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Cover: *Oliver's Reception by Fagin and the Boys.* George Cruickshank.

"Eternal honour to his name": Tennyson's *Ode on the Death of the Duke of Wellington* and Victorian Memorial Aesthetics

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The death of the Duke of Wellington stamped itself on the national consciousness of nineteenth-century Britain. Wellington and Nelson were the "heroes of the age" but it was Wellington who survied into peacetime, proving himself as "the greatest single argument for Victorian hero worship" "the greatest single argument for Victorian hero worship" (Houghton 309). In mourning for Wellington, the people of Britain had the opportunity to act out their emergent national and cultural identity. Wellington's death provided an occasion for Victoria's nation to describe itself. He was "one of the established institutions of the country . . . as little to be questioned as the existence of St. James's Palace or the action of parliament" (*The Spectator* 18/9/1852), and so to memorialize "England's Duke" was to memorialize the Duke's England. And yet, burdened by an awareness of its own modernity, this Great Exhibition of Grief could never do its subject justice. As one journalist wrote in *The Spectator* "you might as well (to use the phrase in no irreverent sense) seek a biography of gunpowder or of steam, as of that strong-willed English sense of duty which the Duke impersonated among public men" (*Ibid*). The feeling that an occasion so momentous could only be trivialized by public ceremony was strengthened by the Duke's own reputation as a man of silence and of action, who "hated display of any kind" (*Gentleman's Magazine* Oct, 1852). For the two months that followed Wellington's death and culminated with his funeral, an apparently compulsive need to create and produce display through lavish ceremony, public art and pages upon pages of print was countered by a general sense of unease about the pomp and circumstance that were required to memorialize the great Duke.

The protracted debate surrounding the funeral procession and ceremony revolved around this conflict between distaste for lavish public spectacle and the impossibility of producing anything else. The funeral was a pageant of modern Englishness. From the parade of military strength that accompanied the coffin, to the gas lights that were used to illuminate St. Paul's and the mechanical pulley that was used to winch the coffin from the funeral car, to the multitude of people that swarmed into London on the railways to witness the procession, every detail of the event spoke of the new commercial and industrial Empire of which the Duke of Wellington had been a figurehead. The fact that the extensive preparations were barely finished on time and the modern technologies employed were not entirely successful—the funeral car was too heavy and broke down under its own weight, the pulleys used to winch the bier did not work smoothly and the light from the gas lamps was drowned out by the sunlight streaming through the windows of the cathedral—lent the occasion a clumsiness that only served to emphasise its modernity.

The modernity of the funeral provoked an uncomfortable response: "The few great ceremonials, whether local or national, still remaining among us hold there place as relics of the past, not to be lightly interfered with, or approved by, the spirit of our age" (*Illustrated London News* 25/9/1852). One of the event's more generous reviewers , while acknowledging the need for such magnificence, expresses unease about the overt materialism:

> We could not have been content with less than the performance of such a tribute, and yet while it was in progress we felt it was too much . . . That it was an impressive pageant—that it did express a great national idea—that it spoke eloquently the national sentiment in regard to the national man, we all admit; and yet there is a feeling, that the spontaneity, the completeness, the genuineness of the manifestation are abated by the sight of the machinery. It was the real thing, but made to wear the aspect of a getting-up. Enthusiasm wearied itself with its own appliances. The sentiment was overlaid by the timber, the estimates and the plans; the thing was done so handsomely that the material was in excess of the spiritual. (*The Spectator* 20/11/1852)

The reviewer for *The Examiner* found the ceremony to be a distraction from the serious business of remembrance:

> Reverent thoughts of the dead were in all minds; but necessarily overlaid by thoughts obtruded by the pageantry, they were drawn away from the coffin and passed to the "funeral car drawn by twelve horses, decorated with trophies and heraldic achievements" (20/11/1852)

And a particularly critical letter to the editor of *The Spectator*, entitled "Funereal and Memorial Aesthetics," describes the "whole proceedings" as "vulgar, overcharged and unnatural" and sees the Duke's funeral as representative of much that was wrong with the England of the day:

> Though Englishmen possess sensibility they suppress it. . . . They are so very practical that they take more interest in the sign than in the signified. By velvet at twelve shillings a yard, and gilding laid on without stint, they express the measure of difference between a hero and a common man. (20/11/1852)

Each writer suggests that the measure of a hero cannot be found on the rich surfaces of fine ceremony, that it is a thing of depth, beyond the "double gilt, illuminated embroidered and embossed" material language of greatness.

Permanent public memorials to the Duke, were received with a similar scepticism. Two statues had been erected in honor of Wellington while he was still alive: the eighteen foot high naked Achilles, subscribed for and erected to Wellington and his brave companions in arms by their

countrywomen had caused a certain amount of laughter.[1] Matthew Cotes Wyatt's bronze statue of the Duke was so unpopular that it was moved from its original site in Hyde Park to Aldershot after his death. In spite of a general feeling that "Colossal statues have rarely produced happy works of art" (*Spectator* 25/20/1852). £23,000, left over from the £100,000 set aside for the cost of the funeral, was used to pay for a national memorial and numerous provincial statues were erected throughout the country.

All of this commentary and criticsm was recorded in the national press.[2] Every day for the two months between the Duke's death and his funeral newspapers published articles about his life, his career and meticulous and endlessly revised accounts of his final hours, until the writing became its own self-perpetuating subject. The press had a strong sense of its role in transforming Wellington into a national institution:

> His attendance at the early service at the Chapel Royal and at the Whitehall sermons, his walk in the park in former years, and of late times his rides to the Horse Guards or the House of Lords, with his servants behind him, are incidents which every newspaper has long chronicled for the information of the country. (*Gentleman's Magazine* Oct. 1852)

Articles expressed a new confidence in the adequacy of the press to such an important occasIon:

> The press of all parties, in paying tribute to departing greatness, has reviewed the career and the character of the Duke of Wellington with a fairness and a discrimination to which journalism would not have been equal some years before. (*Spectator* 18/9/1852)

But despite these claims, its extensive involvement might still be felt to be somehow inappropriate:

> It needs all the genuine respect for the memory of the Duke of Wellington to prevent the mass of writing, about the past, present and even future, which floods the journals, in respect to his career, his departure and his funeral, from degenerating into a nuisance; and there can be no doubt that it has already had an inevitable tendency in that direction. Every conceivable phase of his character, all the traits that marked and did not mark it, are reviewed, not as chance suggests, but systematically, from day to day. A "leading article" about Wellington blocks up one column in each morning journal, as a funeral shutter remains in the window of some West End shopkeeper every day. Society itself joins in the endless

talk; seeming to feel that it is bound to show that it appreciates its loss, and forgetting that genuine feelings usually find their own utterance. (*Ibid*)

The author of this article, despite his opinion that "genuine respect" and "genuine feelings" are best expressed by not writing and not talking, is unable himself to remain silent. His own contribution to the mass of articles that he considers such a nuisance is just one more example of the dilemma of presentation occasioned by the death of the Duke of Wellington. Moved to use everything available to them in order adequately to respond to the demise of their national hero, the Victorians found that what the technology and culture of their age produced, these massive surfaces of material and print, offended their aesthetic sensibility. Their commitment to sincerity, depth and silence, inherited from previous generations was buried beneath modern surfaces, many of which were perpetuated by anxieties about their own value.

The death of the Duke of Wellington gave not just the nation, but its recently appointed laureate an opportunity to establish a new identity. *Ode on the Death of the Duke of Wellington*, Tennyson's first separate publication since he had been appointed laureate in 1850, was not officially a laureate poem—Tennyson received no request from the Queen for its composition—but the connection between national hero and national poet was readily available to reviewers and journalists: "It is fitting" wrote a reviewer for *The Times*, "that the requiem for England's greatest warrior should be hymned by England's laureate." Hence Tennyson's poem was not only a memorial tribute to the Duke, but also the first monument to Tennyson's laureateship. Tennyson expressed something of this in a letter to his Aunt Russell, saying of the *Ode*: "I wrote it because it was expected of me to write."

The poem was very much a part of the funeral ceremony and the press response. Ten thousand copies were printed for sale on the day of the funeral and the fact that only 6,000 of these were bought can to some extent be explained by the fact that it was reproduced more or less in its entirety in *The Times* the previous day. Although the poem was by no means the critical disaster that Tennyson perceived it to be, it was not an unqualified success. Reviews of the poem express a disappointment and a discomfort very similar to that expressed about the funeral ceremony and press involvement. There is a sense of the potential that the occasion offers—"Of these themes, the ode before us has the most august that ever fell to the chance of poet laureate, one to have wakened emotion in the most humble of minstrels"—a feeling that Tennyson's poem only served to trivialize its occasion—"But Mr. Tennyson seems

to have thought otherwise, and regarded the occasion as happily intended to illustrate how readily he could sport with a great subject and reduce its mightiness to the sing-song of indolent rhythm and familiar rhyme"— and that the strained dignity of the poem was incongruous with the hero it celebrated: "Most inappropriate alas! Is this mode of treatment to the topic; for the 'Great Duke' whom he commemorates was the most unaffected of men; and this self-same method is, of all the methods of verse-writing, the most affected" (*Illustrated London News* 27/11/1852). The only defense is that it is at least in keeping with the elaborate funeral ceremony: "Grand and solemn to the occasion is the poet's simple strain of music that accompanies the funeral pageant to St. Paul's" (*Examiner* 20/11/1852).

Ode on the Death of the Duke of Wellington might also be criticized for its lack of difference from the funeral ceremony and the media circus surrounding it. Even though the newspapers and journals made it part of the "Wellington Literature" that filled their pages by quoting it wholesale in their reviews, what they saw as its failure to stand apart from the mass of print became a subject of their criticism. *The Weekly News and Chronicle* could see little to separate the poem from "dozens of such lines" that had been received by the provincial newspapers over the past three months (20/11/1852) and *The Leader* (20/11/1852) expressed its disappointment that the only thing that caused this ode to "stand eminent" from the "articles and biographies, pamphlets and poems that crowd upon the inattentive public" was Tennyson's name at the bottom (20/11/1852). While feelings of unease about the magnificence of the funeral could be tempered by an understanding that nothing else and nothing less could be done, there was a more specific, more informed view that this was not the way one should do poetry.

The poem's failings were often put down to its being a piece of laureate verse, required by public events rather than inspired by Tennyson's own feelings of loss—"Wherefore did Alfred write this ode? Because he is Poet Laureate? Surely not because the [spirit] within goaded him with that poetic pain that insists on utterance" (*The Leader* 20/11/1852)—and the position of laureate was itself called into question: "Poets Laureate in these material times are veritable objects of pity. To dream dreams, to open cells of sweet sensibility—to order—is now a thing of terror to a man of poetic genius" (*Weekly News and Chronicle* 20/11/1852). This last remark is particularly interesting because it suggests that it is the materialism of the age that unfits it for poetry. Materialism, the word that defined Victorian modernity for this journalist, is placed in opposition to aesthetics. Patronage confounds poetic sensibility in the same way that the twelve shilling yards of velvet suppressed the sensibility of a nation at the Duke's funeral. Poetry of any worth cannot, therefore, be modern; it must rise above the times or stay behind them, confining itself to the margins in order to retain any worth.

Ironically, it seems to have been Tennyson's own *In Memoriam* that helped to create all the expectations that *Ode on the Death of the Duke of Wellington* disappointed. The reviewer for *The Court Journal* goes so far as to make a direct comparison:

> Alfred Tennyson, who, when really touched by grief, sobbed forth his soul in the touching *In Memoriam*—Alfred Tennyson, as we suppose feeling himself bound, as the public's pensioner, to pay his laudatory tribute to the memory of the public's idol, has written an ode which . . . is very far inferior to anything that has yet fallen from his pen? (20/11/1852)

It is a comparison that is hard to ignore. *In Memoriam* and *Ode on the Death of the Duke of Wellington* were almost consecutive publications and both poems are written on the occasion of the death of a man named Arthur. This initial similarity makes differences between the poems all the more obvious. The first Arthur, too young to have achieved any public fame when he died, was Tennyson's close personal friend. The poem that mourned him was written and revised over the course of sixteen years and published anonymously with only Hallam's initials printed on the second title page. The second Arthur, living into old age to acquire unparalleled fame was no better known to Tennyson than he was to the public at large. Tennyson wrote his poem to this Arthur in just two months and the published edition bore the names and titles of both himself and the Duke.[3] It is this easy juxtaposition that informed the reception of *Ode on the Death of the Duke of Wellington*. Tennyson's own *In Memoriam* provided the most powerful precedent for modern elegy. *In Memoriam* not only represents the aesthetic from which Tennyson departed when he wrote his ode, it also exemplified and helped to form the public sensibility that was so offended by the whole memorial experiment instigated by Wellington's death: by the funeral, by the press accounts of the man and by Tennyson's own memorial ode.[4]

In a recent essay on the Victorian elegy Seamus Perry locates its emergence "at a specific, late-Romantic moment in history," a moment that was influenced by the inward turn towards the "particular 'I,'" towards uniqueness and sincerity, "so that the testing point for post-Romantic elegy is about the eloquence or the inwardness of poetic language: its public efficacy and address or its personal authenticity" (117-118). Naming Wordsworth as "the most important Romantic presence in Victorian elegy," Perry cites Wordsworth's "Essays on Epitaphs" in order to illustrate his argument. In these essays Wordsworth's emphasis is not on the meaning of the words that are carved on the tombstone, but on the "slow laborious work" to which the engraven letters "testify" and the unwritten feeling that lies within them, all the more sincere and powerful for its not being bodied forth in language:

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[1]Benedict Read uses memorial statues of the Duke of Wellington to illustrate the difficulties surrounding public sculpture during the Victorian Period and there are parallels to be drawn between this art form and Tennyson's laureate verse. Read writes that although "as a form of patronage, the public memorial could bring consistently to the sculptor both prestige and success," the artistic integrity of the sculptor was seen to be compromised by the patron and commissioned sculptures suffered strong criticism from the likes of Arnold and F. T. Palgrave. He also comments on the difficulty of memorializing modern subjects as works of art, which, for Victorian sculptors, manifested itself in the question of how to clothe their subjects. The "tight trousers" of contemporary dress were seen as unsuitable costume for sculptures and contemporary subjects were often presented in classical dress. This is an example of a nineteenth-century squeemishness about its

[2]Peter W. Sinnema provides a case study of the ways *The Illustrated London News* reported the death and funeral of the Duke of Wellington in the final chapter of *Dynamics of the Pictured Page: Representing the Nation in the Illustrated London News*. He describes its coverage as "sincere but opportunistic" (182). His observation that the pictures of the funeral procession "withhold a glimpse of the funeral car" (195) is particularly pertinent to this discussion because it implies that "the dead hero functions as an alibi for something else," (195) for a celebration of the modernity that enveloped it.

[3]"Tennyson's Arthurian psychodrama" by Cecil Y. Lang makes a comparison between these two Arthurs and the *Arthur of Idvlls of the Kino*.
[4]In her recent article "Burying the Great Duke: Victorian Mourning and the Funeral of the Duke of Wellington," Cornelia D. J. Paersall examines the Duke's funeral and Tennyson's ode as examples of Victorian cultu anxiety about death and mourning. Her argument focuses on the two-month delay between Wellington's death and burial and describes an unwill-

ingness to commit the dead body to the earth. The pageant and public spectacle, she argues, was a way of keeping him part "of the civic landscape," rescuing it from "the yearning, defiled interior." My argument, which covers the same ground as Pearsall's article would place greater emphasis on on the anxieties about the civic landscape itself, and understand the Duke's death as an unprecedented occasion for the presentation of that landscape, uncomfortably new to the eyes of nineteenth-century Britain.

. . . where the internal evidence proves that the writer was moved, in other words where the charm of sincerity lurks in the language of a tombstone and secretly pervades it, there are no errors in style or manner for which it will not be, in some degree, a recompense (345).

In Memoriam, with its fragmented collection of four-line stanzas, might be compared to a graveyard in which the few words on each tombstone are only markers for the body that is buried beneath it. To indicate the depth and sincerity of his grief, the speaker constantly draws attention to the inadequacy of words fully to express it: he is no more articulate than "an infant crying in the night," his "large grief" is "given in outline and no more" (V, 9-12). The yew tree that marks out the poem's broken progress fascinates the mourner because he imagines that the roots from which its trunk and branches are "wrapped around the bones" of his friend (II, 4). But, even though it is in closer contact with Hallam than the stone that marks his grave, the mourner is frustrated by the tree's refusal to communicate what is going on beneath it:

> And gazing on thee, sullen tree,
> Sick for thy stubborn hardihood,
> I seem to fail from out my blood
> And grow incorporate into thee. (II, 13-16)

He wonders that his own life, like that of the tree, can continue after Hallam's death, but, although on the surface his life and work may even signify the opposite of what they mean, they are valuable because their presence marks the loss that they grieve. In this sense, the lyrics that make up Tennyson's elegy are repeated inscriptions of its title: In Memoriam A.H.H.[5]

In Wordsworth's third essay on epitaphs he writes:

> The most numerous class of sepulchral inscriptions do indeed record nothing more than the name of the buried person, but that he was born on one day and died on another . . . a Tomb like this is a shrine to which the fancies of a scattered family may repair in pilgrimage; the thoughts of the individuals, without any communication with each other, must oftentimes meet here. Such a frail memorial then is not without its tendency to keep families together; it feeds also local attachment, which is the taproot of the tree of patriotism. (370)

We hear the echo of these ideas in Section 67 of In Memoriam:

> When on my bed the moonlight falls,
> I know that in thy place of rest
> By the broad water of the west,
> There comes a glory on the walls;

Thy marble bright in dark appears,
As slowly steals the the silvber flame
Along the letters of thy name,
And o'er the number of thy years.   (LCVII, 1-8)

This imaginary pilgrimage to his friend's tomb occurs a number of times throughout In Memoriam. The anonymity of the poem's author and the fact that even the name of the person being mourned is reduced to its initials (the initials of an unknown youth) mean that it is a pilgrimage in which any of its readers may join. The initials can be appropriated by any mourner, since they function only as markings for the body beneath: the letters themselves can be substituted by any name, as long as it is that of a person who has been lost and for whom deep grief is felt. In this way, Tennyson manages to express a loss that is no less bitter for being common.

But this account of In Memoriam as epitaph can never do justice to such an intricate and lengthy poem. By making explicit the inarticulate depth of his feelings, Tennyson is free to write. Poetry is no more than a "sad mechanic exercise," so divorced from any real expression of grief that it serves as a distraction, numbing the pain that he cannot express. Safe in the knowledge that he can say nothing, Tennyson can say anything and he can do so as many times as he chooses. In so doing he amasses a weight of words that, of course, speaks volumes. Tennyson's compulsion to mark out his grief with poetry, like a prisoner marking out the days of his sentence on the prison wall, results in a rich and eloquent meditation on death informed by the religious, social and scientific debates of the time it was written. Thus, the sequence of voluble silences that make up Tennyson's epitaph, speak the grief of an age and a nation.

This is only one way of explaining the central paradox and great achievement of In Memoriam that has been addressed in some way by nearly every critic of the poem. Christopher Ricks describes it as "anonymous but confessional, private but naked" (221); David Shaw writes that, being "both introverted and intellectual" it successfully "transforms the official affirmations of his era into experienced truths"(141) and Alan Sinfield bases his reading of the poem around the figures of "The Linnet and the Artefact," arguing that Tennyson, builds a meaningful and powerful monument out of the unchecked outpourings of a genuine grief (17). But it was T. S. Eliot who first described this paradox in terms of depth and surface. In his essay on In Memoriam he writes:

> Tennyson 's surface, his technical accomplishment, is intimate with his depths: that which we most quickly see about Tennyson is that which moves between the surface and the depths, that which is of slight importance. By looking innocently at the surface, we are now likely to come to the depths, to the abyss of sorrow.[6]   (337)

In other words In Memoriam is a poem that effectively communicates the value of silence through its eloquence and of depth through its surfaces.

Many of these critics also argue that the reconciliation of the poem's paradoxical elements is achieved through its, somewhat circuitous, progress: that the movement of In Memoriam is upwards and outwards. Herbert F. Tucker provides the best description of this movement. He describes the poem as being at once private and public and argues that the poem works to reconcile the alienated, solipsistic mourner to society. This is not only a personal journey, it also travels forward from the moment in literary history described by Perry, building away from the Romantic traditions that form its foundations:

> The ennobling of In Memoriam, the calling of the "high muse" of Romanticism must draw on inward sources; yet the motive for this elevation is felt as a public duty to the poet's "brethren." The elegiac conventions of the poem will entail connecting the silent "deep self" to the self that speaks and reacts with the world . . . and the rapprochment that the poem goes on to seek with the vanished presence of Hallam will be a massive figuration of the poet's own private brooding with public display.   (389)

Tucker describes the process itself, the description of what a thing is through the narrative of what it was and what it has come to be, as "Bildungspoesie." This is as much part of Tennyson's Romantic inheritance as a belief in the incomprehensible depths of real feeling, but Tennyson uses it to move away from that inheritance. By charting this movement as a self-conscious, doubtful and often guilty narrative, he is able to legitimize its arrival at the surface. Like the initials on a gravestone that gain strength and meaning from the life whose end they mark, In Memoriam draws much of its success from the traditions that its composition seeks to conclude.

Tucker also observes that this journey is somewhat contrived. The first verses of In Memoriam that Tennyson composed were not the ones in which the mourner appears farthest removed from society. His response to Hallam's death was initially social, the sections that reflect upon archetypal figures of mourning were among the first to be written, and it is from these that he withdrew "into a subjective realm of analysis and refinement," ending with a more powerful assertion of where he had begun.[7] The abba stanza form reflects this contrivance, retreating inwards from a first line that is then re-established, strengthened by the two lines which have intervened, in line four. The process that Tennyson describes might in then be understood as being played out for the benefit of a late-Romantic readership more than working through his own grief in verse. This is not to say that Tennyson's grief at the loss of his friend was not immense, only that it was ineffable, so utterly beyond words, that a surface response was as accurate as any other and was perhaps more honest, in that it made no attempt to reach the feelings that words could not hope to fathom. It is this sur-

face response, which Tennyson takes up in his composition of Ode on the Death of the Duke of Wellington, that I am suggesting corresponds to the material surfaces of the funeral ceremony, the empty signification that was seen in both cases to be so reprehensibly modern.

Reviewers who found themselves disappointed by Ode on the Death of the Duke of Wellington in spite of an admiration of Tennyson's work in general, often excused this work on the grounds that its author had not had enough time adequately to develop and reflect upon the national sense of bereavement. The review in The Leader ends by saying: "Tennyson is said to compose with great slowness and as this ode must have been written hastily, it may have that extenuation" (20/11/1853), and The Illustrated London News concludes that:

> The subject must, it is clear, await Mr Tennyson's better mood; must become, perhaps idealized by distance of time, and then we doubt not that we shall have a fine poem from his pen . . . not hurried by the pressure of circumstances, but a free offering from the soul of the poet. (27/11/1852)

Their suggestion that, over time, Tennyson might present a more satisfactory offering from his soul offers guidelines for the composition of another In Memoriam. To a very limited extent, the predictions of these reviewers were fulfilled. A revised edition of the poem was published the following year and more changes were made to it before its inclusion in Maud and Other Poems in 1855. Tennyson's revisions of Ode on the Death of the Duke of Wellington have been examined in two articles by Edgar F. Shannon and Christopher Ricks, who observe that some of the alterations make for a poem that is more feeling and less formal. However, they also point out that these changes were made largely in response to the criticism that Tennyson received from the reviews. Ironically, it was in responding to the demands of his late-Romantic readership for spontaneity that Tennyson was writing to order, the very practice that so many of the reviewers had identified as the cause of the poem's failure. But no amount of revision could have transformed the Ode into a poem that could be enjoyed by the tastes In Memoriam had created.

Tennyson's very first response to the problem of commemorating Wellington is Wordsworthian in every sense. In March 1851, eighteen months before the death of Arthur Wellesley, Tennyson wrote the following letter to Thomas Woolner:

> My dear Woolner,
> I had rather let Dr Davy have his own way but since he and you require an opinion, look here is an epitaph on the Duke of Wellington.
>   To the memory
>   Of the Duke of
>   Wellington
> Who by singular calling and through the special foresight of Almighty God was [raised] up to be the safeguard of

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[5]This reading resonates with Isobel Armstrong's discussion of graffiti in The Radical Aesthetic. She writes that graffiti does "not have the deciferability of writing. The many sets of initials tell you only that these are initials, just

as the dominance of pseudo-words—KOF, UURZ—tells you that you cannot read them. . . . These are anti-words . . . [they] constitute an aggressive barrier to reading" (152).

[6]Ideas about surface and depth also form part of Eric Griffiths' discussion of In Memoriam and Maud (97-170).
[7]Without this contrivance the social, or surface poetic is unpalatable even to

critics today. I imagine that David Shaw speaks for many readers when he asserts that the Prelude to In Memoriam does not work because private truths are too quickly and too easily bodied forth as public sentiment.

the greatest people of the world—who possessing the greatest military genius which the world etc. Won the battle of Waterloo etc etc etc—who was equally great in statesmanship as he was in etc. Now look here, do not the very words Duke of Wellington involve all this? Is Wordsworth a great poet? Well then, don't let us talk of him as if he were half known

> To the memory of
> William Wordsworth
> The Great Poet

Even that seems too much but certainly is much better than the other, far nobler in its simplicity. (*Letters* 2:10)

By using the name of the former laureate further to illustrate his point, Tennyson suggests a relationship between the name and fame of military leaders and of poets so that, even in this private letter, concerns about his own posterity are bound up with the Duke's memorial. But his invocation of Wordsworth as part of a discussion about epitaphs also recalls Wordsworth's own comments on epitaphs that commemorate greatness:

> The mighty benefactors of mankind, as they are not only known by their immediate survivors, but will continue to be known familiarly to latest posterity, do not stand in need of biographic sketches, in such a place; nor deliniations of character to individualise them. This is already done by their works, in the memories of men. Their naked names, and a grand comprehension of civic gratitude . . .—these are the only tribute that can here be paid—the only offering that upon such an altar would not be unworthy. (336)

Tennyson's letter echoes these remarks. The impatient 'etceteras' that punctuate his imaginary epitaph stand in for facts and forms so familiar that they need not be spelled out and anticipate his final proposal that the Duke's name alone would make the best epitaph. The ability of the name to speak for itself is testament to its greatness and Tennyson suggests that allowing it to do so is the only way to give a man such as the Duke of Wellington the honor he deserves.

Such thoughts seem in keeping with *In Memoriam* but wholly incongruous with *Ode on the Death of the Duke of Wellington*, a poem that does such wordy honour to the Duke's name. The fact that Tennyson expressed these ideas in private and then went on to compose his ode a year later is a contradiction that attests not just to his own unease but to the general unease of a nation compelled by the death of their hero to confront a modernity that offended its late-Romantic way of seeing. Tennyson's letter to Woolner places the poet amongst his readership. Like them, his tastes and ways of understanding were to a large extent defined by the Wordsworthian memorial aesthetic of *In Memoriam* and, like them, his sense of "duty" forced him into a poetic experiment that went against the grain. *Ode on the Death of the Duke of Wellington*, then, should not only be read as characteristic of Victorian modernity, a poetic representation of "these material times," but also as a poem painfully aware of its newness, embarrassed by, and with little confidence in, its maginificent surfaces.[8]

Far from the modern development that I have been describing, *Ode on the Death of the Duke of Wellington* seems to be an anachronism that does not fit into literary histories of the elegy or the ode, a step backwards rather than forwards. Jahan Ramazani, in the introduction to his study of the modern elegy, uses Tennyson's ode, the epitome of a traditional elegy, as a point of comparison with the modern works that he is introducing and then goes on to name *In Memoriam* as the first modern elegy, ignoring the fact that this "modern" poem preceded its "traditional" counterpart (2-10). Critics who have charted the history of the ode tend to locate the culmination of its development in the early nineteenth century with Keats and Shelley. *Ode on the Death of the Duke of Wellington* serves only as a postscript: it was a "return to the metrical exemplars of antiquity," a symptom of the intellectual drift of his later poetry towards conservatism (Shuster 279). Paul Fry ignores the poem completely. He makes brief mention of Tennyson's early "apprentice work" before moving straight over to Swinburne. Fry understands that "to write an ode is to honor the company of fools: court hacks, windy curates, triflers with nature, versifiers on milady's fan—laureates. . . . The very word 'ode' has been enough to call down journalistic ridicule from antiquity to the present (10). A poem composed in earnest by just one such laureate does not fit happily into his scheme of development which describes the history of the ode as a sequence of increasingly self-aware performances.

However, Fry describes the form itself in terms that can help to understand how *Ode on the Death of the Duke of Wellington* moves away from the illusory depths of *In Memoriam* and thus establishes its uneasy modernity. As the most formal, elevated and public poetry, the ode is poetry at its farthest remove from the possibility of natural language. He argues that it has therefore become "a form of ontological and vocational doubt," "a proving ground of presentation that boldly attempts to invoke the reality that it would be part of, knowing that, if it were part of that reality, there would be no need to call" (9). Written out of the full knowledge of the inevitable failure of its project, it does not dwell on its inadequacies in an attempt to make up for them; instead it "writes itself hoarse," throwing itself into its doomed project with a masochistic poetic honesty. The superficiality of this formal anachronism enables it to be rewritten and reread as modern in a Victorian context, appropriate, if not appealing to a newly material nation. By composing *Ode on the Death of the Duke of Wellington*, Tennyson takes the form to its farthest extreme, committing himself, without irony, to the surfaces of language that he knows to be inadequate.

Rather than leaving Wellington's name to speak for itself, the ode insistently speaks for the name. The poem may be entitled *Ode on the Death of the Duke of Wellington*, but, after that title, the Duke's name is excluded from the poem. Tennyson prefers to talk about and around it. Wellington is the "Great Duke," the "last great Englishman," the "great world-victor's victor," "England's greatest son." These periphrastic expressions contrive repetitively to assert a greatness that they also imply goes without saying. Everything in the poem is brought back to the name, almost to the exclusion of the Duke himself. The thrice repeated refrain announces that the project of the ode and of the people for whom it would speak is to honor the name of their hero:

> A people's voice, when they rejoice
> At civic realm and pomp and game,
> Attest their great commander's claim
> With honour, honour, honour to him,
> Eternal honour to his name. (146-50)

Rather than admitting that language can barely scrape the surfaces of identity and loss by leaving the name, like an epitaph, as a marker for what the Duke was, Tennyson uses names that describe and explain. In so doing, he refuses to acknowledge the depths that separate his ode from what it represents. It does not keep a respectful and modest silence, nor does it verbalize silence with the anxiety-ridden language of *In Memoriam*. It is reduced instead to a rhetoric that is at once empty and insistent, a rhetoric of repetitions:

> With honour, honour, honour to him,
> Eternal honour to his name.

The result is a poem that strains under its own wordiness. Its compulsive and cumulative verbal over-reach works to create immense stretches of verse that draw attention to their own technicality rather than "the brilliance or profundity of their thought" (Pitt 191). Tennyson's reference to the funeral car, "bright . . . with his blazoned deeds" (56) brings his own descriptions of the Duke's life and work to mind so that we can almost see his own poem blazoned across the pall. Even the simplest ideas are endlessly embroidered and elaborated upon. Each section is built around a single thought or statement that is clarified, drawn out, returned to and reiterated. In Section One this process occurs within a single sentence. The poem's opening exhortation: "Let us bury the Great Duke / With an empire's lamentation" is immediately repeated; but, as if the poet was not satisfied that he had used enough words, the "empire's lamentation" is rewritten as "the noise of the mourning of a mighty nation." This "rewrite" is nearly twice as long, the downbeats of "noise," "mourning," "mighty" and "nation" jolt the reader slowly along the line and the mirror symmetry of their initials (n, m, m, n.) draw attention to its wrought artifice. As the poem gains momentum its self-perpetuating sentences, intent on imitating the length of the funeral procession, become longer. Another clause is added and then another; and each compulsive addition is openly displayed to the reader through the use of conjunctions that naively reveal how one clause is simply tacked onto the next, drawing attention to the poet's need always to say just one more thing:

> Let the long long procession go,
> And let the sorrowing crowd about it grow,
> And let the mournful martial music blow;
> The last great Englishman is low. (15-18)

Tennyson sees Wellington's death was the end of an era. As the "last great Englishman" Wellington takes with him a time that cannot be retrieved, but he also leaves behind a legacy that it is the nation's duty to sustain. This theme is strongest in the 1852 version of the poem; Section Four begins:

> Mourn for to us he seems the last,
> Our sorrow draws but on the golden Past.

In the 1853 version the second line was changed to: "Remembering all his greatness in the Past," so that the absolute split of then and now occasioned by the Duke's death is exchanged for the departed greatness of a single man. The less moderate first version gives greater purpose to the lengthy descriptions of Wellington that follow. The remainder of Section Four draws on journalistic sketches of his character. Wellington was "moderate, resolute" (25), "greatest yet with least pretence" (29), "Rich in saving common sense/And, as the greatest only are,/In his simplicity sublime" (32-4). The reviewers need not have pointed out the disparity between Wellington's character and Tennyson's poetic, as the laureate seems intent on doing it for them. With this remarkably elaborate tribute to simplicity, Tennyson acknowledges the need to move forward, away from a past that, though golden, is nevertheless over, and into the modern present that remains.

Wellington's voice, now silent, is employed by Tennyson as symbol of the late lamented national character. The Duke's language was the deep, wordless language of canon-fire:

> And the volleying canon thunder his loss;
> He knew their voices of old.
> For many a time in many a clime
> His captain's-ear had heard them boom
> Bellowing victory, bellowing doom:
> When he with those deep voices wrought,
> Guarding realms and kings from shame;
> With those deep voices our dead captain taught
> The tyrant, and asserts his claim
> In that dread sound to the great name   (63-71)

But, however powerful, it will be heard no more: "O friends, our chief state-oracle is mute" (23), "His voice is silent in your council-hall / For ever" (174-5). A different voice, however imperfect, must now be used, to do honour to the name. *Ode on the Death of the Duke of Wellington* attempts to find that voice and speak with it:

> A people's voice! we are a people yet.
> Though all men else their nobler dreams forget,
> Confused by brainless mobs and lawless Powers;
> We have a voice, with which to pay the debt
> Of boundless love and reverence and regret. (151-5)

But the poem is uneasy about its own procedures. In Section Five, a single line thrice repeated, "Let the bell be tolled," briefly interrupts the momentum of ode and funeral proces-

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[8]Valerie Pitt is the only critic I have come across who recognizes Tennyson's laureate verse as trying out a new poetic. She argues that "Tennyson's major problem . . . was that, although there was a body of common sentiment, there was no available poetic with which to express it. . . . Ten

nyson's laureate verse is not, then, the verse of a complacent poet working in outworn conventions, but the vigorous creation of new forms for a new national consciousness" (195).

sion as they roll towards St Paul's. The invocation of this wordless sound, the tolling bell, betrays a conviction that the proper indication of the sincerity of grief is the inarticulacy that lies buried beneath this poem's persistent articulations.[9]

In Section Nine the poem enjoins silence:

> Peace, his triumph will be sung
> By some yet unmoulded tongue
> Far on in summers that we shall not see:
> Peace, it is a day of pain
> For one about whose patriarchal knee
> Late the little children clung:
> O peace. . . .   (232-238)

As he draws his ode to a close, Tennyson offers consolation to the mourners, but his call upon them to be at peace can also be read as a request, made to himself as much as to them, to be quiet. The ode seems to split into two voices, one asking for peace, the other unable to stop talking. By this stage the second voice has gained too much momentum to be held to a dignified silence and it moves on to a beautiful profession of faith before it is asked once again to "Hush" as the Duke is committed to the ground. Tennyson is unable to brazen out this moment with words. At the point towards which this whole poem has been moving, his ode recognizes its own inappropriateness and, in the few lines that follow the burial, reach its oddly muted conclusion. It will "speak no more of his renown" and concludes instead with a quiet prayer: "God accept him, Christ receive him" (281). *Ode on the Death of the Duke of Wellington*, then, was not the complete departure from *In Memoriam* that the reviews understood it to be; rather it expands upon the surfaces that *In Memoriam* ventures towards, immersing itself in the material world to which Hallam's mourner is finally reconciled. The self-doubt that runs through *Ode on the Death of the Duke of Wellington*, its embarrassment about its own public magnificence results in the poem being a rather fine poetic failure. Tennyson's lack of confidence in these great surfaces of language that he has created lends them the fragility of a nation and a poet reaching maturity. In the end, *Ode on the Death of the Duke of Wellington* can never be uncoupled from anxieties surrounding the emergent modernity of Victorian Britain. And these are anxieties that persist. A poetic that so perfectly reflects the age in which it is written is distasteful even now and the embarrassment with which Tennyson's ode resonates is our own. Not yet reconciled to an aesthetic made up of the material surfaces of modern culture and still enamored with illusions of depth, we are more likely to regard *Ode on the Death of the Duke of Wellington* as an historical document than a poem: an artifact that confers honour on the name of its subject rather than a work of art that honours the name of the poet.

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[9]An addition made to the 1855 version of the *Ode* is worth noting. Between the lines "Let the bell be tolled" and "And the sound of the sorrowing anthem rolled," Tennyson inserted "And a deeper knell in the heart be knolled. This additional line, which gestures towards depths that the poem does not otherwise attempt to fathom, is a capitulation to the critics: a return to the self-conscious poetic of *In Memoriam*.

Deviance in *The Law and the Lady*: The Uneasy Positionings of Mr. Dexter

Mary Rosner

> Victorians were mad about monstrosity. (O'Connor 148)

It's easy to point to the popularity of men like Darwin and say that Victorians were intent on trying to understand "man's place in nature": that man differed in degree rather than in kind from other animals. But Victorians were equally intent on trying to understand the loss of man's place. As Cynthia Russett writes in *Sexual Science*, Victorians had an "extraordinary obsession with evolutionary failures, those who never quite made it to complete human perfection or who, having made it, regressed." These "'outcasts from evolution,'" she explains, "women, savages, and criminals among them, were a nagging reminder that nature sometimes miscarried. . . . that some small developmental quirk, some ancestral lack of self control, some injury or illness, might consign an individual to an existence that was less than fully human" (63-4).

A category Russett doesn't mention but equally haunting is composed of Victorian monsters or mutants. It was in the nineteenth century, after all, that words describing notions of "normal" and "abnormal" entered "European languages" (Davis 10), with a common view "that monstrosity was written both upon the physical body and within the moral fabric" (Wilson 14-5). It was then too that the "science of teratology" came into being, a science that largely attributed natural abnormalities or monstrosities to arrests in development. Darwin generally saw these monstrous deviations as "injurious to or not useful to the species" (*Origin* 101). Another Victorian scientist, in words that echoed Darwinian theory, called these abnormalities "the inevitable spinoff in the stern and remorseless process of evolutionary struggle . . ." (Maudsley in Pick 208). He further argued that "the human brain may revert to, or fall below, that type of development from which, if the theory of Darwin be true, it has gradually ascended by evolution through the ages" (Maudsley 46). Yet seeing "outcasts from evolution" in these scientific terms—as "injurious to the species" or as "waste products" of natural selection—is not seeing the whole Victorian picture. According to Harriet Ritvo in *The Platypus and the Mermaid*,

> Every [and any] departure from the ordinary . . . was . . . open to conflicting interpretation. Depending on the beholder, an anomaly might be viewed as embodying a challenge to the established order . . .; the containment of that challenge; [its] incomprehensibility . . . ; or simply the endless and diverting variety of the world. And beholders who agreed on the content of the representation could still disagree strongly about its moral va-

> lence—whether it was good or bad, entrancing or disgusting. . . . [I]n the concrete world of real monsters, easy binary distinctions were often impossible. (148)

Some Victorians were less interested in "a scientific exposition of teratology" than in enjoying "medical curiousities" (Gould & Pyle 2) that exemplified and sensationalized "the most striking instances of abnormism" (Gould & Pyle 217). For instance, the subtitle of Gould and Pyle's *Anomalies and Curiousities of Medicine* (1896) tells us that it is an "encyclopedic collection of rare and extraordinary cases, and of the most striking instances of abnormality in all branches of medicine and surgery, derived from an exhaustive research of medical literature from the origin to the present day, abstracted, classified, annotated, and indexed." In it, we find multiple versions of anonymous and famous monsters presented in verbal and visual details that contribute to a description that is not necessarily coherent. This description of Victorian Harvey Leach[1], for example, defines him as an object of scientific scrutiny and a public performer: "the pelvis was comparatively weak; the femurs hardly to be recognized, and the right tibia and foot defective. . . . He was one of the most remarkable gymnasts of his day. . . . As an arena-horseman, either standing or sitting, he was rarely excelled" (266).

Figure 1: Leach (Gould & Pyle 266)

[1]This individual is variously identified as Harvey Leach or Harvey Leech.

"Freaks" like Leach and like "the Turtle-Boy, the Mule-Faced Woman, . . . the Camel Girl . . . and the Alligator Man" (Thomson 5) challenged conventional ways of seeing and thinking, especially when displayed in arenas unconnected with science—taverns, fairs, popular exhibits—where they evoked mixed responses: from fascinating to alienating, from disturbing to extraordinary, from "terrible" to "wonderful" (Thomson 3).

Fiction writers like Wilkie Collins took advantage of the monstrous as a site of multiple and disturbing responses. His 1875 novel *The Law and the Lady*, for instance, describes a characterized narrator's (Valeria's) attempts to clear the name of her husband, Eustace, from the shame of a "not proven" verdict for killing his first wife. This shame was hidden by Eustace when he married Valeria under a false name; when she finds out about his past, he runs away. In the course of her investigations, she interviews Miserrimus—"the most miserable—Dexter, who, she initially (and wrongly) believes, "had especially shown himself to be a thorough, good ally of [her] husband's" (152). Dexter lacks the healthy body and sound mind so valued in Victorian culture. As the text reminds us, "Never had Nature committed a more careless or a more cruel mistake than in the making of this man!" (173). And like other monsters, he excels in a "common inability to fit or be fitted" into recognizable categories (Ritvo 133). Dexter himself "'delights in mystifying'" (265) and seems pleased to evoke uneasy questions about social, gendered, and human boundaries. Others in the novel "don't fit" in other ways, but they lack the physical and mental signs of devolution that mark Dexter, their "degeneration" is without delight, and—by contrast—they seem largely one-dimensional. Dexter dies. They survive. If we agree with Eveleen Richards that "the metaphor of the monster . . . is a particularly powerful one for making sense of the glue that holds . . . material . . . together" (404), Dexter draws attention not only to boundaries and boundary-breaking but to the "very unfavourable conditions" of survival that the monstrous can signify (Darwin, Notebook C, 259).

A. Dexter's Unhealthy Body

Knowing the body was the most direct path to knowing the man.   (Haley 18)

In *The Healthy Body and Victorian Culture*, Bruce Haley claims that "no topic more occupied the Victorian mind than Health" (1). He goes on to identify the three characteristics of good (male) Victorian health: A healthy person "acts responsibly" as he goes on to "pursue his calling and work . . . with the greatest comfort to himself and usefulness to his fellow men" (20). A healthy person is "never static" but alive to his environment and changing with it: "without healthy movement and growth"—Haley writes—"there must be unhealthy movement and growth" (20-21). Furthermore, a healthy person is in a "state of functional and structural wholeness" (20). Other critics have described a healthy male

Victorian in more specific terms, citing "characteristics such as height, musculature, lung capacity, and athletic prowess" (Vrettos 127)—with "self-control" as a prerequisite (Waters 74) and with a strong vigorous body being a sign of "patriotism" (Vrettos 124), "sound mind and moral character" (Waters 75), "Christian earnestness, . . . dutiful service to God and humanity, as well as to one's own family, . . . kindness toward the needy and helpless" (Oppenheim 147), and "progress." According to one member of the London Anthropological Society, "'the vital energies of a people had a great deal to do with the state of the body, and . . . the capacity of the chest should count for something very considerable as an indication of national power'" (Vrettos 124). Men who failed to demonstrate good Victorian health—not only small men but incomplete or deformed men, degenerate men—might entertain the spectacle-hungry public as we see in this cartoon from *Punch* in the 1840's:
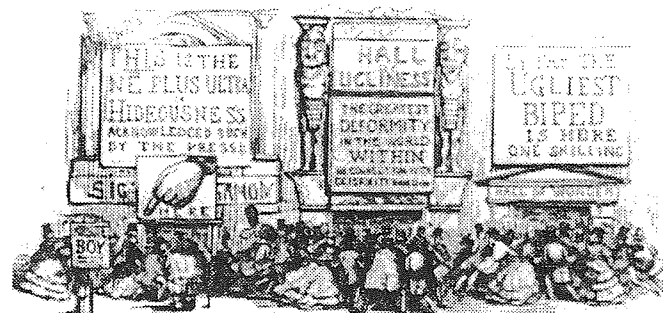
Figure 2: Deformato-mania (1848)

But deformities could also seriously disturb as we see in Stevenson's frightening descriptions of Hyde in the 1880's: "there was something abnormal and misbegotten in the very essence of the creature" (73).

In Misserimus Dexter, we seem to have another apparently "abnormal" and unhealthy man. He is wealthy enough to do no work, yet he does nothing to contribute to the world around him. Imprisoned in a "rotten and rambling" house (228), attended by a cousin who is "half alive" (210), he spends his days racing his chair, making horrifying paintings and barbaric music, collecting photographs of "various forms of madness" (247), plaster heads of "famous murderers" (247), "a frightful little skeleton of a woman" (247), and skinned and tanned bodies of French Revolutionaries. In spite of the evidence of his undirected activities, he proclaims himself (to himself) an extraordinary man:

"I am Napoleon, at the sunrise of Austerlitz! . . . I give the word and thrones rock, and kings fall, and nations tremble, and men by tens of thousands fight and bleed and die! . . . I am Nelson! . . . leading the fleet at Trafalgar. I issue my commands, prophetically conscious of victory and death. . . . I am Shakespere! . . . writing 'Lear,' the tragedy of tragedies. Ancients and moderns, I am the poet who towers over them all." (206)

He imagines himself a "big" man, a great man, but his denying any cultural or social obligations marks him as a passive, unhealthy man. So does his inability to adapt to changing conditions as his verbal and physical declarations of love to the first and second Macallan-wives demonstrate (their married state fails to constrain him). Moreover, he loses "all hold over [himself]" (218) when the unexpected or the undesired comes his way so that his "immense imagination . . . runs riot" (218), causing him to "say and do strange things" (208).

A more obvious sign of poor health, of course, is Dexter's monstrous body. He is first described as a cripple who wheels himself along in a chair, but the word "cripple" is misleading. Dexter was born without the lower half of his body. His name, he explains, "'was given to [him] by [his] father, in allusion to the deformity . . . with which it was [his] misfortune to be born'" (174). This deformity marks a "manly" absence that contrasts dramatically with the promise of what remains; for Dexter is "unusually handsome" (123) as Valeria's description shows: "'I saw plainly now the bright intelligent face, and the large clear blue eyes; the lustrous waving hair of a light chestnut colour; the long delicate white hands, and the magnificent throat and chest. . . . the manly beauty of his head and breast'" (213). This response leads Valeria to romanticize, thinking that "A young girl, ignorant of what Dexter's coverlid hid from view, would have said to herself the instant she looked at him, 'Here is the hero of my dreams!'" (214). But ONLY in her dreams, because Dexter's body is partial—a condition that recalls a comment by nineteenth-century physician Weir Mitchell, who suggested that "cutting up the male body absolutely fragments the body's masculinity; that opening up a man allows a mad woman—or at least a piece of one—to come out" (O'Connor 109).

B. Dexter's Unhealthy Mind

Polymorphous, whimsical, elusive—this is how hysteria appears to the nineteenth-century doctor. . . . "the very model of the unstable, the irregular, the fantastic, the unexpected . . . it is governed by no law, no rule . . . and no serious theory."   (Ender, *Sexing the Mind* 30)

Victorians correlated physical health with mental health. One psychologist, Thomas Laycock, explained in his 1860 *Mind and Brain* that "'it appears certain that no morbid change, however minute, can take place without a concurrent change, although not cognisable by observation, in the mind'" (qtd. in Haley 38). Another, Henry Maudsley, wrote that "the integrity of the mental functions depends on the integrity of the bodily organization" (qtd. in O'Connor 103) and that "'the character of every mind is written in the features, gestures, gait, and carriage of the body'" (qtd. in Arata 20); and another, Benjamin Brodie, urged "a just appreciation of the influence which the body exercises over the conception and feelings of the mind" (74). When the body's organization is disrupted, so is the mind's—so that we find,

for instance, "the forms and habits of sexually mutilated men approach[ing] those of women" (Maudsley 35). We see these "womanly" habits in Dexter's desire "to be bright and beautiful" (232) and ornamental: "His jacket . . . was of pink quilted silk. The coverlid . . . matched the jacket in pale sea-green satin; and . . . his wrists were . . . adorned with massive bracelets of gold" (232). We see them in his interest in cookery and in the "patient and nimble dexterity of an accomplished needlewoman" (236). We also see signs associated with commonly-held conceptions of the Victorian female in his excessive emotionalism. Instead of exercising "self- control, self-discipline, and outward conformity" (Porter 228-9)—marks of a healthy man, a manly man, a good Victorian man who works to "control [himself and] the world around him" (Waters 74)—we hear excess in Dexter's words, connecting him to the stereotypical "hysterical woman" whom Victorian doctors equated with "'the unstable, the irregular, the fantastic, the unexpected'" (Ender 30). "'This is one of my melancholy days,'" he says to Valeria. "'Tears rise unbidden to my eyes. I sigh and sorrow over myself. I languish for pity. Just think what I am! A poor solitary creature, cursed with a frightful deformity. How pitiable! How dreadful! . . . Sad! Sad! Sad!'" (232). This emotionalism can fall into incoherence where Dexter breaks out "'into rhapsodies of the most outrageous kind, like a man in a state of delirium'" (199-200) or forgets what he is saying as in the last story he tries to tell. Other characters read his unhealthy mind more generically, calling him "crack-brained" (193) and "mad" (199), and a medical doctor diagnoses Dexter as suffering from "latent insanity" which can "give way . . . at a moment's notice . . . into madness, or idiocy" (282). We see in the visual accompanying his final story "the advancing eclipse of the brain" (344) and the "mute vacant face" (346) of a helpless Dexter, inviting us to connect him to the faint "IMBECILE"[2] notice above and to the left of his head.[3]
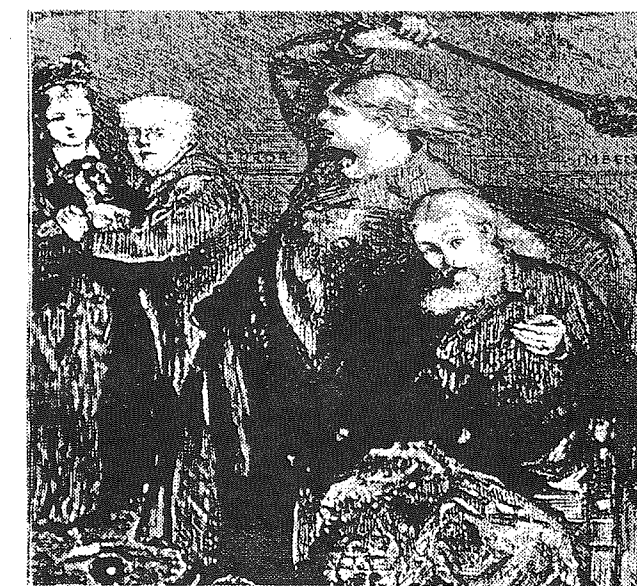
Figure 3: Ariel protects the vacant Dexter (*The Graphic* February 13, 1875)

[2]While the word "IMBECILE" is part of the background in the illustration published in *The Graphic*, the reduction of the visual for publication here has made the word unreadable.

[3]The illustrations from *The Law and the Lady* come from the serialized version of the novel in *The Graphic*. Their location in the serial does not always correspond to the scenes they portray in the narrative.

While at times his unhealthy mind is reflected in Dexter's being a decorative, tearful, passive object, at other times Dexter portrays himself as actively assertive but still unhealthy, both in his chair when he is "like a whirlwind" and outside of it when his actions seem to be exaggerated and energetic versions of male behavior as Valeria learns to her distress: "he suddenly stretched himself over his chair: he pounced on [her], with a hand on each of [her] shoulders, his wild eyes questioned [her] fiercely, frantically, within a few inches of [her] face" (240). And later, he "caught [Valeria's] hand in his, and devoured it with kisses. . . . He twisted himself suddenly in the chair, and wound his arm round [her waist]. . . . Vainly struggling with him, [she] cried out for help" (299). We might see in Dexter's disturbing role as puppeteer over his female puppet-cousin a similar parody of masculine behavior: "just as [Ariel] touched a cake with the tips of her fingers, her hand was jerked away by a pull at the string, . . . savagely cruel in [its] nimble and devilish violence" (326). Beyond inviting "questions of psychological disorder" (Benjamin 212), the combined masculine and feminine descriptions of Dexter suggest a frightening sexual slippage, what Matus has described as a Victorian "anxiety that the 'natural' distinctions between men and women are mutable and capable of being eroded . . ." (249). But this is only part of Dexter's instability. He cannot be categorized or described in any final way: "'My Chair is ME'" (144), he declares. And like his Chair, Dexter is in motion, with his various forms dictated partly by Nature, partly by Dexter himself, and partly by those who read him.

C. Signifying Monsters

Monstrosity seems available for any number of meanings. (Halberstam 2)

In its own time, *The Law and the Lady* received little attention, and that was negative. For example, writing in *The Academy*, Macleane complains that Collins "has stripped the puzzle-novel of its last rag" (9); and the anonymous reviewer in the *Saturday Review of Politics, Literature, Science and Art* grumbles that the secret of the novel may not "altogether [repay] the trouble of getting at it" (337). Today, critics have begun slowly to turn to Collins' text with some interest. Several have connected Dexter to Collins himself. Catherine Peters, for instance, reads him as an "author-surrogate" transformed through "opium visions" (374) and imagines that Collins' poor health may have caused him to feel "as he was carried out to be 'aired' in a carriage" (374) that he would soon become like Dexter himself: "the slide from Eustace Macmillan's limp and walking-stick to the state of Miserrimus Dexter . . . could not be long postponed" (374). Teresa Mangum reminds us that "Collins perceived his own body as deformed" (289), with delicate hands and tiny feet that required women's shoes, a small body and large head, a misshapen forehead and gouty eyes; his "irregular domestic arrangements" also defined him as socially

unconventional (289). Other critics have focused on the psychological uneasiness that Dexter evokes. We see in him what we see in many sensation novels, a "fracturing of social certainties" (Shuttleworth 196)—in this case, certain socially-inscribed distinctions between masculine and feminine, alarmingly aggressive and passively helpless: "Collins uses his androgynous villain . . . to parody the traditional power structure of the male-female relationship" (O'Fallon 238) or to "intensif[y] readers' anxious preoccupation with the reconciliation of gender with sex and of sex with artificial, but implacable norms" (Mangum 295).

Dexter's culture fails to control him, and labelling him in conventional Victorian ways—as unhealthy in mind and body—fails to explain him fully. He seems to belong in a world where "life-forms are fluid, mutable, unstable" (Brown 123), a world like Darwin's—a world James Krasner describes as "evolving [through] a set of unstable forms that slip into new forms even as they are being named and represented" (35). This world, Krasner goes on to say, involves Darwin's readers "in a perceptual chaos that parallels the organic chaos of the entangled bank. . . . [It is a] world . . . both fragmented and fluid . . . incessantly flowing, reforming, rearranging" (62). Dexter's evolutions are sudden, haphazard, unrelated, and slippery, like Darwin's, yet they occur at "such a rapid rate of progress, that they [are] . . . beyond [Valeria's] counting" (297) so that they both reflect and exaggerate the "perceptual chaos" of Darwin's nature (Krasner 36). Dexter is seen as "monkey," as "half monkey/half man," as "maundering mad monster who ought to be kept in a cage," as "wild animal," "gleeful bird," "woman," "child," "Indian idol," "puppet," "chair," "Centaur," "thing" and "Object." Words describe him

> off on his furious wheels—half man, half chair—flying like a whirlwind to the other end of the room. . . . down on the floor, poised on his hands, looking in the distance like a monstrous frog. Hopping down the room, he overthrew, one after another, all the smaller and lighter chairs as he passed them. . . . leapt rapidly over chair after chair, on his hands—his limbless body, now thrown back from the shoulders, and now thrown forward to keep the balance, in a manner at once wonderful and horrible to behold. 'Dexter's Leapfrog! ' he cried, cheerfully. . . . (259)

And the visual nearby suggests for the moment that his child-like joy seems to be equated with animal "excitability" (OED) since it places Dexter beneath a sign of "RABIES."[4]

Figure 4: Dexter rejoices in playing leapfrog. (*The Graphic* January 9, 1875)

Mangum correctly describes this fascinating and erratic character as "perversely exhibitionist" (294). But we can see in the multiple and changeable Dexter Darwin's ominous suggestion that "a vast number of characters, capable of evolution, lie hidden in every organic being. . . . These characters, like those written on paper with invisible ink, lie ready to be evolved whenever the organization is disturbed by certain known or unknown conditions" (*Variation* 30-31). In Dexter we have someone always evolving because, perhaps, always disturbed.

Beyond transferring Darwin's natural world to Victorian drawing rooms—and accelerating change unnaturally—the transformations associated with Dexter call attention to their own constructedness and raise questions about the ability of any labels to adequately describe life. Naming Dexter a puppet or a child necessarily associates him (for a time) with a static trait and fails to reflect his instability: he is no more correctly described as a cripple than as a frog; he is both imprisoned in his chair and freed of it. Dexter's transformations also emphasize what other characters lack. While unquestionably flawed by Victorian standards, he is also compelling. Like the monster that Erin O'Connor writes about in *Raw Materials*, he is "a tool for imagining a type of individual whose humanity [is] not deadened by the monotonous rhythms of modern existence" (169). Dexter's explosions of energy are exciting. His laughter genuine. His performances unforgettable. And to adopt Darwin's phrasing, "there is grandeur in *this* view of life" (*Origin* 459; emphasis added). When they fail to play the roles that society assigns them, Eustace and Valeria are flawed as well but they are without Dexter's grandeur and without his playfulness. Eustace, we are reminded again and again, is a failed man. Not only has he "deceived and deserted" (122) Valeria, but he is shown to be "unnatural," excessively "tearful," "hopelessly misguided," "weak," "languid," passive. And as Shuttleworth reminds us, "the passivity so desirable in women becomes pathological in [Victorian] men" (209). At the same time, the activity desirable in men is out of place in Valeria. In spite of the advice of others, she disobeys her husband and listens to

"Prevarication and Deceit" (362) to mislead Eustace and neglect her duty to him. It is these lesser figures—Eustace and Valeria—who survive to parent the next generation, suggesting "very unfavourable conditions of survival" (Darwin, Notebook 259) in a world of small gestures and "little atonement[s]" (412). Dexter finds insanity and death. What Valeria calls his "strange and many-sided life—with its guilt and its misery, its fitful flashes of poetry and humour, its fantastic gaiety, cruelty, and vanity" [407]—grows still. His bright eyes fade, his voice becomes monotonous, his firm hands wither, his energy exhausts itself, and he is not so very different from the dull and cheerless Eustace—not different in kind, only different in degree. And so the novel ends in a world without grandeur, in a site that exposes what Mangum calls "the deforming constraints of domesticity." (302).

Yet the energy of Dexter exists beyond his death. And that quality recalls one of the possible sources for his character (Mangum 290): the Victorian entertainer Harvey Leach, whom we met in a different context (and construction) at the beginning of this article.

Figure 5: Harvey Leach (Gould & Pyle 267)

According to the *Times*, Leach

> "exhibits the very rare combination of perfect symmetry, strength, and beauty, with a great amount of deformity. The head is remarkably fine in form, and the expression intelligent and benign; the chest, shoulders, and arms form a perfect model of strength and beauty, the arms are exceedingly muscular, and the hands very well and strongly formed. . . . In the place of legs there are two limbs, the left about 18 inches from the hip to the point of the toes, the right about 24 inches from the same points. The feet are natural." (qtd. in Cook 126-27)

Leach's power of leaping was unusual, and he became famous playing "numerous monkey characters" as well as "The Wild Man of the Prairies" and the "Gnome Fly"—an

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[4]While the word "RABIES" is part of the background in the illustration published in *The Graphic*, the reduction of the visual for publication has made the word unreadable.

extraordinary spectacle that required him to transform himself from a gnome to a baboon to a blue-bottle fly, all the while moving from the ceiling of the stage, to the gallery and back to the stage (Cook 127). Leach also worked for P. T. Barnum in the short-lived first version of the exhibit called "What Is It?" where, with stained skin, covered in hair, he stood in a cage and ate raw meat in order to represent some kind of missing link. In *The Arts of Deception*, James Cook explains that P. T. Barnum may have intended the "What Is It?" as an "artful deception" to "encourage public debate" (28) about definitions and categories. Cook argues that such exhibits could represent a type of "middle-class play" that used entertaining stories to evoke "moral ambiguity and epistemological flexibility" (28). Perhaps, then, that is a role we should assign to Dexter. Bigger than the dull world of Valeria and Eustace, he belongs in the playful arena of "the greatest show on earth," a world that encouraged multiple responses to monsters on display, none of them deadly.

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Sympathy and Discipline in *Mary Barton*

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Sympathy is dangerous. This insight, so counterintuitive to most everyday applications of the word, has become more and more commonplace in scholarly investigations of its history. For nineteenth-century readers, sympathy—the ability to feel another's pain as one's own—posed the danger of loss of control in the sympathizer, brought on by excess of feeling. Another danger is that recently pointed out by Audrey Jaffe in *Scenes of Sympathy*, that sympathy can cause great discomfort to the sympathizer as it forces upon her the "fear of falling" (18) to the level of the object of sympathy. Sympathy poses yet another danger to the sympathizer, as yet uninvestigated. Though most scholarly studies of the political role of sympathy (especially in industrial novels), including Jaffe's, focus on sympathizers in superior positions, not every sympathetic transaction involves a privileged professional coming to a greater understanding of a member of the underclass. In Elizabeth Gaskell's *Mary Barton* (1848), sympathy flows just as frequently from the workers to the masters. This sort of sympathy contains an entirely different danger—that it will paralyze victims by making them morally unable to take action against their own victimization. Gaskell deploys sympathy in exactly this way, using it as a tool to discipline both the workers in her novels and the workers who read her novels.

Of course, this sinister view of sympathy is a bit out of step with mainstream notions. The eighteenth century idea that sympathy is the root of morality, and is desirable in itself as a feature of a mature character, is still the dominant view in modern culture. And the idea that sympathy has political value because of its power to transform one's views of people unlike oneself, introduced in the eighteenth-century and a truism for nineteenth-century industrial novelists like Gaskell, is still the most popular view even for Americans who have never heard of Gaskell or of factory novels. In *Mary Barton*, Gaskell presents sympathy as the solution to the violence caused by mistrust between classes. If workers and owners could simply come into one-on-one contact and be enabled to understand each other's problems, as they do in the famous reconciliation between John Barton and the mill-owner whose son he has murdered, the violent dislocations of industrialization could be avoided or at least ameliorated. That theory of the power of sympathy is still operative today. One Thanksgiving my local newspaper ran a holiday-themed column by the editor, who had changed his attitude toward homelessness after a homeless man cared selflessly for his dying dog (a victim of a hit and run) until he could find it. Michael Marshall, the editor, reaches the crisis of his story specifically with a vision of the homeless man's discomfort: He took off his coat . . . and covered Pepper. He stayed next to her, stroking her and talking to her, probably shivering himself, until well after sunrise." The exercise of the sympathetic imagination in feeling the homeless man's chills inspires in him this insight: "There have been times in my life when I have not had much patience for homeless people. I remember once calmly explaining to a couple of panhandlers that, given my mortgage and other financial encumbrances, their net worth was far greater than my own. 'So how about y'all giving me some of your spare change.' But I will never look at those folks in the same light, not after this." Elizabeth Gaskell would have been very pleased by Michael Marshall's conversion experience, which so exactly brings to life her theory. So, in a different way, would Audrey Jaffe, who uses the modern American's tortured anxiety over meeting the gazes of homeless persons as the paradigmatic example of the discomfort of sympathy. Marshall's last sentence illustrates her contention that it is specifically "the act of looking . . . [that] fills the spectator with the anxiety of bodily contagion, the fear of inhabiting the beggar's place" (Jaffe 5). Marshall's story illustrates my theory just as well. The homeless man, after all, showed just as much sympathy as Michael Marshall, and as far as one can learn from the editor's account, he got nothing from it.

Gaskell's more positive view of sympathy as a means of checking the excesses of the upper classes—changing one's views of homelessness or of the Hands—is certainly the dominant mode of industrial fiction. Scenes of suffering, with which the reader is meant to sympathize, abound in factory novels. Description of the physical misery of working-class characters is a standard means by which such authors produce a desire for political reform. That "the response to the suffering body" (Sanders 317) is the moral mechanism of condition of England has been a commonplace in modern study of the genre.[1] *Mary Barton*, while it gets most of its emotional force from this same mechanism, complicates it, and these complications create the ideological fissures that allow one to glimpse the more ominous possibilities of sympathy. Gaskell uses suffering for political effect, but she is not interested only in physical pain, placing just as much emphasis on the wounded emotions of her characters. Even when she does describe more standard physical suffering such as cold or hunger, she erases the bodies of the workers who suffer, the reality of their anguish being expressed as discourse (their words, and the words of other characters) rather than as somatic description. Finally, she allows sympathy to flow in both directions: from workers to masters as well as the reverse. The effects produced by the disappearance of workers' bodies from particular scenes in the novel, and by the greater emphasis on the workers' own powers of sympathetic emotion, force us to revise our understanding of the role of sympathy in Victorian culture.

Sympathy has had a complex history since Adam Smith first made it the keystone of *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759). The Romantics, who were suspicious of the cult of sensibility, saw the depiction of pain as a dangerously double-edged sword that could be made to support any political position (Bruhm 20-5). Later Victorian writers' medical-

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[1] For a recent survey of the vast body of secondary literature on the sentimentalist discourse of sympathy in relation to industrial fiction, see Mary Lenard's *Preaching Pity*.

ized vision of female bodies and the body politic created alarm over the effects sympathy might have on hysteria and crowds (Vrettos 83). Throughout the nineteenth century, sympathy was acknowledged to have great but dangerous imaginative power, which though desirable had always to be accompanied by stringent attempts at management and control, often through distancing the reader from the very scenes of pain which the author had just gone to such effort to describe.[2] Bodiliness itself had an equally ambiguous value. The unique individuality conferred by the experience of ineffable pain or by the imaginative experience of feeling another's pain could detach one from the larger social body (Bailin 29), and yet paradoxically also make one better able to exist within that social body by melting the boundaries between inside and outside yet preserving individuality at the same time (Bruhm 19). The body, in short, was capable either of eroding the discipline necessary to an industrial society, or of preserving it.

The most powerful and yet most dangerous component of bodily sympathy was the melding of the points of view of reader and character. Though that melding was necessary to produce the political energy desired by industrial writers, it also had a potential drawback. Athena Vrettos argues in *Somatic Fictions* that by the 1860s Victorians feared that "to view suffering was potentially to collapse the rational boundaries between imagination and reality and to relinquish the power of self-control" (86). But *Mary Barton* does not display precisely the same anxieties about sympathy and bodily suffering that modern critics have discerned in the periods that bracket it. Gaskell does not treat sympathy as a dangerous tool to be handled carefully; rather, she depicts her scenes of suffering even more intensely, to provide even more sympathetic engagement than would otherwise be the case. However, while her novel abounds in the kind of realistic verisimilar description that is found in other industrial fiction, the materiality of her description is usually reserved for settings and events. The actual feelings of the workers are not described physically. Even hunger and dirt are translated out of the bodily realm and into the verbal and emotional realm, so that the sympathizing character has to divine the sufferers' feelings by translating their words into emotions and hence into sensations. The sensations, however, are rarely described, and Gaskell lays the most emphasis on the speaking, thinking, and feeling part of the process—on the cognitive bridge between two people that sympathy represents, not on the sensations that result from crossing that bridge. This emphasis on the immaterial force of sympathy is what allows her to depict it as a source of discipline for the poor workers who feel it. John Barton's greatest flaw, according to the narrator, is irrationality. The narrator describes his rage at the masters and his decision to join a trade union as the result of diseased thoughts, and even implies that opium might have influenced his decision making (198). Without education, his outrage over suffering

results only in his "wild" (199) decision to be a Chartist. At this stage of his career the narrator compares Barton to Frankenstein's monster, a being without a soul or the "inner means of happiness" (199). But the cognitive nature of sympathy—its existence as a process of translation of the signs of emotion (especially words) in others into a feeling in oneself—requires the exercise of rationality, and that makes it, in Gaskell's model, a tool of self-discipline. John Barton's growth in sympathy is a growth in rationality denied him by his lack of education. *Mary Barton* thus argues that sympathy will increase self-control rather than dangerously eroding it (as many nineteenth-century writers feared), but Gaskell achieves this effect by de-emphasizing the physicality of suffering and highlighting instead its emotional force.

The displacement of the body into discourse or representation is a key element of Audrey Jaffe's theory of sympathy as well. She defines sympathy as an imagined relation, in which the sympathizer does not identify with the sufferer, but rather puts herself in the sufferer's place, representing the sensations as being her own. This process of imaginative representation necessarily "do[es] away with bodies" (13) and emphasizes the mental processes of the sympathizer, as I have described. But Jaffe's theory cannot wholly account for the absence of bodies from this particular novel. She argues that sympathy usually produces a "swerve toward the visual" (3) in Victorian fiction because it is a specular relation (one sympathizes with a sufferer one looks at). Gaskell, however, represents her scenes of sympathy as often through words and sounds as through the visual. This difference, I think, is a symptom of the larger difference in theories of class structure that separates Jaffe's model from mine. For Jaffe, sympathy produces anxiety in middle-class characters and readers who fear that their own identity (or place) is vulnerable to being exchanged with the place of the lower-class object of their sympathy. The middle-class character's position on a continuum of three classes is essential to this transaction, since it is the possibility of going either up or down that produces anxiety. Industrial novels, however, generally represent England as a dual-class system: "two nations" or Masters and Hands. Perhaps for this reason the sympathizing characters in these novels do not display the anxiety about identity that Jaffe finds fundamental, but are, rather, stabilized in their identities by their experience of sympathy. Ultimately, the anxiety of sympathy, according to Jaffe, "threatens the desired stability and presumed naturalness of middle-class identity" (19), and as a result, by the end of the century sympathy leads to a type of modern identity politics subversive of liberal capitalist ideals (22-3). In industrial novels, however, the very different class structure produces a correspondingly different structure of feeling, one that lends itself to the circulation and consolidation of power in the two-term system of labor and capital.[3]

In fact, bodily suffering without sympathy frequently has the effect of stabilizing identities and social norms in

early Victorian writing.[4] Authors and activists of the 1830s and 40s used intensely physical descriptions of poverty, filth, and disease as evidence in political works on the reform of the urban industrial environment. The metaphor of the "body politic" dominates such discussions, from debate over the Factory Acts to theories of labor value[5] to Edwin Chadwick's seminal work on sanitary reform. In *Nerves and Narratives*, Peter Logan argues that Chadwick's descriptions of disease-producing filth are meant as a spur to middle-class readers to impose their values (derived from their greater physical sensitivity to bad smells) on the poor, through inspection and surveillance (157-63). Chadwick does not seek to produce sympathy through his descriptions, merely a desire in the reader to promote governmental reform. Suffering here is not a means to sympathy, but a metaphor used for essentially bloodless purposes (deriving the state of the nation from the physical state of the People). Some industrial novels fit this model as well—for example, Disraeli's *Sybil*, which relies as much on its narrator's ironically distanced voice as it does on ethnographically detailed descriptions of working-class characters' pain. Gaskell's novel, however, does not, even though she uses passages from Chadwick's *Sanitary Report* in *Mary Barton*.

Gaskell's novel does, however, share one major feature with Chadwick's writing—the desire to control the poor. For Chadwick the control must come, in the traditional manner, from above (sanitary inspectors forcing discipline on the masses). For Gaskell, the control will come from within the workers themselves, ultimately a far more chilling vision. In *Mary Barton*, the working-class characters whose pain is represented in their own voices are denied power and political reality because of the nature of those voices. Gaskell uses the pain-wracked language of her suffering workers to create sympathy not only between reader and character but also, and primarily, between working-class characters. It is in modeling sympathy for the working classes that Gaskell's book functions disciplinarily, as sympathy for the suffering of others becomes the force that will prevent workers from rioting and will teach them self-command as members of an emerging modern body politic.

In generating this sympathy, Gaskell controls point of view delicately in order to avoid collapsing the distinction between imagination and reality (the outcome so feared by her contemporaries). Instead, as Mary Poovey explains in *Making a Social Body*, Gaskell produces sympathy and identification paradoxically enough by emphasizing the separation of points of view between character and reader (145). Poovey illustrates her point with the visit to the Davenports' cellar apartment, by far the most-quoted scene in the novel and one often cited as the paradigmatic example of how industrial authors use physical description to create sympathy: "After the account I have given of the state of the street, no one can be surprised that on going into the cellar inhabited by Davenport, the smell was so fetid as almost to knock the two men down. Quickly recovering themselves, as

those inured to such things do, they began to penetrate the thick darkness of the place" (Gaskell 66-7). Peter Logan points out that this scene echoes many in Chadwick's report in which middle-class observers enter a filthy tenement and are overcome by the smell of it because of their superior sensibility. Both Logan and Poovey emphasize the separation Gaskell creates between the middle-class narrator/reader and the lower-class characters through her use of pronouns and her declaration that the men are "inured" to squalor (whereas, presumably, the readers are not). I, however, would argue that Gaskell's description, while indeed enforcing separation, also emphasizes the degree to which the working men hate filth as much as the reader can—the fact that they are almost knocked down stands out far more than their subsequent recovery. Logan argues that the upper and middle classes saw the lower classes as susceptible to disease precisely because they were not sensitive enough to mind living in filth, and that this is why a government bureaucracy of surveillance was necessary, but at least in this instance Gaskell is not trying to support Chadwick's dehumanization of workers. She is, instead, modeling in her working characters the kind of sympathy for suffering that readers are expected to learn. By acknowledging both the separation between classes and points of views and the similarities between them, she models sympathy for readers of all classes, including other workers, and her particular method of doing so transforms sympathy into exactly the tool of discipline that the less-sophisticated Chadwick envisions as sanitary inspection.

The sympathy Gaskell creates for the Davenports comes from physical description, but the setting receives far more attention than the human bodies within it. The Davenports' feelings of hunger or pain are not described directly from their point of view by the narrator, but instead we are given indirect, largely verbal, evidence: the children cry out for food, Mrs. Davenport faints in hunger, and Mr. Davenport (ill of typhus) can only express himself through "screams and shrieks of agonized anxiety" (68). This early in the novel, John Barton pays little attention to Ben Davenport's voice, preferring to focus on the physical tasks of relief available to him, such as lifting Mrs. Davenport's head off the bare floor. Eventually the voice forces itself on the men's attention, as both Barton and Wilson are required to restrain Davenport from hurting himself during a fit of "mad agony" in which he yells and swears deliriously (72). Barton is described as surprised by the cursing, through his inexperience with delirium. But as the concept of sympathy evolves throughout the novel, the voice of pain takes on more and more importance, and Barton's experience with it increases.

The pattern established in the Davenports' cellar, in which we are told about "agony" through the abstract word but given illustration of it only through the victim's voice and not a direct description of the pain from his or her point of view, deepens as John Barton's character evolves

[2]See Steven Bruhm's discussion of Wordsworth's revisions of his early poetry, which make the body less immediate and more processed (44-58), or Lawrence Rothfield's description of the narrative voice in realist novels as resembling a doctor's "repression of the impulse toward identification with the patient, a silencing of one's sympathy" (85).
[3]Jaffe, like other critics, also tends to assume that only middle-class Vic-

torians read novels. Since Gaskell cut her authorial teeth writing short fiction for *Howitt's Journal*, a "working-class weekly" (Schor 24) it seems unsafe to assume that this particular author was writing only for her peers. The possibly different experience of a worker—or an aristocrat, for that matter—who is forced to feel sympathy is a lacuna in most critical considerations both of sympathy and of the Victorian novel.

[4]Both Miriam Bailin and Athena Vrettos argue that scenes of pain and physical illness in later Victorian fiction act as metaphors for emotional and cultural issues, and that by transposing those issues onto the body, novelists can assert control over them (Vrettos 3) and reconfirm a "stable, unified self" (Bailin 6). On the other hand, Bailin points out that the sickroom itself is often the scene of the suspension of "institutional and internalized" dis-

cipline (21), and the overall unifying effect of the novel is achieved despite this relaxation of discipline. Gaskell rarely provides even this temporary relaxation, however. Figures of ideological control such as nurses and police officers are present in most of the scenes of sympathy I shall discuss.
[5]See Catherine Gallagher on Malthus and Mayhew in The *Making of the Modern Body*.

throughout the novel. Barton's speech at the union meeting that condemns Harry Carson to execution is an important stage in this process. The younger Carson's doom is sealed not only because the workers discover a derisive cartoon he has drawn of their delegation during talks over a strike, but also because of their sense of guilty sympathy with the woes of a fellow worker. The transformation of the workers' rage into violence is accomplished by Barton's description of his visit to the sickbed of an Irish "knobstick" whom one of the union members had injured with vitriol during the strike. The man's pitiable state caused Barton to sympathize with him, and resolve to give up future violence against their fellow working-class victims. This emotional transaction—the conversion of animosity to amicability through the medium of sympathy for another's pain—is the paradigmatic moment of industrial fiction. John Barton has not yet achieved perfectly disciplined sympathy, however. At this point his new positive feeling for a former enemy merely adds fuel to his rage against the owners: "'I've thought we han all on us been more like cowards in attacking the poor like ourselves; them as has none to help, but mun choose between vitriol and starvation. I say we're more cowardly in doing that than in leaving them alone. No! what I would do is this. Have at the masters!'" (223). Barton clearly still has some evolution to do, as his rage has not yet been dissipated, merely redirected. But the power of sympathy to refine and control the otherwise formless rage of the workers is an essential element of Gaskell's theory.

As with the Davenports, the depiction of the injured Irishman focuses on his disordered speech. His ravings specifically draw Barton's sympathy, as the audible sign of his pain. Though Barton begins by saying "'bless your life, none on us would ever throw vitriol again (at least at a knobstick) if they could see the sight I saw to-day'" (222) he goes on to admit that the man's face was bandaged and so he really couldn't see anything. The evidence of the man's pain turns out to be his "moans," and while Barton tries to initiate somatic sympathy by squeezing the man's hand, the response he gets is verbal: "'when I axed his wife's name he shrieked out 'Mary, Mary, shall I never see you again? Mary, my darling, they've made me blind because I wanted to work for you and our own baby; oh, Mary, Mary!' Then the nurse came, and said he were raving, and that I had made him worse'" (222). This speech succeeds in producing the sympathy for knobsticks that Barton wants—when he breaks off his story, his listeners ask him with "anxious voices" whether he ever found out where the wife lived. Barton is forced to admit that he could not, because the Irishman

"'went on talking to her, till his words cut my heart like a knife'" (222). Throughout Barton's account and the use he makes of it in persuading the workers to violence, the most salient feature of the Irishman's invalid state is not his pain but his voice, crying out incoherently.

Barton's use of the Irishman's incoherent and pained voice exactly echoes Gaskell's description of her own project in writing the novel in the Preface, in which she will "give some utterance to the agony" of "this dumb people" (xxxvi). The transformation of mute or unintelligible pain into language for political purpose is a basic goal of industrial fiction. But as Pamela Corpron Parker points out, the control of the language in which pain is expressed is a vexed issue in Gaskell's novel, the suffering worker often vying with the author for power over the language (321-2); and as Hilary Schor argues, Gaskell's desire to valorize maternal care as a model for political relations too frequently results in reducing the suffering workers to "infants" who have to "move back, almost beyond language" (35) in order to be able to generate sympathy.[6] The reassertion of control over language requires the narrator to lay more emphasis on the nature of tortured speech than on suffering bodies. This evaporation of workers into the language of pain, beginning with the Davenports and culminating in the knobstick, paradoxically blunts the impact of Gaskell's ostensible project, transferring agency not to the sufferer who utters words, but to the non-suffering observer who interprets them.[7] When that observer refuses to interpret, language has no power for the victim. When Barton's sister-in-law Esther, now a prostitute, comes to him with incoherent warnings about his daughter Mary, Barton is too impatient to make sense of her words, misunderstanding her as referring to his dead wife rather than his daughter. When she tries to speak to him she is out of breath, and even "put her hand to her side, and caught her breath with evident pain" (143), but the sight of her so enrages Barton because he blames Esther for his wife's death that he ignores these obvious bodily symptoms and her broken speech as well. After he throws her aside, a policeman takes her into custody under suspicion of drunkenness, and the warden of the prison spends the rest of the night listening to her "half-delirious wails and moanings" (145). He attributes them to intoxication, but readers are told what she is saying, and while her speech is heated, it is perfectly understandable. In this case, male interpreters wilfully fail to interpret her speech. Because sympathy is so thoroughly a linguistic and rational act in *Mary Barton*, there is no room for Esther to create sympathy if observers will not make the effort to meet her halfway.[8] But the encounter with

the knobstick seems to have changed Barton's attitude toward irrational speech permanently. Ironically, he displays "beautiful patience" in gathering "fragments of meaning from . . . half-spoken words" (233) to figure out how to take a lost little boy home—on his way to commit the murder. Barton is willing to invest imaginative energy in one victim and not another; in either case the power rests with him, the potential sympathizer.

Ultimately, however, Gaskell strips agency away from sympathizers as well. Sympathy is the ability to imagine another's pain and thus interpret it correctly, but in the end it is not a means of increasing the power of the one who possesses it, instead becoming an impetus to self-control and a conduit by which power flows outward into the surrounding society that imposes restraint and has created the conditions causing pain in the first place. When applied widely enough, sympathy can flow not only downward, but upward as well. Barton's final stage of evolution away from monstrosity and toward disciplined individuality is to be able to sympathize with the more fortunate as well as the less fortunate. Gaskell is not content for Barton to learn sympathy only for other workers; for sympathy to be a completely successful political force it must exist between workers and owners as well. This type of sympathy dominates the ending of the novel, in the final reconciliation between Barton and Carson. Significantly, however, while both men in the end learn a lesson of sympathy for the suffering of others, the narrative emphasis is laid on Barton's realization of the suffering he has caused Carson by killing his son. When Carson at last expresses in words the pain he has felt, Barton realizes that "[r]ich and poor, masters and men, were then brothers in the deep suffering of the heart; for was not this the very anguish he had felt for little Tom in years so long gone by, that they seemed like another life!" (431). This realization of common emotion produces in Barton a desire to speak words of comfort, and the "blasting thought" that his guilt deprives him of "the right to bind up his brother's wounds" (431) is the blow that finally crushes him and produces the repentant death-bed speech that seals his claim to pathetic heroism.

In this speech Barton claims that the most irritating factor that led to his Chartism and union activity was the owners' lack of sympathy for the workers, and this assertion is echoed later by Job Legh in his and Jem Wilson's final visit to Mr. Carson. Job claims that "what we all feel sharpest is the want of inclination to try and help. . . . even if they could find no help, and at the end of all could only say, 'Poor fellows, our hearts are sore for ye; we've done all we could, and can't find a cure,'—we'd bear up like men through bad times'" (456). Apparently all the workers really require is the belief "that men are caring for their sorrows" (456) to satisfy them. Here at last the narrator finally addresses the need for owners to feel sympathy for workers. And yet until this point in the novel, the descriptions of the poverty and suffering of the workers had focused on material details: the dank and fetid basement of the Davenports, the starving children on all sides, the constant deaths from illness and want. In the end, where a solution is finally offered,

those sufferings are translated from the physical to the emotional realm: they become "sorrows" rather than pains. This transformation structurally parallels the transformation of physical suffering into speech that had caused sympathy in Barton earlier in the novel. Both movements result in the idea that the owning classes of England can purchase security from a workers' revolution very cheaply, merely through attempting to *feel* rather than to *do* anything.[9] The workers' consciousness of those sympathetic feelings will produce a gratitude that leads to self-discipline and a resolution to suffer in silence, and their own sympathies for the emotional trials of owners (whom they have learned are as human as themselves) will reinforce their submission.

The success of the program of sympathy between classes leading to self-discipline in the workers is forecast by an incident the elder Carson witnesses at the end of the novel. A working-class boy accidentally knocks a wealthy child down to the pavement, giving her a bloody nose; her nurse threatens to take him to a policeman, but the girl forgives the boy instead, kissing and making up. A passerby is convinced that "That lad will mind, and be more gentle for the time to come, I'll be bound, thanks to that little lady" (435). The repressive authority of the policeman is to be replaced in the boy's mind by the ideological authority of the little girl, an internalized image of the consequences of violence that will cause him to discipline himself, obviating any need for the state to do so. Frankenstein's monster will discover anger management. And, of course, it is the realization of the expedient power of sympathy in this scene that motivates Carson to go home and read his Bible rather than call the police on Barton, which in turn leads him ultimately to forgiveness and sympathy. This scene, and not Carson's embrace of the dying Barton, is the one most truly emblematic of Gaskell's vision of the future relations between classes.

My reading of *Mary Barton* runs counter to more than one strain of criticism about the novel. Though Marxists have sometimes criticized Gaskell for not going far enough to emphasize the sufferings of the workers and foment class revolution, most critics have defended her, describing the novel's ability to transform English class relations for the better through forcing upper- and middle-class readers to confront the realities of working-class life and change their treatment of workers accordingly—exactly the way Michael Marshall, the editor, promises to treat homeless people differently in the future. Thomas Recchio's description of the "self reformation" (17) *Mary Barton* requires of readers exemplifies this tendency to ascribe "resistant power" and "disruptive and humanizing energies" (10) to Gaskell's fiction. Both this article and many of the books on industrial fiction that take a similar tack emphasize the power of sympathy to transform the behavior of the owners and the presumably similar readers.[10] As Hilary Schor puts it: "Having read these lives, like Mr Carson, we cannot turn away" (43). Schor, like most critics, equates the reader with the owner—"we" are more like Mr. Carson than like John Barton. My reading, however, has focused on the effect

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[6]Schor's argument about maternal care develops a common thread in feminist criticism that sees Gaskell's politics being encoded primarily in gender rather than class. Feminists who want to defend Gaskell from the Marxist charge that the romance and domestic plots distract from the class politics have generally argued that in fact those plots enact a progressive gender politics that cannot be separated from class; sympathy and emotion in general are key to this very popular line of argument. Patsy Stoneman argues that the male working-class characters illustrate a Carol Gilligan-esque "female ethic" (71) through their sympathetic and nurturing behavior, and other feminist critics have taken up this line of argument to depict Gaskell's vision of sympathy as a truly radical force rather than as wishful thinking or a compromise. Such readings, however, ignore the more negative effects of sympathy I am trying to elucidate here. See, for example, the note below about Esther's "surveillance" of her niece.

[7]My theory here runs counter to Elaine Scarry's in *The Body in Pain*, which begins with the assertion that "[p]hysical pain has no voice" (3) and that the pre-linguistic state induced by suffering is a key element in the work of

torturers, who must destroy or subvert the prisoner's voice, which is "the locus of power" (51). She argues that the expression of pain in linguistic form is the first step toward re-empowerment for victims (12), and sh. valorizes the transformational power of human creativity in language, since metaphor is the most basic tool for expressing pain. Scarry's theory has merit but is not as universal in its application as she clearly wishes to make it. I am not the first to make this claim; Lucy Bending describes the transfer of agency from sufferer to interpreter as a potentially negative effect of Scarry's emphasis on the ineffability of pain (114-5).

[8]I have focused here only on Esther's role as a victim of insufficient sympathy. Hilary Schor provides an interesting counterpoint in her discussion of Esther as a detective and narrator, whose "surveillance" of her niece Mary transforms that activity from an "official" action to one of "affection" (31)—a movement Schor sees as key to the novel's politics of gender, which valorizes all-seeing mother-love as a solution to the crisis of class. Of course, one person's all-seeing love is another person's panopticon.

[9]Of course Gaskell most earnestly believed that true sympathetic feeling would have inevitably produced alleviating action in the physical realm, but this belief requires assumptions that a cynical reader might very well not share. The promise that her program of sympathy will avert revolution is

made fairly overt by her reference in the Preface to "the events which have so recently occurred among a similar class on the Continent"(xxxvi)—the revolutions of 1848.

[10]Mary Lenard provides another recent example of this standard reading of

sympathy has on the workers, duplicating the emphasis of the novel—almost all the examples of sympathy operating in the novel involve working-class characters exclusively. They model the effect imaginative identification with others has on one's personality and political behavior, and that effect is considerably more sinister than readings focusing solely on Carson's reconciliation with John Barton convey. What Gaskell chooses to emphasize in the end is not the softened behavior of factory owners, but sympathy's power to avert a violent revolution of the workers. John Barton's tortured repentance and the incident with the little girl it might be in vividly described than any reformations in factory owners' behavior. The bare statement that Carson's own lesson of sympathy has resulted in "[m]any of the improvements now in practice in the system of employment in Manchester" (458) is too perfunctory and vague to have any real impact. Sympathy, no matter how positive a force it might be in exposing the plight of those who suffer, becomes a vector of social control, because its cumulative effect in the novel is to prevent the outraged workers from taking action, whether against rival workers or against their employers' children. Thus sympathy paradoxically dissipates agency rather than enabling it.

Gaskell's treatment of working-class suffering in this novel reflects the emerging discourses of power and discipline in the period. According to Mary Poovey, "disciplinary individualism" (expressing freedom through voluntary compliance with the law) was the established vision of the social body by the 1860s (22). Gaskell is clearly part of this emergent discourse. Her vision of industrial relations is more optimistic than those of her contemporaries, Disraeli and Dickens, one of whom forecasts violent riots and burning castles, and the other of whom concludes famously that it's all nothing but a "muddle." But Gaskell's more optimistic faith in the lower classes' moral progress paradoxically produces the more chilling vision. She truly seems to expect sympathy to enable the factory workers to internalize their class position, creating an inner policeman to take the place of the outer one. At least Disraeli's factory workers get to keep their pile palace, and Dickens's will always have the circus. Gaskell's workers have nothing to look forward to but self-imposed orderliness in colonies (where Jem and Mary emigrate), voluntarily avoiding the personal space of rich little girls.

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Victorian Sisterhoods and Female Religious Vocation in Margaret Oliphant's *Chronicles of Carlingford*

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Although a woman was the head of the Church of England, Victorian women like Margaret Oliphant were barred from positions of Church leadership, aside from the office of churchwarden, and deterred from writing sermons and religious treatises. The "religious novel," however, allowed women a voice in "theological debate" (Showalter 144), the opportunity "to 'preach' in the Circulating Library" (Melnyk 107). When Oliphant wrote her popular *Chronicles of Carlingford* series, moreover, the clerical series was already a "best-selling formula" (Jay, "Introduction" xvi), and George Eliot suspected opportunism in their anonymous publication (Haight, *GEL* 4: 28). The marriage of commerce and serious purpose is one of the most controversial aspects of the series' reception, and as a woman greeted by proofs on both her wedding morning and her death bed, the highly prolific Oliphant has often been disregarded as a mere opportunist. While not conventional "religious novels," however, Oliphant's *Chronicles* are not as explicitly secular nor is their engagement with religious matters as merely expedient as many critics have maintained. Margarete Rubik, for example, has argued that "Oliphant cannot really be regarded as a religious writer" (226), and Lance St John Butler that neither *The Rector* nor *The Doctor's Family* "is a religious novel in the usual sense of the term" (15); for John Stock Clarke, in *Miss Marjoribanks*, "[t]he religious theme is . . . of no importance" (5), and Elizabeth Langland's study of this novel and *Phoebe Junior* does not touch on the novels' religious context. The *Chronicles of Carlingford*, however, are religious novels, engaging themes from the genre of popular religious fiction, though frequently setting them on their head. For example, *The Perpetual Curate* uses the common trope of the cleric converting to Roman Catholicism and abandoning his family to debunk doctrinal correctness of all kinds: the controversy over Gerald Wentworth's conversion critiques the irresponsibility permitted by a myopic devotion to abstract principles. Abandoning a wife and children is the closest thing to blasphemy in Oliphant's fiction.

This essay argues that Oliphant's *Chronicles* advocate the authority of religious fiction on controversial matters such as Anglican Sisterhoods and female religious vocation. The series locates English religious life not in the sacerdotal priesthood, but in the everyday lives of religious women. Reading the series in the context of Oliphant's extensive nonfictional writing on religion and in light of other novels she published simultaneously, moreover, reveals that while these nonfictional texts on religious subjects offer an enthusiastic, unorthodox endorsement of Sisterhoods, the *Chronicles* mitigate their endorsement with more conventional, conservative presentations of Sisterhoods and of female religious vocation generally as conduits for philanthropy and

matrimony. While advocating female religious vocation and attacking doctrinal correctness, Oliphant as a conservative feminist and professional woman of letters did not want to alienate her audience, supplying in her religious novels modified versions of her religious views seasoned with the requisite ecclesiastical melodrama and clerical romance.

The authority of the *Chronicles'* handling of religious matters derives partly from assumptions about innate female piety as well as from personal conviction; in addition, their authority derives from an aesthetic relying on the spiritual truth of the "everyday" (Langbauer 1-7, Mermin 109, Saunders, 177). Oliphant sketched the poetics of her brand of religious fiction in a series of articles in the mid-1850s in *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* a few years before she began the *Chronicles*. These essays deplore contemporary popular religious writing and reckless theological speculation, and by implication present a remedy. While cautioning that "our vocation is not to expound or interpret" in 1855's "Modern Light Literature—Theology" (85), Oliphant openly castigates "intellectual dabblers in scepticism" (86) as she does "the Ritualist and the Mystic" in the following year's "Religion in Common Life" (244). In "Religious Memoirs," written just three years before the publication of the first of the *Chronicles*, she criticizes "unnatural representations of life" (704), and turns some of what will become the *Chronicles'* humor on the subject: such memoirs intimate that "the best thing we could wish for any one . . . would be a lingering illness and a happy death" (707). Furthermore, using a refrain common in the *Chronicles*, she blames such excesses of piety on "that vanity of youth which does not like to be behind in anything, but prefers extremity to moderation even in sin" (708). The brunt of her attack on these memoirs and on all "the lighter literature of religion" ("Religious Memoirs" 718) is that they ignore individual experience. As she argues in "Religion in Common Life," English religious life lies in the "hands and households" of common people (244).

The publication of the early *Chronicles* in the 1860s coincided for Oliphant with a flurry of writing on religious subjects and a personal spiritual crisis. When "The Executor," the first *Chronicle*, appeared in *Blackwood's* in May 1861, Oliphant was writing a commissioned biography of her friend Edward Irving, the controversial Church of Scotland minister, removed from office over the millenarian movement in his congregation that sanctioned what the *Times* called "the screaming of hysterical women" (Oliphant, *Life* 433). Oliphant's "Preface" expresses the hope that writing about Irving would afford her "personal consolation amid heavy troubles" ([v]). Her spiritual trauma after the sudden deaths of her husband in 1859 and daughter in 1864 left her questioning providential benevolence. When her beloved

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the religious conversion of the elder Carson at John Barton's deathbed (120-6). Indeed, she argues (as many critics do) that "Carson's literary conversion experience [reading the Bible] is probably the most important moment in the entire novel" and that "Gaskell invites her readers to put themselves in the place of Carson" (126). It is worth noting that Lenard designates Carson as middle-class (in order to align him with the presumably middle-class reader). But as I have already argued, industrial fiction depicts a two-class world, and within an industrial town, Carson is not in the "middle" of

anything. Thus one might question how far a truly bourgeois reader would identify with him. Though Lisa Surridge falls into this same habit as well, describing Carson as middle-class, her otherwise perceptive analysis of the contrasting masculinities of workers and owners leads her to a different conclusion: "In a novel which locates manly nurturance firmly in the working class, the final scene of Carson embracing the dying Barton simply does not ring true" (341).

daughter Maggie died, Oliphant was at work on *The Perpetual Curate*, and her paper on Savonarola in *Blackwood's*, the same June 1863 number in which that novel's serialization began, portrayed him as a tragic "progenitor of Reform" (713); her novel's account of Gerald Wentworth's conversion in that novel parallels the friar's dilemma. The second and third installments overlapped with essays on "The State and Prospects of the Church of England," regarding the parliamentary and theological debate over clerical subscription. The August number of *Blackwood's*, containing the novel's third installment, also included Oliphant's generally favorable review of religious novels, including Frederick William Robinson's *Church and Chapel*, a formulaic fiction of romantic misunderstandings, that like the *Chronicles* indicates the futility of doctrinal disputes. Robinson's narrator requests the occasion "under cover of a novel . . . [to] add opinions of our own on matters theological" (2: 299). In this period, while writing both *The Perpetual Curate* and another novel about religious vocation, *A Son of the Soil*, serialized in *Macmillan's Magazine*, Oliphant mused in letters to Blackwood about writing additional essays on the High Church movement and on liturgies, editing a volume of sermons, and undertaking a trip to Jerusalem.

More than one hundred years before the ordination of women in the Church of England, Oliphant's *Chronicles* clearly suggest that women would make, not just effective Sisters of Mercy, but superior clerics as a result of their natural piety and common sense, a theme she developed elsewhere. In "Modern Light Literature—Theology," Oliphant argues that, unlike men, women have no need to pass through a dark night of religious doubt: "let us have a generation of the little sisters—those proper little beings, whom nature herself keeps in order, and who have no necessity laid upon them to be either dissipated or sceptical" (86). Girls and women, she implies, are the natural repositories of England's cultural and spiritual heritage. In *A Beleaguered City* (1879), a novel of the supernatural published three years after *Phoebe Junior*, for example, the pious women of a French town—but not its priest—witness the invasion of spirits who protest its male citizens' impiety, shown by their objection to masses performed at the hospital of the Sisters of St. Jean. Women's reputed protection from impiety and doubt, however, was partly a consequence of women being kept from the universities, widely perceived in the period as schools of apostasy. Moreover, as Dorothy Mermin points out, "women could not afford to question the faith that gave them poetic authority" (115); their vocation as writers after all was justified and authorized partly by their religious devotion. In the *Chronicles*, mothers and wives link the cleric to the natural obligations of home and family, and offer an important corrective to the ineptitude of an ancient system of recruitment and the self-aggrandizing tendencies of a reforming sacerdotal caste (O'Mealy 245-61). The rhetoric of female vocation, while related to male professions about the value of career, is less dogmatic and explicit, and more frequently couched in terms of the demands of everyday life and the needs of the poor.

The Victorian revival of sisterhoods did not constitute for Oliphant the most promising development for women's

religious vocation. In her fiction, Oliphant usually presents a vocation in a Victorian sisterhood as a willingness to enter a school for matrimony, an apprenticeship for the position of Mrs. Rector, the clerical wife. In the mid-1840s, there was a revived interest in sisterhoods, as a result of the Oxford Movement's emphasis on the importance of prayerful retreats, and a perceived increase in unmarried, surplus, and "redundant" women, as well as through shifts in women's participation in the educational and medical sectors. The controversy about their existence was hottest in the 1850s, though by 1873 there were 43 sisterhoods in operation and by the 1880s a calmer attitude prevailed. Objections to sisterhoods focused on their perceived imitation of Roman Catholic models, as well as suspicions of female leadership in the handling of money and discipline, and the inability of women to live and work together, and in particular the unsuitability of ladies for a life of perpetual surveillance, harsh discipline, and menial labor, though class hierarchies were reproduced within sisterhoods. The internal social stratification of sisterhoods was used, in fact, as a rationale for their existence; ladies's very presence, it was felt, would exude a morally uplifting influence on the wretched of the English earth. Suspicions, however, still lingered about the motives that led Victorian women to enter sisterhoods. In particular, many felt that relinquishing family life was a strange choice, probably provoked by disappointments in love, or by naive delusions about the romance of asceticism, or simply by the rebellious instincts of undutiful daughters. Christina Rossetti's short novel *Maude*, written in 1850, for example, is a fantasy of spiritual renunciation turned pathological, and voices concern about the romance of asceticism. Responding to the common charge that sisterhoods were un-English and archaic, T. T. Carter stressed in 1853 their encouragement of both active community service and religious devotion: "our plans will naturally partake of an English character, and, in some degree at least, of the general tone of modern society" (23). Carter advocated division of such societies into lay, associate, and contemplative orders, partly to mollify popular prejudice about cloistered nuns, and to emphasize the continuity between work in sisterhoods and women's traditional philanthropy. Writing 26 years later, the Bishop of Lincoln, Christopher Wordsworth, voiced a still less threatening rationale for English sisterhoods, arguing that "[t]here can be no better training for a wife and mother than the work of a sister" (21).

Oliphant, like other conservative feminists, clearly anticipated the potential of sisterhoods to free women from lives of enforced lassitude and the dead-ends of permitted vocations, as well as to allow them to venture beyond traditional restrictions on social space. Frances Power Cobbe and Dinah Mulock Craik linked sisterhoods and traditional female philanthropy, and, like Oliphant, accepted the primacy of family life, but they also resented the notion that life within a religious institution defined the exclusive religious vocation for women, maintaining that women's domestic activities had a spiritual grounding. However, Cobbe wrote in two essays in the 1860s, "Female Charity-Lay and Monastic" and "Woman's Work in the Church," that

sisterhoods also restricted otherwise independent women, and in "What Shall We Do with Our Old Maids?" Cobbe regrets that sisters and deaconesses, the "lady guerillas of philanthropy" must always operate under the surveillance, however indirect, of a male hierarchy (594). A few years earlier, Craik, in her popular *A Woman's Thoughts About Women* (1858), discussed a range of female professions in education and the arts. She equated the "female 'ministry'" of governessing for women with the priesthood for men, deploring the fact that men and women enter these professions for the perceived security of the social status they confer (81-83). In "On Sisterhoods" (1883) Craik describes a novice's ceremony of induction into a sisterhood, holding that sisterhoods offer to those single women who are incapable of living alone an adequate portion of shelter, companionship, sympathy, and work. Craik's sisterhood is a sanctuary of service and self-denial, a safe space that "would have saved many a woman from a lunatic asylum" (55).

Oliphant's non-fiction clearly regards sisterhoods as viable alternatives for women who chose not to marry, but she disputed the assumption made by Craik that sisters only reluctantly renounced the world. In 1871, Oliphant wrote in a review of a biography of the superior of a French convent, that one of "the favourite fallacies of the British nation" regarding sisterhoods is that they are populated by "[w]omen who are ugly, and hopeless of the attentions of 'the other sex;' women who are broken-hearted; women who have allowed the chances of life to go past them,—such are nuns and sisters according to the English idea" ("New" 35). At least in one of her novels, Oliphant appeared to uphold the unorthodox position of her review. In *For Love and Life*, published four years after her review, Oliphant similarly rejects the stereotypical notion of the convent's "melancholy seclusion" as it appears "to an English mind," (2: 138) explaining sisterhoods' appeal; it refers instead to their opportunities for vocational freedom: "a Sisterhood means occupation, a kind of independence, a position of her own—and at the same time protection from all the folly we talk about strong-minded women" (2: 72). Despite this rationale and the novel's seeming advocacy, the novel's Sister of Charity, Augusta Thornleigh, uses her experience as an apprenticeship for marriage, as sisters do in the *Chronicles*.

Members of the Sisters of Mercy established in Carlingford under Frank Wentworth's auspices are first mentioned in *The Doctor's Family*. Lucy and Mary Wodehouse serve the poor and run a school, like the sisterhood to be established in Charlotte Yonge's hugely popular *The Heir of Redclyffe* (1853), discussed in *Phoebe Junior* (175). Yonge's hero Sir Guy Morville requests 1000 pounds from his guardian, not explaining its target is a sisterhood which Miss Wellwood wishes to establish so that it can operate a school and hospital. Guy's disingenuous mentor Philip accuses Guy of wishing to pay gambling debts, and Guy cannot reveal his true motives because Miss Wellwood is Philip's sister's rival in philanthropic schemes. Guy dies leaving 5000 pounds to the sisterhood, his subterfuge a consequence, not of romantic deception, but of his acceptance of sisterhoods' social function. Like members of T. T. Carter's lay order, Lucy and Mary Wodehouse live in their father's home, where Lucy

hangs a copy of the San Sisto Madonna and St. Agnes in the sitting room, but their pragmatic social role is emphasized in the novel more than their High Church proclivities. Their devotion to the sisterhood appears to be primarily an extension of their regard for Frank Wentworth, and these dove-colored women are always accompanied by an air of romance in *The Doctor's Family*. Frank is Lucy Wodehouse's "reverend lover" (152), and the perpetual curate is a "perpetual visitor" at her home where romance unfolds under the guise of his charitable "calls of duty" (88, 153). The novel generally reinforces the most benign, conservative Victorian interpretation of the usefulness of sisterhoods as cheap sources of public charity, occupations for aging, unmarried women, and schools for matrimony.

Frank Wentworth is referred to in *The Perpetual Curate* as his beloved Lucy's "spiritual guide" (13), a term also used, together with "ghostly advisor," for all its Gothic and Romish flavor, by the would-be murderess Mrs. Hilyard for the mild Mr. Vincent in *Salem Chapel* (52). Frank Wentworth, representing the "latest fashion of Anglicanism" (*The Perpetual Curate* 536), like Lucy and Mary Wodehouse, is devoted to flowers, candles, and surplices—his Aunt Leonora's "mummeries" (88)—but he embraces the latitude of interpretation permitted in the mid-Victorian Church, and later his position changes and his becomes the middle way between the extremes of his brother's Romanism and his aunts' evangelicalism. He likely hears confessions of the Sisters of Mercy, due to the warmth of his advocacy of the practice and his establishment of the sisterhood, though the notion was highly controversial and tinged with erotic suggestion. For many Victorians, confession was associated with everything narcissistic, morbid, and unmanly, and it was perceived as a threat to the purity of women, the sanctity of marriage, and even national security. Following the alarm about renewed "papal aggression" when Pius IX's 1850 bull constituted England an ecclesiastical province, things Roman, with confession topping the list, were associated with muddle-headed "poetic waywardness" and "slavish" devotion to rules (*The Perpetual Curate* 176, 32), as well as the Anti-Christ and everything foreign, non-English, and Other.

In their sympathetic writings on confession, however, E. B. Pusey, T. T. Carter, and C. F. Lowder utilize an analogy between the cleric and the physician, naming confession one of the priest's most effective remedies for particular problems like drunkenness and masturbation. Oliphant had a somewhat ambivalent view of the matter. She wrote to Blackwood about her essay on Savonarola, that appeared five months before she began publishing *The Perpetual Curate*: "I don't for my own part understand how one can give oneself over to the guidance of a priest but people do it." In *A Son of the Soil*, however, the dying evangelical Arthur Meredith experiences Roman Catholic confession and absolution, performed almost by proxy (2: 83). Oliphant also acknowledges the value of confession in *The Perpetual Curate* in which it involves the poor dying woman at No. 10 Prickett's Lane, who ails for the six months' duration of the novel, providing an occasion for ameliorating the strained relations of Lucy and Frank. The poor, sick woman has spiritual anxieties, and Frank hears

all the woeful tale of a troubled life, which the poor sick creature had been contemplating for days and days, in her solitude . . . . She remembered all sorts of sins, great and small, which filled her with nervous terrors; and it was not till close upon the hour for the Wharfside service, that the Curate could leave his tremulous penitent. (41)

Sacerdotal confession is presented here as a type of de-ritualized, demythologized psychological counseling, the talking cure for nervous terrors. Lucy refers to another confession when she speaks of the woman's improvement that leads to a discussion with Frank about the value of the practice:

"I think she has been a great deal better since she confessed," continued the charitable Sister, looking up to the Curate, and, like him, dropping her voice. "The absolution was such a comfort. Now she seems to feel as if she could die. And she has so little to live for!" said Lucy, with a sigh of sympathetic feeling, remorseful too. Somehow it seemed cruel to feel so young, so hopeful, so capable of happiness, with such desolation close at hand. "Not even duty," said the Curate; "and to think that the Church should hesitate to remove the last barriers out of the way! I would not be a priest if I were debarred from the power of delivering such a poor soul." (79)

The Sisters of Mercy in Carlingford, though their views on confession are not canvassed publically, do dismay some like Aunt Leonora, who believes their order is "founded on a mistake" (6), and Mr. Morgan, whose wife was a sister during part of their ten-year courtship, until she learned his critical opinion of such female vocations. The sisterhood occasions a number of common mid-Victorian objections, such as Leonora's assertion that "they only get young clergymen into mischief" (287), especially since, as Dr. Rider warns, "Priests are always infallible with women" (*The Doctor's Faily* 100) and thus romantically susceptible to women's spirited devotion. The work of the sisterhood also violates gendered restrictions on space. The sisterhood runs the school in Wharfside, and the free movement of independent, genteel women in this working district worries even Mary Wodehouse, who dreads that her grey uniform may be insufficient protection against "rudeness"; the poor of Prickett's Lane elicit both her "sympathy and repulsion" (*The Perpetual Curate* 15), and she objects to Lucy's attendance on the dying woman at No. 10. She says, "[w]hen I was a girl I dared not have gone away by myself as you do, and she might not be a proper person" (84). Dora voices another common objection when she intimates that such lay orders mimic Roman Catholic nunneries, an example of insincere "people playing at Christianity" (40). The major objection is not the establishment of a permanent institution—the town thrills at the potential for national notoriety if Gerald Wentworth should establish a brotherhood in the region (520)—but simply the sex of its members, an objection echoed when Oliphant's narrator describes Lucy as being, though a Sister of Mercy, "still but one of Eve's poor petulant women-children" (125).

The sisterhood is not an ideal career for women in the novels, but a means to achieve the closest approximation to official female incumbency, becoming a cleric's wife or mother. In this period, the role of the clerical wife was becoming formalized, with manuals and journals setting out her parish duties as a member of a "clerical dynasty" (Gregory 261, 259-71). While enabling the clergyman to infiltrate the private and public spheres of the parish, however, Oliphant's clerical wives exert an influence extending beyond teaching and dispensing charity in the direction of professional and spiritual counseling. Clerical mothers and wives are the natural female priests of the *Chronicles*. In *The Rector*, Mr. Wodehouse boasts to Morley Proctor that his two daughters, who will marry clerics, are "as good as curates" (6), and the Rev. Proctor's quick-witted mother is a more skillful negotiator in parish politics than her son. She insists with devastating frankness that he requires "a good wife . . . who would enter into all the parish work, and give you useful hints" (33). In a critique of the unworldliness of a sacerdotal priesthood associated with the High Church party, the novel insists that Proctor must learn to recognize his fatal detachment from everyday life. Proctor's sojourn in Carlingford is an ironic Edenic allegory, in which, having fallen from the sanctuary of All-Souls into "this discomposing real world" (19), he is alarmed at the presence of women, "these curious unknown specimens of natural life" (6). He has been "living out of nature so long" (9) that what appears natural is the total avoidance of social contact. Proctor dreads that women are "plotting against him": "[h]e did not feel by any means sure that he was a free agent, or could assert the ordinary rights of an Englishman, in this most unexpected dilemma" (15). This dilemma is not a parish revolt or theological controversy but what he imagines to be Lucy Wodehouse's designs. He dreads that "She might marry him before he knew what he was about" (16), or that he might be "married by proxy" (17). The 50-year-old clergyman fears the seductiveness of his very eligibility as a bachelor clergyman. For him, women are the real world, a geography precariously unmapped. Finally established in the social realm of Carlingford and facing his practical ineptitude in ministering to his congregation, Proctor takes the first step towards being an effective clergyman, and accepts his mother's advice and marries a capable clerical wife.

In *Salem Chapel*, mothers of nonconformist clerics dispute theological questions, and as in *The Rector* enjoin their inept clerical sons to be prudent. At the blasphemous outburst of Rachel Hilyard, who has endured a brutal marriage to "a man, who was not a man, but a fine organisation capable of pleasures and cruelties" (394), and who says—in language recalling some of Oliphant's most bitter remarks in her autobiography (4-10)—that seeing innocent suffering, God "stands by like a man, and . . . . never interferes" (193), Vincent is stunned into silence. Mrs. Vincent, however, who suffers through her daughter's misery and her son's professional recklessness, responds: "Yes! I know God does not always save the Innocents, as you say—but He knows why, though we don't" (194-95). In fact, far from refuting Mrs. Hilyard's arguments on theological grounds, Vincent will soon repeat them verbatim (222). His grasp on

the transcendental is at best airy and insubstantial, and when groping to describe the divine, he wonders "like a child, if perhaps his simple mother knew a little more of that far-off wondrous figure" (306). When emotionally roused, Mrs. Vincent prays, whereas Vincent either becomes reckless, vindictive, or apathetic, as when he hears bells announcing Lady Western's marriage and, with dizzying suddenness, loses hope in heaven. Justifying her skill in parish politics by referring to her experience as a minister's wife, Mrs. Vincent employs the tactics of a "gentle Jesuit" (126) in the fight to preserve her son's clerical position. Incredibly, she convinces Tozer that a rising man like her son may leave the nonconformist connection, and Tozer borrows her arguments to support Vincent, but the renewed support he wins arrives too late. Before he resigns, Vincent's mother prays, and we learn that "[w]hether he asked advice or not of his Father in heaven, the widow asked it for him with tears in her anxious eyes" (447). Vincent's downfall follows as much from his views about clerical independence as from his devastating immaturity and incompetence, and, it is suggested, his inability to find a clerical mate.

The equation of female religious vocation and romance is treated more lightly in *The Perpetual Curate*, though it is also related to the type of natural religion that dominates Oliphant's usually very reticent direct references to faith in the series. Oliphant outlines part of her project in *The Perpetual Curate* in an Austen-like epigram: "if a young man chooses to fall in love when he has next to nothing to live upon, trouble is sure to follow" (2). Professional advancement is necessary for Frank to marry, and until the end of the novel his only expectation is genteel poverty. Lucy, Frank's advocate, in a warm moment, extols the value of priestly vocation, regardless of considerations based on career or social status, emphasizing the transparency of the line dividing the cleric's public and private domains:

"shouldn't a clergyman's house be like the church, open to good and bad?-for it is to the wicked and the miserable you are sent," said the Sister of Mercy, lowering her voice and glancing up at the Perpetual Curate. They could have clasped each other's hands at that moment, almost without being aware that it was any personal feeling which made their agreement so sweet. (77)

Frank and Lucy's shared religious vocation is inspired by benevolent feelings that readily translate into personal affection. This natural religion of the heart, the recognition of the need "[t]o have somebody behind whom one can fall back upon to fill up the interstices of thought" (99), is wholly consistent with Oliphant's belief in divine mystery and benevolence. However, she rarely allows too much of the sanctimonious or the tragic in the *Chronicles*. A heated treatment of Frank and Lucy's spiritual eros or, in Gerald's case, of mystical transport has no place.

Oliphant always ironically undercuts her male characters' pretensions; her priest is always first a man subject to the drives of instinct, a bondage expressed in the clerical proposal. Frank Wentworth's and Mr. Proctor's proposals as clearly indicate the priest's folly as they do his partner's uncommon good sense. Mr. Proctor asks for Mary

Wodehouse's hand in language resembling an offer of mutual employment. Announcing his new living and recalling their shared ineptitude in ministering to the dying woman, he says, "I have always thought of you from that time. I have thought I should like to try whether I was good for anything now—if you would help me" (*The Perpetual Curate* 391). He is not like St. John Rivers offering Jane Eyre a missionary post in India and a glorious martyrdom, but, like St. John's, his proposal is a job offer. He buttresses his proposal, not by professing his affection but by displaying his rectory. Insulted by his crude reference to her age and his obvious emotional bankruptcy, Mary Wodehouse, before accepting the only offer she is ever likely to receive, recommends her sister for the matrimonial position he wishes filled, for "Lucy knows a great deal more about parish work than I do" (392). Similarly, in *The Curate in Charge* (1876), the Rev. Mildmay proposes after asking his beloved Cicely's advice on comforting the dying; listening to her advice, he sinks to his knees beginning a proposal that mixes professional counseling and the job interview, while mimicking the conversion experience. Frank Wentworth's demand for a speedy marriage is similarly sweetened by the offer of Carlingford rectory, but Lucy and Frank's mutual professional commitment already has been formalized when Lucy refers to a shared responsibility not to desert "our post" in Carlingford (*The Perpetual Curate* 522). They will supersede the rectory's incumbent clerical couple, a sensible woman who "had proved herself an admirable clergywoman" (272) and her hot-headed, self-wounding husband. Both parties of the "reverend pair" have "clergymanly intellects" (11, 3), though Mrs. Morgan is wiser and much better tempered. Though for most of the novel his wife is condemned to watch as his limitations of vision and sympathy lead him deeper and deeper into controversies and contests he cannot win, the Rev. Morgan at least is afforded the saving grace of being able to value her superior abilities. Treating this theme in *The Minister's Wife* (1869), five years after *The Perpetual Curate*, on the other hand, Oliphant has the minister's wife become a genteel ornament, indifferent to her partner's vocation, whereas single women with ecstatic experience maintain priestly roles; the Rev. Mr. Lothian acknowledges, "it is not me but Ailie that's at the head of the parish" (1: 188). The discussion of female ministerial roles does end abruptly, however, in a display of Oliphant's impatience with doctrine or her fondness for melodrama, with Lothian's murder.

In *The Doctor's Family*, Nettie is one of a number of strong female agents in the *Chronicles* with a developed sense of religious vocation who become surrogate doctors, politicians, and captains of industry as well as clerics. However, Nettie's initial vocational renunciation is a Christ-like sacrifice. Though not a perpetual curate, she gives "perpetual ministrations" to Fred, and in her attendance on his family, Nettie is moved by a "diviner compunction" (69, 126). She is "obliged" by necessity "to give up her own life" for them, being one for whom "[no] agonies of martyrdom" would lead to a desertion of duty (133, 137). For Nettie, all this "is simply *my business*," but she couches her sense of vocation in terms of Christian sacrifice, a fulfillment of "what God has given me to do" (157, 171). She vows "no one shall take the world on his shoulders for my sake," while

she moves inexorably to "the brink of the costliest sacrifice of all" (173, 177). This sacrifice is not her own death but the renunciation of the care of her sister's family. However, in so doing, she accepts a vocation of caring for the welfare of the community, and begins to accompany Dr. Rider on his medical calls, perhaps anticipating the later Victorian development of novels about female doctors, such as Anne Elliot's *Dr. Edith Romney* (1883). In *The Curate in Charge*, written at the same time as the final *Chronicle*, *Phoebe Junior*, Cicely St. John, one of Oliphant's energetic, resourceful women, rails against the injunction that "[a]n independent woman . . . is an anomaly" (194). She teaches at the village school although she is more fitted for the priesthood than Mr. Mildmay. She berates his parochial ineptitude and presumption, and belittles his lofty, impractical, and, she hints, unnatural ideals about the clerical profession. Eventually they marry, though Oliphant's narrator in a metanarrative "parenthesis" notes that a romance ending—the marriage of ideal surrogate female priest and inept, waffling rector—seems contrived, a clerical *deus ex machina*, though it is justified by its very conventionality (193-94).

Miss Marjoribanks focuses on non-clerical vocations for women, and their approximations of the clerical role of community betterment and moral uplift, but similarly ends with renunciation. The novel is a sustained meditation on vocational opportunities and their absence for women. Lucilla is courted by a lawyer, a political candidate, a soldier, and a clergyman, and she mimics the role of military conqueror, despot, parliamentary leader, and parson. Unlike Anne Dorset in *Phoebe Junior*, who feels marriage is "not her vocation" (58), Lucilla accepts its inevitability though not as renunciation, for Lucilla's husband, she believes, will be her steward. A self-styled social rebel, she finds her field of battle is the drawing room and the Thursday evening social. Lucilla is an apolitical and somewhat deluded "revolutionary of the highest class" (100) though despondent that, despite her efforts for its reform, society will revert to its old ways "after one has slaved like a—like a woman in a mill" (485). However, while she can't become an MP, Lucilla can pilot a political husband, and, while she can't become a parson, she does contemplate, however facetiously, setting up a House of Mercy. She does not mean to enter a Protestant nunnery; exercising her prerogative as a woman of leisure, she would be patroness rather than Sister of Mercy. As the Rector says, "parish-work" is her "providential destination" (434), but Lucilla is more realistic about her abilities and motives:

> She had no vocation, such as the foundress of such an establishment ought to have, nor did she see her way to the abandonment of all projects for herself, and that utter devotion to the cause of humanity which would be involved in it; but yet, when a woman happens to be full of energy and spirit, and determined that whatever she may be she shall certainly not be a nonentity, her position is one that demands thought. (435)

Lucilla's vocational dilemma, though lightly treated, is no less acute; by the novel's end she is an unmarried orphan surviving on a small income. *Miss Marjoribanks* is a comedy of man-

ners, however, and we soon learn that, "after all the archdeacons, doctors, generals, members of Parliament" (476), she marries within her family and reclaims the old family estate, with the prospect of making her husband district MP and reforming the decrepit village. She accepts this marriage that appears such a radical reduction of her hopes as belonging to "the arrangements of Providence" (497), the sudden and almost flippant religious justification of her social accommodation setting her decision in an unsettling and suddenly harshly cynical light.

Lucilla has had a far broader range of vocational options than those available to Barbara Lake, who has lost her reputation "wandering over the face of the earth, nobody could tell where—governessing, singing, play-acting" (452). Lucilla rejects the idea of becoming a Sister of Mercy or foundress of a sisterhood, in favor of marriage and the role of surrogate member-of-parliament, though she, like the clerical mothers and wives in the other novels, has a more developed sense of vocation as well as more abundant energy and ability than the majority of professional men surrounding her. While female vocation in these novels is not a choice between a sisterhood or marriage, redundancy or martyrdom, female characters often must renounce ideal careers and accept gendered restrictions on vocation.

The *Chronicles of Carlingford* and other "religious novels" Oliphant wrote in the same period, initially conceived to respond to the popular demand for clerical novels, advocate for the authority of novelistic sermons by women and advance the religious role of women in everyday life, who as wives or mothers of clerics, perform the role of a natural priesthood. Oliphant's novels demythologize the sacerdotal clergy, whose members are often inept and clearly unsuited for the profession, and who must be instructed by women to accept the demands of the everyday. This woman's work, for which she would never have claimed a place in the discourse of theology or clerical professionalism, clearly situates female religious vocation in the context of the desire for transformation and rationalization within the established Church and other Victorian cultural spaces.

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Catharsis in George Meredith's Essay on Comedy

Jacob Korg

In his *Essay on Comedy* Meredith recognizes that the origins of comedy were neither morally nor intellectually respectable, and undertakes to modernize it, in the Victorian sense, by purging it of the brutality of its past and the sentimentality that often accompanied it in his own time. He was not a theorist, but he had obviously assimilated a good deal of theory in thinking about comedy. If we follow him through the rather tangled thickets of the *Essay*, we are led, ultimately, to the view that comedy is not merely a literary genre, but a faculty employed by reason to correct the faults of civilization.

He defines his term through an elaborate process of exclusion. The proper field of comedy is the confining square of civilized social intercourse; it operates within that, in the even smaller circle of intellectual appeal. Human nature is not its subject, for it observes, not what people are, but rather what they do, say and think; it laughs, not at persons but at qualities. It is not to be confused with irony, satire, humor, farce, or the grotesque; it neither ridicules nor sympathizes. All of these lead to something too gross, uncharitable or indiscriminate to be called comedy. It does not even require laughter to show that it has succeeded; a wise smile is preferred.

Ben Jonson, according to Meredith, is not comic; his method is exaggeration, which comedy exposes, but does not use itself. Shakespeare's comic characters are excluded because, with their vigorous outdoor quality they represent humanity itself, not its social aspect. Where, then, is true comedy to be found? Meredith turns to Molière for most of his examples; but also admits to his canon *The Rape of the Lock, The Way of the World*, and certain classics, especially Aristophanes and Menander. We might expect that his own novel, *The Egoist*, would illustrate his principles, since the *Essay* was delivered as a lecture shortly before he began to work on it. And, in fact, its famous first episode seems exactly right. We see the notion of civilized intercourse being damaged when Sir Willoughby snubs the military relative he has invited to visit because he turns out to be a stout, middle-aged non-gentleman instead of the dashing young soldier he had expected. But then Meredith has Willoughby say that he will compensate for his behavior by sending his cousin a check. This is clearly punitive. Our response to it is something other than the one Meredith identified with pure comedy: it is not the silvery, impersonal laughter of "unrivaled politeness" expressing the "humor of the mind."

Comedy, says Meredith, generates "healing laughter"; it cures Folly; it is a "specific" for delusions. His conception of it clearly included the therapeutic effect of catharsis. This in turn implies an acceptance of a theoretical basis for comedy homologous with the classical theory of tragedy, a view resting on the tradition that Aristotle wrote a discussion of comedy corresponding to his treatise on tragedy, possibly as a second, lost book of the *Poetics*. By insisting on the intellectual quality of comedy, Meredith also implies that he would concur in the more specific view that catharsis is essentially a mechanism of enlightenment, an exercise and extension of rational powers.

It is possible to abstract from the *Essay on Comedy* a three-stage process that corresponds with, and also differs from, the traditional, but much-debated process of tragic catharsis. First, the reader's mind must be prepared with what Meredith disarmingly calls "common sense," a general belief that the present state of society is reasonable, and a knowledge of men and women that includes both a liking for them and an awareness of their deficiencies. The comic work takes as its subject the behavior of people in society, and projects on it the light of reason, enabling us to see, to perceive—the visual metaphor is persistent. What we perceive is the folly of some exaggeration, illusion, deception, obsession or other deviation from the standards of rational civilization. (Meredith's own preferred targets were egoism, sentimentality, pretension and conformity.) This perception leads to a third and final event, the recognition, refreshed, but not entirely new, of the value of social intelligence, and an inspiriting sense of belonging to an aristocracy of consciousness that is capable of appreciating deviations from it.

One of the first things we notice about this pattern is that there is nothing in it that corresponds with the intensification of feelings for the purpose of purgation that is found in classical theory. It does not call for total immersion in the element it means to disperse. Lane Cooper, who explored this part of the comic terrain more than fifty years ago by editing Meredith's *Essay* and writing a book on Aristotelian comic theory, thought that the comic catharsis Aristotle had in mind might differ from the tragic one in being allopathic, a cure by difference rather than by similarity. He thought the emotions to be purged might have been anger and envy; but the audience would be cured of these by witnessing different emotions in the actors. To these Meredith would add contempt, a feeling the audience overcomes by observing people motivated by *other* feelings. Some modern critics think of the comic catharsis as homeopathic, a praise of folly, curing folly through folly itself. But Meredith's comedy removes itself sharply from its ritual beginnings by starting from a position of poised rationality comparable to the *stasis* that appears at the end of Aristotle's cathartic process

The comic artist does not identify himself with his subject. He exercises a detached cognition from a point of vantage in the realm of ideas. Meredith attributed the greatness of certain comic poets to their power to "idealize upon life," to approach reality with spiritual strength, which he calls "the solid in art." Aristotle considered the plot the most important part of tragedy. But Meredith would have agreed with Northrop Frye, who thinks dramatic comedy centers upon *dianoia*, a theme or topic of thought, and feels that social comedy approaches the condition of the symposium. In this impersonal and objective realm, criticism exchanges its power to wound for the power to illuminate. Ernst Cassirer, whose philosophy locates the nature of man in his way of forming concepts, offers a view of comedy that strikingly parallels Meredith's. For Cassirer, catharsis in general is a liberating process that takes place in the world of forms, where the imagination is free of the pressures of the practical world; comedy is able to depict those pressures without creating a sense of despair. When the two are joined in what Cassirer expressly calls a "comic catharsis," the audience is able to contemplate the deficiencies of life in a spirit of "sympathetic vision" and liberating laughter.

The pivotal element of Meredith's idea of comic insight is a traditional one, the awareness of imperfection. Since it is an intellectual perception of the discrepancy between its subject and the standards of civilization, it does not generate the contemptuous sense of superiority mentioned in some theories of comedy, but rather a sense of membership in the enlightened class of a civilized community. Meredith's comedy is not, like the Greek New Comedy, employed as a theoretical model of the comic *mythos* by Northrop Frye, a movement from one society to another, but rather a confirmation of the virtues of existing society. There is no comfort for rebels in Meredith's comic theory; it is uncompromisingly establishmentarian. It operates by reminding us that society is based on sanity and common sense, and that any deviation from its usage opens itself to laughter.

This is perhaps the most striking contrast between the view of the comic catharsis suggested in Meredith's essay and those of other critics. Generally, catharsis, whether comic or tragic, is said to end in a liberation and renewal comparable to the resurrection which some critics take to be the mythic origin of comedy. In Meredith's thinking this effect is greatly modified, for it is linked with another, limiting experience, the sense of taking part in and accepting responsibility to, the community of the enlightened, which is a part, though a superior part, of the existing community. Meredith bases our ability to appreciate comedy on the belief that society is founded on common sense, and formulates the inner meaning of the comedies of Aristophanes as "good citizenship." For him, the comic catharsis ends in a participation in whatever wisdom is embodied in the community.

There is, no doubt, much that is specifically Victorian in the severity of Meredith's limitations on the idea of the comic, and in the responsibility it imposes on the comic sensibility. He was also taking part in a contemporary campaign against the broad, heavy-handed, sentimentality-tinged sort of humor found in Dickens. Meredith felt no need for new social principles, but for a clearer recognition of values that were already in place. Within this context, a context we may, perhaps, find familiar, his kind of comic vision has its uses. If it stimulates a responsible, if uncritical, sense of reality, discourages fanaticism, ignorance and egoism, and teaches the worth of balance and awareness, it is at least capable of preventing a good deal of harm.

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Arseneau, Mary. *Recovering Christina Rossetti: Female Community and International Poetics*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004. Pp. xiv + 227. $45.00. "There can be little doubt that over the last few decades Christina Rossetti has emerged as a major Victorian poet, and that this consolidation of her reputation is largely indebted to feminist scholarship. Repeatedly in this very fine body of work, however, there appears a tendency to consign to the margins the very conceptual framework and lived perspective most intimate to Rossetti herself because it happens to be a perspective very much less sympathetic to the majority of readers, feminist or otherwise, in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. In this present study I hope to extend and revise the feminist project of recovering Christina Rossetti: first, by recuperating her primary familial, literary, intellectual, and religious community; and second, by exploring how the Anglo-Catholic religious devotion shared in the community of Rossetti women impressed itself upon Rossetti's poetic themes and modes of expression" (1).

Cambridge, Ada. *A Black Sheep: Some Episodes in His Life: A Serial Version of "A Marked Man."* Ed. Elizabeth Morrison. The Colonial Texts Series. Canberra: Australian Scholarly Editions Centre, School of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of New South Wales at the Australian Defence Academy, Canberra, 2004. Pp. lxvii + 373. $39.95 (Australian) (paper). "*A Black Sheep*, arguably Ada Cambridge's finest novel, brought her literary fame in the late nineteenth-century not only in the American colonies when it appeared as a newspaper serial in the Melbourne *Age* every Sunday from 7 July 1888 to 5 January 1889 but also in England and the United States where, with textual changes, it was published under the title *A Marked Man* in 1890 and reissued several times during the next few years. Out of print and virtually forgotten for many decades of the twentieth century, *A Marked Man* regained a readership when republished by Pandora Press in 1987. *A Black Sheep*, here edited of the Colonial Texts Series, makes the *Age* serial version available in book form for the first time, and provides an apparatus that displays textual differences between it and *A Marked Man*" ([xi]).

Christiansen, Allan Conrad, ed. *The Subverting Vision of Bulwer Lytton: Bicentenary Reflections*. Newark: U of Delaware P, 2004. Pp. 258. $49.50. Contents: Allan Conrad Christensen, "Introduction"; Andrew Brown, "Lytton, First Baron Lytton of Knebworth, 1803-1873"; Andrew Brown, "Bulwer's Reputation"; Richard Cronin, "Bulwer, Carlyle, and the Fashionable Novel"; Heather Worthington, "Against the Law: Bulwer's Fictions of Crime"; Jonathan H. Grossman, "In the Courtroom of Bulwer's Newgate Novels: Narrative Perspective and Crime Fiction"; Lawrence Poston, "Bulwer's Godwinia Myth"; Joachim Mathieu, "*England and the English*: Perceiving Self and Other"; Angus Easson, "'At Home' with the Romans: Domestic Archaeology in *The Last Days of Pompeii*"; Esther Schor, "Lions of Basalt: Bulwer, Italy, and the Crucible of Reform"; Catherine Phillips, "The Historical Context of *Athens: Its Rise and Fall*; Lord Cobbold, "Rosina Bulwer Lytton: Irish Beauty, Satirist, Tormented Victorian Wife, 1802-1882"; Marie Mulvey-Roberts, "Writing for Revenge: The Battle of the Books of Edward and Rosina Bulwer Lytton"; Bulwer Lytton and 'The Cult of the Colonies'"; Peter W. Sinnema, "Between Men: Reading the Caxton Trilogy as Domestic Fiction"; Allan Conrad Christensen, "Writing and Unwriting in *The Caxtons, 'My Novel'* and *A Strange Story*"; Lillian Nayder. "Bulwer Lytton and Imperial Gothic: Defending the Empire in *The Coming Race*"; Philip Rand, "The Last Days of the Second Empire: *The Parisians and La Débâcle.*"

Davies, Emily. *Emily Davies: Collected Letters, 1861-1875*. Eds. Ann B. Murphy and Deirdre Raftery. Victorian Literature and Culture Series. Charlottesville & London: U of Virginia P, 2004. Pp. lviii + 555. $95.00. "Sarah Emily Davies (1830-1921) was at the heart of critical political, educational, journalistic, and social reform movements of mid-nineteenth-century England. Between 1861, when she arrived in London, and 1875, when she retired as Mistress of Girton College, Davies was an active member of Langston Place Circle; edited both the *English Woman's Journal* and the *Victoria*; launched campaigns to open the Cambridge Local Examinations to girls and to request that the Taunton Commission (SIC) include girls' schools in its invesigation; helped form the London Association of School Mistresses and the Kensington Society; organized the first campaign for women's suffrage in 1866; served on the London School Board; and founded Girton College, Cambridge University, the first residential college of higher education for women" (xx-xxi).

Dellamora, Richard. *Friendship's Bond: Democracy and the Novel in Victorian England*. Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 2004. Pp. 252. $47.50; £31.00. "Focusing in particular on the writing of Benjamin Disraeli, novelist, polemicist, and prime minister, as well as that of his leading political rival, William Gladstone, in this book, I consider how sodomitic intimations inflected debates over the civil, political, and social rights of artisans, women, Jews, and Irishmen in Victorian England. Beginning with Charles Dickens's angry response to the denial of the vote to manual workers in the Reform Bill of 1832 and continuing with studies of two little-known works by Disraeli that focus on the relationship between male friendship, Jewish culture and religious belief, and citizenship in the imperial nation-state, the study continues with an excursus on Karl Marx's classic essay on the Jewish Question. The central chapters deal with the novels of Anthony Trollope and George Eliot that respond to Gladstone's attacks on Disraeli and other English Jews following the further extension of male suffrage after 1867. The book ends with chapters on works by Henry James and Oscar Wilde that reflect critically on the implications, for both art and male intimacy, of the advent of mass democracy. By the mid-1890s, Wilde had good reason to wonder whether belief in a positive relation between friendship and expanded rights of citizenship could be sustained" (1-2).

Faught, C. Brad. *The Oxford Movement: A Thematic History of the Tractarians and Their Times*. University Park: Pennsylvania State UP, 2004. Pp. xi + 184. $29.95 (cloth); $22.50 (paper). "From 1833 to 1845, Newman, Keble, Froude and Pusey shaped the religiopolitical debate and set in train the history of the modern Anglo-Catholicism. Much of the sharpest controversy and the most compelling drama occurred during these years. From their Oxford base, this Group of Four divided the Church of England, a division that can be felt even today. But it was during the 1830s and 1840s that their impact was strongest and most important; and therefore, any study of the Oxford Movement must return to this period. Of course, as in any movement, leaders, fellow travelers, followers, and observers, enter, stay, and leave the scene of the action. This is especially true of the Oxford foursome, who displayed, over the dozen years concentrated on here, a not-altogether-comfortable unity. Nevertheless, these men found at different times and over different issues a startling commonality of purpose that reduced or even eliminated internal dissension" (x).

Fyfe, Aileen. *Science and Salvation: Evangelical Popular Science Publishing in Victorian Britain*. Chicago & London: U of Chicago P, 2004. Pp. 325. $25.00 (paper). "In this book I explore the relationship between science and religion, specifically the religious reaction to the perceived threat posed by cheap science publishing in the middle of the nineteenth century. The significance of religious faith in the history of European science is already well known. In the case of nineteenth-century Britain, in particular, much has written on the transformation of the sciences into professionalised, organised, specialist disciplines during the course of the century, and this is seen as going hand in hand with the story of the separation of science from religion as each developed into a profession. The sciences are regarded as moving from a highly religious state with no clear criteria for measuring expertise, to one that is professional and mostly secular. This book does not intend to challenge that story, but it starts from the observation that such narratives do not take account of the ways in which science and faith related to one another outside the restricted community of specialists. . . . This book approaches the question from the point of view of the religious community, and examines popular, rather than expert, science. I take as a premise that the history of popular science and religion need not be the same as that of expert science and religion, and get to the root of the issues by concentrating on the period when popular science publishing, and its secular and Christian variants, was developed" (2-3).

Gill, Gillian. *The Nightingales: The Extraordinary Upbringing and Curious Life of Miss Florence Nightingale*. New York: Ballantine Books, 2004. Pp. xxiii + 535. $27.95. "Florence Nightingale is one of the most remarkable women known to history. She was a bonafide heroine in her time, a nineteenth-century woman who yearned to become a new Teresa of Avila, mystic, religious reformer, saint. She is also one of the best-documented women who has ever lived. We shall be spending a good deal of time with Florence as a child, girl, and young woman, since these were the years when her life was tightly bound up with her family. And no book on the Nightingales could fail to give some account of Florence's extraordinary twenty-one months in Turkey and the Crimea, one of the most famous events on women's history. All the same, this is not a biography of Florence Nightingale. When her health breaks down in 1857 and she moves into seclusion to work all out for health reform, I shall not follow her into the bedroom upstairs or monitor the business she conducts there. Just as she kept beloved family and friends resolutely at bay during her fifteen-odd years of frenzied reform lobbying and continued thereafter to focus her energies on international health care issues, so we too shall hear of Florence's activities after 1858 only insofar as family and friends are involved" (xxiii-xxiiii).

Lambert, Ray. *John Constable and the Theory of Landscape*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2005. Pp. xi + 269. $80.00. "John Constable was a painter of great freshness of vision and of vivid evocations of the experience of living and being in the English landscape. This is common ground for all commentators on his art. He was—in my view, even more importantly—an imaginative artist of great formal power in pictorial design. The purpose of this book is to bring out the coexistence of these attributes in his work. The argument is largely to establish Constable's art in its intellectual background, contextualising it in systems of ideas, mainly about art rendering nature into paint with aesthetic intent. My close analysis of the formal structures of the pictures uses a framework of seeing derived from a specific, historically deployed model of visual perception" (1).

Lougy, Robert E. *Inaugural Wounds: The Shaping of Desire in Five Nineteenth-Century English Narratives*. Athens: Ohio UP, 2004. Pp. 204. $42.95. "This book should be regarded as an inquiry into the wistful implications of longing . . . , an examination of the various ways the 'desire of something lost or fled or otherwise out of reach' is mapped out in five nineteenth-century narratives: Charles Dickens's *Martin Chuzzlewit* (1843-44), William Thackeray's *Notes of a Journey from Cornhill to Grand Cairo* (1846), Elizabeth Gaskell's *Ruth* (1853), Wilkie Collins's *The Woman in White* (1860), and, finally, Thomas Hardy's *Jude the Obscure* (1895). I have characterized these narratives as mapping out the various shapes of desire, but 'desire' is a term frequently invoked to refer to a wide range of specific ends or objects—political or economic power, for example, or sexual fulfillment, personal freedom, and so on. When I speak of desire, however, I am referring specifically to desire as Jaques Lacan has theorized it . . . " (1-2).

Martineau, Harriet. *Illustrations of Political Economy: Selected Tales*. Ed. Deborah Anna Logan. Peterborough, ON: Broadview Editions, 2004. Pp. 439. $18.95 (CND); $15.95 (US); £8.99 (UK); $24.95 (AUST) (paper). "The following tales have been chosen for their literary quality as well as for their demonstration of key issues of interest to the period. 'Weal and Woe in Garveloch' earned notoriety for addressing such topics as sexual abstinence and delayed marriages, over-population and the lack of birth control options, infanticide, and Mathusian population theories. Martineau rejects the claim that respectable women do not discuss such issues, demonstrating instead that women must look out for their own interests, and not rely on men to do that for them. 'A Manchester Strike,' one of the earliest 'industrial tales,' studies the impact of industrialization and the factory milieu on the working poor and on the rising middle-class manufacturers. Inadequate wages, work-related illness and death, strikes and strike-breaking, union organizing, and fluctuations in the market economy—these are themes introduced by Martineau to be endlessly rehearsed by subsequent writers throughout the century.

"'Cousin Marshall' illustrates the inadequacies of the out-moded Elizabethan poor law system in industrial society and dramatizes the need for poor law reform. Punitive treatmemt of the poor, workhouse abuses and exploitation, charity and lack of incentive, and a desperate need for solutions for the growing pauper populations are themes that anticipate the passage of the New Poor Law in 1834. Finally, 'Sowers and Reapers' highlights the social problems engendered by the combination of famine and drought, poverty, and alcoholism, while dramatizing the effects of the controversial Corn Laws on the working poor. This early anti-corn-law tale presupposes the repeal of the laws in 1846, when the shift in the socio-political power balance initiated in the 1832 Reform Bill was most fully and satisfactorily realized" (47-48).

Mitchell, Sally. *Frances Power Cobbe: Victorian Feminist, Journalist, Reformer*. Charlottesville & London: U of Virginia P, 2004. Pp. xiii + 463. $45.00. "Frances Power Cobbe (1822-1904) was celebrated in her time as a suffragist, essayist, journalist, theologian, and social reformer. By the last quarter of the nineteenth century she was the most important British woman writer of intellectual prose. Forceful, fearless, and effective, Cobbe worked to improve conditions for delinquent girls and for the sick poor, was the first person to formally propose that women be admitted to English universities, served for many long years on the Central Committee for Women's Suffrage, publicized marital violence, and founded two organizations to protect animals from medical experiments" ([1]).

Morris, Pam. *Imagining Inclusive Society in Nineteenth-Century Novels: The Code of Sincerity in the Public Sphere*. Baltimore & London: The Johns Hopkins UP, 2004. Pp. 261. $44.95. "Novels especially those authored by women, form part of the pressure toward heterogeneity that transformed the public sphere in the 1840s and 1850s. They also consciously engage with debates and struggles that were shaping public opinion as to the impending prospect of an inclusive society. There are striking and illuminating points of contact between novelistic and journalistic discourse and political essays. The code of sincerity is thematized and practically elaborated by the novelists in this study. The novels I discuss also function in the realist manner described by Benedict Anderson to provide 'confirmation' of imagined social reality. In the six novels published from 1849 to 1864 [*Shirley, The History of Henry Esmond, Bleak House, North and South, Romola, Our Mutual Friend*], the fictional worlds of the stories are represented as increasingly inclusive national societies. The characters who inhabit these worlds are represented as perceiving their reality in terms that move from predominant consciousness of social exclusions to an acceptance of heterogeneity. The fictions are fully implicated in of the formation and legitimation of new rules of social exclusion and inequality put in place in the process of transformation. Yet they do also articulate utopian perceptions and aspirations of genuine community. In summary, these six works provide dramatic insights into the forces, discourses, aspirations, and fears that constituted a radical new mode of perceiving human existence—not only the inception of mass commodity culture but also the goal of egalitarian inclusiveness" (29-30).

Harriet Martineau's Writing on the British Empire

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