. He concludes that relative political stability after Walpole's defeat is one reason, but perhaps a more important cause is a philosophical shift from uniformitarianism to historical relativism; this shift rendered satiric claims less universal (Carretta 250).

³² Hazlitt praises Rabelais for his "teeming wit" and good nature without "spleen" – his "laughing at the world and enjoying it by turns" (446).

³³ This thesis, however, suggests that Lockean associationism altered rather than abolished satire by significantly shifting the satiric target from the innate frailties of humankind to those that originate in habit.

³⁴ Dyer adds that the dominance of middle-class ideologies (and a provincial middle class shaped "disproportionately" by women [50]), non-conforming denominations, and the Evangelical branch of Anglicanism, "all restrained verbal attack and, along with it, satire" (139). Frank Palmeri adds the satire-reducing and moderating effect of the reduction of the stamp tax on conservative dailies such as the *Times* or the *Morning Chronicle*, while the radical papers, which had been breeding grounds for radical satire, remained at a higher tax level. ("Thackeray" 754).

³⁵ Dyer alters the traditional Horatian-Juvenalian dichotomy by distinguishing between three modes: "Neo-Horatian," "Neo-Juvenalian," and what he terms the "Radical" mode – a complex combination of Horatian and Juvenalian elements.

³⁶ For example, Coleridge engaged in elaborate self-parody in "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner." See David A. Kent and D. R. Ewen's *Romantic Parodies, 1797-1831* (1992). As well, Kyle Grimes examines the work of William Hone (1780-1842), a late-romantic satirist and publisher, concluding that Hone created a new form of satire ("hacker satire"

[Grimes 174]), which was opportunistic transforms satire from a “fundamentally literary and conservative genre into the more dialogical form” (Grimes 175).

³⁷ The essays in her collection (*The Victorian Comic Spirit*) address the subversive function of humour without reference to satire as a generic or even modal consideration.

³⁸ From Macaulay’s 1831 review of John Wilson Crocker’s *Life of Samuel Johnson* (1831).

³⁹ From Macaulay’s 1837 review of Basil Montagu’s 1825-34 edition of the works of Francis Bacon.

⁴⁰ Loomis, in an article entitled “Thackeray and the Plight of the Victorian Satirist” (1968), argues that “in spite of the existence of some fine contemporary satirists,” the Victorians “were excessively distrustful of the satiric spirit” (1). In his discussion of the inhospitable critical context in which Thackeray’s *Vanity Fair* was received, he highlights a pervasive distrust of satiric intention and effectiveness, and the condemnation of *ad hominem* arguments in the Victorian period, to conclude: “The Victorian satirist, even more than the satirists of other periods, had to work against the spirit of his times” (6). Palmeri argues that a key reason for the “occlusion of satire was the reign of Mudie’s, the powerful circulating library” (“Narrative Satire” 371). The library and its regime of decency was “among a network of contributing and competing pressures” that limited the production of satire (Palmeri, “Narrative Satire” 371).

⁴¹ Bulwer-Lytton published a well-reviewed metrical translation of *The Odes and Epodes of Horace* in 1869.

⁴² However, Lamb himself (or Bulwer-Lytton) was not averse to Juvenalian satire. In an essay on Hogarth that appeared in Hunt’s *Reflector* (1811), he praises Hogarth’s “strong and masculine Satires” (61); he observes that Persius and Juvenal are “perpetually darting across the otherwise appalling gloom of their subject – consolatory remembrancers, when their pictures of guilty mankind have made us even to despair for our species, that there is such a thing as virtue and moral dignity in the world, that her unquenchable spark is not utterly out – refreshing admonitions, to which we turn for shelter from the too great heat and asperity of the general satire” (72-3).

⁴³ Letter to Mary Elizabeth Bulteel Ponsonby, 17 October 1877 (*Letters* 6: 440). Eliot’s concern is moral: “We may satirise character and qualities in the abstract without injury to our moral nature, but persons hardly ever” (letter to Frances Houghton, 4 February 1849; *Letters* 1: 378).

⁴⁴ Abigail Burnham Bloom observes that Carlyle’s “humor went beyond the theoretical framework he himself had erected” (153). Bloom argues that Carlyle’s theories of benevolent humour and his concomitant purpose to “change the world” necessitated a less “sportive” and more ironic approach.

⁴⁵ Chaucer is a humourist and, despite his many virtues, is not one of “the great classics,” for he lacks “high seriousness” (Arnold, “Study,” *Works* 9: 177).

⁴⁶ Arnold acknowledges that Wordsworth and Coleridge also denied Dryden and Pope status as poetical classics, yet he observes (in an admonitory, Carlylean observation) that these poets find favour with the “young generation, and there are many signs to show that

the eighteenth century and its judgments are coming into favour again" ("Study," *Works* 9: 178).

⁴⁷ "The grand work of literary genius," Arnold maintains, "is a work of synthesis and exposition, not of analysis and discovery; its gift lies in the faculty of being happily inspired by a certain intellectual and spiritual atmosphere" ("Function," *Works* 3: 261). In short, the "creative" is more appropriate to literature than the "critical power" (Arnold, "Function," *Works* 3: 261).

⁴⁸ David Ferrier argues that the reaction against Pope and wit (underway by 1760) was underscored by the novel's exploration and elevation of the concept of sensibility (as theorized by Shaftesbury and Adam Smith) (xiv). Following Tave and Martin, Ferrier supports the idea that the sentimental humour advocated by Dickens and Carlyle was replaced by intellectual wit and satiric modes at the end of the century (in the work of Butler, Gissing, Wilde, and Shaw) (xv).

⁴⁹ O'Gorman argues that this aesthetic admiration facilitated Pope's acceptance in the *fin de siècle* – epitomized by Aubrey Beardsley's 1896 illustrations to *The Rape of the Lock* ("High Priest" 77).

⁵⁰ In addition, his lecture "Charity and Humour" (first delivered in 1853) defends the national importance of humourists, the "gay and kind week-day preachers" (268) who, true to a gentlemanly ideal, promote charitable, Christian sensibilities through humour – "an irresistible sympathizer" (279). He argues that the wearers of "motley habit, or satiric disguise" ("Charity" 277) are large-hearted moralists brimming with compassion and love for humanity. Even the uncouth Henry Fielding had a "great hearty sympathy and benevolence" ("Charity" 278).

⁵¹ In a letter to James Hannay thanking him for a copy of *Satire and Satirists*, Thackeray admits: "I hate Juvenal, I mean I think him a truculent brute, and I love Horace better than you do" (August 1854: *Letters* 2: 553).

⁵² Loomis argues that the lectures are the clearest expression of the Victorian "anti-satiric spirit," for "[a]s a critic, if not as a novelist," Thackeray increasingly participated in this spirit (14).

⁵³ Palmeri observes, as Loomis previously noted, that Thackeray's satires in the 1850s "render satire more obscure and subordinate" ("Narrative Satire" 367). Loomis argues for Thackeray's transition from a professional satirist (in magazine journalism and fiction) to a conflicted "realist-satirist" who, "in his attempts to soften his satire," "weaken[ed] his later fiction" (15).

⁵⁴ Interestingly, Lewes imagines Thackeray's overall satiric practice as redolent of Horace's: "In Thackeray we see many resemblances to Horace; both have outlived their illusions and yet look back with fondness on them, so that their laughter is rather sad than bitter" (Tillotson and Hawes 107). As well, Lewes holds that, in *Pendennis*, Thackeray is still "above all things a satirist," although he demonstrates a more "generous view of humanity" (Tillotson and Hawes 109).

⁵⁵ Except for an unsigned review in *The Times* (24 August 1875), which commends the novel as a faithful portrait of society, typical responses were more like the unsigned review in the *Spectator* (26 June 1875), which accuses the novelist of mistakenly

surrounding his characters “with an atmosphere of sordid baseness which prevents enjoyment like an effluvium” from which there is “no relief, no pleasantness” (Smalley 397, 399). The *Examiner* (August 1875) notes an uncharacteristic lack of genial humour, and the *Saturday Review* (July 1875) accuses Trollope of a style of satire that is destructive. Trollope is accused of being an automaton whose “habit of construction” is “scarcely voluntary”: “Where habit and a ready pen act together, to stay the hand is almost a physical impossibility” (Smalley 406). (This is a cruel charge against Trollope, for both his *Autobiography* and novels reveal an obsession with the moral value of habit as well as its destructive potential.)

⁵⁶ Skilton submits that it was “universally agreed among Trollope’s reviewers that there should be a distribution of virtues and vices in any novel – that evil must necessarily be counterbalanced by goodness” (65). In Skilton’s assessment of the literary milieu that preferred Trollope’s moderate productions (despite accusations of dullness) and denounced his more pessimistic works (such as *The Way We Live Now* and *Eustace Diamonds* [1871]), influential critics such as Eneas Sweetland Dallas, Richard Holt Hutton, G. H. Lewes, and Meredith Townsend, were generally agreed that a work of art should not be wholly composed in terms of moral negatives – it required a “moral standard of character” (67-8).

⁵⁷ Steven Wall concludes that Trollope, in his resilient belief that “on the whole things were getting better,” was incapable of the “sustained hostility” of satire – even in *The Way We Live Now* (42, 46). Trollope’s “magnanimous handicap” prevents him from writing the pure satire of Wyndham Lewis or Swift (Wall 46). A. O. J. Cockshut, however, highlighting the fact that “the mid-Victorian period was a time of unusual dissociation between creation and criticism,” observes in Trollope’s novels from 1859 onwards a “steadily-growing pessimism,” despite his anti-Carlylism (124, 131).

⁵⁸ In the May 2 1870 letter to Austin, Trollope rejects Juvenalian or “unmixed satire”: “I do not believe that such writings have ever done good, or have left other impress than that of the cynic disposition, and power, of the writer. I doubt whether Juvenal ever aided at all in the suppression of vice; – but Horace, who was not a satyrst by profession, & who is playful and even good-natured in his very satyres, did probably teach men to be less absurd in their manner of writing [and] speaking...” (*Letters* 515).

⁵⁹ The *OED* defines the noun *cynic* as follows: “1. One of a sect of philosophers in ancient Greece, founded by Antisthenes, a pupil of Socrates, who were marked by an ostentatious contempt for ease, wealth, and the enjoyments of life; the most famous was Diogenes, a pupil of Antisthenes, who carried the principles of the sect to an extreme of asceticism. 2. A person disposed to rail or find fault; now usually: One who shows a disposition to disbelieve in the sincerity or goodness of human motives and actions, and is wont to express this by sneers and sarcasms; a sneering fault-finder.” As well, Menippus, who is credited as the originator of Menippean satire, was a cynic philosopher. Kirk Freudenburg defines a “cynic” as an “aggressively anti-social primitivist (lit. ‘dog-like’) beggar-philosopher in the tradition of Diogenes” (*Satires of Rome* xv).

⁶⁰ Similarly, as Katherine B. Linehan points out, George Eliot feared “forgetting herself” in her “penchant for humor and satire” (28).

⁶¹ The word “satire” has evolved past its Roman and Renaissance connotations to become “a structural principle or attitude” – what he terms a mythos (which can appear in any form of art) (Frye, *Anatomy* 310).

⁶² Hutcheon defines parody as “a form of repetition with ironic critical distance, marking difference rather than similarity” (xii). Paradoxically, parody reinforces its subject, even while debunking it; thus, the tension “between conservative repetition and revolutionary difference is part of the very paradoxical essence of parody” (77). Invested in defining parody as a subversive genre, Hutcheon stresses its differences with satire. Satire, “unlike parody, is both moral and social in its focus and ameliorative in its intention” (16); she supports a view of satire as comic and extramural in its targets (49). As well, satire generally makes a negative, aggressive statement, while an overt attack would be “self-destructive” (44) to parody. Importantly, parody involves “authorized transgression,” whereas satire “does not authorize but ridicules the transgression of social norms” (74, 78).

⁶³ Elliott accounts for the frequent disparity between conservative satiric intent and revolutionary implications through the function of the satiric trope of synecdoche. The representation of the whole by the part is the metaphoric vehicle through which subversive criticism spreads from a specific, local target to society at large. It is the “key to the satirist’s power” (Elliott 273)

⁶⁴ Frye argues, for example, that “Dickens’s influence is also for us completely radical, whatever he himself may have been” (“Nature” 88).

⁶⁵ Ethics is defined in the *OED* as being “the science of morals; the branch of knowledge that deals with the principles of human duty or the logic of moral discourse,” or “the moral principles or system of a particular leader or school of thought.” Using the terms *ethics* and *morality* interchangeably, Richard Norman describes this area of philosophy as being “the attempt to arrive at an understanding of human values, of how we ought to live, and of what constitutes right conduct” (1). Contemporary philosophers distinguish between “substantive” or “normative” ethics and “meta-ethics”; the first examines which actions are good, while the other analyses the logic of ethical discourse in determining standards of virtue and goodness (1-2). Norman posits that philosophers have always combined substantive and meta-ethics (3). The history of ethics and moral philosophy reveals a multiplicity of systems which either accept or negate transcendental or “substantive” ethics. A “narrow conception of morality” (151), Norman posits, defines morality as necessarily oppressive and dominated by theological notions of virtuous self-denial; this notion, he argues, has “a strong hold on the popular consciousness” (152). Furthermore, this position, which is common in critics of satire, does not consider the variegated nature of moral philosophy. An illustration of this is Meredith’s rejection of the Puritan superiority of the satirist/“moral agent” (“Essay on Comedy” 445). Meredith suggests that the satirist/moralist necessarily promotes transcendent (Christian) moral law. Contrastingly, the capacious intellect of the “Comic Spirit” is free of the “priestly element” (“Essay on Comedy” 447).

⁶⁶ His overarching concern for literary realism leads him to overlook satire – which is mentioned only in passing. *Gulliver's Travels*, for example, is discussed as the sub-genre of mock travel literature; even in his discussion of Dickens, he evades the subject of satire.

⁶⁷ As well, each has been associated with low forms, such as comedy (Auerbach's "low mimetic tradition"), and each has required moral defenses to assert its status as art. For example, F. R. Leavis, in *The Great Tradition*, dispenses with satire (with the exception of *Hard Times*) in an effort to dissociate the novel from lowly comedic forms. The formalist tradition of novel theory, from Henry James to Leavis and beyond, tends to neglect satire.

⁶⁸ Recently, Matz argues that the intersections of realism and satire have been "mostly ignored in the history of literary criticism," despite the fact that "both modes claim a superior knowledge of the real and an exceptional method of representing it" ("Satire" 3, 35). He notes the exception of John Lawlor's 1955 essay "Radical Satire and the Realistic Novel."

⁶⁹ As Henry James claims, "[t]he only reason for the existence of a novel is that it does attempt to represent real life" ("The Art of Fiction" 5).

⁷⁰ Narrative satire, by contrast, firmly opposes two extremes which are never reconciled (Palmeri *Satire, History* 11). Palmeri's conception of satiric method is quite general. In his 2007 essay, "Narrative Satire in the Nineteenth Century," he reiterates that unlike verse satire or narrative satire, which attacks its object from a single and extreme perspective, novelistic satire is more contradictory, and "extreme" "positions" are avoided and even parodied (361).

⁷¹ Jerome Meckier assesses satire's role in what he terms the mid-Victorian "realism wars" (*Hidden* 8). Meckier argues that canonical Victorian "realists" such as George Eliot, Elizabeth Gaskell, and others engaged in "competitive revaluation" of one another's fiction, each reading their "version of the truth" as the one that "most closely reflects the actual world" (*Hidden* 3). Dickens, Meckier argues, was the scapegoat of choice for those who rejected his bitter satire as "counter-productive" (*Hidden* 4).

⁷² For Ermarth, fictional realism reconciles disparate points of view, offering comfort to the reader in the form of "[h]armony, unity, centrality" (34).

⁷³ In opposition to the novel, Bakhtin defines epic as an absolute, finished genre that is distant from contemporary reality, due to its focus on a national and heroic past. The epic refuses to admit indeterminacy or contemporary reality. It is therefore yoked to official thought and language, whereas Bakhtin associates the novel with unofficial thought and language (*Dialogic* 11-20).

⁷⁴ Horace's "satirico-ironic" treatment of himself in his satires, Bakhtin observes, contributed to the development of the autobiographical form (*Dialogic* 143).

⁷⁵ Bakhtin asserts that the "satires of Varro are even closer to novelistic orchestration of meaning," for they parody both scholarly and moralistic speech (*Dostoevsky* 371n).

⁷⁶ "Grotesque realism" focuses on the body's orifices and the actions of eating, drinking, copulating, and defecating. Images of the "double" body – a body that is linked to the world and other human bodies through its protrusions and orifices – abound in this style

of realism, which, above all, affirms the collective existence of humanity and celebrates the cosmic cycles of death and renewal. According to Bakhtin, its criticism and ridicule of social ideologies and institutions, like its mockery of the body, is fundamentally productive. (See *Rabelais and his World*, 303-67.)

⁷⁷ Russell views satire as a mode, yet follows the pattern I discuss in Chapter 1 by continuing to discuss satire in generic terms: satire is the “humorous criticism of human foibles and faults... with sufficient art to be accounted as literature” (5). Predating Frye’s assessment of the boundaries of satire, she refers to the humorous and critical poles of satire and finds, for example, a minimum of humour in Juvenal and a minimum of criticism in Horace (6).

⁷⁸ Hypocrisy, for Russell, is a “ubiquitous habit” targeted by the satirist (29-30). This claim likely stems from Henry Fielding’s pronouncement that the “only Source of the true Ridiculous is (as it appears to me) Affectation,” which arises from vanity and hypocrisy (Preface to *Joseph Andrews* 6).

⁷⁹ Vrettos is the first, to my knowledge, to do so in any detail. Philip Fisher, in “The Failure of Habit” (1973), analyses the twentieth-century rejection of habit in modernist fiction (an aesthetic theory inspired by Walter Pater’s famous denunciation of habit).

⁸⁰ Habit may refer to a mode of attire, such as the dress of a particular profession or rank – for example, the monastic habit. The symbolic possibilities of habit as a signifier for clothing are explored by many Victorian writers; clothing “provides a particularly suitable means of discussing habitual behavior because it is intimately connected to how the self presents itself to the world” (Vrettos 407). In the chapters that follow, I observe in various novels the psychology of habit inhering in representations of characters’ clothing. Clothing is particularly significant in relation to satiric criticism of custom and habit. The word “fashion” (denoting “prevailing custom, a current usage; esp. one characteristic of a particular place or period of time” [*OED*]), like custom, has nuanced associations with habit.

⁸¹ James also includes his work on habit in the lengthy initial chapter of *Psychology: Briefer Course* (1892).

⁸² Etymologically, the root verb for *hexis* is ἔχω, which connotes various notions of “holding” and “possessing” – either of objects, trained skill, states of being (i.e., wealthy, pregnant, old) or the manner in which one conducts oneself (habit of mind) (Liddell and Scott).

⁸³ As Frank M. Turner notes, the *Ethics* of Aristotle (along with works of Plato) “came to the fore from the middle of the nineteenth century onward” (*Contesting* 318).

⁸⁴ According to Alexander Bain, Aristotle “grasped” fundamental associating principles – similarity, contrariety, and co-adjacency or contiguity – but “gave no detailed exposition of them” (*MS* 91).

⁸⁵ Locke was reading Nicolas Malebranche (*Recherche de la Vérité* [1674]), who gave the original example of the musician who unconsciously performs his instrument “by the habit of exercise” (Wright 113). The musician’s facility with an instrument becomes a favourite example for writers theorizing habit.

⁸⁶ The Shandian narrator, in a clear parody of the language of Locke, explains that the humours react to “the different tracks and trains you put them into; so that when they are once set a-going, whether right or wrong...away they go cluttering like hey-go-mad; and by treading the same steps over and over again, they presently make a road of it, as plain and as smooth as a garden-walk, which, when they are once used to, the Devil himself sometimes shall not be able to drive them off it” (Sterne 1-2).

⁸⁷ The “faculty of *Perception*” is the primary mental faculty involved in the formation of ideas: “*Ideas we receive by sensation*, are often in grown People *alter’d by the Judgment*, without our taking notice of it”; our judgment is shaped by what we are habitually “accustomed to perceive” (Locke 145).

⁸⁸ Bain notes that Locke illuminates the role of association in forming “prejudice, antipathies, and obstacles to truth,” but never creates “any generalized statement of associating principles” (MS 91).

⁸⁹ For Hume, “the idea of cause and effect is deriv’d from experience, which presenting us with certain objects constantly conjoin’d with each other, produces such a habit of surveying them in that relation, that we cannot without a sensible violence survey them in any other” (175). Hume was the “first after Aristotle to attempt a thorough classification of the modes of association” (including resemblance, contiguity, and cause and effect) (Warren 43).

⁹⁰ Warren argues that Hume’s greater interest, like that of Locke, was epistemological, and thus association psychology proper begins with Hartley, from which point on, association “assumes the role of a psychological doctrine and school in Great Britain” (Warren 15).

⁹¹ William James describes association as “the universally admitted fact, that any sequence of mental action which has been frequently repeated tends to perpetuate itself so that we find ourselves automatically prompted to *think, feel*, or *do* what we have before accustomed to think, feel, or do, under like circumstances, without any consciously-formed *purpose*, or anticipation of results” (*Principles* 116).

⁹² Edward S. Reed traces the development of psychology as it transmuted from “moral philosophy” in 1815 into the new psychology of the 1890s, while maintaining many of its theological underpinnings (3).

⁹³ With David Ferrier’s *The Functions of the Brain* (1876), psychology, as an increasingly professionalized discipline, became a more “substantial presence in the culture” (Rylance 71). The first specialist laboratories opened at the end of the 1860s; the Physiological Society was founded in March 1876 by G. H. Lewes, and the *Journal of Physiology* commenced publication in 1879; *Mind*, the first specialized psychology journal, was launched in 1876 (Rylance 71-72).

⁹⁴ Roger Smith concurs that the word *psychology* was shaped in the public realm (82-83).

⁹⁵ Reid postulates that perception prefigures the sensory mechanics of association (E. Reed 29).

⁹⁶ Furthermore, Coleridge – “poet, critic, all-round theorist, and conservative commentator and ideologist” – rejects associationism (in *Biographia Literaria* [1817]) as

a philosophy that depicts the human mind as a mechanical slave to habit and negates the powers of the imagination (Rylance 47, 63).

⁹⁷ Bernard Lightman argues that John Tyndall's controversial speech was a key event in "the contest between Anglican clergy and scientific naturalists for cultural authority in Victorian Britain" – a power struggle which informed the entire spiritualist/materialist debate. After the address, Tyndall was labeled a materialist in the periodical press and satirized in *Punch* ("Scientists as Materialists" 201-2, 206). The word *materialist* accrued "unsavory connotations" such as sinful, lower class, atheist, heterodox, and "foreign" (Lightman, "Scientist as Materialists" 210).

⁹⁸ Henry Maudsley's *Physiology and Pathology of the Mind* (1867) also denies the freedom of the will by placing reflex action as the basic paradigm of the nervous system (Danziger 135).

⁹⁹ Similarly, Lewes felt that the hypothesis that reflex action is purely mechanical and wholly without sensibility was unfounded. The brain, for Lewes, is analogous to the "coachman holding the reins and guiding the team" (*PLM3* 417).

¹⁰⁰ Darwin clarifies: "Every one who believes, as I do, that all the corporeal and mental organs (excepting those which are neither advantageous or disadvantageous to the possessor) of all beings have been developed through natural selection, or the survival of the fittest, *together with use or habit*, will admit that these organs have been formed so that their possessors may compete successfully with other beings, and thus increase in number" (*Autobiographies* 51; my italics).

¹⁰¹ Butler argues for both design and descent; if heredity is recognized as a mode of memory, design is preserved in evolutionary biology (*Luck* 20).

¹⁰² Instinct, as Lewes defines it, is "*lapsed or undiscursive Intelligence*" (*PLM1* 130); although originally instinct is "facultative" (spontaneous), it becomes "fixed" as it is transmitted from ancestors who acquired it through adaptation (*PLM1* 130).

¹⁰³ James proposes that a definition of habit leads to a consideration of the fundamental properties of matter. The "laws of Nature" at the atomic level are in essence "immutable habits" of action and reaction (*Principles* 109); yet in the "organic world," he asserts, structures are mutable and plastic.

¹⁰⁴ Yet, as I will outline, habit's narrowing function was theorized, rather paradoxically, as a key process in the achievement of the "highest reasoning," which, as Spencer proposed, is "one with all the lower forms of human thought" (*PP* 2: 299).

¹⁰⁵ Tina Young Choi explains that the first law of thermodynamics (as articulated by scientists James Prescott Joule, Michael Faraday, and Hermann von Helmholtz in the 1830s and 1840s) "posited that energy could neither be destroyed nor created but was merely transformed from one state to another" (303). Assenting to the current notion that scientific and literary discourses "enabled each other's articulation" (302), Choi finds that both the first law of conservation, and the second, contradictory law of entropy in thermodynamics (the energy in a given system will transform into an unavailable or useless state [305]), are grappled with in the Victorian novel; this is particularly observed in an aesthetics of closure which enacts a "fretful tension" between conservation and entropy (318). In terms of the paradox of habit, the first and second laws of

thermodynamics can be coded respectively as good and bad habit. Good habits enhance productive, redemptive conservatism; bad ones reinforce what Choi describes as the chaotic, entropic “loss of useful energy” (306).

¹⁰⁶ Tursi’s dissertation examines the impact of James’s view of habit on the work of Henry James, Edith Wharton, and W. E. B. du Bois, arguing for “a modernist aesthetic of habit” (243), in which self-definition is linked to habit.

¹⁰⁷ “[U]niformities,” resulting in part from constitution but also from circumstances, seem to render human mental activity automatic, but our “own consciousness tells us that there is something in our Psychical nature, which is beyond and above this automatic exercise of our powers; and that the direction of our thoughts is placed, within certain limits, under the control of the Will” (Carpenter 250-1). Our “Will” can “concentrat[e]” our “Mental gaze,” which, if “habitually exerted in certain directions, will tend to form the Character, by establishing a set of *acquired habitudes*” (Carpenter 26).

¹⁰⁸ Animals, he argues, are devoid of imagination, as their “thoughts will not call up their similars, but only their habitual successors” (James, *Principles* 977). Laughter, as well, is a product of association by similarity, specifically “the recognition of certain identities in things different” (James, *Principles* 977). In agreement with Bain, James finds genius and success in the arts and science to require “*similar association to an extreme degree*” (*Principles* 984).

¹⁰⁹ Vrettos, interested in the coexistence of theories of habit and mental fixity with theories of mental permeability, observes that James’s interest in wandering attention and spiritualism led him to “conceptualize the mind in a more profoundly fluid relationship to the outside world than his discussions of habit seem to allow” (411). Similarly, I would add, Spencer’s notion of habit is more nuanced than James permits, for he too argues that higher forms of reasoning involve habits of “excursiveness” and mental “multiformity” (*PP* 2: 534).

¹¹⁰ In *The Emotions and the Will* (1859), Bain posits that it is “within possibility to implant, and to root up, the most deep-seated of human pleasures and dispositions” (514). In one lifetime, however, only one “sea change” is possible, as the “plastic power” has limits; only with “adequate initiative” and “unbroken persistence” is it possible for the “still small voice of daily duty [to] overpower” indulgences (*Emotions* 503). Interestingly, the moral habits which Bain promotes for cultivation are the ancient cardinal virtues of courage, fortitude, and temperance (*MS* 335).

¹¹¹ Habit was an instrumental concept in phrenology, which, Janice Carlisle observes, offered the primary mid-Victorian “System of Character” (4). George Combe’s popular *Constitution of Man* (1827) is replete with illustrations of the mind-altering effects of habit, particularly of assiduous self-culture. In *On the Study of Character* (1861), Alexander Bain critiques phrenology and attempts to place the systematic study of character more firmly in the domain of natural science (Carlisle 19).

¹¹² J. S. Mill describes his father’s most important and subversive doctrine as the “universal Principle of Association, and the consequent unlimited possibility of improving the moral and intellectual condition of mankind by education” (*A* 1:111). Contrarily, an anonymous article for *Tait’s Edinburgh Magazine* (1857), entitled “Habits

and Resolutions,” critiques the utilitarian educational trend of “drilling” moral habits into the student as being destructive to the individual (Vrettos 403).

¹¹³ Similarly, James Sully notes that “[t]he perfect fixation of habit appears to obliterate the highest cortical centres from all but the slightest measure of co-operation in the process” (*Human Mind* 225).

¹¹⁴ Along with the “the habit of excessive indulgence in music,” James insists, “[t]he habit of excessive novel-reading and theatre-going will produce true monsters in this line” (*Principles* 129).

¹¹⁵ James emphasizes productive action: “For this we must make automatic and habitual, as early as possible, as many useful actions as we can, and guard against growing into ways that are likely to be disadvantageous to us, as we should guard against the plague” (*Principles* 126). To counter the “tyrannical influence” of habit, James offers some of Bain’s maxims: the necessity of strong will in the breaking or making of a habit (“envelop your resolution with every aid you know,” and “*Never suffer an exception to occur till the new habit is securely rooted in your life*”) (*Principles* 127).

¹¹⁶ Smiles asserts that character “cannot be formed without effort”; one needs to exercise “constant self-watchfulness, self-discipline, and self-control” (*Character* 11). The “energy of will – self-originating force – is the soul of every great character” (*Character* 15).

¹¹⁷ As many (including Bain) note, Mill does not elaborate upon this suggestion of an ethological system. Howard C. Warren observes that Mill’s work in psychology was “fragmentary” (64).

¹¹⁸ References to Mill in psychology texts became a rhetorical shorthand to invoke debates about free-will and determinism. Carpenter identifies Mill as “the most powerful advocate of Automatism” (liv), despite Mill’s famous rejection of the “analytical habits” of Utilitarianism (*A* 1:142). G. F. Stout points out Mill’s contradictory relationship with associationism, arguing that although Mill clung to associationism with “all his might” (112), he unwittingly “abandoned the doctrine” with his ideas on “Mental Chemistry” in *A System of Logic* (his notion that simple ideas generate, rather than compose, complex ideas [111]) (114-115).

¹¹⁹ Mill’s influence resonates in James’s assertion: “The hell to be endured hereafter, of which theology tells, is no worse than the hell we make for ourselves in this world by habitually fashioning our characters in the wrong way” (*Principles* 130). Furthermore, James reiterates that character is “a completely fashioned will” (*Principles* 130) – a phrase he ascribes to Mill (who was originally quoting Novalis [*SL* 8: 843]).

¹²⁰ In “Building Character in the British Boy,” John Springhall examines the popularity of numerous youth societies which, early in the century, promoted habits of Christian manliness, and later in the century encouraged patriotic reverence for athletics.

¹²¹ I am certain the ever-appropriating Smiles kept Grey and Shirreff’s book in view when writing *Self-Help* – a book which sold 20,000 copies within a year, and which best demonstrates the popularity of common-sense (and also masculinist) notions of productive habit.

¹²² Sussman identifies mechanization as a “central concern of Victorian intellectual prose” (98), in which the machine becomes a symbol for the emotionally stunted nature of the age (4).

¹²³ In *Chartism* (1839), Carlyle blames the *laissez-faire* principles and habits of capitalist democracy (which he regards as a “self-cancelling business” [190]) for the fact that “[c]ash [p]ayment has become the sole nexus of man to man” (195). This, he insists, destroys the protective, sympathetic emotion that should rule the relations of the classes. Instead of having a heart, he rages, England has nothing but “a monstrous gangrene pretending to exist there as a heart” (196).

¹²⁴ Sussman discerns that “beneath the contradictions and digressions,” Ruskin’s lengthy *Modern Painters* consistently affirms the “vitalistic, sacramental quality of the natural world” (77-78).

¹²⁵ The word *altruism* entered the English vocabulary in 1853 when Lewes published Comte’s *Philosophy of the Sciences* (Lane 26). Comte was influenced by ethical philosophers such as Shaftesbury, Hume, and Adam Smith to reject the Hobbesean assertion of innate selfishness and to stress instead the innateness of moral sympathy (Houghton 273).

¹²⁶ Mill’s experience is analogous to Darwin’s realization that scientific habits ironically diminished his intellect and “more probably [his] moral character” by weakening his emotional nature (Darwin, *Autobiographies* 85).

¹²⁷ Vrettos’s discussion of Victorian habit theory addresses fears that sympathetic feeling is muted, even short-circuited, by habit. She observes that for Dickens, and many other writers on habit, “habit and sympathy are antithetical”; emotions such as empathy, they reasoned, are “blunted by repetition” (Vrettos 419, 421n). In *Utilitarianism* (1861), Mill attempts to clarify that the “habitual act of the will” may operate “not in contradiction to the general intention prevailing at other times, but in fulfillment of it; as in the case of the person of confirmed virtue”: “Will is the child of desire, and passes out of the dominion of its parent only to come under that of habit” (10: 239). As a result of habit’s “importance” in imparting “certainty” to “one’s feelings and conduct,” the “will to do right ought to be cultivated into this habitual independence” (Mill, 10: 229). The habit of sympathy, it seems, is arguably an oxymoronic concept in Victorian psychological frameworks; however, my focus is on the habit of sympathy, not as a *locus* of failed emotion, but as a *locus* of anti-mechanical hope.

¹²⁸ Eliot’s version of this idea, in *Middlemarch*, is expressed in the narrator’s belief that “[w]e are all of us born in moral stupidity, taking the world as an udder to feed our supreme selves” (*M* 198). Lewes also refers, as if speaking of Eliot’s Casaubon, to the fact that there are many “shrivelled souls with narrow vision” who would deny this (*PLMI* 418).

¹²⁹ Much of the “Conclusion” was initially featured in Pater’s 1868 review, “Poems by William Morris.”

¹³⁰ As an Oxford undergraduate, Pater attended Arnold’s lectures as Professor of Poetry.

¹³¹ Culture is defined as “being a pursuit of our total perfection by means of getting to know, on all the matters which most concern us, the best which has been thought and said

in the world” (Arnold, *Culture* 6). This involves perceptions of “right reason” based on a balance of Hellenism (“spontaneity of consciousness” and “disinterested free play”) and Hebraism (duty, strength, earnestness and action) (Arnold, *Culture* 145-64).

¹³² See “Heinrich Heine” (1863) for another articulation of Arnold’s hatred of habit. Arnold hailed Goethe for the “naturalism” which is “absolutely fatal to all routine thinking” (“Heine,” *Works* 3: 110).

¹³³ Mill credits his wife, Harriet Taylor Mill, as the joint writer of all of his published works, at times professing himself to be little more than the interpreter of her original thoughts (*A* 1:251).

¹³⁴ Spencer was initially a political radical, a supporter of Chartism, an anti-colonist, and a believer in altruism; later, he avidly supported “free-market liberalism” (Rylance 221-22).

¹³⁵ George Levine, Sally Shuttleworth, Kate Flint, and Lyn Pykett are among the critics currently engaged in unearthing the generic multifariousness of the so-called “classic realist” Victorian novel.

¹³⁶ To support his claim, Dyer examines Thomas Love Peacock’s six satirical prose narratives (published from 1815-31) and also Benjamin Disraeli’s *The Voyage of Captain Popanilla* (1828). Peacock’s narratives, he determines, were too intellectual to appeal to middle-class readers, and too impartial to appeal to reformers (Dyer 94). Disraeli’s text was weak and ambivalent in its satire (Dyer 95). Thus, Dyer concludes, “only four years after Byron’s death satire was becoming a moribund literary mode” (127).

¹³⁷ Pollard examines the sporting novels of Robert Smith Surtees (1805-64), whom he terms a “satirical realist” along with Thackeray and Trollope (“Surtees” 111). Beginning with *Jorrocks’ Jaunts and Jollities* (1838), Surtees’s trilogy of a Cockney grocer turned country squire, “castigate[s] social climbing, the marriage market, wild young men with no sense of values, [and] the decadence of the aristocracy” (Pollard, “Surtees” 114). Identifying another satiric sub-genre of the early decades of the period, Leo J. Henkin surveys satirical representations of emergent evolutionary theory. He identifies Peacock, Disraeli, and Charles Kingsley as writers who attack the “ridiculousness of descending from the apes and portray evolution theory as mechanistic, materialistic, or atheistic” (37-38, 77).

¹³⁸ For example, Thackeray’s first major serial publication was *Catherine: A Story* (1839-40), a parody of the Newgate novel (Wheeler 21).

¹³⁹ Just as Professor Teufelsdröckh is both an instrument and a target of satire, his “Clothes-Philosophy” is simultaneously a vehicle of satire (a critique of materialistic and Mammon-worshipping mentality) and a symbolic method to represent the non-transcendent aspects of human life. Appropriately Bakhtin, like Carlyle, chooses the metaphor of clothing for socio-ideological habits of mind; he declares that “all existing clothes are always too tight” (*Dialogic* 37) for the heroes of serio-comic genres. Clothes are the ideal symbol for custom, as they are necessary, changeable, and multi-layered.

¹⁴⁰ Bulwer-Lytton also assumes an informed Church of England reader familiar with its Thirty-Nine Articles or its basic religious and theological tenets.

¹⁴¹ Lauren Gillingham argues, as does Maria K. Bachman, that silver-fork novels were not all simple guidebooks for social-climbing; in particular, Bulwer-Lytton's *Pelham* was political and reformist in its purpose (Gillingham 63-67; Bachman 167-68). Acknowledging *Pelham*'s subversive use of fashion, both critics draw upon Ellen Moer's notion of the dandy as a satirist of both his society's social codes (particularly masculinity) and himself (Gillingham 79).

¹⁴² Bulwer-Lytton's social study of his nation's customs in *England and the English* advocates, in Benthamite terms, a "moral cure" for the working classes in the form of an education that implants "not so much labour, as habits of labour" (123). Richard Cronin observes that Carlyle would not have been "impressed" by Pelham's enthusiasm for Utilitarianism, which "seemed to him itself simply a commodification of ethics" (46-47).

¹⁴³ Like *Gulliver's Travels*, *The Coming Race* is an exemplary Menippean satire that engages a plethora of satiric targets. For example, the Darwinian notion of life as a great battle to acquire superior structures (and habits) is manipulated in *The Coming Race* to illustrate the sheer bathos of materialist thought. Evolutionary debates are satirized overtly when the narrator beholds a portrait of the underworld's version of Darwin's moral monkey: a Giant Frog. Arguing that Bulwer-Lytton's novel offers a more complex "response to contemporary scientific debates than critics generally assume" (349), Anne-Julia Zwierlein posits that the text alludes (through the representation of the Vril-yan frog progenitor) both to William Paley's ironic, and to G. H. Lewes's more scientific, suggestion of a biological kinship between frogs and philosophers. Bulwer-Lytton's satire accepts Paley's "teleological idealism" and rejects Lewes's anti-essentialism (Zwierlein 356). To add to this loaded frog/philosopher nexus, David Seed notes that Bulwer-Lytton would have been aware that in 1870, T. H. Huxley addressed the Metaphysical Society on the subject "Has the Frog a Soul?", which expressed his theory of conscious automata (xxv). As well, the text satirizes explicitly the contention of radical writers such as Wollstonecraft, Mill and Harriet Taylor Mill that women's rights are particularly "essential to the perfect happiness of our human species" (CR 132).

¹⁴⁴ In an oft-cited series of letters to John Forster in March 1870, Bulwer-Lytton clarifies that Vril is a distinctly material force: "I did not mean Vril for Mesmerism, but for electricity, developed into uses as yet only dimly guessed" (qtd. in Lytton, 466). As I discuss in Chapter 2, energy is an evocative word in nineteenth-century mental science, and is particularly significant to habit theory. Vril is arguably analogous to the energy of habit. Furthermore, Vril-yan craniology reveals a large "organ of adhesiveness" (59). "Adhesive constitutions," Bain argues, "require less repetition to achieve the association of [a]... train of ideas" (MS 327). As well, further evoking and satirizing evolutionary psychology, Vril-yans have acquired a "visible nerve" (67) in their thumb to conduct vril. Not only is the Vril-yan nervous system perfectly hospitable to habit, the energy of habit is directed with the aid of a vril staff.

¹⁴⁵ Grateful that his mother had encouraged him to read past the death of Captain Brown, Ruskin declares in a letter to Gaskell, "I do not know when I have read a more finished little piece of study of human nature (a very great and good thing when it is not spoiled). Nor was I ever more sorry to come to a book's end" (21 Feb. 1865; *Letters* 36: 479-80).

¹⁴⁶ Gillooly, for example, finds that the women of *Cranford*, although “targets of humorous aggression,” are also “clearly figures of narrative affection” (139).

¹⁴⁷ Yet *Cranford* has been evaluated generally as a feminist satire of gendered separate spheres. Susan Glass-Fellows describes the novel as a “strong satire” on the patriarchal restrictions that rendered women “infantilized, uneducated, and unemployed” (144). Charlotte Mitchell illuminates the complex “gendered oppositions” (xii) in the text, which, she finds, amount to an argument that neither sex is exempt from “fanaticism and rigidity” (xii). In Chapters 5 and 6 of the novel, she argues, “what one might term satire of the patriarchy emerges for the first time” (xvi). Similarly, Gillooly observes that parental, patriarchal authority is challenged in the text (importantly by Mary Smith and Peter Jenkyns, who are both humourists). Humour, she argues, functions psychologically as a “defense against the conscious knowledge” of an “assault” on patriarchal prescriptions (Gillooly 153).

¹⁴⁸ The matriarchy of *Cranford* is parodically patriarchal. Habits of “genteel society” (C 24) provide a vocation for the women: Mary knits; Matty tends to her candles. Such ritualistic domestic activities keep the women from focusing on the emptiness of their lives. Like children, they require routine to combat the *ennui* of empty stretches of domestic time. Yet despite the text’s indictment of the alienating and mentally constricting effects of the gendering of private and public spheres, the novel does not condone enraged Juvenalian revolt.

¹⁴⁹ *Cranford* satisfies both Bakhtin’s notion of “the Menippea’s” “extreme freedom of plot” and Frye’s understanding of the episodic structure of Menippean satire. Originally published in installments in *Household Words*, *Cranford* evolved as loosely connected sketches. The episodic form of the novel, critics have argued, reinforces its domestic and social themes (see Andrew H. Miller). Natalie Kapetanios Meir finds that the novel’s criticism of social etiquette is undermined by the narrative’s formal affinity to the genre of the handbook in its use of the iterative mode – codifying social practices through repetition (1-2).

¹⁵⁰ Jenny Uglow discusses the general congruity of Gaskell’s Unitarian principles with associationist traditions of philosophy, highlighting that John Locke’s *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (and also David Hartley’s *Observations on Man*) are key texts (5-6). As well, Uglow enumerates the scientists (biologists, chemists, and physicists – not one of whom is a physiological psychologist) who were friends with the Gaskells (559-60). Yet Gaskell went to hear G. H. Lewes’s lectures on speculative philosophy at the Athenaeum, and to hear William Carpenter’s lectures in the Spring of 1851 (Uglow 218, 270). See Louise Henson’s “‘Half Believing, Half Incredulous’: Elizabeth Gaskell, Superstition and the Victorian Mind.” For recent work that focuses on Gaskell’s interest in contemporary science, see Clare Pettitt’s evaluation of “Sylvia’s Lovers” and “Cousin Phillis” in terms of Gaskell’s ambivalent characterization of scientists, and Anne Secord’s assessment of her interest in Manchester’s working-class naturalists.

¹⁵¹ The reference to Tennyson’s “Locksley Hall” is symbolically appropriate, for the speaker, who expresses frustration with the “social lies that warp us from the living truth,” hopes to “burst all links of habit” (60, 157).

¹⁵² Yet in its hermetic removal from the “real” world of Drumble, Cranford is arguably a quotidian netherworld. As well, the narrative includes a parodic journey to hell in the form of a trip undertaken “gallantly” by Matty and Miss Pole “two hundred yards” in the dark to Mrs Forrester’s (C 97).

¹⁵³ Barbara Hardy observes of Gaskell: “Hers is, like George Eliot’s, a very conservative imagination, and these novels combine a realistic report with a modest demand, not for a radical redistribution, but for a minimal nourishment for body and soul” (177). Jane Spencer observes in *Cranford* a vision of “gradual and beneficent social change” (86).

¹⁵⁴ *The Times Literary Supplement*, 20 November 1919.

¹⁵⁵ There is a surprising shortage of full-length discussions of satire in Eliot’s canon. Martin Bidney, however, explores Eliot’s satirical treatment of the clergy in “*Scenes of Clerical Life* and *Trifles of High-Order Clerical Life: Satirical and Empathetic Humor in George Eliot*” (1999). One substantial study is Katherine B. Linehan’s 1974 dissertation, “George Eliot’s Use of Comedy and Satire”; Linehan posits that there was a transition from “broadly humorous rustic comedy” in her earlier works to a subtle “use of authorial irony and social satire” in the later novels (2). Exploring the roots of Eliot’s satirical indignation and resistance to satire, in the author’s “Evangelical ideals” (humility, charity, earnestness and selflessness), Linehan argues for Eliot’s lifelong oscillation between a rejection of satire as a cold-hearted practice, and her acceptance of it as one that is truthful and ameliorative.

¹⁵⁶ Lane troubles “narrow assumptions about Victorian morality” through an exploration of the “cultural prevalence of acute misanthropy” and “nearly insoluble forms” of hatred, specifically in canonical Victorian novels allegedly adhering to a doctrine of sympathy (xiv-xv). His insight that misanthropy, among other “satirical and antisocial associations” (Lane 9), was increasingly pathologized by Victorian writers, complements the widespread discordance between Victorian satiric theory and its multivalent practice. For a discussion of the “flourishing rancor” (121) in what Lane regards as the superficially enacted fellowship of Raveloans in *Silas Marner*, see Lane’s study of the novel (118-21). Within the context of satire, however, it is barely a contradiction in Eliot’s narrative that its “antisocial strains” (126) are not fully expurgated.

¹⁵⁷ Linehan also refers to *Theophrastus Such* and the essay on Heinrich Heine as key works that reveal Eliot’s elevation of sympathetic over intolerant humour (12).

¹⁵⁸ *Economist*, April 1862 (Carroll 175).

¹⁵⁹ Shuttleworth observes a shift between *Adam Bede* and *Daniel Deronda* from the narrative embodiment of theories of continuity and unity to those of disruption and discontinuity (xii). Vanessa Ryan links then-contemporary theories of unconscious, reflexive reasoning to Eliot’s fiction, particularly to *Mill on the Floss* (“Material Mind”). In “Fictions of Medical Minds: Victorian Novels and Medical Epistemology,” Ryan focuses on a comment made by Herbert Spencer in which he credits his seemingly effortless intellectual feats to unconscious processes (278); she situates Spencer’s comment in a positive discourse of habit as energy-saving, and condenses the divergent nineteenth-century terms for reflex or habit-based thought into Malcolm Gladwell’s phrase “thinking without thinking” (279). Numerous articles and full-length studies

tackle the subject of Eliot's relationship to Victorian mental and evolutionary science, from the earlier work of Levine and Beer, to Michael Davis's *George Eliot and Nineteenth-Century Psychology: Exploring the Unmapped Country* (2006). As well, Hao Li, in *Memory and History in George Eliot: Transfiguring the Past* (2000), investigates the influence of both the scientific and the romantic traditions (of Carlyle and Wordsworth) (6) upon Eliot's notion of the relations between "personal" memory and "communal" memory—a form of memory that "both maintains historical continuity and generates from within the need for reform" (2). Lewes's theories of memory and consciousness (along with Spencer's theories of moral instinct and evolution), Li argues, are "broached and tested in Eliot's novels and stories" (9).

¹⁶⁰ The figure of the miser, as I will elaborate in Chapter 4's discussion of Dickens's *Our Mutual Friend*, is an emblematic figure in Victorian psycho-physiology texts for the dehumanizing effects of the habit of loving money as an end in itself rather than as a means to moderate material satisfaction and comfort. In his anti-materialist miserdom, Silas is atypical of this pathology, for his attraction to money is divorced from associations with consumption; instead, the "original ends" of Silas's life (i.e. love and community) were not products to be purchased, yet they have been replaced by the coins he fastidiously counts and controls.

¹⁶¹ Although William James has been credited with coining the term "stream of consciousness," it appears in the posthumous fifth edition of *Problems of Life and Mind* (1880). The "Preparatory note" by the editor (George Eliot) and the manuscript both confirm that the words are Lewes's (Holland 31). The metaphor of water as mind is elaborated upon to include "wave, rivulet, and current" (Holland 37).

¹⁶² In Ermarth's study of the novel's metaphors of enclosure, which are counterpointed by those of openings and thresholds, she observes a parallel between the "sealed lips" of Godfrey and the locked heart and casket of Silas (34-35). Habit, I would add, is the primary means of restriction. Habit (figured in one instance as a fence) offers protective enclosure: "security more frequently springs from habit than from conviction" (*SM* 38).

¹⁶³ In *Phaedrus*, Plato figures the soul as a charioteer with two horses, one good (noble, temperate, rational) and once bad (intemperate, unreasoning, rash) (Jowett 8).

¹⁶⁴ Similar to the texts I explore in Chapter 5, unhealthy, socially divisive, and unproductive habits are associated in *Silas Marner* with habits of patriarchal privilege and masculinity.

¹⁶⁵ A heroine of sympathetic and moral habit, Eppie escapes satiric portraiture (like Dickens's Sissy Jupe and Lizzie Hexam).

¹⁶⁶ In this satire, Horace, once in possession of the Sabine farm, proceeds to contrast city life unfavourably with country life.

¹⁶⁷ The novel, written sporadically and to near-completion between 1873 and 1884 (Holt 66-67), was published posthumously in 1903.

¹⁶⁸ Reinforcing the view of Butler as an angry writer, Hastings Jones's biography (*Memoir*, 1915) describes Butler's personality in terms that are antithetical to his Edwardian reputation for being an icon of compromise (P. Cohen 69). The *Memoir*

describes Butler as a “dogmatic bigot, an unsociable Ishmaelite, a great hater” (P. Cohen 70).

¹⁶⁹ Of his own clergyman father, Butler writes, “he never liked me, nor I him” (Holt 3). Furthermore, the letter from Christina Pontifex to her son is an exact duplicate of a letter from Butler’s own mother (Holt 70).

¹⁷⁰ Recently, Shuttleworth declares that the novel is an “experimental” *bildungsroman* that undermines “conventional boundaries of individual identity” (“Evolutionary” 164, 148). She regards the novel as substantially parodic (a “playful violation of realist form”), and she posits that although its subject matter is “tragic,” its “form is that of comedy” (“Evolutionary” 145, 164).

¹⁷¹ Lightman outlines the subversive significance of Butler in his role as a popularizer who “resisted the scientific agenda of the scientific naturalists who supported Darwin” (“Conspiracy” 132). Among the strategies Butler uses are: satire, “evolutionary epic,” his profound knowledge of theological literature, and a democratizing appeal to the intelligence of the general public as a locus of authority (Lightman, “Conspiracy” 119, 120-9). Butler views the scientific naturalists and specifically the cant of Darwinism as a “new form of repressive orthodoxy far worse than the Anglican orthodoxy it had replaced” (Lightman, “Conspiracy” 129).

¹⁷² Shuttleworth notes that the title of the novel suggests the “vanity of all human life in the face of death” (“Evolutionary” 140). Aptly, this general theme resonates with Juvenal’s tenth satire, which was imitated by Samuel Johnson and entitled “The Vanity of Human Wishes” (1749).

¹⁷³ Butler condemns Darwin’s inconsistent habit theory by insisting that in “Notes on the Beagle,” Darwin pronounced habit to be “omnipotent and its effects hereditary” (qtd. in Butler, *Luck* 62). Darwin “shilly-shallied” (to use Overton’s word for intellectual cowardice) until 1882, when he finally “admit[s]” that instinct is memory which is transmitted though the generations” (*Luck* 62). Butler argues that Darwin used the term “natural selection” rhetorically, as a kind of sleight of hand to “square everything” (*Luck* 85); for Butler, deception is the most loathsome vice.

¹⁷⁴ Shuttleworth notes the strong similarities between ideas in *Life and Habit* and those in *The Way of All Flesh*, particularly with regard to notions of biological inheritance and the “oneness of parent and child in memory and experience” (“Evolutionary” 158). Despite Butler’s Lamarckian notions of human agency in evolution, that novel “seems to be weighted down at times by an almost overwhelming sense of biological, psychological and cultural determinism” (“Evolutionary” 152)

¹⁷⁵ As Lightman explains, Butler did not, like William Paley, believe in a transcendent designer, but argued instead for purposive evolution “without direction from an external deity” (“Conspiracy” 126).

¹⁷⁶ In the conclusion of *Life and Habit*, Butler admits that his friends complain that “they can never tell whether I am in jest or earnest,” but maintains that he is “in very serious earnest,” although “sometimes admitting of a humorous side” (305-6). Not surprisingly, there has been much interpretive confusion in studies of *Erewhon*. Butler’s idea of machines as extra limbs for the human “machinate animal” (*Erewhon* 223) provides the

logic behind the (seemingly satiric) counter-attack to the first Erewhonian Professor. Lightman argues that Butler followed Paley's "analogical reasoning" in making a machine the model for his own "scheme of vitalistic and teleological evolution" ("Conspiracy" 127-28), and in this way, "attempted to rescue the nature-as-machine analogy from the clutches of deterministic and mechanistic evolutionists and to bring it back to the meaning that Paley had originally given it" ("Conspiracy" 127-28).

¹⁷⁷ Complementing this ethos of deflation, Shuttleworth describes Butler's "vision of the possible consciousness of excrement" in *Life and Habit* as being "partially serious" ("Evolutionary" 147).

¹⁷⁸ In his 1895 Preface to *Jude the Obscure*, Hardy asserts that his novel "is an attempt to deal unaffectedly with the fret and fever, the derision and disaster" of unfulfilled aims" (3).

¹⁷⁹ Ledger clarifies that naturalism "can quintessentially be identified in late nineteenth-century England with Émile Zola, Gissing, George Moore, and Arthur Morrison" (69). This project "was an intensification of mid-century realism, more determinedly producing a quasi-photographic, documentary, scientific account of social reality" (Ledger 69).

¹⁸⁰ C. J. Francis also observes that Gissing did not "unreservedly" regard himself to be a realist. Although he was influenced by the impersonal style of French and Russian novelists (Zola and Turgenev), Gissing also followed the more capacious and opinionated realism of Dickens (Francis 106).

¹⁸¹ The editor of *Sartor Resartus* speculates that the Professor's exposure of ugly truths "must have sunk him in the estimation of most readers" (SR 50). In like fashion, Gissing's novels, as Coustillas and Partridge observe, "involved him in more or less open warfare with publishers, publishers' readers, editors or critics" (1).

¹⁸² Levine, in his recent discussion of realism as a necessarily self-conscious and "thoroughly literary mode" that paradoxically struggles to portray "things as they are," refers to Biffen's completion of *Mr Bailey, Grocer* as being "a cheat" ("Literary Realism" 15, 17). Gissing's deception in permitting Biffen to write "The End" highlights the problems of realist representation: "how could he ever have reached the end of these tedious registrations of the real?" (Levine, "Literary Realism" 17).

¹⁸³ The house-fire (started by a drunken tenant) that nearly kills Biffen, like the epidemic of house-fires that Juvenal describes (in Satire III), is symbolic of the drunken incompetence and random violence that announce the decline of civilization.

¹⁸⁴ This harsh narratorial gesture also functions to parody the Trollopean convention of politely investing the implied reader with higher rather than lower standards. Gissing's narrator shares more with *Shirley*'s cynical storyteller, who frequently ironizes the reader's mediocrity.

¹⁸⁵ Admittedly, Gissing cannot defend Dickens's melodramatic plots, but he insists upon Dickens's self-declared status as a realist (for whom a novel was "a very different thing than a severe chronicle of actual lives" (*Immortal* 93-94). In both studies, Gissing emphasizes the then-radical nature of Dickens's subject matter despite his fundamental middle-class values: "Morally, he would have changed the world; socially, he is a

thorough conservative" (*Immortal* 212). Fundamentally, Gissing posits, Dickens "distrusted legislation" along with "charitable associations," and believed in reform through "private benevolence" (*CD* 251).

¹⁸⁶ Biffen's observation that Dickens is generally accepted by the working classes "because of his strength in farce and his melodrama" (*NGS* 314) corresponds with Gissing's own view of "deep-seeing" (*CD* 106) humour as the secret to Dickens's universal appeal. The "rigorous realist" would have rendered characters (like Mrs Gamp) worth scorning; Gissing declares, "We reject the photograph; it avails us nothing in art or life" (*CD* 106). Elsewhere, seeming to reject the impartiality of naturalism, he praises Dickens's sympathy. Dickens's satire, Gissing argues, is most effective when his "indignation" is "subdued" (*Immortal* 238). As Irving Howe observes, Gissing became disaffected with "political movements and philosophies of progress" (xi). Despite Gissing's admiration for Dickens's novels, Samuel Vogt Gapp's statement appears to be valid: "There was nothing of the humourist in Gissing" (3).

¹⁸⁷ Gissing's interest in physiological psychology, and its theories of habit, is far more tangential than that of either Eliot or Butler; yet, as Jenny Bourne Taylor observes, Gissing read Théodule Ribot's contribution to "degenerationist discourse," translated in 1875 as *Heredity: A Psychological Study of its Phenomena, Laws, Causes and Consequence* (Taylor 66). Ribot was a "staunch materialist" who was influenced by mid-century English physiological psychologists (particularly Lewes and Spencer) (Taylor 66).

¹⁸⁸ Tintner argues that Satire III (famously imitated by Samuel Johnson in "London" [1738]) is updated by Gissing in *New Grub Street* (1-2).

¹⁸⁹ Alluding to the same perversion of values (and also perhaps to Satire III), Professor Teufelsdröckh asks, "'Or how, without Clothes, could we possess the master-organ, soul's seat and true pineal gland of the Body Social: I mean, a Purse?'" (*SR* 50).

¹⁹⁰ Epitomizing the Jamesean notion of social entrapment through habit, Mrs Yule is described as being branded for life by her reflexive habits of speech and deportment as a member of the London poor. Her attire also signals her humble origins; she is "plainly dressed in serviceable grey" (*NGS* 71).

¹⁹¹ By contrast, Marian Yule's plain clothes signal that issues of money rarely enter into her "habits of thought" (*NGS* 241). According to the way of the world in *New Grub Street*, thoughtful and sympathetic Marian is doomed.

¹⁹² Possibly Gissing alludes to William of Occam's axiomatic law of parsimony known as "Occam's Razor": "It is useless to do with more what can be done with fewer" (Maurer 405). This law of methodological parsimony is analogous to habit theory's "lines of least resistance" (Lewes, *PLMI* 132).

¹⁹³ According to Francis, the text demonstrates Schopenhauer's idea that the surrender of the will is the only way to survive. Biffen's hopelessly romantic love revives his desiring will and thus is the catalyst of his death (Francis 114-15) – a state in which there is neither "fear nor hope" (*NGS* 406). Reardon and Biffen both die uttering the most Schopenhaueresque of Shakespeare's lines, testifying that life is a "delusive dream" (Francis 113).

¹⁹⁴ Jameson refers specifically to the fear of “slipping down the painfully climbed slope of class position” (265).

¹⁹⁵ In a letter to Mrs Frederic Harrison, 21 April 1891, Gissing explains his specifically Johnsonian view of Grub Street; it is a place associated with poverty-stricken writers, but not necessarily bad writing and “meanness of spirit”: “Grub street actually existed in London some hundred & fifty years ago. In Pope & his contemporaries the name has become synonymous for wretched-authordom” (*Letters* 289).

¹⁹⁶ Vrettos observes in Dickens “a kind of authorial meta-habit of observing the routines of others in order, habitually, to transcribe them into literary form” (415). The opening lines of the 1867 Preface to *Dombey and Son* substantiate this pronouncement: “I make so bold as to believe that the faculty (or the habit) of correctly observing the characters of men, is a rare one. I have not even found, within my experience, that the faculty (or the habit) of correctly observing so much as the faces of men, is a general one by any means” (4).

¹⁹⁷ George H. Ford concludes that “the tone of his satire became much more obviously astringent after 1850” (82).

¹⁹⁸ Vrettos explores the numerous sartorially-inscribed anxieties about class, consumption, and identity that punctuate the narrative of *Great Expectations*.

¹⁹⁹ The myth of Dickens as an instinctive, unconscious artist is imbued with class prejudice. Chesterton’s assertion is explicit: “The rise of Dickens is like the rising of a vast mob,” and like the mob, Dickens is “comparatively ignorant” (*Victorian* 25). (The ever paradoxical Chesterton, however, asserted that Dickens “was among other things a satirist, a pure satirist,” and that “[i]n short the satirist is more purely philosophical than the novelist. The satirist may be only an observer; the satirist must be a thinker. He must be a thinker, he must be a philosophical thinker” (*Chesterton on Dickens* 92-93). Dorothy Van Ghent explains that Dickens’s “intuition alarmingly saw” the deadening effects of industrialism (128); H. M. Daleski, amidst a discussion of the intricacies of Dickens’s novelistic attacks on mid-Victorian England, refers offhandedly to the “limitations of his critical intelligence” (186). Recently, Andrew Sanders declares: “His grasp of the steadily advancing scientific thought of his time probably went no further than that of an intelligent general reader” (*Charles Dickens* 165). Rosemarie Bodenheimer acknowledges and redresses the “long history of critical condescension” towards Dickens’s knowledge (2-8).

²⁰⁰ In a famous laudatory speech given in 1852, Thackeray emphasizes Dickens’s pathos over and above his social criticism. He praises Dickens’s wholesome, comic gifts to the children of England and also to his own daughter, who prized Dickens’s *Nicholas Nickleby* above any of her father’s novels (Thackeray, “Charity” 284-85). Walter Bagehot accuses Dickens of “infantine weakness” (Collins 404), and F. R. Leavis determines that the “adult mind doesn’t as a rule find in Dickens a challenge to an unusual and sustained seriousness” (19).

²⁰¹ Bagehot contributed to the derisive gender-encoding of Dickens's literary style through his insistence upon the novelist's "deficiency in those masculine faculties... reasoning understanding and firm far-seeing sagacity" (Collins 411).

²⁰² Jean Ferguson Carr also explores "attempts to contain Dickens's impact by identifying him as lower-class, uneducated, and aligned with feminine discourse" (161).

²⁰³ In *Charles Dickens Revisited* (2000), Robert Newsom finds a possible explanation for such interpretations in Dickens's ability to present a "anti-intellectual as to give some comfort to his readers who are perfectly content to find in him mere fun and entertainment and who have never quite reconciled with the later and more obviously somber and serious works. He had plenty of such readers in his lifetime and has plenty of them even now" (62).

²⁰⁴ Lyn Pykett observes that the novel's fun is countered by its violent interpolated tales (39). Even John Forster felt that the novels after *David Copperfield* were tainted by a tone of bitterness (Goldberg 8). Interestingly, Steven Marcus points out that *The Pickwick Papers* contains subversive social satire, particularly in the scenes of Mr Pickwick's trial and period of self-imprisonment; however, he concludes that this is "Dickens's one novel, in which wickedness, though it exists, is not a threat" (51).

²⁰⁵ Whipple complained of Dickens's "lack of scientific training in the austere domain of social, legal, and political science" and resented the novelist's attempt to "direct the public opinion of Great Britain by embodying, in exquisitely satirical characters, rash and hasty judgments on the whole government of Great Britain in all its departments, legislative, executive, and judicial" (Collins 328).

²⁰⁶ From "Modern Novelists, Charles Dickens," *Westminster Review*, October 1864. Typically, Ford argues, such dismissals of Dickens's authority as a social critic were politically motivated. For example, Ruskin approves of *Hard Times*'s critique of Utilitarianism (which he felt worthy of universal study regarding "social questions") (*Unto This Last* 17: 31n). Later, however, when Ruskin feels Dickens to be aligned with Macaulay, he pronounces Dickens to be "a leader of the steam-whistle party *par excellence*" and implicates him as an "apostle to the mob" (Letter to Charles Eliot Norton, 19 June 1870; *Letters* 37: 7).

²⁰⁷ Trevor Blount explores Dickens's interest in the reform of intramural burial-grounds. See also Blount's "Dickens's Slum Satire in *Bleak House*."

²⁰⁸ Cotsell explains *Little Dorrit*'s satire on connoisseurship while noting Dickens's "deep political awareness" and "deeply saddened sense that the middle class had ceased to be progressive" ("Politics and Peeling" 197-98).

²⁰⁹ Furneaux's article on Dickens's satire of the Poor Law Bill of 1834 draws upon "plagiarist" adaptations of *Oliver Twist*, like *Oliver Twiss* (by Pos), published in 1838, in order to argue against the view that satire is overcome by the novel's "Newgate" plot. Such adaptations reveal the contemporary impact of Dickens's "specific rhetorical strategies of political resistance" and the dominant perception of the Poor Law satire as "central to" Dickens's novelistic project (Furneaux 222).

²¹⁰ Mitchell clarifies Dickens's lifelong anger concerning the methods of the governing elite. Specifically, he had contempt for projects such as war (i.e. the Crimean) and

overseas philanthropy (“foreign wrongs”) that served to mask systematic neglect of the English poor (L. Mitchell 234).

²¹¹ *The Dickensian* and *Dickens Quarterly* are particularly rich in articles that contextualize Dickens’s variegated satiric targets: see, for example, Paul Schlicke’s “Bumble and the Poor Law Satire of *Oliver Twist*,” Lowell L. Blaisdell’s “The Origins of the Satire in the Watertoast Episode of *Martin Chuzzlewit*,” Kalyan B. Ray’s “Nomenclature and Satire in *Little Dorrit*,” and Joel J. Brattin’s “‘A Mockery So Gross and Monstrous’: Slavery in Dickens’s Manuscript for *American Notes*.”

²¹² Hollington’s study is anchored in theories of the grotesque that culminate in Bakhtin’s positive but politicizing theory of “grotesque realism” (a concept discussed in Chapter 1). Hollington finds a paradoxical “revitalizing of perception” in Dickens’s use of dehumanization (43). In terms of traditions of satire, Hollington suggests that there are many areas of “overlap between Dickensian themes and the subjects of visual satire” (13); for example, Hans Holbein’s *Dance of Death* (1558), with its use of physiognomy as an index of character and its association of everyday occupations with death, is “ubiquitously present in Dickens’s work” (13-14). As well, Hollington observes that London is the “principal focus and instigation of Dickens’s perception of the grotesque” (55).

²¹³ In *Bleak House*, *Hard Times*, and *Little Dorrit*, Manning asserts, “themes of devitalization, mechanization, and devaluation of womanhood – are now central,” and to treat these books as satire is “to grasp the main stem of each” (101).

²¹⁴ Essentially, Gissing grapples with what Steven Marcus effectively summarizes as the “phenomenon” of Dickens: “a great genius who is also a popular success and a genuine, unremitting and impenitent critic of his society” (350).

²¹⁵ Welsh concludes, “Dickens was too sentimental to be a thorough-going satirist” (“Satire” 384). The satirist “should appeal primarily to scorn, secondarily to laughter, and only occasionally to sentiment. Dickens was above all a humorist” (Welsh, “Satire” 384).

²¹⁶ In Chesterton’s discussion of *Martin Chuzzlewit*, he observes that there are two “different” and “even antagonistic strands” (*Chesterton on Dickens* 99) in Dickensian narrative. Similarly, Ronald Paulson observes a “trademark” pairing of the satiric and sentimental (*Satire* 236).

²¹⁷ Ultimately though, for Palmeri, “*Bleak House* may not be predominantly a satire, but it is a tragic novel that has been extensively shaped by satire” (“Narrative Satire” 369).

²¹⁸ A.E. Dyson finds that Dickens’s characters often “transcend[ed] a satiric framework” (81); thus, “satire, in its pure form at least, is forced to yield ground” (177). Dickens’s satire, Gissing argues, is most effective when his “indignation” is “subdued” (*Immortal* 238). R. H. Hutton, providing another example of this view of Dickens, concludes in his 1869 review in the *Spectator* that the “humourist not infrequently swallows up the moralist, and his delight in the grand incoherency of human nature often overpowers his scorn for falsehood” (Collins 490).

²¹⁹ Manning contrasts the satiric with the “novelistic” plots and characters in Dickens’s narratives, which, she concludes, “may be simultaneously dramatic (or novelistic) and rhetorical (satiric counters), or they may move from one mode to the other” (9). “Strange

mixture[s]” such as Krook and Richard Carstone existing in the same “fictional world” reflect a “bifurcation” that is “fundamental to Dickens’s satire” (Manning 9). The third-person narrator is often an “angry satirist,” in contrast to characters such as Esther Summerson, who are “painfully accepting” (9). Manning proposes that in *Little Dorrit* and *Hard Times*, the satire is “so bitter” that even the comic moments are satiric (40).

²²⁰ Importantly, Manning follows Price’s application of Alvin Kernan’s definition of the crowded “satiric scene,” in which things and people become confused in Dickens’s narrative discourse. As well, Manning approves of Cockshut’s argument that Dickens imported Augustan mock heroic techniques, but did so inexpertly.

²²¹ Dickens’s association with eighteenth-century novel traditions has become a “commonplace in Dickens criticism” (Fludernik 65). Monika Fludernik emphasizes the influence of Goldsmith’s *The Vicar of Wakefield* (1766) upon Dickens’s “sentimentalist mode” (68), and she observes that William Godwin’s *Caleb Williams* likely influenced Dickens’s social criticism (and possibly his penchant for prison metaphors). In general, Dickens shared with Smollett, Defoe, Fielding, and others the use of picaresque, travel-centred narratives, and eccentric or “splenic” characters; as well, Dickens adopted the “satiric mode so common in eighteenth-century fiction” (Fludernik 69). Dickens’s novels, Andrew Sanders asserts, should be seen “in the mainstream of the tradition of English comic fiction” for his work is both “comic and affirmative” (“Dickens” 56).

²²² In the same letter, Dickens mentions that he will keep on the look-out for fire-flies when he embarks upon “Horace’s journey” from Rome to Maecenas (*Letters* 4: 323). It is also notable that Dickens owned a copy of John Dryden’s *Satires of Juvenal and Persius* (Manning 234). Dryden’s “Discourse” introduces the satires, and therefore Dickens may have been familiar with Dryden’s distinctions between Horatian and Juvenalian satire. Despite such documentation, the idea that Dickens was a Juvenalian satirist by unconscious imitation continues to circulate. Charles Martindale, for example, characterizes the introductory Veneering dinner party in *Our Mutual Friend* as a “coruscating” and “Juvenalesque” “version of the satiric dinner-party (*cena*)” (285); he posits that Dickens “may never have read Juvenal – even in translation,” but “intuiting” classical satiric traditions, absorbed them through other writers (286).

²²³ Martin is asked if he knows of an American writer who has “‘anatomised our follies as a people, and not this or that party; and who has escaped the foulest and most brutal slander, the most inveterate hatred and intolerant pursuit’” (*MC* 237). Americans are so intolerant of satire that even “‘the most harmless and good-humoured illustrations of our vices or defects’ have been “expunged, or altered, or explained away, or patched into praise’” (*MC* 237).

²²⁴ Manning’s “satiric vision,” which evolves from “Christmassy to dark” (39), is as unclear a term as Palmeri’s “satiric energies” (“Narrative Satire” 367).

²²⁵ In Appendix B, Manning comprehensively summarizes both the overt and the subtextual allusions to Juvenal, Swift, and Pope in Dickens’s writing, and restates her contradictory thesis: “Although Dickens knew both the classic English satirists and their models, he did not see himself as the inheritor of that tradition” (7, 234).

²²⁶ Pykett summarizes her point with the aid of Terry Eagleton's all-encompassing characterization of Dickens's texts as "a veritable traffic jam of competing fictional modes – Gothic, Romance, moral fable, 'social problem' novel, popular theatre, 'short story,' journalism, episodic entertainment – which permits realism no privileged status" (qtd. in Pykett 10). The miscellaneity of Dickensian narrative has inspired many critical assessments that often argue for satire's subsumption by other modes. For example, Steven Marcus discusses *Oliver Twist* as a "Newgate novel," parable, and homiletic tale after the manner of John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*. He determines the first fifty pages of the text to be a focused satire on the New Poor Law of 1834 – although the "satirical polemic is gradually modulated and is assimilated into the dramatic structure of the story" (Marcus 67-68, 58). Though Marcus observes satiric incident and tone, he ultimately defines Dickens as a "novelist of comic genius" (299).

²²⁷ E. P. Whipple's distinction is exemplary: "There is no authorized, no accredited way of exhibiting character but this, that the dramatist or novelist shall enter into the soul of the personage represented, shall sympathize with him sufficiently to know him, and shall represent his... individuality. This sympathy is consistent with the utmost hatred of the person described; but characterization becomes satire the moment that antipathy supersedes insight and the satirist berates the exterior manifestations of an individuality whose interior life he has not diligently explored and interpreted" (*Charles Dickens* 101). Critics such as Whipple rejected Dickensian characterization for veering too close to what was regarded as the unsympathetic, crass reductivism of satire. George Eliot, for example, regarded Dickens's social criticism to be marred by "frequently false psychology" ("Natural" 111). Eliot's perception of a lack of psychological verisimilitude in the novels (which therefore failed in their duty to stir social sympathy) was shared by George Henry Lewes; in 1872 (*Fortnightly Review*), Lewes condemns Dickens's characters for being "masks," "mere catchwords," or "wooden horses" that "mov[e] like pieces of simple mechanism always in one way" (Collins 583).

²²⁸ The programmatic seriousness of the prefaces was not overlooked by critics such as Justin McCarthy, who justifies his attack on Dickens's presumption to be a "philosopher," "moralist," and "politician," based on the claims made in the prefaces to *Martin Chuzzlewit*, *Little Dorrit*, and *Bleak House* (Collins 448n).

²²⁹ Dickens defends the artistic validity of extreme representations of characters in his 1839 Preface to *Nicholas Nickleby* (1838-9); he describes the readerly hypocrisy that "every day in real life," people are regarded as either bad or virtuous, but the world "will seldom admit a very strongly-marked character, either good or bad, in a fictitious narrative, to be within the limits of probability" (*Nicholas Nickleby* 46).

²³⁰ Eagleton's insight is relevant here: "Dickens's grotesque realism is a stylistic distortion in the service of truth, a kind of astigmatism which allows us to see more accurately" (*English Novel* 149).

²³¹ *Exposition* is public declaration, exposure, expounding, or explaining (*OED*).

²³² Jerome Meckier also emphasizes the Juvenalian qualities of Dickens's thematic and stylistic propensities, particularly in *Bleak House*: Dickens "belongs to the school of

Juvenal, Swift and Rabelais” and makes “use of Juvenalian satire to promote a radical politics and encourage reform” (*Hidden* 36, 27).

²³³ Hogarth drew upon iconographic conventions derived from Cesare Ripa’s *Iconologia* (1593). Fittingly, Paulson likens Hogarth’s sense of corruption with Juvenal’s: “Corruption for Juvenal is a falling away, decline, or reversal, most generally of the Republic into the Empire” (“Pictorial” 298). Hogarth found Juvenal a “richer source” (Paulson, “Pictorial” 298) than Horace for a study of the incremental stages of decline reflected, for example, in the ironically entitled print series *A Harlot’s Progress* (1732). Harry Stone offers a thorough study of the influence of Hogarth’s pictorial satire on Dickensian images and themes – especially cannibalism (see *The Night Side of Dickens: Cannibalism, Passion, Necessity*, 35-55). Hogarth’s engravings (of which Dickens owned forty-five) emphasize the societal origins of various vices (Stone 49).

²³⁴ In the serialized novels, each monthly contribution filled a quota of thirty-two pages of text, accompanied by two illustrations (the final number exhibited forty-eight pages of text and four illustrations), cover design, along with a title page and a frontispiece. Dickens’s close attention to the productions of his illustrators has been well documented (see Butt and Tillotson, *Dickens at Work*, 15-22). In *Bleak House*, pervasive darkness and recurring textual images of sickness, blindness, and decay are suggested pictorially by the dark plates – literally darkening the novel.

²³⁵ Manning concludes that in his “dark” novels, “the whole of society is seen through some metaphor of rigidity” (39).

²³⁶ The New Comedy structure involves the clash of two societies, “the obstructing and the congenial society” (Frye, “Dickens” 52). Typically, romantic love is thwarted, but the congenial society demonstrably dominates through a happy ending – usually some form of festivity (Frye, “Dickens” 52, 55).

²³⁷ Frye explains that Dickens made abundant use in his melodramatic plots of the “tagged humor” (“Dickens” 58): a character associated with the repetition of certain phrases and actions (who is generally an “obstructing humor” [“Dickens” 81]). The “humor of stock response,” Frye argues, is particularly powerful for mocking the going opinion; this humour creates “cultural allegories, representatives of the kind of anxiety that caricatures an age” (“Dickens” 61). Henry Fielding defines a humour as “a violent Impulse of the mind, determining it to some one peculiar Point, by which a Man becomes ridiculously distinguished from all other men” (*Covent Garden Journal* 1752, *Works* 113)

²³⁸ Manning also applies to Dickens’s texts Bergson’s notion of laughter arising from the “spectacle of something mechanical encrusted on the living,” and contrasting radically with “life’s infinite changefulness” (Manning 36, 39). Bergson asserts: “The comic is that side of a person which reveals his likeness to a thing, that aspect of human events which, through its peculiar inelasticity, conveys the impression of pure mechanism, of automatism, of movement without life. Consequently it expresses an individual or collective imperfection which calls for an immediate corrective. This corrective is laughter” (Bergson 37).

²³⁹ Dickens’s analogical habit of asserting continuity between the animate and inanimate world was most influentially theorized by Dorothy Van Ghent, who interprets Dickens’s

characters, not as psychologically limited caricatures, but as expressions of the reification of human beings through the processes of industrial capitalism (128). Dickens's "device of association," she posits, is not typical symbolic illustration, but a "necessary metaphysical function in Dickens's universe" (130).

²⁴⁰ In Dickens's texts, habits, the deterministic propensities of human character, are frequently figured in the form of mechanistic metaphors. Paradoxically, habit's transformative and beneficial potential, including such principles as confirmed virtue and habitual sympathy, capitalize on the concept of free will. Dickens's machine-like characters choose freely to be bound by habit.

²⁴¹ Vrettos claims that this novel's "self-conscious attention to habit is more pronounced" than "in much of his other fiction" (416).

²⁴² Dickens received a snobbish rebuke from Lewes for Krook's spontaneous combustion. For a summary of Dickens's trespass into a physiological debate about tissue metabolism, see John B. West, "Krook's Death by Spontaneous Combustion and the Controversy between Dickens and Lewes: A Physiologist's View." The lack of critical attention given to the relation of Dickens's fiction to psychological medicine, which Oberhelman noted in 1995, has been corrected; yet, traces of Lewes's view remain. Rick Rylance, for example, opens his study with a quotation from *Great Expectations*, but ultimately sidelines Dickens in his survey of contributors to the century's psychology debates. As well, Peter Allan Dale offers a Lewes-inflected view of Dickens's psychology (72-73).

²⁴³ Bodenheimer details Dickens's various interests: natural history, medicine and mental science, history, and the occult (1-19). Furthermore, the fact that Dickens owned a copy of Dr. John Bucknill's *The Psychology of Shakespeare* reveals his interest in the intersection of science and literature (Manheim 71-72). See also David Oberhelman (10) and Leonard Manheim (71-77) for an account of relevant books in Dickens's library in 1879.

²⁴⁴ See Taylor and Shuttleworth for a list of articles printed in *Household Words* on the subject of insanity and lunacy reform. Dickens wrote the first of the articles, "Idiots" (June 1853), which surveyed improvements in treatments for the insane (397). As well, Richard A. Currie argues that articles in the journal reflect Dickens's (and Wilkie Collins's) interest in supporting improved treatments in asylums, including moral management (18).

²⁴⁵ In "An Analytic Note" to *The Great Tradition* (1948), Leavis, though generally not inclined to approve of low or comic modes, praises the "satiric irony" of *Hard Times*, particularly its concentration in the first two chapters; here it is not "thrown" in with other "modes" of "melodrama, pathos, and humour" in the characteristically "large and genial Dickensian way" (Leavis 228). For Leavis, *Hard Times* exhibits Dickens's "full critical vision" (a vision that he has "had little credit for" [228]). Although Leavis discusses the text's "ironic method" (230), he favours the generic term "moral fable" to satire. In a "moral fable," the "representative significance" of all aspects of the narrative is "immediately apparent" to the reader (230). In this exceptional text, Leavis holds, Dickens's "ironic humour" is "mature" and "serious" (21).

²⁴⁶ Many critics were disappointed by Dickens's "misunderstanding of trade unionism" (House 28). Interestingly, these critics often demonstrate ambivalence to the novel as satire. For example, Terry Eagleton resists the text's satiric generalities and lack of reformist specificity: *Hard Times* "exposes [Dickens] to be pretty ignorant of industrialism; we never get to know what is produced in Bounderby's factories, and the city of Coketown in portrayed in vaguely impressionistic terms" (*Novel* 143). Eagleton regrets that this is a novel that recognizes "what is at stake is a whole industrial-capitalist system, yet which can find little to oppose to it but the anarchic spontaneity of a circus" (*Novel* 158).

²⁴⁷ He further charges Dickens with perverting these truths through the lens of an "embittered" state of mind (Collins 317). Uncharacteristically, Dickens did not reply to criticisms of *Hard Times* in a defensive preface.

²⁴⁸ Sinnett asserts that her nation respects imaginative works and that she is "not aware of any such system being in operation anywhere in England" (Collins 305). Paul A. Olson argues that Sinnett ignores the legitimacy of Dickens's emphasis on the arguments against fancy in Bentham, through James Mill to William Ellis and George Combe (235).

²⁴⁹ Interestingly, Humphry House's assessment of Gradgrind as being not just a "burlesque and an exaggeration," but the "only major Dickens character meant to be an 'intellectual,' underlies his notorious pronouncement that Dickens "did not understand enough of any philosophy even to be able to guy it successfully" (23, 24). Eagleton also notes that Gradgrind is "in fact the only real intellectual Dickens ever portrays" (*Novel* 157).

²⁵⁰ The enduring critical debate about whether *Hard Times* is a singularly poor or singularly brilliant specimen of a Dickensian novel is coloured by critical resistance towards its satire. Recently, for example, Anne Humphreys obviates the formal issue of satire: "What disappoints some readers is that, in order to attack this system [Utilitarianism], Dickens seems to reduce his characters to types, both limiting the human interest and oversimplifying utilitarianism at the same time" (392). Harold Bloom regrets its "drab characterizations" and lack of Dickens's distinctively "preternatural exuberance" (6). Bloom's collection of critical essays on *Hard Times* echoes his view that the novel "fails as a satire on Utilitarianism, but triumphs frighteningly as a representation of the drive beyond the pleasure principle" (10). Frank Palmeri concludes that *Hard Times*'s educational satire is not successfully linked to the rest of the novel; therefore, he pronounces that the novel is disqualified from being a thoroughgoing satire: "the satiric implication that a utilitarian education will lead children to become amoral embezzlers may connect the children's education to the principal plot, but it... strains credulity" ("Narrative Satire" 368).

²⁵¹ The idea of attaining "full social control" by "employing Associationism" in public schools, Olson notes, appears in James Mill's 1818 entry for psychology in the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, in which Associationist principles (simultaneity, succession, and habituation) are proposed as the "basis" for a mandatory public education (172).

²⁵² Embodying Carlyle's pronouncement that we have "machines for Education" ("Signs" 35), M'Choakumchild is described as being a product, like other pupil-teachers, of mass

production, similar to “pianoforte legs” (*HT* 49). In 1846, the government funded a pupil-teacher scholarship-based system developed by Utilitarian Sir James Kay-Shuttleworth (1804-77), structured on an ideal of fact-based knowledge (Simpson 25), or what the narrator terms “educational cramming” (*HT* 59). David Paroissien finds Mr M’Choakumchild to be Bradley Headstone’s “prototype” (“Ideology” 273).

²⁵³ Dickens frequently alludes to the sterility of mechanical habit in terms of Christian parables of the seed (Job 4:8, “they that plow iniquity, and sow wickedness, reap the same,” as well as Matthew 1:3 and Galatians 6:7, “whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap”). *Hard Times*’s ironic book titles, “Sowing,” “Reaping,” and “Garnering,” may also allude to Carlyle’s invocation of the parable in *The French Revolution*: “The harvest is reaped and garnered; yet still we have no bread” (177).

²⁵⁴ Jennifer Gribble argues that such allusions expose the Utilitarian overwriting of the humanitarian teachings of the bible. Chapter One (of Book One), entitled “The One Thing Needful,” refers to Luke 10:42, in which Mary attends to Jesus’s teachings (the “one thing needful”), while her sister Martha is “absorbed in practicalities” (Gribble 429). As well, the consistent deployment of biblical stories contributes moral scope to the text’s Juvenalian prophecy of doom. As Daniel Hooley notes, Juvenal is characteristically apocalyptic in his tone and in his warnings that Rome is in the last of its days (*Roman Satire* 115). The narrator’s interpretation of the statistics announcing the nation’s prosperity are likely to be the “Writing on the Wall,” referring to Daniel’s prophecy of doom and judgment based on God’s words written on the wall at Belshazzar’s feast (Daniel 5:24-28).

²⁵⁵ Assessing *Hard Times* in terms of prevalent scientific and political discourses, Olson debunks the idea that Dickens was ignorant about his satiric targets. The satire, he specifies, is not exclusive to Jeremy Bentham and James Mill, but simultaneously engages second-generation Utilitarians by “excoriat[ing] [William] Ellis, [George] Combe, and the schools they created” (228) (i.e., the Birkbeck-style schools that were widespread in the 1820s and 30s, such as Andrew Bell and John Lancaster’s monitorial schools for working-class children that promoted rote learning and hierarchy [Olson 175-177]). Olson finds “real-world equivalents” for “large capital in Ellis, the educational reformer in Combe and others,” and the “experimental teacher” in W. M. Williams (236). As well, David Paroissien assesses Dickens’s novel as a criticism of mid-century educational reformers such as Sir James Kay-Shuttleworth, Richard Dawes, and William Ellis, who focused on inculcating habits of industry and thrift in the working poor, and who “assimilated” the ideas of Swiss reformer Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi (1746-1827). Pestalozzi promoted “object lessons” to teach the accurate observation of everyday things (Paroissien, “Ideology” 274-78).

²⁵⁶ Specifically, Dickens parodies Harriet Martineau’s *Illustrations of Political Economy* (1832).

²⁵⁷ For example, John Ramsay McCulloch (1789-1864), a Utilitarian statistician and popularizer of political economy, whom Dickens denounced, promoted a habit-based theory of social control of the working classes in his *The Principles of Political Economy* (1830).

²⁵⁸ Dickens's letter to Charles Knight, 30 December 1854, explains: "My satire is against those who see figures and averages, and nothing else – the representatives of the wickedest and most enormous vice of this time" (*Letters* 7: 492).

²⁵⁹ The highly symbolic nature of *Hard Times*'s characters has been observed by many critics. Lionel Stevenson argues that these characters, more than those of Dickens's other novels, are designed to be agents of an attack on "the ideological basis of current capitalism" (311-12). Ford defines the novel's characters to be "symbolical characterizations" (82); Goldberg identifies them as "personifications of Carlylean criticism" (79); and Manning asserts that they are "ciphers of ideas to condemn or uphold" (133). Steven Wall, in his discussion of satire in Trollope, refers to such characters as "creatures of rhetoric" (43).

²⁶⁰ Goldberg concludes that *Hard Times* exposes Dickens's "dependence on Carlyle's teaching to an extreme extent" – a "tendency" he observes in Dickens's later novels (78): "The satires on bureaucratic muddle in *Little Dorrit*, Philistine money worship in *Our Mutual Friend*, and popular philanthropy in *Edwin Drood* derive much of their animus as well as considerable literary detail from Carlyle's various *Pamphlets*" (Goldberg 7). It is important to note, however, that Dickens was not a blind follower of Carlyle. For example, in a letter to John Forster (15 May 1854), he admits that Carlyle's habit of hero worship could be excessive: "the extraordinary peculiarity of [Carlyle's] mind always is a respect for power when it is exercised by a determined man" (*Letters* 7: 332). Dickens found this penchant to be a "curious distortion" of Carlyle's moral judgment, particularly in relation to tyrants. As well, Dickens's request to dedicate *Hard Times* to Carlyle is not phrased to indicate intellectual subservience: "I know it contains nothing in which you do not think with me, for no man knows your books better than I. I want to put in the first page of it, that it is inscribed to Thomas Carlyle. May I?" (Letter from 13 July 1854, *Letters* 7: 367).

²⁶¹ Humphreys observes that the text's "didactic" themes are articulated less through direct narratorial moral commentary than through "resonant metaphors" (192).

²⁶² Further indicating Gradgrind's multivalent symbolic status, his children are aptly named Malthus, Adam Smith, and Jane. Recently, Hilda Hollis identifies "little Jane" to be a satiric reference to Jane Marcet, a successful popularizer of political economy (89).

²⁶³ Josiah Bounderby of Coketown is selfishness (the first principle of *laissez-faire* economics) incarnate. Chronically inflated by conceited lies of self-sufficiency (and cliché-ridden boasts), he appears to be on the verge of explosion. Like the industrial-capitalist system he symbolizes (and like the train that enters Coketown in a "seizure"), he dies in a fit. Tom Gradgrind, who follows his father "like a machine" (*HT* 15), is a Bounderby in the making.

²⁶⁴ From a letter to Miss Davenport Bromley, 30 August 1866 (Froude 280).

²⁶⁵ Love, he admits, cannot be kept out of the "habits of mind, and habits of life" of unreasonable women (*HT* 131). Other significant Menippean moments are his disciplinary speeches to his dissentingly imaginative children, his conversations with Bounderby, and his final conversation with Bitzer – in the chapter entitled

“Philosophical” – in which he is defeated by the “catechism” that “the whole social system is a question of self-interest” (383).

²⁶⁶ Frye determines that *Hard Times*, “of all Dickens’s stories, comes nearest to being... the dystopia,” for the “most effective dystopias” reveal a “nightmare world” in which “perverse tendencies” (ones that particularly “threaten” the writer’s social occupation) have “free play” (“Dickens” 67). As well, Joseph Gold observes that the novel is Dickens’s “nearest approach to Huxley’s *Brave New World*, Orwell’s *1984*, and particularly *Gulliver’s Travels* in its third and fourth books” (198).

²⁶⁷ Christopher Lane’s term for the key narrative habit of *Our Mutual Friend*.

²⁶⁸ Recently, Tamara Ketabgian challenges the straightforward opposition of machines and human beings in Victorian anti-mechanical social criticism. Contextualizing *Hard Times*’s image of melancholy-mad elephants within “industrial metaphors common in works of medicine, social criticism, and natural history,” Ketabgian argues that Dickens’s novel “explores distinctly mechanical forms of feeling” (672). Her complex argument links period studies in reflex action with surprising suggestions of affect in mechanism.

²⁶⁹ As Mary Simpson notes, the town’s architecture is Georgian and therefore strictly functional and symmetrical (56). This contrasts with the “Gothic architecture” (*HT* 14) of Sleary’s Circus, which invokes, in Ruskinian terms, the individuality and creativity of a free population.

²⁷⁰ In view of Plato’s metaphor for the soul as a chariot driver and two horses, one good and one bad (like Sleary’s “one fixed” and one “rolling eye” [*HT* 46]), Sleary and the Circus Family, who train horses to dance, have clearly given rein to the good horse; mechanicals, Louisa explains, have “[c]rushed [their] better angel into a daemon” (*HT* 289). When Sissy is asked to define the horse, she is figuratively asked to define the ineffable human mind and soul.

²⁷¹ For J. Hillis Miller, “Dickens dramatizes in strikingly symbolic terms the opposition between soul-destroying relation to a utilitarian industrial civilization... and the reciprocal interchange of love.” The machinery of the mills and the “horse-riding” are the two “dominant,” opposing symbols (226-7).

²⁷² James Harthouse symbolizes the unaccountable force and momentum of sheer habit. Unlike Gradgrind, who is at least sincere in his misguided application of habit theory, Harthouse operates through the passive absorption of current trends. Intentionally, he uses the power of habit to seduce Louisa, for he is “in the habit” of visiting her. Strategically, he “associate[s] himself” (*HT* 238) with her love for her brother. As a “Parliament gentleman” from London and aimless “modern gentleman” (of whom there are “legions”) (*HT* 197, 238), his character enacts the reflexive *ennui* and inattention that characterize England’s mechanical ruling men. “[I]ndifferent and purposeless,” more than “designedly bad,” he prefigures Eugene Wrayburn as an exemplar of amoral habit (*HT* 238-9).

²⁷³ Observable also is the text’s reliance upon literary devices of repetition: alliteration, consonance, and assonance.

²⁷⁴ For example, Steven Connor’s deconstructionist reading explores “important internal inconsistencies” (126) in the text. The fact that “[m]etaphor is repeatedly used to discredit

metaphor as Dickens mounts a systematic assault on systematic thought” undoes the “firm opposition of Fact and Fancy essential to the book” (123). In this way, Connor concludes, *Hard Times* “connives in what it condemns” (121).

²⁷⁵ Coketown’s library is a monument to the persistence of wonder. Mr Gradgrind is incredulous that the exhausted working population reads at all; the narrator explains that in an immovable desire for narrative (even rather un-fanciful specimens), “[t]hey took De Foe to their bosoms, instead of Euclid, and seemed to be on the whole more comforted by Goldsmith than by Cocker” (*HT* 65-66).

²⁷⁶ The images of hell also recall, in Pope’s *Dunciad*, the solemn moral victory over “ashes and dead carcasses” (Frye “Nature” 55).

²⁷⁷ Marcus observes that “[i]n *Little Dorrit*, indeed in all his later writing, the discovery of the connections between social and personal disorders becomes Dickens’s chief pre-occupation” (47). Similarly, H. M. Daleski asserts that *Bleak House* demonstrates that “for the first time in Dickens individual attitudes are related to those of organized society” (158). The novel is his “first major assault on the England of his day” (Daleski 167).

²⁷⁸ Another of Dickens’s satire-promoting and perception-fixated pronouncements is found in his speech on 7 February 1842: “[W]e cannot hold in too strong a light of disgust and contempt, before the view of others, all meanness, falsehood, cruelty, and oppression, of every grade and kind” (*Speeches* 24).

²⁷⁹ See also Trevor Blount’s “The Graveyard Satire of *Bleak House* in the Context of 1850.”

²⁸⁰ Raymond Williams observes that the traditional rhetorical antimony between the rural virtue of the country and the corruptions of the city (from ancient Greek and Roman literature onwards) “crystallised” in relation to the imperial capital of Rome (especially in the “savage satires of Juvenal”) (46). In Dickens’s novel, the customary moral distinction between country and city is undermined to suggest a widespread culture of moral delinquency; however, with the restoration of Bleak House at the novel’s close as a sanctuary of rural virtue, the traditional binary is ultimately reinforced.

²⁸¹ Dickens was against the Young England Movement and backward-looking ideas of reform generally. One of *Bleak House*’s most singular similes for the unempathetic habits confirmed by social insularity is that of a fossilized fly. Lady Dedlock is “so long accustomed to suppress emotion, and keep down reality; so long schooled for her own purposes, in that destructive school which shuts up the natural feelings of the heart, like flies in amber, and spreads one uniform and dreary gloss over the good and bad, the feeling and the unfeeling, the sensible and the senseless; she has subdued even her wonder until now” (*BH* 787).

²⁸² Welsh, who also identifies illness as the “principal symbol” of the satire, notes that the “satirical charge of *Bleak House* is so comprehensive that readers are bound to differ about its true symbolic centre” (*Redressed* 105, 107).

²⁸³ Kate Flint pronounces *Bleak House* to be the “most obviously dialogic of the novels” (*Dickens* 43). Peter Garrett explores the singularities of the “dialogical” Victorian

multiplot narrative, emphasizing its “constitutive indeterminacy” and its “dialogue of structural principles” (13, 8).

²⁸⁴ The reviewer for the *Athenaeum* (17 September 1853) was appalled at being thrown into “some orb where eccentrics, Bedlamites, ill-directed and disproportioned people were the only inhabitants” (Collins 276).

²⁸⁵ Lady Dedlock’s demise is charted pictorially through her increasing presence in the “dark plates” that palpably convey her engulfment by forces beyond her control. Formally, they force the reader/viewer to experience the obliteration of perception.

²⁸⁶ D. A. Miller identifies Chancery as the text’s principal symbol, for its operations, in their sheer “unlocalizability,” “exceed the architectural” confines of the court (123-4). The “topic of the carceral in Dickensian representation” is both a “confined institutional space and the space of “liberal society”” (specifically that of the individual and family) (D. A. Miller 123-4).

²⁸⁷ Observing *Bleak House*’s cynicism concerning free will, Q. D. Leavis notes that the novel asks a “cut-throat” society “to enquire into the possibilities of goodness in such an environment, and whether anything in the nature of free-will is possible for those born into it” (174).

²⁸⁸ Esther’s impressions of London are particularly redolent of traditions of urban satire that associate the city with underworlds. “Towards London,” Esther perceives that “a lurid glare overhung the whole dark waste” (*BH* 450); she associates this light with a hellish, “unearthly fire” that gleams on the city’s buildings and “wondering inhabitants” (*BH* 450).

²⁸⁹ Esther, like Horace, is a humble and tentative member of a social circle into which she is grateful to have been accepted. Her outsider’s perspective, combined with a craving to “understand [things] better” (*BH* 24), and her overriding ethic of being sympathetic to, and wary of superiority over, her fellow human beings, are compatible with the Horatian decree of affectionate criticism. Her “brighten[ed]” perceptions are lovingly satiric (*BH* 24).

²⁹⁰ He does not elaborate upon this intriguing suggestion of agency, except to say that Ada, Clare, and Esther “are all in the suit without being spoiled or corrupted by it – indeed they constitute a domestic retreat into which the institutional, social space of the court can be contrasted” (D. A. Miller 126).

²⁹¹ Miller, however, does highlight the shrewdness of Esther’s comment that it is “ridiculous” to speak of the Chancery suit as being “in progress” (D. A. Miller 129).

²⁹² “[B]ecause [*Bleak House*] is a satire as well as a romance,” Welsh argues that there “needs to be” a “few signs of redemption” (*Redressed* 119). Esther’s narrative has “the shape of new comedy, with its marriage plot,” and “[w]hereas comedy achieves a happy ending, satire often just leaves off”; thus, in *Bleak House* (particularly in the last double number), “the satire itself can be thought of as a blocking agent that finally gives way” (Welsh, *Redressed* 127).

²⁹³ Carpenter, for example, argues that monomania is potentially circumvented by the will to change the patterns of “unconscious cerebration” by routinely diverting one’s thoughts

into “healthful channels” (543, 674). Carpenter holds that human beings are not “mere thinking Automata,” although he warns, “such thinking Automata *do* exist” (6, 27).

²⁹⁴ Rather than a “*tabula rasa*,” Lewes refers to the “sensitive subject” as being “a palimpsest” (*PLMI* 149).

²⁹⁵ By contrast, George Eliot’s *Daniel Deronda* defends the possibility that the will can direct habit productively; Grandcourt suffers from “the want of regulated channels for the soul to move in – good and sufficient ducts of habit, without which our nature easily turns to mere ooze and mud, and at any pressure yields nothing but a spurt or a puddle” (132).

²⁹⁶ Eugene’s rejection of the naturalist’s custom of comparing human beings to bees is not just a lazy dreamer’s rant against the cult of earnestness, but is also (as *Our Mutual Friend* is generally) a complaint against habitual and thoughtless enactment of the status quo.

²⁹⁷ In Juvenal’s satires, he condemns “the systematic reduction of this feudal concept into pure financial huckstering, at all levels” (Green 31). Significantly, Green determines Juvenal’s first programmatic satire, “with its forgers, gigolos, informers, and crooked advocates,” to be a “threnody on the theme of collapsing social values” (30).

²⁹⁸ Juvenal observes the prevalence of “retainers whose friendship was bought / With the meal-ticket stashed in their wallets” (5.45-46).

²⁹⁹ Gibbon himself learned from Juvenal; he references Juvenal’s satires throughout his history of ancient Rome.

³⁰⁰ As well, the figures from Roman history underline the title in the cover for the monthly parts. Boffin is depicted staring intently at the image.

³⁰¹ It is also an imitation of Horace’s Satire II.8.

³⁰² Recently John Reed, resuscitating authorial intentionality, applies information theory and its concept of “redundancy” to Dickensian narrative structure and techniques: “Dickens has embedded his redundancy not only in characterization and plotting, but in his very style, so that literal descriptions and figurative passages blend to convey an ever-increasing stream of data building to an inescapable message” (“Redundancy” 32). Reed’s idea that Dickens aimed for enhanced authorial control through a surplus of information complements an interpretation of *Our Mutual Friend* as satire/satura.

³⁰³ This contrasts with the “moderate pursuit of gain, that leaves the mind free to dwell upon the pleasures and advantages that money is to bring” (Bain, *S&I* 398). In *Our Mutual Friend*, the “dreadful extent” of Bella’s desire for the things that money can buy contrasts with her father’s comparatively innocent desire for a new suit, and his opinion that “most of us” (*OMF* 319) naturally desire nice things.

³⁰⁴ Jarvie explores the link between Dickens’s metonymic representation in *Our Mutual Friend* and the “ubiquitous metonymic processes of capitalism” itself (116), by which “‘value’ moves from commodity to commodity” almost “autonomously,” in a “shape-shifting, opportunistic” way (115). Drawing upon theories of metaphor (by Roman Jakobson and Paul de Man), Jarvie accepts that “metonymy,” more than metaphor, is a “relational, unstable figure” – an “opportunistic trope” that generates “links based solely

on the accident of proximity” (117). It functions as a kind of “rhetorical capitalism” (121).

³⁰⁵ Habit, Bain argues, plays a key role in sensual excesses, for merely the “accustomed routine of life leads to a craving almost of the nature of Appetite”; the “tendency” or “bent” to fulfill the appetite when the normal “time comes round” creates “uneasiness at being restrained” (*S&I* 254). Through habit alone, healthy desires can become pathological and “[t]hus we have the alcoholic craving, the craving for animal food, for tea, coffee, &c.” (*S&I* 253). Furthermore, Spencer posits that some substances, though initially distasteful, are “relished if frequently taken”: “long persistence” alone “makes [them] pleasurable” (*PP* 1: 287). In *Our Mutual Friend*, the British economy, like Lady Tippins’s digestive tract, is in a painful and “chronic state of inflammation” (*OMF* 618).

³⁰⁶ The dissolute habits of Lammler’s “business” partners epitomize the text’s interrelation and equivalence of diverse habits of consumption: these men are “indefinably loose; and they all ate and drank a great deal; and made bets in eating and drinking. They all spoke of sums of money” (*OMF* 260).

³⁰⁷ In *Our Mutual Friend*, the narrator’s diminution of Fascination Fledgby emphasizes the bestial urges of avarice: “Why money should be so precious to an Ass too dull and mean to exchange it for any other satisfaction, is strange; but there is no animal so sure to get laden with it, as the Ass who sees nothing written on the face of the earth and sky but the three letters L. S. D. – not Luxury, Sensuality, Dissoluteness, which they often stand for, but the three dry letters. Your concentrated Fox is seldom comparable to your concentrated Ass in money-breeding” (*OMF* 271-72).

³⁰⁸ Poovey outlines the general financial crisis of 1858, in which the Bank of England withdrew its support from discount houses, the most important of which was Overend, Gurney & Co (*Making* 157-8). A volatile credit market had created the disaster: “The mania for profit – combined with legal provisions that encouraged (but did not oversee) company formations and credit facilities that generated finance capital vastly in excess of gold reserves or even good debts – produced a concentration of financial abuses, which, for sheer recklessness and audacity, surpassed even the credit frauds of the 1840s” (Poovey, *Making* 160). Between March 1863 and August 1865, when Dickens was writing *Our Mutual Friend*, much criticism of the speculation mania appeared, including a series of essays by Malcolm Ronald Laing Meason (published in *All the Year Round*) on company flotations, the bill-broking system, and international speculation (Poovey, *Making* 160). Fledgby is a bill-broker of the most illegitimate kind.

³⁰⁹ In the final society dinner, the “Contractor, of five hundred thousand power,” is most explicit; he suggests that Eugene buy Lizzie with an annuity instead of marrying her: “‘You speak of that annuity in pounds sterling, but it is in reality so many pounds of beefsteaks and so many pints of porter’” that “‘are the fuel to that young woman’s engine’” (*OMF* 818). In the labour theory of value, human beings become equivalent to the food that they must consume to continue working.

³¹⁰ At Podsnap’s dinner, the guests are “counted, weighed, and valued like the plate” (*OMF* 143).

³¹¹ Harry Stone explains that the exhuming of bodies to provide illegitimate supplies for research relied on criminal traffickers (577n). The notorious murderers William Hare and William Burk (who were hanged and publicly dissected in 1829) supplied the demand for “dissectible bodies” by committing multiple murders (577n). Catherine Gallagher observes that in the “cannibalistic bioeconomy” of *Our Mutual Friend*, the horror is “not that human flesh becomes money, but that money is just a metaphor for human flesh. In this respect, the exchange made through the corpse is really not different from any other economic exchange, since all value is produced at the expense of life” (94).

³¹² The synecdochic matrix that represents her tenuous existence as sheer “exchange value” is beyond grotesque, for her character contains no human element: “Whereabout in the bonnet and drapery announced by her name, any fragment of the real woman may be concealed, is perhaps known to her maid; but you could easily buy all you see of her, in Bond Street; or you might scalp her, and peel her, and scrape her, and make two Lady Tippinses out of her, and yet not penetrate to the genuine article” (*OMF* 118-19).

³¹³ Her metonymic status as a “hardy old cruiser” who “last touched at the North Pole” (*OMF* 11) further alludes to the cannibalistic impulses of materialists. Michael Cotsell notes that this is an allusion to attempts by commissioned cruisers to find the remains of Sir John Franklin’s Arctic expedition of 1845 (*Companion* 28). Sir John Rae’s scandalous claim that the men resorted to cannibalism (“the last resource”) was rejected by Dickens in *Household Words* and *All the Year Round*. His characters in *Our Mutual Friend*, however, are less noble.

³¹⁴ Descriptions of Alfred Lammle are cannibalistic. With his violent outbursts and sparkling teeth, it is not surprising that he opens a bottle of soda-water as if “wringing the neck of some unlucky creature and pouring its blood down his throat” and then “wipe[s] his dripping whiskers in an ogreish way” (*OMF* 267).

³¹⁵ Since 1829, “mutton” is also a slang term for “prostitute,” and Bella, Lizzie, and Georgina are all nearly sold into forms of prostitution. As well, in the nineteenth century, “the lower down the social scale a person came, the less likely they were to eat meat” (Ingham, *Brontës* 46). The rich are thus emphasized as a carnivorous class.

³¹⁶ As well, a series of subsidiary, unsatisfactory dinners, breakfasts, and teas reinforce the cannibalism motif of the society dinners. Significantly, Silas celebrates his contract with Boffin by devouring a meat pie; Venus and Wegg vie against one another over a greasy meal of spit-toasted muffins. Gruesomely, Bradley, himself an emblem of habit-generated appetites, feasts on a thick-crustied meat pie (given to him by Riderhood) after murdering Eugene. Evocatively, the pie is rank and filled with “clots of congealed gravy” (the uneaten gravy is “put back into what remained of the pie” to satisfy Rogue’s miserliness) and each man eats from “the blade of his knife” (*OMF* 705). Augmenting the implicit cannibalism of the feast, Bradley cuts his hand and splatters Rogue with his blood. These unpleasant meals are juxtaposed by one singularly humble and humane repast: “The Feast of the Three Hobgoblins” (*OMF* 603). At this wholesome feast, Bella, John, and Mr Wilfer enjoy bread and milk together after Bella’s mercenariness has been exorcised. This meal prefigures their fugitive but happy marriage feast.

³¹⁷ John Middleton Murry's title for his fourth chapter in *Jonathan Swift: A Critical Biography* (1954).

³¹⁸ Leon Litvack regards the mounds as "an emblem of the negative aspects of the Victorian capitalist economy" (438). Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick observes that critics such as Monroe Engel, J. Hillis Miller, and Sylvia Manning relentlessly thematize the dust mounds in terms of a Freudian interpretation of the psychological link between money and human waste (i.e., that it is morally worthless) (179). In Sedgwick's view, the mounds have distracted critics from the homosocial and homophobic themes of the novel: *Our Mutual Friend*, she insists, is "the only English novel that everyone says is about excrement in order that they might forget that it is about anality" (190).

³¹⁹ Gallagher discusses mid-Victorian notions of waste as a form of natural capital, such as Ruskin's notion (in *Unto This Last*) of the necessity of converting "illth" (that which is ill-making) into wealth. As well, R. H. Horne's 1850 article for *Household Words*, "Dust; or Ugliness Redeemed" ("long recognized as an inspiration for Dickens's novel"), argued that dust could fertilize crops and generate new life (Gallagher 107-108). Thus, the "remains of consumption" could be reclaimed for production (104). Gallagher's reading supports a view of the novel as fundamentally regenerative.

³²⁰ Eliot acknowledges that distortions occur in the mirror of realism that are created by authorial subjectivity, but in this "witness-box" (*AB* 75) version of the honesty trope, her narrator lays claim to honest, unromantic percipience.

³²¹ Vrettos notes that J. Hillis Miller describes *Dombey and Son* as a novelistic attempt to contend with the principle of habit, a "term" that is used to "define the enclosure of personality within itself and within the things that it has transformed into a mirror of itself" (J. H. Miller 145).

³²² Characteristically, Dickensian narratives personify the natural world and the world of objects as *also* having prevailing humours – like Old Harmon's miserly "tight-clenched old bureau, receding atop like a bad and secret forehead" (*OMF* 184), the "still life" is visibly impressed with the habits of the "human life." In *Our Mutual Friend*, a plethora of objects signify characters' mental pathways of least resistance. Venus's mental fixations (his art and loneliness) are figured in the various pinioning devices; Boffin's resiliently charitable but vulnerable mind is signified by his walking stick. In terms of malevolent mentalities, Wegg's wooden-leg and the iron-rod (for the daily probing of the dust mound) are metonymic analogues for his rigid selfishness. Almost all characters are represented in close association with symbolic evidence of their habits of thought.

³²³ Most of *Our Mutual Friend*'s characters are represented as being imprisoned within their daily habits and are depicted in close association with reflective surfaces. Mr Wilfer is stuck behind the window of his "dark, dingy place of captivity," perpetually seated on "Rumpty's perch" (*OMF* 605). The entrapment of some characters is signified by the transparent or reflective surfaces associated with them, such as love-sick Miss Pecher, who always stares out of her narrow windows looking for Bradley, and Georgiana Podsnap, who is imprisoned in the world reflected in her father's glossy boots "and in the walnut and rosewood tables of the dim drawing-room, and in their swarthy giants of looking-glasses" (*OMF* 176).

³²⁴ “There is no more contemptible type of human character than that of the nerveless sentimentalist and dreamer, who spends his life in a weltering sea of sensibility and emotion, but who never does a manly concrete deed” (*Principles* 129).

³²⁵ Sedgwick concludes: “Eugene’s lack of will is enormously more potent than Bradley’s clenched, entrapping will, simply because the powerful, ‘natural’ trajectory of this stream is eternally toward swelling the exploitive power of ruling-class men over working-class women” (187). Eugene’s class status is as uncertain as his moral character, for he is a university-educated barrister who scorns the bourgeois values of M. R. F. (“my respectable father”) and is a pseudo-aristocratic hanger-on at Veneering’s “Society” dinners. Regardless of his indeterminate station, he regards himself as a gentleman and Lizzie Hexam as a working-class girl. *Our Mutual Friend* accommodates Sedgwick’s theory of the novel’s orchestration of homosocial and homophobic ideologies. She amasses abundant textual evidence for Eugene and Bradley’s (and Eugene and Mortimer’s) homosocial “narcissistic relation” through Lizzie. Upon exposing Bradley’s class-inflected methods of “sphincter domination” (185), Sedgwick asserts that the novel’s conclusion supports a “homophobic reinstruction of the bourgeois family” – Lizzie’s reactionary potential, she posits, is subsumed in her final status as Mrs Eugene Wrayburn (193-4). Through the lens of a satire on habit, however, Lizzie provides a foil to the solipsistic and masculinist perceptual habits of each of her suitors. Furthermore, Mortimer’s love for Eugene is criticized for being narcissistic and rooted in bad habit: in the “pernicious assumption of lassitude and indifference which had become his second nature, he was strongly attached to his friend” upon whom he had “founded himself” in his youth (*OMF* 284-285). Importantly, it is not Mortimer who interprets Eugene’s dying wish to marry Lizzie, as Sedgwick argues in support of the homosocial subtext, but Jenny Wren – the satirist.

³²⁶ Michael S. Kearns situates Dickens’s fiction within the context of the influence of associationist philosophy’s conceptions of moral transformation. Vrettos, however, argues that theories of habit (which grew out of association theory) significantly questioned the capacity for “moral transformation” that “Kearns celebrates”; similarly, Dickens’s novels tend to trouble notions of moral reformation (Vrettos 421-22n). Allen’s chapter on *Dombey and Son* joins Vrettos in concluding that the “governing idea of the novel is an analysis of habit,” and that Dickens’s characters are “nearly powerless to change their habits” (72, 89).

³²⁷ Van Ghent’s words to describe Becky Sharp’s emblematic status in *Vanity Fair* as materialism incarnate (152).

³²⁸ Manning also refers to Boffin’s gently satiric manner, Lavinia Wilfer’s bitter running commentary on her mother, and Eugene’s witty cynicism (213). The narrator’s first-person outbursts against the “impossible” cant of “prosperity” (*OMF* 503) and the atrocities of the Poor Law, are kept to a minimum, whereas direct satire is comparatively abundant in *Bleak House*.

³²⁹ The demon from Alain-René Lesage’s *Le Diable boiteux* (1707). Garrett notes Dickens’s idea of utilizing Asmodeus’s power in both his fiction and his journal *Household Words*, but ridding him of “aggressive malice” (34).

³³⁰ The word *trick* is associated with *habit*. In one of its many meanings, a trick is a “particular habit, way, or mode of acting; a characteristic quality, trait, practice, or custom (Usually, a bad or unpleasant habit)” (*OED*). Lewes refers to irresistible “tricks of thought and act” as “minor habits” (*PLM3* 54).

³³¹ Her real name, Fanny Cleaver, Sedgwick argues, “hints at aggression – specifically, at rape, and perhaps homosexual rape” (180). She explains that Fanny is a name with homosexual connotations; for example, Pope applies it Lord Hervey. For Sedgwick, this homophobically-charged name is of greater thematic resonance than her new appellation.

³³² The following chapters from Book IV are all presented from Jenny’s viewpoint: Chapter VIII, “A Few Grains of Pepper”; Chapter IX, “Two Places Vacated”; Chapter X, “The Doll’s Dressmaker Discovers a Word”; and Chapter XI, “Effect is given to the Doll’s Dressmaker’s Discovery.”

³³³ Satire is often associated with seasoning. Anthony Trollope, for example, complains that truth is obscured in strong satire, “as the eater loses the flavour of his meat through the multiplied uses of sautes and pepper” (*Letters* 516).

³³⁴ E. P. Whipple, in his 1877 introduction to *Our Mutual Friend*, betrays some bafflement at its blend of satire and pathos. He describes its characters and incidents as being “almost as unreal as anything in the Arabian Nights,” but then proceeds to praise the delineation of Bradley Headstone for its “great power of psychological observation and analysis” (xiii, xxv). Furthermore, Whipple’s enthusiasm for Jenny Wren’s visionary, rather than satiric, qualities, affirms his general critical emphasis on Dickens’s pathos-eliciting imagination over and above his social criticism: “this small, queer, deformed, bright-brained, good-hearted specimen of maiden humanity is really deserving of a prominent rank among the creations of the poets and romancers of the century” (Introduction xxvi).

³³⁵ Erik Gunderson affirms that Roman satire implicitly idealizes the hegemony of a non-feminized Rome, in opposition to the vile, castrated, feminized bodies of the corrupt (226, 228). Gunderson notes that for Juvenal, “we” means exclusively “us men” (236). Yet, when satire, a “masculine” coded genre, is itself criticized for its excesses and ambiguities, it is often figured, not only as *satyr* (unruly goat-like male creature), but as feminine. For example, Joseph Addison imagined satire as a woman with a dagger behind her back. This tradition continues in satire criticism through Gilbert Highet’s figuration of satire as a female muse, who is a “mercurial” and “elusive” “mistress” (243-4), and Kirk Freudenberg’s intriguing personification of satire as a woman “who has been forced to sit on her hands and keep silent” (*Satires of Rome* 212).

³³⁶ Although there is a vast body of criticism interlinking gender, feminism, and the Victorian novel that accounts for certain “sub-genres” such as Gothic and sensation fiction (Pykett and others), satire’s generic and modal contributions stand in need of continued evaluation. Susan Glass Fellows’s 1996 dissertation explores novels by Emily Eden, Elizabeth Gaskell, Mary Elizabeth Braddon, and Rhoda Broughton. Andrés Guillermo López, in his 1992 dissertation, “Exposing Vice and Vicious Characters: Anne Brontë’s Satiric Art in *Agnes Grey* and *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*,” and in his article “*Wildfell Hall* as Satire: Brontë’s Domestic Vanity Fair,” examines the novels of Anne

Brontë in relation to satire. He regards satire as a general form of moral criticism, and describes *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* as a fervently moral satire anatomizing domestic injustice. Monica Cohen aligns Margaret Oliphant's novels with satiric and parodic strategies such as "aphoristic discourse" (103), arguing that Oliphant's novels have been neglected because of their social critique.

³³⁷ Critics of satire who address the question of gender and genre frequently attempt to identify the features of "female" and "male" traditions. For example, Steven Leon Gilbert argues that women's satire has different "motives, forms, and goals" than conventional male satire (3).

³³⁸ Toril Moi notes that there are a "plurality of feminist criticisms," ranging from the "New Feminist gynocritic" works of the 1970s, through the post-structuralist, Marxist, Foucauldian, and historicist approaches of the 1980s, 1990s, and beyond (104). For the purposes of this chapter, although I accept that women have participated in oppressive cultural practices, and that men have been too "ensnared in the contradictions that characterize[e] [gender] ideology to be charged with being simple oppressors" (Poovey, *Uneven* 22), I wish to emphasize the dominance of masculinist political, legislative, social, religious, and literary power in the Victorian period. As Poovey observes, "as long as difference was articulated on gender, men and women were subject to different *kinds* of ideological constraint. Because they were positioned as nonexistent, women at midcentury did not have institutionally recognized power, no matter how much moral influence they could wield" (*Uneven* 23). An acknowledgement of the cultural dominance of patriarchal ideology is compatible with a view of ideology as incomplete and contradictory.

³³⁹ From the ancient philosophy of Aristotle through to the medieval periods, "male and female were contrasted and asymmetrically valued as intellect/body, active/passive, rational/irrational, reason/emotion, ... order/disorder" (Bynum 257). Gillooly observes that "in Western culture, at any rate, the early Greek construction of the feminine has proved to be alarmingly resilient" (xxii).

³⁴⁰ From "Of the Characters of Women: An Epistle to a Lady" (1735).

³⁴¹ Suggestively, the *OED* links satire with a definition of misogyny through a quotation from the 1821 *New Monthly Magazine*: "The sentiment has been re-echoed by every misogynistic satirist."

³⁴² Rogers notes that "naked expressions of misogyny have rarely been considered acceptable," yet the "insidious belittlement which replaced them [particularly in the nineteenth century] was hardly less destructive" (K. Rogers 277, 188). Rogers concludes that misogyny is rooted in what she terms "patriarchal feeling": the "wish to keep women subject to men" (K. Rogers 272).

³⁴³ "Hatred or opposition of marriage." (*OED*)

³⁴⁴ These "myths," Nussbaum claims, "repeat themselves throughout the history of misogyny, particularly in the Augustan period" (*Brink* 19).

³⁴⁵ Generally, classical scholars concede that Juvenal's satire is "a diatribe against women," and that, as Daniel Hooley argues, "[t]argeting women is a perennial reflex for expressing" the "angst" of a conservative Roman unsettled by changing times: "Upstarts,

new-moneyed outsiders, women, foreigners, Greeks and Jews – these are bogeys of the reactionary mind, complacent in his traditional privilege, jealous of position, resentful of change and displacement” (*Roman Satire* 116-17).

³⁴⁶ See Susan Gubar, “The Female Monster in Augustan Satire.”

³⁴⁷ Post-Nussbaum, feminist criticism of satire focuses upon the re-discovery of female satirists, across various genres. For example, Laurie Finke explores the writings of medieval women; Mihoko Suzuki examines how Margaret Cavendish’s plays satirize misogynist satire. Carol Virginia Pohli’s dissertation, “The Feminization of Wit: Satire by British Women Writers, 1660-1800” (1994), describes satire as more of a “prominent feature” than a genre in the work of female playwrights, novelists, and poets, who use satire’s “ambiguities and transgressions of logic to convey dissatisfaction with women’s social opportunities and with prevailing ideas about women’s nature” (272). Claudia Kairoff surveys what she observes to be the Horatian-themed satires by numerous eighteenth-century writers, noting that “women’s poetic satires diminished when newer modes predominated” (285). Dale Spender and Valerie Rumbold have also written extensively about women’s satire in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

³⁴⁸ Dissertations on the subject of women and satire that wrestle with questions of the gender and genre question tend to cite Lorraine York’s brief 1996 article “Satire: The No-Woman’s Land of Literary Modes,” which identifies Margaret Atwood as a feminist satirist who writes in a mode associated with specifically masculine aggression. York concludes: “Satire does seem, in the minds of many readers, to be associated with unacceptable forms of female deportment, noncompliance, critique of sexual relations, barbed invective” (48).

³⁴⁹ Fellows also notes the absence of a definition of feminist satire and marvels at a lack of commentary on the subject (3).

³⁵⁰ Lipovski-Helal argues that satirical strategies in the works of Rebecca West, Amy Lowell, Virginia Woolf, and Dorothy Parker tend, unlike the men’s satire of the period, to deconstruct “pervasive cultural misogyny” (20). She observes that there is no existing book-length study of women’s satire, and in late 2009, her observation remains correct.

³⁵¹ Gilbert Highet promotes the cliché that women are averse to satire: “very few of them have ever written, or even enjoyed satire, although they have often been its victims” (235). As well, James Sutherland defines the satirist as a “man of the world” who has a “toughness of fibre” (69). More recently, Brian A. Connery and Kirk Combe posit that the fact that feminist critics refer more often to “women’s humour,” “impl[ies] that satire is indeed gendered” (11-12). Furthermore, Charles A. Knight self-consciously restricts the scope of his study to canonical male writers (7-8), arguing that satire is “more-or-less a masculine genre” because of the “relative silence of women as satirists” and their use of satire predominantly as a mode (either in plays such as Aphra Behn’s, or in novels by Burney, Edgeworth, and Austen) (Knight 7).

³⁵² Stephen H. Browne argues that women’s public address was considered “an affront to conventions of cultural discourse” (20). The learned female “was becoming a caricature in the popular mind,” and women’s speech was portrayed as the “perversion of social

order”; it was denounced as being meaningless, excessive, disruptive, or false (Browne 21, 23, 25).

³⁵³ Similarly, Steven Leon Gilbert observes that “a majority of the leading women writers of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries wrote satire in some form, including Elizabeth Inchbald, Anna Laetitia Barbauld, Jane Austen, Mary Robinson, Hannah More, and possibly even Felicia Hemans”, and although they wrote in “a wide variety of forums and genres,” the genre of choice for many was the novel (2, 6).

³⁵⁴ The consensus that the novel offered a particularly viable forum for women’s satire reawakens discussions of satire’s vexed generic status; for example, Palmeri contends that the nineteenth century witnessed the “metamorphosis” of satire into the sentimental novel (*Satire, History* 228).

³⁵⁵ Steven E. Jones notes that in the late eighteenth century, the intellectual women of salon culture (the Blue Stockings in England, and the Della Crusicans in Italy) were a “perceived threat” to the masculine territory of wit and ridicule (140-41). The London Blue Stocking Club, centred in the salon of Elizabeth Montagu and Elizabeth Vesey would later include Hannah More, Ann Yearsley, Fanny Burney, Mary Hays, and Mary Wollstonecraft. Female writers outside this circle were “soon being identified as bluestockings,” and eventually the type included “all women of progressive intellectual ambitions, radical or liberal women in particular” (Jones 143-45).

³⁵⁶ He observes that satire “gendered itself male” (6) – a phrase that reveals a hesitation to ascribe satire’s “maleness” to patriarchal ideologies. Instead, he quotes female satirists who stated their resistance to and biases against satire, implying that women writers are complicit in the moribund path of satire post-Byron (Dyer 150).

³⁵⁷ As Katharine Rogers explains, female moral authority was constantly delimited by overriding assumptions of female bodily and mental insufficiency. As Mill observes, ideas of female moral superiority are an “empty compliment” which “must provoke a bitter smile” (*SW* 21: 320).

³⁵⁸ Several important studies explore the relationship of feminism to comedy and humour; for example, Audrey Bilger’s *Laughing Feminism: Subversive Comedy in Frances Burney, Maria Edgeworth, and Jane Austen* “investigate[s] the intersection of feminism and comedy” (9).

³⁵⁹ From a review of John Leech’s pictures; *Quarterly Review*, December 1854.

³⁶⁰ Bilger, referring to the gendered comic theory of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, observes that the discouragement of women’s wit was a manifestation of the head/heart dichotomy.

³⁶¹ Patricia Ingham cogently summarizes this ideal of the “Angel in the House”: “Women’s function in society was constructed as biologically determined and the construction of proper femininity was predicated upon an ideal, domesticated middle-class wife, far less rational than a man but intuitive, emotional, and with a natural maternal instinct” (*Brontë* 51).

³⁶² Mill declares ideas of sex-based inequality to be “the most intense and most deeply-rooted of those which gather round and protect old institutions and custom, that we need not wonder to find them as yet less undermined and loosened than any of the rest by the

progress of the great modern spiritual and social transition" (*SW* 21: 261). Russett explains that post-Darwin, "a human hierarchy of excellence was needed more than ever. Women and the lesser races served to buffer Victorian gentlemen from a too-threatening intimacy with the brutes" (14).

³⁶³ Rachel Malane suggests that Herbert Cowell's 1874 question is central to the "Woman Question" debates: "Is there such a thing as sex in mind; and, if so, what mental characteristics correlate the differences in sex?" (qtd. in Malane vii).

³⁶⁴ For Darwin, women "excel" in "intuition, rapid perception, and ... imitation," whereas men's "intellectual powers" attain a "higher eminence" in "all fields of human study" (*Descent* 629). Women, with their "maternal instincts," have a "mental disposition" that is "less selfish" (*Descent* 629). The "present inequality between the sexes," he posits, cannot be significantly altered through education because of women's fundamental lack of competitive, "robust virtues" (631). Darwin, unlike Spencer, did not explicitly argue that women were more habit-based thinkers, but his arguments for their lesser intelligence renders this observation about habit suggestive: "There seems to exist some relation between a low degree of intelligence and a strong tendency to the formation of fixed, though not inherited habits; for a sagacious physician remarked to me, persons who are slightly imbecile tend to act in everything by routine or habit" (*Descent* 89).

³⁶⁵ Spencer clarifies that the greater excursiveness of the superior (implicitly masculine) mind results in greater originality ("the highest intellectual faculty") (*PP* 2: 534).

³⁶⁶ In "Psychology of the Sexes" (*Popular Science Monthly*, 1872; later incorporated into *The Study of Sociology*, 1873), Spencer reasserted an earlier theory presented in his *Principles of Biology* (1867), that women's intellectual development upon puberty was disrupted by the conservation of energy required for reproduction. Spencer also held women to be less intellectually and emotionally capable of justice (Paxton 171).

³⁶⁷ Previously, in "Sex in Mind and in Education" (1874), Maudsley insists (following Spencer) that women's physiological functions (geared to maternity) necessarily limit their "mental culture" (468).

³⁶⁸ Interestingly, Bain and Carpenter contributed less overtly in their key texts to a theory of women's greater susceptibility to habit. Bain, however, discussing Mill's *The Subjection of Women*, refutes the "mental equality of the sexes": "[Mill] grants that women are physically inferior, but seems to think that this does not affect their mental powers. He never takes account of the fact, that the large diversion of force for the procreative function must give some general inferiority in all things where that does not come in, unless women are made on the whole much stronger than men" (*Mill* 131).

³⁶⁹ A man's "brain would be more persistent in the line first taken; it would have more difficulty in changing from one mode of action to another, but, in the one thing it was doing, it could go on longer without loss of power or sense of fatigue. And do we not find that the things in which men most excel women are those which require most plodding and long hammering at a single thought, while women do best what must be done rapidly?" (Mill, *SW* 21: 311-12). This point irked Darwin, who then proffered it in the *Descent of Man* as evidence against Mill's argument for gendered equality. Prefiguring James's ideal of the productive forcefulness of masculine habit, Darwin suggested that

masculine mental “ascendancy” is largely due to a greater capacity for patience, and for energetic perseverance (capacities that he tentatively posits are the foundation of “genius”) (*Descent* 630n).

³⁷⁰ Critics who assail Brontë for her High Tory partisanship frequently ignore the gender politics of the text. For example, Terry Eagleton’s influential Marxist argument concerning the novel’s socio-political conservatism is, by his own admission, “pre-feminist” (*Myths* xiv). Recently, Philip Rogers, who explores Brontë’s “gradualist paternalism” and support for the anti-Chartist Duke of Wellington, cites the narrative’s approval of Mrs Pryor (a strident Tory) as evidence of Brontë’s own arch-Toryism (165). In doing so, he ignores the condemnation of Mrs Pryor’s unsympathetic assertion of the “great Gulf” between William Farren’s “caste” and her own; Caroline rebukes her: “you do not know him” (*S* 446). Criticism stressing Brontë’s tendency towards conservative political views tends to obviate the text’s dizzying dialogism.

³⁷¹ Although Hutcheon’s theory of postmodern parody, which separates satire from parody – defining parody as a mode that ironizes representation and not extramural events and morality – is not strictly relevant to Brontë’s *Shirley*, her notion that parody is complicit in its criticism is relevant. Elizabeth Langland, for example, evaluates Louis Moore and Shirley Keeldar’s dynamics of “masculine” mastery and “feminine” subordination within the context of parody and mimicry – strategies in which “the woman deliberately assumes the feminine style and posture assigned to her within... discourse in order to uncover the mechanisms by which it exploits her” (Luce Irigaray, qtd. in Langland 5).

³⁷² Forçade’s article in *Revue des deux mondes* (15 November 1849) was described by Brontë as the “best critique yet” (Allott 142).

³⁷³ Brontë attended and critiqued four of Thackeray’s lectures on the eighteenth-century humourists (1851). Fielding’s personal vices and excesses, in her opinion, were not sufficiently reprimanded by Thackeray. Moreover, Brontë was also critical of Thackeray’s representation of women; responding to *Henry Esmond*, she concludes, “as usual – he is unjust to women – quite unjust” (letter to George Smith, 14 February 1842, *Letters* 3: 18). Thackeray’s private criticisms of Brontë affirm her pronouncement. His letter (11 March 1853) to Lucy Baxter concerning *Villette* epitomizes the “sex in mind” assumptions about female intellectual limitation that saturated the literary *milieu* at mid-century: “The good of *Villette* in my opinion Miss is a very fine style; and a remarkable happy way (w. few female authors possess) of carrying a metaphor logically through to its conclusion – And it amuses me to read the author’s naïve confession of being in love with 2 men at the same time; and her readiness to fall in love *any* time. The poor little woman of genius!” (*Letters* 1: 547).

³⁷⁴ A contemporary critic, in “Thackeray and Currer Bell” (*Oxford and Cambridge Magazine*, June 1856), notes that the same aversion to hypocrisy and the valuing of appearances forms the “prevailing undercurrent of their works”; “[b]oth satirize the existing features of society” (Allott 315-17). Interestingly, in a letter to W. S. Williams, Brontë asserts that the “doors of knowledge” to the “very deepest political and social truths” are shut to her, but open to “such writers as Dickens and Thackeray”; she,

however, must “grope [her] way in the dark and come to uncertain conclusions unaided and alone” (8 January 1848; *Letters* 2: 782).

³⁷⁵ Boumelha observes that *Shirley* is Brontë’s social panoramic or Thackerayan novel (78). Langland also notes that *Vanity Fair* is a “key precursor text,” because *Shirley* “absorbs and transforms” Thackeray’s “key passages of narrative commentary on the ideology of womanhood” (5).

³⁷⁶ Tellingly, she advises in a letter to Elizabeth Gaskell (22 May 1852) that Thackeray should learn from Gaskell “how to be satirical without being exquisitely bitter” (*Letters* 3: 47).

³⁷⁷ Letter to W. S. Williams, 14 August 1848 (*Letters* 2: 782).

³⁷⁸ Gilbert and Gubar note the text’s illustrations of the “inextricable link between sexual discrimination and mercantile capitalism” (375). Sally Shuttleworth also affirms that the economic dilemma of an overstocked market, and the class antagonisms stemming from technological invention and the Corn Laws, parallel the gendered problem of the surplus of marriageable women and the lack of female vocation. The novel’s preoccupation with Caroline’s psychical states also demonstrates that “circulating economies of psychological and social life are directly interwoven” (Shuttleworth, *Brontë* 183).

³⁷⁹ Argyle finds it fitting that the “male narrators of the historical romance and the comedy of manners” reveal that historical and social forces must curb the female protagonists (754). By contrast, the “psychological romance” mode challenges the “naturalness of the political, social, and psychological assumptions which the two “male modes” champion (749-50). In this way, Argyle masculinizes the satiric strains of the novel.

³⁸⁰ The Chartist agitation of the 1840s, Eagleton argues, is transfigured into the Luddite context of 1812-13: “Chartism is the unspoken subject of *Shirley*” (*Myths* 45).

³⁸¹ Brontë’s contemporaries who had hoped to repeat the experience of a “sleepless night” reading *Jane Eyre* and marrying “Mr. Rochester about four in the morning,” were disappointed by *Shirley*’s intellectually taxing historical content. The reviewer for *The Times* (7 December 1848) resented characters who “do nothing but talk”; referring to Rose Yorke, the reviewer insists: “the dialectics of the precocious 12 year old would do honour to John Stuart Mill himself” (Allott 151, 149). Uniquely, the critic for the *Examiner* permitted Brontë the intellectuality of a satirist: “Keen, intellectual analysis is her forte,” for *Shirley* is a novel in which the “intellectual is predominant and supreme” (Allott 126-27).

³⁸² Helstone’s misogyny, rooted in the scorn of female intelligence, is explicit: “At heart he could not abide sense in women: he liked to see them as silly, as light-headed, as vain, as open to ridicule as possible; because they were then in reality what he held them to be – inferior toys to play with, to amuse a vacant hour and to be thrown away” (*S* 115). The narrator’s assessment of the murderous misogyny of the institution of marriage is unsparingly Juvenalian: “the second Mrs. Helstone, inverting the natural order of insect existence, would have fluttered through the honeymoon a bright, admired butterfly, and crawled the rest of her days a sordid, trampled worm” (*S* 117). This arresting metaphor

may be an allusion to Wollstonecraft's description of women as the "insect whom [men] keep under [their] feet" (175)

³⁸³ Hortense hopes that the inculcation of "feminine" habits will reform Caroline's "ill-regulated mind": "I will give her a system, a method of thought, a set of opinions; I will give her the perfect control and guidance over her feelings" (S 68).

³⁸⁴ Brontë's larger target is selfishness, for Puseyism was a "crisis" that required "good-natured ridicule" more than the weaponry of "bitter satire" (Letter to George Smith, 3 December 1850; *Letters* 2: 782).

³⁸⁵ *Shirley* satirizes inflexible habitudes of thought as being dangerous to both the individual and society; however, as Brontë's text engages less explicitly with scientific discourses of habit than *Middlemarch* does, my discussion focuses on the novel's satirical defamiliarization of gendered habits/customs. In *Shirley*, although inherited mental disposition is emphasized (for example, Robert Gerard Moore is described as a bullheaded tradesman by blood), habits of thought are represented as being alterable. Brontë accepts both the heritability of habit and the importance of choice in the propagation of one's mental habits. Her letter to W. S. Williams (5 November, 1848) expresses her belief in the power of the will to shape character: "it is our duty to the end, to strive after the perfection we revere, and to contend against the weakness and errors we disapprove, and whether our besetting sin be of temper or habit, we should *never submit to be its slave*, never cease to struggle against its bad influence: thus we may avoid degradation, and even secure – perhaps a very gradual – but a certain improvement" (*Letters* 2: 782). Furthermore, as Shuttleworth demonstrates, Brontë's knowledge of phrenology suffuses her novels. Phrenological discourses of self-improvement appealed to Brontë, who admired George Combe's *Constitution of Man* (1828), a key phrenological text that emphasized the role of the will in the alteration of natural faculties (Shuttleworth, *Brontë* 53-65). Notably, the language of habit permeates Combe's study; habit is represented as a force that, along with education, establishes the moral and mental character of the individual, which continues through hereditary descent.

³⁸⁶ The advice of Brontë's publisher to remove "Levitical," or at least to lessen the harshness of its ironies (as well as those of the last chapter), is imbued with implicit censure of satire. Williams's concerns proved accurate. The reviewer for the *Atlas* (31 October 1849) resents the "extraordinarily unreal and repulsive" curates, pronouncing the chapter to be "very coarse – very irreverential"; in fact, he posits that satirical improprieties tarnish the novel as a whole (Allott 121). Similarly, the *Daily News* (31 October 1849) determines the curates to be "monstrosities" (Allott 118). Williams's advice to remove the novel's satirical preface, "Note to the Quarterly," also reflects a cultural resistance to satire. In a letter to Williams (31 August 1849), she argues that her preface should be "fearlessly" printed, pleading that it contains "the lightest satire" (*Letters* 2: 782). The preface includes not only a general satire on status quo moralism, but a blatant attack on Elizabeth Rigby – whose notoriously searing review of *Jane Eyre* in the *Quarterly Review* (1848) contains implications that female-authored satire is unacceptable. Rigby argues that *Jane Eyre* is inferior to *Vanity Fair*. Its heroine (and

implicitly its author) is an “uninteresting, sententious, and pedantic thing; with no experience of the world” (Allott 107).

³⁸⁷ From the *Spectator*, 1849 (Allott 131).

³⁸⁸ Tim Dolin accurately observes that *Shirley* anticipates “partly combatively and partly defensively its own critical reception” (201).

³⁸⁹ Although he bars women from first-rate achievements in higher forms of literature (prefiguring both Darwin and Romanes), he concedes that a mental aptitude for minutiae renders their success in the novel unsurprising, as it is a form dedicated to observation rather than intellectual abstraction. In a letter to Elizabeth Gaskell, Lewes recalls that he had asserted that “in the *highest* efforts of intellect women have not equaled men,” but that this was not meant to be disrespectful or offensive “on the personal” or “general ground” (Allott 330).

³⁹⁰ Lewes reviewed *Jane Eyre* favourably, but proceeded to warn Brontë to stay within the realm of personal experience in her next novel – advice from which she clearly dissented. Hence, he disliked her explicit and forthrightly critical engagement with politics, religion, and history in *Shirley*, concluding that (a little like Shirley’s reproof of Mr Sympson) it “passes all permission” (Allott 166). Brontë was appalled by Lewes’s review: “after I had said earnestly that I wished critics would judge me as an author, not a woman, you so roughly – I even thought so cruelly – handled the question of sex” (*Letters* 2: 782).

³⁹¹ Interestingly, an unsigned review of *Jane Eyre* in the *Christian Remembrancer* (April 1848) approved of the novel’s “unfeminine” satire: “There is an intimate acquaintance with the worst parts of human nature, a practiced sagacity in discovering the latent ulcer, and a ruthless rigour in exposing it, which must commend our admiration, but are almost startling in one of the softer sex” (Allott 89).

³⁹² Noticing the philosophical and satiric pronouncements that saturate *Shirley*, the reviewer for the *Critic* (15 November 1849) implicitly categorized the novel as a masculine satire: “In almost every page of *Shirley*, there are scattered... the utterances of a reflective mind, which almost assume the shape of aphorisms. These are so unlike the usual productions of a lady, they are so comprehensive in their views, so terse in their expression, that ... we should have received them as conclusive testimony to the masculine gender of Currer Bell” (Allott 141).

³⁹³ Eagleton disregards the intellectuality of the friendship by categorizing it as being “latently sexual”; *Shirley*, he argues, provides for Caroline a “kind of sexual surrogate” (*Myths* 58).

³⁹⁴ Brontë’s epithet for Thackeray in a letter to William Smith Williams, 11 December 1847 (*Letters* 1: 627).

³⁹⁵ By means of a perplexing disquisition on bitterness, the narrator attempts to distance Caroline from aggressive satire. In the famously acerbic discussion of the social double standards of unrequited love, which consign a “lover feminine” to a mental life of half-bitterness, the narrator ponders: “Half-bitter! Is that wrong? No – it should be bitter: bitterness is strength – it is a tonic”; “if energy remains, it will be rather a dangerous energy – deadly when confronted with injustice” (*S* 105,106). “Puir Mary Lee” is given

as an example, for the ballad's heroine, far from remaining stoically silent, curses Robin-a-Ree. Yet, demonstrating the text's ambivalent attitude towards invective, the narrator insists that "what bitterness [Caroline's] mind distilled should and would be poured on her own head" (S 107).

³⁹⁶ This passage conforms to the satiric and prophetic rhetoric that, according to George P. Landow, characterizes the Victorian "sagistic" tradition (of Arnold, Ruskin, and Carlyle). The sage interprets the "signs of the times," and offers "an attack upon the audience (or those in authority), a warning and a visionary promise" (22-24).

³⁹⁷ The episode in which Shirley (pistols in hand) provides greater protection to Caroline than either Helstone or Robert parodies the myth of the Amazon; for rather than being "unsexed" by their temporary escape from their martial ignorance and inaction, they are liberated.

³⁹⁸ Shirley's pronouncement incisively satirizes the literary double standard of her day. She proposes to prove her point by writing a "magazine article some day" on the subject of male writers' false estimation of women, knowing all too well that it "will never be inserted: it will be "declined with thanks," and left for me at the publisher's" (S 352).

³⁹⁹ It is the feminized (marginal and sympathetic) Henry Sympson whom the narrator suggests will actually, through Shirley and Louis's aid, transgress his family's materialism to become a poet.

⁴⁰⁰ Milton met with ubiquitous mid-Victorian approval. For example, Matthew Arnold asserts: "Milton is of all our gifted men the best lesson, the most salutary influence" ("Milton," *Works* 11: 330).

⁴⁰¹ Eve is represented by Milton as being intellectually inferior to Adam: she is "[t]oo much of ornament, in outward show / Elaborate, of inward less exact. / For well I understand in the prime end / Of nature her th' inferior, in the mind..." (*Paradise Lost* VIII, 538-41).

⁴⁰² Arguably, Shirley's cryptic *devoir* (lovingly memorized by Moore) is a mythic portrayal of the first marriage that is not only anti-misogamist, but also a parodic satire of misogynistic creation myths. Shirley designs a myth of origin for Eve as a female orphan named Eva who unites with Genius to become "*La Première Femme Savante*": the first learned woman or "blue-stocking." Although it appears that she is conventionally represented as "the heart" and "Humanity," Eva's intelligence is emphasized; her forehead "shines an expanse fair and ample" (a possible echo of Adam's "fair large front" [*Paradise Lost* IV, 300]) and her spirit is alive with "the flame of her intelligence" (S 487). It is *she* who drinks from the cup offered by Genius (the Adam figure).

Allegorically, the symbolic marriage of Genius and Eva undermines the traditional gendered binary of head/heart, to create the exemplary woman in whom intellect is merged with sympathetic sentiment. Interpreted in light of Shirley's complaint against exclusively male-authored mythology, her *devoir* amends the myth of human origins; accordingly, Milton is not named as the authoritative poet of sacred history: "Who shall, of these things, write the chronicle?" (S 490). Similarly, Lucasta Miller asserts that Shirley's allegory is a creation myth for female creative genius (175). Gilbert and Gubar,

however, interpret the *devoir* non-parodically as an illustration of Shirley's (and Brontë's) inevitable capitulation to convention (394).

⁴⁰³ This is not the first example of Caroline's feminist biblical hermeneutics; she rejects Lucretia and "Solomon's virtuous women" as female role models, favouring Lydia – an agriculturalist and a manager. She recalls Proverbs 31:25: "[Lydia] opened her mouth with wisdom; in her tongue was the law of kindness" (S 392)

⁴⁰⁴ Shirley's alternating Horatian and Juvenalian tendencies are reflected in its conflicting assessments of human nature. Robert, observing the Horatian golden mean, contends that "human nature is human nature everywhere, ... and that in every specimen of human nature that breathes, vice and virtue are ever found blended, in smaller or greater proportions, and that the proportion is not determined by station" (S 60). Yet Juvenalian cynicism and elitism is observable in William Farren's words: "Human natur', taking it i' th' lump, is naught but selfishness. It is but excessive few ... that being in a different sphere, can understand t'one t' other, and be friends wi' out slavishness o' one hand, or pride o' t' other" (S 326).

⁴⁰⁵ Barker declares that Brontë "lacked the courage of her convictions and ended her book in the conventional manner" (603). Yolanda Padilla, however, argues that Shirley "undermines her submission" to Louis simply through the rebellious act of marrying a social inferior (and also by controlling the terms of their engagement) (13).

⁴⁰⁶ From an unsigned review of *Jane Eyre* in the *Christian Remembrancer*, April 1848 (Allott 90).

⁴⁰⁷ In "The Melancholy of *Middlemarch*" (*Spectator*, 1 June 1872), Hutton regrets that Eliot "likes jeering at human evil": "She sees narrowness so oppressive to her that she is constantly laughing a scornful laugh over it, and despairing of any better euthanasia for it than its extinction. And all this makes her bitter. She clings to the nobler course, but she cannot repress discordant cries at the disorder of the universe and the weakness of the painfully struggling principle of good. She is a melancholy teacher, – melancholy because sceptical; and her melancholy scepticism is too apt to degenerate into scorn" (Carroll 301-2). Hutton argues that Eliot overindulges in morally anatomizing her "own creations." Censoriously, yet astutely, he notes that Eliot "has a speculative philosophy of character that always runs on in a parallel stream with her picture of character" (Carroll 302).

⁴⁰⁸ Similarly, *The Fortnightly Review* (19 January 1873) noted the "blending of the author's bitterness with her profound tenderness" (Carroll 337).

⁴⁰⁹ Eliot claims that her portraits of the Dempsters and their town are authentic; in fact, she asserts that the "real town" was more "vicious than [her] Milby; the real Dempster was far more disgusting than [hers]," and Janet's fate was far more sad (*Letters* 2: 513).

⁴¹⁰ Meckier regards Eliot's "benevolent version" of Darwinism as being essentially anti-satiric. Alluding to her assessment of Dickens's novels as being too caricatural and pessimistic, Meckier posits that Eliot (particularly in her reaction to *Bleak House*) was "trying to stave off the modern satirical vision" (*Hidden* 274).

⁴¹¹ Letter to Lewes, 18 January 1848 (*Letters* 2: 782).

⁴¹² Katherine Linehan explores what she declares to be the lack of “critical analysis of the role which humor plays in [Eliot’s] novels,” concluding that Eliot’s satire “is marked by a peculiar mixture of sympathy and unsparing acuity” (1, 49). John Holloway calls Eliot a “sage-novelist” (114), and Victorian sagistic rhetoric is generically linked to ancient “biblical, oratorical, and satirical” traditions (Landow 22) – traditions that are historically masculinist.

⁴¹³ Levine argues against critics (such as Catherine Belsey) for whom realism is “a predominantly conservative form” that “largely confirm[s] the patterns of the world we seem to know” (“Literary Realism” 9).

⁴¹⁴ For example, her 1856 essay “Silly Lady Novelists” “snaps with irony and anger, qualities that George Eliot could not and did not entirely eliminate from her great fictions” (Levine, “George Eliot” 4). Levine references her harsh criticism in “Evangelical Teaching: Dr. Cumming” (1855). Linehan also refers to Eliot’s *Westminster Review* essays of the mid-1850s as works in which Eliot does not temper her satiric inclinations with the “loving laughter” that characterizes her novelistic use of satire (65).

⁴¹⁵ Letter to R. H. Hutton, 8 August 1863 (*Letters* 4: 502).

⁴¹⁶ Henry James notes that Eliot wished to “recommend herself to a scientific audience” and that “*Middlemarch* is too often an echo of Messrs. Darwin and Huxley” (unsigned review, *Galaxy*, March 1873; Carroll 353).

⁴¹⁷ Varouxakis discusses Mill’s often-overlooked notion of national character (arising from his comparisons between the French and the English), noting that in Mill’s “Vindication of the French Revolution of 1848,” he argues that constitutions cannot establish institutions “alien from, or too much in advance of, the condition of the public mind” (qtd. in Varouxakis 382). Eliot regards Mill as “amongst the world’s vanguard” (Letter to John Chapman, 24 July 1852; *Letters* 2: 515).

⁴¹⁸ Letter to Barbara Leigh-Smith Bodichon, 5 December 1859, after reading Darwin’s *Origin* (*Letters* 3: 475). I also find Eliot’s reference to the “ministerial crisis” of the 1850s illuminating; she wishes for “some solid, philosophical Conservative to take the reins – one who knows the true functions of stability in human affairs” (*Letters* 5: 495).

⁴¹⁹ Letter to John Austin, 13 April 1847 (13: 713). The assertion by *Middlemarch*’s narrator regarding human insensitivity to tragedy through inurement to what is “usual” invokes the idea of the homeostasis of habit in the general population – and its survival function: “we do not expect people to be deeply moved by what is not unusual. That element of tragedy which lies in the very fact of frequency, has not yet wrought itself into the coarse emotion of mankind; and perhaps our frames could hardly bear much of it. If we had a keen vision and feeling of all ordinary human life, it would be like hearing the grass grow and the squirrel’s heart beat, and we should die of that roar which lies on the other side of silence. As it is, the quickest of us walk about well wadded with stupidity” (*M* 182).

⁴²⁰ As Kate Flint observes, readers past and present have “grappled with” Eliot’s persistent creation of heroines who do not (as she herself did) transgress “Victorian convention” (“Gender” 150-60). Flint argues that Eliot’s narratives “contain little by way

of solutions, and a great deal that looks like expediency and compromise: hers is no utopian radicalism," but "continuity in English life" ("Gender" 179).

⁴²¹ Will Ladislaw, like Dorothea (and also prefiguring Daniel Deronda), is habitually sympathetic (he has a "troop" of small children whom he takes on excursions). With empathy and mental flexibility, Will counters the rigidity of others: "[he] entered into every one's feelings, and could take the pressure of their thought instead of urging his own with iron resistance" (*M* 467). Throughout *Middlemarch*, iron is a key metaphor for negative, solipsistic, and inflexible habits of thought.

⁴²² Eliot tempered the indignant tone of her original ending by omitting the accusation that society "smiled on" the marriage of Dorothea to Casaubon. Instead, the attack on women's education is obliquely acknowledged in the revised ending as the female lot of "struggling amidst the conditions of an imperfect social state" (*M* 784). Yet an ominous reference to "sadder sacrifice[s]" (*M* 785) than those made by Dorothea sustains the elegiac tone of the "Prelude." Furthermore, Brady argues that Eliot's letter to Sara Hennell cues the irony of the "Finale": "Expect to be immensely disappointed with the close of *Middlemarch*. But look back to the Prelude" (qtd. in Brady 173).

⁴²³ Paxton argues that Eliot's writings articulate "feminist resistance" to Spencer's notions of biological determinism and sexual selection – particularly the "vehement antifeminism" of his later works (5, 15-16). Eliot jests in 1874 that she observes "the selection of conceited gentlemen" (*Letters* 6: 440).

⁴²⁴ Paxton observes that Herbert Spencer is the "eminent philosopher among my friends" (*M* 248) to whom the narrator credits the "pier-glass" metaphor; Spencer used this analogy to clarify his theory of the fallibility of scientists and their susceptibility to "class reasoning" and *a priori* prejudice (Paxton 174).

⁴²⁵ Brooke's chastisement of Dorothea for being ignorant of "that never-explained science" (*M* 17) of political economy dramatically calls attention to the absurd logic upon which men base their predominance over women.

⁴²⁶ Virginia Woolf will later assess this phenomenon of false potency through the metaphor of the mirror: "Women have served all these centuries as looking glasses possessing the magic and delicious power of reflecting the figure of man at twice its natural size" (*Room* 45). The mirror image is necessary "because it charges the vitality; it stimulates the nervous system. Take it away and man may die, like the drug fiend deprived of his cocaine" (Woolf, *Room* 46-47). Possibly, Woolf was inspired in her choice of metaphor by George Meredith's *The Egoist*. Laetitia Dale, who, in her "habit of wholly subservient sweetness," is described as Sir Willoughby Patterne's "mirro[r] for life, and far more constant than the glass" (*Egoist* 267, 134). Meredith's novel anatomizes masculine egoism for its reliance on tradition and the female habitude of worshipful submission. Patterne, as his name signals, is a Menippean mouthpiece for masculinist "patterns" and habits of thought.

⁴²⁷ R. H. Hutton finds Rosamond to be a victim of Eliot's "malicious moral anatomy" (Carroll 304), but Rosamond's moral failings are depicted as being, by and large, habituated and socially created.

⁴²⁸ Brady adds that Rosamond, through her materialism, also satirizes middle-class and genteel aspirations (167).

⁴²⁹ Kate Flint observes: "The catastrophe of Lydgate and Rosamond's marriage" lies in their adherence to the "doctrine of separate spheres" ("Gender" 154).

⁴³⁰ Paxton argues that the story of Lydgate and Rosamond is a "cautionary tale" regarding the fallacy of sexual selection (174-77).

⁴³¹ This theme is reinforced by James's offering of a Maltese dog, which Celia adores, but which Dorothea rejects for being unnatural and "parasitic" (*M* 28).

⁴³² He emphasizes the novel's links to the "school of Fielding": its "ironic method," "self-inclusive ironies," and its narrator who resembles the "mock-heroic jester of the English comic novel" (*Laughter* 177, 179).

⁴³³ Kristin Brady interprets Mary's future as the subject of "extensive ironic comment," for Mary achieves marital happiness based upon self-denying devotion to Fred's career, and "[l]ike her mother, ... she [gives] up even the voice of caustic comment" (172). As well, Mary becomes the mother of three sons and, in fact, celebrates her lack of daughters. Most disturbing is her reinforcement of Plutarch's patriarchal traditions in her "Stories of Great Men" (Brady 165-168). Brady also notes the obtrusive and "unmitigated frustration of Letty" in the "Finale" (172).

⁴³⁴ Frances Theresa Russell notes glancingly that, in addition to George Eliot, George Meredith considered "foolish young men" (239) to be a type to satirize. By the 1870s, "Meredith was able to satirize masculine desire to stave off the threatened feminism," but for "half our novelists the 'women question' as such did not exist" (Russell 184, 187).

⁴³⁵ James's thoughts are a satiric amplification of Mill's description of male entitlement: "Think what it is to a boy, to grow up to manhood with the belief that without any merit or any exertion of his own, though he may be the most frivolous and empty or the most ignorant and stolid of mankind, by the mere fact of being born a male he is by right the superior of all and everyone of an entire half of the human race: including probably some whose real superiority to himself he has daily or hourly occasion to feel" (*SW* 21: 324).

⁴³⁶ "Fancy," Adam informs Eve in Book IV of *Paradise Lost*, is one of the "lesser faculties" that "serve Reason as chief" (101-2); it is directly related to the senses.

⁴³⁷ One of the text's key ironies is that Dorothea's passion is part of what makes her intellect superior to Casaubon's. We are told that if she had written a book, it would have been written in passionate sympathy "at once rational and ardent" (*M* 80). Appropriately, as Casaubon's passions are "droughty regions" (*M* 58), he is associated with the scholastic tradition of Aquinas, whereas Dorothea is associated with the affective mystical tradition through Sts. Theresa, Clara, Catherine, and Dorothea.

⁴³⁸ Henry James, betraying his dislike of strong satire, compliments Eliot for the "admirably sustained grayness of tone" with which she renders Casaubon; for James, "[t]o depict hollow pretentiousness and mouldy egotism with so little of narrow sarcasm and so much of philosophic sympathy, is to be a rare moralist as well as a rare storyteller" (Carroll 368). Certainly, *Middlemarch's* narrator pities Casaubon. Yet, in addition to the narrator's own mockery of the frigid scholar, Celia and Mrs Cadwallader treat him with corrosive sarcasm. Even Dorothea must struggle against a "violent shock of

repulsion” towards him when she learns of the codicil, the “last injurious assertion of his power” (*M* 461, 464). Arguably, Casaubon’s misogyny adds a more monstrous dimension to his human egotism – rendering him a suitable target for personal satire.

⁴³⁹ In *Middlemarch*, great minds and “coarse” ones, such as Bulstrode’s, are alike represented as being subject to the laws of habit: “Before changing his course, [Bulstrode] always needed to shape his motives and bring them into accordance with his habitual standard” (*M* 123).

⁴⁴⁰ Flint also points to the general importance of the psychology of habit in *Middlemarch*, arguing that the text explores how “assumptions about gender roles” become part of an “individual’s automatic mental reflexes” (“Gender” 164).

⁴⁴¹ Forebodingly, Farebrother, referring to Lydgate, tells Dorothea that “‘character is not cut in marble – it is not something solid and unalterable. It is something living and changing, and may become diseased as our bodies do’” (*M* 692). Recalling John Dryden’s comparison between the satirist and the “physician” who “prescribes harsh remedies to an inveterate disease” (122), Eliot’s view of satire as being fundamentally reformatory is suggested obliquely by Dorothea’s reply to Farebrother: “‘Then it may be rescued and healed’” (*M* 692).

⁴⁴² Implicitly for Stevenson, Lydgate’s greater awareness of his errors mediates the Juvenalian satire on Rosamond’s character.

⁴⁴³ As this is, ironically, also the perennial goal of satire (Frye figures satire as the “children of the light” engaged in battle with “the Philistine giant” [*Anatomy* 236]), resistance to satire as a literary habit of bygone ages, and a seemingly inappropriate vehicle for the promotion of sympathy, was routinely revoked.

⁴⁴⁴ Lucilius (the founder of Roman satire) positioned himself as “being an enemy and an opponent of bad men and habits – a champion on the other hand of good men and habits” (Rudd 13).

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