

# The Victorian Newsletter

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Cover: On the centennial of Gladstone's final election, Harry Furniss's caricature of the Prime Minister.

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## From Religious Ecstasy to Romantic Fulfillment: John Wesley's *Journal* and the Death of Heathcliff in *Wuthering Heights*

Katherine M. Sorensen

In June, 1750, as John Wesley traveled through Ireland, listening as well as preaching, he met a man who told a story about a particularly intriguing religious death. Wesley made a practice of recording stories with supernatural elements, and though he never comments on the truth of the tales he passes on, he assures his readers here that the "strangest part" of this tale was confirmed by many of the Irishman's neighbors (480). The Irishman told of the death of his son, John Dudley, a young man distinguished even in childhood for being unusually religious, serious, and "tender of conscience." Shortly after the death of his mother, John Dudley suddenly and for no apparent reason felt close to death himself, and for two successive days "gave himself wholly to prayer, laying aside all worldly business" (480). On the third day, he saw a vision of his mother in heaven, and though he still had no physical reason to expect death, he asked to make a will and to be buried beside her. The next morning he remained in his room, "where he continued upon his knees . . . crying to God with many tears, and sweating much through the agony of his spirit" (481). At dinner, although his father begged him to eat, he took only "two little bits," and returned to his room:

He continued there in prayer about an hour, and then came out, and said, with a cheerful voice and countenance, 'I never knew the Holy Ghost until now; now I am illuminated with Him. Blessed be my great Creator!' He returned to prayer, and continued therein till he came to family duty. In this he joined with an audible voice, and, commending us to God, retired to his own room, yet he did not sleep, but continued in prayer all night and all the next day. (481)

At three o'clock in the morning of the next day—June 10—he took off his clothes and, over his father's objections, wished his father farewell and went out to walk, claiming he "must go." Later that day, since John Dudley had not returned, his father and some friends searched for him. They found him by the side of a lake:

He was lying in the grass, stretched out at length, with his face upward; his right hand was lifted up toward heaven, his left stretched upon his body; his eyes were closed, and he had a sweet, pleasant, smiling countenance. What surprised us most was that he had no hurt or scratch from the crown of his head to the sole of his foot; nor one speck of dirt on any part of his body, no more than if it had just been washed. (481)

Nearly one hundred years later, Emily Brontë's Heathcliff, a Byronic hero distinguished from childhood by his hardness, fierceness, and alienation from society, dies in a manner markedly similar to the way John Dudley died. Interestingly, the reader of *Wuthering Heights* is again at two removes from the story, since here too we are reading a narration of the event by an interested observer, as that narration was recorded by a disinterested traveler to the area. These narrative removes suggest both objectivity in the narration and, at the core of the tale, a passion so intense that it requires distancing.

Like the Methodist John Dudley, Heathcliff is mourning a death, but here it is the death of his lover Catherine, about twenty years before. Time has not dulled his feeling, however; Heathcliff mourns her as passionately now as ever. During the spring of the novel's end, Heathcliff begins to feel a "strange change approaching" (353).<sup>1</sup> He loses connection with his physical life—he claims he must force himself even to breathe—and abandons his central worldly goal: revenge against the people who separated him from Catherine. Instead, he is possessed by the sense of her presence; without actually appearing to him, her image hovers within every feature of the world. He tells Nelly Dean, the narrator, that he is healthy and has no thought of dying, and yet that he is being pulled beyond his life into his wish to be with Catherine:

"I have a single wish, and my whole being and faculties are yearning to attain it. They have yearned towards it so long, and so unwaveringly, that I'm convinced it *will* be reached—and *soon*—because it has devoured my existence—I am swallowed in the anticipation of its fulfillment." (354)

Several days later, Heathcliff spends the night walking the moors. When he returns, the "change" has occurred. Cheerful, excited, and abstracted, he devotes himself to his reflections and visions, for, while no one else can see her, Heathcliff now sees Catherine before him all the time. He does not eat; he does not sleep; he says, as he will say again, that he is within sight of his heaven (358, 368). The visions continue the next day and he takes another night walk upon the moors. After his return, Nelly hears him pacing alone in his room, groaning and muttering, his tone "low and earnest, and wrung from the depths of his soul" (362). Early the next morning, Nelly speaks with him. Like John Dudley, Heathcliff wants to make his will and repeats his instructions for his burial next to Catherine—instructions that in this case include sliding casket sides to enable him to be physically reunited

<sup>1</sup>Eighteenth-century Methodists, as Schmidt explains, use the word "change" as a key term for spiritual rebirth (2: 28). Hannah More describes the converted Christian's heart as "inwardly changed" (37); and Thomas Rankin,

rejoicing in his conversion, writes: "I never felt such a change, through all the powers of my soul, as I now feel!" (Jackson 2: 164).

with her in the grave. He spends the rest of the day alone, and again Nelly hears him groaning and murmuring through the night. The next day, he allows no one to enter his room, and curses Nelly and the rest of the family when they try to see him. On the following morning, Nelly checks his room from the outside of the house, and sees the window to his room swinging open in the rain. She unlocks the door and finds him:

Mr. Heathcliff was there—laid on his back. His eyes met mine so keen, and fierce, I started; and then, he seemed to smile.

"I could not think him dead—but his face and throat were washed with rain; the bed-clothes dripped, and he was perfectly still. . . .

". . . I tried to close his eyes—to extinguish, if possible, that frightful, life-like gaze of exultation, before anyone else beheld it. They would not shut—. . ."

(364-65)

Certainly the similarities between the deaths of these two men are striking. Both are in fine health, but sense approaching death and remove themselves from ordinary concerns. Both describe a vision of a beloved, dead woman in heaven, expect to join her, and ask to be buried beside her. Both spend several days alone in prayer and great emotion. Neither eats or sleeps, but both are strangely cheerful in their communion with the spiritual world. Both walk out at night and are found dead in the morning—face up, smiling, washed, and bearing no visible cause of death. Even the contrasts are connections in that they tend to be opposites instead of simple differences. Dudley was marked since childhood by his religious devotion; Heathcliff, by associations with Satan. Dudley, just before his death, commends his family to God; Heathcliff curses them. Dudley's eyes are closed in death; he lies on the grass, and his smile is sweet. Heathcliff's eyes are wide open in wild exultation; his lips are parted in a sneer that reveals sharp, white teeth, and he lies on Catherine's bed.

I am convinced that Emily Brontë's scene is based on the tale Wesley recorded a hundred years before. Certainly it is very unlikely that the Brontë children would not have read Wesley's *Journals*; voracious readers, they grew up in an isolated parsonage, the children of Patrick Brontë, an Anglican clergyman who remembered hearing the great evangelical preach in Ireland when Brontë was a child, and who idealized Wesley and modeled himself after him (Maurat 22). Patrick Brontë became perpetual curate of Hayworth, Yorkshire, which Wesley frequently visited, and which had been the

home of another well-known and passionate evangelical, William Grimshaw. Patrick Brontë married the niece of a prominent Methodist preacher in Hartshead, and after her death, her sister, Elizabeth Branwell, joined the family to care for the children. With her came a collection of "mad Methodist magazines, full of miracles and apparitions and preternatural warnings, ominous dreams and frenzied fanaticisms" (Harrison, *The Clue* 74), a virtual table of contents for elements of the passionate love between Heathcliff and Catherine.<sup>2</sup>

Assuming, then, that Brontë echoes the story of John Dudley's death, we must ask what her version of the event says about Heathcliff on the one hand, and about Methodism on the other.

In giving Heathcliff a death modeled on that of a devout Methodist, Emily Brontë implicitly states that this Romantic hero's passion for Catherine is religious. The association of personal and religious love is, in the abstract, altogether traditional. At its root is a connection between religious ecstasy and sexual passion, a concept as ancient as Dionysus, and one with a substantial history in Christianity and its literature. (Dante's love for Beatrice and the ecstasy of Saint Theresa provide famous examples.) What is startling about considering Heathcliff in this light is simply that most readers initially hesitate to associate him with religion.<sup>3</sup> Everyone would agree, however, that Heathcliff is a Romantic hero; that the sources of his nature, including his Satanic qualities, are found in Schiller, Radcliffe, and Byron. Critics frequently point out parallels between Romanticism and Methodism, though such parallels were not much discussed by nineteenth-century Romantics or Methodists, and these are more comfortably applicable here.<sup>4</sup> While Heathcliff, like most Romantic heroes, never shows an interest in conventional religion, he still embodies the most important characteristics that Romanticism shares with Methodism. Both locate the experience of reality—spiritual or not—in individual feeling. Although both were consequently criticized for lacking "moderation and soundness of judgment" (Somervell 19), both Methodism and Romanticism emphasize the primacy and ultimate authority of feeling, and the centrality and absolute importance of the individual.<sup>5</sup>

Because nineteenth-century Methodists and Romantics identified truth through feeling, they functioned through arousing the emotions. They were known for violence of feeling, whether inspired by their work or demonstrated within it. In his *Journal*, Wesley mentions the antagonism aroused in his critics when his sermons caused listeners to fall down trembling or in convulsions, to "cry out as if being put to the sword," to foam at the mouth, or to speak in tongues. Wesley

at times wondered if the devil caused these displays of emotion in order to intimidate outsiders, but ultimately he interpreted them as signs of divine struggle. Wesley had to trust feeling over intellect; his was a faith based not on rationality, but on the individual's experience of God's presence and power.

Heathcliff's passionate feeling arises primarily in his relation with Catherine. His violent grief at her death is certainly offputting. He gnashes his teeth and foams at the mouth as he holds her for the last time. Later, while standing under a tree near her window at the time of her death, he trembles and howls like an animal "being goaded to death with knives and spears" (204), and dashes his head against the tree trunk. Every night of the next week, his wife reports with disgust, Heathcliff returned home at dawn and locked himself in his room:

"There he has continued, praying like a methodist; only the deity he implored is senseless dust and ashes; and God, when addressed, was curiously confounded with his own black father! After concluding these precious orisons—and they lasted generally till he grew hoarse, and his voice was strangled in his throat—he would be off again; always straight down to the Grange!" (209)

Like a proper Romantic hero, Heathcliff expresses his feelings without restraint. In identifying that expression with the extravagances of Methodists, Brontë suggests not just a general parallel between Romanticism and Methodism, but also that Heathcliff's passion occurs in the spiritual realm.

Heathcliff's love for Catherine illustrates both the primacy of the individual and the spiritual state that complete dedication to an absolute individual creates. Early Methodists also asserted the primacy of the individual self: since God was to be found in self-examination and not in the pronouncements or hierarchy of the Church, that individual self, the medium for divine expression, had to be valued above social or ecclesiastical law. Similarly, Heathcliff considers Catherine's marriage—one need not even consider his own—no obstacle to their attachment. Social or legal forms are petty and unreal in comparison to the truth of his feeling. When Nelly asks Heathcliff to leave the ill Catherine to her husband's care, Heathcliff answers:

"I've no doubt she's in hell among you! I guess, by her silence, as much as anything, what she feels. You say she is often restless, and anxious-looking—is that a proof of tranquility? You talk of her mind being unsettled—How the devil could it be otherwise, in her frightful isolation? And that insipid, paltry creature attending her from *duty* and *humanity*! From *pity* and *charity*! He might as well plant an oak in a flower-pot, and expect it to thrive, as imagine he can restore her to vigour in the soil of his shallow cares!" (190)

And Heathcliff is right. In the context of the novel, the love between Heathcliff and Catherine is justified by its force and truth. Catherine would not have died as she did had she remained true to herself by remaining true to Heathcliff, rather than alienating herself from herself in her shallow marriage to

Edgar Linton.

But how could two people who consider self the supreme reality love one another? What we find here makes the relationship clearly a religious one: each accepts the supreme reality of the other's self, believing that other to be the source of the self's meaning and being. Catherine describes Heathcliff as "more myself than I am" (121). Because of her love for him, she feels that Heathcliff includes her and takes her beyond herself:

"I cannot express it; but surely you and everybody have a notion that there is, or should be an existence of yours beyond you. What were the use of my creation if I were entirely contained here? . . . If all else perished, and *he* remained, I should still continue to be; and if all else remained, and he were annihilated, the universe would turn to a mighty stranger. I should not seem a part of it. My love for Linton is like the foliage in the woods. Time will change it, I'm well aware, as winter changes the trees. My love for Heathcliff resembles the eternal rocks beneath—a source of little visible delight, but necessary. Nelly, I *am* Heathcliff—he's always, always in my mind—not as a pleasure, any more than I am always a pleasure to myself—but as my own being—. . ." (122)

Heathcliff is the ground of her being; he contains her existence beyond her. In Heathcliff's mourning for Catherine, he expresses a similarly religious understanding of her role in relation to him: "I *cannot* live without my life! I *cannot* live without my soul!" (204). Each of the lovers is life to the other; without Heathcliff, Catherine describes herself as an exile from all she is; without Catherine, Heathcliff says his existence is "death and hell." The loved one in *Wuthering Heights* is described as a believer describes God: as the source of life, the very principle of life, union with whom is heaven. In one of Emily Brontë's last poems, "No Coward Soul Is Mine" (*Complete Poems* 243-44), she addresses God in terms quite similar to those Catherine uses about Heathcliff:

Though Earth and moon were gone  
And suns and universes ceased to be  
And thou wert left alone  
Every Existence would exist in thee

There is not room for Death  
Nor atom that his might could render void  
Since thou art Being and Breath  
And what thou art may never be destroyed. (ll. 21-28)

The lover's fidelity, therefore, simply must be to the beloved; that love takes precedence—like a religious person's faith—over ordinary ties. The love between Catherine and Heathcliff is spiritual, absolute, and godless.

If Brontë's use of Wesley's *Journal* comments on Heathcliff, the opposite must be true as well: the passion of Catherine and Heathcliff must comment on Methodism. Joseph, the novel's outspoken and small-minded Puritan, who finds his greatest pleasure in charting the damnation of others, is generally understood as the prime instrument of Brontë's

<sup>2</sup>Harrison and Hewish are very aware of the "profound" influence of Methodism upon Emily Brontë (Hewish 23). Harrison argues that Methodism is the key to understanding the Brontës in *The Clue to the Brontës*, and provides a detailed description of its pervasive presence in their household. She describes, furthermore, how the outline of the plot of *Wuthering Heights* follows events described by William Grimshaw in letters to John Wesley that were printed in Wesley's *Methodist Magazine* (164). Harrison does not, however, discuss the death of Heathcliff or Wesley's *Journal*, and does not consider the connections between Romanticism and Methodism.

<sup>3</sup>Critics frequently associate Heathcliff's Romantic passion with demonic elements or even with animals, as Judith Weissman does in "Like a Mad Dog": The Radical Romanticism of *Wuthering Heights*. In *Methodist Companions*,

however, G. E. Harrison directly identifies Heathcliff's love with religion. She writes that Brontë "translated Methodist passion for the Divine Lover into the language of human love and . . . affirmed that in essence the love is identical" (124). Harrison does not, however, discuss the changes that occur in this translation, changes suggested by the contrasts between the deaths of Heathcliff and John Dudley.

<sup>4</sup>Romanticism has often been loosely connected with religion—T. E. Hulme defines Romanticism as "spilt religion" (118)—and the Methodist revival has often been described as "romantic movement in religion" (Fairchild 13).

<sup>5</sup>There are many other significant parallels less relevant to the thesis of this essay, including the use of the language of the common man, the opposition to established forms, the role of outsiders, and the emphasis on spontaneity.

complete and devastating criticism of evangelical faith.<sup>6</sup> Certainly he embodies criticism, but not of Methodism as a whole. He provides an example of how unreligious religious doctrine is without religious feeling, of how easily creed can twist the basis of Wesley's Religion of the Heart into a system of curses. Joseph has nothing in common with John Dudley. Catherine and Heathcliff, on the other hand, show that religious feeling can exist without doctrine. Doctrine, to Brontë, is not necessary for the reality of Methodism. Even God is not necessary—a rather large-looming element of doctrine. Doctrine, in fact, seems destructive of religious feeling. In another passage of "No Coward Soul Is Mine," Brontë describes creeds as threatening faith, though incapable of shaking hers:

Vain are the thousand creeds  
That move men's hearts, unutterably vain,  
Worthless as withered weeds  
Or idlest froth amid the boundless main

To waken doubt in one  
Holding so fast by thy infinity  
So surely anchored on  
The steadfast rock of Immortality . . . (ll. 9-16)

What identifies Methodism in the story of John Dudley, and what is right about it, according to *Wuthering Heights*, is its emphasis on the truth of feeling, and its access to the truth of spiritual reality beyond the self. What is true and valuable in John Dudley, according to what survives in *Wuthering Heights*, is not his "tender" conscience or his doctrine, but that tenderness itself: the sensibility and susceptibility that allow him to give himself wholly to the reception of the spiritual. Along with that sensitivity, what is valuable in John Dudley is his confidence in the actuality of his vision and his faith that his vision is more vital than the people and concerns of the ordinary objective world.

*Wuthering Heights* judges Methodism as correct in asserting the power and force of the individual spirit that knows through feeling. The spirit is stronger than the body; it can bring a person like John Dudley or Heathcliff to death without a physical cause, and survive the death of that body. That being the case, particularly in relation to eternal life, the soul is what matters: eighteenth-century Methodism did not moderate this absolute religious position the way Anglicans did, even for the sake of conventional ethics (Knox 2). *Wuthering Heights* similarly shocks its readers through its refusal to moderate the violence and the passion of its characters, but that absolutism in Heathcliff and Catherine results in their successful union after death: their spirits, together, walk the moors. They win a victory in the spiritual world that is directly due to their insistence upon the truth of their emotions.

Spiritual reality exists—that is proved by those two

ghosts walking at the end of the novel. For Heathcliff and Catherine, spiritual reality is not located in another realm, like that distant and alien heaven out of which the angry angels throw Catherine in her dream. Rather, spiritual reality is located in the world around us properly and passionately felt. Wesley also believed that a "mysterious world interpenetrates" this world (Knox 519); that is the only explanation for his fascination with the preternatural experiences that he so often records in his *Journals*, like the death of John Dudley. But the passion and death of Heathcliff is not simply a translation of the faith and death of John Dudley into Romantic terms. Instead, *Wuthering Heights* revises the Methodist event. Wesley provides Brontë with an event and an implicit explanation, and Brontë returns, through Heathcliff, what the novel considers the core of truth in Dudley's experience: that reality reveals itself internally and is finally accessible only through feeling—the individual's receptor for the spiritual, and the ultimately real, world. Emily Brontë's use of the death of John Dudley demonstrates her recognition of a direct connection between the Romantic vision of the reality of life and Methodism. It proves that, in her writing at least, Romanticism and Methodism were not simply parallel intellectual movements sharing approximately the same era, but intersecting, interrelating visions of the world, capable of speaking to one another through shared images because they shared faith in the individual perception of spiritual reality.

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institution of the church itself" (119), whereas Davies also emphasizes the religious—though "anti-Christian" (127)—nature of the love between Heathcliff and Catherine.

Wesley's Methodism, of course, was not Calvinist, and in his own time was also deeply critical of the institutionalized church.

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## No Name: Embodying the Sensation Heroine

Melynda Huskey

In August of 1861, as Wilkie Collins began work on a new novel to follow his *succes fou*, *The Woman in White*, the Reverend James Pycroft was being pilloried in the *Saturday Review* for following in Collins's footsteps. The *Review*, sworn enemy to sensationalism, fulminates against Pycroft's new *Agony Point*:

"The world," Mr. Pycroft remarks, "is like one great House of Correction"—and really it wears very much that appearance under his handling. His characters have all a tendency to rapid degeneracy; "society," he somewhere tells us, "is a detective in plain clothes," and indeed, we feel under the eye of the police while in their company, they drop off so naturally into adventurers and swindlers. (174)

The *Review*'s somewhat heavy-handed irony here unerringly identifies the fluidity of social and moral status in Pycroft's novel as the culprit. The frightening, dangerous thing about *Agony Point*, and about sensation novels generally, is that they blur boundaries that ought to remain fixed, and permit characters to pass from one moral region to another without the proper documentation. Sensation novels display a morbid preoccupation with masquerading, pretending to be something or someone, disguising oneself, and these disguises protect criminals from punishment, from detection. When the *Saturday Review* objects to the ease with which Pycroft's characters fall, it is also objecting that they won't stay down; they systematically impose on society by evading the consequences of their actions, returning to the ordinary life of men and women instead of being punished. The social reality, of course, was that "fallen" women rarely died of shame, and that criminals did go free.<sup>1</sup> The sensation novel, in that sense, simply records an alternative to the hegemony of the Little Em'lys and the Nancys. But the possibility that a fallen woman, or a criminal of some other sort, might find her way into domestic life, might not be immediately identifiable (one thinks of the prostitute Martha in *David Copperfield*, moaning, "The river! the river!" as a kind of leper's bell to warn good

- Weissman, Judith. "'Like a Mad Dog': The Radical Romanticism of *Wuthering Heights*." *Midwest Quarterly* 19.4 (Summer 1978): 383-97.
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women away) is a frightening and pleasing notion for Victorian readers and critics.

Jonathan Loesberg identifies a fear of losing status as the single most important theme of the sensation novel: "In effect, sensation novels evoke their most typical moments of sensation response from images of a loss of class identity" (171). The most terrifying possibilities for Victorian readers, Loesberg postulates, involve losing or confusing one's social position, that clearly defined "place" which gives one ground to stand on, a position from which to define oneself against others.

But it is possible to be even more specific about the source of the sensation novel's effects. The sensation novel (and its reader) gets its thrills from the spectacle of a woman on the verge of an irretrievable fall. Women, the class of people least able to self-determine their future, teeter perpetually on the brink of social disaster in these novels: unfortunate loss of parents, bad or indiscreet marriage, or worst of all, irregular union of some kind, could spell the end of social life. At the same time, women, acquiring social class as a concomitant of their domestic relations, have no independent class of their own. Women exist, that is, only in context, and context can change at any time, in any direction. The heroine's movement from high status to low, as in *East Lynne*, or from low to high, as in *Lady Audley's Secret*, makes the sensation novel possible. Encoded in these novels is the premise that women can endanger the social balance, even while they make it possible. Particularly disturbing to Victorian readers and writers is the possibility that some women will not stay where they are put, will not accept their context.

The Victorians, if their fiction is an indicator, feared even more than losing their own status the possibility that people who had lost, or never had, status were taking it illicitly. Such pirating not only devalued the hard-won legitimate social standing of virtuous people, but weakened the usefulness of social status as a weapon against nonconformity. The *Cornhill* points out, in an article entitled "Anti-Respectability," that the novel has recently become a forum for arguing that

<sup>6</sup>Spark and Stanford describe Joseph as Brontë's chance "to publish her scorn of Calvinism and so get even with her aunt, who was always thrusting such doctrines down her throat" (251). Less intuitively and more justifiably, De Grazia states that Joseph "personifies the evil bent of the institutionalized church" (191), a position many critics attribute to the novel. Davies, for example, writes that the novel expresses "powerful contempt . . . for the

<sup>1</sup>Nina Auerbach's essay "The Rise of the Fallen Woman" describes the implications and permutations of the archetype of the fallen woman in Victorian fiction and art.

the monster, Society, is the most oppressive of tyrants, imposing the most absurd tests by the most unreasonable means, on persons who are dwarfed in intellect and character by the discipline to which they are subjected, even if they are not driven into the very vices against which it is professedly directed. (282)

Rather than disputing that society is sometimes unjust, the *Cornhill* articulates the necessity of retaining standards of purity in reputation and respectability in social intercourse, despite the occasional false condemnation:

There is no doubt, as a matter of fact, that the existence of the rule in question produces immense results, and that wherever it is vigorously and impartially administered, it produces a very high average level of female virtue, and thereby invests life in general with what is unquestionably the best and greatest of its charms . . . . You can excommunicate a woman simply by refusing to associate with her, for the pleasure which her society gives is the only reason why you do associate with her; she stands in no other relation to the world than the social one. (290)

The result obtained by such social surveillance is, simply, female virtue, which might otherwise be impossible to procure. Only threats will produce the desired effect. If the world is to be provided with the pleasure of intercourse with virtuous women, certain safeguards must be arranged. Society, it seems, supervises the orderly conduct of women through arrangements not unlike those of Mr. Pycroft's plain clothes detective, so annoying to the *Saturday Review*.

The sensation novel, despite the complaints of the *Saturday Review* and the *Cornhill*, most often supports this vision of society as protector of female virtue. Such novels as *Lady Audley's Secret* warn us against the bewitching arts which allow a wicked woman to pass herself off as a virtuous wife by punishing her villainies with (private) incarceration and death. It is true the sensation novel will sometimes concern itself with the exception to some social law, as in *Aurora Floyd*, where the unwitting bigamist is eventually justified, but generally speaking, the sensation novel is as punitive and as strict as the strictest parlor moralist could wish. The annoyed fear which the sensation novel seems to arouse in its critics arises in part from its willingness to flirt with disaster, to dramatize the disasters attendant on a woman's fall, and in part from the inevitable sympathy readers come to feel with the character as they follow her desperate story.

Such heroines of sensation novels move of their own volition, inhabiting places to which they have no right, or conforming outwardly to propriety while pursuing a secret revolution, at least for a while. Of course, they are caught and punished eventually, but they have gotten away with cheating society; they have pulled off scams that, despite their final failure, were, for a time, too successful.

The success of these deceptions depends on the character's maintaining a self "underneath" her public self, a self which judges society and its moral laws. Of course, this separate self is in some ways exceptionally difficult to maintain under the circumstances in which women are part of the world. In *The Woman in White*, for example, Madame Fosco,

Laura Glyde's aunt and an advocate of women's rights, undergoes a remarkable transformation after marrying an Italian Count who "tames" her:

For the common purposes of society the extraordinary change thus produced in her [by her marriage], is, beyond all doubt, a change for the better, seeing that it has transformed her into a civil, silent, unobtrusive woman, who is never in the way. How far she is really reformed or deteriorated in her secret self, is another matter. I have once or twice seen sudden changes . . . which have led me to suspect that her present state of suppression may have sealed up something dangerous in her nature, which used to evaporate harmlessly in the freedom of her former life. (537)

Madame Fosco has been forced to change, but even in such abject slavery, she seems to maintain some identity, some resistance. Collins clarifies the cause of Madame Fosco's change: "The rod of iron with which he rules her never appears in company—it is a private rod, and is always kept upstairs" (541). Government by private rod keeps Madame Fosco, and hundreds of other characters like her, in her place, but she still maintains her "tigerish" nature; she, like other sensation heroines, adjusts to the circumstances of her new life by hiding her nature, not altering it.

Lucy Graham Audley leads another kind of double life. She is not tamed by marriage; only systematic investigation and exposure—followed by incarceration—can control her. But she cloaks her "insanity" with a perfect imitation of ladyhood, and no one has reason to suspect her of being anything but exactly what she seems, a sweet, lovely, childlike bride. She lives up to the demands of her position as baronet's wife perfectly satisfactorily, so that Robert Audley's suspicions are both wildly unexpected and yet perfectly justified, a paranoic combination which invites readers to suspect the least suspicious women, since they must have the most to hide.

Double lives—whether of the Madame Fosco variety or of the more complex Lady Audley variety—are especially the property of women in mid-century fiction. While there is no dearth of men leading deceptive lives in these novels, women are more likely to be hiding powerful and dangerous secrets, to be deceiving their nearest and dearest for felonious reasons. As the sensation novel examines and displays these secret lives, it reminds us that the boundaries between good and wicked women are not clear, that one can merge into the other very easily, and that appearances are nearly always deceptive. While there are also heroines of the soft and yielding sort, the sweet heroines of the Dickens and Trollope varieties, the sensation novel nearly always ignores them in favor of the more compelling villain, or reminds us how easily a weak woman can become a wicked woman.

Wilkie Collins especially occupies himself with this shapeshifting, using the re-creating and revising of female identity as an inexhaustible topos. In *No Name* (1861-82), Collins develops a paradigm for the sensation novel's heroine—the resourceful, energetic, powerful, and deceptive woman who abandons one life, one role, one identity after another in the pursuit of a goal. To be sure, these women can-

not be considered heroines in the usual Victorian sense of the word; they are rarely helpless, rarely innocent, and rarely punished for being neither. They are often guilty of whole Newgate Calendars, including forgery, murder, bigamy, fraud, and adultery. Nevertheless, all our sympathy, all our attention, is directed toward them. The sensation novel creates its own heroine, a different kind of woman altogether from the conventional heroine of the domestic novel.

Magdalen Vanstone, the central character of *No Name*, is Collins's first truly sensational heroine. While *The Woman in White* boasts a number of striking women, including the redoubtable Madame Fosco and Marian Halcombe, the self-reliant and almost manly protector of preternaturally feminine Laura Glyde, none of those women are presented to us as criminal heroines. Madame Fosco is doubtless a criminal, but she is not our heroine. Marian, while heroic, never stoops to actual crime; even her mildly unethical eavesdropping on the Count and Sir Percival is undertaken only to save Laura's life. Magdalen Vanstone is the first of Collins's heroines to choose willfully to do wrong, knowing that she is doing wrong, and not forfeit our sympathy.

Collins manages this effect very adroitly by juxtaposing Magdalen's careful home training with her hidden (female) nature:

Are there, infinitely varying with each individual, inbred forces of Good and Evil in all of us, deep down below the reach of mortal encouragement and mortal repression—hidden Good and hidden Evil, both alike at the mercy of the liberating opportunity and the sufficient temptation? Within these earthly limits, is earthly Circumstance ever the key; and can no human vigilance warn us beforehand of the forces imprisoned in ourselves which that key may unlock? (127)

Although the words of this passage are indefinitely directed—equally a generalization about human nature as about female nature—the action of the novel argues only that Magdalen's nature must overcome her socialization whenever the two come in conflict, until her nature is utterly worn out. In fact, what the novel offers us is a familiar set of oppositions by which Magdalen, and the sensation heroine, is defined: nature / culture; feeling / principle; desire / law. Magdalen chooses the lawless, the passionate, the active; she embraces the marginal world of natural and uncivilized desire, actively seeking to gratify herself. The sensation heroine is always associated with this underworld of self-serving femininity; the heroine's battle to maintain her lawless existence—against the grain of the plot—becomes the center of the novel.

Magdalen Vanstone's battle is first presented to us through her looks, her body. Extended description of the heroine is, of course, a standard Victorian trope, and experienced readers are trained physiognomists, interpreting the signs of nature. We can "read" Magdalen in the long description in Chapter 1. Collins begins, naturally, with her hair, that most sensational of female characteristics:

Her hair was of that purely light-brown hue, unmixed with flaxen, or yellow, or red—which is oftener seen on the plumage of a bird than on the head of a human being. It

was soft and plentiful, and waved downward from her low forehead in regular folds—but to some tastes, it was dull and dead, in its absolute want of glossiness, in its monotonous purity of plain light color. (16)

Magdalen's hair, which seems to be more like feathers than hair, does not have the striking color usually affected by sensation heroines; Margaret Oliphant, commenting sarcastically on the use of hair as an indicator of character, asks:

What need has a woman for a soul when she has upon her head a mass of wavy gold? . . . Red and gold, in all its shades, are compatible with virtue; amber means rich luxurious vice . . . as for black and brown, which were once favourites in fiction before it took to violent colouring, they are "nowhere." (269)

While Magdalen's hair is not sensationally colorful, her forehead offers a contradictory clue. Jeanne Fahnestock, in her article "The Heroine of Irregular Features: Physiognomy and Conventions of Heroine Description," comments on the significance of foreheads in the interpretation of a heroine's face: "the higher and broader the forehead, the more intelligent the owner" (345). Moreover, the low forehead is likely to indicate an animal nature. Magdalen's low forehead is not a good sign.

Her eyes, naturally the next feature to be described, echo the contrast between hair and forehead:

But it was here exactly that the promise of her face failed of performance in the most startling manner. The eyes, which should have been dark, were incomprehensibly and discordantly light; they were of that nearly colorless gray which, though little attractive in itself, possesses the rare compensating merit of interpreting the finest gradations of thought, the gentlest changes of feeling, the deepest trouble of passion, with a subtle transparency of expression which no darker eyes can rival. (16)

Magdalen's face works on a principle of contradiction and contrast; what one feature claims, another denies or mitigates. Those pale but divinely sensitive eyes, unmatched to either hair or complexion, undermine our emerging vision of Magdalen as either ethereal or earthly woman. Moreover, when we begin to synthesize these features, Magdalen's face can be read as a true index to her character and her future. We know what struggles Magdalen will confront when we read:

Thus quaintly self-contradictory in the upper part of her face, she was hardly less at variance with established ideas of harmony in the lower. Her lips had the true feminine delicacy of form, her cheeks the lovely roundness and smoothness of youth—but the mouth was too large and firm, the chin too square and massive for her sex and age. (16)

Magdalen's body contradicts itself constantly, but also means what it says. Not only does her face fail to meet our generic expectations, or our notions of fashionable beauty, it actually seems to be two different faces, flung together without regard for appropriateness. The mature man's mouth and chin in the

face of a fresh young girl is a picture both confusing and alarming. But the mouth, an index of passionate nature, and the chin, which expresses will and tenacity, tell us that Magdalen contradicts herself in a specifically gendered way: she opposes a man's strong will and powerful passions to her feminine intellect and beauty.

But Magdalen's body offers another contradiction to this gallimaufrey:

Her figure—taller than her sister's, taller than the average woman's height; instinct with such a seductive, serpentine suppleness, so lightly and playfully graceful, that its movements suggested, not unnaturally, the movements of a young cat—her figure was so perfectly developed already that no one who saw her could have supposed that she was only eighteen. She bloomed in the full physical maturity of twenty years or more . . . (16)

Magdalen has a woman's body, which is also the body of a kitten and of a snake. She suggests, in all her mismatched perfections, the Horatian figure which Thomas F. Boyle has suggested is at the heart of the sensation novel (92): "ut turpiter atrum / desinat in piscem mulier formosa superne" (*Odes* 111). Magdalen, like other sensation heroines, is an animal hybrid, a mermaid, a lamia, Lilith in the form of a cat. Her animal nature, clearly inscribed in her body and face, wars with her spiritual nature, inscribed just as clearly in other parts of the same body and face.

Magdalen's *psychomachia* is crowned by her name:

Magdalen! Surely, the grand old Bible name—suggestive of a sad and sombre dignity; recalling, in its first association, mournful ideas of penitence and seclusion—had been here, as events had turned out, inappropriately bestowed? Surely, this self-contradictory girl had perversely accomplished one contradiction more, by developing into a character which was out of all harmony with her own Christian name! (17)

Of course, we will discover that "Magdalen" truly describes this woman, that she will achieve the penitence and seclusion connoted by her name. All of Magdalen's contradictions are true, from her name (and her lack of name) to her body to her face. Externals do not, in this fictional world, ever lie; they only need the correct interpretation, the vision which incorporates every fact in its proper place. The sensation heroine's body is like another sensation novel, plotted and prepared with the clues whose importance will be revealed as we connect them rightly to each other and their surrounding novel.

One of the most successful deceptions Magdalen and Captain Wragge achieve in their campaign to entrap Noel Vanstone involves just such a reading—or misreading—of Magdalen's body. Mrs. Lecount, Noel Vanstone's housekeeper and Magdalen's chief enemy and rival, reads as Magdalen's opposite, a completely integrated, entirely consistent, work of art; she is "a lady of mild, ingratiating manners, whose dress [is] the perfection of neatness, taste, and matronly simplicity" (232). Her clothes and her body, equally important in creating her, speak the same language:

The elegant black gown in which she mourned the memory of Michael Vanstone was not a mere dress—it was a well-made compliment paid to Death. Her innocent white muslin apron was a little domestic poem in itself . . . The comely plumpness of her face was matched by the comely plumpness of her figure; it glided smoothly over the ground; it flowed in sedate undulations when she walked. (233)

The "Venus of the autumn period of female life" (233), purely feminine and domestic in appearance, is an expert interpreter of other women. She connects "Miss Bygrave" with Magdalen Vanstone intuitively, and prepares to protect herself and her master by revealing Magdalen's identity. Her evidence comes from a description of Magdalen circulated by the family lawyer after her disappearance, the same document which first drove Magdalen to join forces with Captain Wragge:

Left her home, in London, early on the morning of September 23d, 1846, A YOUNG LADY. Age—eighteen. Dress—deep mourning. Personal appearance—hair of a very light brown; eyebrows and eyelashes darker; eyes light gray; complexion strikingly pale; lower part of her face large and full; tall upright figure; walks with remarkable grace and ease; speaks with openness and resolution; has the manners and habits of a refined, cultivated lady. Personal marks—two little moles, close together, on the left side of the neck. (162)

Mrs. Lecount's plan is to draw Noel Vanstone's attention to those moles, the identifying feature of Magdalen Vanstone, not of Susan Bygrave. Once "Susan" is unmasked, Mrs. Lecount can save Noel Vanstone from her machinations. Wragge is more than a match for her, of course. Using cosmetics to cover her moles, Magdalen passes what Wragge calls the "Crucial Test" (342):

Not the vestige of a mole was visible on any part of the smooth white surface of Miss Bygrave's neck. It mutely answered the blinking inquiry of Noel Vanstone's half-closed eyes by the flattest practical contradiction of Mrs. Lecount . . . That one discovery shook the housekeeper's hold on her master as nothing had shaken it yet. (347)

Magdalen's body, the one apparently immutable part of her identity, can be rewritten and misread, so that her neck, smooth and white as a blank piece of paper, cannot testify against her, but instead lies for her, contradicting Mrs. Lecount, even casting doubt on her sanity.

Later in the novel, Mrs. Lecount has occasion to recur to those moles; after Magdalen has successfully married Noel Vanstone, Lecount reappears to "rescue" her former master. On the evidence of Magdalen's maid, Noel learns that his wife does bear the telltale marks:

What he had heard from the maid produced a marked change in him. The horror of the coming discovery had laid its paralyzing hold on his mind. He moved mechanically; he looked and spoke like a man in a dream. (452)

The true story is revealed; the heroine's body can be made to tell the truth. The effect of that truth, however, devastates Noel Vanstone; it finally kills him. Mrs. Lecount, moreover, succeeds in unmasking her rival only at the cost of her own body:

Her hair was white; her face had fallen away; her eyes looked out large, bright and haggard over her hollow cheeks. She was withered and old. Her dress hung loose round her wasted figure; not a trace of its buxom autumnal beauty remained. (447)

The task of fixing Magdalen's identity is a costly one for everyone concerned; husband, rival, accomplices, as well as Magdalen herself, will be injured in the process.

Despite the wasting effect of these masquerades, Magdalen attempts one more, a reprise of her role as Lucy Locket in the first chapters of the novel. She goes to Combe Barton as Louisa the parlormaid; the Admiral changes her name to Lucy, and Magdalen once again changes her looks:

In this servant's costume—in the plain gown fastening high round her neck, in the neat little white cap at the back of her head—in this simple dress, to the eyes of all men not linen-drapers, at once the most modest and the most alluring that a woman can wear, the sad changes which mental suffering had wrought in her beauty almost disappeared from view . . . In the evening costume of a servant, no admirer of beauty could have looked at her once and not have turned again to look at her for the second time. (516)

As a servant, Magdalen takes on the attractiveness of her clothes, of the generic space filled by the admirer's expectant eye. But the fall is too great to be sustained for long. A lady cannot be a servant; Magdalen cannot be an indeterminate set of possibilities forever. For one thing, she is no longer nameless. Her marriage has fixed the name "Magdalen Vanstone" upon her. She writes to Miss Garth: "You forget what wonders my wickedness has done for me. It has made Nobody's Child Somebody's Wife" (492). But Somebody's Wife is a fully determined place, a person with very clear limits. Magdalen, "a respectable married woman, accountable for [her] actions to nobody under heaven but [her] husband" (492) is a very different character from the quicksilver impersonator of the "At Homes." And one of the first consequences of this change is that Magdalen no longer controls her own body. Named, it belongs to someone else. When she falls ill at Combe Barton, she goes out into the sunshine to consider her plight:

But one warning could be read in such a change as this. Into the space of little more than a year she had crowded the wearing and wasting emotions of a life. The bountiful gifts of health and strength, so prodigally heaped upon her by Nature, so long abused with impunity, were failing her at last. (542)

Her body, slipping out from under her control, betrays her. She can no longer rely on it to help her deceive, to control

those around her, to lie for her.

Finally, when Magdalen loses her place at Combe Barton, she also loses her body, for the first time in the novel. Once she has been turned out into the world alone and penniless, she is never again described, never given a body at all. When Captain Kirke discovers her out on the streets, dying of a brain fever, she is rendered indirectly:

The action disclosed her face to view, for an instant only, before her head drooped once more on her bosom . . . The shock of the double recognition—the recognition, at the same moment, of the face, and of the dreadful change in it—struck him speechless and helpless. (574)

What is the change? How has Magdalen been marked by her illness? We don't know, and we will never know. There is no further description of Magdalen, except for a passing reference to her "wan cheeks" and to her restored health in the novel's last chapter. She is now permanently disembodied, recreated as a woman without the rampant physicality of the bad girl. Once cleansed in this way, she can be married truly, married for love, by the Captain who has fallen in love with her at first sight.

Of course, that love is based entirely on Magdalen's appearance, on her body; Kirke has never met her, knows nothing about her except that her face haunts his memory. Nevertheless, Magdalen's new life, which begins as she recovers from her brain fever, is a life lived in a new, absent body, a body which, if it exists at all, exists for Kirke, and in his reactions.

The body of the sensation heroine is a new territory for the novel. Its discovery, exploration, and settlement operates as a metaphor for the domestication of sensation. Just as the sensation novel investigates the home and the family as the source of crime and passion, its narratives describe the heroine as the microcosm of that investigation. In Magdalen Vanstone's metamorphosis from reckless actress to loving wife, we see the reassuring assertion that despite dangerous foundations, the home can be controlled, the family can be rehabilitated.

The contradiction of this novel's title poses a question central to its reading: who can be named No Name? In this novel, No Name is a condition as well as a person—the condition of a woman, but not all women. Magdalen Vanstone is No Name, is not named, but Norah, her sister, who shares in all the conditions which unname Magdalen, keeps her name by keeping her context, by meeting the unspoken conditions which allow her to make a place for herself in the world.

When the great disaster strikes the family, and the sad story of the Vanstone marriage is revealed, Norah changes her life to suit her new story. She becomes the long-suffering governess, the hard-working girl that her cruel uncle tells her she ought to become:

Let [her], as becomes [her] birth, gain [her] bread in situations. If [she] show[s] herself disposed to accept [her] proper position, I will assist [her] to start virtuously in life. (134)

Although Norah treats this offer with contempt, she neverthe-

less fulfills the prescription, going to London and finding herself a situation, accepting her proper position as orphan and bastard. She may not have a legal title to the name she bears, but she is permitted to retain it, both by the characters around her and by the novel itself, because she does not presume on her former claims. Passively accepting the new life she must lead, Norah earns the love and respect of those around her, as well as of the rich man who becomes her husband. Thus she not only retains her name and a place, but earns a new name and a better place, one which restores to her the inheritance lost through her uncle's greed.

Magdalen, on the other hand, has no name; she loses it, abandons it. The very phrase, "loses her name," implies the cause. The law cannot take a virtuous woman's good name from her, despite the legal fiction that she does not have one; Norah proves this. Magdalen gives up her name, not through her parents' lapse, but through her own defiance. When she runs away from the school where she and her sister have fled for refuge, and begins to pursue her revenge on Michael Vanstone, she forfeits her good name—her only name. Once nameless, she is an outlaw. She cannot be named in good society; she has lost her place. Defying the demands of society leads to Magdalen's downfall; as Mr. Pendril, the faithful family lawyer, observes, she has become "one of the most reckless, desperate, and perverted women living" (493) as a result of her determined pursuit of the inheritance.

Magdalen Vanstone's weapon against society is her femininity, her marginality. Because she is a woman, an illegitimate child, and an orphan, she is Nobody, Nobody's Child. She has no legal identity because she has no father to create one for her, and no husband to give her one. Being nobody means that she might become anybody, could take on many identities. As a woman without an identity, but not without a personality, Magdalen is an especially unnerving, difficult character. Refused definition in the world she lives in, she simply runs through all the possibilities, trying all the places which are available, until the novel fixes her, finally, in a single spot.

Magdalen is first presented to us as an ordinary middle-class daughter, capricious, spoiled, pleasure-loving:

"I'm ready for another concert to-night, and a ball tomorrow, and a play the day after. Oh," cried Magdalen, dropping into a chair and crossing her hands rapturously on the table, "how I do like pleasure!" (17)

This capacity for pleasure is somewhat alarming in a young woman. When the matter of the private theatricals arises, Magdalen's devotion to, and skill at, acting informs the reader that her desire for pleasure is directed in dangerous ways. Acting fills an ambiguous place in the sensation novel; it makes public the ability to conceal, which is always suspicious. Even such innocent private theatricals as the ones in which Magdalen takes part are faintly disreputable. The date of the story, 1846, is only thirty years removed from *Mansfield Park*, in which private theatricals are a vicious and blameworthy pastime. But far worse than taking part in the Marrables's production of "The Rivals" is Magdalen's professional attitude and her success.

As Magdalen reveals her "natural" gift for acting at the first rehearsal, Miss Garth again expresses a concern that seems oddly placed:

Her worst apprehension of results in connection with the theatrical enterprise, had foreboded levity of conduct with some of the gentlemen—she had not bargained for this. Magdalen, in the capacity of a thoughtless girl, was comparatively easy to deal with. Magdalen, in the character of a born actress, threatened serious future difficulties. (54)

Magdalen's natural acting ability is a threat to her future; light behavior with gentlemen is not. Young ladies may marry, may fall in love. They may not make a profession of acting. Magdalen's acting ability is too close to counterfeiting, to deception, for anyone to feel happy about her success.

This acting is at the heart of the sensation heroine's interactions with the world. In taking on various characters to further her plan to regain her money Magdalen shows her contempt for the world's ways of creating and sustaining identity. Whether she is Miss Bygrave, Lucy the parlormaid, or Miss Garth, Magdalen creates an identity to suit her needs. There is nothing fixed about her social existence. Magdalen has been abandoned by society; in return, she will abandon it. Masquerading as Miss Garth to threaten her cousin, Noel Vanstone, Magdalen tells him:

I know [Magdalen Vanstone], Mr. Vanstone! She is a nameless, homeless, friendless wretch. The law which takes care of you, the law which takes care of all legitimate children, casts her like carrion to the winds. It is your law—not hers. She only knows it as the instrument of a vile oppression, an insufferable wrong. (245)

Magdalen's willingness to oppose herself to the Law (as Collins often renders it) is her most sensational characteristic. While other characters see the law which debars illegitimate children from inheriting as unfair or even unjustifiable, none of them makes the leap that Magdalen does. If the law is unfair, she reasons, then she is free to combat it unfairly—that is, outside the law.

Magdalen's confrontation with English laws of inheritance is necessarily a losing battle; she cannot possibly defeat the law by combating it. Norah's policy of waiting and suffering is, of course, the successful one, and through Norah's patience and Norah's beauty, the fortune is restored. But we can discover how Norah won her prize in a few short words at the end of the novel:

Norah, whose courage under undeserved calamity had been the courage of resignation—Norah, who had patiently accepted her hard lot; who from the first to last had meditated no vengeance and stooped to no deceit—Norah had reached the end which all her sister's ingenuity, all her sister's resolution, and all her sister's daring had failed to achieve. Openly and honorably, with love on one side and love on the other, Norah had married the man who possessed the Combe-Raven money—and Magdalen's own scheme to recover it had opened the way to the event which had brought husband and wife together. (597-98)

The story of Magdalen's failure is much more interesting, much more eventful, and much more titillating. We can watch Magdalen's wicked, unwomanly plots—from marrying Noel Vanstone under false pretenses to masquerading as a parlormaid—fail, knowing comfortably that they must fail, and nevertheless wishing they might succeed. Her acting, her pretense, licenses us to watch her career as an entertainment; her outlawed behavior is part of the topsy-turvy world of the sensation novel, in which nothing behaves as it ought to. Nina Auerbach has connected Lewis Carroll's Alice with the complex of fallen women which lies at the heart of Victorian culture,<sup>2</sup> and certainly Wonderland can be compared to the world of the sensation novel, where appearances are deceitful and nothing sits still long enough to be defined. Magdalen is as mutable as Alice: "At least I know who I was when I got up this morning, but I think I must have been changed several times since then" (Carroll 42). She is also at the mercy of the creatures who inhabit and control her world, the Captain Wragges and the Mrs. Lecounts, despite her belief that she can manipulate circumstances. But Magdalen willingly assumes these roles, seeks out forbidden actions and outlawed places. She does not fall by accident, but by intention.

Magdalen's flexibility of identity is bounded clearly by her gender, of course. D. A. Miller has discussed the ways in which sensationalism "feminizes" both readers and characters by making them nervous about gender.<sup>3</sup> *No Name* offers us a very wide and confusing range of gender possibilities, from the girlish Frank to the retarded giantess, Mrs. Wragge, and from the hyper-feminine Mme. Lecount to the electrically masculine Captain Kirke. How can we help feeling nervous, confronted by these possibilities, and asked to make sense, not sensation, of them?

Magdalen herself has a soul above gender confusion, according to Captain Wragge:

Hundreds of girls take fancies for disguising themselves; and hundreds of instances of it are related year after year in the public journals. But my ex-pupil is not to be confounded for one moment with the average adventuress of the newspapers. She is capable of going a long way beyond the limit of dressing herself like a man, and imitating a man's voice and manner. (216)

Magdalen does not need to fly to the extreme of cross-dressing. She is more dangerous and more skillful in her identity-changing. She works within the boundaries of her own defining characteristics, her femininity, which constitutes her most powerful weapon against the world she is trying to conquer. As a woman, after all, she cannot be defined, but only compared—to other women, to men. The "limit," as Captain Wragge describes it, is well within Magdalen's capabilities, but not within her needs. Dressing as a man, aping men's ways, will not get Magdalen what she wants, her rights as a woman, a daughter, and a sister.

Norah, although her identity as the "ideal" passive woman is clearly established, is at the same time only an inferior copy of an earlier generation:

Inheriting the dark majestic character of her mother's beauty, she had yet hardly inherited all its charms. Though the shape of her face was the same, the features were scarcely so delicate, their proportion was scarcely so true. She was not so tall. She had the dark-brown eyes of her mother—full and soft, with the steady lustre in them which Mrs. Vanstone's eyes had lost—and yet there was less interest, less refinement and depth of feeling in her expression; it was gentle and feminine, but clouded by a certain quiet reserve, from which her mother's face was free. (14)

Norah is defined purely as a less beautiful version of her mother, marred by a version of Magdalen's failing; she, like her sister, is secretive. The unfeminine reserve which she cultivates marks her as a victim of heredity. Of course, given the terrible secret which her mother conceals, the secret of Norah's birth, the daughter is less than her mother. That inferiority expresses itself as a predisposition to keep secrets. Nevertheless, Norah represents the domestically appropriate woman, rewarded at the novel's end with the fortune and husband her merit has earned. She is unquestionably feminine as this novel defines such a category; more so than Magdalen, with her unfeminine energy and perseverance, or even Mrs. Lecount, whose alluring subservience camouflages a toadlike heart. Norah's passivity and patience outweigh her faults; she wins the contest which Magdalen begins.

There are women in the novel more masculine than Magdalen: Miss Garth, in particular, is presented as a man in skirts. Her masculinity can be traced to her ancestry and her age:

Her hard-featured face; her masculine readiness and decision of movement; her obstinate honesty of look and manner, all proclaimed her border birth and border training. Though little more than forty years of age, her hair was quite gray; and she wore over it the plain cap of an old woman. (13)

An old woman is, after all, next door to a man; Miss Garth's post-menopausal appearance partly explains her manliness. Moreover, she is from a notoriously uncivilized and wild country, where the demands of daily life on the frontiers of civilization create a hardy, strong, unwomanly woman. But Miss Garth's "male" nature does not provoke any outrage from the narrator, as other examples of cross-gendering do. Miss Garth has a responsible position as teacher and protector; her charges need the guidance of a mature and reliable person—and the natural result of such reliance in this novel is to create a more masculine character. Trading up, as it were, is always acceptable; it is the movement downward, from man to woman, which provokes the narrator.

While women in the novel explore a comparatively wide range of gender possibilities, men are more often than not to be found in the category "woman" as well. What are we to make of Magdalen's fiance, Frank Clare, who suffers, like Norah, from being less than his parents, and who is also

<sup>2</sup> In *Woman and the Demon*, Auerbach examines *Alice in Wonderland* as a veiled commentary on the image of the fallen woman.

<sup>3</sup> In particular, *The Novel and the Police* examines *The Woman in White* as a typically sensational and sensationalizing text.

unambiguously feminine:

His slim figure had now acquired strength and grace, and had increased in stature to the medium height. The small regular features, which he was supposed to have inherited from his mother, were rounded and filled out, without having lost their remarkable delicacy of form. His beard was still in its infancy; and nascent lines of whisker traced their modest way sparsely down his cheeks. His gentle wandering brown eyes would have looked to better advantage in a woman's face—they wanted spirit and firmness to fit them for the face of a man. His hands had the same wandering habit as his eyes; they were constantly changing from one position to another, constantly twisting and turning any little stray thing they could pick up. He was undeniably handsome, graceful, well-bred—but no close observer could look at him, without suspecting that the stout old family stock had begun to wear out in the later generations, and that Mr. Francis Clare had more in him of the shadow of his ancestors than of the substance. (39)

Frank is not only physically feminine; he can't keep a job, having no desire to apply himself. He suits himself in the end, however, by making a good marriage, as a young lady would. Running away from a job in China, Frank stows away on board a ship headed back to England, where he meets a rich widow; she bestows her hand and fortune on him, and they live happily ever after, much to his father's chagrin.

Frank, like Magdalen, is mirrored by a rival; Noel Vanstone, who takes Frank's place as Magdalen's fiance, and then as her husband, is the distilled version of Frank as Mrs. Lecount is of Magdalen. His effeminate appearance masks a vindictive, though foolish, temperament:

Seated not far from the front window, with his back to the light, she saw a frail, flaxen-haired, self-satisfied little man, clothed in a fair white dressing gown many sizes too large for him, with a nosegay of violets drawn neatly through the button-hole over his breast. He looked from thirty to five-and-thirty years old. His complexion was as delicate as a young girl's, his eyes were the lightest blue, his upper lip was adorned by a weak little white mustache, waxed and twisted at either end into a thin spiral curl . . . . When he smiled, the skin at his temples crumpled itself up into a nest of wicked little wrinkles. (237)

Like Frank, Noel is a confusing mixture of genders; also like Frank, the mixture has not improved his character. Moreover, we discover that he suffers, symbolically enough, from a weak heart, which eventually destroys him.

Noel and Frank appear to be masquerading as men—the very thing that Magdalen won't do. Magdalen, appropriately gendered despite her unwomanly energy and perseverance, is morally superior to such weakly, evilly feminine men. Captain Kirke, the moral opposite of Frank and Noel, admits no gender confusion:

He was a man in the prime of life; tall, spare, and muscular; his face sun-burned to a deep brown; his black hair just

turning gray; his eyes dark, deep, and firm—the eyes of a man with an iron resolution, and a habit of command. (276)

Unlike either of his rivals, Captain Kirke is purely masculine; even he, however, shifts occasionally: he kisses his sleeping nephew “with the gentleness of a woman” (292). Kirke is destined to be Magdalen's husband; he is the only powerfully masculine character in the novel, the only one with the strength to resist and overcome Magdalen's feminine power. Not surprisingly, he rarely appears in the novel; his appearances are restricted to a scene in the middle and a *deus ex machina* discovery of Magdalen in her extremity. The less we see of him, the more plausible his masculine power over Magdalen—which might otherwise seem unlikely, given her ability to control and govern the men around her. After her illness, the new, reborn Magdalen is shaped by his nature:

No suspicion crossed his mind of the influence which he was exerting over her—of the new spirit which he was breathing into that new life, so sensitively open to impression in the first freshness of its recovered sense. (594)

As she recovers into both moral and physical health, Magdalen learns to wish, “Oh, if I could be a man, how I should like to be such a man as this!” (594). To marry such a man is to become him, legally speaking. Magdalen will take Kirke's name, become him. This achievement will mark Magdalen's complete rehabilitation.

“He stooped and kissed her.” The final sentence of the novel is Captain Kirke's response to Magdalen's demand, “Say what you think of me with your own lips.” The tableau effect thus created permanently diminishes and fixes Magdalen; she is now perpetually under Kirke, receiving his seal of approval and love. His action, not hers, closes the novel; his (unspoken) answer silences her voice. The truth of Kirke's opinion, which Magdalen eagerly solicits, is contained in his kiss; Magdalen is no longer herself. She has become the man she wants to be, the right man. She has found her place.

The first question of the Anglican catechism is “What is your name?” The answer, “N or M,” is a blank meant to be replaced by the name of the respondent. Norah and Magdalen are that N and M, those blank spaces without a replacement. Each achieves a name, an identity; each does so by submitting to circumstances and to a man. Magdalen just takes the long road home. The sensation heroine survives by defying circumstance, by reserving the right of self-definition. The logic of the sensation novel, however, requires either submission or death from its heroines eventually; they cannot be permitted to resist forever. As with the other complications of plot, part of the reader's pleasure in the heroine is in seeing how far she is from an acceptable closure, from finding her limitations and her place. The alternatives which proliferate in the beginning of the sensation heroine's story narrow to two in her conclusion—two alternatives which are really versions of the same end. There is no escaping closure, and enclosure, for the sensation heroine; her fate, her plot, is already inscribed on her body.

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## “Devising New Means”: *Sartor Resartus* and the Devoted Reader

Vivienne Rundle

### I

Contemporary readers of Thomas Carlyle's *Sartor Resartus* (1833-34) were baffled and bewildered by the work. Even John Stuart Mill found Carlyle's approach needlessly obscure:

About . . . that Teufelsdröckh, by the way, it has frequently occurred to me of late to ask of myself and also of you, whether that mode of writing between sarcasm or irony and earnest, be really deserving of so much honour as you give to it by making use of it so frequently. I do not say that it is not good: all modes of writing, in the hands of a sincere man, are good, provided they are intelligible. But are there many things, worth saying, and capable of being said in that manner which cannot be as well or better said in a more direct way? (176)

Readers of *Fraser's Magazine*, in which *Sartor* was first published, were more than puzzled—they were actively hostile to the work.<sup>1</sup> Carlyle wrote his brother that “Teufelsdröckh meets with the most unqualified disapproval” (*Letters* 128) and, in a letter to Ralph Waldo Emerson (one of the book's few contemporary champions), detailed the work's unpopular reception:

Nothing ever was more ungenial than the soil this poor Teufelsdröckhish seedcorn has been thrown on here; none cries, God speed to it; the sorriest nettle or hemlock seed, one would think, had been more welcome. For indeed our British periodical critics, and especially the public of *Fraser's Magazine* . . . exceed all speech; require not even contempt, only oblivion. (*Correspondence* 20)

<sup>1</sup> G. B. Tennyson notes: “There is abundant testimony as to the general disapprobation that greeted *Sartor* in *Fraser's*” (155n). See also Wilson 358, 362. For a refreshing defense of Carlyle's indirect manner, see Miller.

- Fahnestock, Jeanne. “The Heroine of Irregular Features: Physiognomy and Conventions of Heroine Description.” *Victorian Studies* 23 (1981): 325-50.
- Loesberg, Jonathan. “The Ideology of the Sensation Novel.” *Representations* 13 (1986): 115-38.
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most devout and sophisticated readers. Given that John Stuart Mill found *Sartor Resartus* tough to swallow it is hardly surprising that the majority of the book's readers failed to grasp its designs or its significance.

Chris Vanden Bossche has recently argued that "By attempting to resolve the dialectic between revolution and authority, Carlyle sought both to establish his own authority and to recuperate authority in the social domain" (*Authority* 1); with *Sartor Resartus*, Carlyle

not only enacted the mythology of the literary career by producing a narrative in which the hero becomes an author, he also succeeded in creating his first original work of literature. In addition to representing the recuperation of authority in the career of Teufelsdröckh, Carlyle hoped this work would establish his own authority as a man of letters. (*Authority* 32-33)

I will argue that by forcing the reader to abandon conventional notions of narrative structure and authority, *Sartor* attempts to initiate a readerly revolution. As Shoshana Felman points out, the concept of "revolution" implies stasis as well as upheaval,

having in its turn two ambiguous semantic centers, the one meaning revolution as subversion, an epistemological break or scientific leap, and the other meaning . . . almost the exact opposite: the very movement of turning round, of revolving, of endlessly returning to the same place, of repeating (*Jacques Lacan* 67).

*Sartor Resartus* instigates an "epistemological break" which materializes in the form of unconventional narrative structure and consequent radical demands on the reader. And yet even while *Sartor* constitutes a break from tradition—a revolution—for the rapidly expanding reading public, it illustrates the conclusion to Felman's gloss on the word: *Sartor* returns to and revolves around the traditional elements of the novel. In subverting conventional narrative structure and engendering frustration in its readers through its repeated refusals to "play the game," *Sartor* enacts the dual semantics of the word "revolution": it returns to convention even as it constitutes something altogether new and shockingly different in the British literary world. Taking Felman's bipartite tracing of the etymology of "revolution" as my trajectory, I will explore the precise nature of *Sartor Resartus*'s revolutions—its advances and returns—in the realm of narrative fiction. *Sartor*'s narrative revolution leaves the reader back where s/he began, unsettled and disoriented, but perhaps paradoxically persuaded of the importance of Carlyle's project.

*Sartor*'s revolutionary power centers primarily in its insistence upon the reader's transgression, a revolt against textual authority that takes the form of an interpretation or rewrit-

ing of the text. Typically, part of the reader's response to a text consists in its ongoing re-creation while reading. In *Sartor* this reading-generated-writing is explicitly thematized, in the Editor's re-writing of both Teufelsdröckh's text and his life. The Editor's own repeated crossings of the boundary between reading and writing call into question the distinction between the two activities, and draw the reader's attention to his or her own re-writing of the text. In addition to the Editor's enacting of the problematics of reading, the narrative structure of *Sartor Resartus* similarly insists upon the reader's transgression. Although traditional readings hold that Teufelsdröckh's Clothes Philosophy is the heart of *Sartor Resartus* and that *Die Kleider* is the originating text explicated by the Editor's commentary, this view cannot completely account for the work's rhetorical impact.<sup>2</sup> To concentrate exclusively on the "kernel" of the work is to ignore the most fascinating aspect of *Sartor*'s interpolated narrative structure: the dividing line or boundary that defines the two components. *Sartor* creates the illusion of a textual center, constructing boundaries that the reader is forced to cross in order to read; thus, what this text finally illustrates is the inescapably transgressive nature of reading. By this I do not mean that an absolute "truth of the text" is being violated, for, as I shall show, *Sartor* denies the existence of any such ground. Rather, I use the word "transgressive" to convey the sense in which textual boundaries are crossed in the (inevitably futile) effort to arrive at a privileged center or origin of the text. In *Sartor Resartus*, transgression becomes an integral part of the text's narrative structure: by establishing a frame, the text demands first that we break through it and then that we acknowledge our incrimination.

Unlike a more conventional novel which would rely upon the unquestioned power of the Author and the similarly unquestioning compliance of the reader, *Sartor* demands the reader's continual reappraisal of the narrative, which does not "unfold" linearly but revolves and returns repeatedly upon itself. Thus the reader's expectations of conventionality are thwarted twice over: once in the reception of the text and again in the re-creation or re-writing of the text that reading inevitably initiates. *Sartor* forces the reader to "write" a baffling and bewildering text, making the reader an accessory to his or her own frustration. However, a reader's interpretation or re-writing of a text also has the potential to challenge or distort the intentions of the historical author. The reviews appended by Carlyle to the 1838 edition of *Sartor Resartus* signal the flawed and inadequate nature of Carlyle's authorial control over his text and its reception: the reviewers' varied responses attest to the power readers possess both for misinterpreting and for re-writing a text—or, in this case, having it re-written. Here, the reviewers' comments (their readings of *Sartor Resartus*) lead Carlyle to revise the work by appending those remarks. As components of the narrative, these "real

also the text of *Die Kleider* . . . Only the combination of text and gloss constitutes the text. This playfulness, of course, confuses the normal divisions between the act of interpretation and the object of interpretation. Every text is itself a gloss, every gloss also an integral text. One has only interpretations of interpretations, each interpretation reenacting rather than explicating the structure of the interpretation it interprets. (189)

documents" add yet another layer to the series of textual frames that is *Sartor Resartus*. Functioning as a Derridean "supplement," critical readings here both complete and displace the text as originally written.<sup>3</sup> Carlyle's "Author's Note" of 1868, ingenuously claiming to remove "idle stumbling blocks and nugatory guessings from the path of every reader" (332), simply prolongs the game.

Carlyle's supplementary gesture foregrounds the potential readers possess for (mis)appropriating and revising texts. In *Sartor Resartus*, Carlyle is able to turn his readers' willfulness back on itself in order to use their revisionary power for his own ends; *Sartor* illustrates the power of the text to incorporate and invade the reader for its own purposes. The transgression and submission to textual authority that in *Sartor* is insisted upon as a necessary aspect of reading is continued or extended by Carlyle's affixing of the readers' reviews: the reader "passes and repasses" among Teufelsdröckh's text, the Editor's commentary, the reviews, and "Carlyle's" address in the "Author's Note" of 1868.

## II

I want now to take a closer look at *Sartor*'s narrative components. *Sartor Resartus* consists of two separate but similar texts: the Clothes Philosophy itself (*Die Kleider: ihr Werden und Werken*) written by Diogenes Teufelsdröckh, and *Sartor Resartus*, narrated mostly by the English Editor.<sup>4</sup> These component texts are, of course, interpolated rather than simply enclosed one within the other in a straightforward frame structure: islands of *Die Kleider* are surrounded by a sea of *Sartor*. The resulting effect resembles the phenomenon of "negative shapes" in the visual arts, of which the drawings of M. C. Escher are the supreme example. The "negative shape" concept can be used to define a "positive shape," as when students of drawing are instructed to concentrate on drawing the outline of the space around a chair rather than the chair itself; by drawing the outline, they will produce a drawing of the actual object. When speaking of the literary work, we can say that a portion of the text is defined by its outline, or by its frame: in *Sartor*, for instance, the Editor's commentary not only surrounds and partially repeats Teufelsdröckh's text, but also defines *Die Kleider* by virtue of its difference or distinctness from that text.<sup>5</sup> In both the visual and the verbal arts, the significance of the negative shape design consists in the way it makes the viewer focus on the boundary, the defining border-line between the two components.

Repeatedly, the Editor's remarks signal the defining

boundaries between his discourse and that of others; in fact, the Editor's marginal border-line commentary emphasizes the production and reception of a variety of discourses. Before any part of *Die Kleider* is conveyed to the reader, for example, the Editor cites both a newspaper review of the work ("a masterpiece of boldness, lynx-eyed acuteness, and rugged independent Germanism and Philanthropy" [I, 1, 128]) and a letter from Hofrath Heuschrecke, Teufelsdröckh's associate in Weissnichtwo, who alludes to the "agitation and attention" (I, 1, 130) produced by the publication of *Die Kleider* in Germany.<sup>6</sup> The Editor's quotations from the responses of prior readers instruct the reader of *Sartor Resartus* as to the type of behavior that is expected, increasing the reader's awareness of his or her own critical activity. As well, the personal reminiscences of Teufelsdröckh provided by the English Editor draw attention to the public reactions the Professor of Things in General supposedly provoked. Teufelsdröckh's coffee-house toast, delivered over a tumbler of the local beer Gukguk, elicits a dramatic response: "One full shout, breaking the leaden silence; then a gurgle of innumerable emptying bumpers, again followed by universal cheering, returned him loud acclaim. It was the finale of the night. . ." (I, 1, 133). We are also informed how "when he opened his lips for speech"

the whole Coffee-house would hush itself into silence, as if sure to hear something noteworthy. Nay, perhaps to hear a whole series and river of the most memorable utterances; such as, when once thawed, he would for hours indulge in, with fit audience. (I, 3, 136)

By calling attention to the rhetorical impact of Teufelsdröckh's speech, the Editor draws the reader's attention to questions of communication and response: how will the reader's response compare to that of this prior audience?

Once the Editor begins to provide the actual text of *Die Kleider*, the border-line status of his own discourse becomes even more pronounced. Because of the zeal with which the Editor hastens to explain, amplify, or denounce Teufelsdröckh's ideas, citations from *Die Kleider* rarely extend beyond a few paragraphs in length: the overall effect, therefore, is one of rapid oscillation back and forth between the Editor's discourse and Teufelsdröckh's text. "Here may we not, for a moment, interrupt the stream of Oratory with a remark . . . ?" inquires the Editor, in a characteristic phrase (I, 5, 152). A little later he asks: "What, for example, are we to make of such sentences as the following?" (I, 6, 153), and sub-

<sup>2</sup>Gerry Brookes, for instance, writes: "We are interested in the Editor's comments on Teufelsdröckh's ideas as they aid our own understanding of and fix our attitude toward the Clothes Philosophy . . . Our interest is in coming to know the Clothes Philosophy, not the fate of the Editor" (48-49). See also Tennyson 182, 280-81. In contrast, Jonathan Loesberg notes:

there is some indication that the text of *Sartor*, at least in a sense, is

<sup>3</sup>Derrida describes the supplement in *Of Grammatology*:

the concept of the supplement . . . harbors within itself two significations whose cohabitation is as strange as it is necessary. The supplement adds itself, it is a surplus, a plenitude enriching another plenitude, the fullest measure of presence. It cumulates and accumulates presence . . . But the supplement supplements. It adds only to replace. It intervenes or insinuates itself *in-the-place-of*; if it fills, it is as if one fills a void. If it represents and makes an image, it is by the anterior default of a presence. Compensatory and vicarious, the supplement is an adjunct, a subaltern instance which *takes-(the)-place* . . . the supplement is an "exterior addition." (144-45)

<sup>4</sup>A problem in terminology is associated with this work, because "*Sartor*

*Resartus*" refers both to Carlyle's text and to the English Editor's commentary on *Die Kleider*. This ambiguity is deliberate in that the very title of the work signals some of the major issues inherent in its narrative structure and its theme; nonetheless, it makes the critic's job rather more complicated. I hope that it will be clear from the context whether I am referring to Carlyle's *Sartor Resartus*—that is, to the book that we hold in our hand while reading—or to the Editor's commentary.

<sup>5</sup>On the general significance of literary frames, see Caws.

<sup>6</sup>Quotations from *Sartor Resartus* are keyed to *A Carlyle Reader: Selections from the Writings of Thomas Carlyle*. Because of the large number of editions, I have also provided Book and Chapter numbers for each passage cited. Thus, (I, 1, 128) refers to a passage from Book I, Chapter 1, which may be found on page 128 of the *Carlyle Reader*.



sequently laments: "Or again, has it often been the lot of our readers to read such stuff as we shall now quote?" (I, 6, 154). As I have mentioned above, the Editor's framing remarks regularly foreground the issue of reception and interpretation of Teufelsdröckh's text by its various readers. The following sentences are typical:

If in the Descriptive-Historical portion of this Volume, Teufelsdröckh, discussing merely the *Werden* (Origin and successive Improvement) of Clothes, has astonished many a reader, much more will he in the Speculative-Philosophical portion, which treats of their *Wirken*, or Influences. It is here that the present Editor first feels the pressure of the task . . . (I, 8, 158-59)

In *Sartor Resartus*, an interpolated narrative structure—constituted primarily by the English Editor's border-line commentary, which defines Teufelsdröckh's text—calls attention to the transgression of boundaries inherent in any act of reading.

As the reader oscillates between *Die Kleider* and the Editor's commentary and simultaneously watches the Editor himself crossing the boundary between reading and writing, s/he cannot but become aware of the significance of the ubiquitous borderlines of this text *for his or her own role*. The reader's borderline position is clearly linked to his/her involvement in the work's re-writing—a participation in the creative act that Leonard Deen has noted:

Organization takes active and dramatic shape in the editor's struggles with Teufelsdröckh's texts, and the reader is thus involved in the process of composition. Reader and editor struggle together towards the transcendental regions of the Clothes Philosophy . . . (438)

*Sartor's* interpolated structure not only necessitates repeated readerly transgressions—"passings and repassings"—but prompts the Editor's explicit remarking of that readerly role:

New labourers will arrive; new Bridges will be built; nay, may not our own poor rope-and-raft Bridge, in your passings and repassings, be mended in many a point, till it grows quite firm, passable even for the halt? (III, 9, 310)

The Editor clearly recognizes the importance of the reader's contribution to the text's meaning. That contribution is made possible by the text's framed narrative structure. Were the frame design more conventional, more complete—that is, if *Die Kleider* were enclosed in its entirety by a simple frame of editorial commentary—the reader's transgression would be elicited only at the beginning and end of the text. As it is, the reader repeatedly crosses between the interpolated "islands" of *Sartor Resartus*: the text's narrative structure is designed to maximize and foreground the reader's involvement. By necessitating readerly transgression, *Sartor's* narrative structure encourages the reader to contribute a meaning of his or

her own rather than unquestioningly accepting a textual authority.

Indeed, authority in *Sartor Resartus* is portrayed as partial, limited, and subject to constant revision. Although the English Editor is the most obvious authority in the text, his discourse is not unmediated. The interjections of Hofrath Heuschrecke, Teufelsdröckh's "chief friend and associate" (I, 2, 130) both instigate and silence the Editor's telling, effectively defining or framing his narration. In Chapter Two, the reader learns of Heuschrecke's request for a biography of Teufelsdröckh and his promise to provide biographical documents. This letter incites the Editor to write his commentary on *Die Kleider*—the text that becomes *Sartor Resartus* as we know it (I, 2, 130). Subsequently, Heuschrecke sends a letter accompanying the biographical documents (I, 11, 175), which stresses the importance of correct reading and the usefulness of biographical information. Heuschrecke thus fosters the Editor's fruitless faith in a biographical origin for *Die Kleider*. This strategy is repeated a little later when Heuschrecke usurps the narration with an assured address to both Editor and—by virtue of the use of the second person pronoun "you"—the reader:

by this time you are fairly plunged (*vertieft*) in that mighty forest of Clothes-Philosophy; and looking round, as all readers do, with astonishment enough. Such portions and passages as you have already mastered, and brought to paper, could not but awaken a strange curiosity touching the mind they issued from; the perhaps unparalleled psychical mechanism, which manufactured such matter, and emitted it to the light of day. (I, 11, 176)

In this passage Heuschrecke stresses the connection between text and man, between literary and biographical analysis, implying that he possesses authority over *Die Kleider*. Heuschrecke's attempted coup prefigures the Editor's efforts to become the undisputed authority over the text, the Lacanian "subject presumed to know."<sup>7</sup> Like all the other bids for authority over this text, though, Heuschrecke's efforts are undermined. When the social revolution in Germany is attributed to the influence of *Die Kleider*—and hence Teufelsdröckh—Heuschrecke's authority is threatened; he can preserve his position only by eliminating Teufelsdröckh altogether, an episode recounted in a third letter to the Editor (III, 12, 330). The threat that Teufelsdröckh poses to Heuschrecke's authority is emphasized when at one crucial moment the professor's discourse displaces all others, including Heuschrecke's own: the Editor includes Heuschrecke's Malthusian pamphlet on population control "Not indeed, for the sake of the Tract itself, which we admire little, but of the marginal Notes, evidently in Teufelsdröckh's hand, which rather copiously fringe it" (III, 4, 281). Here, the margin literally becomes the center of attention, a maneuver that underlines the constructed, arbitrary nature of narrative authority and undermines the narrator's attempts to gain control of the text.<sup>8</sup>

Even more than Heuschrecke, the English Editor is the figure most concerned with the establishment and preservation of textual authority. From his position as explicator of Teufelsdröckh's text the Editor continually tries to control the reader's knowledge and opinion of *Die Kleider* and its author. For example, at the end of Chapter Three of Book I the Editor establishes his superiority over the reader by refusing to disclose the details of Teufelsdröckh's appearance. Describing Teufelsdröckh's social and domestic habits, the Editor abruptly concludes, stating only:

Additional particulars: of his age, which was of that standing middle sort you could only guess at; of his wide surtout; the colour of his trousers, fashion of his broad-brimmed steeple hat, and so forth, we might report, but do not. (I, 3, 142)

As Lee Baker correctly notes, "the middle, biographical chapters in *Sartor* give only a shadow of Teufelsdröckh's life" (232); here and throughout, the possibility of arriving at a biographical origin for *Die Kleider* and Teufelsdröckh is first advanced and then undermined.

At the beginning of Chapter 9 of Book I, the Editor hastens to reassure and enlighten the reader on the subject of Teufelsdröckh's writing: "Let no courteous reader take offence at the opinions broached in the conclusion of the last chapter . . ." (I, 9, 163). While the reader may well have found Teufelsdröckh's rhapsodic prose bewildering, surely "take offence" is too violent a description of the reader's reaction. Consequently, the Editor's intervention serves as much to distance the reader from *Die Kleider* as it does to bring the reader closer to an interpretation of the text. As these examples illustrate, the Editor functions as both guide and barrier to Teufelsdröckh's text, much as the Derridean "hymen": something "that *both* sows confusion between opposites and stands *between* the opposites 'at once'" (*Dissemination* 212). The Editor is *both* a liaison and a barrier: in Derrida's words, "what counts here is the *between*" (*Dissemination* 212). As guide to Teufelsdröckh's writings, the Editor will necessarily and simultaneously function as a barrier. For instance, a guide to a house or a wilderness trail shows visitors what is permitted, but also informs them of what is forbidden by saying "that room is off limits" or "don't go that way." A teacher explains the requirements of a course, but that explanation implicitly or explicitly encompasses an idea of unacceptable work and behavior: an idea that ultimately rests with the teacher's decision, which is in turn informed by precedent, convention, higher authority and so on. Interdictions—barriers—are an inevitable part of the function of guides and teachers. This uneven distribution of knowledge and power fuels the transference relationship—which, as I shall show, underlies much of the reading dynamics of *Sartor Resartus*. Before continuing my discussion of this aspect of *Sartor Resartus*, though, I want to explore in further detail the nature of the Editor's role as "hymen."

The Editor's authority over the reader originates with his privileged access to Teufelsdröckh—or, rather, to Teufelsdröckh's writings. Claiming that Teufelsdröckh's authority consists in his individuality, "as if it were not Argument that had taught him, but Experience" (II, 8, 159), the Editor clearly considers that his friendship with Teufelsdröckh affords him in turn a measure of authority. This authority places the Editor on the boundary, in a borderline position of mediation between reader and text. Only a prior reading can interfere with an individual's experience of a text; in consequence, the Editor's reading constitutes a barrier for the reader—even though the Editor himself chooses to describe his role as that of Bridge-builder (I, 11, 178). While the Editor guides the reader through Teufelsdröckh's text, he also interferes with the reader's direct experience of *Die Kleider*. Furthermore, the reader can approach Teufelsdröckh only through the Editor's reminiscences; we experience only fragments of Teufelsdröckh's selected and narrativized autobiography, not the individual himself. As biography supplements life, text displaces the man: there is no Teufelsdröckh at the center of this textual labyrinth. Nevertheless, the Editor encourages our belief in Teufelsdröckh's centrality just as Hofrath Heuschrecke fostered the Editor's faith in biography, suggesting that Teufelsdröckh's "essence" will be conveyed by the biographical documents:

[W]hat reader expects that, with all our writing and reporting, Teufelsdröckh could be brought home to him, till once the Documents arrive? His Life, Fortunes, and Bodily Presence, are as yet hidden from us, or matter only of faint conjecture. But, on the other hand, does not his Soul lie enclosed in this remarkable volume? (I, 3, 142)

The Editor's remarks are extremely provocative. Reiterating *Sartor's* characteristic strategy of both proffering and withholding narration, the Editor here both proposes and withdraws the possibility of gaining unmediated access to Diogenes Teufelsdröckh. The Editor's first phrases encourage the reader not to over-value the written text as a source of true knowledge of Teufelsdröckh the man: "What reader expects that, with all our writing and reporting, Teufelsdröckh could be brought home to him?" The message seems unequivocal, but it is abruptly undermined by the reversal inherent in the sentence's closing clause: "till once the Documents arrive?" Within the course of a single sentence, the Editor has seemingly reversed his position, and the reader has been subjected to a dizzying volte-face. The more wholeheartedly the reader agrees with the sentiments expressed in the first clauses of the Editor's sentence—a position s/he is probably only too ready to assume, given *Sartor's* exasperating profusion of bewildering and obscure "writing and reporting"—the more violent is the destruction of that stance with the maddening final phrase. Picture the reader as in a room with rubber walls: the more energetically s/he runs toward one wall, the more violently will s/he be bounced back in the opposite direction.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>7</sup>"Transference," according to Lacan, "is only understandable insofar as its starting point is seen in the subject presumed to know; he is presumed to know what no one can escape: meaning as such" (64).

<sup>8</sup>This kind of episode recurs in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, where Kurtz's own scrawled marginalia steal the center of attention from his pamphlet on the "Suppression of Savage Customs."

<sup>9</sup>There is, of course, the possibility that certain real readers will enjoy *Sartor's* narrative williness. This does not invalidate my analysis of the text's designs on the implied reader. And I am arguing that *Sartor's* notoriety is primarily

due to the gap between the implied reader's expected response and the actual reader's execution of that response.

In the remainder of this passage the Editor undermines the possibility of attaining access to Teufelsdröckh's "Bodily Presence"—the commonsense position, as it were—only to conclude with a provocative question for *Sartor's* reader. Alternately attracted and rejected, *Sartor's* reader undergoes an oscillation with respect to the Editor's authority that s/he also performs in reading the interpolated sections of the *Sartor Resartus* / *Die Kleider* narrative. At both the micro and macro levels of its design, then—both at the level of the cell and of the skeleton—*Sartor Resartus* demands a mentally agile reader, one able—like Carroll's Alice in Wonderland—to hold to two contrary positions at once. At the same time, to re-cite Derrida's phrase once more, what counts here is not the resolute espousal of one position over another, but "the between"—an ability and a willingness to switch, to oscillate, to exist in the uncertainty of "between."

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Teufelsdröckh's use of another writer's words to bolster the account of his new-found subjectivity corroborates the illusoriness of personal authority that Derrida has described as inherent in the use of the first-person pronoun: "he who says *I* in the present tense, in the so-called positive event constituted by his discourse, would be capable of only an illusion of mastery" (*Dissemination* 298). Teufelsdröckh's "I" cannot convey the man but only his fictional construction of himself. (We can compare the way in which *Sartor Resartus* includes quotations from Goethe, Novalis and Fichte directly after the subtitle: "The Life and Opinions of Herr Teufelsdröckh." Thus, even the title page of *Sartor Resartus* signals the impossibility of actually gaining access to Teufelsdröckh's "life and opinions," displaced as they are by the words of others.)

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about the book.) In *Sartor*, the Editor is placed in a position of apparent authority over Teufelsdröckh, and attempts to assume the role of the "subject presumed to know." Ultimately, though, this authority dissolves—like all others in the text. Teufelsdröckh's persuasive but disruptive power over the Editor is signalled by the Editor's adoption of his

piebald, entangled, hyper-metaphorical style of writing, not to say of thinking . . . Even as the smaller whirlpool is sucked into the larger, and made to whirl along with it, so has the lesser mind, in this instance, been forced to become portion of the greater, and, like it, see all things figuratively: which habit time and assiduous effort will be needed to eradicate. (III, 12, 327-28)

As the Editor's reduplication of *Die Kleider* in an attempt to explicate and account for the text shows, both reader and Editor "transfer" onto Teufelsdröckh, the elusive and illusory subject of *Sartor Resartus*.

"Thomas Carlyle," *Sartor*'s implied author, constitutes another element in this series of ambiguous authority figures. Like Teufelsdröckh and the English Editor, the "voice" of the implied author partakes of the authority of the "subject presumed to know." In fact, the implied Carlyle of *Sartor Resartus* behaves very much like the persona developed by Jacques Lacan, who in his theoretical writings adopts the persona of the ultimate subject-presumed-to-know, alternately flaunting his presumed knowledge and withholding it from the frustrated and subjugated reader. Similarly, both Teufelsdröckh and the Editor finally refuse to divulge their secret knowledge: to do so would necessitate the surrender of the only authority they possess. For all the figures of textual authority in *Sartor Resartus*, mystery—which involves submission to a truth beyond human reason—is a necessary element of mastery. Even though the reader may in successive readings develop a sense of a controlling voice or presence behind the maneuverings of Teufelsdröckh, Heuschrecke and the Editor, that apparently authoritative voice is subject to the same limitations that constrain the authority of other textual figures. We cannot know whether the implied author of *Sartor Resartus* truly "knows," because we encounter only a facade of textual shows and veils, just as we never encounter Teufelsdröckh himself but must be content with his writings.

Despite the Editor's efforts to assume the role of "subject presumed to know," it is Teufelsdröckh who is more compelling in the role. The barrier to the fulfillment of this narrative relationship is, of course, the Editor, who literally stands between Teufelsdröckh and the reader, and doesn't let the reader forget it for a minute; however, the Editor's unwillingness to allow the reader unrestricted access to Teufelsdröckh only underlines the Professor's mesmerizing power. As both teacher and barrier, receptive to the prospect of Teufelsdröckh as the origin of the text and retaining a persistent belief in an "authentic" version of events, the Editor fights to preserve his own authority by withholding absolute knowledge of Teufelsdröckh and controlling the reader's access to the Professor's text. Trying to keep control over Teufelsdröckh's writing—to translate, master, explain it—the Editor finally is corrupted and seduced by Teufelsdröckh's ideas and by the "piebald, entangled, hyper-metaphorical" style of his writing. This nar-

rative design emphasizes the impossibility of a detached experience of story, the futility of attempting the uninvolved transmission of a tale. The Editor's experience highlights the struggle for dominance inherent in the relation between the reader (of the text, of experience, of the world) and what is read.

*Sartor*'s Editor is invested in the concept of Teufelsdröckh as origin, but Teufelsdröckh does not possess the meaning of his own text. By the end of the book, when Teufelsdröckh is finally silenced by Heuschrecke, Carlyle's "new means" have wrenched a new way of reading into existence. Although *Sartor*—unlike *Die Kleider*—does not generate social revolution, it incites the reader to rebel against the "teacher" of the text and to establish an independent relationship with the ostensible central authority of the work. The reader's new relationship with the text is predicated upon a faith or conviction that there is something in the work "worth saying," even though the authority behind that "saying" is questionable. Carlyle's "new means" instigates a series of private readerly revolutions and transforms a reading based on subjection to authority into one founded on faith. *Sartor Resartus* represents a watershed in the history of narrative fiction, in that it marks the transition from a mode of fiction dominated by an overt textual authority (clearly present in Fielding's novels, for instance) to one distinguished by the absence of such a controlling presence. That this transformation is not an easy one is amply demonstrated by the scandalized responses of *Sartor*'s earliest readers.

*Sartor Resartus* demands the reader's participation, which in this case means that the reader must break the law of the text simply to be able to read it. Persuaded that *Die Kleider* is the explanatory "germ" of *Sartor Resartus*—"To look through the Shows of things into the Things themselves he is led and compelled" (II, 10, 266)—the reader is lured into the role of "subject presumed to know," even while recognizing that that role is arbitrary and constructed. Despite everything the text says to the contrary, the reader is still tempted to assume the mantle of authority, to say "I think" about this text. And *Sartor Resartus* is re-enacted in its criticism, in a way that Felman has observed occurring in responses to *The Turn of the Screw*:

The scene of the critical debate is thus a repetition of the scene dramatized in the text. The critical interpretation, in other words, not only elucidates the text but also reproduces it dramatically, unwittingly participates in it. Through its very reading the text, so to speak, acts itself out. ("Turning the Screw" 101)

The crucial difference between James's text and Carlyle's, though, is that criticism of *Sartor Resartus* cannot elucidate the text. The reader of this work is coaxed into a rewriting that both deconstructs and originates with the concept of textual authority, replacing submission to narrative authority with a devotion to the processes of the text itself. In fact, in *Sartor Resartus* narrative structure itself assumes an authority that in more traditional novels is linked more directly with an authorial persona.

To write a text means to assume responsibility for it, as when I say "I am responsible for this chapter." But *Sartor*

puts its reader through the wringer by forcing him or her to assume responsibility for a fundamentally groundless text, demanding a readerly revolution that goes nowhere. *Sartor* is

indeed an "extensive Volume" of boundless, almost formless contents, a very Sea of Thought; neither calm nor clear, if you will; yet wherein the toughest pearl-diver may dive to his utmost depth, and return not only with sea-wreck but with true orient. (I, 2, 129)

The problem with this metaphor, as the first readers of the work sensed, is that *Sartor*'s sea is bottomless and the reader must bring along her own pearls. Lacking the reader's supplement, this designing narrative elaborately contrives to procure it, demanding that the reader provide the faith to fill in the absence at the center of the text. Derrida tells us that "there is a supplement at the source" of every text (*Of Grammatology* 304). But he also cautions that "the supplement supplements. It adds only to replace. It intervenes or insinuates itself *in-the-place-of*; if it fills, it is as if one fills a void" (*Of Grammatology* 144-45). By encouraging the reader's transgression in the expectation of discovering an origin while finally removing any possibility of such a ground, *Sartor Resartus* thematizes this Derridean filling of the void. It is no wonder *Sartor*'s first readers responded so violently, for they were reacting to the text's startling and hitherto unthinkable demand. Inescapably caught up in the "labyrinthine tortuosities" of the narrative (II, 10, 264), *Sartor*'s readers are forced to share Teufelsdröckh's own surrender to the "Everlasting No." But they can also re-enact the "Everlasting Yea" through their own faith in the importance of writing and reading. The reader's devotion to *Sartor Resartus* is an ethically-charged action that negates the abysmal doubt attendant on the absence of narrative authority. As Teufelsdröckh stresses, only action can banish all doubt:

But indeed Conviction, were it never so excellent, is worthless till it convert itself into Conduct. Nay properly Conviction is not possible till then; inasmuch as all Speculation is by nature endless, formless, a vortex amid vortices: only by a felt indubitable certainty of Experience does it find any centre to revolve round, and so fashion itself into a system. Most true is it, as a wise man teaches us, that "Doubt of any sort cannot be removed except by Action." (II, 9, 259)

*Sartor Resartus* has been described as "a prophetic history or myth of the death and rebirth of belief" (Deen 450). But *Sartor* does not stop at merely recounting the passage from doubt to faith; rather, it seduces the reader into re-enacting these experiences. *Sartor* is a text that, in the words of Michel de Certeau, "does not express practices, does not merely represent this or that move, it performs them" (36).<sup>13</sup> The performative reading thus elicited transforms a poetics of authority into a poetics of devotion, and—John Stuart Mill's hesitancy notwithstanding—makes Carlyle's problematic

parable undeniably "worth saying" and repeatedly worth reading.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup>Similarly, John Holloway observes that the task of the Victorian sage consists not in transmitting information but in awakening perception (1-57).

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## The Pastoral and Anti-Pastoral in Elizabeth Gaskell's

### *Cousin Phillis*

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Scholarship on *Cousin Phillis* supports the perception that Gaskell is at heart very traditional-minded, nostalgically bound to customs and habits of the past and especially to a simpler, gentler rural England. Thus, provincial and pastoral novels like *Cranford* and *Cousin Phillis* are thought to represent most completely what Gaskell genuinely felt and the themes and subjects her imagination could most enthusiastically embrace because they reify her love for rural Knutsford and her longing for the peace, tranquility, and simple life of the English countryside.<sup>1</sup> Gaskell readers have observed that, in the middle of the urban poverty and strife in novels such as *Mary Barton* and *North and South*, there is always the scene, the character, the moment that epitomizes this sharp longing for the peace and harmony of a Wordsworthian pastoral England. To be sure, *Cousin Phillis* uses the conventions both of the classical pastoral and the nineteenth-century pastoral

novel, but submerged beneath "that lovely idyll" of rural England is a critique of the pastoral ideology the novel is said to celebrate. Ultimately, in *Cousin Phillis*, Gaskell is as critical of withdrawal to the "middle landscape of pastoral" (Marx 23) as she is critical of urban evils for which the country is supposed to be an anodyne.

Though the novel recreates neither the Arcadian world of idleness and leisure nor the urbane stylized language of classical pastorals, it is in the tradition in its use of several of the key elements of the mode. Physically, Hope Farm reminds the reader of that enchanted place, the *locus amoenus*, beautiful and bountiful, surrounded by the sounds and scents of an ever replenishing nature. Seen from the perspective of the urban dweller-narrator, Paul Manning, the rural retreat evokes the pastoral virtues of simplicity, peace, and wholeness. Paul remembers the scenes of harvest like Wordsworthian spots of

time providing him with psychic sustenance in the present as they "rise like pictures to [his] memory" (267). Certainly for Gaskell's nineteenth-century readers Hope Farm was "a vision of a life of contentment located in the rural past" (Squires 4), an old place reminiscent of an ancient time with its "queer-like stone chimneys" (Gaskell 224).

Indeed, *Cousin Phillis* reflects the development of the mode from classical to contemporary times in that it employs elements of the Virgilian Georgic, the Christian pastoral, and the romantic rural idyll. Minister-farmer Holman represents the good shepherd tending his flock, his congregation and his extended family at Hope Farm. Like the nineteenth-century pastoral novel, *Cousin Phillis* uses the particularized setting, a farm in rural England, to suggest not only the practical world of agricultural industry of the Georgic but also the romantic idealization of the simple, good life lived close to nature. In fact, in the community of Hope Farm, Minister Holman attempts to reproduce the simpler master-worker relationship of pre-industrial England, a social world based on benevolent patriarchy. At the same time, the balancing of work and contemplation in a socially integrated community also suggests the democratic nineteenth-century utopia. Servants eat in the kitchen and the family in the dining-living room, but the door is kept open between the rooms for easy communication, and everyone comes together in field work and prayer.

Gaskell employs too the tension in pastoral literature created by the contrast between the country and the city, nature and civilization, an antithesis considered central to pastoral literature. Frank Kermode has observed that "the first condition of pastoral poetry is that there should be a sharp difference between two ways of life, the rustic and the urban" (14), and Eleanor Terry Lincoln sees the pastoral as representing "a withdrawal from action that affords a perspective upon battlefield and marketplace" (2). Implicit in this contrast is the assumption that country life is superior to city life because the former recreates a golden age of simplicity and naturalness that the pastoralist nostalgically longs for. In *Cousin Phillis*, Gaskell uses two narratives—an external and an internal one—to develop this rural-urban antithesis. In the external narrative, Paul Manning, the city dweller, talks about his growing up experiences both outside and inside the pastoral world of Hope Farm. This external narrative then serves as a frame for the internal narrative, his story of the growing up experiences of Cousin Phillis on Hope Farm when the city comes to the country in the person of engineer Holdsworth.

In fact *Cousin Phillis* reflects the various levels of contrast which Harold Tolliver suggests the pastoral setting can elicit (*Pastoral Forms and Attitudes* 1-5). On one level, Hope Farm represents the values associated with pastoral nature, such as organicism, plainness and honesty, innocence and simplicity, while the urban world of the Mannings and Holdsworth represents, at various times, the mechanical and artificial, experience and complexity, and cultured order. Yet, viewed from another perspective, Hope Farm also suggests values that would seem to be antithetical to pastoral nature. In that it is a community shaped along fixed social and religious principles, Hope Farm also represents the ordered, the enclosed, even the artificial. Gaskell introduces several variants of these levels of contrasts to create a tensive struc-

ture more complicated than the simpler rural-urban antithesis of most nineteenth-century pastoral novels. This tensive structure allows her to examine social, moral, and intellectual values of her culture from a variety of different perspectives.

Like the sophisticated classical and Renaissance poet looking back on a simpler, more elemental life, Gaskell evokes in her two central pastoral figures, Holman and his daughter Phillis, that sense of alienation from the rural which calls into question the virtues embodied in the pastoral landscape. Both father and daughter have a hunger for knowledge and a curiosity about the larger world that is in contrast to the pastoral image of the humble, simple rustic. Phillis combines household chores with her study of Italian, keeping Dante's *Inferno* by her side to snatch moments from her work to study. She listens hungrily to the lively discussions on problems in dynamics and mechanical engineering and the customs and habits of foreign countries. Holman's office, filled as it is with books on divinity, manuals on farming, and an assortment of manuscripts, reflects his complicated life as a scholar-farmer-minister-artisan. He is a product of the urban world, having been educated at one of the universities and, presumably, having lived a good portion of his life in a city before moving to his rural retreat on land inherited from his wife's family.

Not only are Holman's intellect and education in contrast to the bucolic life usually associated with pastorals, but so is the moral code by which he lives and which governs and orders existence at Hope Farm. In shaping that community, he has attempted to establish a "visible" kingdom of God on earth separate from the corruption and imperfections of the fallen world. His is a Puritan vision that rejects as signs of the fallen state the sensuality, freedom, and spontaneity usually associated with pastoral nature. Holman is anti-pastoral in ways similar to the New England puritan William Bradford, who condemns Thomas Morton and his May Day celebrations at Merry Mount. Though his intellectual pursuits reflect humanistic concerns, Holman is as inflexible in self-denial as his Puritan forefathers. He will not allow his daughter to wear colorful ribbons in her hair or to read fiction or enjoy art purely for aesthetic pleasure. The only music encouraged is hymn singing. He rejects Holdsworth's bantering as a frivolous distraction, and he sees Paul's pride in his father's achievements as vanity. Indeed, though the Hope Farm culture endorses plainness and honesty, it is an austere serious, highly structured existence that opposes as evil not only the worldly world of the larger society but also the very pastoral world it seems to endorse.

For those who see *Cousin Phillis* as Gaskell's masterpiece because it is such a "perfect little idyll," Phillis herself epitomizes most completely not only the pastoral idyll in her close identification with nature but also idealized nineteenth-century feminine qualities—simplicity, gentleness, and innocent beauty. David Cecil, for example, describes her as "gentle, unintellectual, domesticated" (199). Arthur Pollard emphasizes her "maidenly affections, modesty, gentleness" (192). Paul, Phillis's interpreter and her primary "reader," compares her to Wordsworth's Lucy and associates her with "a rose that had come to full bloom on the sunny side of a lonely house, sheltered from the storms" (289). In her study of the pastoral myth in American culture, Annette Kolodny

<sup>1</sup>There is a long tradition in Gaskell scholarship that emphasizes the split in her between the social problem novelist and the domestic-provincial novelist, between her distaste for the urban and Manchester and her love of the rural and Knutsford. See Allen, who argues that Gaskell is at her best depicting provincial life (209). See also Wagenknecht, who comments on the two Gaskells, the lesser one who wrote purpose novels and the greater one who wrote "that lovely idyll, its author's finest short piece, *Cousin Phillis*. There is no didacticism in that" (252). See too Ffrench, who also discusses the two Gas-

kells, the social crusader and the creator of the country idyll, and finds that the second gained ascendancy during the writer's career (133-34). Also Wright finds that Gaskell "turned back to examine the tradition and social order she knew, . . . the values inherent in the life of the country as opposed to the life of the town" (83). Lansbury, however, offers an opposing view, that, for Gaskell in *Mary Barton*, for example, to look back on an "imaginary golden age of rural simplicity" is an illusion and that the character of Alice Wilson "marks the rejection of Arcadianism" (15).

has commented extensively on the recurring image of the landscape as female, the depiction of the harmony between man and nature as "based on the experience of the land as essentially feminine" (4-5). In *Phillis*, Gaskell reminds readers that the pastoral myth of the unspoiled, bucolic landscape embodied in the image of the female idealized is a central metaphor of English writers as well, particularly a romantic poet like Wordsworth.

Readers who see *Phillis* as the central image of the pastoral ideal point to the correspondence between the harvest scenes and her development. Ironically, however, what these scenes symbolically dramatize is not harmony between the human and natural but the conflict between her maturing sexuality on the one hand and her father's moral vision on the other. For Holman, minister and farmer, nature must be tamed and cultivated. Sherry Ortner speculates that women have always been closely identified with natural processes and devalued accordingly by culture which attempts to control nature (71-73). *Phillis*'s "innocence" has been preserved through "careful segregation, inside a magic hedge, from the processes of time, seasons, growth, and fertility which structure the rural world" (Stoneman 162).

At the haying, when a sudden summer storm forces father and daughter and their two visitors to seek shelter in an overhanging sand bank, *Phillis*'s physical closeness to Holdsworth in the tight enclosure awakens her sexually in ways that her "uncorrupted" pastoral nature is hardly able to acknowledge. At the apple harvest she expresses her desires by offering Holdsworth a love token, a nosegay, yet her response to his boldly passionate look is denial, even shame as she shrinks from him. Pauline Nestor accurately comments that "in such a world, where female sexual passivity is normative, but not, as Gaskell recognizes, natural, women are inevitably condemned to feelings of guilt" (63-64). When she experiences the loss of Holdsworth and what he represents, the serenity of her pastoral world evaporates; and her physical and psychological decline corresponds with the winter season. Nature grieves, and the novel takes on the somber tone of the elegiac. In a double inversion of the convention of pastoral love, the woman, not the man, expresses the lover's lament; and its expression takes the form of a nineteenth-century psychologically induced female illness rather than the plaintive song of the narcissistic poet-shepherd. The gender roles of men and women and the genre roles of city and country are inverted when *Phillis* leaves the country to seek renewal in the city with Paul's family in Birmingham. This second double inversion marks the conjunction of the internal narration and external narration at the conclusion of the novel.

Gaskell also uses the two male visitors and their relationship to *Phillis* to comment ironically on the identification of the female child with pastoral nature. When Paul first meets *Phillis*, he comments on her steady, clear, untroubled look. In their conversations she is simple and direct, lacking in the masking of the real self expected of women in social settings. For example, she confidently compares her superior intellectual abilities to his inferior ones and does not allow him to dominate their conversations. But, when Holdsworth comes to visit and she begins to struggle with the feelings he arouses in her, repression, confusion, silence, even coyness replace the openness and honesty which both pastoral and reli-

gious ideologies should have nurtured in her. She begins to act more like the heroine in a sentimental romance than the heroine of a pastoral novel.

The relationship between *Phillis* and Paul established early in the novel is used to illustrate yet another central purpose behind Gaskell's transformation of the city-country contrast, that is, to critique both gender differences in the socialization of boys and girls in the general society and the additional constrictions the pastoral myth places on the development of self-identity in the female. The "sibling" relationship between *Phillis* and Paul, reminiscent of other such relationships in nineteenth-century novels (*Maggie* and Tom Tulliver in George Eliot's *Mill on the Floss*, for example), dramatizes the different realms assigned to men and women, the public and active for men and the domestic and passive for women, and the ways that the rural perpetuates the sexism of the separate spheres.

To underscore the degree to which *Phillis*'s life is circumscribed and the contrasting expectations for boys and girls, Gaskell creates a male narrator who is only two years older than his cousin and who, like Tom in relation to *Maggie*, is clearly less intelligent and gifted but who has had opportunities and advantages not available to her. "Equal in age and class, only gender divides them" (Stoneman 162). To heighten the irony of the contrast, Gaskell allows this narrator to first dwell with relish on his maturational experience away from home—the excitement of this first trip, the variety and diversity of his daily schedule on his job, and his optimism over its prospects—before he meets *Phillis* and is introduced to her world of domestic chores, preparing vegetables in the kitchen or doing some hand sewing in the sitting room while stealing quick glances at an open book by her side. The observations he makes about her childish pinafore and her social inexperience are that much more poignant because such signs of *Phillis*'s retarded psycho-social development come from his limited perspective.

By allowing Paul to talk about himself at some length before getting to the internal narrative, Gaskell is able to emphasize the separation that any young person, male or female, should be encouraged to experience if an independent self is to emerge. Away from his parents for the first time, Paul is openly pleased with "his independence of lodging." After his father leaves him alone in his room, he savors being his own master, "smelling the packed preserves with the delight of a possessor" (220), a treat which he might eat at his own will. In fact the word *independence* occurs repeatedly in this external frame to the internal narrative. "The new independence of my life occupied all my thoughts," he says (221). Though his father clearly wants the son to have some supervised meals with villagers known to the family, Paul is pleased that at least "supper will be an independent meal" (220). He is clearly an immature and insecure young man when he first visits Hope Farm, but he is allowed to develop independence, initiative, and some sense of self-identity as he establishes boundaries between himself and others. *Phillis*, brought up in her sheltered rural retreat, has had books to feed her mind but few, if any, opportunities to develop a sense of self. In yet another version of pastoral tradition, the external frame, the story of urban life, provides an ironic commentary on the internal narrative, the story of pastoral life.

Through Paul's narration of his separation from home, Gaskell is also able to use a young man's rebelling against authority to critique not only provincial sectarianism but also the impact of religion on gender differences. Though his parents are Independents, Paul rebels against the religious rituals of the village church, the dull, tedious sermons and prayers. Later, he perceives that the pastoral care of the local ministers during *Phillis*'s grave illness is long on tenets but short on compassion. Too, Paul's internal narrative, even at its most ironically naive, allows the reader to understand that Holman's infantilization of his daughter is at the core of his transformation of Hope Farm into a pastoral haven free of the imperfections of the real world. As Wendy Craik has observed, in this novel "active faith is aligned with what is passing, with the old ways of life and the older generation" (74).

Separation and differentiation have always been more difficult for girls than for boys, as Nancy Chodorow's study of gender differences in the psycho-sexual development of young children suggests. Traditionally, the expectation for a middle-class daughter has been that she stay in the bosom of the family until she marries. Expectations for *Phillis* are doubly constricting because, as the precocious child of a formidable intellect and moral authority, she has bonded far more closely with her father than with her very passive, non-intellectual mother. Her father's pastoral withdrawal and religious beliefs come together to re-enforce idealized feminine virtues. The pastoral nature *Phillis* is identified with is not problematical for her father as long as he can control her development to assure that she will flower in innocence and unworldliness, free of imperfections, her spirit as arrested as her passions.

However, here too, Gaskell provides the double perspective, critiquing as well the expectations of the larger society regarding female autonomy and development. She creates a scene in which Paul's father, on first meeting *Phillis*, seizes immediately on the possibility that she could be his son's future wife—"I think if that lass had not a penny, she would be the making of a man" (251). When Paul responds that *Phillis* is so clever "she's more a man than a woman." (252) the father's assessment is that she would soon forget her studies if she had children to care for. The conversation between father and son underscores two points Gaskell wants to work into her story of *Phillis*. As Paul's father observes, the traditional expectation for a girl, regardless of her intellectual abilities and personal aspirations, is that she will marry and help a man define himself rather than establish her own sense of self. In addition, a girl like *Phillis*, whose intelligence has been nurtured, is some kind of monster in society. Paul's father observes that *Phillis* was "well brought up to work with her hands as well as her head; a scholar—but that can't be helped, and is more her misfortune than her fault, seeing she is the only child of a scholar" (252). The statement comments ironically on *Phillis*'s antithetical nature. In her the domestic, the feminine, and the natural remain divorced from the life of the mind and the aspirations essential to the development of self-identity. And the burial of her female self has been fostered in the pastoral idyll of Hope Farm. Again, in an inversion of pastoral tradition, the external frame, the story of urban life, again provides an ironic perspective on the internal narrative, the story of pastoral life.

Though in this novel Gaskell does not develop the idea that urbanism can effect healthy changes in gender roles in patriarchal society, she does expand on the rural-urban antithesis to reflect on the need to endorse change if it constructively challenges the status quo. The visitors from industrialized urban centers provide a perspective on the conventionally narrow lives and the provincialism of the local villagers, as well as on the insularity of Holman's Hope Farm. The economic and social changes in highly industrialized central and southern England (in the railway and postal service reaching out to the rural communities) also provide a perspective on the stasis of both the farm and rural villages. The foreign and native English are contrasted as well in that Holdsworth's accounts of foreign customs and ways of life give new meaning to the solitary studies of the Holmans. At crucial points in the narrative these disparate worlds invade the pastoral retreat of Hope Farm to provide that double perspective by which both the country and the city, the provincial and the rural, the foreign and the native English can be evaluated by way of ironic contrast.

Set against Holman's Hope Farm, which preserves what Paul calls "the primitive distinction of rank" (292), is the social diversity within the hierarchy of the urban world of work. Belonging to the English gentry and presumably educated in the best schools, Holdsworth now works productively as an engineer-supervisor. The working class Mannings, educated in the workplace, have used their practical knowledge in the mechanical sciences and their skills in entrepreneurship to carve their own niche in the business world. Even more important, what Gaskell wishes to communicate is that in the urban workplace, such as "the great machine shop" in which Holdsworth was an apprentice and Paul's father a worker, a friendship based on common goals, shared interests, and mutual respect can develop naturally in spite of class distinction and social differences. In contrast, though Hope Farm seems rooted in a classless pastoral world, the paternalistic Holman unquestionably has the final word in all things great and small, in, for example, the way his daughter dresses, in the proper discipline of an employee's children, in the running of the farm, and in the moral conduct and attitudes of his extended family.

Gaskell sees the changes occurring in the urban centers as challenging the hierarchical class structure in ways that the conservative pastoral ideology embodied in the self-contained community at Hope Farm certainly cannot. Paul's first position, as clerk to Holdsworth, a managing engineer for the railroad, puts him in a situation above the station his father was born into. By the end of the novel Paul's father has accepted a partnership, and Paul is planning to go into his father's business. With closure in the external narrative, the emphasis is on progress relatively free of the evils of Mammonism. In his inventions and designs that have led to his new partnership, Paul's father has been guided more by his own fancy and self-satisfaction than by the profit motive. For Gaskell the Mannings represent change that is good both for the individual and for society.

Of course, the utopian community of Hope Farm does not reflect certain bleak realities rural people faced in the first third of the nineteenth century, such as unemployment, dis-possession, and extreme poverty. There are no beggars com-

ing to the back door to beg for food at Holman's farm. Indeed, for generations of readers the pastoralism of the novel seemingly has removed it from social and political concerns. Still, in her treatment of Holman as the industrious, thrifty, independent landowner Gaskell could be seen as endorsing an ideology dear to contemporary conservatives—self-reliance and nobility of character fostered by rural life as answers to those calling for reforms. However, though Holman represents much that is good and decent, rural life has not nurtured in him an integrated self in harmony with his pastoral world. Emotionally detached, morally rigid, and psychologically insensitive, he does not emerge as an endorsement for the beneficial effects of a nurturing, sustaining rural environment.

Ironically, Holdsworth, who represents more completely than any other character in the novel society and art in opposition to pastoral nature, is in at least one respect closer to the pastoral mode than any other character in the novel; that is, he acts out a pattern common to the urban sojourner-turned-pastoral hero. His retiring to Hope Farm to recuperate from an illness follows the pattern of withdrawal from action in the public arena for a contemplative period of re-assessing and re-orienting values, followed by a return to the complex and active world, renewed and in harmony with oneself (Tolliver, "Marvel's Pastoral Vision" 138). Such a character then gains the perspective from which ironically to contrast the two worlds, the worldly and the rustic. Holdsworth certainly is in a position to contrast the pastoral life of the Holmans with the worldly life of industrial England as well as with the old world culture of the continent. Here too Gaskell uses a convention of the genre to critique both the insularity of the rural idyll and the restlessness and instability in urban change and progress.

Like the traditional pastoral hero, Holdsworth gains some insight into the advantages of the rural over the urban. The tranquility of the farm, the clean healthy air and the simple food restore him in body and spirit. And he learns from Holman and Phillis that simple, direct language has advantages over the obfuscation of the sophisticated society he is used to. Paul observes that his friend has been subdued by "the minister's uprightness and goodness and delighted with his clear intellect—his strong healthy craving after further knowledge" (271). In Mrs. Holman, he meets the quintessential maternal mother, passive and giving, concerned only with caring for others, and receives from her the unquestioning love he has never known before. In Phillis, he encounters the rural-urban contrast internalized—a child of nature with intellectual aspirations. Soon after he meets her, he exclaims to Paul, "That quiet girl, full of household work, is the wonderful scholar, then, that put you to rout with her questions when you first began to come here" (262). His experiences at Hope Farm may well have prepared him to exchange his nomadic life for the stability of family and marriage with the foreign Lucille. But his actions, the choices he makes, suggest his re-assessment of values has not been very deep or permanent.

For Gaskell uses Holdsworth to present the double perspective characteristic of the pastoral. As the sophisticate who has retired to the country, he is in a position to reflect on both the rural and the urban. In addition, he embodies the antithetical also, in his case, the two sides of the anti-pastoral, the positive and the negative of urbanism. On the positive side, like the Mannings, he represents urban change and progress which

the novel, on one level, endorses. Holdsworth also represents urban qualities the minister has denied to himself and his daughter—cultural and social diversity and involvement in the public world of action reflected in his accounts of his travels and of his work and in the books he recommends. Clearly, for the Holmans, especially father and daughter, Holdsworth's stay brings to their lives an excitement lacking in their constricted lives. Also, his interests and experiences reflect an immersion in both the cultured and the industrialized in a complex urban society. He is a manager in the practical work of railroad building, a mechanical engineer, a well-traveled sophisticate, and an artist. Holman's fascination with Holdsworth is mirrored in Paul's appraisal of the minister himself, that he could have been a leader in any field of endeavor, a lawyer, an engineer, a sea captain, if he had chosen to make his mark in the public world of the city.

However, if *Cousin Phillis* were a pastoral novel pure and simple, Holdsworth would be transformed. He is not. He represents the negative side of urbanism. His is a changeable, unstable, non-contemplative nature, symbolic of the worst of the urban and represented not only by his nomadic professional life but also by the kinds of change and advancement he endorses. For him advancement means to strike while the iron is hot, to move quickly, without deliberation, on a course of action in the marketplace. When he receives the letter concerning an advantageous position in Canada, he leaves that night, putting on hold his relationship with Phillis. As he counsels Paul, "Activity and readiness go a long way in our profession. Remember that, my boy!" (275). This response to the competitive edge in the industrial world of railroad building does not suggest that the elemental experience in the pastoral world of Hope Farm has nurtured in him either reflection or strong feelings. His incomplete sketch of Phillis as the goddess Ceres, the pagan symbol of fertility in his version of the pastoral myth, is as much at odds with her complex nature as her father's vision of her as his unawakened child. Soon after leaving Hope Farm, Holdsworth woos and weds another woman in Canada. Thus, he also represents negative qualities that can be fostered by urbanism—restlessness, ennui, emotional detachment, and an unreflecting nature. Such qualities are hardly characteristic of the pastoral hero who returns to the imperfect world of the urban emotionally and spiritually renewed and in harmony with himself. If his work extending the railroad into the rural countryside represents the intrusion of the machine in the garden, then the "scream and whistle of the engine down at the sheds" (277) as he hurries to leave the pastoral certainly symbolically underscores that clash of contrasting values.

Ultimately, however, Holdsworth is not meant to symbolize urban evil destructively intruding into a pastoral Eden. The most important lesson learned in the novel is not what the country teaches the city but what the country learns from the city. The Holmans can hardly continue to deny the realities of their daughter's psycho-sexual development. Holman especially is forced to confront the extent to which her collapse is the direct consequence of his infantilization of her in order to preserve her status as the pastoral child in his Eden-like artifice. It is the worldly Holdsworth who first stimulates Phillis's psycho-social growth. Of course, like her father, her lover too wishes to control her development. His desire is to

"bury" her in his fairy tale as his princess. His seeing himself as the Prince who will return from Canada to awaken his Sleeping Beauty suggests that what he finds most appealing about Phillis is his power over her passive beauty. But the fairy tale also comments ironically on the "burial" of Phillis's sensuous nature by her minister-father, who has been as overly protective as the King-father in the original tale.

After the news of Holdsworth's marriage and the confrontation between father and daughter, the disharmony in Phillis's pastoral self can no longer be contained. There is a jangle in the tone of her voice when she speaks; her eyes are restless, and she works with an irregular energy. Her escape to her special sacred place, a shelter beneath a stack of wood in the orchard, her retreat as a child when the house became too close for her, symbolizes her return to the childhood her parents have sustained, but it is a temporary regression. After her illness, she journeys to Birmingham. Though she vows to Paul that she and her family will go back to "the peace of the old days," (317) the urgency in her voice suggests the opposite. Hope Farm can never again be sustaining for her. Susan Morgan feels that this daughter "who has outgrown the innocent world her father made" will find "a new world composed of pain and loss" (117). If there will be pain and loss for Phillis, at least there will be growth and perhaps a sense of selfhood with that growth. The anti-pastoral, change, for Phillis is affirmative.

*Cousin Phillis* then is not a re-creation of a pastoral idyll, a nostalgically preserved social and moral order that can comment by contrast on the deficiencies of a highly complex, ever-changing urban society. Nor is it a bit of fluff, "the perfection of a delicate piece of china" (McVeagh 192), the uniting of "the pastoral sense and the nostalgic mood" into a rare delicacy (McVeagh 45). In its internal and external frames and in the tensions developed between the two, Gaskell again addresses relevantly, thought with a different method and purpose, concerns addressed in her earlier novels of social purpose. She examines again the impetus for social change in an industrialized society, endorses what she sees as the positive values of urbanism and cautions against the negative effects on individuals and institutions. More important, she uses the pastoral to caution against withdrawal from the larger society and to question the non-interventionism implicit in the nostalgic longing for some green world in England's rural past. In *Cousin Phillis*, injustices and inequities created by a hierarchical and patriarchal society cannot be so easily wished away.

## Reading and Restoration in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*

Ronald D. Morrison

In 1894, only three years after Hardy published the volume edition of *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, Lionel Johnson enunciated what critics have often designated as the novel's biggest flaw. Johnson wrote that he could not rank *Tess* "so high, as certain other of Mr. Hardy's books" because he recog-

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"insinuated argument" other critics have termed "authorial intrusion" (and far worse).<sup>1</sup> Not only are the narrator's comments distracting, but, as many critics have pointed out, the narrator's stance is strongly biased in favor of Tess Durbeyfield.<sup>2</sup> Indeed studies of the manuscript reveal that Hardy revised *Tess* almost obsessively and that in these successive revisions he continued to emphasize Tess's purity and Angel's perverse idealism.<sup>3</sup> What might be the causes for Hardy's extreme reactions to this novel and its heroine?

J. T. Laird, in his study of the manuscript of *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, suggests three possible solutions to the critical problem represented by the narrator's "intrusions." Readers, he argues, may view the narrator's comments (1) as the author's reaction to the "prevailing ethos of the time"; (2) as part of Hardy's narrative method; or (3) as the voice of the narrator rather than the voice of Hardy (191-92). No doubt all three are accurate in part. Clearly Hardy was attacking one version of the "prevailing ethos" of his time with his thoroughly unsympathetic portrait of Angel Clare. In addition, Hardy chaffed against another result of the "prevailing ethos" when the editors of the *Graphic* forced him to make numerous revisions, which he later resentfully described as the novel's "dismemberment."<sup>4</sup> In response to these revisions, Hardy utilizes his narrator's comments as part of a program to make *Tess* and its heroine whole again. Laird's other two suggestions—that the narrator's intrusions are part of Hardy's technique and that they are not necessarily Hardy's opinion—establish a vital link between Hardy's attempts to restore this novel and his dogged insistence on restoring his heroine's purity.<sup>5</sup> In *Tess*, as in the earlier novels, Hardy's narrator presents a number of distorted views of one woman, Tess Durbeyfield. The narrator, in effect, presents Tess Durbeyfield as a mysterious text that he alone can decipher. Just as the various men in the novel find Tess a puzzling text and constantly strive to interpret her, the narrator presents, in effect, a "reading" or an interpretation of Tess.<sup>6</sup> Just as Hardy later sought to "restore" the printed novel, so the narrator actively works to restore Tess's "wounded name."

The restoration process begins with Hardy's epigraph, which come from Shakespeare's *Two Gentlemen of Verona*: ". . . Poor wounded name! My bosom as a bed / Shall lodge thee" (I.ii.115-16). This passage, in the context of the play,

refers directly to restoring a damaged text. Julia has just received a love letter from Proteus. While her servant Lucetta is in the room, Julia pretends to despise Proteus, tearing the letter into pieces. But after Lucetta leaves, Julia frantically retrieves what is left of the letter. First, when she finds the words "kind Julia" on one of the scraps, she throws it to the ground as if to punish herself. Next, she finds "love-wounded Proteus" written in the scraps and places it in her bosom "till thy wound be thoroughly healed." When she finds both of their names in the letter's salutation "Poor forlorn Proteus, passionate Proteus / To the sweet Julia," she is tempted to tear her name from the scrap because of her cruelty but becomes enchanted by the sight of the two names together. She folds the scrap and bids the two names "kiss, embrace, contend, do what you will" (I.ii.130).

This epigraph suggests a number of parallels between Hardy's novel and Shakespeare's play. Most obviously, both works concern a lover's betrayal, though Julia is eventually reunited with her aptly-named lover. Furthermore, in both works lovers find magic in their lover's name; the name of the beloved becomes a type of fetish, an odd empowerment of language that perhaps makes the name of the beloved more real than the lover. By giving Tess names, the men in the novel (the narrator included) attempt to make or create Tess.<sup>7</sup> Put another way, they attempt to write Tess (or in Hardy's case, to write *Tess*). The narrator, in fact, presents Tess's life as a series of scraps, which he calls "phases." Importantly, several of these phases label Tess; she is both maiden and maiden-no-more and later a woman. Over the course of the novel (and, perhaps it is fair to say, over the course of the novel's publication) Tess receives many other names: wife, deserted wife, adulteress, murderess, and so forth. And Tess receives several surnames; she is both a Durbeyfield and a d'Urberville, and later she is Mrs. Clare, though she dares not go by that name. Already there is a central problem: If the narrator is going to protect Tess's name, which one will he protect? Which name, which quality will he restore?

A partial answer is found in the various prefatory materials to the novel, which also concern reading and restoring texts. The Explanatory Note to the First Edition explains that the chapters "more especially addressed to adult readers" have been restored to the text (27).<sup>8</sup> In his Preface to the Fifth

Edition, Hardy voices his thanks to reviewers who "welcomed the tale": "Their words show that they, like the others, have only too largely repaired my defects of narration by their own imaginative intuition" (29). These readers have rescued Tess, restored her, salvaged the dignity that his artistic failings mar. These readers have, in effect, completed the job of the narrator. Indeed I believe that strategy—forcing the reader to complete the narration and thus complete the woman—to be one of Hardy's major objectives in writing *Tess*. As several critics have noted, important scenes in the novel are missing, and thus readers must fill in the narrative gaps.<sup>9</sup> For instance, Hardy does not describe two of the most crucial elements of Tess's relationship with Alec—his seduction of her (and the weeks following it) and her murder of him. Rhetorically, Hardy's tactic forces the reader to imagine, in fact to create, these scenes. I think it fair to argue that these scenes become more vivid to readers precisely because they are not described, because readers must create the details themselves. Thus in one sense Hardy relies on his readers to complete the narrative, to share the author's role with him, and to become closely involved in the recovery of Tess's purity. But, as the distance between Hardy and his narrator decreases, readers must supplement the narrator's view of Tess to preserve her from one further destructive interpretation.

From the opening pages of *Tess*, Hardy focuses on reading and restoration. While "hunting up pedigrees for the new county history" (34), Parson Tringham, an amateur historian, discovers that John Durbeyfield is the lineal descendent of "the ancient and knightly family of the d'Urbervilles" (34). Looking closely at John, the parson is able to make out "the d'Urberville nose and chin—a little debased" (35). It seems, then, that John Durbeyfield's troubles stem directly from names and from old books. Parson Tringham little knows what mischief he stirs up by telling Durbeyfield of his heritage, since the parson has no notion that the name will ever be restored. But Durbeyfield, given hope by "a wold silver spoon, and a wold graven seal at home" (36), immediately thinks that by restoring his name he will prosper. What follows is a chain of events, carefully constructed by Hardy, that leads to all of Tess's woes.

Although at times Hardy-as-narrator stresses Tess's "typicality," she is also very much an individual.<sup>10</sup> Tess is able to move between social classes because of her ability with language; she is able, as Hardy constructs her, to speak two languages, "the dialect at home, more or less; ordinary English abroad and to persons of quality" (48). Furthermore, she has also "passed the Sixth Standard in the National School under a London-trained mistress" (48); thus she is another of the women Hardy invents who, like Bathsheba Everdene and Grace Melbury, has found herself alienated from members of her own social class because of her education. To set her apart further, because of the family's poverty and her father's "casualness," Hardy has Tess assume what through the nar-

rator he names a "deputy-maternal attitude" (51); thus she is neither mother nor child but an ambiguous blend of both.

Once Tess has found employment at Trantridge, Hardy continues to focus on the power of names. Alec, of course, is not a true d'Urberville; his family has purchased the name along with the estate. Old Simon Stoke, according to the narrator, found the name in "the pages of works devoted to extinct, half-extinct, obscured, and ruined families" (68). Actually, this act parallels events in John Durbeyfield's life: both men seek to establish their identities from books and old names. Alec certainly does not believe that she is his relative, and he is correct, though it is he who is the sham d'Urberville. Eventually Alec gives her pet names, as well as calling her "Beauty" when he first meets her (68). Besides naming her, d'Urberville tries to give her a kiss, which in Hardy's novels is often a way to label a possession, as is evidenced by his frequent use of the metaphor of "imprinting a kiss." When Tess first accompanies Alec to The Slopes, the newly-built d'Urberville seat, he tries to "imprint" such a sign on her cheek (85). Though Tess struggles and refuses his imprint, he finally gives her "the kiss of mastery" (85). Immediately after the kiss, she tries to wipe out the mark on her cheek, to "un[do] the kiss, as far as such a thing was physically possible" (86). However, a few weeks later, in the primeval forests surrounding the Chase, Alec imprints an indelible mark on Tess. These oft-quoted lines show Hardy-as-narrator conceiving of the rape / seduction as a variety of writing, just as he describes the kiss a few pages earlier:

Why it was that upon this beautiful feminine tissue, sensitive as gossamer, and practically as blank as snow yet, there should have been traced such a coarse pattern as it was doomed to receive . . . many thousand years of analytical philosophy have failed to explain to our sense of order. (107-08)

Alec leaves his mark on Tess's tissue, both in the sense of physically altering her body's tissue, and in the sense that he has written his name in the book of her life.<sup>11</sup> He has left his pattern upon her, left his seal, and, if not then, he eventually leaves the seed of his child in her body. Alec has, in effect, marked her as his permanent property. Even several years later, after Tess has married Angel, she still wonders if she is not "more truly Mrs Alexander d'Urberville" (256) in the eyes of the world.

Returning home from Trantridge, Tess encounters yet another male who is ready to fix a label on her: the text-painter, who has just inscribed his fiery message in red paint "THY, DAMNATION, SLUMBERETH, NOT" (114). Hardy has Tess, who feels the weight of her "ruin" so heavily, react to the message as though the words have a life of their own:

They seemed to shout themselves out and make the atmos-

<sup>1</sup>In one notable example, Dorothy Van Ghent calls the narrator's commentary "bits of philosophic adhesive tape" (196).

<sup>2</sup>This tendency is not entirely consistent, however. See, for example, Paris (59) and Schweik (17-18). Also see Claridge, who argues *Tess* "is too often caught in the middle of Hardy's own evolving ideas" (332). For a counter-view, see Freeman, who argues that Hardy's "watching presence . . . is the most fundamental stability in the novel" (317).

<sup>3</sup>Laird's *The Shaping of Tess of the d'Urbervilles* is the most complete study of the manuscript. Mary Jacobus's essay "Tess's Purity" is also useful, especially for exploring how Hardy's revisions altered the presentation of Tess. For example, in the Ur-novel, the Tess character is less admirable and far more straightforward in her relationship with Alec. In the earlier version, Angel, as Jacobus writes, is "scrupulous rather than obsessive" (331) and is much more sympathetic to Tess's plight than in the later version.

<sup>4</sup>See Purdy for a concise description of Hardy's revisions of the novel for serial publication (68-70). As Purdy notes, the editors of the *Graphic* deemed several chapters unacceptable, so Hardy published them as separate pieces: "Chaps. 10 and 11, the seduction of Tess by Alec d'Urberville, were printed under the title 'Saturday Night in Arcady' in a Special Literary Supplement of the *National Observer* (Edinburgh), 14 November 1891; Chap. 14, the bap-

tism and death of Tess's baby, was printed under the title 'The Midnight Baptism, A Study in Christianity' in the *Fortnightly Review*, May 1891 . . ." (69). Even though the *Graphic* contains one of the classic instances of Victorian bowdlerization—Angel carting the three milkmaids across the pool in his handy wheelbarrow—Laird remarks that "the First Edition is sometimes less frank than the *Graphic* in describing the feelings and behaviour of Tess and Angel during the courtship period at Talbothays" (158).

<sup>5</sup>Casagrande regards *Tess* as a "Novel of Restoration," in which Hardy "exhibited the regenerative power of nature for a tragic life lived in harmony with nature" (199).

<sup>6</sup>Though it is not the focus of his chapter on *Tess*, Miller briefly notes the novel's preoccupation with reading and writing (120-26). Also see Michie (112-13) and Thompson.

<sup>7</sup>I believe, as Kramer does, that "[a]t times it is difficult to separate the position of the omniscient storyteller (or *persona*) from that of one of the characters" (132). See Lucas on Tess's struggle to break free of these various interpretations (178-79).

<sup>8</sup>See note 4 above. All quotations from the novel are taken from the paperback version of the New Wessex Edition.

<sup>9</sup>See especially Miller (116-18), as well as Boumelha (126-27) and Bayley (182-84). For a discussion of "narrative gaps," see Iser.

<sup>10</sup>Kramer calls *Tess* the "tragedy of individual consciousness" (114). To stress Hardy's active role in Tess's restoration, I often refer to his narrator as "Hardy-as-narrator." This is not to say that the two are identical. The narrator

is one guise the author assumes. Angel Clare is perhaps another.

<sup>11</sup>In commenting on how history and genetics influence Tess's life, Michie writes that Tess's "'soft feminine tissue' is the blank page on which fate and an individual rapist converge to write their stories" (113).



phere ring. Some people might have cried "Alas, poor Theology!" at the hideous defacement—the last grotesque phase of a creed which had served mankind well in its time. But the words entered Tess with accusatory horror. It was as if this man had known her recent history; yet he was a total stranger. (114-15)

The words seem to "enter" Tess and violate her very being, and she believes that the painter has "known" her in some way, that he indeed has raped her with language. Walking with him for a time, Tess applies the painter's text to her own life and recognizes the tyranny of such a view, especially for women: "I think they are horrible . . . Crushing! killing!" (115). But the text-painter replies, as one might expect, "That's what they are meant to be!" (115). Finding the young woman out alone so early on a Sunday morning, the painter attaches a label to Tess; she is bound to fall if she has not done so already. His next text, naturally, is "THOU, SHALT, NOT, COMMIT—" (115). Though Tess never sees the last word, she and the reader are both able to supply the missing word "adultery." In effect, the narrator forces the reader to attach one more label to Tess, even though Tess is not technically an adulteress. Hardy no doubt designed this scene to force his reader to see the tyranny of such labels.

The various views of Tess at this point in the novel complicate the question of how the reader is to interpret Tess. Because of her conventional religious training, Tess looks at herself as "a figure of Guilt" (121). To the villagers, she is simultaneously an object of pity, scorn, and laughter since "the event which had made of her a social warning had also for the moment made her the most interesting personage in the village to many" (128). To her younger siblings, Tess becomes a "divine personage" (131) when she herself must baptize her baby (named, symbolically, "Sorrow") after her father refuses to admit Parson Tringham into the family cottage. To Hardy-as-narrator, Tess is an idealized woman, or as he writes "an almost standard woman" (126). Tess's experiences at Trantridge transform her into a vital, mature human being; when she returns home, she is "another girl than the simple one she had been at home" (110). And later he describes Tess in her capacity as a field worker:

But those of the other sex were the most interesting of this company of binders, by reason of the charm which is acquired by woman when she becomes part and parcel of outdoor nature, and is not merely an object set down therein as at ordinary times. A field-man is a personality afield; a field-woman is a portion of the field; she has somehow lost her own margin, imbibed the essence of her surrounding, and assimilated herself with it. (123)

Though Hardy-as-narrator sees her loss of margin as a positive thing, as an index of Tess's correspondence with the natural world, it also means a loss of identity for Tess. Tess finds solace in nature since she sees a link between nature and her

own life, but she also learns that her life has no real significance in the larger order of things.<sup>12</sup> Finally, Hardy-as-narrator presents one last way of looking at Tess after her seduction:

Almost at a leap Tess thus changed from a simple girl to complex woman. Symbols of reflectiveness passed into her face, and a note of tragedy at times into her voice. Her eyes grew larger and more eloquent. She became what would have been called a fine creature; her aspect was fair and arresting; her soul that of a woman whom the turbulent experiences of the last year or two had quite failed to demoralize. But for the world's opinion those experiences would have been simply a liberal education. (135)

Here more than ever Hardy's narrator presents Tess as a text, marked by "symbols of reflectiveness" that he feels confident to interpret. Though the world would label Tess's experience a tragedy, the narrator—ever ready to label her himself—describes her as possessing a "liberal education."

At Talbothays Dairy, "amid the oozing fatness and warm ferments of the Froom Vale" (189), Tess meets and eventually falls in love with Angel Clare, yet another reader of Tess. Indeed I think it accurate to claim that Angel's perception of Tess is caught up inextricably with his reading. To Angel, Tess is not simply a romantic vision: she is also an intellectualization of the unspoiled country girl. When Tess first arrives at Talbothays, Angel initially does not notice her, for he mixes little with the workfolk, even dining at a separate table while

abstractedly reading from some book, periodical, or piece of music just come by post . . . One day, however, when he had been conning one of his music-scores, and by force of imagination was hearing the tune in his head, he lapsed into listlessness, and the sheet-music rolled to the hearth. He looked at the fire of logs, with its one flame pirouetting on the top in a dying dance after the breakfast-cooking and boiling, and it seemed to jig to his inward tune; also at the two chimney crooks dangling down from the cottel or cross-bar, plumed with soot which quivered to the same melody; also at the half-empty kettle whining an accompaniment. The conversation at the table mixed in with his phantasmal orchestra till he thought: "What a fluty voice one of those milkmaids has! I suppose it is the new one." (157-58)

Tess's voice joins in with the "phantasmal orchestra" in his brain, just as the real and ideal in Tess merge during the long summer at Talbothays.<sup>13</sup> As he continues to gaze at Tess, his reading of her character becomes even more abstract: "What a fresh and virginal daughter of Nature that milkmaid is!" (158). The reader of course knows that Tess, however "fresh" or "virginal" she might appear, is not a virgin. This rhetorical strategy tends to make Angel less appealing and Tess more of

a sympathetic figure since the reader knows Tess can never live up to Angel's dream of her.

Like many of Hardy's male lovers, Angel wants to create a woman in the image of his ideal woman. He is pleasantly shocked that the pure and simple Tess has a definite philosophical turn of mind that allows her to perceive what he terms the "hobble of being alive" (162). But Tess's abstract musings only lead to frustration, as she tells Angel: "My life looks as if it had been wasted for want of chances! When I see what you know, what you have read, and seen, and thought, I feel what a nothing I am! I'm like the poor Queen of Sheba who lived in the Bible" (164). Angel, wanting to view himself as a Solomon and Tess as his alluring Queen of Sheba, sees his chance to fashion the country girl into an educated woman and offers to help Tess take up "any line of reading" (165) she desires. Yet Tess is skeptical that books will help her:

" . . . what's the use of learning that I am one of a long row only—finding out that there is set down in some old book somebody just like me, and to know that I shall only act her part; making me sad, that's all. The best is not to remember that your nature and your past doings have been just like thousands' and thousands', and that your coming life and doings 'll be like thousands' and thousands'." (165)

Here Tess seems to recognize that the interpretive skills Angel finds so valuable will prove to be of little use to her, since she is, in the world's view, "marked for life."

Angel continues to look at Tess as though she were a fit object of study; in fact, the narrator uses the very word when he says that "Tess and Clare unconsciously studied one another" (168). Before Angel quite realizes that he has fallen in love with Tess, he worries little about the time he spends thinking about this milkmaid, "deeming his preoccupation to be no more than a philosopher's regard of an exceedingly novel, fresh, and interesting specimen of womankind" (168-69). That Angel sees her from such an abstract, philosophical perspective is heavily ironic, especially since the lush environment of Talbothays brings the two together "under an irresistible law, as surely as two streams in one vale" (168). In fact, Hardy-as-narrator likens their early time together in the Froom Valley to Adam and Eve's time in the Garden before the Fall. This strategy is also ironic since Tess's "fall" has already taken place and because Angel continues to think her a virgin. One instance of Angel's idealism occurs when the midsummer dawns that he spends with Tess make him "think of the Resurrection hour," though the narrator darkly comments that Clare does not realize "that the Magdalen might be at his side" (170). As they complete these early morning chores, Angel watching Tess through the "luminous gloom" of that mysterious hour, he sees

no longer the milkmaid, but a visionary essence of woman—a whole sex condensed into one typical form. He called her Artemis, Demeter, and other fanciful names half teasingly, which she did not like because she did not understand them. "Call me Tess," she would say askance; and he did. (170)

In using these mythological names, Angel tries to fix his interpretation of Tess, but his labels only set up an irresolvable conflict. She is neither Artemis, the virgin huntress, nor Demeter, goddess of fertility and marriage. Nor is she Virgin or Magdalene, as Hardy-as-narrator prompts his readers to understand. She is, simply, Tess Durbeyfield.

That Angel would see Tess as a species of writing is not at all surprising given his background. When Angel decides to ask Tess to marry him, he returns to his parents' home in Emminster, during which visit Hardy-as-narrator presents a complete portrait of Angel's father and brothers. Though the narrator offers a biased, one-dimensional view of the Clares, it is vital for Hardy to clarify what forces and attitudes Angel is reacting against. The narrator describes the elder Clare as "an Evangelical of Evangelicals, a Conversionist, a man of Apostolic simplicity in life and thought, [who] had in his raw youth made up his mind once for all on the deeper questions of existence, and admitted no further reasoning on them thenceforward" (198). Thus, of his three sons, Mr. Clare most resembles Angel in his fervor and in his narrowness of vision. It is not surprising, then, that Mr. Clare directs his life according to various texts and authors. The following passage supplies a sample of his reading, as well as providing yet another example of his narrow methods of interpretation: "He loved Paul of Tarsus, liked St John, hated St James as much as he dared, and regarded with mixed feelings Timothy, Titus, and Philemon. The New Testament was less a Christiad than a Pauliad to his intelligence—less an argument than an intoxication" (189). Indeed it is St. Paul who most strongly influences Old Clare, and ultimately Angel strives to break from St. Paul as much as from his father, for Paul's anti-sex theology creates much of the confusion in his mind.

Angel's two brothers, Felix and Cuthbert, share their father's devotion to texts. Felix is a curate at a nearby town, and Cuthbert, a classical scholar, is Fellow and Dean of his College at Cambridge. Though Hardy allows Angel to remain fairly tolerant of his brothers, he has the narrator attack them sarcastically:

They were both somewhat short-sighted, and when it was the custom to wear a single eyeglass and string they wore a single eyeglass and string; when it was the custom to wear a double glass they wore a double glass; when it was the custom to wear spectacles they wore spectacles straightway, all without reference to the particular variety of defect in their own vision. When Wordsworth was enthroned they carried pocket copies; and when Shelley was belittled they allowed him to grow dusty on their shelves. (200)

These shortcomings are not signs that Felix and Cuthbert are merely slaves to fashion—in either eyeglasses or authors. Their defects of vision represent much more serious flaws, exemplifying much that is wrong with Victorian society and its quest for respectability—the loss of humanity, tenderness, and mercy.

Thus, though much more appealing than his father and brothers, Angel shares with them a faulty vision. His view of Tess becomes clear as he speaks with his family concerning his choice for a wife. When his mother asks him "Is she of a

<sup>12</sup>See Lodge, who argues that Tess presents a Romantic sensibility that Hardy found ironic (176-78). I see Tess's character as much more dynamic than Lodge does.

<sup>13</sup>On Tess as a figure between real and ideal, between literal and figurative woman, see Blake and Silverman.

family such as you would care to marry into—a lady, in short,” Angel answers: “She is not what in common parlance is called a lady . . . for she is a cottager’s daughter, as I am proud to say. But she is a lady nevertheless—in feeling and in nature” (204). Thus Tess receives yet another of her many labels: she is a “natural lady.” When Mrs. Clare asks Angel about Tess’s education, Angel says *he* can educate her:

“She’ll be apt pupil enough, as you would say if you knew her. She’s brim full of poetry—actualized poetry, if I may use the expression. She *lives* what paper-poets only write . . . [Hardy’s ellipses] And she is an unimpeachable Christian, I am sure; perhaps of the very tribe, genus, and species you desire to propagate.” (205)

In this passage Tess moves from being “full of poetry” to being a poem herself. If Angel can make Tess a text, she becomes more familiar, less intimidating—perhaps to his family as well as to himself. But whatever Angel tells his family, it is clear he cannot read Tess the woman. She is neither Christian nor, by his standards, “unimpeachable.” The effect is that only Hardy-as-narrator and the reader are able to see the “real” Tess.

By describing Tess to his family in this way, Angel shows he believes more strongly than ever, as he returns to Talbothays, that Tess is an ideal woman, and he is determined to marry her. But when she turns down his proposal again, he is confused: “Is it too sudden to be asked thus, my Pretty?” (212). In his pet name for Tess there exists an ominous echo of Alec’s “Beauty.” In fact, Angel shares a good deal of Alec’s self-confidence, though their methods for possessing a woman differ sharply. Despite his confidence in his powers of interpretation, Angel’s ability to read Tess proves very limited. When Angel once more asks her to marry him, she again refuses. “Clare regarded her attentively, coned the characters of her face as if they had been hieroglyphics. The denial seemed real” (215). Eventually, however, Angel comes to interpret her refusals as feminine flirtation. As Angel struggles to make sense of her response, Tess feels the full weight of her moral dilemma. She longs to tell Angel of her past troubles, but she fears, and rightly so, that Angel will be unable to forgive her in spite of his many professions of love. Eventually, she divulges what is known about her family’s history. Delighted that her objections to marrying are so inconsequential, Angel wonders why he did not “trace the manifest corruption” (230) of “d’Urberville” into “Durbeyfield.” In reality, Angel is a snob and is relieved by the news, since her “extraction may make an appreciable difference” (230) to the way his family and friends accept her as his wife. He even tells her to use the name d’Urberville since she is rightfully entitled to use it. For a moment, Angel, too, wants to restore Tess’s name. But when she says that she would rather not take her family’s name, he tells her “Take my name, and so you will escape yours!” (231). Tess cannot resist this final temptation, and in a sense she hopes that by taking Angel’s name she can escape her past and the whole conflict that resulted directly from her name.

Tess finally acquiesces partially because Angel is able to change her, at least superficially. The narrator says that Angel’s “influence over her had been so marked that she had

caught his manner and habits, his speech and phrases, his likings and his aversions” (245). Indeed Angel tries to “make over” Tess—still the colloquial expression meaning “to give someone a new look”—to the extent that he buys her a “whole stock of clothing” (247) without consulting the bride-to-be. But though Tess changes in some respects, Hardy-as-narrator constantly reminds his reader that enormous differences exist between the two lovers. Angel, he says, loves “ideally and fancifully,” while Tess loves with “impassioned thoroughness” (245). Tess herself recognizes the disparity, but she cannot fathom that Angel seeks an ideal woman, not simply a virgin. At the former d’Urberville manor house after the wedding, Angel is struck, apparently for the first time, by “the artistic excellence of Tess’s limbs and features” (263). Only now does he notice how beautifully formed his new bride is; and, typically, he sees her beauty as “artistic excellence.” How different from the response of the other men in the novel.

Just as Angel creates one short-sighted interpretation of Tess before her learns her secret, after her revelation he is quick to fix another interpretation of his wife’s character. Hardy-as-narrator reports nothing “in the substance of things” had changed between the time Tess began her story and the time she ended it, but the “essence of things had changed” (270). Largely, what changes is Angel’s interpretation of her. He now sees her “without irradiation” (274), as a flesh and blood woman whose flaws he cannot overlook or forgive. His joy that Tess is a member of an old family, a d’Urberville, turns to disgust, and her name becomes an emblem of her weakness: “I cannot help associating your decline as a family with this other fact—of your want of firmness. Decrepit families imply decrepit wills, decrepit conduct” (275). What had earlier been one of the signs of her worth is now a sign of her “want of firmness,” her wantonness. Even after her revelation, Angel finds it nearly impossible to believe her story, that “Nature, in her fantastic trickery, had set such a seal of maidenhood upon Tess’s countenance” (280). Angel further reveals his naive and thoroughly conventional means of reading a woman when he says that “I thought . . . I should secure rustic innocence as surely as I should secure pink cheeks . . .” (281). Horrified by Tess’s confession, Angel proposes a temporary separation.

Once Tess finds herself alone, Hardy-as-narrator’s point of view significantly affects the way the reader views Tess. Before Angel discovers the details of Tess’s past, it appears that only the narrator and the reader have “accurate” interpretations of Tess. And after her revelation, only the narrator and the reader remain to defend her. The narrator’s voice become more noticeable, more insistent in the later portions of the novel.

Hardy, I believe, also attempts to direct his reader through a series of emotions. One of his goals is to present Angel Clare as negatively as possible. Though Tess repeats Angel’s primary fault—loving an ideal—Hardy has the narrator imply that this quality, engendered by “her sublime trustfulness” (234), is a trait to be pitied, perhaps even admired. Meanwhile, he has the narrator deliver this long, damning verdict on Angel’s character:

She had not known that men could be so disinterested, chivalrous, protective, in their love for women as he.

Angel Clare was far from all that she thought him in this respect; absurdly far, indeed; but he was, in truth, more spiritual than animal; he had himself well in hand, and was singularly free from grossness. Though not cold-natured, he was rather bright than hot—less Byronic than Shelleyan; could love desperately, but with a love more especially inclined to the imaginative and ethereal; it was a fastidious emotion which could jealously guard the loved one against his very self. (234)

And later, after Tess reveals her past relationship with Alec d’Urberville, Hardy-as-narrator continues his analysis of Angel: “Some might risk the odd paradox that with more animalism he would have been the nobler man. We do not say it. Yet Clare’s love was doubtless ethereal to a fault, imaginative to impracticability” (287). Though Angel is incapable of loving with the thoroughness of Tess, the narrator refuses to say that Angel would be a better man with more of the “animal” in his nature. Perhaps Hardy-as-narrator finds Angel’s physicality potentially threatening. Tess is “absurdly far” off the mark in her estimations of Angel; indeed, as he later confesses, Angel has spent “eight-and-forty hours’ dissipation with a stranger” (267). While it is true that Angel needs to find a balance between the two sides of his personality, the narrator promotes distrust of Angel long before Angel reveals his hypocrisy.

When Angel returns to Emminster, he squirms as his father reads a passage from Proverbs on King Lemuel’s pronouncements on a virtuous wife. And later he finds himself in the ironic position of having to defend Tess when his mother, whose suspicions are aroused by their early separation, asks if Tess has a history that “will bear investigation” (308). Nagged by guilt and unsure of his own feelings, Angel cries “She is spotless!” (309). Later, when he is alone, Angel reconsiders his position, and it is here that Hardy-as-narrator delivers a sharp indictment of Clare and an impassioned defense of Tess:

No prophet had told him, and he was not prophet enough to tell himself, that essentially this young wife of his was as deserving of the praise of King Lemuel as any other woman endowed with the same dislike of evil, her moral value having to be reckoned not by achievement but by tendency. (309-10)

Though Hardy-as-narrator blames Angel for holding such simple-minded notions of the worth of a woman, his own position is not entirely defensible. To argue that one should determine moral value by “tendency” rather than “achievement” is certainly questionable. For example, Angel’s “tendencies” often prove far superior to his achievements, yet he is responsible for a great deal of Tess’s suffering. In fact, it appears that Angel’s “tendency” is to forgive Tess, which he eventually does, though it comes far too late. I have more to say about Angel’s change of heart below, but for now I wish to focus on Hardy’s defense of Tess through

his narrator.

In the final chapters of the novel, the narrator tends to rob Tess of much or all responsibility for her actions.<sup>14</sup> In attempting to restore Tess’s wounded name, Hardy-as-narrator re-enacts Angel Clare’s earlier tendency to see her as an ideal. In this long passage, he would make Tess both part of the natural world and the world of art:

Thus Tess walks on; a figure which is part of the landscape; a fieldwoman pure and simple, in winter guise; a grey serge cape, a red woollen cravat, a stuff skirt covered by a whitey-brown rough wrapper, and buff-leather gloves. Every thread of that old attire has become faded and thin under the stroke of raindrops, the burn of sun-beams, and the stress of winds. There is no sign of young passion in her now—

The maiden’s mouth is cold

Fold over simple fold

Binding her head.

Inside this exterior, over which the eye might have roved as over a thing scarcely percipient, almost inorganic, there was a record of a pulsing life which had learnt too well, for its years, of the dust and ashes of things, of the cruelty of lust and the fragility of love. (326)

In the opening parts of this passage, Hardy-as-narrator threatens to make Tess “lose her margin” once again, to merge her identity with the landscape. But Tess’s connection to nature represents only a part of her—just as the various items of her clothing mentioned by the narrator represent only parts of Tess, not the whole. Still struggling to capture her essence in words, Hardy-as-narrator then describes Tess by quoting line is from Swinburne’s “Fragoletta” (1866). Here he fulfills Angel’s earlier desire and makes Tess become “actualized poetry.” On the surface of this human / poem, he claims, there is little for the unpracticed eye to read. Yet Hardy-as-narrator claims a privileged position for himself, saying that “inside the exterior” there is a “record of a pulsing life.” And there he reads the twin causes of Tess’s pain: “the cruelty of lust and the fragility of love.” Tess herself, the narrator implies, bears none of the responsibility for her life’s misfortune and implies that she will never escape the imprint of her seducer.

But a remarkable shift takes place late in the novel. While Tess gradually accepts that she has no option but to return to Alec d’Urberville as his mistress because of her family’s economic situation, Hardy’s attention turns once more to Angel. (In fact, Tess’s return to Alec represents another of the narrative gaps in the novel.) In Brazil, under the influence of a “large-minded stranger,” Angel begins to accept the narrator’s point of view as he considers what constitutes the moral man or woman: “The beauty or ugliness of a character lay not only in its achievements, but in its aims and impulses; its true history lay, not among things done, but among things willed” (388). Angel, once Tess’s harshest accuser, becomes “her advocate” (389); thus Hardy-as-narrator can now accept

<sup>14</sup>See Schwarz (168) and Jacobus (320-21).

Angel's position because it is identical to his own. But Angel is still pursuing a vision rather than a real woman, even if he now has the narrator's support. Separated from Tess—and the persistent awareness of her “not inviolate past” (390)—Angel reconsiders whether “that abhorrence of the un-intact state” is “open to correction when the result was due to treachery” (389). Thus Angel becomes one more restorer of Tess:

... he had thought of the woman taken and set in the midst as one deserving to be stoned, and of the wife of Uriah being made a queen; and he had asked himself why he had not judged Tess constructively rather than biographically, by the will rather than the deed? (419)

This argument looks uncannily like Hardy's stance. Indeed Hardy has both Angel and the narrator “judge constructively,” as they recreate or rewrite Tess's life history. Angel thus returns to England, where he hopes to restore Tess to her name as Mrs. Clare, a name which she has not dared to use in his absence. But Angel finds that he is too late—Tess has returned to Alec. And soon she commits another act that cancels out any hope of his saving her: she murders Alec.

Hardy's resolution of the action represents a loss of Tess's character altogether, and he makes the novel more and more the story of Angel and the narrator. When Angel finds Tess at Sandbourne, and after she reveals her new living arrangements, the narrator says Angel sees something different about Tess, that “his original Tess had spiritually ceased to recognize the body before him as hers—allowing it to drift, like a corpse upon the current, in a direction dissociated from its living will” (429). For both Angel and Hardy's narrator, the “original Tess,” that nebulous creature that both want to restore, still exists, though she has apparently transcended her body. Indeed both Angel and Hardy's narrator are content only with this view of Tess. Angel is able to forgive a spiritualized version of Tess, and they spend a few idyllic days together in Bramshurst Court. Hardy-as-narrator, who compares Tess and Angel to children, with “every idea . . . temporary and unforfeiting” (438), can accept this temporary, idyllic reunion since he no longer must protect Tess from Angel. Though the narrator refers to their time together there as characterized by “affection, union, error forgiven,” (442), it is only a matter of time before the authorities capture Tess. Before her capture, Tess extracts a promise from Angel that he will marry her sister ‘Liza-Lu, who Tess says is “good and simple and pure” (445). And in Hardy's last scene, after Tess has been hanged, Angel walks off with ‘Liza-Lu, “half girl, half woman—a spiritualized image of Tess” (448). Thus in one sense, Hardy restores Tess since ‘Liza-Lu is another version of her older sister, a text as yet unmarked by time or trouble.

In another sense, however, Hardy obliterates, forgets, and replaces his heroine.<sup>15</sup> In this respect there is a clear connection between Hardy the novelist and Hardy the architect. As a young architect, Hardy was often involved in “restoring”

parish churches. But later in his life, Hardy regretted his involvement in this movement because, as he later stated in “Memories of Church Restoration” (1906), often restoration meant “[a]ctive destruction under saving names” (Orel 203). There is, of course, no indication that Hardy regretted his restoration of Tess in later years. But, just as Hardy later claimed that it is no “easy matter to preserve an old building without hurting its character” (204), it is clear that in some respects he has damaged Tess's “character.” In striving to present her as a “pure woman,” Hardy, like his character Angel Clare, idealizes Tess to the point of making her a pure abstraction. Thus as he revised the novel, Hardy strove to make Tess more spiritual and less sensuous. And as he did so, Hardy relieved Tess from much (if not all) of the responsibility for her actions. But the reader need not accept Hardy's view of Tess, and indeed the ideal reader of Hardy's earlier novels cannot accept that view. Readers and critics are left with the unenviable task of having to restore Tess for themselves.

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## Maggie, Tom and Oedipus: A Lacanian Reading of *The Mill on the Floss*\*

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The forum of criticism on *The Mill on the Floss* has not changed over the last hundred years. Maggie Tulliver's association with Philip Wakem, the Maggie-Stephen Guest affair, the dramatic climax of the Floss in flood and Maggie's drowning with Tom, and the narrator's conclusion appended to the Tulliver history—these are the issues that generations of readers have been drawn to either condemn or to justify. *The Mill* was early thought of as wonderful for its evocation of childhood experience yet flawed artistically. F. R. Leavis summed up the common consensus when he observed that the autobiographical subjectivity in *The Mill* caused “disastrous weaknesses” (55). George Eliot, herself, expressed regret over the structuring of the text. In a letter to John Blackwood, on 9 July 1869, she confessed: “The ‘epische Brechte’ [epic breadth] into which I was beguiled by love of my subject in the first two volumes, caused a want of proportionate fullness in the treatment of the third, which I shall always regret” (*Letters* 248). On 29 January 1861, in a letter to Francois D'Albert Durade, she expressed the same sentiment: “My love of the childhood scenes made me linger over them, so that I could not develop as fully as I wished the concluding ‘Book’” (249). The childhood described in *The Mill* that Eliot so lovingly reminisces over drew from her own experience as a child in the Evans household and, more specifically, from the Mary Ann-Isaac Pearson Evans relationship. The Tom-Maggie relationship in *The Mill*, like the “Brother-Sister Sonnets,” is overtly autobiographical. Those autobiographical elements are critical to the novel, for the authorial regret resulted from Eliot's unconscious motivation in the structuring of the text and that in turn has led to critical confusion in the way we have read the text. But the text of *The Mill* becomes more

explicable and Eliot herself more accessible if we apply Lacanian methodology in our interpretation of it. Jacques Lacan's discussion of the mirror stage, of primary and secondary identification, and of the pressure of the Oedipal complex in a subject's unconscious provides a framework within which comprehension and interpretation can occur.

There has been at least one serious Freudian analysis of the text. In 1965, David Smith explored the incestuous elements inherent in the Tom-Maggie relationship. Smith's analysis is perceptive yet limited. Smith sees Tom only in the position of brother / lover and does not fully develop the implications of the “illicit” relationship in terms of the fiction that Eliot created. But in the last two decades, critics have not yet revised Smith's reading. While dissatisfaction with the text of *The Mill* continues to persist, no satisfactory solution has been posited. Fortunately, using Lacanian methodology, we can locate the signs embedded within the text that suggest the shape of an answer.

This essay thus shall undertake to demonstrate that Tom, in his relationship to Maggie, does not merely occupy the position of lover but of both m(Other) and Other. He is for Maggie both the “primary caretaker” or m(Other) and the symbolic Father who occupies the place of the Other. Reading the text from this perspective makes many aspects of the narrative more intelligible. Maggie's association with Philip and her attraction to Stephen, for example, become structurally and aesthetically coherent; the death of brother and sister and the narrator's conclusion fail artistically but become comprehensible and almost inevitable in light of Eliot's unconscious motivation and desire seen through a Lacanian lens.

<sup>15</sup>See Mickelson (123) and Morgan (109) for other views of the novel's conclusion.

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## I

Lacan endorsed Freud's premise that the Oedipus complex is the central motivation of a subject's unconscious (*Ecrits* 142). But Lacan offers his own versions of the pre-Oedipal and Oedipal phase by using his innovative concepts of the Mirror Stage, the Phallus, *jouissance*, Desire, and Castration. Let's look first at the mirror stage. During the age of six to eighteen months, the child first becomes aware of itself by identification with the mother, though as Ellie Ragland-Sullivan points out, any "constant nurturer could fulfill the function of the mother" (16). Though aware of itself, the infant experiences itself as a fragmentary object. The infant's first experience of unity occurs through a kind of reflection of itself. Lacan coined the term "mirror stage" to describe the "phenomenon of recognition" that a child experiences when it encounters its specular image (*Ecrits* 18). During the mirror stage, the subject "identifies himself with the visual *Gestalt* of his own body" (*Ecrits* 18). This specular identification is "paralleled in the infant's relating to the mother's *imago* as if it were his own" (Ragland-Sullivan 24). The relationship is constituted not by the child's vital dependence on the mother, but by its dependence on her love, that is to say, by its desire for her desire (*Ecrits* 198). The infant's relationship to the mother is thus "on the level of images, and in this sense [is] imaginary" (Richardson 21). The mother and child are, in this respect, the "imaginary couple of the mirror stage" (*Ecrits* 196).

Linked to this *Gestalt* phenomenon are emotions of jubilation, alienation, "aggressivity" (a Lacanian term), and desire. The infant first discovers itself in an external or reflected image, an alienating "other," but it is an other that initiates desire and creates an "ego." As Lacan explains:

It is in this erotic relation, in which the human individual fixes upon himself an image that alienates him from himself, that are to be found the energy and the form on which this organization of the passions that he will call his ego is based. (*Ecrits* 19)

This relation "determined the awakening of his desire" but it is a desire "for the object of the other's desire" (*Ecrits* 19). Thus, Lacan says, the "primordial coming together (*concourse*) is precipitated into aggressive competitiveness (*concurrence*), from which develop the triad of others, the ego and the object" (*Ecrits* 19). Consequently, as James M. Mellard explains, due to the *Gestalt* phenomenon of the mirror stage, "a previously unperceived unified being is suddenly separated into a subject and an object, and the lost and desired unity becomes identified with the other, identity forever after to be sought in others or symbolic objects that Lacan calls '*objets petit a*'" (*Ecrits* 197).

The mirror stage comes to a close with the entry of the Oedipal conflict: the symbolic Father (which Lacan also calls the Name-of-the-Father) causes a scission in the symbiotic unity of mother and infant by symbolically castrating the child. Lacan derived the concept of the Name-of-the-Father from the Dead Father in Freud's *Totem and Taboo*. For Lacan, the Name-of-the-Father referred not to the real or imaginary Father, but to the symbolic Father, who is the

"signifier of the Father, the author of the Law, to which the subject binds himself for life" (*Ecrits* 199). The Father castrates the child; as Eugen Bär explains, the child now has to renounce the phallus, the symbol of complete union with the mother, and now must consent to receive the phallus from the established authority (513, 522).

The secondary identification with the Father ushers the child into the symbolic order. Lacan borrowed the term "symbolic" from Claude Lévi-Strauss, who observed that "any culture may be looked upon as an ensemble of symbolic systems, in the first rank of which are to be found language, marriage laws, economic relations, art, science and religion" (qtd. in Pontalis 440). Thus, the symbolic Father, who is identifiable with cultural ideals and enforces the Law, occupies the place of the "Other." The entrance into the symbolic order is essential for the constitution of the now divided subject, who can, as Bär writes, be represented by the Lacanian formula of the symbol:

S Law of the Father  
s Total union with the mother (513-14)

Lacan declared that all human desire is based on the event of castration (*Concepts* 118); "the father, the Name-of-the-Father sustains the structure of desire with the structure of the law" (*Concepts* 48). *Jouissance* momentarily satisfies desire: but *jouissance* replaces the lost paradise, the "ecstatic sense of unity which preceded an infant's knowledge of separation from the mother" (Ragland-Sullivan 75). To regain *jouissance* is to evade the law of castration and to subvert the phallic "no."

## II

Let's now look at Eliot's novel. Eliot's text does not suggest a relationship between Mrs. Tulliver as mother and Maggie as the object of her mother's nurture. In fact, as Eva Fuchs observes, Mrs. Tulliver's "milk" is "sour" and a cause of indigestion (422). Wendy Woodward asserts that, in fact, Mrs. Tulliver becomes "quite sinister in her own household. . . . When she is organizing a family dinner, she declares, 'There's a couple o' fowls want killing'" (48). Mrs. Tulliver, moreover, repeatedly disavows her maternal relation to Maggie and instead focuses her desire on her sister Deane's doll-like child, Lucy: "I can't help loving that child as if she were my own," she says, "and I'm sure she's more like my child than my sister Deane's" (39). In another place she says, "I'm sure Lucy takes more after me than my own child" (12-13). What's more, as Fuchs observes, "the small stock of maternal feeling which Mrs. Tulliver possesses is engrossed by her son Tom" (424). Thus we can quite safely say that the text does not suggest a primordial bond between Maggie and Mrs. Tulliver. Typically, the objects of her desire (*objet a*'s) are inanimate objects—linen, silver tongs and china. Mrs. Tulliver herself is characterized as an object with no self. As Stephen, Lucy's intended fiancé, crushingly remarks: "she should be represented by her brandy cherries and cream cakes" (319). If there is a mother / child relation between Mrs. Tulliver and Maggie, it occurs in an inverted form, with the child nurturing the mother. After Mr. Tulliver's

bankruptcy, Mrs. Tulliver becomes childishly dependent on Maggie, for the loss of her possessions makes her "helpless[ly] imbecile" (242); "the objects among which her mind had moved complacently were all gone" (242). Maggie, now, an "other" to her mother, becomes for Mrs. Tulliver an *objet a*, another piece of furniture. "The mother was getting fond of her tall, brown girl," Eliot writes, "the only bit of furniture now on which she could bestow her anxiety and pride" (346).

In the Tulliver family, it is Tom who is most intrinsically characterized in the role of the mother. Mrs. Stelling's daughter Laura possesses a history which is a "stark abbreviation of Maggie's" (Fuchs 426). Laura, "as she practices walking . . . remains physically connected to Tom by a 'ribbon fastened around her waist . . . and frequently demands to be carried in Tom's arms'" (426). This episode suggests that the toddler Tom could very well have played mother to the infant Maggie. Moreover, we often see the nine-year-old Maggie hanging on to Tom's neck possessively. The narrator, commenting on Maggie's physical demonstrativeness and Tom's answering reciprocity, observes: Maggie "could rub her cheek against his arm and kiss his ear in a random, sobbing way, and there were tender fibers in the lad that had been used to answer Maggie's fondling" (35, *Italics mine*).

Eliot seems to suggest that Maggie's passage through mirror-stage identification occurs in the presence of Tom rather than her mother. It is powerfully associated with both Tom and the Floss. Like the brook in *The Scarlet Letter*, which one critic says "is identified in the text both as mirror and as child" (Mellard 201), the river Floss is described as both human and as a reflecting mirror. The narrator, for example, describes the Floss in human terms: "It seems to me like a living companion while I wander along the bank and listen to its low placid voice, as to the voice of one who is deaf and loving" (8). The deaf but loving object becomes associated in Maggie's experience with her brother. This association occurs as a result of Tom's and Maggie's fishing expedition; the narrator remarks, for example, that Maggie "had forgotten all about the fish and was looking dreamily at the glassy water" (36, *italics mine*). Thus Eliot suggests that the episode serves a mirror stage function for Maggie. The text strongly suggests that Maggie's visual image of her own body was accompanied by an intense identification with Tom's *imago*. Maggie later confesses to Philip, for example, that she will always love Tom best because her first consciously recollected memory is "standing with Tom by the side of the Floss, while he held my hand: everything before that is dark to me" (268). Significantly, she sees their reflection as *joined*. That Tom became for her a primordial object of desire is suggested, moreover, in the narrator's observation that Tom was for Maggie a "perpetual yearning" and had in her unconsciousness a "root deeper than all change" (398). Thus Maggie's desire is activated by Tom and things associated with him. It is Tom's name that can elicit from Maggie what one critic calls an "aroused reaction" (Smith 150). The sound of the name Tom, in his absence, signifies his presence and perhaps recalls the primordial voice, the soothing tone of Tom as m(Other). The narrator observes: "There were few sounds that roused Maggie . . . but Tom's name served as well as the shrillest whistle" (15). Likewise, the doll "towards which

[Maggie] had an occasional fit of fondness in Tom's absence" (36) is, for Maggie, an *objet a*, a symbolic object to make Tom present in his absence. In other words, the doll stands metonymically for Tom.

While Maggie has problems in her relation to her mother that bring Tom into a maternal role, she also has problems in her relation to her father. Here, too, Tom becomes a substitute. Maggie's bond with her father is complicated by his inversion of the parental role. As Fuchs suggests, Mr. Tulliver seems "immobilized" by the death of his mother (423). Mr. Tulliver perceives in Maggie a girl who would grow up to be as like his mother "as two peas" (233). Their inversion of roles is especially evident after Mr. Tulliver's sickness. In Maggie's presence, Mr. Tulliver's contentment is akin to what a "baby has when it is returned to the mother's lap" (176). After his illness, Mr. Tulliver becomes sullen and depressive. Yet the narrator observes that Maggie continues to be for Mr. Tulliver, what the primary nurturer is to the child, an object that answers need and fulfills desire: "Mr Tulliver retained the feeling towards his 'little wench' which made her presence a need to him. . . . She was still the desire of his eyes" (245).

Though a father, Mr. Tulliver does not occupy the position of the symbolic Father. According to Lacan the trauma of separation in the child is initiated by the symbolic Father, who imposes a scission in the child's symbiotic unity with the m(Other). The symbolic Father, who enforces the Law, occupies the position of the Other and is identifiable with cultural ideals. This "intervention initiates the true passage from nature to culture in ternary or Oedipal terms" (Ragland-Sullivan 55). In Maggie's Oedipal history, when the Name-of-the-Father is called for, Mr. Tulliver proves to be an inadequate signifier. The text suggests that it is Tom who once again fulfills the role of an important Oedipal signifier for Maggie. As he has been mother, so he becomes the symbolic Father. It is his gaze, more than that of any other, that impels Maggie through the trauma of separation, though we do not see that separation when it occurs. When the narrative begins, we know that the symbiotic unity of Maggie with Tom has already been severed. Mrs. Tulliver's remark, "they're such children of the water, mine are" (92), speaks of events in the past; now brother and sister do not stand together by the Floss. Instead, when we are first introduced to Maggie, she is standing "at the edge of the water," alone with her dog Yap (8). Nor do we see the shared days of union that the narrator, in her conclusion, speaks about, the "days when they had clasped their little hands in love, and roamed the daisied fields together" (456). Rather, what Eliot does is create an implication of a paradisaical moment for Maggie with Tom that ever after colors Maggie's relations with others and the world.

In the child Maggie we see a conflictual dialectic at work. We are told that Maggie "was rather in awe of Tom's superiority, for he was the only person who called her knowledge 'stuff' and did not feel surprised at her cleverness" (36). Yet Maggie does not wish to submit to Tom's judgment that "all girls were silly" (36). She resists submitting to Tom's Law and attempts to subvert the Law. Maggie imagines that she can reconstitute the cultural Law and solicits approval from "others": Mr. Riley, Luke, and Mr. Stelling. In each case her effort meets with failure. Maggie desires Mr. Riley to have respect for her cleverness. Riley, however, sees her cleverness

as synonymous with naughtiness and treats her with patronizing condescension. Maggie then begins to "dislike Mr. Riley, [for] it was evident he thought her silly and of no consequence" (22). She is communicative with Luke, spurred by the hope that he will "think [as] well of her understanding as her father did" (27). But Maggie soon comes to realize that her father's gaze is not identifiable with the cultural gaze, which is for her punitive; rather it is Tom who represents the cultural Law. When Mr. Stelling declares that women are "quick and shallow," Tom is "delighted with this verdict" for it endorses his own (134). But Tom's view undermines Maggie's sense of herself. She is oppressed by her "dreadful destiny" (134); where she had been praised by her father for being "quick," "now it appeared that this quickness was the brand of inferiority" (134).

It is clear that the duality of Tom's roles vis a vis Maggie at least in part accounts for gender confusion in Maggie. Maggie's confusion of gender roles is stressed in the text. As Woodward remarks, Maggie catechizes Tom about Latin masculine nouns that end in the feminine "a" and seems to possess an instinctive knowledge about words masquerading as a different gender (49). Maggie's transvestism is demonstrated implicitly in her attempt to follow male pursuits. Tom declares that girls cannot learn Latin, but "Maggie can learn to interpret it" (Jacobus 45). She "nibble[s] at this thick-rinded fruit of the tree of knowledge," Latin, Euclid and Logic, the domain of "masculine wisdom" (251). Her confusion of gender seems caused by the inversion of her Oedipal history. As Lacan argues, sexual identity is not based on biology but on identification, and in Maggie's Oedipal history, this identification was specifically male.

Maggie, like Tom, attempts to occupy the place of the Other. She projects into the gypsy community the concept of a matriarchal society, one where the Queen can wield power and lay down the law. But her law would be kinder, gentler, "If I were a queen, I'd be a very good queen, and kind to everybody" (98). In the social milieu of St. Ogg's, however, it is only the man who has power (304). But she cannot be a man any more than she can be a gypsy queen. Depressed by her failure to be accepted in a male role, Maggie makes sporadic attempts to live in the imaginary register, away from the gaze of the other. The attic is for her one such place of refuge. The sound of the mill encloses her, temporarily, within the imaginary register, shielding her from the punitive gaze of the Other.

Thus it is in relation to Tom that Maggie encounters the Oedipus complex. The adolescent Maggie strongly resists Tom's position as the Other, the symbolic Father who enforces the Law. Maggie attempts at this time to install her real father in the position of the Other. During Mr. Tulliver's illness, Maggie passionately upbraids Mrs. Tulliver: "Mother, how could you talk so? as if you cared only for things with your name on, and not for what has my father's name too" (181, italics mine). Later, after Tom's encounter with Philip in the Red Deeps, Maggie declares to Tom, "I will submit even to what is unreasonable from my father, but I will not submit to it from you" (304). And yet Maggie does submit. She confesses to Philip that she "must submit" (268) because "she can do nothing willingly that will divide me from [Tom]" (389). The narrator tells us that "Tom had his terrible

clutch on her conscience and her deepest dread" (307) and that "Maggie dreaded Tom's anger of all things" (33). Maggie's dream, prior to her return to St. Ogg's, enacts her submission to Tom as the symbolic Father who enforces the Law. She dreams that Tom was angry with her and rowed by her without acknowledging her presence; as she stretched out her hands and called him, her own boat began to sink (412-13). This dream is succeeded by another that retreats in time, to the time of her early childhood, to the "parlour at evening twilight" and with Tom not angry at her (412-13). Maggie awakes from her dream and decides to return to St. Ogg's as to "a sanctuary where sacred relics lay" (420). She, now, desires to submit to the burden of the Law: "to submit . . . to Tom's judgment . . . against which she had so often rebelled" (423).

Tom's ambiguous role as m(Other) and Other to Maggie causes in her an imbalance that affects her relation to others. Her abortive love relationships with Philip and later with Stephen thus become explicable if we see them within her Oedipal history. Maggie's relationship with Philip is an attempt at replacing Tom. She declares, "What a dear good brother you would have been, Philip" (287). Yet she cannot love Philip more than Tom. Maggie confesses to Philip that even if he were her brother she would love Tom better (163). Philip would only be the desired object of Maggie's attention in Tom's absence and thus as a metaphoric signifier of Tom. "I wish you were my brother," she tells Philip; "you would stay at home with me when Tom went out" (163). Maggie's relation to Stephen is similar, but more complicated. Since the time of the publication of *The Mill*, critics have sought explanations for Maggie's attraction to Stephen. Eliot in response to critical dissatisfaction replied:

Maggie's position towards Stephen is too vital a part of my whole conception and purpose for me to be converted to the condemnation of it. If I am wrong there—if I really did not know what my heroine would do under the circumstance in which I deliberately placed her—I ought not to have written this book at all, but quite a different book . . . [T]he ethics of art are too narrow, and must be widened to correspond with a widening psychology. (*Letters* 248-49)

Stephen, with his "diamond ring, attar of roses, air of nonchalant leisure, at twelve o'clock in the day" (316), is characterized as an absolute fop, an antithesis to Maggie's spiritual nature. Yet, Maggie's attraction to Stephen becomes explicable if we see Stephen for what he represents as Lucy's intended fiancé. Maggie's desire for Stephen is related to her desire for Tom. She wants to be the object of the Desire of her other (Tom), and the object of Tom's desire is Lucy. Towards Lucy there is in Maggie's attitude an "aggressive competitiveness" (*Ecrits* 19). As a child, Maggie constantly is faced with her mother's rejection of her in favor of Lucy. More than Mrs. Tulliver's rejection, however, it is Tom's rejection of her in favor of Lucy that instills in Maggie emotions of "aggressivity." When Tom declares, "I like Lucy better than you. I wish Lucy was my sister" (78), Maggie begins to "think that she should like to make Lucy cry, by slapping or pinching her" (89), and ultimately she decides on pushing "pink and white" Lucy into the "cow trodden mud" (91).

Maggie's ambivalent, Imaginary relation to Tom and

Lucy continues into adulthood. When Bob Jakins suggests to Maggie that Tom may be nursing a crush on Lucy, Lucy then becomes even more explicitly the object of Tom's desire. Thus Stephen enters the triangle as a displacement for Tom. Even before Maggie's meeting with Stephen, he seems to be for her an object of desire. Though in the Red Deeps Maggie denies the rivalry she feels toward Lucy, when Philip lightly teases Maggie and tells her that she will steal Stephen away from Lucy, Maggie's reaction is indeed telling. She avows to Philip: "Philip, that is not pretty of you, to apply my nonsense to anything real . . . As if I . . . could be rival of dear little Lucy . . . even if I were odious and base enough to wish to be her rival" (291). One cannot but feel that Maggie protests too much. Philip's jocular remark apparently touches a guilty chord that Maggie must deny. Her denial is made evident in Philip's surprise at Maggie's uncharacteristic intensity; "it is not like you" he says, "to take playfulness literally" (291).

The text focuses primarily on the consequences on Maggie of this Oedipal perversion of the brother-sister relationship. Yet, as Smith notes, we also see the working of an "unconscious incestuous passion" in Tom. That Tom seems incapable of heterosexual relations with other women is related to his feeling for Maggie. His antipathy towards Philip, for example, is extreme; he will not be replaced in Maggie's affections. Thus Tom humiliates Philip and forces Maggie to choose between them. Moreover, he experiences, we are told, a "bitter repugnance to Philip and Maggie's union with him" (400). Like Maggie, Tom too envisages a home with his sister. But Tom sees himself as occupying the position of the Other who would enforce the Law: "still he was fond of his sister Maggie and meant always to take care of her an punish her when she did wrong" (36). Significantly, after Maggie's elopement with Stephen, the narrator remarks: "There had arisen in Tom a repulsion toward Maggie that derived its very intensity from their early childhood love in the time when they had clasped tiny hands together" (437). Apparently, Tom, too, is unable completely to renounce the memory of that early union with Maggie.

Because of dissatisfaction with the novel's ending, some have even proffered an alternative conclusion for *The Mill on the Floss*. They suggest that the narrative should have concluded with Book 5, with the father's death; with the grieving Mrs. Tulliver, Luke and his wife and Mr. Turnbull clustered upstairs; and with the omniscient narrator's retelling of Maggie's spoken words and the embrace that follows: "Tom, forgive me—let us always love each other; and they clung and wept together" (315). The actual narrative, however, ends with death and a reunion of another kind. Tom and Maggie drown in the Floss, but they are locked together in utter seclusion, "mutely gazing at each other" (455); here, there are no other people—no Other—to intrude. Now Maggie feels, Eliot writes, a "mysterious wondrous happiness that is one with pain" (456). The death of Maggie and Tom is thus described as a "supreme moment." It is a moment of *jouissance*; Maggie and Tom reexperience the ecstatic sense of forbidden unity that characterized their pre-mirror childhood. What Eliot continually reasserts is that in their death they form a symbiotic whole—the primordial union of self and other found in the period before mirror-phase separation. The narrator asserts that, here, theirs is an "embrace never to be parted" (456); she

assures us that in their death they relived "the days when they had clasped their little hands together and roamed the daisied fields together" (456).

While others have found fault with the novel's ending, Lacanian theory will permit us to critique Eliot's conclusion in a more precise way. The flood is an act of bad faith on Eliot's part. Lacan writes that from the moment of the child's visual *Gestalt*, the "ego is marked by all the ambiguities which, from self-satisfaction to 'bad faith' (*mauvaise foi*), structure the experience of the passions in the human subject" (*Ecrits* 15). Bad faith arises when "consciousness instead of directing its negation outward turns it toward itself" (Sartre 48). In bad faith it is "from myself that I am hiding the truth" (Sartre 49). The bad faith occurs because Eliot hides the truth from herself. After Eliot's letter to her brother Isaac in May 1857 informing him about her relationship with George Henry Lewes, Isaac broke all contact with her. Her breach of Victorian morality was punished with twenty-three years silence. Isaac resumed contact with her only after her marriage to John Walter Cross on May 6, 1880. Her marriage to Cross has been interpreted as an act of submission to the Victorian morality that in effect her brother represented. Undoubtedly, the ending of *The Mill on the Floss* is a fictional cover for a tragic reality in Eliot's life: her division from her brother. While we can "only speculate about Eliot's own erotic obsessions" (Smith 148), the clumsiness of the ending testifies to Eliot's need to create such an ending, to establish a fable, a dead fiction, that would satisfy her unconscious desire for a reunion with Isaac.

The conclusion that follows has been seen as yet another aesthetic lapse. In her conclusion the narrator merely reasserts the union of Tom and Maggie. Eliot writes that their bodies were found in "close embrace" (457). We are told that brother and sister are buried in one tomb next to, yet apart from, their father's grave. The narrative ends with the narrator reading for us (her readers) the inscription on the tomb; it is, incidentally, the motto on the title page: "in their death they were not divided." The narrator, however, as Janet H. Freeman writes, is "a full participant" in the story (375). The creator and the persona of the author seem inextricably bound. Like Eliot herself, the narrator has to reaffirm the union of Tom and Maggie. Seen in this perspective, her conclusion "is just, appropriate, and inevitable" (Freeman 375). At one level, the ending is flawed, an aesthetic lapse, a retreat into the imaginary register. But on another level, it reasserts the tensions and inversions of Maggie's Oedipal history. The entire narrative then is unified. Having begun with Maggie's first conscious recollected memory of their joined reflection in the river, it concludes with their primordial reunion reestablished in the "golden" waters of the Floss.

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## Revisionist Mythmaking in Christina Rossetti's "Goblin Market": Eve's Apple and Other Questions Revised and Reconsidered

Sylvia Bailey Shurbutt

The notion of a woman writer attempting to offer an alternative version to the patriarchal explanation of being is not new: from Amelia Lanier to Virginia Woolf, women writers have attempted to amend traditional Western myth with its misogynist overtones, especially biblical myth so much a part of our Western ethical system. Sometimes blatantly overt (as in Lanier's apology for Eve, Nightingale's declaration of a female Christ or Elizabeth Cady Stanton's dream of a revisionist Woman's Bible), sometimes subtly muted (as in Shelley's retelling of paradise lost in her famous Gothic novel), women writers have sought to revise or reconstruct the patriarchal myths that influence our ethical values and limit the vision of individual possibilities.

Alicia Ostriker evaluates the terrain of myth and the process of revisionist mythmaking in this way: "At first thought," she says, "mythology seems an inhospitable terrain for a woman writer." Juxtaposed to the conquering gods and hardy heroes, "we find the sexually wicked Venus, Circe, Pandora, Helen, Medea, Eve, and virtuously passive Iphigenia, Alcestis, Mary, Cinderella. It is thanks to myth we believe that woman must be either 'angel' or 'monster'" (316). However, emendation of this highly polarized and often negative mythic portrayal of woman has long been an intriguing possibility for women writers. "Whenever a poet employs a figure or story previously accepted and defined by culture, the poet is using myth, and the potential is always present that the use will be revisionist: that is, the figure or tale will be appropriated for altered ends, the old vessel filled with new

wine, initially satisfying the thirst of the individual poet but ultimately making cultural change possible" (317). In the case of revisionist mythmaking, Ostriker continues, "... old stories are changed, changed utterly, by female experience, so that they can no longer stand as foundations of collective male fantasy. Instead ... they are corrections; they are representations of what women find divine and demonic in themselves; they are retrieved images of what women have collectively and historically suffered; in some cases they are instructions for survival" (316).

An example of the more subtle revisionist process can be seen in the lines of one of Victorian literature's most discussed and intriguing poetic tales, Christina Rossetti's "Goblin Market." While the poem has generated a variety of critical interpretation—from the traditional explanation of the divided self struggling against an overwrought libido to Rossetti's positing of a "covert (if ambivalently) lesbian world" (Gilbert and Gubar 567) to the poem as paradigm for a nineteenth-century version of anorexia nervosa (Cohen) and finally to the quasi-Freudian interpretation of the story as "conflict between oral sadism and the reality-testing anal stage" (Charles 149)—what Freudians and feminists alike tend to forget, however, are the deeply religious implications of the poem. Indeed, as Dolores Rosenblum writes in a 1982 article in *Victorian Poetry*: "In a sense ... all Rossetti's poetry is deeply religious, concerned always with the relation of this world to the next" (33). It is this aspect of "Goblin Market" that I wish to focus upon, but not in the traditional or orthodox sense,

rather as Rossetti's conscious attempt to revise traditional Christian myth in order to produce an alternative, "feminist" reading to the two most fundamental stories in Christian lore—the fall of humankind from grace and our redemption through the blood of Christ. It is pointedly significant that this devoutly religious poet has her female Christ figure say in the redemptive climax of the poem: "Eat me, drink me, love me" (l. 471).

That Rossetti, whom biographers have portrayed as a model of pious devotion, indeed, whose posthumous poems were altered by brother William Michael "to make them more saintly still" (Auerbach 113), should attempt consciously or unconsciously anything so rebellious in nature as revisionist mythmaking might seem incongruous; however, even her "saintliness" has been established as slightly unorthodox. As Catherine Musello Cantalupo has stated in her evaluation of Rossetti as a devotional poet, she was "no strict typologist" (275). And Ellen Moers, who calls Rossetti one of "the greatest religious poets of the nineteenth century," comments specifically on the unique *unorthodoxy* of "Goblin Market" (103). In a work so filled with religious imagery and overtones, something is slightly out of kilter in its pious presentation of one sister's effort to save the other from slipping into concupiscent sin. At the moment when the devout sister Lizzie offers herself as a sacrifice for the other, says Moers, "it is the most eloquent, most erotic moment in the poem" (103). But this combination of eroticism and Christian imagery, itself not extraordinary if viewed in a Pre-Raphaelite context, is not the only puzzling aspect about the poem: there appears within the work a conscious effort to turn biblical and Miltonic myth, with its misogynistic intent, into heroic affirmation of the female, Christ-like principle of loving self-sacrifice and creative self-assertion through rebirth or resurrection.

As early as 1956, in an article entitled "The Feminine Christ," Marian Shalkhauser discussed "Goblin Market" as a "Christian fairy tale in which a feminine cast of characters is substituted for the masculine cast of the Biblical sin-redemption sequence" (19). Shalkhauser associated Rossetti's two sisters, Laura and Lizzie, with Adam / Christ figures in a sacrificial drama in which "a feminine Christ redeems a feminine mankind from a masculine Satan" (20). In 1979, Gilbert and Gubar noted Rossetti's use and exploitation of Miltonic imagery, but they viewed such exploitation merely in terms of a "lesson in renunciation" (573), an affirmation of the patriarchal ideal of "angel in the house"; they were perhaps shortsighted in failing to see the ultimate power and expression of active autonomy communicated in Rossetti's revisionist mythmaking.

One must free oneself from the traditional, patriarchal interpretation of self-sacrifice as ultimate expression of feminine submission, in order to understand the implications of the sisters' uniquely *empowering* act of renunciation. Despite Rossetti's seeming acceptance of "woman's place" as defined by a nineteenth-century patriarchy, she appears to have rejected the idea that female self-sacrifice was necessarily indicative of weak-minded submission. Indeed, Diane D'Amico has written of Rossetti's attempt to elevate the female principle and self-sacrifice to deific proportions, with Mary, Eve and Mary Magdalene serving in her writing as "a sort of feminine triptych" (175). D'Amico goes on to explain

that Rossetti believed that woman had suffered "difficulty and pain" in her relationship with man as defined by the Judeo-Christian mythic scheme: "Even in the case of Adam and Eve, Rossetti did not overlook the verse in Genesis (13:12) in which Adam seems quite willing to let Eve take all the blame: 'The meanness as well as the heinousness of sin [says Rossetti in *Letter and Spirit* (84)] is illustrated in Adam's apparent effort to shelter himself at the expense of Eve'" (180-81). However, if "Genesis told her of Eve's weakness and shame," continues D'Amico commenting on Rossetti's devotional prose piece *The Face of the Deep*, "Revelation told her of woman's ultimate strength and glory" (191).

The biblical and Miltonic overtones in Rossetti's poem are obvious as the story of the Eve-like Laura's fall is unfolded. Captivated by the seductive call of the satanic goblin men, who appropriately slink, crawl, and slither their way into her consciousness (ll. 70-76), Laura / Eve succumbs to their serpentine enticement and yearns to partake of their luscious and lascivious fruit. Like Milton's serpent before being cursed by god to slither forever legless, the goblin men are "whist-tailed" creatures, full of "airs and graces," whose honeyed words seduce the feckless Laura / Eve. The fruit with which they accomplish their seduction, like Milton's biblical fruit is rife with sexual and creative implication as well as with the power which forbidden knowledge affords. The vivid words Rossetti employs to describe the fruit and, most important, uses in Laura's own description of her voluptuous feast are rich with Pre-Raphaelite color, the details as brilliant as a Burne-Jones painting:

What melons icy-cold  
Piled on a dish of gold  
Too huge for me to hold,  
What peaches with a velvet nap,  
Pellucid grapes without one seed;  
Odorous indeed must be the meed  
Whereon they grow . . . (ll. 175-81)

The goblin men are purveyors not only of sexual liberation and bacchanal pleasures but of creative liberation as well; they hold the keys to the masculine world of creative activity and knowledge. Laura purchases their fruit with her golden lock, an obvious sexual gesture, and in clipping her lock, she trades her chastity for access to the male world of artistic and sexual freedom:

Stronger than man-rejoicing wine,  
Clearer than water flowed that juice:  
She never tasted such before,  
How should it cloy with length of use?  
She sucked and sucked and sucked the more  
Fruits which that unknown orchard bore,  
She sucked until her lips were sore. (ll. 130-36)

Rossetti's lines pulsate not only with sexual implication but with the suggestion that Laura's hunger, that her oral craving, goes beyond mere sexual fulfillment; the hunger here is also for knowledge and creative expression, for poetic articulation as well as for carnality. Laura is utterly lost in her sensual abandonment, in the awakening she experiences, and

as her words vividly record, she is well able to articulate what she has experienced. Having tasted the forbidden fruit, she becomes God-like in her knowledge and in her ability to create, and, like the artist, she brilliantly portrays for sister Lizzie a portrait of her pleasure feast (ll. 164-83).

However, just as Milton's God feared Adam and Eve's gaining knowledge after tasting the fruit of paradise and cast them out of Eden, the goblin men reject Laura in her newfound knowledge. She too is cast aside and no longer privy to their call to come and feast. She is now a threat—a woman with creative and sexual knowledge, a rival; and like the doomed Jeanie, another willful lass seduced, she is condemned to pine and languish, never again invited to taste of the goblin men's fruit. Unfortunately, having tasted of masculine freedom and knowledge, Laura will forever be dissatisfied with the mundane world of womanly cares and duties; her common-day sphere of kneading dough, churning butter, and whipping cream holds little fascination now; she is as weary-worn and care-ridden as that primal pair banished from paradise and fallen upon a world of tears and pain (ll. 293-98), a world dulled by the postlapsarian shadow.

In her recently published study of Rossetti's poetry, *Christine Rossetti and the Poetry of Discovery*, Katherine Mayberry has recognized the creative self-assertion prominent in Rossetti's portrayal of the fallen sister Laura: "Permeating the verse is a sense of the poet's breathless inebriation with the process of writing. The proliferation of words, rhythms, metaphors, and similes suggests an artist reveling in her creativity, whose love of her craft, like Laura's love of the fruit, is insatiable" (90). Laura's discovery of knowledge and creative self-expression is the narrator's discovery:

The narrator's apparent enchantment or intoxication with the tools of her art allies her with the wayward Laura, who experiences a comparable inebriation with the goblins' beautiful, abundant fruit. In Laura, Rossetti has produced a natural poet-figure—a character possessing all the impulses and instincts necessary, though not always sufficient, for the creation of art [i. e. her Eve-like curiosity, her instinctive attempt to give literary form to her experiences, and her richly "poetic language"]. (92)

Rossetti's version of "paradise regained," the second half of the poem, is unique in that she presents a female Christ figure who offers much more than merely an aesthetic of renunciation and self-sacrifice, the traditional feminist interpretation of the second half of the poem (Gilbert and Gubar 572). The sacrificial action of Lizzie can more appropriately be viewed as a positive act of defiance and, on Rossetti's part, as revisionist mythmaking.

Taking a silver penny with which to purchase the forbidden fruit for Laura, Lizzie / Christ seeks the goblin men herself. The imagery Rossetti associates with Lizzie at this point is the same traditionally associated with Jesus Christ; it is also imagery which fills the Pre-Raphaelite canvas—the lily (Dante Rossetti's "Ecce Ancilla Domini," Collins's "Convent Thoughts," Hughes's "The Annunciation"), the beacon (Hunt's "The Light of the World), the besieged city (ll. 409-21). Fearlessly, Lizzie faces the taunting goblin men, devilish in their wicked supplication:

Full of airs and graces,  
Pulling wry faces,  
Demure grimaces,  
Cat-like and rat-like,  
. . . . .  
[They] squeezed and caressed her:  
Stretched up their dishes. (ll. 337-40, 349-50)

The protean forms the goblin men assume are those traditionally associated with Satan: cats, rats, wombats, magpies. As Lizzie confronts this raffish crew, she remains steady, unyielding to their persecution; and in conquering temptation and the flesh, she purchases redemption for her sister, as Christ in his passion bought redemption for fallen humankind. The mythical Christian imagery in the poem at this point is unmistakable:

White and golden Lizzie stood,  
Like a lily in a flood,—  
Like a rock of blue-veined stone . . .  
Like a beacon left alone . . .  
Like a royal virgin town  
Topped with gilded dome and spire  
Close beleaguered by a fleet  
Mad to tug her standard down.  
(ll. 408-10, 412, 418-21)

Lizzie's is no mean or cowardly act of submission, but one of defiance and action; it is a decisive act of will, and in the face of her strength the goblin men slink and slime their way back into the dark recesses of the earth, back into the primal depths of their origin (ll. 437-46). And Lizzie, having bargained for the "fiery antidote" (l. 559) to her sister's malaise, returns to Laura and, bruised and dripping with the sticky goblin pulp, charges her sister to embrace her, indeed to "Eat me, drink me, love me" (l. 471). With heroic self-sacrifice, she has purchased salvation for her sister, and the redemption she offers pulsates with eucharistic imagery.

Overcome with the magnitude of her sister's sacrifice—"Lizzie, Lizzie, have you tasted / For my sake the fruit forbidden?" (ll. 477-78)—Laura embraces her sister and accepts the offer of redemption. In so doing, she exorcises her demon spirits, and the act of a woman's tasting the forbidden fruit assumes heroic rather than sinful dimensions:

Swift fire spread through her veins, knocked at her  
heart,  
Met the fire smoldering there  
And overbore its lesser flame. (ll. 506-08)

At length, Laura swoons, and in symbolic death finds rebirth and salvation: "Life out of death . . . Laura awoke as from a dream" (ll. 524, 537).

The sisters go on to become mothers, teachers and story tellers, celebrating the heroic actions of Lizzie and the principle of sisterhood (ll. 543-67). At the end of the poem, the world they inhabit is one curiously absent of men, yet it is a creative world, a world of wisdom and knowledge that the sisters pass on to their children. In her remaking of Miltonic and biblical myth, Rossetti appears to legitimize the creative

spirit of the nineteenth-century female, god-like in her ability to create life though seldom sanctioned the freedom to create art.

The sisterhood that Rossetti's poem celebrates is one not only reminiscent of the "Amazon" legends of Greek myth but also similar to those science fiction fantasies of the twentieth century, where female heroes bigger than life create a sisterhood and inhabit a heroic world without men. Perhaps such a sisterhood would seem especially appealing to someone like Rossetti, an individual both disenfranchised and powerless, and allowed little part in "brotherhood." One rather imagines Rossetti, fascinated and deeply interested in the work of her brother and other Pre-Raphaelites, feeling occasionally the intruder, the outcast, perhaps the work of art (as model) but never the artist (see "In an Artist's Studio"). Jerome Bump has written of the irony of Rossetti's exclusion from the "brotherhood": "The first literary victory of the Pre-Raphaelites was the publication of *'Goblin Market' and Other Poems*, and it was written by the member they excluded" (323). The extent of Rossetti's pain at such exclusion can only be guessed at; certainly, her poetry reveals a longing for fulfillment of heroic potential, though it might not be in precisely the same mode or fashion as that of her male siblings. In "The Lowest Room" she questions:

Why should not you, why should not I  
Attain heroic Strength?

Who dooms me I shall only be  
The second, not the first? (ll. 15-16, 19-20)

Rossetti's interest in the concept of sisterhood has been explored by Dorothy Mermin, who notes the poet's work with fallen women, her wish to be an Anglican nun (a goal her sister Maria achieved in 1873), and her interest in joining Nightingale's core of female nurses bound for the Crimea (115). Mermin also speculates that Rossetti's fascination with the concept of a female Christ, not a totally novel idea in the nineteenth century, is due to the influence exerted on her by Nightingale, who writes in *Cassandra*, "The next Christ will perhaps be a female Christ" (112). Certainly, Rossetti's Lizzie follows precisely the mythic / heroic paradigm of a Christ or a Dante or a Buddha—the only variation in this version of the separation, the journey, and the return with redemptive powers is that Rossetti's hero (her Christ) is cast in female guise.

Far from being an affirmation of the angel in the house, typical interpretation of Rossetti's poem, "Goblin Market" is revisionist mythmaking in a variety of ways. Here are certainly angels, but they are by no means passive and sacrificial. Rather, both Lizzie and Laura are strong-willed women who defy the nineteenth-century male version of creative and sexual prerogatives, exclusive to a single sex. When Laura / Eve succumbs to the goblin fruit, she is affirming her sexuality, her creativity, and her right to be an intellectual being; in so doing, she intrudes upon the male domain, becoming a threat and thus deemed worthless and no longer privileged to hear their call or share their fruit. Gilbert and Gubar have characterized the goblin fruit and Laura's fall in this way: "Rossetti's 'pleasure-place' is thus quite clearly a paradise of

self gratifying art, a paradise in which the lines of 'Goblin Market's' masculine fruit-merchants are anticipated by the seductions of the male muse . . ." (571). Yet, in the final analysis, the implication Gilbert and Gubar clearly find for "Goblin Market" is both anti-self and anti-artist for the female; "like Laura and Jeanie," they say, "Rossetti must learn to suffer and renounce the self-gratifications of art and sensuality" (571). There is, however, little suffering and less renouncing suggested in the final lines of the poem; indeed, the sisters' lives portend not only paradise regained but that Blakean version of "paradise" achieved through experience and testing. As for the sisters'—and Rossetti's—renouncing art and creativity, such is hardly the case. Indeed, what renunciation there is in the poem is uniquely empowering and in itself revisionist, for the sisters do not renounce sexuality or artistic expression on *their own* terms (after all, the conclusion presents full-blossomed women with children, women who carry on a tradition of storytelling and wisdom teaching, modes of artistic expression traditionally associated with the female world and only in recent years legitimized as "real" art); rather, theirs is renunciation of sexuality and artistic expression as defined by the goblin men, by patriarchal tradition.

Katherine Mayberry has written that for Rossetti creating poetry was "a tremendously powerful act, serving as an alembic through which all that was painful or confusing could be rendered beautiful and intelligible . . . Through the poetic act, Rossetti could recast the unsatisfactory conditions of her temporal existence into beautiful and permanent experience" (109). One might conclude, as well, that in her choice to create, to be a poet, Rossetti went so far as to revise the "myth," the story of her own life: "Even the conditions of being a poet wrought a reinterpretation of the circumstances of Christina Rossetti's own life, changing her singleness from a misfortune into a professional requirement; as with the heroines of her ballads, Rossetti's spinsterhood was a condition that ultimately fostered autonomy, strength, and creativity" (109).

In some respect, what Rossetti was doing in such poems as "Goblin Market," "Repining," "The Lowest Room," "Moonshine," and "The Heart Knoweth its Own Bitterness" was what Carolyn Heilbrun calls "writing a woman's life." Heilbrun stresses the importance in women's lives of literature and myth and how, for the most part, women's "stories" have been written by men and the patriarchal myths and traditions which mold us all: "We can only retell and live by the stories we have read or heard. We live our lives through texts. They may be read, or chanted, or experienced electronically, or come to us, like the murmurings of our mothers, telling us what conventions demand. Whatever their form or medium, these stories have formed us all" (37). At the conclusion of "Goblin Market," Rossetti presents women themselves narrating to their children their story, creating their own myth; and their story follows the pattern of Christ in its loving self-sacrifice and religious intent, though the roles are recast, revised, with the principal players women.

Dorothy Mermin has written that "religious belief," for Rossetti, "both curbed her ambition and offered escape from the restrictions imposed by her sex" (116). Though one might question whether her religious beliefs did indeed curb Rossetti's ambition, there is little doubt that Victorian women like

Christina Rossetti provided themselves with a means of empowerment by their devotion to a religion of renunciation and self-sacrifice. Though a Nietzsche might not have seen the possibility of power through self-sacrifice, a host of nineteenth-century women found active and positive possibilities in following the paradigm provided through Christ's passion—certainly, Rossetti sensed the power of the myth and the appeal of revision of that myth to achieve her own sense of heroic self-fulfillment.

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## Mrs. Oliphant, *Miss Marjoribanks*, and the Victorian Canon

Joseph H. O'Mealy

John Sutherland's magisterial *Companion to Victorian Fiction* (which synthesizes 554 novels and gives brief notes on 878 novelists) warns against accepting the "Lilliputian dimensions" (1) of our current sense of the Victorian novel. It is a monument to his belief that the dozen or so novelists who regularly dominate bibliographies of Victorian fiction need some fresh companions, lest late twentieth-century readers never learn "what the Victorian novel actually meant to the Victorians" (1). Since Sutherland does not put forth any particular candidate for an expanded canon, the task of partisan promotion falls to others. In the spirit of what I hope is enlightened partisanship, I would like to advance the claims for Mrs. Margaret Oliphant, who, as the so-called "Queen of Popular Fiction" (Terry Ch. 4), has as great a historical claim as any to reconsideration, reevaluation, and, I would argue, ultimate recovery as an important Victorian novelist.

Consider her curious case. During Margaret Oliphant's life one critic called her "the most remarkable woman of her time" (Skelton 80); at her death William Blackwood the publisher wrote, "Mrs. Oliphant has been to the England of letters what the Queen has been to society as a whole. She, too, was crowned with age and honour in her own empire" (Terry 68). But, today, when many women's literary reputations are being recovered and their works are finding a place in either the traditional canon or an all-female counter canon, this prolific

and once admired Victorian novelist is still largely overlooked. Lillian Robinson's question, "Is the canon . . . to be regarded as the compendium of excellence or the record of cultural history?" (112), instead of laying out the possible strategies for Oliphant's achievement of canonical status, points out the precise nature of the dilemma. In either direction Oliphant's progress to canonical status is thwarted since she pleases neither the old guardians of the canon nor the new revisionists. To some traditionalists, the quality of Oliphant's work is questionable; to some feminists her political conservatism is an insuperable barrier. However, a close look at *Miss Marjoribanks* (1866)—arguably her best novel—reveals qualities that should please both camps. Its ambivalent ironies, beautifully controlled and surprisingly directed, demonstrate a high degree of literary sophistication, while its subtly crafted feminism points out Oliphant's sympathetic understanding of the limitations placed on the talented Victorian woman. In recovering the best of Oliphant it's possible to recover not only a fine and satisfying novel but also, more importantly, a truer sense of the immense range of quality Victorian fiction.

### I

As the author of ninety-two novels, scores of essays, and over two dozen non-fiction works, Oliphant could once lay

claim to a degree of productivity unrivaled by any serious contemporary. She could also measure her success in the distinction of being Queen Victoria's favorite novelist (Colby xiii, Sutherland 477), as well as in the large audiences many of her books attracted: "Just think of the millions she has made happy" (Skelton 76). Yet, even during her lifetime, Oliphant's future oblivion seemed inevitable. This same critic, John Skelton, introduced a caveat about Oliphant's abilities that has hung over her reputation ever since—she wrote too much, too fast. Comparing her output of two or three novels a year to Charlotte Brontë's and George Eliot's more modest production levels, Skelton admitted their greater "imaginative force," and asked, "Had Mrs. Oliphant concentrated her powers, what might she not have done? We might have had another Charlotte Brontë or another George Eliot" (80). Laying aside the question of whether a facsimile of a literary genius is ever desirable, Skelton's point about overproduction carries even more weight with a modern audience. Steeped as we are in the late twentieth-century belief that less is more, and conditioned by the modernist examples of lapidary and / or slowly gestated novels, the knowledge that the Oliphant canon contains nearly one hundred novels not only discourages the modern reader but probably gives rise to a mild contempt for the author of such excess. Even Robert and Vineta Colby, whose 1966 study of Oliphant was the first serious attempt at a reevaluation, temper their advocacy with disapproval of the sheer quantity of her output. "Mrs. Oliphant predicted that she would be forgotten by the next generation, and perhaps her eclipse is a Dantean justice for one who wrote too fast and too much" (xiv).

Henry James's 1897 obituary notice of Oliphant shares a similar tone of apparent praise that, under further examination, sounds like damning.

Her success had been in its day as great as her activity, yet it was always present to me that her singular gift was less recognised, or at any rate less reflected, less reported upon, than it deserved: unless indeed she may have been one of those difficult cases for criticism, an energy of which the spirit and the form, straggling apart, never join hands with that effect of union which in literature more than anywhere else is strength. (1411)

Again there is the reference to her great activity (he earlier refers to her "copious tribute" to the "great contemporary flood" of literature). More damaging is the rotund suggestion that perhaps Oliphant falls short of the Jamesian ideal of literary artistry; "the spirit and the form," the subject and the technique, are not in harmony. James hints at what Oliphant would never have denied. She was not an "artist" in the Jamesian sense. In her *Autobiography*, published posthumously, she refused to analyze her work, claiming that she wrote "because it gave me pleasure, because it came natural to me, because it was like talking or breathing, besides the big fact that it was necessary for me to work for my children" (4). Trollope's *Autobiography*, which James found distressingly nonchalant about the novelist's elevated calling, astonished Oliphant with its analytical comments on fictional creations: "I am totally incapable of talking about anything I have done in that way" (4), she averred.

Her male contemporaries did little to keep the memory of her novels alive, and early twentieth-century literary historians like Ernest Baker followed their lead. In his ten volume *History of the English Novel* (1924-1939) Baker found room for only a few sentences about Oliphant, dismissing her as a "domestic novelist" (8:111), that hoary euphemism for "damned scribbling woman." Once the novels fell out of print (for the longest time only *Salem Chapel*, 1863, not her finest work, was available in the Everyman Library series), Oliphant's reputation rested increasingly on her literary criticism. As recently as 1977, Elaine Showalter, in a pioneering study of the female tradition in the novel—*A Literature of Their Own*—based most of her discussion of Oliphant, not on her novels, but on quotations from her literary criticism (*passim*). Not surprisingly, it proved a somewhat unsteady prop. For more than forty years the virtual house critic of *Blackwood's*, Oliphant was conservative in her taste. She preferred the traditional English novel of Scott and Trollope, "not so much perhaps for what critics would call the highest development of art, as for a certain sanity, wholesomeness, and cleanness unknown to other literature of the same class" (102: 257). She was no stranger to skepticism, but she didn't like to see it in other people's books. *Vanity Fair*, for example, offended her sense of fairness in its satire against Amelia and Dobbin (77: 89); Chadband in *Bleak House* she regarded as a cynical and unrepresentative portrait of an evangelical clergyman (77: 463). She hated the "nasty sentiments and equivocal heroines" of sensation novels with their often glamorous depictions of female villainy (102: 280), and, even though she admired the revolutionary passions and vitality of *Jane Eyre*, she thought Charlotte Brontë skirted too close to indelicacy in her subject matter, and she worried that Brontë's legions of imitators, lacking her skills, would only debase the novel (77: 557-59).

The review that has made her appear most out of touch with modern sensibilities (Stubbs 141-42) was written the year before her death when she locked horns with Hardy over *Jude the Obscure*. She decried the novel's depiction of marriage as "shameful," reviled the creation of the openly sexual Arabella ("a human pig"), and characterized the whole enterprise as a product of "grossness, indecency, and horror" (159:138). Finally, she accused Hardy of hypocrisy for profiting twice from the novel, once in a "clean" version for serial publication, and again in the unexpurgated book edition. Her heavy-handed indignation did not sit easily with Hardy. His contemptuous dismissal of her as "propriety and primness incarnate" (Page 24) summed up the way many modernists saw her: an Eminent Victorian relic whose very name—MRS. Oliphant—reeked of the respectability of anti-macassars, horse-hair sofas, and whale-bone corsets.

For many feminists interested in recovering lost women's voices, Oliphant has been, to use James's phrase, "one of those difficult cases for criticism." Virginia Woolf, in *Three Guineas*, established one approach to her, which is to regard her as a cautionary example. She asks whether a look at Oliphant's *Autobiography* does not lead the reader "to deplore the fact that Mrs. Oliphant sold her brain, her very admirable brain, prostituted her culture and enslaved her intellectual liberty in order that she might earn her living and educate her children" (91-92). It's not that Oliphant couldn't



do better, Woolf implies; it's just that she was not allowed to. Oliphant, to Woolf, is an exemplary victim of a patriarchal system that forces women to worry first about the bare mechanics of scraping a living together and then, much later and further down the line, the claims of "disinterested culture and intellectual liberty." Woolf is quick to admire Oliphant's courage and her compassion in putting her family first, but she is even quicker to emphasize the short circuiting of her literary abilities. Like Skelton, Woolf prefers to think more of what Oliphant might have been than look closely at what she was.

Later feminists have not been even so equivocally generous. Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar's twenty-five hundred page *Norton Anthology of Literature by Women* (1985), for example, does not mention Oliphant at all. Novelists admittedly are not allowed much space in traditional anthologies, but Gilbert and Gubar, realizing the centrality of the novel to women's writing, have broken with tradition and included three complete novels: *Jane Eyre*, *The Awakening*, and *The Bluest Eye*. Excerpts from Maria Edgeworth, Jane Austen, Mary Shelley, Elizabeth Gaskell, Emily Brontë, and George Eliot, and summary references to Rhoda Broughton and Mary Elizabeth Braddon constitute their canon of nineteenth-century fiction. To exclude Oliphant from a survey of women's literature, "designed to serve as a core curriculum text" (xxvii), crammed with works whose "historical, intellectual, or aesthetic significance seems clearly to merit inclusion" (xxx) is to make her doubly marginal—neither part of the woman's tradition nor the man's.

Perhaps Gilbert and Gubar do not place Oliphant in their "great tradition" of women's writing because her novels do not question or challenge the prevailing patriarchy, nor does she treat her women characters as the repressed "other." (Oliphant does not privilege alterity.) In a similar way other feminists have faulted Oliphant for her political timidity: her "superficially emancipated heroines . . . remain well within the limits of moral and social convention" and are "in no way a serious challenge to patriarchal stereotypes of feminine character and behaviour" (Stubbs 39). Perhaps it is difficult for some critics to forgive Oliphant's opposition to what she once called "the mad notion of the franchise for women" (*Autobiography* 211). Yet, as Merryn Williams reminds us in her recent biography, Oliphant made that remark in 1866, and during the remaining thirty years of her life she altered her views considerably. "She believed in a Married Women's Property Act, a mother's right to the custody of her children, women doctors, and University education for girls. . . . By 1880 she was prepared to say in public, 'I think it is highly absurd that I should not have a vote, if I want one'" (108). Oliphant apparently did not want the vote herself, but then neither did George Eliot, Christina Rossetti, nor Elizabeth Barrett Browning.

Nevertheless, Oliphant has her modern advocates. They admit without hesitation that not all her work is first-rate, but, rather than dismiss her because of it, they single out those works that represent her best efforts. They look beyond the limitations imposed on her by the need to write fast and publish frequently and emphasize their belief that "what remains remarkable is what she did achieve within those limitations" (Terry 101).

The greatest amount of positive critical attention so far

has been given to Oliphant's five volume *Chronicles of Carlingford: The Rector and The Doctor's Family* (1863); *Salem Chapel* (1863); *The Perpetual Curate* (1864); *Miss Marjoribanks* (1866); and *Phoebe Junior: A Last Chronicle of Carlingford* (1876). Among them the most consistent praise has been directed at *Miss Marjoribanks*. Q. D. Leavis, who wrote an Introduction to a 1969 reprint of the novel, deserves credit for beginning the modern recovery of *Miss Marjoribanks*. She places Oliphant in the same company as Jane Austen and George Eliot as novelists of manners, and assigns Lucilla Marjoribanks, the title character, a prominent position in the Pantheon of strong women characters, somewhere between Emma Woodhouse and Dorothea Brooke, judging Lucilla "more entertaining, more impressive, and more likable than either" (1). She concludes with the hope that "perhaps our age will at last do justice to this wise and witty novel in which every sentence is exactly right and every word apt and adroitly placed" (23). While more temperate minds might balk at claims of perfection, a few other critics of the novel do share Mrs. Leavis's enthusiasm. Merryn Williams has asserted that "it is hardly possible to overpraise *Miss Marjoribanks*, which grows more impressive every time it is read" (84), and R. C. Terry has called it "a novel that can stand comparison with the best contemporary novels of its kind" (89).

## II

*Miss Marjoribanks* is an ironic comedy about power, the story of a young unmarried woman's efforts to achieve power within the narrow confines allowed to daughters of the genteel classes. Lucilla Marjoribanks returns home from school at the beginning of the novel to her widowed father, a prosperous physician in the quiet Tory town of Carlingford, and to a traditional patriarchal society. It's a man's world, where the major social event is Dr. Marjoribanks's weekly all-male dinner, "to which naturally, as there was no lady in the house, ladies could not be invited" (42). To make matters worse for the wives left at home, Dr. Marjoribank's cook is so skillful at creating exquisite sauces that she spoils the men for their wives' plainer fare. For the unmarried young woman, like Lucilla, the only respectable option is to become the socially unimportant wife of such a spoiled man.

Lucilla, however, has decided during her years of exile at the Mt. Pleasant girls' school that her mission upon return will go beyond looking on at her father's festive table. Her real ambition is "the reorganization of society in Carlingford" (40). She plans to create a coherent social life for all members of the genteel classes, male and female, and to make herself the central point around which their activities revolve. The other women of the town are not up to the task, disqualified as they are by virtue of age, circumstance, or disposition from doing "anything in the way of knitting people together, and making a harmonious whole out of the scraps and fragments of society" (43). Lucilla deems herself perfect for the job: she has a passion for organization, she is unattached, and she has her father's large house and not inconsiderable income at her disposal. The first thing she does to build public confidence in her resolve to reshape Carlingford is to dispel rumors that she might marry at any time. She makes it clear to her father, to her cousin Tom, who loves her, and to anyone who asks, that she intends to devote herself to Carlingford for at least ten

years. Lucilla hangs out her shingle, so to speak, and commences her "career" when she establishes her "Thursday nights." When her cousin Tom tries to impress her by declaring "I am called to the bar, and I have begun my Career" (96), Lucilla solemnly ignores him. She knows that her own "Career" as the social doyenne of Carlingford, which is as close to a public career as a Victorian young lady could hope for, is so much more real and active than a fledgling barrister's.

Lucilla is much smarter and abler than any of the men in her world. She becomes thereby Oliphant's emblem of the unfair limitations placed on Victorian women. In a world where female imagination has no real outlet, and female ability can gain no real power, Lucilla makes impressive use of the meager resources at her disposal. She takes the Victorian home, which was supposed to be the realm of the private, and turns it into the public, subverting the Victorian "ideology of home and family [which] was consistently employed to oppose emergent feminism" (Stubbs 7). Her Thursday nights create a community where there was alienation and separation. The genteel classes of Carlingford gather once a week for dinner, gossip, and light entertainment. And a woman's hand guides it all. Lucilla of course performs the time-honored feminine tasks of harmonizing and unifying that Virginia Woolf recognized as Mrs. Ramsay's greatest gift and limitation. It's an ambivalence that Oliphant shares. When Oliphant refers ironically to Lucilla's Thursdays as her "great work" (122), the double-edge of that phrase is unmistakable: ordinarily a genteel Victorian woman's "work" meant her needlework or embroidery, symbols of the limits placed on female productivity. Even her father recognizes the waste inherent in Lucilla's "Thursdays." He had often complained that his sister-in-law had the son, Tom, that he had wanted, yet he has to admit "how great a loss it was to society and to herself that Lucilla was not 'the boy'" (400).

Despite gender restrictions, Lucilla's brilliance cannot be completely dimmed, only somewhat contained. Her ability to exploit convention, even to subvert it when necessary, is revealed clearly in three masterful scenes. In each of them, Lucilla demonstrates her will to power, and her skill at controlling circumstances so that a weak strategic position is converted into a commanding triumph.

When she first arrives in Carlingford the initial obstacles to Lucilla's empire-building are her father and his housekeeper, Nancy. Only nineteen, Lucilla has to establish early on her determination to run the house. Since she's a rank outsider, having been away a decade at school, and since the current inhabitants of the house are content doing things their own way, Lucilla must begin swiftly but subtly. She amuses her father with stories about her Grand Tour of the continent, and while he compounds his good mood with a glass of claret, she, "as she herself expressed it, harmonised the rooms, by the simple method of rearranging half the chairs and covering the tables with trifles of her own" (50). When her father sees her handiwork he is restrained by his usual Scottish phlegm from saying anything. The next morning, however, Lucilla "unfolded her standard" (50). She arises before he does and when he enters the breakfast room discovers her seated in his usual place blithely offering him a cup of coffee. "Dr. Marjoribanks hesitated for one momentous instant, stricken dumb

by this unparalleled audacity; but so great was the effect of his daughter's courage and steadiness, that after that moment of fate he accepted the seat by the side where everything was arranged for him and to which Lucilla invited him sweetly" (50). Lucilla acts not without trepidation, but her firm belief in the wisdom of seizing opportunity by the forelock sustains her. She apologizes for taking her father's place and explains that otherwise she "should have had to move the urn, and all the things, and I thought you would not mind" (50). Her father grumbles quietly and then submits, aware that "the reins of state had been smilingly withdrawn from his unconscious hands" (50).

Oliphant pointedly concedes that "it is no great credit to a woman of nineteen to make a man of any age throw down his arms; but to conquer a woman is a different matter" (52). To win over Nancy is the real challenge. And Lucilla does it through a confident sweetness that encourages Nancy to consider Lucilla her ally in upholding the great tradition of Marjoribanks dinners: "I have heard of papa's dinners . . . and I don't mean to let down your reputation. Now we are two women to manage everything, we ought to do still better" (52). Nancy, who had been prepared to resist any high-handed attempts to wrest control from her, is completely disarmed by Lucilla's conciliatory tactics, and "gave in like her master" (52).

Lucilla's home triumph is not yet secure, however. Her free hand at home raises the eyebrows of at least one townsman, the evangelical rector, Mr. Bury. He considers it irregular, if not improper, for Lucilla to mix in male society without an older woman as her chaperone. Since her mother is dead, he decides to provide her with a live-in companion. Lucilla plays a little fast and loose, but all is fair, as she sees it, in her war for an independent dominion. She reads Bury's candidate, Mrs. Mortimer, quickly—"a deprecating woman, with a faint sort of pleading smile on her face" (85)—and parries Bury's pious declaration that he has found someone to take her mother's place with the disingenuous question, "Do you mean you have found some one for him [her father] to marry?" (86). The introduction of a sexual perspective completely unnerves Mrs. Mortimer, as Lucilla knew it would, and she collapses in a faint. Lucilla takes control by nearly carrying her to the sofa, and ministers to her. So much for Mrs. Mortimer as her protector. After the disgusted Bury washes his hands of Mrs. Mortimer, Lucilla candidly apologizes to her, "I knew it would hurt your feelings . . . but I could not do anything else" (89).

In these two scenes Lucilla has appropriated the conventional image of the innocent young woman whose blundering intrusions and indelicacies are well-meaning but unconscious errors at worst. Because no one can imagine her real motives (except her father who is soon amused by them), she can subvert convention and have things her own way by appearing to personify conventionality itself. As she admits: "I always make it a point to give in to the prejudices of society. That is how I have always been so successful" (72). She serves up revolution with a smile, founded as it is on a paradoxical adherence to the hoariest Victorian standards of decorum.

Lucilla most brilliantly manipulates the conventional code of conduct when she must save the integrity of her Thursday evenings. She learns that Mr. Cavendish, who has

long been a prized jewel in her social crown, is about to be dethroned as an impostor by a visiting prelate, Archdeacon Beverley. Lucilla knows that the exposure of Cavendish, who is not a member of that illustrious family but merely a Kavan, would rend the fabric of her carefully created society, throwing everything in doubt. If Cavendish is Kavan, then who is Cavendish's sister, Mrs. Woodburn? And what status can Mr. Woodburn claim now that he is no longer married to a Cavendish? And so on. For the elite of Carlingford to discover that they have nourished an upstart in their bosoms would mean admitting that they cannot distinguish between a gentleman and a pretender. To save the status quo, Lucilla is willing to lie and risk embarrassment. At the moment the Archdeacon recognizes Cavendish at the table, Lucilla silences him by coyly confessing that "he is one of my—very particular friends" (308), in other words, that she is engaged to him, and that "he has no secrets from me" (308). The Archdeacon is confounded: "What was he to do? He could not publicly expose the man who had just received this mark of confidence from his young hostess, who knew everything" (309). Lucilla has counted on the conventional code of decorum to prevail; no one would embarrass a young lady in her own house about a suitor and expect to be considered a gentleman. Archdeacon Beverley is no cad, so Lucilla is safe. Once again, her utter confidence in her own peculiar genius and her profound understanding of the conventional minds surrounding her have turned a near disaster into a personal triumph.

No reader can fail to detect the irony in Oliphant's treatment of Lucilla's aspirations. She is fond of referring to Lucilla as "the young sovereign" (49) or as a "distinguished revolutionary" (41), eager to begin "her campaign" (98) to bring Carlingford under her sway and establish "her throne" (65) where "her subjects" (266) can pay homage to her. Some critics have worried about this irony, judging the tone "bitter" and "cold": "The portrait of Miss Marjoribanks has wit, freshness, and originality, but it lacks humanity (Colby 63, 67). Another agrees that there is "a hardness of tone," but adds that "the wit and irony never falter; from the first page to the last it is extremely funny" (Williams 81). Oliphant's mock heroic language, laced with imperial and military tropes, can be withering, but its consistent use forces the reader to see the other side of the deflationary mock-heroic. Even as it supposedly diminishes, the comparison of Lucilla's domestic battles with the Napoleonic campaigns paradoxically elevates. We soon see that in Lucilla's milieu her ambitions do set her above the conventionality of her peers. She is both deluded to think of herself as Queen Lucilla and yet perfectly right in assuming that she is a superior being.

Perhaps it is true, as Chesterton said of Dickens's creation of Pickwick—he came to scoff but stayed to pray (70)—that Oliphant's attitude toward Lucilla changes in the course of the novel. Certainly the irony softens in the last third. And perhaps it is also fair to say that Oliphant feels some affection for her own creation, although certainly not to the uncritical degree that Stubbs suggests: "she . . . approves of both Lucilla and her activities" (41). Part of Oliphant is horrified by Lucilla's shallowness, part of her admires her spunk, and the rest admits that Lucilla is the inevitable product of a world that circumscribes talented and ambitious women

so narrowly.

At the end of the novel, for example, Lucilla is ten years older, a little stouter, a little less satisfied with the regular round of Thursday evenings, and conscious of her precarious position as a woman reaching thirty without a husband. Mrs. Oliphant reminds her readers of the paradoxical Victorian usage of the word "independent" to denote both the freedom from being encumbered and the status of a married woman, no longer dependent on her parents or family.

She was very comfortable, no doubt in every way, and met with little opposition to speak of, and had things a great deal more in her own hands than she might have had, had there been a husband in the case to satisfy; but notwithstanding, she had come to an age when most people have husbands, and when an independent position in the world becomes necessary to self-respect. To be sure Lucilla was independent; but then—there is a difference, as everybody knows. (342)

Like Oliphant, Lucilla is a realist and has not ignored the social advantages of marriage. She has always kept her eye out for the appropriate fellow, preferably someone, like an M. P., with access to power. Since "she had come to an age at which she might have gone into Parliament herself had there been no disqualification of sex" (394), and since "when a woman has an active mind, and still does not care for parish work, it is a little hard for her to find a sphere" (395), Lucilla faces a life crisis. Simply put, "her capabilities were greater than her work" (395). When she does marry, Lucilla chooses her cousin Tom, who has no professional standing in England, having been a barrister in India for ten years, and who cannot offer her a conventional position in society. This only gives Lucilla the chance to create a fresh mission: "the thing we both want is something to do" (483). To all Tom's protests that he hopes eventually to take care of her so she can remain idle, Lucilla turns a deaf and mildly contemptuous ear: "What was to be done with a man who had so little understanding of her, and of himself, and of the eternal fitness of things?" (484). Lucilla's view of the "eternal fitness of things" is certainly not that of the typical Victorian male. She finds a country estate for sale, fittingly named Marchbank (her name is pronounced the same), which needs a great deal of work. The tenants lead wretched, disorderly lives, much in need of a strong organizing hand. Tom, she decides, can "improve" the land, while she "improves" the people. Perhaps in a few years Tom, who has "a perfect genius for carrying out a suggestion" (496), will stand for Parliament. "Then there rose up before her a vision of a parish saved, a village reformed, a county reorganised, and a triumphant election at the end, the recompense and crown of all, which should put the government of the country itself, to a certain extent, into competent hands" (497).

Lucilla's horizons grow absurdly large at the end, her Carlingford fiefdom gladly exchanged for the prospect of a national domain. Yet underneath our amusement at her grandiose ambitions lies our realization, thanks to Oliphant, that the irony is not directed only at Lucilla. It's directed also at the world that has made Lucilla. Six years before *Middlemarch* we meet in Lucilla a comic Dorothea, also

"foundress of nothing," but one who is too bustling, too bourgeois, and too bullheaded to care that her life "spent itself in channels which had no great name on earth" (Eliot 4, 613).

Perhaps our unsentimental age has finally caught up with Lucilla and with Oliphant's ironic genius. *Miss Marjoribanks* is permeated with a sense that underneath Lucilla's grand schemes and ambitions lies compromise. Since she cannot partake in the imperial public life open to young men like her cousin Tom, who goes to India, she will create her own private empire in Carlingford; since she cannot stand for Parliament herself, she will look for a mate whom she can maneuver into a seat; since she cannot remain single forever, and share in the world's power, she will marry someone she can control. In Oliphant's world everyone has to settle for the best she can get. Men and women do not necessarily understand one another, nor do they expect to. Romance and sexual attractiveness do not last long; only the foolish think so. Religion, which might be expected to answer the big questions, doesn't, nor does anyone ask them of it. Marriage does not by some immutable law bestow eternal happiness; women are not always content to be only wives and mothers, and so on. We see our disillusioned selves in the mirror that Oliphant holds up. As Q. D. Leavis pointed out, *Miss Marjoribanks* lacks the "infusion of warm feeling" that Victorian readers had come to expect: "it is not simple-minded or self-indulgent . . . [Lucilla] had neither the Victorian sentimentality nor even the necessary reticence and sense of propriety" (23) to achieve mass popularity. We who do not demand warm feelings or propriety in our favorite characters do not miss their absence in Lucilla. In fact we delight in the wit and hard good sense that leaves them out.

Yet this is not a bitter or cynical novel. Oliphant's ironic narrative voice keeps reminding the reader of the folly in all human endeavor, yet accepts the absolute fitness, in a disappointing world, of striking the best bargain you can for yourself. Lucilla maintains a cheerful determination throughout her campaigns, occasionally disappointed but never discouraged. She doesn't analyze the unfairness of her disabilities, sometimes isn't even aware of them, but Oliphant recognizes them and prepares the reader to do likewise. The sustained artistry of Oliphant's ironic technique, poised delicately between scorn and sympathy, recognizing that Lucilla's personal shortcomings are directly related to Victorian society's narrow definition of what was an appropriate ambition for a woman, may be *Miss Marjoribanks*'s greatest strength.

If it's true, as I believe and as Margarete Holubetz asserts in her excellent but little known essay, that "there is [not] another novel of the period which dissects the Victorian conventions of feeling and behavior with such subversive irony" (42), then it is also appropriately ironic that a novel so subversive should remind us that the "Queen of Popular Fiction" can offer as complex a response to society and literature as her more canonical fellows.

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## Allusions to Literature in Trollope's Novels: Interpreting the Evidence, with Identification of Literary, Historical and other References in Trollope's *The Bertrams* (1859) and *Lady Anna* (1874)

James Means

## I

The idea for this study took shape almost a decade ago when I set myself the task—a delightful one, as it has turned out—of reading through Trollope's novels for the first time. Once I had completed the Barseshire and Palliser chronicles (all of which were readily available in well-edited paperbacks), I discovered that many of the lesser-known novels were available only as unedited reprints of early editions. These reprints, issued by Dover Books, were a godsend to me, as doubtless they have been to many another reader. But they are, by their nature, textually unreliable and completely unannotated, so that the text frequently presents the reader with more or less obscure allusions of a literary, historical, social, or legal kind.

From the start I got into the habit of annotating my own copies. This early-morning sleuthing reminded me of a remark Geoffrey Tillotson once made to me. He had observed that, after the passage of fifty years, any novel will require notes. While this is true of novels in general, it is a maxim that applies with special force to the works of Trollope, so deeply are they embedded in the fabric of his time. Professor John Sutherland, one of Trollope's recent editors, has stated the issue best: "To annotate Trollope is to become especially conscious of how vibrantly close his fiction is to his age, and his society."<sup>1</sup>

## II

In summarizing my findings, some of which have been published in an earlier number of this periodical (No. 78 (Fall 1990): 32-38), I shall confine myself to literary allusions only, and with in this category to poetry alone, as Trollope's taste in fiction has been well documented, in his *Autobiography* and in the writings of his commentators. Although I have annotated only about a dozen novels, I have read all but a handful. I trust therefore that my conclusions accurately describe Trollope's practice at every phase of his career. It goes without saying, perhaps, that I am deeply indebted to the editorial labors of other scholars—in particular, to those who have annotated the Oxford University Press "World's Classics" series and the Penguin editions—whose findings I have shamelessly pillaged.

## III

Aside from proverbial sayings and Biblical references, the earliest literature to which Trollope alludes is the Latin. Citations from Horace and Vergil abound in his novels, although he cites Horace much more frequently than he does Vergil—more often, in fact, than he cites any other writer. Trollope tells us, in his *Autobiography* that he acquired his knowledge of Horace during those wretched years of early adulthood which he later depicted in *The Three Clerks*:

In those days I read a little, and did learn to read French and Latin. I made myself very familiar with Horace, and became acquainted with the works of our own greatest poets. (World's Classics Edition 53)

Indeed, Trollope's numerous citations from the *Odes*, *Satires*, and *Epistles*, as well as the *Ars poetica*,<sup>2</sup> show that there was little in Horace that he did not know, at least as the non-specialist knows him. As one might expect, it is the sententious, moral Horace who appeals to him; one almost never finds Trollope quoting bits of nature-description. I surmise that he found the lubricious subject-matter of the *Epodes* objectionable or unpleasant, for in my notes I find only one allusion to these poems.<sup>3</sup> I would guess that the same principle governed his avoidance of allusions to the frank poems of Juvenal and Catullus, which I feel sure Trollope must have known fairly well.<sup>4</sup>

Where the works of Vergil are concerned, Trollope's allusions are brief and perfunctory. I have found only one reference to the *Eclogues* and none at all to the *Georgics*, which might be explained by their lack of specifically social human-interest. But, even when he cites *The Aeneid* (which he does frequently), Trollope generally quotes only a phrase or a single line—very seldom a longer passage. He tends to repeat a handful of familiar tags so often (e.g., *Facilis decensus Averno*) that I am inclined to suspect that his knowledge of Vergil, in the original, at least, was rather limited. From the other poets with whose works university-educated men would have been familiar (Persius, Tibullus, Propertius, et al.), he never quotes.

48-64, that Trollope's library, according to the 1874 catalogue, contained at least seven separate editions or translations of Horace. T. also possessed an edition of Catullus and one of Juvenal. Whether he could read these poets in the original with any degree of ease is another question. The unique citation from the *Epodes* will be found in *The Kellys and the O'Kellys*, Ch. 8.

<sup>4</sup>I have found one citation from Juvenal—in *Phineas Finn*, Ch. 55.

## IV

Trollope's devotion to English poetry is indicated by the two surviving catalogues of his library. Grossman and Wright characterize its poetry holdings as "voluminous" (49-51 *et passim*).<sup>5</sup> Indeed, poetry accounts for 406 of 2,332 entries in the Waltham House catalogue (1867), or almost one-sixth of the total number of volumes. Trollope possessed complete sets of the English poets who wrote before 1800, as well as duplicate sets and editions of all the major poets from Chaucer to Tennyson and the Brownings.<sup>6</sup>

As one would expect, Trollope frequently quotes lines and brief passages from Shakespeare's plays—most often the tragedies, less so the comedies and histories. If frequency of citation indicates a preference, then Trollope's choice among the plays is *Macbeth*. It is curious to note that, despite the many years he devoted to a close study of the other Elizabethan and Jacobean dramatists, I have found no references to their works. While one encounters numerous citations from the minor poems of Milton<sup>7</sup>—especially *Lycidas*, *L'Allegro*, and *Comus*—I have found none at all from the drama of Jonson, Marlowe, Webster, Beaumont and Fletcher, or Ford.<sup>8</sup> Some of Trollope's critics feel that he concerned himself primarily with the structure of these plays; certainly there is no evidence—from direct quotation, at least—that the poetry greatly impressed him. Nevertheless, it is hard to believe that the author of such a psychological tour-de-force as *He Knew He Was Right* did not find much to admire in the poetry of John Ford.

Among the eighteenth-century poets, Trollope most often quotes Pope, Goldsmith, Gray, Cowper, and Burns—and Pope much more often than the rest put together.<sup>9</sup> Pope's perfect couplets and pointed observations about men and women as social animals seem always to have been lurking at the back of Trollope's mind. In addition to the rather trivial citations that stud his prose (e.g. the numerous times Trollope reminds us that every woman is at heart a rake), his allusions to Pope and his poetry sometimes seem to operate in a larger and more significant context. Occasionally, they assume the weight of an historical motif—a moral-aesthetic touchstone from a grander age, against which the present is assayed and found wanting. Perhaps the following passages, selected almost at random, will illustrate my point. In the first selection, Trollope is describing old Miss Marrable, Mary Lowther's aunt in *The Vicar of Bullhampton*. An old-fashioned, somewhat acerbic lady, she represents the freer, easier tastes and *mores* of the Regency, and—by extension—of Pope's day:

<sup>5</sup>This number is exclusive of an additional 302 volumes of "Drama and Dramatic Literature."

<sup>6</sup>Conspicuous by their absence, however, are several of the great Romantics including Blake, Clare, Keats and Wordsworth. To the best of my knowledge, T. almost never quotes from these poets. However, a holograph list shows that Trollope was reading *The Excursion* aloud to his family in May, 1877! See *The Letters of Anthony Trollope*. Ed. N. John Hall, with the assistance of Nina Burgis. Stanford: Stanford UP, 1983: 2:1033. Whatever he may have thought of *The Excursion*, Trollope heartily disliked Wordsworth; for his savage treatment of "The Keswick Poet," see *Lady Anna* (1874), Ch. 26. There is a very slight quotation from Keats in *Ayala's Angel* (1881) World's

As for poetry, Tennyson, she said, was all sugar-candy; he had neither the common sense, nor the wit, nor, as she declared, to her ear, the melody of Pope. All the poets of the present century, she declared, if put together, could not have written the Rape of the Lock. Pretty as she was, and small, and nice, and lady-like, I think she liked her literature rather strong. (Dover Books edition, p. 57.)

So, too, I think, did Trollope. Again, in Chapter 2 of *The Prime Minister*, Abel Wharton, Q. C., speaking to a man named Lopez, cites Pope as a poet whom nobody reads nowadays—a comment he intends as an indictment of modern men and women:

"I'll tell you what it is, Lopez," said Wharton, as they strolled out of the club together, a little after ten o'clock, "the men of the present day won't give themselves the trouble to occupy their minds with matters which have, or should have, real interest. Pope knew all about it when he said that 'The proper study of mankind is man.' But people don't read Pope now, or if they do, they don't take the trouble to understand him." (World's Classics Edition, p. 16.)

Like Byron, one of his favorite poets among the Romantics, Trollope found much to admire in eighteenth-century literature: like his Miss Marrable, he liked its freedom and outspokenness. What realistic novelist, laboring under Victorian strictures as to language and subject-matter, would not have envied Pope his freedom to range through the whole gamut of human subjects, from the sublime to the obscene? To create and manipulate a Belinda, a Lord Fanny, or a Curll.

In the mammoth body of work he left us, Trollope shows himself a worthy disciple of Horace and Pope, the pre-eminent moral poets who, perhaps even more than Shakespeare, lived vividly in his imagination and influenced his practice.

## V

When he ranged among the poets of his own day, Trollope's taste, insofar as we may draw an inference from his allusions, was rather conventional. While his novels and letters betray no interest in Blake, Shelley, Keats, or Clare, he makes frequent allusion to such popular poets as Thomas Moore, E. B. Browning, and Tennyson.

Like many of his readers, Trollope appears to have read carefully Moore's flimsy, pseudo-oriental fantasy, *Lallah Rookh* (1817)—a kind of Brighton Pavilion in verse, but sadly

Classics edition, p. 547.

<sup>7</sup>I have noted only one allusion to *Paradise Lost*—in *The American Senator*, Dover Books edition, p. 525: "In some of these moments in which she [the heroine, Arabella Trefoil] had foreseen that Lord Rufford would be lost to her, she had told herself that it would be better to reign in Hell than to serve in Heaven."

<sup>8</sup>The Waltham House catalogue lists five sets of Beaumont and Fletcher, as well as two early folios of Ben Jonson's plays.

<sup>9</sup>Goldsmith's poems are well-represented in the list of works Trollope read aloud to the family circle (*Letters* 2: 1033).

<sup>1</sup>*He Knew He Was Right*. World's Classic Edition. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1985. 931.

<sup>2</sup>See Ch. 19 in *The Three Clerks*, where Henry Norman tosses out choice bits of the *Ars poetica* in the course of a literary conversation with impressionable Charley Tudor.

<sup>3</sup>Richard Grossman and Andrew W. Wright have shown in their article "Anthony Trollope's Libraries," *Nineteenth-Century Fiction* 31:1 (June 1976):

lacking Nash's stylishness and sophisticated whimsy. Trollope was, of course, deeply read in Byron, for he frequently alludes to many of the poems and plays, not only to *Don Juan* and other well-known works, but also to obscurer things like *The Two Foscari*, which today only specialists are likely to have read. I suspect Trollope cherished this latter drama because of its kinship—in its violent action and perfervid poetry—to his beloved Jacobean tragedy.<sup>10</sup>

VI

To sum up. Trollope, like most novelists who write allusively, uses references and citations in order to illustrate a character or a situation by setting them in a larger context. Perhaps it is obvious that an element of play is always involved when one writes or reads an allusive narrative. The author takes pleasure in assigning a quotation, and the ideal reader is gratified by his ability to recognize its source and appreciate its aptness. Conversely, the less-than-ideal reader will be teased and frustrated by his inability to play the author's little game.

Compared with some other nineteenth-century writers (George Eliot's name springs inevitably to mind), Trollope's range of literary allusion does not appear so very wide. As a virtually self-educated man, Trollope seems to have read through English poetry as though he were a graduate-student following a syllabus. That is, he usually can be tracked in the snows of the masters: Shakespeare, Milton, Pope, Gray, Goldsmith, Burns, Byron, and Tennyson. And, of course, his favorite, Horace. Generally speaking, Trollope is unlikely to stump the educated reader, except when he quotes minor nineteenth-century writers who are now unread. Unfortunately, he stoops to these poetasters with maddening frequency. Unlike some novelists—Sheridan LeFanu is a good example—Trollope does not normally cite arcane or technical writers. Nor does he, like George Gissing in *Ryecroft*, overwhelm the reader with scholarly allusions and learned quotations.

In conclusion, one may say that Trollope's use of literary allusion is always intended to enrich, not disrupt, the flow of his narrative. His citations are not childish displays of erudition (like Poe's), nor are they brilliantly subversive strategies, as in some of Nabokov or Borges. In Trollope's novels, the quotation is always subordinated to the main business at hand—the creation of a credible fictional world.

Identification of Literary, Historical, and Other References in Trollope

The numerals in the left-hand column correspond to the page in the Dover paperback editions.

The Bertrams

Ch.	Pg.	Identification
1.	1.	(Title) <i>Vae Victis!</i>

The Title translates as "Woe to the Vanquished."

1. 1. "We perform our operations under chloroform." Since 1857.

1. 2. *Occupet extremum scabies.*  
Once again, T. cites Horace (*De arte poetica* 417), which translates literally as "May the itch seize the hindmost." We, of course, say "Devil take the hindmost."

1. 9. "Bertram . . . was unsparing in his ridicule of the 'Remains,' set himself in full opposition to the Sewells, and came out as a poet—successfully, as far as the Newdegate [sic] was concerned—in direct opposition to Keble and Faber."

Trollope is "placing" Bertram as a sound Church-of-England man, having a well-developed hostility towards the Tractarians (whom T. dislikes almost as much as he scorns Low-Church hypocrites, such as the Reverends Slope and Prong). The *Remains* of Richard Hurrell Froude (1838-39) caused some controversy, as F. attacked the leaders of the Reformation. Newman contributed the Preface. For the *Sewells*, distinctly lesser lights, see *DNB*. The Newdigate Prize was established in 1805, and is the most prestigious award for English poetry composed by an undergraduate at Oxford. Frederick William Faber (1815-1863) wrote many devotional poems and hymns. He followed Newman into the Church of Rome in 1849.

2. 15. Sound the timbrels, beat the drums  
See the conqu'ring hero comes.

From Thomas Morrell's libretto for Handel's *Joshua* (1747).

2. 17. *Dura ilia.*

2. 20. Literally "tough guts."  
"There is a tide in the affairs of men . . ."  
*Julius Caesar*, IV. iii. 217-18.

2. 21. "Marryat's novel . . . another Japhet in search of a father."

Refers to Frederick Marryat's *Japhet in Search of a Father* (1836).

8. 70. "Sir Lionel was . . . superior to Sir Charles Napier in expression and general design [of his nose]."

For Sir Charles Napier (1782-1853), Lieutenant-General of the British Army and hero of the Peninsular War, see the *DNB*.

9. 82. *Vera incessu patuit Dea.*  
This line from the *Aeneid* (I, 405), describes Aeneas's mother, the goddess Venus, and how her son recognized her by her graceful walk. Dryden translates thus:

In length of train descends her sweeping gown,  
And by her graceful Walk, the Queen of Love is known.  
9. 90. "Praise undeserved is satire in disguise."

A slight misquotation of Pope's line, in the *First Epistle of the Second Book of Horace* (1737), l. 413. Pope wrote "scandal" rather than "satire."

12. 123. ". . . men who speak neither German nor Italian . . . but a patois left to them from the ancient Latins."

T. is referring to *Romansh*, "The language of Latin origin, spoken in the Grisons or eastern district of Switzerland" (*OED*).

16. 168. "and so the bill for the repeal of the corn laws was brought before the House."

The conservative agricultural interests in the House of Commons were finally defeated, after a long struggle, and the oppressive Corn Laws repealed, in 1846.

19. 202. "That woman cannot be of nature's making, Whom, being kind, her misery makes not kinder."

I am unable to trace these verses.  
19. 202. "With nods, and becks, and wreathed smiles."

Milton, *L'Allegro*, l. 28. This phrase, and many others from *Lycidas* and *Comus*, are always at the back of T.'s mind. Though he almost never quotes from the major poems.

24. 257. *Labor omnia vincit improbus.*

Another famous Latin "tag," from Vergil's *Ecl.* X, 69. This is a rare citation from the *Eclogues*; I cannot remember even one from the *Georgics*.

24. 278. "'Rumtunshid gara shushabad gerostophat.' That is the shibboleth of some of the Caucasian tribes. Do you believe in Rumtunshid?"

I am unable to locate this bizarre, teasing reference.

27. 289. "Why do we hear then 'of the poor sequestered stag, left and abandoned of his velvet friend?'"

A conflation of *As You Like It*, II. i. 33-49.

28. 300. "My friends, born together with me in the consulate of Lord Liverpool."

An allusion to Horace once again: *Odes*, III. xxi. *O nata mecum consule Manlio.*

28. 301. *Vixi puellis nuper idoneus, et militavi.*  
Yet another line from Trollope's favorite poet: *The Odes*, III. xxvi. The Loeb translator has it as: "Till lately I was fit to fight in Love's battles and served not without renown."

28. 305. "You could have three times that number [*i.e.*, 24 guests] at supper."

Caroline means that one could serve some seventy guests, instead of only the twenty-four who would fit round the dining-table, if one had them serve themselves, buffet-style.

30. 325. *Sed post equitem sedet atra Cura.*  
This is the Horatian line T. cites most often

32. 336. (from *Odes*, III.1.40) and which translates: "But black Care sits behind the horseman."  
"Whatever Oliver Sir Lionel, or other person, might give her, she would give back to him or her . . . a Rowland that should be quite as good."

This Oliver-Rowland business means simply tit for tat. The point is that Oliver and Rowland were equally-esteemed companions of Charlemagne.

33. 359. "They also were heaven-sent ministers, whom Acheron has not yet altogether swallowed up." *Etc.*

In this passage Bertram and Sir Henry are discussing the permanence of political fame. Trollope's rather oblique reference is to Horace's beautiful ode on his own immortal reputation; *Odes*, III. xxx.

35. 374. "he was not bound in a foul Mezentian embrace."

Mezentius, the cruel king of Caere, was allied with Turnus, and thus an enemy of Aeneas. He was notorious for his habit of fettering together the living with the dead. The Latin reference is *Aen.* VIII. 485: *Mortua quin etiam iungebat corpora vivis.* For a similar use of this reference, see also C. Brontë. *Shirley*, Ch. 31.

38. 389. "anywhere beyond that circle Lewis might begin to paint."

Most likely, T. is referring to *John Frederick Lewis* (1805-1876), a painter of Italian, Spanish, and Oriental subjects. *Bryan's Dictionary of Painters and Engravers* reveals: "In 1843 he went to Egypt and remained several years in the East. This sojourn turned his attention to oriental subjects, which inspired some of his best works."

38. 389. "The horrid outrage perpetrated at Jaffa, and the massacre at Jeddah sufficiently show us what we might have expected."

I have been unable to trace this reference.

39. 415. "Is it not all leather and prunella?"  
A tag from Pope's *Essay on Man* (IV. 203-04), which T. cites frequently. As he habitually uses it, Trollope means a matter of indifference. This is not quite what Pope means.

45. 469. "The personality [*sic*] will be sworn under five. The real will be about two."

"Personality" is a compositor's error for the rare legal term *personalty*, which means the portable, personal property one bequeaths in a will to one's heirs, as distinguished from the *real* property—the immovable property, houses, land, *etc.*. This error, by the way, is a beautiful example of a compositor's sophistication.

47. 484. "Frazer's River."

The Frazer River is to be found in British Columbia.

<sup>10</sup>Grossman and Wright, pp. 56-57, indicate that Trollope took the trouble to acquire Macready's prompter's copy of *The Two Foscari* at a public auction of the latter's books.

Lady Anna

- | Ch. | Pg.  | Identification  |
|-----|------|---|
| 8.  | 55.  | "You are speaking daggers to me."<br><i>Hamlet</i> , III. ii. 414.  |
| 8.  | 55.  | ". . . deal with them as the Jew dealt with the Christians in the play."<br>An allusion, presumably, to <i>The Merchant of Venice</i> .   |
| 11. | 83.  | "The Solicitor-General tempered the innocence of the dove with the wisdom of the serpent."<br>Cf. Gospel of St. Matthew, X, 16.   |
| 13. | 96.  | "Swan and Edgars . . . Marshall and Snellgrove."<br>Two fashionable department stores. The latter, in particular, is a silk mercers and drapers concern, founded in 1837, and located in Oxford Street.   |
| 14. | 102. | ". . . the parson looked at his '99 port and his '16 Margaux."<br>T. kept a well-stocked cellar and evidently considered himself a connoisseur; but modern authorities do not entirely join in his enthusiasm for these vintages. Michael Broadbent, in his <i>Great Vintage Wine Book</i> , gives the 1799 port three stars—a fine rating. But he reports that the 1816 Margaux was a "disaster," owing to "a very wet Spring and Summer in 1816."   |
| 14. | 105. | "the white Doe of Rylston."<br>Cf. Wordsworth's poem of the same name, published in 1815. And, for Trollope's hatchet-job on Wordsworth, see <i>infra</i> .   |
| 14. | 105. | "And Landseer's picture of the Abbey in olden times."<br>The ruins of Bolton Abbey (founded in 1151) are situated amid meadows, woods, and waterfalls—a setting sufficiently picturesque for a romantic (or Romantic) outing. The Abbey is located near Skipworth, in Yorkshire. The nave, which now serves as the parish church, had been restored in 1864, ten years before <i>Lady Anna</i> was published. Landseer's picture is entitled "Bolton Abbey in Olden Times."   |
| 21. | 162. | "You have heard of the great Macfarlane case."<br>The facts, as T. rehearses them, do not fit the only "case" I have succeeded in locating, which is the story of the infamous Mrs. Macfarlane, daughter of Colonel Charles Straiton, who was married to a man considerably her senior in years. Apparently, she took a young lover, one Captain John Cayley, whom on the 29th of September 1716, she shot through the heart with a pistol. A good résumé of her flight from justice, the sentence of outlawry passed against her, and her concealment by the Swinton family in their house may be found in <i>DNB</i> . I am prone to think T. had this case in mind because of the obvious analogue which it provides to the sensational scene in Chapter XLIII, where Lady |

- |     |        |   |
|-----|--------|---|
| 26. | 195+   | This chapter, which is entitled "The Keswick Poet," presents an interview between Daniel Thwaite, the proletarian hero, and an unnamed elderly poet, to whom he has gone for advice, as to whether or not it would be fitting in him to pursue Lady Anna and make her his wife. The "Keswick Poet"—of course—is Trollope's satiric portrait of the elderly Wordsworth and it provides us a devastating commentary on W.'s reputation after mid-century. It is interesting that, according to my notes, Trollope never quotes from any of Wordsworth's poems. (One should add, however, that neither does he cite Blake, Keats, or Coleridge!) The major Romantics were not T's cup of tea. His taste inclined towards Byron and (alas) Tom Moore.<br>What we find in this chapter is Wordsworth presented as a pompous, canting, old hypocrite—and this, unfortunately, is what many people believed him to have become. Trollope's poet is a man who, in his youth, had espoused democratic ideals, but who has long since discarded them. It is hard not to believe that T. was influenced by Browning's caustic poem "The Lost Leader" (1845), which accuses Wordsworth of having abandoned his ideals "just for a handful of silver," and "just for a riband to stick in his coat." |
| 26. | 200.   | "The constancy on which our nature should pride itself is that of an Imogen."<br>The daughter of Cymbeline in Shakespeare's play, whom Brewer describes as "the most tender and artless of all Shakespeare's characters" ( <i>Dictionary of Phrase and Fable</i> ).   |
| 36. | 278.   | "A lover's ears will hear the lowest sound<br>When the suspicious head of theft is stopped."<br>This couplet is from <i>Love's Labor's Lost</i> , IV. iii. 335-36.  |
| 38. | 294-5. | ". . . he would call upon her to allow their banns to be published in Bloomsbury Church after the manner of the Church of England."<br>T. refers to Hawksmoor's baroque masterpiece, St. George's Bloomsbury Way, which is located less than two blocks from Daniel's lodgings in Great Russell Street.   |
| 45. | 349.   | "A woman should not be a butterfly . . . But for a man it is surely a contemptible part. Do you remember the young man who comes to Hotspur on the battlefield, or him whom the king sent to Hamlet about the wager?"<br>Hotspur describes the effeminate courtier (I. iii. 33ff) as follows:   |

Lovel shoots Daniel Thwaite with a pistol, in a vain attempt to discourage his suit for her daughter's hand. Trollope probably met with the "great Macfarlane case" in Scott's *Pevekil of the Peak* (1823), where it is fictionalized. What makes my conjecture even more probable is that Scott appended a note to the novel, in which he outlined the career of Mrs. Macfarlane.

Came there a certain lord, neat and trimly dressed,  
Fresh as a bridegroom, and his chin new reaped  
Showed like a stubble-land at harvest-home;  
He was perfuméd like a milliner,

And 'twixt his finger and his thumb he held  
A pouncet box . . .  
The fop in *Hamlet*, of course, is Osric.

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## The Pregnant Death of Dorian Gray

John Gall

*The Picture of Dorian Gray* is a novel of blurred distinctions.<sup>1</sup> That is to say, traditional boundaries break down; opposites merge. Dorian, as well as other characters, confuses the boundaries between art and life, actor and spectator, while the portrait of Dorian symbolizes the breakdown of the boundaries between birth and death. Wilde describes the painting as possessing

a corruption of its own, worse than the corruption of death itself—something that would breed horrors and yet would never die. What the worm was to the corpse, his sins would be to the painted image on the canvas. They would mar its beauty and eat away its grace. They would defile it, and make it shameful. And yet the thing would still live on. It would always be alive. (443)

The painting obviously merges art and life as an artwork with lifelike qualities; it also merges spectator and actor as it views Dorian's actions and acts accordingly with its own theatrics. However, the depiction of the corpse-like image of Dorian, an image that nevertheless is continually giving birth through Dorian's actions, proves the most dramatic disruption in a novel in which blurred distinctions dominate.

Wilde's blurring of distinctions is strongly reminiscent of Mikhail Bakhtin's conception of the grotesque as the merging of opposites through the breakdown of boundaries. In his discussion of Rabelais, for instance, Bakhtin exemplifies the grotesque as follows:

In the famous Kerch terracotta collection we find figurines of senile pregnant hags. Moreover, the hags are laughing. This is a typical and very strongly expressed grotesque. It is ambivalent. It is pregnant death, a death that gives birth. There is nothing completed, nothing calm and stable in the bodies of these old hags. They combine a senile, decaying and deformed flesh with the flesh of new life, conceived but as yet unformed. Life is shown in its two-fold con-

tradictory process; it is the epitome of incompleteness. And such is precisely the grotesque concept of the body. (Rabelais 25)

The similarities between the description of the painting and Bakhtin's exemplification of the grotesque are remarkable though coincidental. Nevertheless, the picture of Dorian is a most explicit icon of the grotesque in its form of birth and death combined. It is indeed reminiscent of the grotesque body which "stands on the threshold of the grave and the crib" and presents "two bodies in one: the one giving birth and dying, the other conceived, generated, and born" (*Rabelais* 26). Similar references appear elsewhere in the novel and support Wilde's grotesque imagery. Dorian himself is described as a "son of Love and Death" (397) with love possessing its obvious associations with life-giving procreation. Flesh, also with its connotation of life, is described as "tainted with the monstrous maladies of the dead" (457), and Dorian expresses the desire to bring the "dead lovers" of the world into "consciousness" (407). Dorian at one point tells Basil that the portrait is "fatal" because "It has a life of its own" (442), and by way of suggesting the union of life / art / death he begs Basil not to destroy the painting because "It would be murder" (392). Whereas Dorian's soul is said to be experiencing a "living death" (501), the painting, as a reflection of his soul, becomes the ultimate symbol of the "pregnant death" of Bakhtin.

In addition to the presence of birth and death in one icon, the presence of laughter throughout the novel and the facial expression found on the painting also serve to tie *Dorian Gray* to Bakhtin's notions of the grotesque. For Bakhtin, laughter is necessary in its creation, "since no grotesque . . . is conceivable in the atmosphere of absolute seriousness" (*Rabelais* 38). There can be no denying that laughter is present in the novel to the extent that its cataloging would be too extensive for the purpose at hand. But what is most interesting is its connection to death. Sibyl Vane's death provides an initial example, for

<sup>1</sup>This study is in part inspired by those of John J. Pappas, Jan B. Gordon, and Maximilian Novak. Pappas, by demonstrating that much of the imagery of Wilde's novel suggests a "confusion between man and nature" (34), anticipates Bakhtin's grotesque. Gordon likewise notes a confusion, in his view between life and art (356). Gordon also discusses the theme of initiation

but takes a different approach from this study. Similarities between Dorian and Adonis, whose myth embodies the sense of sacrifice and renewal typified by the socio-historical figure of the carnival king, are also introduced by Gordon (364-66). Novak's is an early study of the Gothic and the grotesque.

she is first the object of the laughter of the crowd at her terrible performance in front of Dorian, Lord Henry, and Basil (424). Then Dorian, shortly before her death, laughingly ridicules her (426). Likewise, Dorian mocks Basil shortly before murdering him: "A bitter laugh of mockery broke from the lips of the younger man" (462). Moreover, the murder is prompted by "an uncontrollable feeling of hatred for Basil . . . as though it had been suggested to him by the image on the canvas, whispered into his ear by those grinning lips" (465). Dorian's own death, resulting from his stabbing his portrait, seems to be motivated in part by his perception of the painting. He comments: "I am jealous of everything whose beauty does not die. . . . It will mock me someday—mock me horribly" (391). To be sure it does mock him, though not in the manner he initially anticipates, as a youthful artifact, but rather as a visual emblem of his true nature. Finally, Dorian's death is presaged by the "mocking laugh" of Lord Henry (502) and is followed by the ridiculing "sneers" of two gentlemen, who upon passing his home, hear of Dorian's death (503).

The similarities between *Dorian Gray* and Bakhtin's grotesque are further illustrated when his comments about the transformation of the grotesque in the late-eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries are applied to Wilde's novel. For Bakhtin,

Pre-Romanticism and Romanticism witnessed a revival of the grotesque genre but with a radically transformed meaning. It became the expression of subjective, individualistic world outlook very different from the carnival folk concept of previous ages, although still containing some carnival elements. The first important example of the new subjective grotesque was Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*, a peculiar transposition of Rabelais' and Cervantes' world concept into the subjective language of the new age. Another variety of the new grotesque was the Gothic or black novel. (*Rabelais* 36-37)

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If Bakhtin is correct, and "the ritual of decrowning has been the ritual most often transposed into literature" (*Dostoevsky* 125), it may be argued that Dorian represents the carnival king whose rule is characterized by absolute freedom but whose rule, in keeping with the pessimistic attributes of the Romantic grotesque form, is a failure. Bakhtin notes that

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she is first the object of the laughter of the crowd at her terrible performance in front of Dorian, Lord Henry, and Basil (424). Then Dorian, shortly before her death, laughingly ridicules her (426). Likewise, Dorian mocks Basil shortly before murdering him: "A bitter laugh of mockery broke from the lips of the younger man" (462). Moreover, the murder is prompted by "an uncontrollable feeling of hatred for Basil . . . as though it had been suggested to him by the image on the canvas, whispered into his ear by those grinning lips" (465). Dorian's own death, resulting from his stabbing of his portrait, seems to be motivated in part by his perception of the painting. He comments: "I am jealous of everything whose beauty does not die. . . . It will mock me someday—mock me horribly" (391). To be sure it does mock him, though not in the manner he initially anticipates, as a youthful artifact, but rather as a visual emblem of his true nature. Finally, Dorian's death is presaged by the "mocking laugh" of Lord Henry (502) and is followed by the ridiculing "sneers" of two gentlemen, who upon passing his home, hear of Dorian's death (503).

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## Being Rid of Women: Middle-Class Ideology in *Hard Times*

Kristin Flieger Samuelian

Dickens in *Hard Times* advocates a system of benevolent if inactive paternalism as the solution to both the novel's industrial malaise and to the inadequacies of Gradgrindian utilitarianism:

Dear reader! It rests with you and me, whether, in our two fields of action, similar things shall be or not. Let them be! We shall sit with lighter bosoms on the hearth, to see the ashes of our fires turn grey and cold. (227)

These sentences at the end of the novel include both middle-class author and middle-class reader in a system of non-interventionist paternalism<sup>1</sup> that uses the language of *laissez-faire* ("Let them be!") to advocate an unspecified move toward better relations between classes, figured in the image of a redeemed Louisa Gradgrind repairing the damages of her father's system by "trying hard to know her humbler fellow-creatures, and to beautify their lives of machinery and reality with those imaginative graces and delights, without which the heart of infancy will wither up" (226). Dickens's solution is an idealized one, which presents itself as an example of right behavior rather than as a program for reform. It is dependent upon a system of cooperation between a benevolent middle class and a docile working class.

The spokesperson for this passive paternalism is Stephen Blackpool. A working-class character with middle-class values, Stephen recognizes that the responsibility for the spiritual and material welfare of the working-class lies with the well-to-do, but he does not, as does Nicholas Higgins in Elizabeth Gaskell's *North and South* (published at nearly the same time as *Hard Times*) presume to take an active part in reform. In his second interview with the mill-owner Bounderby (the first is, characteristically, to request his master's "help" [57] in resolving his marital troubles), Stephen is asked how he would resolve class conflict in Coketown,

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His reply puts the responsibility for resolution on Bounderby and the mill-owners: "I donno, Sir. I canna be expecten to 't. 'Tis not me as should be looken to for that, Sir. 'Tis them as is put ower me, and ower aw the rest of us" (115).

Stephen's passivity and reliance upon those above him for help mark him as a less outspoken example of the same type of working man as Gaskell's John Barton and thus the antithesis of Bounderby, the self-made man who rejects Stephen's request for help in obtaining a divorce and joins with the union in spurning him when he refuses to organize: "I never thought those fellows could be right in anything; but I tell you what! I so far go along with them for a novelty, that I'll have nothing to do with you either" (116). Bounderby's refusal to accept the role of paternalist mill-owner that Stephen's passivity suggests to him leads to Stephen's exile from Coketown in search of work, and eventually leads to his death, characteristically, from a fall down an abandoned mine shaft, where he lies on his back, gazing upward (207).

The novel's argument for paternalism in the tragedy of Stephen's unnecessary death corresponds to an argument for a particularly middle-class Victorian lifestyle, one that Bounderby rejects along with his rejection of paternalism. Stephen's adherence to a bourgeois domestic ideal (expressed in his desire to divorce his drunken and disruptive wife and start anew with a marriage to the virtuous working woman Rachael) opposes Bounderby's claim to self-made status: in addition to requiring an activity and ambition distinct from Stephen's reliance on "them as is put ower" him, the ideal of the self-made man includes a rejection of the kind of domesticity embodied in Stephen's idealized relationship with Rachael. Not only does Bounderby's assertion that he was "born in a ditch" (12) deny the possibility of female agency in his rise to the middle class, but his household, even after his marriage with Louisa, lacks the softening influence that Rachael provides in Stephen's home:

invincible Gradgrindian system . . . for it is Sissy who functions as the principle of reclamation and reforms the reformer" (14).

There was no mute sign of a woman in the room. No graceful little adornment, no fanciful little device, however trivial, anywhere expressed her influence. Cheerless and comfortless, boastfully and doggedly rich, there the room stared at its present occupants, unsoftened and unrelieved by the least trace of any womanly occupation. (97-98)

The contrast between Stephen and Bounderby suggests a critique of one popular middle-class ideal—the myth of the self-made man—and the endorsement of another equally popular middle-class ideal—the combination of bourgeois domesticity and reliance upon paternalism represented in Stephen's character.<sup>2</sup> But beneath the contrast between the two men there is a common denominator that destabilizes the political argument dependent upon their opposition. Each ideal requires a particular conception of womanhood: Bounderby's self-production depends upon the existence of an "unnatural" mother (198) whose sexual license effectively robs her of the right to claim maternal power, while Stephen's bourgeois domesticity depends upon the existence of a chaste angel in the house whose softening feminine influence makes his home a refuge from the harsh industrial world.<sup>3</sup> Both ideals necessitate the absence of women who challenge them: Stephen attempts to erase the image of his drunken wife and replace her with the virtuous Rachael, while Bounderby creates the story of illegitimacy, abandonment and poverty followed by a meteoric rise into the affluent middle class that repudiates Stephen's ideal. The connection between the two men—the women both must deny in order to perpetuate their apparently antithetical ideologies—undermines Dickens's argument for one middle-class ideal over another.

Bounderby's story depends on the creation of a mother who is the maternal counterpart of Stephen's wife, the threat to the bourgeois ideal that Rachael represents to Stephen. But his equally fictional rise embodies the bourgeois theory that anyone can by hard work and dedication pull himself up into the middle class.<sup>4</sup> Conversely, Stephen embraces the middle-class domestic ideal without demonstrating a desire to use his "middle-class virtues" (Spector 365) to move out of the working class. The novel's sympathy with Stephen and condemnation of Bounderby argues for a class stasis based on middle-class values not unlike the hierarchized paternalism at the end of Gaskell's *Mary Barton*.

The explosion of Bounderby's story comes as no surprise to readers who have been prepared to expect a crisis by descriptions such as the one below:

A man made out of a coarse material, which seemed to have been stretched to make so much of him. A man with a great puffed head and forehead, swelled veins in his temples, and such a strained skin to his face that it seemed to hold his eyes open, and lift his eyebrows up. A man with a pervading appearance on him of being inflated like a

<sup>2</sup>Stephen Spector calls both Stephen and Rachael "automatons compounded of such Victorian middle-class virtues as industry, honesty, self-denial, chastity, and deference" (365).

<sup>3</sup>Catherine Gallagher refers to Stephen's and Louisa Gradgrind's "chaste and self-sacrificing attachments outside their marriages" (152).

<sup>4</sup>In this respect, Bounderby enacts the self-help philosophy of Samuel Smiles,

balloon, and ready to start. A man who could never sufficiently vaunt himself a self-made man. A man who was always proclaiming, through that brassy speaking-trumpet of a voice of his, his old ignorance and his old poverty. A man who was the Bully of humility. (11)

The latent irony of the phrase "a man made out of a coarse material" anticipates the novel's denunciation of the self-made ideal. Bounderby was originally made out of at least respectable if not "fine" material. When he set out to make himself over, he rejected this fabric in favor of the coarser one emphasized in his new life story.

The autobiography that he relates to Mrs. Gradgrind indicates a profound fear, not only of the trappings of respectability (in keeping with his rejection of the middle-class values that Stephen represents), but also, in its literalization of the concept of self-manufacture, of maternity and reproduction:

"Here I am, Mrs. Grandgrind, anyhow, and nobody to thank for my being here, but myself."

Mrs. Gradgrind meekly and weakly hoped that his mother—

"My mother? Bolted, ma'am!" said Bounderby . . .

"My mother left me to my grandmother . . . and, according to the best of my remembrance, my grandmother was the wickedest and worst old woman that ever lived. . . . She kept a chandler's shop," pursued Bounderby, "and kept me in an egg-box. That was the cot of my infancy, an old egg-box." (12)

Although the overt progress of Bounderby's story is clearly going to be his deflation when his Horatio Alger tale turns out to be untrue, the deflation of the social myth exposes the fear of maternity on which it is built. His self-made status is dependent on his mother having "bolted." The pun on dry goods is significant here, because Bounderby's own mill produces bolts of cloth. His one-word answer to Mrs. Grandgrind's tentative question offers an alternative meaning to the one intended. Either the mythical Mrs. Bounderby has bolted and left her son to be brought up in an egg-box by an alcoholic grandmother, or she has been bolted, turned into one of the products of her son's mill.

The egg-box that figures in his autobiography indicates his anxiety about reproduction. An egg-box is a container for unfertilized eggs, the kind that would be sold for human consumption in a chandler's shop. At the same time, it, like the ditch in which Bounderby claims to have been born, is a female symbol, an enclosure or a vessel for containing the infant Bounderby. In his very rejection of maternity, Bounderby cannot seem to avoid evoking maternal echoes.

Nevertheless his assertion that he has "made himself" (21), like his metaphoric bolting of his mother, indicates his desire to replace reproduction with production.<sup>5</sup> To this end

a theory that is embodied in *North and South's* John Thornton. For a discussion of the myth of the self-made man as an instrument of middle-class propaganda see Perkin 225.

<sup>5</sup>Sally Shuttleworth points out that the myth of the self-made man "perpetuates the ideological erasure of female agency" (52).

<sup>1</sup>The argument against active interventionism comes in the portrayal of Gradgrind's adoption of Sissy Jupe, where, as Cynthia Northcutt Malone recently observed, "the novel ironically subverts this complacent picture of an



he "remakes" his mother, in the process of making himself, into "probably the very worst woman that ever lived in the world" (25). As Robert Lougy has put it, "By creating a concept of self that corresponds to the industrial ethos around him, Bounderby is assimilated into that ethos" (248).<sup>6</sup> The alternative to maternal reproduction offered by both his mill that produces bolts of cloth and his story that has produced a bolted mother is later realized in his will, which provides for "five-and-twenty Humbugs, past five-and-fifty years of age, each taking upon himself the name, Josiah Bounderby of Coketown" (225).<sup>7</sup>

While making his mother into a "bad woman," Bounderby also metaphorically kills the respectable Mrs. Pegler.<sup>8</sup> Hence, when his mother returns in the story it is not only to deflate her son's self-aggrandizing puffery but also to revenge "the crime of matricide" (Lougy 247). Paradoxically, too, her reappearance at once emasculates him and demonstrates his impotence. After the public reconciliation between mother and son and the destruction of the Bounderby myth, he is described in a way that is clearly meant to contrast with all the "swollen" images of him earlier in the novel: "There was a blustering sheepishness about him, at once extremely crestfallen and superlatively absurd . . . He could not have looked a Bully more shorn and forlorn if he had had his ears cropped" (200). Lougy has observed that the descriptions of Bounderby as swollen "must be among the most explicit allusions to sexual frustrations in legitimate Victorian fiction." But if Bounderby is a walking erection "he is also an archetype of impotence" (246), of sterility. When Mrs. Pegler deflates his swollen egoism, she is also demonstrating the triumph of maternal reproduction over Bounderby's sterile and impotent production—of his life story, of the materials of Coketown, of his bachelor heirs. Behind the triumph of reality over "fiction" (and the consequent condemnation of the self-made ideal) that the novel explicitly advocates in this deflation of Bounderby is the triumph of maternal reproduction over a capitalist system of production that denies maternity.

*Hard Times* is critical both of Bounderby's adherence to the doctrine of *laissez-faire* and of the social mobility figured in his fictional self-production, and consequently sympathetic to the banished mother who is a victim of her son's myth. But this criticism is undermined when a similar pattern emerges in the life of the novel's hero, Stephen Blackpool. Just as the specter of his respectable, self-sacrificing mother hovers behind the self-help myth on which Bounderby's autobiography depends, so the specter of his far from respectable wife hovers behind Stephen Blackpool's efforts to create a world of middle-class respectability. To all appearances, Mrs. Blackpool is the reality of which the fictional Mrs. Bounderby is the

image: "Such a woman! A disabled, drunken creature . . . A creature so foul to look at, in her tatters, stains and splashes, but so much fouler than that in her moral infamy, that it was a shameful thing to see her" (52).

This image is contrasted, in Stephen's mind and in the reader's eyes, with the domestic ideal embodied in the figure of Rachael, who is waiting for him when he returns home the following night:

Quiet and peace were there. Rachael was there, sitting by the bed . . . watching and tending his wife. That is to say, he saw that some one lay there, and he knew too well that it must be she; but Rachael's hands had put a curtain up, so that she was screened from his eyes. Her disgraceful garments were removed, and some of Rachael's were in the room. Everything was in its place and order as he had always kept it, the little fire was newly trimmed, and the hearth was freshly swept. It appeared to him that he saw all this in Rachael's face. (63)

Rachael is the embodiment of Stephen's fantasy of middle-class domesticity. She replaces his wife's objectionable presence (substituting her own clothes for Mrs. Blackpool's tatters). She screens her from his view. She does not merely create the environment of order and peace that has become the bourgeois ideal in the nineteenth century; she *is* that environment: the ideal home is reflected in her face. Rachael contains all that Stephen would like to believe about himself—that he is a contented working man who comes home after a difficult day to a clean house and hearth, provided by an appropriately chaste (57) "Angel" (68). This fantasy, and its embodiment in Rachael, lift both characters ideologically although not practically out of the working class and into the middle class.<sup>9</sup>

Stephen's bourgeois fantasy corresponds to Bounderby's opposing fantasy of birth in the lowest ranks of society, and the correspondence highlights a common impulse in the novel's hero and villain. The link between them is the woman each must deny in order to perpetuate his myth, and Stephen is no more successful at keeping his wife away than Bounderby is at keeping his mother away. In spite of, or because of, the fact that his wife left first of her own accord, her absence quickly becomes the thing most desirable to Stephen, to the point where he—like Bounderby with Mrs. Pegler, and equally unsuccessfully—pays her to stay away (55).

It is odd that this episode in the novel, commonly identified by critics as Dickens's fictional tract in favor of divorce law reform, should be the story of a man victimized by his wife rather than the story of a woman victimized by her

husband. The episode that focuses on a woman's unhappiness in marriage—Louisa's marriage with Bounderby—is apparently satisfactorily resolved when Louise returns to her father's house and Bounderby "resume[s] a bachelor life" (186). In spite of the obvious connection to Dickens's own marital troubles in Stephen's story—especially the financial drain his wife's family had become on him—the relationship does not fit the spirit of contemporary divorce reform agitation, which focused on protecting women from their husbands and not the other way around.<sup>10</sup>

Mrs. Blackpool behaves more like a husband than a wife to Stephen: she claims a right to his income and repeatedly leaves him destitute.<sup>11</sup> In addition to the financial tyranny she exercises over him, she signifies a kind of sexual tyranny. Her repeated eruptions into the domestic cocoon he has so carefully built around himself are a kind of metaphoric rape, concentrated in the image of her aggressive possession of his bed and his attitude of passivity and sexual shame: "Come awa' from th' bed!" He was sitting on the side of it, with his face hidden in his hands. "Come awa' from 't. 'Tis mine, and I've a right to 't!" (52). The assertion of aggressive female sexuality in Mrs. Blackpool's metaphoric rape of her husband corresponds to the assertion of female reproductive power in Mrs. Pegler's appearance in Bounderby's dining room. Both scenes describe the intrusion of women into a middle-class ideal the existence of which depends upon their exclusion.

In *Desire and Domestic Fiction* Nancy Armstrong remarks on the appearance of "deranged" women in the domestic fiction of this period: "It was as if the production of this new Victorian fiction depended on bringing forth some monstrous woman to punish and then banish from the text" (165). Stephen's request for help in banishing Mrs. Blackpool from his life—"I ha' coom to ask yo, Sir, how I am to be ridded o' this woman" (56)—connects him with his employer in a way that questions the apparent distinction between the two characters. His middle-class fiction requires him to be "ridded" of his wife, as Bounderby's Horatio Alger story requires the elimination of his mother, Mrs. Pegler.

The existence of both women constitutes what Pierre Macherey in *A Theory of Literary Production* has called the "reverse" of the text, "the conditions of its possibility which enable us to read it against the grains of its intended meaning" (230). In the case of Stephen's story, the intended meaning is a fictive argument in favor of marriage law reform, with a concomitant argument for middle-class values in a docile working class. Stephen's desire for a divorce is a desire not for social change but for the stasis emblemized by his idealized marriage with Rachael. It is nevertheless condemned by the structural connection between his wife and Bounderby's mother. In Bounderby's case, the morality tale about false origins, because its denouement depends upon the reappearance of an excluded mother, indicates an anxiety about

production versus reproduction.

If Dickens's intended meaning in *Hard Times* is to promote an image of the working class that combines middle-class virtues with a humility that necessitates the kind of paternalism suggested in the final pages of the novel, this meaning is destabilized by a connection between the character who embodies this ideal and the one who opposes it. Both middle-class ideals depend in this novel on the absence of women who challenge them. The respectable Mrs. Pegler and the "monstrous" Mrs. Blackpool suggest an instability in both ideals that disrupts Dickens's political argument.

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<sup>6</sup>Melvyn Haberman points out that Bounderby's self-made fiction "incarnates the spirit of capitalism . . . He is the material enactment of his own hypothesis" (42).

<sup>7</sup>Janet Larson has observed "this multiplication of his mirror-image is not just the outrageous foolery of the vain: it is a mathematical immortality and a form of quantitative philanthropy, perfectly adapted to the impersonalities of mass production, of which Bounderby is both chief and 'model' product" (17).

<sup>8</sup>According to Richard Fabrizio, "What Bounderby does is replace his 'ideal' family—the gentle mother and good husband—with an ideal 'no-family' in mythic terms . . . he commits a kind of matricide . . . With each retelling of

his fictive autobiography, he destroys his female side—a kind of gynocide" (71).

<sup>9</sup>James M. Brown points out that "the concept of the ideal home" was "chiefly a middle-class product" (43). See also Mary Poovey for a discussion of the importance, to the rising middle-class, of a gradual phasing out of the eighteenth-century perception of women as primarily sexual and its replacement with a perception of women as primarily domestic and morally superior to men: "woman became not some errant part of man, but his opposite, his moral hope and spiritual guide . . . this transforamtion proceeded alongside—and was an integral part of—the consolidation of bourgeois power and the redefinition and relocation of the idea of virtue" (10).

<sup>10</sup>For more on the divorce reform movement, see Poovey's discussion of the Caroline Norton case. Poovey notes that Norton represents herself in her case as a victim in need of "protection" (69).

<sup>11</sup>Fabrizio notes that "Blackpool plays the female role—allows his wife to take his property, allows her to dominate him sexually and financially" (85).

## Individuation and Consummation in Hardy's *Jude the Obscure*: The Lure of the Void

Mary Ann Kelly

"He could not realize himself."

(*Jude the Obscure* 60)

The peripatetic motif in *Jude the Obscure*, Hardy's final novel, is obvious to any reader confronted with Jude's wanderings in Hardy's six Parts: from Marygreen to Christminster; from Melchester to Shaston; from Aldbrickham and "Elsewhere"—back to Christminster again, where Jude chooses finally to die, to become *unreal*. The fact of Jude's rootlessness clearly enhances his isolation from community, his obscurity (read worthlessness) in society's eyes, and his pain in existing as an individual—his rootlessness demonstrating Every-modern-man's predicament: the struggle to overcome disconnectedness and fragmentation. Jude's isolation, separateness, and obscurity remit only suffering. In Jude's struggle to flee the isolation and the void, he learns, eventually, and paradoxically, that the void is in fact home, a state which he need no longer flee. Though Hardy insisted he was conveying only his impressions of existence, the philosophical basis of Jude's desperate and aimless search for a "home," a feeling of completeness, belonging, and connectedness (a search demonstrated in the degradations of sexual longing which lead him to Arabella; in his compulsion to drink himself into oblivion; in his obsessive attempts at transcendence through learning and idealizing Sue Bridehead; and, finally, in death itself), is informed greatly by a knowledge of Hardy's appreciation of Schopenhauer's dictum that, in this life, "determinism stands firm" (3: 69).<sup>1</sup> According to Schopenhauer, the real world of phenomena is simply illusory, and an individual discovers who he is only after he has acted since will manifests itself before understanding. Individuals are merely manifestations of the blind, impulsive Will to live. Further, if birth itself is original sin, if consciousness is an evolutionary mistake, and if human behavior is essentially irrational, willful compulsion thinly disguised by the vanity and denial inherent in human reason, then the conscious existence of each individual is a kind of imprisonment from which we all, to some degree, yearn to escape. Escape from illusory reality as we know it, from individuation, becomes necessity. In Schopenhauer, Hardy found a philosopher who attempted to explain (not merely justify) existence: consciousness was evolutionary error, and so, in a sense, was individuation, the separation of the individual from the mass. Jude's initial attempts to realize himself by connecting with the phenomenal world are shown to be misguided. His final attempt to realize himself by connecting with the noumenal world, the void, is shown to remit peace.

*Jude the Obscure* opens with a separation—Phyllotson, Jude's teacher and inspiration, leaving him behind. Jude's his-

tory is an account of a series of these kinds of separations which throw him back upon himself, separations from: his father; his mother; his aunt; Arabella; Sue; the world of academics; his children; and, finally, his faith in God. Jude's history of being left an orphan, from his earliest days, primes him to expect that loss, isolation, and solitude are his lot—and yet, his "lot" feeds a tremendous compensatory urge for community which he sublimates in his affinity with Nature and in his attraction to the role of caretaker and protector of wild birds, rabbits, and the domesticated pig. In these specimens of Nature, Jude, not necessarily consciously, but certainly intuitively, recognizes himself; in his sympathy for suffering creatures, victims, outcasts, he gives what he longs to receive: sympathy, compassion, and a sense of community with others—or, *an other*. Jude's attempts at integration with something beyond himself—community—whether it be with the natural world, with the family represented by his aunt, or with the family always potentially represented in his marriages—repeatedly fail. Hardy demonstrates his misguided effort to experience consummation, communion, in the world of phenomena. Jude's longing therefore increases in strength and immediacy until he is driven largely by this compulsion for reintegration—with something beyond himself—for the duration of his life.

The need for a sense of oneness with this world, or with an other, points to the truth that no man can live happily and be autonomous. Autonomy is a version of hell. Yet Jude's fate, above all, is to feel obscure, isolated, and rejected in the corporeal world; and the obsessive desperation of his psychological need to belong (which is correct in Nature, according to Schopenhauer), coupled with repeated repudiation, becomes his tragic flaw. In turn, this cycle of desperate need and insistent repudiation becomes his informant, a significant signpost on the path to truth.

Jude's yearning to travel, to roam, to escape, literally and philosophically, is the result of an unmet need in Hardy's eyes—a hunger for consummation, oneness, belonging, peace—denied Jude most obviously by society—but even moreso by his own nature—human nature, which according to Schopenhauer, is purblind Will. In one sense, then, Jude's "groping in the dark" (258) can be seen as a dramatization of Schopenhauer's irrational and impulsive Will to live: incessantly seeking contentment through connection but more often finding pain in thwarted connections.

Schopenhauer's fatalism, his view of consciousness as a painful evolutionary blunder, fascinated Hardy and explained

his own sense of the needless pain and futility of existence. Schopenhauer's solution to the "quieting" of the will, informed by Buddhist asceticism, Franciscan transcendence, as well as Kantian idealism, provided Hardy with a philosophical explanation for the moments wherein Jude (and, of course, Hardy himself, according to his autobiography) felt a longing to liberate his spirit from the imprisonment of his body: to travel in the realms occupied by the dead, as he does early in Part Second at night among the ghosts of Christminster. The wish or yearning to self-destruct, or rather the wish not to be imprisoned in the flesh, could be understood by Hardy in Schopenhauerian terms, not as simple suicide, but rather as a yearning for the freeing of one's will, the ultimate escape into will-lessness and, simply, consummation, a sense of belonging and integration.

The lure of the void is increasingly for Jude an enticement toward integration which yields promise in contrast to his life of segregation. This variety of nothingness is, as Robert Adams describes it, an

ominous and preparatory Nothing, as a sudden hush before the storm; there is a Nothing of *completion*, the void which follows on a cycle fully worked out. It is the clear intent of many tragic actions to clear the moral atmosphere by reducing their viewers to this pure simplicity, all passion spent. (13-14)

Thus, the void paradoxically promises Jude the re-union with a larger entity, even if this entity, which so promises a completion and reintegration, is Nothing, oblivion.

Early on, Jude exhibits repeated death wishes—from jumping on the frozen ice, to the slow disintegration of himself through drinking. In the disintegration of the self, there is the paradoxical promise of integration with the whole. Above all, this need for consummation, obliteration of self, integration of self with the entirety of Nature and the cosmos, overtakes Jude's motivations to *realize himself* (60) in the more traditional meaning of enhancing one's individuality. The will to self-destruct in order to belong transcends Jude's will to live as a separate being.

In this interpretation, Jude's peripatetic wandering; his self-destructive tendencies in alcoholism; his ruinous, desperate, and clutching attraction to Sue Bridehead; and finally his "suicidal" walk in the rain, can be seen as attempts to travel beyond the veil and to experience consummation, a communion with all others in Nature, with *an other* represented by Sue, and even communion with the dead which Jude longs for from the early pages of the novel. In philosophical terms, Jude's "groping in the dark—acting by instinct and not after example" (258) is ended when he lets go and chooses no longer to will to live:

"Let the day perish wherein I was born, and the night in which it was said, There is a man child conceived.

"For now should I have lain still and been quiet." (321)

The aimless, frenetic travel characterized by Jude's search for quiet ends with Jude's last trip to Christminster, at least in part, because Hardy found philosophical explanations for the

inherent aimlessness and rootlessness and discontent at the quick of Jude's (and everyman's) being—and because he found a spiritual, though nihilistic, alternative to Jude's compulsive search for consummation; Hardy demonstrated this alternative in Jude's final, simple, passive, and peaceful acquiescence; and, even more importantly, in Jude's willing not to live among those symbols of learning in Christminster which he long believed to be the only things worth living for. In death, Jude travels beyond the veil in a way which can be interpreted in Schopenhauerian terms not as simply despairing and suicidal. Jude exits this life with dignity and grace, and even an oddly uplifting serenity, under pressure—and in that, his demise can be seen as a transcendental and even fulfilling re-integration with the void.

The loss of the surrogate father, mentor, and caretaker in Phyllotson in line one of the novel becomes a reverberating motif in Jude's wretched history. Even the beacon represented by the lights of Christminster is surely tied to Jude's need to be reconnected to the parent Phyllotson represents. Jude's search for the parent, the father, God, the Truth, manifests itself in ways hidden to his conscious deliberation—yet this search compels all Jude's choices in life.

For example, in Christminster Jude makes associations in the dark shadows of the walls surrounding the college which attest to his desperate need to discover lost "fathers":

"Meanwhile I will read, as soon as I am settled in Christminster, the books I have not been able to get hold of here: Livy, Tacitus, Herodotus, Aeschylus, Sophocles, Aristophanes—"

—Euripedes, Plato, Aristotle, Lucretius, Epictetus, Seneca, Antoninus. Then I must master other things: *the Fathers* thoroughly:

Yes, Christminster shall be my *Alma Mater*; and I'll be her beloved son, in whom she shall be well pleased.

(32, emphasis added)

Of course, the loftiness of Jude's aim for this ideal re-creation of a sense of belonging is undercut by his substitution of Arabella, "a complete and substantial female animal—no more, no less" (33) as a sexual conduit or shortcut to a lesser variety of temporary consummation—that satisfied by the sexual urge. But the need to "belong," to feel attached, and to be part of and lost in another persists inexorably in Jude, so desperate is his longing and so magnificent is his spiritual deficit. Varieties of the botched marriage, thus, become a central concern in the novel, and also become incidents which teach Jude by default the true route to communion.

The spiritual destitution Jude embodies renders his search for some variety of consummation a compulsion. And the degree of dependency manifested in his most depleted moments echoes through the novel:

Onward he still went, under the influence of a child-like yearning for the one being in the world to whom it seemed possible to fly—an unreasoning desire, whose ill judgment was not apparent to him now.

<sup>1</sup>Hardy's reading and use of Schopenhauer is discussed in Wright, Weber, and Kelly.

"I an so wicked, Sue—my heart is nearly broken, and I could not bear my life as it was! So I have been drinking and blaspheming, or next door to it, and saying holy things in disreputable quarters . . . O, do anything with me, Sue—kill me—I don't care! Only don't hate me and despise me like all the rest of the world!"

(99, emphasis added)

The ultimate consummation, symbolized by Jude's repeated wish for death, lurks always in the recesses of his mind. Death, extinction, is a subliminal and unconscious, yet tenacious and persistent, possibility. Ironically, the ultimate remedy to Jude's "obscurity" is for him to "belong" in a final consummation so complete in Death that he cannot be separate, individuated again. In the end, Jude, who is a "chaos of principles" (258) enters the larger chaos, the cacaphony and silence behind the veil, which finally entices him in his search for safety more than the "real" world he inhabits. Jude realizes himself in death because he is finally integrated, connected—albeit in a noumenal realm whose ghostly inhabitants have "called" to him since childhood. As Hardy discovered in Schopenhauer, birth may well be tantamount to original sin, and death may be the fulfilling correction of a mistake.

In one sense, *Jude* is the tragedy of "unfulfilled aims" which Hardy refers to in his Preface. But, in another sense, the novel is a curiously fulfilling demonstration of the quieting emotions which set Jude on the road to pursue a geographical cure for a disease of the spirit: there is beauty in Jude's final ticket to oblivion because it attests to his learning an important lesson in his journey through life, a lesson he has sensed intuitively and more acutely than others since his boyhood days: that oneness with his fellows, living and dead, is his ultimate destiny; and that in obliteration of the individ-

ual, sublimation manifests itself most completely. Jude achieves the state of percipience without volition ascribed to Tess at the end of her plight. He recognizes that

Quietism, i.e. surrender of all volition [and] asceticism, i.e., . . . consciousness of the identity of one's own nature with that of all things . . . stand in the closest connection. (Schopenhauer 3: 433)

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College of William and Mary

Coming in

## The Victorian Newsletter

A. R. Coulthard, "The Flawed Craft of A. E. Housman"

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Judith Kennedy, "Tennyson and the 'Spirit of the Age'"

John B. Lamb, "Utopian Dreams / Heterotopian Nightmares: Disease and Discourse in Carlyle's *Latter-Day Pamphlets*"

Lillian Nayder, "Agents of Empire in *The Woman in White*"

David Paroissien, "*Oliver Twist* and the Contours of Early Victorian England"

Joseph S. Salemi, "The Personification of Death in the Poems of William Ernest Henley"

# Victorian Group News

## Announcements

The first international conference dedicated to Oscar Wilde and his works will be held at the Edgbaston campus of the University of Birmingham, England, from 16-18 April, 1993. The total membership will be about 100 persons (the maximum number which can be accommodated). There will be papers by distinguished Wilde scholars and a number of specialist seminars. For further information, please write to Wilde Conference, Drs. Ian Small and Russell Jackson, School of English, University of Birmingham, Edgbaston, Birmingham B15 2TT, England.

Midwest Victorian Studies Association Conference—*Victorian Urban Settings*—16-17 April 1993, Chicago. This Conference seeks a conscious look at the setting of the visual and literary arts, music, theater, architecture and urban planning, as they embraced or rejected the Victorian city. Send 6 copies of paper or abstract by 1 December 1992 to D. J. Trela, Executive Secretary, Midwest Victorian Studies Association, Box 288, Roosevelt University, 403 S. Michigan Avenue, Chicago, IL 60605-1394.

## Editor's Note

*The Victorian Newsletter* has not raised its price since 1980, in spite of increases in printing and mailing costs. Subscribers will help us continue at our present rates if they don't require separate notice of renewal dates. The number on your address label is the number of the last issue covered by your subscription. Renewals should be made at the rate of \$5/year or \$9/2 years —\$6/year foreign and Canada. Please renew when you notice that your subscription has lapsed with the issue number on your address label.

## Sale on Back Issues

For one year (through December 31, 1993) back issues of *The Victorian Newsletter* will be available at half price—\$2.00 per copy, \$2.50 for the Index. Issues are available (in some cases in very limited quantities) for the following issues: 8, 20, 23, 30, 31, 32, 35, 36, 37, 38, 40, 41, 43, 45, 47, 49, 51, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81, Index.