

# The Victorian Newsletter

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*The Victorian Newsletter*, begun in 1952, features scholarly articles by many of the most prominent Victorian academics of the last half century. As such, the *VN* reflects the genesis and the development of contemporary Victorian literary and cultural studies. Under the editorship of Dr. Ward Hellstrom for nearly thirty years, *VN* is now edited by Deborah Logan, Professor of English at Western Kentucky University in Bowling Green, Kentucky. *The Victorian Newsletter* is a refereed publication which particularly welcomes article-length analyses of Victorian literature and culture.

The editorial aims of *The Victorian Newsletter* include:

- \* to provide high quality analyses of topics relevant to Victorian scholars;
- \* to participate in broader academic discussions of interest to those in the field; and
- \* to contribute useful and innovative insights, through nuanced analyses, to Victorian studies.

The editor welcomes book announcements and book reviews, along with announcements of interest to the Victorian academic community.

Tables of Contents of the *Newsletter* from 1952 through 2007 are available at [www.wku.edu/victorian](http://www.wku.edu/victorian)

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Cover Illustration: "The First Christmas Card," by  
John Calcott Horsley (1843)

## Greetings from the Editor

Professor Ward Hellstrom served as Editor of *The Victorian Newsletter* for the last three decades until his retirement earlier this year, in Spring 2007. Along with Managing Editor Louise Hellstrom, Ward steered the *Newsletter* through what could be termed a *renaissance* in the field of Victorian studies. Alternatively, the phenomenal interest in Victorian literature and culture displayed over the last half-century might also be viewed as – not a rebirth, but – the generative inception of scholarly interest in the period that preceded, and so profoundly shaped, our own. *The Victorian Newsletter* has played a pivotal role in the proliferation of nineteenth-century socio-cultural history and literature, helping to make Victorian studies the vibrant, vital, and perpetually engaging intellectual pursuit that it is today.

I am honored and delighted to be the new editor of *The Victorian Newsletter*. One of my first goals as editor was to make the Tables of Contents accessible on-line. This was accomplished by Zachary Adams who, astonishingly, scanned, typed, proofed, and corrected fifty-five years' worth of Contents in less than a week. This exercise in itself highlights the dizzying technological shifts marking the last half-century; the earliest numbers of the *VN* were type-written, recalling the days of mimeograph machines, typewriters and carbon paper, paper strips of "Correctype" and small bottles of liquid "Whiteout." The result of the compiled Tables of Contents, accessible at [www.wku.edu/victorian](http://www.wku.edu/victorian), is enlightening in another way: even a cursory glance over this list of contributors reveals the names of many of the most prominent, and still rising, Victorian scholars of the last half-century.

My primary goals as editor of *The Victorian Newsletter* are two-fold: first and foremost, to preserve the tradition and integrity of the hard-copy academic journal. Simply put, there is just no substitute for the pleasure of holding the printed word in one's hands: no computer screen, in my view, can replicate the special dynamic that exists between mind, hand, and printed text. That said, my second concern is also to make earlier and, eventually, new and forthcoming, material available on-line, so that the fine work accomplished in *The Victorian Newsletter* is available to students and scholars throughout the world. It is my sincere hope that this next phase in the

evolution of *The Victorian Newsletter* will satisfy the inclinations of both book-lovers and virtual scholars as they negotiate Victorian studies in the postmodern era.

Number 112 of *The Victorian Newsletter* represents both an editorial transition and a collaboration between Ward Hellstrom and myself. We are pleased to present the work of the following scholars in this issue:

Lesla Scholl's "Translating Authority: *Romola's* Disruption of the Gendered Narrative" assesses George Eliot's novel through the lens of translated discourses. By aligning 15th- with 19th-century gender concerns, Scholl scrutinizes the "Woman Question" issues common to both eras, in the process illustrating the apparently timeless obstacles faced by women living vicariously through the discourses of the men in their lives. Nils Clausson's "The Anarchist and the Detective: The Science of Detection and the Subversion of Generic Convention in H. G. Wells's 'The Thumbmark'" analyzes a little-known short-story by the science-fiction writer that establishes once more Wells's prophetic perspective on post-modern society.

Jill Wagner, in "Class Consciousness, Critter Collecting, and Climatic Conditions: Post-Victorian Existentialism in the 'Morphing' Victorian Scientist," compares the Victorian scientists depicted in John Fowles's *The French Lieutenant's Woman* and A. S. Byatt's "Morpho Eugenia" from an existential and modernist viewpoint. The Victorian scientist, argues Wagner, "analytically explores evolution and religion while faced with social temptations and the resultant ramifications of subsequent moral and ethical decisions." On a different note, and with a nod to Catriona Finlayson's "Wilde about Mary: the Legacy of Lady Eccles," Nikolai Endres's "There is Something Wilde about Mary: The Eccles Bequest" offers a succinct overview of the British Library's recent acquisition of Oscar Wilde materials. While outlining the primary organizational categories of the bequest, Endres highlights several tantalizing examples of an exciting collection that promises to enhance and enliven Wilde studies for generations to come.

Karen Kurt Teal's "Against 'All that rowdy lot': Trollope's Grudge Against Disraeli" examines Victorian antisemitism by comparing the novelist who had failed political ambitions – Anthony Trollope – with the politician who had literary ambitions – Benjamin Disraeli. Finally, two articles address the synthesis

between Victorian art and literature: "Sensational Bodies: Lady Audley and the Pre-Raphaelite Portrait" by Brian Donnelly analyses Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret* through the aesthetics of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, while Rodney Edgecombe's "John Opie's Lectures to the Royal Academy and *Little Dorrit*" applies Victorian aesthetics to Dickens's *Little Dorrit*.

I thank Zack Adams, Katharine Gilbert, David Lee, Karen Schneider, John Oakes, Bill Harmon, John McGowan, and Brent Kinser for their contributions to this transitional *Victorian Newsletter*. Number 112 is dedicated, with love and thanks, to Ward and Louise Hellstrom, for their years of hard work promoting Victorian studies through *The Victorian Newsletter*.

Deborah Logan  
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November 2007

## Translating Authority: *Romola's* Disruption of the Gendered Narrative

Lesla Scholl

Barbara Godard's essay "Theorising Feminist Discourse/Translation" powerfully links ideas of female language and women's writing with translation. She argues that women's writing translates masculine discourse by using "the language of the dominant to persuade and to transform it" (87). This idea resonates with Eliot's self-proclaimed masterpiece, *Romola*, which sees the eponymous character employed in resisting and challenging the narratives made available to her by the dominant men in her sphere, before returning to them in a transformed – or translated – way. The resistance of the female character disrupts the male narrative, just as Godard argues that female translation disrupts the dominant male discourse. This disruption forces the reader to acknowledge the construction of the narratives and reevaluate the dominant discourse. Godard argues that a plurality of discourses, and therefore multiple and multi-layered translation, is a necessary part of heterogeneous culture:

Confronted with a plurality of discourses, the mixture of levels of language within one national culture or heteroglossia, wherein their language is marginal with respect to the dominant discourse, women writers figure this metaphorically in terms of polyglossia or the co-presence of several "foreign" languages. (89)

Godard points out that even within a single national language, there are many "languages" or discourses, leading to varied modes of interpretation. The different readings (and therefore translations) provide a fertile ground for rigorous reinterpretation.

Godard's metaphorical dealing with translation is central to my argument, with "language" being replaced by "narrative." She connects the act of translation with the linguistic and social "dis/plac[ement]," "otherness" and "alienation of women" (Godard 89; 87). The metaphor poses an image of woman existing between two languages, creating a new space for herself. I argue that *Romola* exists between

multiple narratives in the same way. From this vantage point, she is able to break her traditional stereotypical "silence in order to communicate new insights into women's experiences and their relation to language" (89). She transfers "a cultural reality into a new context," and writes – or rewrites – herself "into existence" (89-90).

The idea of translation is particularly pertinent in the study of George Eliot's work, for she began her literary career as both a translator and a reviewer of translations, a foundation that influenced the way she constructed her fiction. *Romola*, probably one of the least recognized of her works, was developed through Eliot's extensive research on Renaissance Florence, made possible through her knowledge of the Italian language. I suggest that the neglect of this text is partly due to the fact that, more than any other of Eliot's novels, it disturbs and interrupts the author(ity) of the gendered narrative. As Mary Wilson Carpenter has claimed, *Romola* can be seen as "the radical transformation of a patriarchal scheme into a feminist apocalypse of history" (60); yet this transformation ironically works through the patriarchal narratives it defies. *Romola* first embodies, and then reworks, manipulates and changes the narratives made available to her by her father, brother, husband, godfather and priest, thereby creating a translation of narrative that, while echoing the original, subverts its power. This subversion is evident throughout the text but is revealed most provocatively in the absence of masculinity in the epilogue, an episode that disturbs critics now as much as it did Eliot's contemporaries.

Susan Bassnett states, "the translator...is also a traveller, someone engaged in a journey from one source to another" (viii). I take this idea of the translator traveling between texts further, by looking at narrative movement within a text as a form of translation. I do not go as far as claiming that *Romola's* movement between narratives is a direct or literal form of translation, although in a way, it can be described as a type of intersemiotic translation: it constitutes the redefinition of self across various discourses; it translates self between different narratives; and it mediates new circumstances in an attempt to comprehend and convey difference. The mediation of meaning that defines translation is crucial in this sense. However, to define the perimeters of my essay, translation is most useful as a metaphor

to describe the various narrative displacements that Romola experiences. She undertakes physical and emotional journeys to escape the male narratives that seek to bind her, in the end taking on an ambiguous authority within the domestic sphere that eerily conforms to patriarchal expectations, while subversively absenting male figures.

It has been widely acknowledged that although set in Renaissance Florence, George Eliot's *Romola* can be read in part as a discourse on nineteenth-century England. Indeed, this historicizing of her tale was a common distancing device of Eliot's, and could in itself be seen as a form of translation: she translates Victorian ideas into a different time and place, while bringing Renaissance concerns to the fore in Victorian England. With this context in mind, I argue that Eliot mediates between her English middle class and her invented late-fifteenth-century Italy, in order to address social issues – namely the position of women – in her own society.

Eliot's choice of fifteenth-century Florence is noteworthy, yet not unusual. Hilary Fraser points out that in the mid-nineteenth century, the British appropriated Italian art, literature and history, and were as willing to "colonize Italy's past as they were its present" (3). The obsession with and construction of the Italian Renaissance in the Victorian period was indicative of the desire to connect to Italy's "historical roots" to compensate for England's "dislocat[ion] from its past." Thus Eliot accesses an invented Italian history in order to make sense of her own culture. In the fifteenth century, Florence was going through political and social upheavals comparable to those of nineteenth-century Britain. The overthrow of the Medicis could be related to the perceived threat that the French Revolution had presented to Britain, as well as the subsequent Napoleonic Wars. On the domestic front, the internal unrest within Eliot's Florentine politics could be linked to the massive political changes that took place in so many areas of the British legal system leading up to and during the Victorian period. As much as those changes affected and were affected by social change, there remains one very significant aspect of society that links Eliot's Florence to the Victorian period: a widespread crisis of faith, involving chaotic dichotomies of renunciation of faith

and conversion, and the exposure of religious corruption within a rise in apostolic and apocalyptic preaching. Thus within an uncannily similar world, Eliot places Romola de'Bardi, the very image of oppressed Victorian womanhood.

Levine and Turner's collection of essays, *From Author to Text*, constantly comes back to the question of how conventional or unconventional Romola is in mid-Victorian terms. This idea of Romola's conventionality is central to my discussion, as her desire to find her own narrative leads her to conform, at various points in the novel, to the different male narratives within which she exists. The narrative structure is further complicated in that the male narratives Romola embodies ironically belong to men who are all in some way exiles or outsiders: a position that the Victorianized Romola – and Eliot herself – can empathize with. Her father, Bardo, is an intellectual exile, out of touch with the academic culture of Florence; Tito is a national outsider as the foreigner; Savonarola is the spiritually exiled prophet, while Romola's godfather, Bernardo del Nero, becomes a political outcast, executed for his continued support of the Medicis. Romola is also caught up in her disowned brother Dino's narrative through his vision of her marriage, but also in that she is expected to fulfill his role for their father. Dino's familial exile is significantly intentional on his part, as he chose to leave the "human sin and misery" of his father's home (*Romola* 154). The other male narrative that Romola enters, albeit for a moment, is that of Baldassarre, the social outcast and wrongful prisoner, bent on exacting his revenge on Tito. Romola escapes the male narratives briefly, yet it is only to exist within the gendered Victorian narrative of the angelic nurse polarized with the drowning fallen woman. As Christine Krueger states, in spite of Romola's unusual education, she still "cannot escape the web of her cultural identity" (275-76). I argue, however, that while Romola cannot completely escape her cultural context in order to create an entirely unique female narrative, she is successful in radically redefining and rewriting, therefore translating, the overarching patriarchal narratives in order to navigate her own.

Romola's first narrative position situates her within the tradition of blind fathers and their daughters through her role as Bardo de'Bardi's daughter. The similarity to Milton and his daughters is unmistakable, yet there is a significant difference:

although highly educated in order to assist her father in his work, Romola is very aware that she is Bardo's second choice. Within the image of the daughter religiously devoted to her father, there is a converse portrayal of an intellectual woman struggling against her sense of inferiority: Romola vocalizes Bardo's regret in losing his son, and tries to provide hope by suggesting that when she marries, her husband would be able to fulfill the role Dino had abdicated:

I will try to be as useful to you as if I had been a boy, and then perhaps some great scholar will want to marry me, and will not mind about a dowry; and he will like to come and live with you, and he will be to you in place of my brother...and you will not be sorry that I was a daughter. (54)

Romola's poignant appeal highlights her bondage to her father, both from familial attachment and social expectations. Yet at the same time, social expectations are ironically anomalous to Romola's position, as her father has tried to create a narrative for her that differs from convention. He prides himself on separating his daughter from the stereotype of women: "I have been careful to keep thee aloof from the debasing influence of thy own sex with their sparrow-like frivolity and enslaving superstition." Therefore, while giving Romola a masculine education, which should, in theory, release her, by speaking of women in such a way Bardo actually reinforces his daughter's bondage by emphasizing inescapable feminine weaknesses.

Eliot stresses Romola's contradictory position by simultaneously feminizing and masculinizing her. As she pleads for her father's approval, her eyes "dilat[e] with anxiety" and there is "a rising sob" in her voice (54), clearly depicting the nineteenth-century hystericized female body. Bardo reassures her by calling her a "sweet daughter" and expressing gratitude for the way she "gently" cares for him when he is ill. Romola thus fulfills a conventional female role. At the same time, though, Bardo declares that she has "a man's nobility of soul." Later, when Tito begins to frequent the Via de'Bardi, his impression of Romola reinforces this tension between the feminized body and masculine soul:

The transient pink flush on Romola's face and neck, which subtracted nothing from her majesty, but only gave it the exquisite

charm of womanly sensitiveness, [was] heightened still more by what seemed the paradoxical boy-like frankness of her look and smile. (94)

Indeed, Bardo further encourages this definition of his daughter, explaining to Tito on their first meeting that Romola has "fill[ed] up to the best of her power the place of a son" (69). In his eyes, Romola cannot completely fill that role because he, like his Victorian counterparts, links too closely mental capacity and physical strength. He says to his daughter:

For the sustained zeal and unconquerable patience demanded from those who would tread the unbeaten paths of knowledge are still less reconcilable with the wandering, vagrant propensity of the feminine mind than with the feeble powers of the feminine body. (51)

He then reminds her of her fainting when searching for references for him. Romola tries to separate mind and body, claiming that it was the physical weight of the books rather than their intellectual weight that overpowered her, yet Bardo does not regard this claim: "It is not mere bodily organs that I want: it is the sharp edge of a young mind to pierce the way for my somewhat blunted faculties" (52). For Bardo, intellectual activity requires strong physicality; something lacking in the feminine makeup. Indeed, Bardo's attitude could also be linked to the growing belief in nineteenth-century medicine that intellectual activity could disrupt the feminine biological make-up. Later in the century, Edward H. Clarke argued, in line with earlier debates on the topic, that girls could not be educated in the same manner as boys "and retain uninjured health and a future secure from neuralgia, uterine disease, hysteria, and other derangements of the nervous system" (160). There seems to be an underlying suggestion in Bardo's thinking that, although Romola's education is motivated by her feminine attribute of self-sacrifice, her masculine education has affected her health; an idea that is perhaps followed through in that she remains childless, ironically sacrificing her femininity to her father's intellectual ambitions.

Thus, although given an education out of necessity, Romola remains imprisoned:

she is allowed knowledge, but refused activity; allowed intellect, yet denied passion. It is not surprising, then, that the first picture of Romola, which almost seems incidental to the description of her father, is an ambivalent portrayal of submission, devotion and oppression. Romola's existence, in spite of her education, is as narrow as that of any conventional Victorian woman of untapped capabilities:

The most penetrating observer would hardly have divined...that this woman, who imposed a certain awe on those who approached her, was in a state of girlish simplicity and ignorance concerning the world outside her father's books. (58)

In light of this seclusion, which is often couched in monastic terms, Bardo's library becomes both a tomb and a prison for Romola, as she can only exist within it: the claustrophobic setting of her father's narrative. Bardo has chosen his narrative, speaking of the "narrow track" Dino left him to walk (52). Yet Romola is forced to exist within the same narrative, thus her life and passion, depicted through her brilliant "reddish gold" hair like "sunset clouds" (48), is juxtaposed with the "lifeless objects," "unchanging mutilated marble" and "bits of obsolete bronze and clay" that belong to her father's dead scholarship (52). It is impossible, therefore, at this stage, for Romola to develop outside her father's ideas. As Shona Simpson points out, "interpretation is imposed on Romola so that it seems she cannot interpret meaning for herself" (60).

Tito's entrance into the Via de'Bardi initially indicates potential and hope for Romola. Rather than the gray-haired scholar she expected to marry, Tito is not only young and handsome, he is from outside Florence. The possibilities for a narrative shift are irresistible for Romola and, having expected so little, she is swayed. Her godfather remarks on how easily she gives her heart and trust, perhaps already suspecting Tito, as he works with him:

Ah, he's not made of the same clay as other men, is he?... Thy father has thought of shutting woman's folly out of thee by cramming thee with Greek and Latin; but thou hast been as ready to believe the first pair of bright eyes and the first soft words that have come in reach of thee, as if thou couldst say nothing by heart but paternosters, like other Christian men's daughters. (190-91)

Nevertheless, Romola's transition between Bardo's and Tito's narratives furthers her narrative displacement. It is questionable whether Romola ever fully adopts Tito's narrative; even after Bardo dies, she insists on sitting in her father's library, rather than the "pretty saloon" where Tito preferred her to be (*Romola* 279). In this way, Tito insists upon Victorian expectations: the woman is to be ornamental, not intellectual, thus a saloon is a suitable space, not a library. Furthermore, Romola (wrongly) believes that Tito understands that her "life is bound up with [her] father's" (190). By developing this kind of double narrative between her father and husband, Romola begins to broaden her existence to some extent: she is given two perspectives to choose between, yet she is still bound by male narratives. Her inability to act without male accountability is shown when she goes to see Dino without Bardo's knowledge. She is relieved when she encounters Tito and is therefore able to confess her actions to him (134). Yet in moving between the narratives of her father and husband, Romola begins to take on a mediatory and translational role as she negotiates between the two narratives in an attempt to construct her own pathway.

Romola's encounter with her brother is a significant interlude in the text. Dino opens up the possibility for Romola's religious discourse, which later becomes bound up with Savonarola's narrative, a figure whom she meets for the first time at her brother's death. Even in that first encounter, Savonarola's "penetrating voice" suggests the power he will gain over her (157). Dino's role is somewhat different, though, providing a three-way bridge between the narratives of Bardo and Tito that leads toward the mystical religious narrative of Savonarola. His vision, warning Romola not to marry, resonates with the reader who, having just witnessed Tito deceiving Tessa, already suspects the Grecian and fears for Romola. We are, therefore, willing to trust the authenticity of Dino's narrative, while in other circumstances it would be cast aside as fanatical.

In many ways the brother and sister are similar. Romola's cloistered existence and devotion to her father is juxtaposed with Dino's religious devotion, and both find passion problematic as a result. Romola's suppressed passion is expressed physically in that she "quivered from head to foot," while Dino shows his self-denial though

his “strange passionless eyes” (154). However, it is Dino’s narrative that teaches Romola to rebel: he left first to follow his divine call; he gives Romola the crucifix, which becomes a symbol both for her identity and her rebellion; and when Romola escapes, both times she disguises herself as a nun, the female equivalent of her brother.

After her meeting with Dino, Romola enters into a narrative triad, with her father, brother and husband laying claims upon her. Fraser pertinently refers to Romola “negotiat[ing] between conflicting loyalties to her father and her brother, her husband and her conscience” (206). Again her narrative space expands, but still only within male discourses, determined by the three most powerful male influences in Victorian convention. And yet through the increased diversity in narrative possibilities, Romola begins to awaken. I agree with Krueger’s claim that both Tito and Dino seek to “dominate and silence all other voices,” although I would add that Bardo is the same; yet as Romola discovers this desire of the men to dominate, “Eliot begins to sketch out an alternative model of female power” (274). Romola begins to select elements of the narratives to hold on to, affecting the way she translates and mediates the space around her: therefore, none of the narratives can have absolute power. She does not tell her father about her meeting with Dino, and while Tito implores her to “banish those chill fancies” for love of him (*Romola* 178), Romola remains haunted by Dino’s vision.

The spiritual power of Dino’s narrative seems to be what Tito feels the most threatened by. In light of Eliot’s dual fifteenth- and nineteenth-century discourses, this threat could be due to religion supplying to some extent the only legitimate public space for women and female discourse: a cloistered religious existence precluded men, providing a significant danger to patriarchal control. Tito must have control over the existence of Dino’s narrative in Romola’s life, symbolized in Dino’s crucifix being locked in the casket Tito had made for Romola, and Tito taking possession of the key (199).

Before Romola can step into the religious narrative, then, Tito must lose his power. After Tito breaks Romola’s trust by selling Bardo’s library, she makes her first escape, which places her into Savonarola’s narrative; but it is not until Romola

finds out about Tessa that she determines wholeheartedly to leave Tito’s narrative. She devotes herself to her godfather Bernardo and her spiritual father Savonarola, but when the former is executed and the latter disappoints her by not stepping in to save him, Romola is set adrift, disillusioned and forsaken by these men. As a result, she loses confidence in the narratives they had offered her.

Krueger refers to Romola’s “fallen state” (264), while Mark Turner points out the irony in that it is Romola who attempts suicide – portraying the drowning fallen woman – rather than Tessa (Levine and Turner 26). This calls into question the narrative positions of the two wives. Tessa is generally considered the fallen woman and Romola the rightful wife, yet even Romola herself is uncertain of her position. She says to Baldassarre: “You say she is foolish and helpless – that other wife – and believes him to be her real husband. Perhaps he is: perhaps he married her before he married me” (450). The reader knows that Tito’s “marriage” to Tessa took place well before his marriage to Romola, and as the laws regarding common law marriages did not change until the seventeenth century, Tessa does seem to have some claim on Tito. The actual position of both women is unclear; and Eliot uses the confusion surrounding Tito’s marriages to challenge ideas concerning marriage in nineteenth-century England, an interest likely to have been colored by her own relationship with Lewes. Although there is passion leading up to the wedding between Tito and Romola, the relationship that maintains any semblance of affection is his common law marriage to Tessa, and it is significant that it is this marriage that produces children, while Romola remains childless. Perhaps Eliot’s sympathy does lie with Tessa, being able to empathize with the role of a common-law wife while the legal wife still lives. Even so, I contend that, for Eliot, neither woman is fallen. As Mark Turner points out, Eliot transforms convention by having male promiscuity as the destructive force in the family, rather than the traditional female promiscuity (Levine and Turner 25). Thus in light of this view, Romola’s “drowning” is not a death, but rather a “baptism” (26) into a new life and, in the context of my argument, the awakening of Romola’s own narrative.

Rather than leading to her death, Romola’s attempted suicide leads her to a new narrative, beginning on a kind of mythical island that has been devastated



by the Plague. She takes on the gendered role of a healer, but it is a modified role: she is seen as a divine figure, and she is therefore powerful, in spite of being polarized as a figure for the Holy Virgin. The subversive power of virginal religion was, after all, what unsettled Tito. From this moment in the text, Romola's position as one who interprets and rewrites the narratives of others becomes clear. She maintains Savonarola's narrative by identifying with him, but "just as Romola liberally translated classical texts for her father, she interprets Savonarola's text as an invitation to appropriate truth" (Krueger 277): in a sense, she uses Savonarola's words against him. This shift begins when Romola confronts Savonarola, pleading with him to be an advocate for Bernardo:

The law was sacred. Yes, but rebellion might be sacred too. It flashed upon her mind that the problem before her was essentially the same as that which had lain before Savonarola – the problem where the sacredness of obedience ended, and where the sacredness of rebellion began. To her, as to him, there had come one of those moments in life when the soul must dare to act on its own warrant, not only without external law to appeal to, but in the face of a law which is not unarmed with divine lightnings – lightnings that may yet fall if the warrant be false. (468-69)

She says to Savonarola: "Father, you yourself declare that there comes a moment when the soul must have no guide but the voice within it, to tell whether the consecrated thing has sacred value. And therefore I must speak" (490). Thus, just as Eliot was influenced by Positivism, and held to the importance of moral duty in the absence of religious belief, Romola takes on Savonarola's narrative of living for others, minus Savonarola's spiritual influence. As she flees Florence for the second time, Romola relishes her freedom in that "this time no arresting voice had called her back" (500). Yet in escaping her identity – found in the narratives of others – "she despaired of finding any consistent duty belonging to that name." On her island, Romola discovers a duty of her own, separated from Savonarola, but still defined by gendered roles.

The epilogue of *Romola* has been a point of contention and discomfort for nineteenth-century and modern critics alike. Eliot radically rewrites the domestic

sphere by absenting men, replacing the husband and wife with the two wives, not clearly defined in terms of legal right. Romola is teaching Lillo, Tito's son, while Tito's daughter is not educated. The "perpetuation of a system where boys learn and girls do not" (Simpson 64) seems to undermine Romola's narrative by marking a definite return to the patriarchal system. Having journeyed so far to flee the domination and silencing of masculine discourse, Romola becomes an active reinforcer of the culture she sought to escape. The reader must then question why it seems so much more terrifying for Romola to deny scholarship to Ninna, when the majority of women in Eliot's society were denied an education. It may be that the Victorians were not horrified by the epilogue because through reinforcing Lillo and Ninna's roles, Romola reinstates the patriarchal system, hence softening the radicalism of the absent patriarch. Yet, as I have argued, Romola never actually departs from patriarchal narratives. She exists within them, presses their boundaries, plays them off each other and manipulates them; yet these male narratives remain paramount to her identity. Her controversial return to, and manipulation of, the domestic sphere provides a final tableau of Romola's role as a translator of masculine discourse.

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## The Anarchist and the Detective: The Science of Detection and the Subversion of Generic Convention in H.G. Wells's "The Thumbmark"

*Nils Claussøn*

There prevailed at that time [the late 1800s] a kind of scientific optimism which made men believe that the Kingdom of Heaven was about to break out on earth. The vast strides accomplished by science and technology made it seem not implausible that the solution of all problems was close at hand.

– Bertrand Russell, *The Wisdom of the West*

The attempt to blow up the Greenwich Observatory: a blood-stained inanity of so fatuous a kind that it is impossible to fathom its origin by a reasonable or even unreasonable process of thought. For perverse unreason has its own logical processes. But that outrage could not be laid hold of mentally in any sort of way, so that one remained faced by the fact of a man blown to bits for nothing even most remotely resembling an idea, anarchistic or other.

– Joseph Conrad, *The Secret Agent*

On June 24, 1894, an Italian anarchist, Sante Jeronimo Caserio, assassinated the French president, Marie-François Sadi Carnot, an act that was the culmination of a series of anarchist attacks in France and Europe dating back to the assassination of Tsar Alexander II in 1881. Just four months earlier, late on the afternoon of February 15, 1894, a twenty-six-year-old Frenchman named Martial Bourdin blew himself up when a bomb that likely was intended to be set off in the Greenwich Observatory accidentally exploded as he approached the building. Since he was carrying a considerable amount of money, investigators suspected that he had planned to leave for France immediately after completing his mission. Later that

day, police conducted a raid on the Club Autonomie in London, arrested everyone present, and discovered that Bourdin had been a member of the club, which was a meeting place for foreign anarchists. Many members were deported, but no charges were filed. Bourdin's funeral became a rallying point for anarchist sympathizers in London and attracted huge crowds. Although the attack did not inspire imitators in England, it did inspire Joseph Conrad's novel, *The Secret Agent* (1907).

The event may also have inspired, at least in part, H. G. Wells's story about an anarchist, the "The Stolen Bacillus," which appeared in *The Pall Mall Budget* on June 21, 1894, four days before the assassination of the French president. The anarchist in "The Stolen Bacillus" gains the confidence of a bacteriologist in order to obtain cholera germs to infect London's water supply. The bacteriologist, unaware of his visitor's intentions, expiates on the dangers of cholera that he shows him in the test-tube: "Yes, here is the pestilence imprisoned. Only break such a little tube as this into a supply of drinking-water [...] and death – mysterious, untraceable death, death swift and terrible, death full of pain and indignity – would be released upon this city, and go hither and thither seeking his victims" (3-4). Disaster is averted when it turns out that what the anarchist has actually stolen is a harmless strain of bacteria. "The Stolen Bacillus" is one of Wells's most frequently anthologized short stories. Its popularity has overshadowed another Wells story, "The Thumbmark," which appeared in *The Pall Mall Budget* four days after Caserio's assassination of the French president. "The Thumbmark" is about a foreign anarchist, a French chemistry student named Chabôt, who mixes chemicals to produce an incendiary device intended to burn down the London home of a police inspector. Although both "The Thumbmark" and "The Stolen Bacillus" share the common themes of a terrorist attack (or a threatened attack) and the common figure of the anarchist, they belong to two distinct genres of popular fiction. Whereas "The Stolen Bacillus" is a thriller predicated on suspense, complete with a cab chase through the streets of London, and focused on whether the anarchist will reach the reservoir before he is intercepted, "The Thumbmark" – as its title implies – is a detective story and hence predicated on mystery and focused on the detective's effort to identify the incendiary. The protagonist of "The Stolen Bacillus" is the anarchist, and the

story is narrated from his point of view; the protagonist of "The Thumbmark," in contrast, is the professor-detective, and the story is narrated by one of the professor's students, who plays Watson to the professor's Holmes. Although "The Stolen Bacillus" became one of Wells's best-known stories, "The Thumbmark" slipped into obscurity. It was not reprinted in *The Complete Stories of H. G. Wells* (1927), and so it remained virtually unknown, or at least was ignored, until J. R. Hammond reprinted it in *The Man with a Nose and the Other Uncollected Stories of H. G. Wells*. It is Wells's only detective story and is, understandably, not mentioned in any of the standard histories or collections of detective fiction. That neglect is undeserved, for it is one of the first detective stories to rely on fingerprints to solve a crime, and, as far as I can determine, it is the first to refer explicitly to Francis Galton's pioneering study *Finger Prints* (1892).<sup>1</sup> "The Thumbmark" is centered upon the conflict between the irrationalism of the anarchist and the rationalism of the detective: what is most significant about the story is that it is the first detective story to question the rationalist, scientific ideology underwriting the Holmesian detective story, as opposed to merely satirizing its surface conventions.

Although the classic British detective story would not become thoroughly conventionalized until the 1920s, with the publication of Ronald Knox's "Detective Story Decalogue," the formation of the Detection Club and its famous Oath, and the idea of playing fair with the reader, the form had become standardized after the first two Holmes collections. By 1894, readers knew what to expect: a puzzling crime that baffles the police, a brilliant and eccentric detective, clues, a startling announcement of the solution, and an explanation by the detective of how he arrived at his solution. In addition, readers expected the apprehension and arrest of the criminal. One of the social functions of detective fiction at the time was to reassure the public by showing that crimes can be solved and criminals can be caught. Sherlock Holmes, writes Christopher Clausen, "single-handedly

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1 In Mark Twain's *Life on the Mississippi* (1883), a murderer is identified by the use of fingerprints, and his novel *Pudd'n'head Wilson*, published in seven installments in the *Century Magazine* in 1893-94, includes a courtroom scene involving fingerprint identification. It is uncertain whether Wells read either of Twain's novels.

defends an entire social order whose relatively fortunate members feel it to be deeply threatened by forces that only he is capable of overcoming" (60). One would expect, then, that a detective story in 1894 about an anarchist outrage in London, especially after the Greenwich bombing only a few months earlier, would reassure the public by ending not just with the identification of the anarchist but also with his capture and arrest. But Wells violates this expectation when, unexpectedly, he allows his anarchist to escape. This generically anomalous ending raises an obvious question: why?

The answer to this question needs to take into account not just the fact that Wells violates a formal generic convention of the detective story, but that this particular violation involves allowing an anarchist to escape at a time when, first on the continent, and then in London, people were being threatened and killed by anarchist attacks. As David Mulry points out in his thoroughly researched study of the Greenwich bombing and its relation to Joseph Conrad's *The Secret Agent*, the London press played up the sensationalism of the event – body parts promiscuously strewn about Greenwich Park – while at the same time “assuring [readers] that the police had the situation under control” (45), and that they had broken up a dangerous ring of foreign anarchists.<sup>2</sup> So one would expect that, in such an historical situation, a detective story about an anarchist attack would reassure people and quell their fears. But the ending of the story, in which the anarchist escapes, subverts this expectation.<sup>3</sup> The explanation for this unconventional ending, I shall argue, is that in “The Thumbmark” Wells parodies the detective story, and by doing so he questions the implicit ideology that lies behind Conan Doyle's Holmes stories: the reassuring myth of the Holmesian detective as a man of science who can confidently apply its methods to solve crimes that would otherwise remain

2 “The linking of the foreign body with the criminal body,” points out Ronald Thomas, “is as deeply engrained in the history of forensic science in English and American law enforcement as it is in popular literature” (208). Numerous other commentators have called attention to the link between foreignness and crime in the Holmes stories.

3 Thomas says that “detective stories help to provide reassurances...by continually reinventing fictions of national and individual identity to respond to rather specific historical anxieties, often invoking the authority of science to do so” (6).

unsolved. Another consideration is that this myth reassures the public that it is protected from criminal threats, including the new threat posed by revolutionaries and anarchists from abroad. Although the mystery of who the anarchist is and how he started the fire is easily solved by Wells's professor-detective, Somerset Smith, the unexpected ending certainly does not reassure the public that the application of the methods of science will stop future anarchist attacks.

Wells's parody of the conventions of the detective story in “The Thumbmark” is consistent with his literary practice as a writer. In his book *The Splintering Frame: The Later Fiction of H. G. Wells*, William J. Scheick points out that, even in his earlier fiction, Wells was impatient with generic conventions and often resorted to parody and satire:

Wells...demonstrated originality in these early works as well as revealing a knack for imitating successful literary techniques. This latter talent found expression primarily in satiric or parodic treatment of specific texts as well as in deliberate distortions or inversions of various conventions of the Victorian novel. *Tono-Bungay*, for example, so recasts the recurrent fictional preoccupation with the search for a father that the protagonist's eventual pessimistic awareness of an essential rootlessness in life reflects the more pervasive disorder of post-Victorian culture. In the same year, Wells violated the Victorian fictional convention of the saintly woman in *Ann Veronica* (1909). Actually, Wells conducted similar experiments much earlier. *When the Sleeper Wakes* (1899) parodies the inheritance convention of Victorian fiction, and *The Food of the Gods* (1904) deftly manages reader response so that the sympathy given to ordinary humanity in the first half of the book is transferred to the giants, who threaten that ordinary world, in the second half. *In the Days of the Comet...* reveals a similarly distinctive division: whereas the first part of the work recalls the Victorian suspense novel, the second half fails to fulfill expectations engendered by the preceding section. (16-7)

But Wells's deliberate violation of generic conventions was not limited to his novels; it is also present in the early short stories, most obviously in “The Thumbmark.” Just as *In the Days of the Comet* sets up the conventional expectation of the Victorian suspense novel in the first half only to frustrate the reader's generic expectation

in the second half, so “The Thumbmark” sets up all the standard conventions of the classic detective story in the first two-thirds, only comically to subvert those conventions in the last third. Since the classic detective story relies on the reader’s expectation that logic, reason and science will triumph over the irrationality of crime, Wells, by subverting this expectation, also undermines the reader’s confidence in the effective application of science to crime.

The expectation that a combination of logic and science could solve even the most baffling crimes had been created largely as a result of the enormous popularity of the Sherlock Holmes stories. In the two and a half years from July 1891 to December 1893, Arthur Conan Doyle had transformed the detective story into the most popular form of popular fiction. But he had done even more than that: he had created the myth of the scientific detective and forged in the public mind a strong link between the methods of science and the solution to crimes. When an admiring Watson exclaimed to Sherlock Holmes in *A Study in Scarlet* (1887), “[Y]ou have brought detection as near an exact science as it ever will be brought in this world” (33), he anticipated one of the most enduring myths of popular culture. “The scientific character of Holmes’s famous method is perfectly evident in any of his numerous adventures” (353), wrote James and John Kissane seventy-five years later, and little has changed since then. The Holmes stories, says Catherine Belsey, “reflect the widespread optimism characteristic of their period concerning the comprehensive power of positivist science” (112), while Jon Thompson proclaims Sherlock Holmes “the quintessential empiricist” (66). For Stephen Knight, Holmes “stands for science, that exciting new nineteenth-century force in the public mind....[T]he overt techniques of science, the careful collection and rational analysis of information, were realized in Sherlock Holmes” (175). Whereas Conan Doyle, says J. K. Van Dover, “embodied in Sherlock Holmes the argument that the detection of crime *is* the scientific method” (40), Holmes, reiterates Christopher Clausen, “is conceived – and conceives of himself – as a man who applies scientific methods to the detection of crime, and...his success as a detective is due to those methods” (57).

Like Holmes, Somerset Smith is conceived – and conceives of himself – as a

man who applies scientific methods to the detection of crime. He also wants to show up the inept police – a standard convention of the detective story since Poe – by spectacularly succeeding where they have failed. As a professor of chemistry, he wants to be the voice of science and to demonstrate its usefulness, and one of the useful things that science had very recently contributed to the art of detection was the systematic study of fingerprints. In the late 1880s, Francis Galton, a cousin of Charles Darwin, began observing and classifying fingerprints as a means of identifying criminals. In 1892, he published the results of his investigations in his book *Finger Prints*, in which he established the individuality and permanence of fingerprints, and developed the first system for classifying them. Galton’s primary interest in fingerprints was as a means of determining heredity and race. Although he soon discovered fingerprints offered no firm clues to an individual’s intelligence or genetic history, he was able to prove scientifically what previous investigators, such as Sir William Herschel and Dr. Henry Faulds,<sup>4</sup> already suspected: that fingerprints do not change over the course of a person’s lifetime, and that no two individuals’ fingerprints are exactly the same. According to Galton’s calculations, the odds of two individual fingerprints being the same were 1 in 64 billion. In the same year that *Finger Prints* appeared, a police official in Argentina, Juan Vucetich, began the first finger-print files based on Galton’s pattern types, and also made the first criminal fingerprint identification. Vucetich was able to identify a woman who had murdered her two sons and cut her own throat in an attempt to place blame on another. After Vucetich identified a bloody print that was left on a door post as belonging to the suspect, she confessed. “In 1894” – the year “The Thumbmark” was published—“the London police began taking the fingerprints of suspected criminals” (Thomas 201).

It is no accident, then, that Somerset Smith is a chemistry professor, or that

4 In 1880, Dr. Henry Faulds, a British surgeon and Superintendent of Tsukiji Hospital in Tokyo, published an article on fingerprints in *Nature*, in which he discussed fingerprints as a means of personal identification and the use of printer’s ink as the best method for obtaining them. In the same year, Faulds sent a description of his fingerprint classification system to Sir Charles Darwin, but Darwin, in poor health, was unable to offer any assistance to Faulds. However, he sent Fauld’s research on to his cousin, Francis Galton.

his investigation of the torching of the inspector's house is based on the latest development in criminology: the scientific study of fingerprints. Smith fancies himself as a disciple of both the great detective Sherlock Holmes and the great scientist Sir Francis Galton. He believes he can combine Holmes's observational and logical powers with Galton's scientific theory of fingerprints to solve this particular crime. "You may have heard of Professor Galton," Smith tells his students:

He has made a special study of the lines upon the human thumb, and has proposed it as a method of identifying criminals. He has taken thousands of impressions from inked human thumbs at the Anthropometric Laboratory at South Kensington, and in no two human beings are these impressions alike. He has published a book of his prints, and a very good book it is too. (108)

Smith suspects that one of his students is the incendiary, since the previous night he noticed by chance that a quantity of carbon bisulphide and phosphorus had been removed from his chemical storeroom: "The inference," he announces, "was either that some student contemplated a chemical entertainment at home at my expense, or that some incendiary was on foot" (106). And since Smith has found a fingerprint at the crime scene, he proceeds on the rational assumption that all he has to do is take the fingerprints of all his students, and the guilty one will inevitably be identified. For Smith, a criminal investigation, like a scientific experiment, is a game played by rules, and he assumes that everyone will play by those rules. He therefore assumes that all his students, including the guilty incendiary, will cooperate and allow him to take their prints.

But Smith's rational plan goes awry when the anarchist does what one might expect an anarchist to do – behave anarchically. Fearing detection and capture, he begins throwing "bottles of acid, corrosive sublimate, lunar caustic, and so forth" at Smith and the other students. "A small bottle of hydrochloric acid caught Wilderspin in the neck, made him yell dismally, and turned his coat a bright red forthwith" (109). Smith, abandoning cool logic, rushes into the store-room, re-emerging with "a huge jar of that most unendurable gas, sulphuretted hydrogen" and instructs one of the students to spray it at the anarchist while Smith returns to the store-

room to procure ammonium sulphide, "a gas only rivaled in its offensiveness by the sulphuretted hydrogen." Wells describes this comic drama of detection degenerating into chaos as if it were a battle in a mock epic. Finally, Smith and the students manage to lock the anarchist in the laboratory, where, they assume, he will be overcome by the gases they have hurled at him, and they can then apprehend him. They have overlooked, however, the fact that the lab has a window: all that the anarchist has to do is break the window, let in some fresh air to breathe and then crawl through it and escape – which is precisely what he does. The student narrator identifies the cause of the professor's failure: "Smith had been a little *too* intellectual in his treatment of the case, and scarcely vigorous enough" (110). For Smith, identifying and apprehending criminals is entirely a matter of applying logic and reason:

"After that thumbmark," said he when the class met next morning amid the debris of the laboratory – "after that thumbmark he ought to have surrendered at once. There was not a loophole left for him. Logically, at any rate, he was hopelessly cornered. For him to start throwing acids about, gentleman! It was a thing I did not anticipate. Most unfair of him. This kind of thing robs detective work of all its intellectual charms."

The logical Smith is astounded that the anarchist has not behaved logically.

Smith's description of detective work as ideally possessing "intellectual charms" is revealing. One of the most common criticisms of detective fiction, particularly the classic British variety stemming from Conan Doyle, is that it turns crime, a social problem, into an intellectual puzzle, a charming exercise in logic, and thus aestheticizes it. This is precisely how Somerset Smith regards the anarchist's crime – a charming diversion, in the form of an intellectual puzzle, from his routine of teaching. This view is anticipated in the story when, at the opening, one of the students remarks about the fire that has taken place across from the college:

The police...have a very good reason to regard this outrage as the work of an Anarchist, so the papers say. But nothing has transpired. However, it's very nice of the Anarchist to pick a house right in front of our windows. It will relieve the rigors of our last week's cramming immensely. (104-05)

The criminal "outrage" is regarded, from the student's perspective, as a diversion. And that is also what it is to the professor.

But even more than a diversion, detective work – like the science it is based on – is for Smith a rational enterprise, and those involved in it, including criminals, are assumed to be acting in way that can be explained rationally. But as my epigraph from Conrad shows, the actions of criminals, and particularly those of anarchists who throw bombs or burn down houses, cannot always be accounted for rationally. Wells's choice of an anarchist for his criminal is thus determined only in part because of the topicality of anarchism; he also chooses an anarchist because the acts of anarchists were carried out on assumptions contrary to those on which the new science of detection confidently rested. Science is predicated on the assumption of rationality and predictability: the universe is a rational place, thus events in it can be predicted. The conflict in the story between the detective and the criminal can also be formulated as a conflict between science and anarchism, reason and irrationality.

What is most conspicuously irrational about the anarchist's crime is its lack of motive. There appears to be no more reason for Chabôt's torching of the inspector's house than there was for Bourdin's attempted bombing of the Greenwich Observatory. For many contemporaries, the most puzzling aspect about the bombing was the absence of a clear motive. What exactly was Bourdin's objective, and why did he choose such an unlikely target as the Greenwich Observatory? The small bomb, which was not even powerful enough to kill him instantly, was unlikely (as Conrad points out) to cause any serious damage or to kill many people, and the observatory was a very different target from the crowded opera houses and cafes favored by the anarchists on the continent. The absence of an obvious motive has, inevitably, created an opportunity for conspiracy theorists to rush in. The most popular theory was that Bourdin was duped by an *agent provocateur* into carrying the bomb. His brother-in-law was widely suspected of being a police informer, and anarchists and their sympathizers were convinced that the whole incident was inspired by a secret agent working for a foreign government that wanted England to change its rather lax attitude to foreign anarchists, who were taking advantage

of its tolerant laws. This assumption is, of course, the premise of Conrad's *Secret Agent*.

In addition to the failure to apprehend the criminal, there is, then, one other convention of the detective story that Wells deliberately violates: the explanation of the criminal's motive. What is surprising about Wells's detective story is that the professor never even raises the question of Chabôt's motive. The fact that he is an anarchist is, for Smith, enough to account for his actions – throwing bombs and starting fires is, after all, simply what anarchists do. Smith is so narrowly focused on scientific methodology – demonstrating the usefulness of fingerprints – in crime investigations that it never occurs to him to ask what the anarchist's motive was. In "The Stolen Bacillus," Wells reveals the thoughts of the anarchist, exposing his petty, personal motives, as he exultantly escapes with the culture of bacilli that he has stolen:

How brilliantly he had planned it, forged his letter of introduction and got into the laboratory, and how brilliantly he had seized the opportunity! The world should hear of him at last. All those people who had sneered at him, neglected him, preferred other people to him, found his company undesirable, should consider him at last. Death, death, death! They had always treated him as a man of no importance. All the world had been a conspiracy to keep him under. (11-2)<sup>5</sup>

But the mind of the anarchist in "The Thumbmark" remains forever inaccessible to the detective, the narrator, and the reader; hence, the motive for his crime, like that of Martial Bourdin, is never revealed. In the first Holmes story, *A Study in Scarlet* (1887), Watson reads a magazine article by Holmes in which he "claimed by a momentary expression, a twitch of a muscle or a glance of an eye, to fathom a man's inmost thoughts" (18). But detecting the mystery of human motives, Wells's story implies, is not nearly as easy as detecting fingerprints.

Wells's violations of the conventions of the classic detective story in "The Thumbmark" are not simply a formal exercise. They are related to Wells's belief

<sup>5</sup> The same motivation reappears three years later in Wells's *The Invisible Man*.

that his contemporaries were placing too much blind faith in science. The science of detection could certainly answer empirical questions concerning the identity of the criminal (as Galton had demonstrated), as well as the method used to commit the crime. But often, Wells implies, particularly in the case of politically motivated crimes, science is unable to throw any real light on the most interesting question: why? In *Detective Fiction and the Rise of Forensic Science*, Ronald Thomas says,

At the center of virtually every detective story is a body upon which the literary detective focuses his gaze and employs his unique interpretative powers. His goal is to explain an event that seems to be inexplicable to everyone else. At stake is not just the identification of a dead victim or an unknown suspect, but the demonstration of the power invested in certain forensic devices embodied in the figure of the literary detective – the fingerprint, the mug shot, or the lie detector, for example, all of which enable the detective to read the clues to a mystery that is written in the suspect body. (2)

But if the detective's goal is "to explain an event that seems to be inexplicable," then Somerset Smith has surely failed, since the burning down of the inspector's house, like the attempted bombing of the Greenwich Observatory, remains inexplicable. The power of such forensic devices as fingerprints is revealed to be limited. Thus Wells's comic story seriously questions the widespread assumption at the end of the nineteenth century that the scientific solution to all problems, including the problem of crime, was close at hand. Wells knew that it was not – as the series of scientific romances he would go on to publish over the next few years brilliantly demonstrates.

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## Class Consciousness, Critter Collecting, and Climatic Conditions: Post-Victorian Existentialism in the "Morphing" Victorian Scientist

Jill E. Wagner

I am convinced there are degrees of being conditioned and that there is an area where many people – if society allows – can achieve moments or periods of comparative freedom. I think it is very necessary to cling to that, until science can categorically prove that all is conditioned. I now think of existentialism as a kind of literary metaphor. – John Fowles

More than a century before John Fowles' novel *The French Lieutenant's Woman* and more than one hundred and thirty years before A. S. Byatt's novella "Morpho Eugenia," "Evolution was in the Victorian air" (Tarbox 79). Charles Darwin's theory of evolution as presented in *On the Origin of Species* in 1859 not surprisingly conjured a variety of impassioned responses from the British public. It carried significant implications beyond the test tubes and specimen cabinets of the laboratory, concerning "understanding of knowledge in general and... understanding of human concepts and purpose in particular" (Smith 217). It also confronted previously sacrosanct religious beliefs. Darwin's theory repudiates Lamarckian evolution by emphasizing that human will is not a force for change, but rather that biological advancement hinges on natural selection; thus, to a large degree, evolution "replaces" the all-powerful God of the Biblical creation account in Genesis. For the first time, religious ideals battled a serious scientific adversary that brazenly questioned humanity's place in the universe.

In the battle between early Darwinism and the entrenched Judeo-Christian view of God and creation, frequently a third view emerged from the philosophical battle for meaning. The harsh realities of existentialism enabled humanity to grapple, however painfully, with questions of instinct and intellect, of free will and fate, of faith and "freedom." It revealed the possibility of change and adaptation

by choice. Existentialism provided Victorians, torn between competing ideologies, with alternative explanations for their world and their place in it.

I argue that Fowles and Byatt depict this vehement nineteenth-century philosophical battle and an emerging quasi-triumphant existentialist viewpoint through the figure of the Victorian scientist in their postmodern Victorian novels. This figure analytically explores evolution and religion while faced with social temptations and the resultant ramifications of subsequent moral and ethical decisions. Continually, the character is forced to choose between "his better and his worse self" (Fowles 282). The very real struggles with early Darwinism as faced by the Victorian scientist manifest themselves in the twentieth-century rewriting of the scientist's conceptions of his own class, his right to "collect" both nature and women, and his relationship to his natural environment. Virtually no aspect of Victorian life was left untouched by the arrival of *On the Origin of Species*, and these three means of self-identification are no exception. Through these three "lenses" of class consciousness, collecting affinity, and sense of natural superiority, the reader views characteristic Victorian scientists Charles Smithson's and William Adamson's varying levels of interpersonal transformation as a synthesis of evolution and conscious choice.

Clearly, Fowles and Byatt want the readers of their works to notice the gradual changes in their characters. First, they utilize the language of evolution in parts of the story "beyond" the story. The first word of Byatt's title, "Morpho," highlights the process of transformation. While the entire title refers to a literal butterfly, and by metaphoric suggestion, to Victorian scientist William Adamson's wife Eugenia Alabaster (and the gradual stripping away of her romanticized image), it also connotes change in general. "Morph" means "to transform" or "to be transformed," while "eugenesis" connotes virility and species perpetuation. Fowles includes scientific epigraphs in several chapters, and each short selection of scientific material forces the reader to analyze Fowles's following few pages via an evolutionary lens. For example, at the beginning of chapter nineteen, the reader learns, "As many more individuals of each species are born than can possibly survive; and as, consequently, there is a frequently recurring struggle for existence, it follows that any being, if

it vary however slightly in any manner profitable to itself, under the complex and sometimes varying conditions of life, will have a better chance of surviving, and thus be naturally selected" (Fowles 120). Thus, when the reader next reads of Smithson's mentor, outspoken Darwin supporter Dr. Michael Grogan, and learns his diagnosis of "Tragedy," Miss Sarah Woodruff, he or she is encouraged to evaluate Smithson, Grogan, and Woodruff as *evolving* beings. A second obvious nod to Darwin opens the text thirty-one chapters later, in which Smithson breaks off his engagement to socialite Ernestina Freeman (who, interestingly, is frightened by the prospect of sexual intercourse with her soon-to-be husband): "I think it inevitably follows, that as new species in the course of time are formed through natural selection, others will become rarer and rarer, and finally extinct. The forms which stand in closest competition with those underpinning modification and improvement will naturally suffer most" (293). Finally, before the last chapter, Fowles propels our attention forward to the twentieth-century and includes a quote from Martin Gardner's *The Ambidextrous Universe*, published in 1967: "Evolution is simply the process by which chance (the random mutations in the nucleic acid helix caused by natural radiation) cooperates with natural law to create living forms better and better adapted to survive" (361). Each of the three epigraphs encourages the reader to think about the role of transformation – biological or existential – in the chapter.

Both Fowles and Byatt also highlight change in their texts by emphasizing parallels between their scientists and other biological creatures. The most prevalent analogy in "Morpho Eugenia" is between the human and the insect. While Adamson declares, "Men are not ants," the narrator quickly adds that the scientist, nevertheless, "was hard put to not see his own life in terms of a diminishing analogy with the tiny creatures" (Byatt 16). In addition, the narrator discloses that Adamson has a "drone-nature" (121) like that of the bees he studies. In the fields, the scientist considers his role as a hunter, naturalist, and explorer but also as a "small animal afraid amongst threatening sounds and movements" (33), and in the jungle, he compares himself to "a dancing midge in a collecting bottle" (14). Similar to Adamson, Smithson is described in animalistic terms. In *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, he is compared to the monkeys from which he supposedly descends (or ascends) and also in terms

of other animals. He is no different from other well-adapted animals who succeed in the evolutionary struggle for existence. Smithson's hardiness, like that of the proverbial king of the jungle, is characterized by the narrator as "the survival of the fittest and best, *exemplia gratia* Charles Smithson" (Fowles 45). The narrator later notes of Smithson, "He himself belonged undoubtedly to the fittest" (134). Like all living creatures, though, Smithson will die and become "one of life's victims, one more ammonite caught in the vast movements of history, stranded now for eternity, a potential turned to a fossil" (262).

At first, Smithson's identification with "the fittest" is due partly to his sense of societal position. Smithson is proud of his own heritage and the class in which it places him. He was born into wealth. While joking about his own descent from monkeys, he considers himself a "titled ape" (Fowles 12), focusing on his lineage as his redeeming quality. Katherine Tarbox summarizes, "Charles thought...he was above the rest of his fellows – richer, smarter, better educated, and all the rest" (80). Smithson adopts the anthropocentric view of humanity common to Victorian gentlemen. He is also able successfully to navigate society's many layers, because as a gentleman, he is gifted with "cryptic coloration" (Fowles 118) – the ability to act appropriately with his servant Sam, his fiancée Ernestina, and Sarah.

One benefit of such a lofty heritage is the likelihood of inheritance when a wealthy family member dies, leaving behind his home and possessions. Thus, when Smithson is effectively "disinherited" by his betrothed uncle and the Winsyatt estate slips from his grasp midway through the novel, he feels "like a victim of evolution" (Fowles 228), subsequently pressured to work for Mr. Freeman in the city. He has no choice in the matter – or rather, he must face an employment decision for which he feels evolutionarily unprepared – as social evolution begins to favor the mercantile class.

By the final chapters of *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, Smithson does not rely on class for self-acceptance. While destined to be a Smithson, another Victorian gentleman like his father and his father's father, he is content to be unfashionable. For example, he adopts *Maud*, that poem "almost universally despised," as his favorite (Fowles 334), even though almost no one else admires it at the time. He

chooses to break off his engagement, to accept the Freeman family's castigation, and to end his relationship with Grogan. He leaves England behind for a time and heads to America where no one knows his lineage. If fate and social evolution allowed him to be born into wealth, his difficult choice to reject his ancestors' legacy has little to do with blind fate.

Adamson's class situation is more complex than Smithson's. Early in the novella, the reader learns that Adamson's father was a successful butcher, and the son is grateful to his father for the slaughterhouse skills he learned: skinning, mounting, and preserving specimens. However, he is without the kind of family connections and related respect that Smithson enjoys (or to which he is condemned). To make a name for himself, he must struggle on his own without the "gift" of elevated social position. When he recalls his early journals containing self-authored reminders that "he was *going* nowhere, and he meant to go far" (Byatt 10), now stored in a bank and out of sight but nevertheless on his mind, the reader recognizes his frustration. Partly as a result of his background, his financial situation is dire, but he matter-of-factly, not sadly, reports to Lady Alabaster the loss of all his earthly belongings – until he meets Eugenia. Wistfully dreaming of proposing to her, he reminds himself that he is "penniless and with no prospects" (15). For example, he never owned a dress suit, and in his previous two years at Ega he had no shoes, either (5). He lacks the simple possessions that Smithson takes for granted.

Though Adamson makes headway in the Alabaster household, gaining a voice and some influence because his scientific prowess benefits Harald Alabaster, Eugenia's father (himself ironically described in terms reminiscent of portraits of an aged Charles Darwin), he remains frustrated with his relative lack of status. With Eugenia seemingly unattainable, he laments his "kind of between-world" (Byatt 51). Adamson is not a servant, not a relative, not a worthy suitor. Even by some apparent miracle of fate, when Eugenia expresses her desire to marry Adamson and wishes her beloved to speak to her father about their engagement, he fears his "lack of prospects and breeding" make him ineligible (65). After his marriage to Eugenia, Adamson still doubts whether or not he should be with his wife.

Class consciousness splits the Alabaster household, and household servant Matty

Crompton, not Eugenia, enables Smithson to redefine his self-worth. When faced with Eugenia's half-brother Edgar's verbal aggression, Adamson defends himself. Edgar calls him a "miserable creature without breeding or courage," and Adamson takes the opportunity to define good breeding as his father's achievements and his own survival in hardship as courage (Byatt 72). Adamson's hard work, as well as his father's diligent toil, allows them both to reach their goals. By defending himself, Adamson chooses to "confront the Victorian social hierarchy and participate in its gradual dissolution" (Campbell 151). Matty then instills in Adamson beliefs in his own worth as a scientist and in the value of his writing. While Adamson believes he is "still meant to be a great man" (Byatt 11) early in the novella, possibly by discovering a new species of ants and thereby achieving greatness (12), Matty enables him to prove to himself that breeding is as *he* defines it. Sweat, toil, and choice, not class as a result of blind fate at the moment of conception, ultimately define Adamson's future.

Smithson and Adamson come from opposite ends of the social class system, yet they both eventually realize that class, determined at birth, cannot be an excuse for laziness or blindness to the evils of the system. While Smithson's staff see him as a "frivolous grasshopper" (Fowles 169) at the opening of the text, he recognizes that his own social ennui and satiation are no longer acceptable. Likewise, Adamson understands that he does not need to be embarrassed or hindered by his background in his choice to mold his self-identity.

While Fowles and Byatt focus on changes in their principle male characters' class consciousness, they also both create characters obsessed with collecting and classifying. Smithson exhibits little qualms about searching and taking pieces of nature for his collection; he is a collector – a "type" that Fowles repeatedly and harshly critiques, especially in his earlier novels, in the figures of eccentric Alphonse de Deukans and biology master Leverrier in *The Magus*, and most obviously butterfly collector and kidnapper Frederick Clegg in *The Collector* (who exhibits a scientific passion comparable to Adamson's). Collector Smithson's intentions on his initial visits to the Undercliff are to find fossils. In fact, his irrepressible glee is due to his scientific prowess in the Undercliff; he finds himself in a site ripe with possibility, a scientific paradise without restrictions.

Smithson demonstrates a similar “right” to “collect” women. His ancestors are “collectors of everything under the sun” (Fowles 16), and his interest in possessing a woman makes him fall nicely into their predetermined mold for him. Smithson recognizes Ernestina’s shortcomings but remains with her because she improves his social position. She is beautiful. She is fashionable. She is his showpiece. In an ironic twist, she also validates his motives for collecting *Micraster* tests. When Smithson finds a perfectly formed fossil specimen, he is perversely pleased with the difficulty of carrying such a heavy object, and he intends to give it to Ernestina with the plan to take it back after their marriage. He does not intend to give it away at all (46). One prize “specimen” – Ernestina – gives Smithson a reason to bolster his fossil collection and an opportunity to be greedy. The tests are also significant in that they emphasize Smithson’s “chance to evolve [that] comes largely through a biological impulse – his sexuality. Even the name and shape of the tests resembles those of testes” (Huffaker 110). Marriage for Smithson, then, offers another chance to be a dominant figure and to procreate, ensuring the survival of his name through blood.

By the end of the novel, Smithson loses interest in paleontology and donates his fossil collection to the Geological Museum and students (Fowles 333). His formerly most prized possessions find new homes with complete strangers. While Smithson finds pleasure in fossils new to him at Harvard (339), there is admiration but no mention of his former lust to possess them. The dead sterility of nature frozen in the rock no longer holds him in its power. Perhaps the thought of hoarding fossils even repels him to some extent. Collecting tests is a reminder of the past from which Smithson purges himself.

Also by the conclusion of the novel, Smithson no longer equates devotion to a woman as a mere hobby. He chooses Sarah; unlike Ernestina, she is not an automatic ticket to a secure pecuniary future. She is not a plaything. In his relationship with Sarah, Smithson exhibits a new sense of responsibility. He rejects the sexual double standard of his Victorian world, and he ends his engagement to Ernestina despite the devastating financial and societal ramifications of his decision. In the end, he must cope with existence without Ernestina or Sarah. He cannot “collect” either

woman for his own satisfaction. He learns that “the reality of another human being can never be possessed in terms of an object relationship” (Binns 26).

Smithson cannot “collect” his daughter Lalage either. Fowles introduces her, a perfect symbol of conjoined evolution and existentialism, at the conclusion of *The French Lieutenant’s Woman*. The little girl, her name meaning “babbling brook” in Greek, is Smithson’s and Sarah’s daughter. As Smithson’s progeny, she is an evolutionary triumph in the passing on of his genes. If Smithson is indeed “the last heir of a long line of landed aristocrats...[and] the last exemplar of a species in danger of extinction” (Onega 87), Lalage at least temporarily ensures the survival of his family. She is a new generation. Yet she is also the manifestation of Smithson’s deliberate *choice* to be with Sarah. Further, in one ending that Fowles proposes, Smithson realizes that Lalage is his daughter. In Fowles’ final ending, Smithson rushes from Sarah’s home without interacting with Lalage and therefore remains unaware of his part in the evolutionary process. Thus, in the final chapter, Lalage embodies both Darwinist triumph and existentialist consequences.

Unlike Fowles, Byatt does not depict collecting as a wholly debilitating pastime of the power-hungry. Rather, collecting reveals Adamson’s reverence for nature. Kathleen Coyne Kelly terms this “ebullient Wordsworthian naturalism” (105). The abilities to amass and catalog give Adamson a sense of purpose, and, unlike Smithson, he chooses to collect and categorize natural specimens without pressure from his heritage. As a young man, Byatt’s Victorian scientist is awash in nature’s magnificent diversity and abundance: “He wrote for a time in his journal of the wonders of divine Design, and his self-examination gave way insensibly to the recording of petals observed, leaf forms noted, marshes, hedges and tangled banks. His journal was for the first time alive with a purposeful happiness” (Byatt 11). He does not distinguish between creation (“Design”) and evolution (Darwin’s famous “entangled bank”). This fascination for collecting, with a wariness of its potential to make the collector act as an invincible lord over nature, remains consistent throughout the novella.

Collection does not entirely govern Adamson’s existence. Rather, his specimens are a means to a greater human-centered end – they are his ticket into the Alabaster

household. When he loses much of his collection in a shipwreck, the narrator assures the reader that Adamson “was still full of the survivor’s simple pleasure in being alive” (Byatt 13). In fact, by early summer in the Alabaster household, Adamson begins to lose interest in his cataloging employment (51). Other preoccupations take hold: wood ants, Matty’s sage advice, and Eugenia’s tantalizing presence.

Adamson views the “slippery slope” of collection and remains wary of it. As a scientist, he recognizes that having knowledge and withholding it from others (or, as Smithson does, giving specimens away only to take them back) runs counter to true scientific – and ethical – pursuits. Understandably, when Harald condemns “plundering the Earth of her beauties and curiosities and then not making use of them for what alone justifies our depredations – the promotion of useful knowledge, of human wonder” (Byatt 19), Adamson does not contradict him. Rather, he takes on the challenge of identifying and cataloging Harald’s collection of specimens. It becomes a “labour of love” (31). In addition, he agrees to teach science to the children of the family, and though he initially feels coerced, he discovers that he likes spending time outdoors exploring with the children (33). When he captures caterpillars, he does so only to create Eugenia’s coveted “butterfly cloud” (56). Repeatedly, he uses his ability to identify and manipulate specimens to please others or add to their scientific knowledge. He avoids the potential pitfall of collecting: “An object in a collector’s hoard usually stays there. Often, nobody but the collector sees it. The joy of collecting, in fact, springs largely from not sharing. Like a miser, the collector gets less pleasure from owning an object than from knowing that others do not own it. In the meantime, the object loses its color and force; it becomes the reverse of a mystery” (Wolfe 6-7).

Adamson’s devotion to collecting and classification may even be a positive attribute in “Morpho Eugenia.” In *A. S. Byatt and the Heliotropic Imagination*, Jane Campbell suggests that the scientist’s classification job helps him conduct another “more crucial kind of sorting” (149); she refers to the discernment between reality and illusion that Adamson develops. He needs to stop defining “women” collectively but rather as a group of individuals with varying traits. Eugenia and Matty cannot meet Adamson’s needs or fulfill his fantasies in the same way; they

are vastly different individuals, not mere female bodies designed for Adamson’s enjoyment.

While Adamson’s attitude toward collecting elements of nature differs markedly from Smithson’s, largely remaining the same throughout the novella, his attitude toward manipulating women for his own pleasure is similar to Smithson’s. According to the “back-story,” Adamson danced with “olive-skinned and velvet-brown ladies of doubtful virtue and no virtue” (Byatt 5); he enjoyed “being grabbed and nuzzled and rubbed and cuddled with great vigor by women with brown breasts glistening with sweat and oil, and with shameless fingers” (7) in the tropical jungles of his past. In both cases, the women remain faceless, unnamed. They are expendable sources of pleasure. In the same paragraph, the narrator notes Adamson’s similar thoughts of fleeting physical pleasure while dancing with the youngest Alabaster daughter, Enid: “There was something alarming in the soft, white creature in his arms, at once so milky-wholesome and so airily untouchable” (5). At this early stage in the novella, the only distinction that Adamson makes between desirable women is the color of their skin, which, in his mind, indicates their sexual accessibility. He relishes the promiscuity of the dark-skinned women in his past, and he is tantalized by the forbidden qualities of those with white skin. Both “types” of women are desirable; significantly, none are identified by name.

Adamson’s need to possess especially comes to light in his relationship with Eugenia. During his first dance with her, the narrator describes their physical connection as “Her presence within his grasp – that was how he thought of it” (Byatt 7). He uses terms of ownership even in that first encounter. That night, he writes and twice rewrites, “I shall die if I cannot have her” (15). Significantly, that evening he dreams of hunting a flock of golden birds always “just out of reach” (16). Eugenia, like the birds, is a prey to be captured and possessed. When they do marry, the narrator reveals that Adamson “*had* Eugenia” (121), emphasizing ownership. Adamson even thinks of his return to his wife’s bed after the birth of their children in clinical terms; he is pleased with wet nurse Peggy because her presence “restored Eugenia’s body *to use*” (83; emphasis added). For him, sex is apparently a process of taking, not mutual sharing.

Ironically, Eugenia undermines Adamson's sense of successful possession over her. She eventually proves that she will not be owned. Adamson supposedly fathers several children with his wife, but the reader can infer that the children are not his own. "His" progeny all share a shocking resemblance to the Alabaster family, and the reader learns that Edgar and Eugenia have been committing incest for years, before Adamson's arrival and throughout his courtship and marriage. While Smithson presumably does not want any children with Sarah but discovers he has a daughter in *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, Adamson thinks he has children but does not in "Morpho Eugenia." As Byatt bares one of the oldest familial taboos in her novella, that of incest resulting in children, she presents an uncomfortably provocative mix of evolutionary triumph – procreation – with the unexpected twisting of the scientist's intentions. Adamson wants children, and a new generation is born. But this "triumph" of nature is not what it seems. Byatt thus underscores existentialist ideas with an unexpected Darwinist struggle.

During the same period as his frenetic expression of sexuality with Eugenia, Adamson begins to see Matty in a new way. He ponders her daily activities and her role in the Alabaster household, and she prompts his study of the ant nests and helps him publish an interesting and scholarly examination of warring ant colonies titled *The Swarming City*. She intrigues him first in a non-sexual way, unlike the majority of the women he describes. He admits to thinking of her as a sexless being (Byatt 121) – but that in itself begins to interest him. Or rather, other characteristics beyond the physical begin to draw his attention. Matty will not allow herself to be "collected"; she possesses "a kind of suppressed fierceness.... She had herself very much in her own control, and he thought he preferred to leave things that way" (107).

Adamson then begins to notice Matty's physicality and emotions. On one excursion to the ant colonies, Adamson smells her scent, "a slightly acrid armpit smell, inside the cotton sleeves in the sunlight, mixed with a tincture of what might be lemon verbena, and a whiff of lavender, either from her soap, or from the herbs in the drawer where her shirts were laid up. He breathed more deeply. The hunter in him, now in abeyance, had a highly developed sense of smell" (Byatt 111-12). He

is drawn to her natural scent, her simple practicality. He is also drawn away from "his white and sterile marriage" (Levenson 167). He simultaneously realizes Matty is an emotional creature, not "dry," as he frequently describes her. His choice of adjective is especially interesting when compared to the metaphors of fluidity that categorize Eugenia: her shoulders rising "like Aphrodite from the foam" (Byatt 7) and her "fluid sex" (12), for example.

By the novella's conclusion, Adamson gives up his need to have women in his power. He leaves Eugenia, now revealed as an adulterer committing incest with her arrogant brother Edgar. He agrees to Matty's desire to accompany him back to the harsh Amazonian tropics so different from the peaceful English meadows she knows. She "calls the shots" and will not take "no" for an answer. One can thus presume that Adamson will no longer be flirting with unnamed women in the jungle but rather forming a meaningful relationship with a woman he considers his equal partner. He relinquishes his need to possess women as sexual objects.

He also reveals heartfelt concern for servant girl Amy's plight; Edgar impregnated her, and she was dismissed. Earlier, Adamson had little thought for the outcome of his past sexual relationships – the possibility that he has children uncared for in Brazil. Now, he wishes for Amy's and her unborn child's well-being, and he hardly knows Amy. Byatt again critiques evolution with the presence of yet another one of Edgar's children. In a brazen statement against evolution and "survival of the fittest" in which creatures look out for their own preservation and that of their family, Adamson, as a man with power, wishes to aid a weak creature unrelated to him – even if doing so threatens his own "fitness" in the Alabaster household.

The transformation of Smithson's and Adamson's possessive attitudes toward science and women takes place in both *The French Lieutenant's Woman* and "Morpho Eugenia" against prominent natural backdrops. Thus, the reader cannot fail to notice the male characters' relationships to their natural environment and how these relationships change over the course of the authors' tales. Smithson's relationship to the wild Undercliff is the strongest example of his negotiation with evolution in regard to his sense of self-identity. Throughout the course of the book, Smithson makes five visits to the Undercliff, "the novel's seedbed for growth and

abundance" (Wolfe 153), and his relationship to his natural surroundings changes each time. Smithson adapts from a self-centered "scientist" and supposed master over the natural environment to a being cut off from the beauty around him. Among the trees, Smithson's sense of superiority over his surroundings, his belief in his privileged position on an evolutionary pinnacle, is shaken. The roles of human as god and natural environment as subject are inverted, and "social arrangements are thrown askew" (153). His sense of superiority disintegrates over the course of his five visits to the Undercliff, with the result that he begins to view his place in the world as rightly much more insignificant.

On the morning of his first visit to the Undercliff, the natural environment sends out a magic call to the Victorian gentleman. Having seen Sarah from afar but unaware of her sanctuary in the Undercliff, Smithson treks into the area with the solitary intention of furthering his dilettantish naturalist pursuits typical of Victorian men of his class. He is "caught up in the sensational growth of science" (Kucich 120). The aptly named Charles, like the more famous "Charles," pursues his hobby with the intent of a hound hot on the trail. The reader finds him engaging in that famous "love of the chase...an inherent delight in man – a relic of an instinctive passion," as described in the final passages of Darwin's *The Voyage of the Beagle*.

Smithson's attitude toward nature at this early stage in his experiences in the Undercliff reveals his feeling of mastery. The narrator notes Smithson's sudden "necessity of catching a small crab" (Fowles 44; emphasis added). Rather than relishing the sunshine around him, his need to capture, collect, and classify overtakes him. The narrator's description of the crab's "vigilant stalked eyes" (emphasis added) can thus be read in two ways: as biological ophthalmologic structures or the crab's status as defenseless prey. The second reading further emphasizes the master-servant relationship between Smithson and his natural surroundings, similar to his initial attitudes toward both Ernestina and Sarah.

Like Smithson's first visit to the Undercliff, his second visit is prompted by his scientific aspirations and his need to collect. The narrator mentions Smithson noticing "considerable piles of fallen flint" near Sarah's hideout on his first visit and

assures the reader that "It was certainly this which made him walk that afternoon to the place" (Fowles 97). There is little mention of Smithson's surroundings.

On these third and fourth visits, Smithson's masterly attitude is clearly evolving. He is essentially powerless, though still in pursuit of ammonites. The narrator specifically describes the "rough woods" in which Smithson will locate Miss Woodruff: the "ivy-clad ash trees" are "enormous,...among the largest of the species in England...Charles felt dwarfed, pleasantly dwarfed" (Fowles 112). For the first time, Smithson is conscious of his tiny part in the grand scheme of evolution. Smithson is not daunted by his realization: he seems surprisingly content to be "dwarfed." When Sarah leads him to a secluded place, he praises her "genius for finding eyries" as the narrator notes his admiring gaze on the flowers around him (135). There Smithson is on top of the world, reveling in the glory of the wild place rather than his supposed mastery over all he sees.

On Smithson's final trip to the Undercliff, he is no longer a god in control of his surroundings, eager to find and take evolutionary remnants home as monuments to his own evolutionary triumph and ability to collect. Instead, Fowles portrays him as a penitent, observing what he cannot touch. The trees that dwarf Smithson on his third visit now form a temple of sorts, as the narrator lavishly describes "their dewy green vaults of young leaves; there was something mysteriously religious about them, but of a religion before religion; a druid balm, a green sweetness over all" (Fowles 191). The Undercliff's allure is spelled out in spiritual terms as Fowles reaches into the evolutionary past to unearth the place's enduringness. Its longevity is yet another reminder of Smithson's relative insignificance.

In America, Smithson expresses new appreciation for his surroundings and their wild untameability. He delights in American nature – not in its cultured estates but rather in "the delicious newness of the nature: new plants, new trees, new birds" (Fowles 339). His experiences in the Undercliff show him that, on an evolutionary scale, he is relatively insignificant no matter where he goes, and he must choose to be a better man. His class, his legacy, and his scientific acumen – all "gifts" of evolution – no longer permit stagnant living in a Victorian world.

While the reader encounters the transformation of Smithson's relationship to

his natural environment largely in his repeated visits to the Undercliff, Adamson's relationship to the natural world does not change significantly and is revealed in several outdoor settings. The first is the jungle. In the Amazon, Adamson records "his smallness in the face of the river and the forest, his determination to survive" (Byatt 13). His view of the Amazon is not all rosy, as he speaks of the Murderer Sipo tree that sucks the life from its host (35). In the harsh tropics, one must kill or be killed. Similarly, Adamson remembers his precarious condition in the jungle: "a mind in a fragile body, under the sun and the moon, bathed in sweat and river-steam, punctured by mosquitoes and biting flies, senses alert for snakes and creatures on which he could feed" (85). He does not romanticize nature. Rather, he acknowledges his evolutionary insignificance in the face of a beautiful but cruel world even before arriving at the Alabaster home.

In England, meadows must of necessity be Adamson's temporary substitute for the jungle's "millions of unexplored miles, unknown creatures" (Byatt 18) before he returns with Matty to the Amazon. Early in the novella, he expresses his admiration for the fields. He tells Matty his ideal image of a springtime English meadow, matching fantasy with reality: "just as it is today, with the flowers, and the new grass, and the early blossom, and the little breeze lifting everything, and the earth smelling fresh after the rain. It seemed to me that such scenes were truly Paradise – that there was not anything on earth more beautiful than an English bank in flower, than an English mixed hedge, with roses and hawthorn, honeysuckle and bryony" (Byatt 34). He finds pleasure in the present but will eventually return to the jungle.

In conclusion, the reader of both *The French Lieutenant's Woman* and "Morpho Eugenia" encounters two Victorian scientists who at first glance may seem understandably swept up in early Darwinist thought. This is true: Smithson and Adamson do pay homage to ideas presented in *On the Origin of Species*, as they are part of Darwin's nineteenth-century world. But while they (and their narrators) couch much of their tales in evolutionary language of struggle and survival, they also show an existential view of existence. They realize that their identities are not solely biologically determined but rather are formed by their decisions – their

freedom to choose. Focusing on Adamson, Campbell notes the scientist's thought process enabling "a moment of freedom and choice" (158), and a similar argument can be made for Smithson. By examining the scientists' class consciousness, their sense of their right to "collect" both nature and women, and their relationship to the natural environment, the reader sees that they evolve because their social and natural environments allow them and because they decide to do so.

Although both Smithson and Adamson are different men at the end of their respective texts than they were at the beginning, the extent of their transformation markedly differs. Smithson's sense of class, his right to possess nature and women, and his view of the environment are polar opposites at either end of *The French Lieutenant's Woman*. In contrast, Adamson's specimen collecting and realistic relationship with the environment largely remain unchanged throughout the novella. If both scientists face the same social milieu and the same philosophical conundrum Darwinism poses in mid-nineteenth-century England, why do twentieth-century writers Fowles and Byatt depict the Victorian scientist so similarly in many ways and yet so differently in others?

One answer is, simply put, that every person is an individual. Personal conceptions of a higher power, our literal surroundings, and our sense of legacy all color our sense of self and the choices we make. Reflecting on the past, Sally Shuttleworth suggests, "the Victorian age is best encapsulated...in the *individualised* crisis of faith and the discourses that served to articulate it" (154; emphasis added). What better way to convey the earth-shattering effects on humanity brought about by the publication of *On the Origin of Species* than to focus on the individual struggle?

Another answer is that, in a postmodern world, texts like *The French Lieutenant's Woman* and "Morpho Eugenia" are variations on a theme, affected by the differing historical and cultural moments in which they were written. They are, in evolutionary terms, branches of the same biological tree. In other words, the reader is presented with two very similar Victorian scientists facing the conundrum of early Darwinism – and two authors' dissimilar "solutions." The "trunk" is the theme of Darwinist evolutionary struggle, and *The French Lieutenant's Woman* and "Morpho Eugenia" are two branches, or two stages in the evolution of literary development.



A third plausible answer is that evolution, religion, existentialism, and other explanations for the meaning of existence that came into conflict in the Victorian Age, though at war with each other in many ways, nevertheless are inextricable even in the present; Mira Stout explains, "For the Victorians, everything was part of one thing: science, religion, philosophy" (14). There are truths to each philosophy. Fowles himself "realizes that freedom of will is not absolute, that it is relative to the freedom allowed by the biological, social, and environmental conditions of each of us" (Olshen 11). Then and now, all of us, like Smithson and Adamson, are shaped by environment, class, and gender. We maintain our interest in evolutionary thought, and we continue to choose between environmental preservation and cultural and technological "advances" that elevate the human over his or her surroundings.

Our society, so eager to be post-Victorian, still faces the same philosophical concerns, the same age-old questions, the same temptations Smithson, Adamson, and presumably scores of other Victorian scientists faced. We choose to fight fate in small ways even as we acknowledge its pull. Sometimes we succumb, as Smithson and Adamson do. Sometimes we triumph, as Smithson and Adamson also do. So the struggle continues as Fowles and Byatt hold their texts to our faces and we see, as in a mirror, ourselves.

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## **There is Something Wilde about Mary: The Eccles Bequest**

*Nikolai Endres*

This past summer, I had the opportunity to sift through the Eccles Bequest at the British Library.<sup>1</sup> Mary, Viscountess Eccles (1912-2003), and her first husband Donald Frizell Hyde (1909-66), a founder of the British Library, initially acquired Oscar Wilde's correspondence in collaboration with Reginald Turner, which eventually expanded into the most comprehensive collection of Wilde memorabilia in private hands. In 2003, the collection was bequeathed to the British Library and delivered over several years. The bequest now complements the Library's existing selection of Wilde manuscripts (index numbers 37942-37948 and 50141 A+B), which were presented by his literary executor Robert Ross. The collection includes books, manuscripts, works of art, portraits, photographs, and other memorabilia relating to Wilde and his circle. According to the British Library website (<http://www.bl.uk>), the collection contains over 1,500 items, comprises 266 volumes, and is valued at over 3.7 million pounds (about \$7.5 million). The bequest is arranged as follows:

- 1) literary papers of Wilde and others: 81619-81689
- 2) correspondence of Wilde and others: 81690-81730
- 3) general correspondence collected by Mary Eccles: 81731-81747
- 4) notebooks of Wilde and others: 81748-81750
- 5) family papers of Wilde and others: 81751-81756
- 6) papers relating to the trial and imprisonment of Wilde: 81757-81758
- 7) financial and business papers of Wilde and others: 81759-81770
- 8) programmes, reviews, etc. of Wilde and others: 81771-81781
- 9) papers relating to forgeries of Wilde manuscripts: 81782
- 10) portraits and photographs of Wilde and others: 81783-81821

<sup>1</sup> See Catriona Finlayson, "Wilde about Mary: the Legacy of Lady Eccles," British Library press release, 2 February, 2005.

- 11) scrapbooks: 81822-81829
- 12) miscellaneous: 81830-81845
- 13) Eccles papers relating to the creation of the collection: 81846-81855
- 14) research material of Mary Eccles: 81856-81884

The catalogue is arranged by material type rather than by individual. Within each section, the Wilde material is catalogued first, followed by items relating to other people in alphabetical order. The holdings can be searched at

<http://www.bl.uk/catalogues/manuscripts/INDEX.asp>

I will now give a highly eclectic sampling of this treasure-trove, suggesting various avenues for further research, beginning with some anecdotal items. Wilde, who always enjoyed the high life, was both a gourmet and gourmand. An 1891 menu from the Marguery restaurant shows his penchant for oysters, quail, ragout of roasted game, and beef sautéed with truffles; on the reverse he wrote his most (in)famous quip: "The only way to get rid of a temptation is to yield to it" (81830). A bill from the Grand Hotel Voltaire, Paris from March 1889 (81759B) details Wilde's room service while he was staying in rooms 11-12, overlooking the Seine and writing *The Duchess of Padua*. A bill from the Savoy dated March 1893 testifies to Wilde's predilection for daily wines, liqueurs, and other spirits, not to forget his obligatory journal (81759A). Also available is Wilde's account book for Channon's Grocers, Chelsea, listing all the delicacies delivered to Tite Street from 1892 to 1895 – to Constance's chagrin at her husband's extravagance (81761).

Item 81733 contains the medical certificate issued by the Parisian doctors Claiss and Tucker three days before Wilde's death, plus Robert Ross's long eye-witness account of Wilde's agony; item 81752 shows the marriage license of Oscar Wilde and Constance Lloyd, dated 28 May 1884 and signed by W. P. Moore, Registrar.

Of historical interest is Wilde's 10-page essay "Hellenism" of 1877, which reveals his stance on Greek religion and politics (81641). In item 81634 we find printed proof sheets with autograph corrections for the first edition of *The Ballad of Reading Gaol*, carefully embedded in a black full morocco slipcase with blue cloth flapcase. Papers relating to *De Profundis* can be found in 81645-81647, which helps scholars trace or retrace its convoluted publication history. Box 81774 collects

newspaper articles from *The Utica Daily Press* relating to Wilde's tour of the United States. Box 81757 houses newspaper cuttings from *The Times* relating to Wilde's trial.

A fascinating part of the bequest includes various unpublished letters. For example, scholars can read the correspondence of Constance Wilde and Vyvyan Holland for the crucial years of 1891-98 (81727), plus numerous epistolary exchanges with Frank Harris, Robert Ross, George Bernard Shaw, and of course Lord Alfred Douglas. The bibliophile will even stumble upon photocopies of some letters of Hester Piozzi (formerly Thrale), companion to the great Dr. Johnson (81878).

Without doubt, the most moving items are the dozens of photographs. In 81783A+B we find Wilde at Magdalene, Wilde in Greek costume while travelling, Wilde and others in cricket gear, Wilde in aesthetic dress, cabinet sized portraits of Wilde and Douglas, copies of photographs from the original production of *The Importance of Being Earnest*, Wilde and Douglas reunited in Naples in 1897, Wilde in St. Peter's Square Rome (one of the last photographs of him), photographs of the room in which Wilde died taken by Robert Sherard in 1904, and also of Wilde's first tomb. Item 81785 assembles oversize photographs of Oscar Wilde from 1882-1900, and item 81805, an oversize photograph of Lord Alfred Douglas taken in Cairo (no date). Item 81799 compiles, among other things, photographs taken by H. Montgomery Hyde of the birthplace of Douglas and the church in which he was baptised, pictures of Olive Douglas, photographs taken by Hyde of the psychiatric hospital where their son Raymond Douglas stayed, four photographs of the tomb of Oscar Wilde at Père Lachaise cemetery in Paris, and a picture of John Gray (the model, some say, for Dorian Gray). Last but not least, item 81784 includes various caricatures of Wilde, such as a pen and ink drawing by James Edward Kelly inscribed "To Dr Marcus M Benjamin from his friend Kelly I sketched Oscar Wilde from life Jan 1882" that was used for the American edition of *De Profundis*; a copy of a print by Toulouse Lautrec of Wilde; an etching of Oscar Wilde by an unknown artist; and sundry postcards.

Please contact me for further information at [nikolai.endres@wku.edu](mailto:nikolai.endres@wku.edu). My

thanks to Laura Fielder, who let me take a peek at the Wildean iceberg while she was still cataloguing the bequest.<sup>2</sup>

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## Against "All that rowdy lot": Trollope's Grudge Against Disraeli

*Karen Kurt Teal*

Benjamin Disraeli suffered under Anthony Trollope's pen. Trollope attacked the respected and popular prime minister in three well-known characterizations: Ferdinand Lopez in *The Prime Minister* (1876), Augustus Melmotte in *The Way We Live Now* (1874), and Joseph Emilius of *The Eustace Diamonds* (1873) and *Phineas Redux* (1874). The most obvious reason for these attacks appeared to be the prime minister's Jewish heritage. However, the types of attack were varied. The less well-known characterization of Disraeli in the person of Mr. Daubeny, the opportunistic prime minister of the Palliser novels, is emptied of anti-semitic slurs. The first three depictions were memorable and damaging, like boxing, without the gloves. Trollope's narrator tended to leaven all negative characterizations with a bit of good; even Emilius has a "manliness" about him. Nevertheless, in these depictions of Disraeli, the mediating qualities are quite thin, which causes readers to wonder about Trollope's narrator, who is usually ready to give every character his due. A closer examination of Trollope's letters, journalism, and public speeches reveals more about his long-standing distrust of Benjamin Disraeli.

Each of these characterizations contains the programmatic antisemitism of the era. Scott's *Ivanhoe* dismisses the Jewish characters from England at the close of the action; Dickens's Fagin leaves a lurid impression; Mark Lemmon, a Jewish confrère of Dickens who should have known better, published antisemitic cartoons in *Punch*; even Disraeli, who fought a life-long battle against the old prejudices, wrote some of the most surprising antisemitic literature of all in the character Sidonia of *Tancred* (1847), who insists that "All is race." Antisemitism was as common in the Victorian age as ambition and coal smoke. Jewish newcomers settling in London were lumped together with all the other recent arrivals, forming an exotic encampment of humanity in the City and east of Gracechurch and Bishopsgate Streets, and inspiring strong literary reactions. In *Oliver Twist* (1838), the narrator reminds the reader in an eerie passage that, as the wealthy class moved to the

<sup>2</sup> The research for this project was facilitated by a fellowship from the Faculty Scholarship Council at Western Kentucky University.

west end of London, they abandoned their noble family houses in the City to the undeserving masses engaged in nefarious activities. Thus Dickens describes the house of Fagin:

It was a very dirty place. The rooms upstairs had great high wooden chimney-pieces and large doors, with paneled walls and cornices to the ceiling; which, although they were black with neglect and dust, were ornamented in various ways. From all of these tokens Oliver concluded that a long time ago, before the Jew was born, it had belonged to better people, and had perhaps been quite gay and handsome: dismal and dreary as it looked now. (88)

In Dickens's works, this no-man's land was a place to which one was abducted; in the works of Doyle, the disorderly east-London was a place to be probed and policed. In the East End, William Booth found a degenerating swamp of sub-humanity and wrote about it in his book, *In Darkest England*. Trollope's work reflects these widespread attitudes. But I want to argue that, at least for Trollope's narrator, antisemitism was a cover for the author's jealousy of Disraeli, indicating a philosophical dismay over the politician's policies and showing a great difference in the two men's world-views as they are revealed in their novels about the privileged classes.

At the outset of Disraeli's second term as prime minister, Trollope parodied him in *Phineas Redux* (1874). Because of the scrutiny given in the press to the politicians of the day, readers were well aware of Disraeli's particular speaking style and personal history. Trollope capitalized on this awareness, and his characterizations of Disraeli would have been instantly recognized by his public (Hertz 385). In *Phineas Redux*, the preacher Joseph Emilius is a fashionable minister to the aristocracy. It is suspected that he is a converted Jew. Through an eloquence and charm that the narrator dubs "greasy," Emilius has made his way into the circles of social prominence, and he marries a wealthy English widow. Disraeli was noted for his magnificent and quick-witted speeches and debates, for his personal charm, and for a preacher-like manner at the podium. He also married a wealthy widow. Trollope's narrator warns the reader that Emilius assumes qualities that he really does not have, and once he is revealed to be of undistinguished background – a *ci-devant* Jew

from Prague, a bigamist, and also a murderer – he is dropped from the text.

The second notable representation is the character Augustus Melmotte, a financier in *The Way We Live Now* (1875). Characterized as a "fat alien Jew" with blurry nationality, Melmotte bursts suddenly on the scene. He involves many impoverished English aristocrats in his effort to establish a dubious financial operation in London, and his brief financial reign involves hosting an expensive dinner for the King of China and buying a seat in Parliament. When Melmotte's real estate swindles are discovered, he takes his life. The depiction seethes with abuse of power, falseness on a gargantuan scale, and an implication that its subject does not know his place. Trollope's fictional treatment of Disraeli is brutal and tasteless. Mullen remarks that in his depictions of Disraeli, Trollope was "at times quite irrational" (560). *The Spectator* called the novel "a sewage farm" (Smalley 397). Trollope admitted that the satire was too harsh, but he never completely understood what angered readers (*Autobiography* 295-96).

Trollope introduced another crypto-Jew named Ferdinand Lopez in his novel *The Prime Minister* (1876). Lopez, an attractive, well-dressed and suave political aspirant, makes his way into an English home and steals away a daughter. The father calls Lopez "a greasy adventurer out of the gutter" (126). The continuous reference to Lopez's blurry background – Spanish or Portuguese? – is, according to Bertha Hertz, a "shot at Disraeli, who was reputed to be both of Spanish (not true) and of Italian (true) descent" (385). The frequent use of the word "adventurer" is meant to call up the slurs aimed at Disraeli. Hertz notes that the term was so frequently leveled at Disraeli "that Victorians could guess the parallel in Lopez." Poor Lopez's hectic attempts to win aristocratic patronage for his political career through Lady Glencora Palliser are supposed to be a parody of Disraeli's attempts to make a social splash and pick up political support in the 1830s (386). This was Disraeli: he did not have it all – indeed, friends had to purchase an estate for him so he could run in a general election (Blake 251). Lopez's ultimate destruction clearly is due to his alleged "crime" of having penetrated a closed group of Christian English people. His elegant demeanor and deceptiveness are impugned in the narration as typical tools for a swift and unmerited rise into aristocratic circles.

Antisemitism fueled these extremely ugly portraits; at least, that is what a limited reading would reveal. However, critics Robert Tracy, Bill Overton, and Bradford Booth find such reasoning facile. The antisemitism expressed is inconsistent. In a less well-known work, *Nina Balatka* (1866), the efforts of a Jewish man and a Christian woman to unite are sympathetically portrayed. R. C. Terry notes that in this text Trollope pushes “beyond the stereotype of Jewish greed and hard-bargaining to the center of Anton’s lonely sensibility” (392). Terry also remarks that Anton Trendellsohn, the Jewish lover, is significantly one of the few Trollopian characters to bear the author’s initials.<sup>1</sup> Overton remarks that “Trollope has not appealed to anti-semitic prejudice but dramatized it” when the force of his satire turns against the bigoted squirearchy of *The Way We Live Now*, and takes a Jewish merchant’s side in his bid to marry the daughter of a Tory squire (10). Hertz determined that Mr. Longstaffe, the squire, voices Trollope’s opinion when he says: “the single, terrible departure from ancient standards of British virtue...was the admission of Jews into Parliament” (390); but she fails to see the irony of Longstaffe’s mismanagement of family and money, which has brought him to his present state of embarrassment. Like Roger Carbury, who was too thickheaded to see his own role in his misery, Trollope ridiculed those who sought to blame others for their own errors.

Although Bradford Booth thinks that Trollope’s feelings about Jews are indeterminate, he remarks: “it is pretty clear that [Trollope] could use Jews objectively for artistic purposes, seeing in them the same mixed qualities of mind and heart that animated [the] Anglicans of Barchester” (31). Furthermore, Booth sees Dickens’s Fagin and Riah as creations for the “critically naïve,” while Trollope’s Trendellsohn is written for the “critically mature.” Robert Tracy suggests that Trollope “is not anti-American or anti-semitic so much as he is fervently English” (100-01). Biographers Hall and Glendinning mention no personal episodes of overt antisemitism in Trollope’s life. However, the letters reveal irritations with Disraeli, and here is where we see anti-antisemitism. Trollope called the government of

1 Arabella Trefoil (*The American Senator*, 1877) and Alaric Tudor (*The Three Clerks*, 1858) also bear the burden of difficult, outcast lives, and their stories function as jeremiads on ambition. It is possible that they sum up Trollope’s doubts about his own career.

1874 a ministry of one of those “wrong Jews” (qtd. in Hertz 389), “that rowdy lot” (*Letters* 341). The earliest expression of antisemitism in the novels occurs in *Barchester Towers* (1857), when Bertie Stanhope briefly converts to Judaism under the influence of a member of the family of Sidonia – the name of Disraeli’s 1847 character – and deeply upsets his clerical father, who refuses to receive the Jewish teacher in his house. The narrator says that a Jew did come to the house and that “He was a dirty little old man” (79).

Oppressive antisemitism continues and then alters during a critical time in Trollope’s life, changing the tenor of his commentary on Disraeli. Antisemitism speckles Trollope’s public remarks during his campaign to stand for parliament for Beverly. Here, Trollope criticizes Disraeli’s clever showmanship. If Disraeli came to power, Trollope warned the crowd, he would probably

go over the most beautiful conjuring tricks. It will be hocus pocus, square round, flyaway, come again, up and down, turn a somersault, come down on his feet, and present you with a most beautiful bill to disendow the Irish church, and very likely to abolish Protestantism generally. (Hall 395)

While Trollope finds in Disraeli a perversion of conservative policy and a betrayal of party, his use of the words “conjuring” and “hocus pocus” connect Disraeli the man with the tradition of the Jew as wizard (Rosenberg 206). Nevertheless, after he lost his election in Beverly, Trollope changed his approach to Disraeli. He created the character of Daubeny, who was to represent Disraeli in the Palliser novels. Trollope did not stereotype Daubeny but focused his attack on Disraeli’s swift changes of allegiance, and, according to Jack Hall, on the allegedly unfair tactics used in a fairly audacious way to win his place (394). Barrington Erle simply calls Daubeny someone who “would give his toes and fingers to remain in” (*Phineas Finn* 68). John Sutherland located longer passages about Daubeny which were canceled in the manuscript and suggests that Trollope might have struck them for their presumed offensiveness (738). But even these passages, quoted here briefly, are empty of anti-semitic slurring: “Mr. Daubeny had done this in the teeth of the counsellors who assured him, in the columns of many newspapers, that he was

proving himself to be a dog in the manger, who would rather himself cut the hay of reform.”

Trollope attacked Disraeli two more times in the press, following his unsuccessful bid for the seat of Beverly. In the pages of *Saint Paul's Magazine* (4 May 1869), he chastised Disraeli for abusing his patronage privileges. Disraeli had given his private secretary a position at the Mint – which the man had never seen – and promoted him over another who had been there thirty-six years (Hall 353). Trollope's other journalistic attack on the politician appeared in his review of Disraeli's *Lothair* in 1870. Trollope felt that *Lothair* was an attack on the aristocracy, but the commentary had no antisemitic overtones. Trollope said it was “vulgar, ill-written, passing all previous measures in the absurdity of its adulation of ranks false as it can be made in its descriptions of life, stuffed with folly...[I]t is impossible to invent any rational theory for its absurd puerilities” (354). Trollope the journalist attacked Disraeli on the grounds of bad form and poor writing.

The charges of antisemitism are lessened by the fact that one of Trollope's most popular and significant characters counteracts all of it. Madame Max Goesler, a crypto-Jewish woman and border-crosser, does only good in the Palliser novels (Hertz 381; Epperly 30-34). She captivates Phineas Finn and counsels him in the strategies of a real politician. Doing brilliant detective work on the continent, she saves Finn's neck. In a dispute after the death of the Duchess of Omnium, she prevails over the Duke, counseling him to be liberal and more tolerant of the new society around him. Trollope's narrator, who evaluates the action from a conservative, middle-class viewpoint, lavishes praise on her as she guides the entire Palliser family through rough waters, even at the risk of making this preeminent family look foolish. Hertz maintains that Madame Max's real role is to demonstrate that “good crypto-Jews (like Madame Max) may serve their superiors” (381), but she does not give credit to Madame Max for her loyalty to her ethics in all the proceedings. She will not grab at jewels and coronets – it is not mannerly. Madame Max declines to marry the old duke because a late marriage to him would threaten the inheritance of Glencora's children. Furthermore, she holds out hope that the man she actually does love will be free to marry her one day. Epperly has called her

the “moral guidepost for the entire Palliser family” (34). Her character involves all the nobility of Eliot's Jewish characters and claims all the allure of Trollope's most worldly continental ladies.

Similarly, money matters rather than cultural heritage form the main critique of the character Lopez in *The Prime Minister*. Conventional criticism maintains that Trollope's narrator was always preoccupied with a character's social background (Blake 217; Tracy 85) and whether marriages were contracted between social equals. And yet, despite the narrator's concern with the displacement of upper middle-class gentlemen by people who, like Lopez, “seemed like” gentlemen, other issues work against Lopez in *The Prime Minister*. Abel Wharton sees Lopez as an intruder, but his suspicions do not become antisemitic until *after* his new son-in-law fails to give an adequate account of his income. Property would make the alliance right. Trollope complicates Wharton's refusal of Lopez by delaying fatherly rejection until the marriage candidate is suspected of insolvency.

If antisemitism cannot wholly account for Trollope's dislike of Disraeli, we might think of jealousy, which Ruskin called “your great English vice” (298). Could Trollope's dislike of the prime minister also have been a matter of jealousy? The birthplace of Trollope at Keppel Street is only a ten-minute walk from the birthplace of Disraeli at 22 Theobald's Road, London. Trollope was the younger man by eleven years. Both men were raised expecting to climb higher in the world. Neither attended the universities of privilege; neither came into property at 21; both made their own way in the world. Both dreamed of entering parliament, but Trollope spent thirty years in the post office, while Disraeli managed to spend forty years in Parliament. The articulate prime minister could deliver spellbinding speeches to tremendous and lasting applause; whereas, by his own estimate, Trollope was an untalented speaker: “I had no special gifts in that way” (*Autobiography* 213). Although Trollope occasionally said witty things at gatherings, guests expected to hear more from his brother, Tom, than from Anthony (Hall 324). Trollope's first biographer, T. H. S. Escott, described Anthony Trollope's delivery at the Beverly hustings as “sonorous,” but he does not record the crowd's reaction (249). Glendinning calls Trollope “not a particularly good speaker” (379). “Monotone”

and “somewhat hurried” (Hall 324), Trollope’s speeches at Beverly earned him some praise and some criticism. With this single attempt to represent Beverly, Trollope failed at his lifelong ambition to gain a seat in the house. The following passage from *Can You Forgive Her?* is widely accepted as autobiographical, and it reveals the significance of this failure:

Between those two lamps is the entrance to the House of Commons, and none but Members may go that way! It is the only gate before which I have ever stood filled with envy, – sorrowing to think that my steps might never pass under it....I have told myself, in anger and in grief, that to die and not to have won that right of way, though but for a session...is to die and not to have done that which it most becomes an Englishman to have achieved....It is the highest and most legitimate pride of an Englishman to have the letters M.P. written after his name. (250)

Disraeli by contrast had the stamina, the matrimonial fortune, and the emotional resources to weather four failed campaigns before he won his first seat, and he had the genius to make the right speeches and the right moves to stay in power. His opponents found him virtually indomitable because of his strategies. Moreover, the politician’s prominence helped him sell his own novels. Trollope correctly judged them weak, and it irritated him to see Disraeli, the political savant, easily sell novels and succeed in the same field in which he himself toiled.

Trollope did not camouflage his criticisms of Disraeli in his autobiography:

In whatever he has written he has affected something which has been intended to strike his readers as uncommon and therefore grand. Because he has been bright and a man of genius, he has carried his object as regards the young. He has struck them with astonishment and aroused in their imagination ideas of a world more glorious, more rich, more witty, more enterprising than their own. But the glory has been the glory of pasteboard and the wealth has been the wealth of tinsel. The wit has been the wit of hairdressers, and the enterprise the enterprise of mountebanks. (187)

Jealousy is a workable hypothesis. Given the atmosphere of London, where Beatrice Webb observed that “the making and breaking of personal friendships...[was]

in no way connected with personal merit” (50-1), pure jealousy can be plausibly argued. But could jealousy of Disraeli have inspired Trollope to devote time to three significant novelistic assaults and numerous minor ones? Could he have been so jealous of the quirky prime minister, given the numerous ties Trollope enjoyed, his long list of publishing successes, and his lifelong criticism of self-defeating mindsets? There may be merit to the argument, but it is not all.

Disraeli demonstrated the opportunism in politics that Trollope consistently criticized in his novels. Trollope’s narrators are preoccupied with modesty and consistency. His political bellwethers, Plantagenet Palliser and John Grey, perform their political tasks quietly, working as part of a recognized group. Disraeli crossed into political impropriety in 1866. That year, he suddenly decided to make household suffrage a part of the Tories’ new bill. Getting help from the Whig party, Disraeli borrowed the substance of the Whig’s attractive yet defeated suffrage bill and added it to a new Reform Bill. This combination ensured Disraeli great success. Lord Carnavon and other Tory party members quit. Trollope considered Disraeli’s act the height of opportunism, and Carnavon and others were also clearly offended by it (Hall 334-35). This was not a minor indiscretion for the Conservatives – it was a complete change in policy, and this opportunistic acquisition of a Liberal policy helped Disraeli sweep the election. It would not have taken much to draw Trollopian fire in the period following the Beverly race, and, in his mind, this was a complete abandonment of principles. Quiet and steady, Trollope’s own prime minister, Palliser, was probably created as an antidote to Disraeli. Trollope became publicly critical of Disraeli again in 1876 over the “Eastern Question.” “Here we are all agog about the Turks and the Russians,” Trollope wrote to a correspondent,

and are so hot that every body is ready to cut everybody’s throat. I and my brother quarrel most ferociously per post....To my thinking Disraeli is the meanest cuss we have ever had in this country – but he, (my brother) makes a God of him and says his prayers to him. (Hall 419-20)

The problem lay in the Queen’s and Disraeli’s unpopular decision to overlook Turkish aggressions in the Bulgarian sections of Turkey, in order to maintain



influence in the area. Gladstone and members of the opposition vigorously opposed this policy, urging the country to retaliate against the Turks for the massacre of hundreds of Bulgarians, even if it meant joining with the Russians. Along with Gladstone, Trollope spoke at a public meeting held at St. James's Hall, on December 8, denouncing Disraeli's pro-Turkish policies. According to Thomas Hardy, who was present, Trollope rattled on so long that the Duke of Westminster desperately "tugged at Trollope's coat-tails," and Trollope replied "Please leave my coat alone" (Hall 420). It tends to be the policy that draws fire from Trollope first, rather than the heritage of the Disraelian character.

Disraeli was Trollope's *bête noire* because of his Jewishness and political impropriety and because Trollope was jealous. But there was something more: Disraeli was never an artist. His characters were not creations but undisguised replicas of actual persons. Many spouted awkward political speeches. Noting this, Edgar Rosenberg remarks, "Disraeli used all his major figures either as extensions of a rather marvelously inflated ego or as mouthpieces for his highly personal racial and political mystique" (8). Further, Disraeli gave us a hint about the source of his novels: "My books are the history of my life," he wrote to Lady Bradford; "I don't mean a vulgar photograph of incidents, but the psychological development of my character" (qtd. in Bogdanor xii). His fictional aristocracy was to speak his policies, untransmuted by the forces of art on the page. Trollope's aristocrats, on the other hand, were given developing characters and were imbued with credible lives of their own that frequently dominated and even subverted the apparent purposes of the narration. Trollope's fictional aristocrats were inevitably slated to face the consequences of their actions as individuals, not as symbols of their class. In other words, they were not Disraeli's automatons.

To illustrate an important difference between the two writers, I refer to Maria K. Bachman's claim that the main character of Disraeli's *The Young Duke*, a post-regency roué, comes to a moment of clarity and goes through a hokey conversion (18). Disraeli's narrator makes lofty proclamations about a new age and a new role for the aristocracy, chastened and educated by the Catholic Church. It is very difficult to imagine a more surreal vision for a member of the aristocracy. Thirty

years later, Trollope portrays Squire Perry Orme hunting rats and Lord Silverbridge racking up a £70,000 debt at the racetrack. Weak in will and prone to bad choices, Trollope's youths of privilege are sympathetic and carefully-drawn psychological portraits. Forty years after writing *The Young Duke*, the ousted prime minister tried his hand again at portraying the aristocracy in his novel *Lothair* (1870). His *louche* character, St. Aldegonde, displays a worldly, Wildean sense of reality:

[I]f every man were straight forward in his opinions, there would be no conversation. The fun of talk is to find out what a man really thinks, and then contrast it with the enormous lies he has been telling at dinner and perhaps all his life. (94)

Despite this thread of insight, little of Disraeli's fictional aristocratic world embraces the same reflexive or ironic qualities as Trollope's. Disraeli's narrator describes movement, color, display and a sort of dream world of swirling wealth and privilege, and never invests time examining the weakness in a character. On the other hand, Trollope's narrator knew there was no dreamland and that the center of the political world was empty (Kincaid 223). The more experienced novelist avoided the doctrinaire and pursued the more inspired route of the fiction writer.<sup>2</sup> Casting about for the blurred points in popular moral thought, Trollope reflected on the subtle tensions in the aristocratic as well as in the upper- and middle-class marriage, and the preeminence of the ordinary in the most idealistic households. Trollope's aristocrats are people with flaws, and if there are superlatives in life, they are generally found in the humbler homes.

Trollope read deeply and carefully. His narrators' preoccupations reflect world views sympathetic to Trollope, the writer and observer of English culture. While antisemitism, jealousy and politics had their role in his portrayals of Disraeli, there was also something less visible at work. Judging from the undercooked and

2 "Literature is a combinatorial game that pursues the possibilities implicit in its own material, independent of the personality of the poet, but it is a game that at a certain point is invested with an unexpected meaning, a meaning that is not patent on the linguistic plan on which we were working but has slipped in from another level, activating something on that second level that is of great concern to the author or his society" (Calvino 22). This is Trollope's art: Disraeli's method was to simply give his characters speeches about their creeds.

moonstruck quality of Disraeli's fictional world view, Trollope could be nothing but completely out of sympathy with Disraeli from the beginning. In 1871, according to T. H. S. Escott, when the two men met at Lord Stanhope's house for the first time, Disraeli was quick to compliment Trollope on the main character of *The Eustace Diamonds* (280). We will never know whether the lack of a reply is a lapse of observation on Escott's part, or proof of Trollope's mortification. In any case, Trollope's reply is unrecorded.

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## Sensational Bodies: Lady Audley and the Pre-Raphaelite Portrait

*Brian Donnelly*

Mary Elizabeth Braddon is primarily known for her prolific career as a writer of sensation fiction. Yet in her work and letters she consistently reveals an ambition to renovate her literary style, consequently demonstrating an abiding concern with the nature of representation in both verbal and visual media. In Chapter VIII of her most popular novel, *Lady Audley's Secret* (1862), Robert Audley and George Talboys enter the eponymous protagonist's private chamber to view in turn the portrait of Lady Audley. The narrator attributes the painting they inspect to an artist of the Pre-Raphaelite school:

Yes; the painter must have been a pre-Raphaelite. No one but a pre-Raphaelite would have painted, hair by hair, those feathery masses of ringlets with every glimmer of gold, and every shadow of pale brown. No one but a pre-Raphaelite would have so exaggerated every attribute of that delicate face as to give a lurid lightness to the blonde complexion, and a strange, sinister light to the deep blue eyes. No one but a pre-Raphaelite could have given to that pretty pouting mouth the hard and almost wicked look it had in the portrait. (107)

The portrait of Lady Audley represents a distinct conception of femininity, the dynamics of which Braddon interrogates in the novel; it is through such crucial scenes of revelation and discovery that she asserts that concept. The painting is insistently defined through its appearance as a Pre-Raphaelite work, but at the same time the narrator parodies the repertoire of techniques associated with that style. Braddon's construction of femininity through Lucy Audley is influenced by Pre-Raphaelite tenets of artistic design in addition to literary convention, particularly that common to the realist form of the novel that dominated Victorian fiction in the mid-century. However, this particular vision of the feminine is not necessarily complementary to those tenets of design.

Braddon problematizes the perceived distance between realism and

sensationalism in the novel through the appearance of the portrait. In doing so, she articulates the contemporary shift between the realism characteristic of early Pre-Raphaelite art and Dante Gabriel Rossetti's later distortion of it. The narrator's insistence that the reader see in the painting of Lady Audley the distinct style of the Pre-Raphaelites is undermined by the singular resemblance the work has to Rossetti's portraits of the 1860s. The description here is distinctly Rossettian, and for Braddon it confirms an interest in the modern while providing a review of the changes Rossetti's painting had undertaken in the final years of the 1850s. Recognition of this change, evincing a pronounced difference between the original manifesto of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood when it was formed in 1848 and the direction Rossetti's work began to take during this period, is crucial in reading Braddon's explicit gesture towards Pre-Raphaelitism.

This is not to suggest, however, that the portrait of Lady Audley is a deliberate copy of a particular painting by Rossetti. Between 1859 and 1868 Rossetti produced no fewer than twelve finished paintings in a similar vein, from *Bocca Baciata* (1859) to the striking *Lady Lilith* (1868). Rather, the resemblance of Lucy Audley's portrait to the paintings Rossetti produced during this period is evidence of an engagement with cultural anxieties concerning truth in representation in both visual and verbal media. While the majority of Rossetti's portraits of this kind were produced after Braddon's novel was published, retrospectively they can help us to understand the anxieties surrounding the images of the feminine they represent. As Mieke Bal proposes of reading pictorial signs beyond their immediate similarity, images such as these are related further through "temporal contiguity, just as a consequence can represent its cause, or a later event its predecessor" (64). Thus these images contest the highly charged terrain of representations of the feminine during this period through their imaginative reconfiguring of orthodox Pre-Raphaelite concepts. It is therefore my concern, in this article, to approach Braddon's particular engagement with realism through her reference to the Pre-Raphaelite portrait. The article will address several questions that are posed by the depiction of Lady Audley in this novel as a "Pre-Raphaelite" subject, questions that are largely concerned with notions of realism and sensationalism, of visual and verbal representation, and of the pursuit of knowledge.

In the opening chapter of her book, *The Pre-Raphaelite Art of the Victorian Novel*, Sophia Andres discusses the "explicit" use of Pre-Raphaelite visual art in *Lady Audley's Secret* (1). Andres considers Braddon's overt inclusion of Pre-Raphaelitism as a calculated ruse to engage her readership with an "amalgamation of high and popular culture," inviting her readers to "collaborate with the writer by contributing their own knowledge [of Pre-Raphaelite art] to the construction of the narrative" (3). In short, Andres avers that in addition to engaging the reader on aesthetic grounds, Braddon involves them in "sociopolitical constructions of gender," complicated by "contradictory perspectives" and "contemporary anxieties over Pre-Raphaelite transgressions of gender constructs." The construction of gender is the focus of Andres' introductory reading, and rightly so, for the representation of Lucy Audley does scrutinize with sophisticated skepticism the Victorian concept of the dutiful, beautiful wife, provoking the reader to reconsider traditional notions of sanctity and domesticity. However, this article will suggest further that Braddon's engagement with Pre-Raphaelitism may be read to demonstrate that, in addition to the construction of gender, she is preoccupied with the nature of representation itself. She achieves this primarily through her awareness of the incongruence of Pre-Raphaelite ideals of authenticity and fidelity, ideals which chafe against notions of realism in the Victorian novel. Braddon's explicit relationship with Pre-Raphaelitism is selective, engaging as it does in creative reciprocity with Rossetti's portraits of the late 1850s and early 1860s, and it signifies an attempt to scrutinize the politics of representation, of gender, and of reality, specifically the kind of reality offered by the realist novel.

The intrusion of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood into the English art scene in 1848 has been copiously documented, from Millais' ill-treatment at the hands of Dickens, when the novelist attacked *Christ in the House of his Parents* (1849-50) for its all too real "ugliness of feature, limb, or attitude" (Dickens 266), to Ruskin's championing of the new style due to its fidelity to nature and assertion of truth and emotion. Ruskin's first of two letters to *The Times* in 1851, written in support of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, summarized their objectives: "they will draw either what they see, or what they suppose might have been the actual facts of the scene

they desire to represent" (322). Elizabeth Prettejohn discusses the problematic claim of "truth to nature" to which the group adhered, proposing that the kind of realism the painters' strove for was a union of perceptual and conceptual: "Chris Brooks has described this union...using the term 'symbolic realism': 'Pre-Raphaelite images of what the world looks like are simultaneously accounts of what the world means'" (171).

Of the three major artists of the Pre-Raphaelite circle, only Holman Hunt retained some kind of fealty to the original ideals throughout his career. Millais and Rossetti had both begun to experiment with their work in the early 1850s, and by 1853 the brotherhood was all but defunct. Rossetti's work in the period directly following this was largely occupied by chivalric themes, and it was not until later in the decade that he began painting the images of women that characterized his work in the 1860s, also indicated by a shift from water-color to oil. By 1858 his work had begun to move away from established Pre-Raphaelite subject matter. Virginia Surtees records the shift in Rossetti's work at this time in her description of his 1859 *Bocca Baciata*, which signaled his artistic intent for the next decade:

condemned at the time by some as "coarse" and "sensual," this painting...represents a turning-point in the career of the artist. Arthurian and Dantesque subjects had begun to vanish from his easel...a new type of woman...in which the sweep of the neck, the curved lips, the indolent pose of the head and the emphasis to the fall of the hair foreshadow his prolific output of studies of women...sensual and voluptuous, mystical and inscrutable. (68-9)

The exposition is reminiscent of Braddon's description of the painting of Lady Audley. The painting was inspired by the Boccaccio *novelle* of the young virgin Alatiel, who by a series of misadventures, is passed through the hands of many lovers before returning to her betrothed. The inscription on the reverse of Rossetti's painting reads: "Bocca baciata non perde ventura, anzi rinova come fa la luna" (Surtees 68).<sup>1</sup> The plot is also reminiscent of Lady Audley's trajectory through a

<sup>1</sup> "A kissed mouth doesn't lose its freshness for like the moon it always renews itself" (Boccaccio 191).

variety of identities, each new personality remaining undetected by the men who covet her.

Holman Hunt provided an index of Rossetti's departure from the original Pre-Raphaelite ideals, claiming that Rossetti had "completely changed his philosophy" (Hunt 2:111), and describing the painting as "remarkable for gross sensuality of a revolting kind," while admitting it had a certain "power of execution" (qtd. in Surtees 69). Rossetti's paintings during this period, commonly known as the "floral" portraits, exemplify the artist's interest in the difference between unadorned nature and mannered artifice. The paintings are striking not only for their opulent, dazzling color, dominated by the theme of the beautiful *femme fatale*, but for the intricate play they effect on the discrepancy between appearance and reality, reflecting Rossetti's increasing concern with surface and depth. His portraits of women during this period are interesting precisely for the reasons Lady Audley's portrait is interesting in this novel: they disturb the comfortable distance between seeing and believing, making them ideal for a genre that relies on hidden meaning and subversion to provide narrative interest. Winifred Hughes comments: "The mimetic standard, unsurprisingly, is the one most often invoked against the sensation novelists, as opposing reviewers echo the universal refrain of 'unnatural,' 'artificial,' 'false,' 'grotesque'" (49). Furthermore, regardless of whether she sympathised with the images themselves, evoking Rossetti's paintings enabled the author to capitalize on their modish engagement with issues of sexuality and representation.

In 1864 Braddon published *Aurora Floyd*, the novel that succeeded *Lady Audley's Secret*, and once again she demonstrated her deliberate manipulation of the tropes and expectations conjured by Pre-Raphaelite images. Talbot Bulstrode, the conventional Victorian hero, is undermined by his Pre-Raphaelite sympathies, which are distinctly and recognisably those of the early years of the Brotherhood – of "grim saints and angular angels" (83), far removed from the floral portraits that dominated Rossetti's *oeuvre* in the 1860s. Bulstrode's "ideal of woman" is later categorised as "pale and prim as the medieval saints in his Pre-Raphaelite engravings, spotless as her own white robes" (86). Interestingly, it is Bulstrode's inability to believe in what he sees and to trust the "reality" of Aurora that leads

him to mistakenly reject her. Braddon, overtly conscious of the transitional status of Pre-Raphaelitism in this period, is making the most of the confusion caused by public expectation; in fact her fiction thrives on it. This involves her deliberate and conscious use of the term "Pre-Raphaelite" to describe a painting distinctly not "Pre-Raphaelite," thus confounding the reader's expectations and causing the confusion her fiction will exploit. The marriage Hunt describes of the "gross" and "sensual" in *Bocca Baciata*, represented in Lady Audley's portrait as that which is perhaps "lurid" or "sinister," "pouting" or "wicked," with the attempted verisimilitude of portraiture itself – a gesture towards reality – encapsulates the conflict between sensationalism and realism that Braddon exploits to great effect in her novel.

The portrait of Lucy Audley provides the novel's first sustained engagement with Rossetti's portraiture and the Pre-Raphaelite ideals that inform it. The lengthy description of the painting underscores the congruence with Rossetti's work in particular. The detail is crucial, though, in that it prepares the ground over which Braddon will contest representations of femininity: ostensibly representations which assert the claims of the realist novel to truth. This ground is determined by that aspect of Rossetti's art that came to distance it from its origins in the Pre-Raphaelite manifesto, revealed here in the discrepancy the narrator exposes between the character of Lady Audley and the painted portrait:

It was so like and yet so unlike; it was as if you had burned strange coloured fires before my lady's face, and by their influence brought out new lines and new expressions never seen in it before. The perfection of feature, the brilliancy of colouring, were there; but I suppose the painter had copied quaint mediaeval monstrosities until his brain had grown bewildered, for my lady, in his portrait of her, had something of the aspect of a beautiful fiend.

Her crimson dress, exaggerated like all the rest in this strange picture, hung about her in folds that looked like flames, her fair head peeping out of the lurid mass of colour, as if out of a raging furnace. Indeed, the crimson dress, the sunshine on the face, the red gold gleaming in the yellow hair, the ripe scarlet of the pouting lips, the glowing colours of each accessory of the minutely-painted background, all combined to render the first effect of the painting by no means an agreeable one. (107)

The narrator first remarks on the verisimilitude exercised by the painter: the work is accurate as a likeness, it is realistic. It is also, however, an unlikeness, and in that it is sensational. Thus a contradiction in terms of representation occurs. The real is infected by the sensational and it becomes indistinguishable from it. What Braddon does not attempt, though, is an imitation of Rossetti's art. Her image is one that exploits Rossetti's suggestion of difference, but it does not necessarily copy it. By attributing the painting to an artist of the Pre-Raphaelite school, she deliberately establishes her reader's expectations, and by describing a painting after Rossetti's style, she subverts those preconceptions. The painting is perfect of feature and brilliant of color, but the painter is somehow affected, "bewildered," in the brain. The reader too is bewildered, discomfited by the discrepancy between the Lucy Audley that has hitherto been portrayed in the novel and the artistic likeness that is somewhat skewed, even though painted with purportedly Pre-Raphaelite precision. Prior to this point in the novel, Lucy Audley (née Lucy Graham) is articulated only in the most hyperbolic of terms: "Her accomplishments were so brilliant and numerous...Miss Lucy Graham was blessed with that magic power of fascination by which a woman can charm with a word or intoxicate with a smile. Every one loved, admired, and praised her" (47). Lyn Pykett regards this early description of the heroine as typical of Braddon's technique: a formulaic, even banal form of address, "with the effect of making her the object of the reader's gaze," involving the reader in "shared assumptions about the nature of feminine fascination" (89). Thus the staging of Lucy Graham as "spectacle" prefigures the way the character will be exposed as "staging herself" in the narrative.

The portrait provides further opportunity for complicating the staging of the feminine by configuring the reader's gaze as specifically male through the intrusion of George and Robert into Lady Audley's chamber. This gendering of the gaze engages Braddon further with realist discourses on observations of the body. As Peter Brooks observes concerning literary realism:

While the bodies viewed are both male and female, vision is typically a male prerogative, and its object of fascination the woman's body, in a cultural model so persuasive that many women

novelists don't reverse its vectors. Looking in the realist tradition seems in fact to be highly gendered. (88)

The reader's discomfiture is intensified when placed in the position of the male viewer of this particular portrait. While there is perhaps nothing new in this technique, Braddon immediately confounds the reader further by not describing the painting through the eyes of George Talboys, the man who is actually viewing the portrait at the time. The narrator withholds the vital information that George recognises the face as that of his wife, and while the discerning reader will already suspect this is the case, the written confirmation desired here is unattained. As the character of Robert Audley will become the surrogate reader for the duration of the novel, as its detective and hero, the seemingly innocent discrepancy enacted in this scene between vision and knowledge is one that will come to dominate the remainder of the text. The implications here are twofold: the first is that Braddon is undermining a certain claim to authenticity that visual art makes over verbal, its truth verified that we – as readers and therefore viewers of this portrait alongside Robert Audley – are expected to believe our own eyes. The second is that this claim to truth is one asserted through a Pre-Raphaelite manifesto that promises an authentic rendering of a given scene, a connection for the novel with a form of representation that is realistic, and therefore a claim to realism itself.

Sophia Andres suggests that the overt gesture towards Pre-Raphaelitism in *Lady Audley's Secret* is a conscious decision by the author to broaden the appeal of the novel. Andres cites a letter from Braddon to her literary mentor Edward Bulwer-Lytton as evidence of a deliberate attempt to render the coarse subject matter of sensation palatable to an ideal intellectual readership, represented by Bulwer-Lytton himself: "I want to be artistic and to please you. I want to be sensational, and to please Mudie's subscribers... Can the sensational be elevated by art, and redeemed from all its coarseness?" (qtd. in Andres 4). Andres argues that the Pre-Raphaelites' "innovative approaches to realistic representation" no doubt "made them irresistible to Victorian novelists" (18). However, the repeated use of the term "coarse" by Rossetti's contemporaries to describe his portraiture suggests that the Pre-Raphaelites' "innovative approaches" to realism were not necessarily

the hook with which Braddon would best land an intellectual readership.<sup>2</sup> The "coarse" developments in Rossetti's portraiture afforded instead a connection for her sensational fiction with modern painting, a connection that mobilized existing concepts of realism so as to challenge those concepts by confusing the distinction between the sensational and the real. This is apposite given that Victorian perceptions of the real in fiction were inherently bound up in their relation to the visual. Nancy Armstrong summarizes current critical orthodoxy pertaining to the use of visual description in the novel, or ekphrasis, to enact a ratification of reality:

[the] novel's use of painterly technique, perspective, detail, spectacle, or simply an abundance of visual description served to create, enlarge, revise, or update the reality shared by Victorian readers. Indeed, today many of us would hold the very kind of description we associate with realism at least partly responsible for changing the terms in which readers imagined their relation to the real. (6)

Sensation fiction exploits the ready reliance on visual description as confirmation of the real in realist novels. By acknowledging, indeed, by enacting the possibility of the fabrication of the real or imagined in order to deliver its sensation, this kind of fiction thrives on misunderstandings. These misinterpretations occur both at the level of narrative, in the plot itself, yet fundamentally also at the level of representation. If realism can be tampered with, if it can be faked, and if "painterly technique" is a referent to the real, then it becomes clear that Braddon's deliberate deployment of visual art in the form of a "coarse" portrait in the style of Rossetti proposes a very different relationship between appearance and reality than that expected by Victorian readers.

The Pre-Raphaelite work of the kind invoked so explicitly in *Lady Audley's Secret* does not actually offer a connection for the novel with "high culture" in order to enrich it; rather, Braddon identifies the sensational aspects of Rossetti's work, not as something apart from her novel and the popular aspects of it, but as

2 See Surtees (99) for Ruskin's comments on *Venus Verticordia*, another of Rossetti's 1860s portraits, and a rebuttal from Graham Robertson.

manipulating the same notions of representation that her novel critiques. When Andres considers Braddon's gesture towards Pre-Raphaelitism as one that invites the reader to "collaborate with the writer by contributing their own knowledge to the construction of the narrative" (3), she is correct. However, Braddon's invitation is duplicitous as it presupposes that knowledge to be inaccurate; indeed, she relies on that assumption.

In her writing, Braddon consistently reminds us that she is aware of her putative role and position in the literary landscape, and her self-conscious inquiry to Bulwer-Lytton regarding the possibility that "the sensational be elevated by art" (Wolff 1:4) seems to be evidence of that awareness. And why would Braddon not wish to muddy the waters of realism and representation, especially through her description of a painting, if in 1862, a critic as prominent as Robert Buchanan can write:

Realism has at least served one admirable purpose – that of bringing women prominently before the public as book writers....Narrow as their range necessarily is, they have been encouraged to describe thoughts and emotions with which men are of necessity unfamiliar....Disciplined in a school of suffering, closely observant of detail, and painfully dependent on the caprice of the male sex, they essay to paint in works of art the everyday emotions of commonplace or imaginative women, and the domestic experience of sensible daughters, wives, and mothers. (qtd. in Pykett 26)

Buchanan's criticism is notable for its synthesis of the visual and verbal. His conception of realism as peculiarly suited to women writers relies on their ability to render the surface details of everyday events faithfully, confirming a critical connection between truth and painting. Evidence of Braddon's informed appreciation of the particular role she inhabits as a practitioner of sensation fiction permeates throughout her letters and her work. In the 1864 novel *The Doctor's Wife*, which Braddon felt was perhaps her best work to date, she offers a parody of the sensation novelist in the character Sigismund Smith, author of novels such as *Lilia the Deserted*, and *Colonel Montefiasco*, or *The Brand upon the Shoulder-blade*. *The Doctor's Wife* is loosely based on Flaubert's *Madame Bovary*, and Braddon's

interest in French fiction is well established.<sup>3</sup> In another letter to Bulwer-Lytton she reflects on her experience when writing *The Doctor's Wife*:

The idea...is founded on "Madame Bovary" the style of which struck me immensely in spite of its hideous immorality. There seems an extraordinary Pre-Raphaelite power of description – a power to make manifest a scene and an atmosphere in a few lines. (Wolff 1:10)

Braddon's awareness of the protocols and conventions regarding both sensation fiction and realism is suggested by her conscious deployment of both the sensation novelist and the sensation reader in *The Doctor's Wife*. When it was completed, Braddon pronounced *The Doctor's Wife* "not a sensation novel[;] I write here what I know to be the truth" (108). Central to the novel is the creation of a realist heroine defined as unreal through her reading of fiction. The result challenges our ideas of reading, representation, and artifice, demonstrating Braddon's concern, and indeed her ability to create texts that engage with the complexities of the realist novel and its claim to truth.

The premise on which realism is founded, according to Peter Brooks, is that "knowing things is a matter of viewing them, detailing them, and describing the concrete milieux in which men and women enact their destinies. To know, in realism, is to see, and to represent is to describe" (88). Brooks' understanding of realism is grounded in the representation of what is seen and delineated, a verbal representation of the visual, an ekphrasis. Furthermore, it is anchored fundamentally in the visual articulation of the body, claiming as he does, that the "nineteenth-century tradition, that of realism, insistently makes the visual the master relation to the world." Brooks contends that realism is consistent in that it "strives to make the body into a text" (7). Thus, "the desire to know" is what epitomizes realism, and specifically, knowledge of the body: "the body as an epistemophilic project. The desire to know is constructed from sexual desire and curiosity" (5).

3 Braddon's letters confirm her interest in Flaubert, Balzac and Soulié among others. See Wolff, "Devoted Disciple."



Building on this definition, Pamela Gilbert proposes that the difference between sensation novels and realist novels (or "love stories") lies in their depiction of the body. Under this schematic, the sensation novel presents the body as corpse, and the love story, or realist novel, provides the sexualized body of the heroine:

In each case the body does indeed run like an "undercurrent" throughout the story, and the question is indeed one of accessibility. Will the corpse be found? Will the woman be seduced? Anxiety over the permeability of the body creates centre stage for the body itself as chief protagonist, and sexuality, addiction, disease, and decay are the chief expression of that grotesque permeability. (108)

Gilbert's distinction between these representations of the body suggests a significant link between sensational fiction and realism. The body in *Lady Audley's Secret* in accordance with this analysis would be that of George Talboys, the corpse waiting to be found. This schematic is complicated, though, due to the fact that George Talboys is not a corpse at all: his body is not waiting to be found, nor does he rise as a phantom of truth to divulge the hideous secret of his former beloved. In fact, the body of Talboys is not even necessary to the narrative denouement of this story. Rather, it is the body of Lady Audley herself, represented by the Pre-Raphaelite portrait in her chambers that is *the body* of this text, and not its corpse. Because the body of Talboys is not the central factor in this sensation novel, it is Lucy Audley's body that of necessity propels this narrative, represented by the painted portrait hanging in her private chamber. It is here that we see Braddon's multifaceted engagement with and conflation of the modes of realism and sensationalism through the medium of the painted portrait. A secret is expressed visually in the painting of Lady Audley, but it remains undiscovered, awaiting confirmation through the text of verbal reality. *Lady Audley's Secret* is a novel of revelation driven by the desire to know, the revelation brought about by an amateur male detective that a woman is adulterous and a murderer, thus returning us to the scene of disclosure in Lady Audley's private chamber.

When Robert Audley and George Talboys enter the chamber to view the portrait of Lady Audley, they do so without her permission. Their surreptitious

entry into her boudoir in her absence is made possible by accessing a secret passage from another room. After his initial frustration at being locked out of the room, Robert questions his cousin Alicia, seeking to "contrive" (103) another way into his step-aunt's rooms, discovering one of which she herself is unaware:

If you don't mind crawling upon your hands and knees... that very passage communicates with her dressing-room. She doesn't know of it herself, I believe. How astonished she'd be if some black-visored burglar with a dark lantern were to rise through the floor one night as she sat before her looking-glass. (104)

Alicia Audley's humorous vision at her step-mother's expense may seem trite, but the implications are more sinister when read in the context of Victorian ideas on sexuality and the inviolate female body. The private chamber of Lucy Audley acts as a metaphor for her private past in addition to her body, one in which she has both a husband and a child; the penetration of that privacy by two young men – one the husband she has abandoned, the other her present husband's nephew, an attractive bachelor – is of great significance.

In terms of the narrative of revelation the novel enacts, the opportunity for George Talboys to recognize the portrait of the wife he believes dead becomes crucial, and the effect of his viewing the portrait confirms that Braddon deliberately reconfigures Pre-Raphaelite assumptions regarding the male gaze she has instigated. For Robert Audley, the amateur detective and hero of the novel, the nephew of Lucy Audley's husband Michael and his erstwhile heir, the implications are far-reaching. Prior to this point, Robert has "only an imperfect notion" (103) of his aunt's visage, though enough to form a distinct opinion based on indistinct information. In the preceding chapter, Robert meets Lucy Audley for the first time and his reaction is telling: "I feel like the hero of a French novel; I am falling in love with my aunt" (94). Braddon's abiding interest in French novels is already apparent, particularly through her engagement with the body in the text; in this her familiarity with Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* is resonant. Lucy Audley's *sensational* body is constructed through a realist mode of representation, a promise initially underlined by her portrait's Pre-Raphaelite resemblance, problematized

thereafter by the resemblance to Rossetti's images. In manufacturing her realist portrait Braddon signals the impossibility of the realist endeavor, acknowledging the fundamental capacity for the image to deceive.

Peter Brooks comments on Flaubert's virtual deconstruction of the realist enterprise in his very real construction of Emma Bovary as a body without substance: "Her body is the social and phantasmatic construction of the men who look at her" (95). Lucy Audley also becomes a façade, a woman fashioned ostensibly by the male gaze. The result of this deconstruction, Brooks suggests, is the "ultimate impossibility of realism insofar as it is subtended by the desire to know" (96). Braddon's construction of the body of Lucy is achieved in similar terms, and as her body moves through the text it is recreated by a succession of male gazes: as Helen Maldon, Helen Talboys, Lucy Graham, and Lucy Audley, each epitomized by definition as an object of male desire and ownership, to rest finally on the anonymous Madame Taylor. Thus Robert Audley succeeds in interring her in an institution in Belgium, removing her power as an object of sexual desire – indeed, her very identity. The necessary excision of Lucy Audley by her nephew confirms her as a character constructed through the male gaze in this novel, yet able to regulate the visual in some way in order to fabricate her various identities. Robert Audley's inability to sexually pursue this beautiful young woman (as she is both the wife of his best friend, and the wife of his uncle – a double taboo), whom he more than once says he could fall in love with, neutralizes his masculine power, resulting in his deliberate act to remove her from the domestic sphere. Thus it is that Brooks' central tenets of realism are worked through and out of the character of Lucy in the novel: "Sight, knowledge, truth" (97) are interrogated through the representation of the real, reversed through the evocation of the Pre-Raphaelite portrait, and finally, once she is "known," the woman's body is physically removed from the domestic sphere it inhabits in an assertive act of male self-definition.

The question that remains is, how do we come to this point of "knowing," and how does the substitution of what is real in the portrait with what is fabricated in life bring about the removal of Lady Audley? This once again returns us to the scene of revelation and discovery, of the covert entry into Lucy Audley's chambers

undertaken by the two young men. Prior to remembering the secret passage that allows entry to the chambers, Alicia Audley inquires of her aunt's personal maidservant whether the rooms are in a suitable state to receive visitors. The reply is unequivocal: "Yes, Miss" (103). However, once the gentlemen do gain entry into the chamber they find themselves

standing amidst the elegant disorder of Lady Audley's dressing-room.... She had left the house in a hurry... and the whole of her glittering toilette apparatus lay about on the marble dressing-table. The atmosphere of the room was almost oppressive from the rich odours of perfumes in bottles whose gold stoppers had not been replaced. A bunch of hothouse flowers was withering upon a tiny writing-table. Two or three handsome dresses lay in a heap upon the ground, and the open doors of a wardrobe revealed the treasures within. Jewellery, ivory-backed hair-brushes, and exquisite china were scattered here and there about the apartment. (105)

As is immediately apparent, the maid Phoebe's response to Alicia Audley could not be farther from the truth. The chambers are in disarray and provide an iconographic register through which we are invited to construct a vision of Lucy Audley. Braddon not only describes as "Pre-Raphaelite" the painting the men then observe in the chamber: the chamber itself is distinctly Pre-Raphaelite. Braddon prefigures the later appearance of Lucy Audley, sitting in her own boudoir, by articulating here the setting resembling a Rossetti painting where all but the model is in place. Furthermore, she disrupts the detailed placement of objects within the frame that characterised Rossetti's portraits of the 1860s, further confounding readers' expectations while satirising the fastidious reputation of the Pre-Raphaelites. The description also offers a discrepancy between the painting the men are about to view, with its "minutely-painted background" and the room in which they view it.

It is no wonder that, in all of this, "George Talboys saw his bearded face reflected in the cheval-glass, and wondered to see how out of place he seemed among all these womanly luxuries" (105). George Talboys *is* out of place, not only because he has stepped uninvited into a private room belonging to a woman he does not know, married to a man he has not met; but because he has stepped into a Pre-

Raphaelite painting. As Braddon assembles a scene that disrupts our perception of the real and unreal, she disassembles the distinction between the visual and the verbal. We read about the Pre-Raphaelite portrait itself; we see a face that does not belong, "so like and yet so unlike," observed by a man to whom the woman depicted no longer belongs, who feels he himself does not belong, in a room that appears in the painting, though not as it should be. The room is in a state of upheaval. Consequently, the "Yes, Miss," so perfunctorily stated by the maid can be read as signalling the shift between the reality offered by the portrait that seems so unreal, and the reality that the visual revelation visits quite abruptly and catastrophically on George Talboys. All this is precipitated by a girl who resembles her mistress: "Phoebe, you *are* like me" (95), remarks Lady Audley, and is suddenly undermined once these men appear in a room they are not supposed to be in, to view a painting they are not supposed to see. Accordingly, the intrusion of the Pre-Raphaelite idea of authenticity becomes central to a narrative that rests on misrepresentation and revelation to bring about its sensation, its reality, and the deliberate corruption of Victorian realism's reliance on the visual, "the master relation to the world" (Brooks 88).

The effect of his alienation, effectively the unmaning of George Talboys, is evident in his reaction to the portrait he sees. He is rendered speechless as the visual power of the image temporarily subdues the capacity of verbal definition through which the male spectator is able to control the feminine: "he sat before it for about a quarter of an hour without uttering a word – only staring blankly at the painted canvas" (107). Thus the novel's quest for knowledge is set in motion. George will inevitably seek out his former wife to demand of her a reason for abandoning him, leading to his disappearance, and Robert Audley's subsequent unravelling of the mystery surrounding his aunt's true identity, fulfilling his desire for knowledge. The substitution of the body of the text, the exchange between Lucy Audley and George Talboys as *the body* of this text, is instigated when he views her portrait. George Talboys is so "out of place" (105) when he steps into a Pre-Raphaelite painting because, while the image of the feminine depicted there is constructed by the male gaze, the actuality it figures for him is one that denies his

current "truth," invalidating the earlier information concerning his wife's death.<sup>4</sup> The catastrophe forced upon him is one to which he has no response, a task that will be left to his friend.

Braddon manufactures the sensational Pre-Raphaelite portrait to provide a representation of the reality of the body that realism itself "strives for," the knowledge of the body as a text (Brooks 7). The body of Lucy Audley, instrumental in the quest to attain both knowledge and desire, is inherently unknowable; it can never be fully grasped or comprehended, never fully visualized or owned. How then can the problematic image of Lucy Audley, the visual clue to her fabricated body, be unraveled in order to bring the narrative to a satisfactory conclusion? If the body is repeatedly articulated as a construction of that which it is not, it vouchsafes a continuing stimulation for the quest narrative only while it remains inscrutable. The resolution to the problem created when the body of Lucy Audley replaces that of George Talboys as the central body of the text is found in visual evidence provided through the written word, thus circumventing the duplicity of the painted image.

Robert Audley's quest for knowledge begins earlier in the narrative though, and is inextricably intermingled with the nature of representation – as he must learn to read. The ability to write Lady Audley as Helen Talboys means overturning the written evidence produced at the outset of the novel in the form of an obituary in *The Times* newspaper, and underscored by the headstone her bereaved husband orders for her at Ventnor. As the narrative progresses, it is these fragments of textual evidence that must be proved false in order to unmask Lady Audley's deception. In Chapter VI of the second volume of the novel, Robert receives George's letters from his sister Clara, and the written description of Helen Talboys they contain is the first piece of solid evidence against her. The description contradicts the portrait's unreadability, and Robert reads it three times: "in which every feature was minutely catalogued, every grace of form or beauty of expression fondly dwelt upon, every charm of manner lovingly depicted" (231). This written evidence also disputes the validity of the portrait and its depiction "so like and yet so unlike"; the

written word only offers a likeness, not an unlikeness. It is with this image in mind that in the following chapter Robert exhibits the signs of his progressively learning to read: "She shall look at me,' he thought; 'I shall make her meet my eye, and I will read her as I have read her before'" (237). The trail of evidence is completed with the discovery at the house of Mrs. Vincent, when he assiduously removes one luggage label to reveal another, the written word again confirming the suspected duplicity hinted at through the Pre-Raphaelite portrait he was unable to read. His subsequent confrontation with Lady Audley corroborates the importance of the word to this investigation: "Shall I tell you the story of my friend's disappearance as I *read* that story my lady?" (282; emphasis added).<sup>5</sup> Thus Robert's reliance on the word as evidence against Lady Audley establishes the grounds for re-reading the portrait, for knowing the truth as represented in the painted image.

This occurs ultimately in a second representation of Pre-Raphaelite portraiture in the novel. Here is the verbal reality that George Talboys could not articulate when viewing the portrait of his wife, the verbal confirmation of the visual this text has been waiting for:

If Mr. Holman Hunt had peeped into the pretty boudoir, I think the picture would have been photographed upon his brain... My lady in that half-recumbent attitude, with her elbow resting on one knee, and her chin supported by her hand, the rich folds of drapery falling away in long undulating lines from the exquisite outline of her figure, and the luminous rose-coloured fire-light enveloping her in a soft haze, only broken by the golden glitter of her yellow hair. Beautiful in herself, but made bewilderingly beautiful by the gorgeous surroundings which adorn the shrine of her loveliness. (308)

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5 The text has other examples of Robert reading evidence. In Chapter XII he reads the mutilated telegraph he finds in the house at Ventnor (128). In his dream at the beginning of the following chapter he imagines the headstone at Ventnor having the inscription removed (130), and at the end of the chapter, he writes a record of events to that point in time (134-35). Chapter I of Volume II is titled "The Writing in the Book." The novel ends with him discarding the French novels he read in common with Lady Audley (446).

The moment of contemplation described here visually, in terms of the Pre-Raphaelite portrait still hanging in the same room, gives way to the psychological ruminations of the subject, her despair almost complete, and Lady Audley about to embark on her most desperate attempt to salvage her position. The "bewilderingly beautiful" Lady Audley is described in the pages that follow as "wretched" and in "cruel despair" (309). The text here signals to the reader that which it did not when describing the portrait at the beginning of the novel. The "new expressions never seen" (107) that the artist captured are represented in this second viewing of Lady Audley.

Braddon's sophisticated construction of an ekphrasis that gestures at Rossetti's portraiture from the 1860s has cast a definitive shadow over this text. By inviting us to "read" the character of Lucy Audley through the definitive medium of modern photography, Braddon challenges our perception of what is real by invoking the specificity that epitomises the photographic lens, while creating an image which inverts that reasoning. Here she utilises the discrepancy between the artist named – William Holman Hunt, and the artist featured – Dante Gabriel Rossetti. Hunt's work most resembled that promised by the original Pre-Raphaelite ideal, the reflection of reality delivered by the photograph. Braddon's text, however, appropriates and corrupts the distinctive claim to realism made by Pre-Raphaelite painting, and it uses the change in Rossetti's creative *oeuvre* to do so. Pivotal to the narrative structure, these scenes take on further resonance from their resemblance to one another. As the novel takes shape, issues of identity and the idea of doubling, so central to Rossetti's work, become crucial to our reading of this text. Thus the eponymous heroine of the novel is herself doubled. The *denouement* to her story comes in Chapter VI of Volume Three, "Buried Alive," referring to her incarceration in a Belgian "maison de santé," while it also reveals the fate of George Talboys, himself buried alive in the abandoned well at Audley Court, to be reborn before the end of the novel. The Pre-Raphaelite portrait, which at once revealed while it concealed her secret, is covered over at the novel's resolution, and the body of Lady Audley, the representation of which confused the distinction between what was real and what was performed, is conspicuously obscured.

Writing to Bulwer-Lytton in 1864, Braddon curiously connects her sensation of reading Flaubert with Pre-Raphaelitism, and she does so through the perceived shared ground of realism:

Have you read anything of Gustave Flaubert's, and do you like that extraordinary Pre-Raphaelite style? I have been wonderfully fascinated by it, but I suppose all that unvarnished realism is the very reverse of poetry. (Wolff 1:7)

Braddon seems to register an incongruity in her connection between Pre-Raphaelitism and Flaubert's "unvarnished realism." In a letter from 1863 she indicates that sensation is something she achieves "in lieu of *poetry* or *truth*" (Wolff 1:5). If unvarnished realism can be described as "the very reverse of poetry," it seems to proffer common ground to both sensation and realism, in opposition to truth. In the same letter Braddon describes her own writing experience, of having to "resort to coarse blacks and whites" to maintain a melodramatic effect. The necessity of abandoning rich color for "coarse painting in blacks and whites" (Wolff 1:3) is suggestive of stripped, unvarnished prose, and Braddon's conscious juxtaposing of Pre-Raphaelitism, sensation, realism, and truth suggests her appreciation of the very fine line between them. This also suggests that in her reconfiguring of Rossetti's portraiture to suit the needs of her fiction, Braddon is aware of her distance from it. The dazzling color of the portrait, "so like and yet so unlike" (107) its subject, while being crucial to Braddon's sensational narrative and its reliance on the discrepancy between seeing and believing, offers her the opportunity to challenge and diminish traditional differences in modes of representation. The duplicity inherent in the representation of the body through the portrait supplies the means by which she is able to exploit the perceived discrepancy between realism and sensationalism, offering ultimately a critique of those perceptions. The body remains, inevitably, unknown, and the visual truth claimed by realist representation is exposed as untenable.

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## John Opie's Lectures to the Royal Academy and *Little Dorrit*

*Rodney Stenning Edgecombe*

In his *Companion to Little Dorrit*, Trey Philpotts suggests that the following passage from *Modern Painters* helped shape the account of Henry Gowan's dilettantishness:

Art, properly so called, is no recreation; it cannot be learned at spare moments, nor pursued when we have nothing better to do. It is no handiwork for drawing-room tables, no relief for the ennui of boudoirs; it must be understood and undertaken seriously, or not at all. To advance it men's lives must be given, and to receive it, their hearts. (222)

Ruskin published the volume from which this extract derives on 15 January, 1856, which cuts things rather fine if we recall that Gowan debuted in the novel in April of that year. It is just as likely, therefore – and indeed more probable – that Dickens was influenced by another source altogether, the *Lectures on Painting by the Royal Academicians: Barry Opie, and Fuseli* that had been republished in 1848. While no reference to Opie himself appears in the collected letters (although Dickens hotly defends himself against a charge that he had taken Miss Wade from a novel by Opie's wife), there is some internal evidence that he was familiar with artist's pronouncements. The account of Gowan's amateurishness seems more indebted to Opie's first lecture than it is to the passage from Ruskin cited above:

Should any student, therefore, happen to be present who has taken up the art on the supposition of finding it an easy and amusing employment – any one who has been sent into the Academy by his friends, on the idea that he may cheaply acquire an honourable and profitable profession – any one who has mistaken a petty kind of imitative, money-talent for genius – any one who hopes by it to get rid of what he thinks a more vulgar or disagreeable situation, to escape confinement at the counter or the desk – any one urged merely by vanity or interest, or, in short, impelled by any consideration but a real and unconquerable passion for excellence

– let him drop it at once, and avoid these walls, and every thing connected with them, as he would the pestilence; for if he have not this unquenchable liking, in addition to all the requisites above enumerated, he may pine in indigence, or skulk through life as a hackney likeness-taker, a copier, a drawing-master, or pattern-drawer to young ladies, or he may turn picture-cleaner, and help Time to destroy excellencies which he cannot rival – but he must never hope to be, in the proper sense of the word, a painter. (“Lecture I. On Design,” 248)

There are some resonances with this in the corresponding passage in *Little Dorrit*. Whereas Ruskin speaks in the abstract of “Art,” Opie spotlights the agent noun “painter” – and with good reason, for he wished to stress the effort that the vocation demands of its votaries (“in no profession will he have to labour so hard, and study so intensely,” 248).

Almost as if he were parodying Opie’s phrase, Gowan envisages “painter” not as “the proper sense” of a common noun, but rather as a *proper* one – a Platonic absolute that his “genius” has made his birthright (even though it is “of that exclusively agricultural character which applies itself to the cultivation of wild oats”; Dickens 250). Gowan’s actual birthright, of course, is the incompetence and amateurishness of the ruling class, and, in both Opie’s and Dickens’s vision of things, the *sprezzatura* by which noblemen have traditionally ducked (or pretended to duck) the artisan component of art will never win the day. Indeed, the “distinguished ladies” are shocked precisely because Gowan has embraced a “trade”:

At last he had declared that he would become a Painter; partly because he had always had an idle knack in that way, and partly to grieve the souls of the Barnacles-in-chief who had not provided for him. So it had come to pass successively, first, that several distinguished ladies had been frightfully shocked; then, that portfolios of his performances had been handed about o’ nights, and declared with ecstasy to be perfect Claudes, perfect Cuyps, perfect phaenomena; then, that Lord Decimus had bought his picture, and had asked the President and Council to dinner at a blow, and had said, with his own magnificent gravity, “Do you know, there appears to me to be really immense merit in that work?” and, in short, that people of condition had absolutely

taken pains to bring him into fashion. But somehow it had all failed. (206)

This same leisured class, with pretensions to taste and knowledge but with little correlative experience upon which to base them, inspects his portfolio “o’ nights” (artificial light is notoriously untrustworthy for the assessment of color), and, attempting to praise the student copies it finds there, unconsciously damns them for the lifeless facsimiles they are. Its “ecstasy” reduces real Romantic passion to a drawing room formula (much as Mrs. Merdle turns Rousseau into the chitchat of a morning visit), and the talk of “perfect phaenomena” recalls the puffery of theater and circus (Mr. Crummles’s daughter comes to mind). In truth, however, Gowan’s is “a petty kind of imitative, money-talent,” and the Barnacles’ attempts to promote it by influence recalls the unfortunate candidate “who has been sent into the Academy by his friends, on the idea that he may cheaply acquire an honorable and profitable profession.” Opie’s judicious choice of “friends” makes it clear that patronage and jobbery will not secure success, just as Lord Decimus’s advocacy has no effect on the fortunes of his kinsman. The painter’s warning to those who have “taken up the art on the supposition of finding it an easy and amusing employment” also looks forward to Gowan’s “idle knack in that way,” a phrase in which “idle” teeters between its significations of leisure and futility.

Some remarks made in connection with Christopher Casby also point to the impact of Opie’s thought upon the novelist:

Patriarch was the name which many people delighted to give him. Various old ladies in the neighbourhood spoke of him as The Last of the Patriarchs. So grey, so slow, so quiet, so impassionate, so very bumpy in the head, Patriarch was the word for him. He had been accosted in the streets, and respectfully solicited to become a Patriarch for painters and for sculptors; with so much importunity, in sooth, that it would appear to be beyond the Fine Arts to remember the points of a Patriarch, or to invent one. (146)

And again:

It was said that his being town-agent to Lord Decimus Tite

Barnacle was referable, not to his having the least business capacity, but to his looking so supremely benignant that nobody could suppose the property screwed or jobbed under such a man; also, that for similar reasons he now got more money out of his own wretched lettings, unquestioned, than anybody with a less nobby and less shining crown could possibly have done. In a word, it was represented (Clennam called to mind, alone in the ticking parlour) that many people select their models, much as the painters, just now mentioned, select theirs; and that, whereas in the Royal Academy some evil old ruffian of a Dog-stealer will annually be found embodying all the cardinal virtues, on account of his eyelashes, or his chin, or his legs (thereby planting thorns of confusion in the breasts of the more observant students of nature), so in the great social Exhibition, accessories are often accepted in lieu of the internal character. (149)

Dickens makes two charges against contemporary artists in these inter-related passages. The first is their lack of imagination – an incapacity to invent or to supplement with ideal features the material of empirical experience – and the second, to some extent a corollary of the first, is their failure to match that found experience with their ideal intentions.

Let us turn to Opie with these strictures in mind:

I will not undertake the perilous task of defining the word *beauty*; but I have no hesitation in asserting, that when beauty is said to be the proper end of art, it must not be understood as confining the choice to one set of objects, or as breaking down the boundaries and destroying the natural classes, orders, and divisions of things (which cannot be too carefully kept entire and distinct); but as meaning the perfection of each subject in its kind, in regard to form, colour, and all its other associated and consistent attributes. In this qualified and, I will venture to say, proper acceptance of the word in regard to art, it may be applied to nearly all things most excellent in their different ways. Thus we have various modes of beauty in the statues of the Venus, the Juno, the Niobe, the Antinous, and the Apollo, – and thus we may speak, without exciting a confusion of ideas, of a beautiful peasant, as well as of a beautiful princess, of a beautiful child, or a beautiful old man; of a beautiful cottage, a beautiful church, a beautiful palace, or even of a beautiful ruin. (“Lecture I. On Design,” 245)

The keynote here is rigorous separation – of species from species and subject from subject – but also, at the same time, an attempt to obtain *perfection* within these categorical confines. Perfection requires that one modify one’s *données*. The “beautiful peasant” presumably becomes beautiful not by the act of transcription, but by the editorial omissions and heightening that the transcript entails.

So an artist wishing to paint or sculpt a patriarch – even one so doubtfully conceived as Dickens conceives him through the descriptors “grey,” “slow,” “quiet,” “impassionate,” and “nobby” – ought not to importune a Mr. Casby on the streets of London. For, as Opie points out,

The discovery or conception of this great and perfect idea of *things*, of nature in its purest and most essential form, unimpaired by disease, unmitigated by accident, and unsophisticated by local habits and temporary fashions, and the exemplification of it in practice, by getting above individual imitation, rising from the species to the genus, and uniting, in every subject, all the perfection of which it is capable in its kind, is the highest and ultimate exertion of human genius. – Hitherto shalt thou go, and no further – every step in every direction from this pole of truth is alike retrograde – for, to generalise beyond the boundaries of character, to compose figures of no specific age, sex, or destination, with no predominant quality or particular end to be answered in their construction, is to violate propriety, destroy interest, and lose the very essence of beauty in contemptible nothingness and insipidity. (245)

This, then, is a likely source for the contemptuous dismissal of mid-Victorian RAs in *Little Dorrit* for their limited invention, which forces them to copy experience in a literal, veristic way, and, worse still, to muddle categories and “mutilate” ideals with irrelevant accident. Opie allows us to “speak, without exciting a confusion of ideas, of a beautiful peasant,” – but if you paint a “Dog-stealer,” misplacing your emphasis on such “mutilating” accidents as “his eyelashes, or his chin, or his legs,” and if (adding insult to injury) you attach those accidents to “the cardinal virtues,” you will plant “thorns of confusion in the breasts of the more observant students of nature.” Both Opie and Dickens significantly speak of “confusion” in this regard. The artistic mind ideally must half perceive and half create, less from



a Romantic concern with subjectivity than from a desire to *clarify* the muddle of actual experience: "the true expression of character in painting depends on the proper conformation and adjustment of the parts to the whole and to each other, according to the unalterable and universally established laws of nature" (253).

For Opie, no artist had done this more successfully than Raphael:

On the whole, therefore, it must be granted to Raphael, that notwithstanding he seldom ascended the brightest heaven of invention, reached the conception of unprescribed being, or rivalled the Greeks in the delineation of perfect beauty, enchanting grace, and character truly superhuman, he has, perhaps, reached the utmost extent of the art in pathos and expression, and so far explored the natural regions, that it is scarcely possible to propose a subject, or imagine a situation within the sphere of humanity, which he has not treated, or in the treatment of which some considerable assistance may not be derived from his works; and, take him for all in all, he undoubtedly forms the richest, most extensive, and most useful magazine of materials for study, with the least admixture of anything capable of misleading inexperience, of inspiring false taste, and of flattering the eye at the expense of the understanding. ("Lecture II. On Invention," 284-85)

Those superlatives fix a point *ne plus ultra*. No wonder Dickens should have lost his temper when Millais and his fellow-travelers implicitly rejected Raphael. It suggests that he had read the passage in Opie in which he contrasts Raphael's idealizing method with Bassano's verism:

It is happy for this country that it possesses many of the finest specimens of the powers of Raphael. The cartoon of the St. Paul preaching at Athens is, of itself, a school of art, in which the student may find most of the principles of historical invention, composition, and expression, displayed in characters of fire, not addressed to the eye or imagination only, but also to the understanding and the heart. This will be more sensibly felt, and the painter's merit more clearly understood, by comparing his work with another, on the same subject, by Jacopo Bassano, in which that artist has, as usual, contrived to leave out all that dignifies, all that interests, all that characterises, and all that renders the story peculiarly proper for the pencil. As he knew

St. Paul was but a man, he perhaps thought any man might be St. Paul, and taking the first unwashed artificer that came in his way, set him up as a model for the apostle, whom he consequently represents destitute of majesty, grace, action, or energy, and drawing out what no person attends to, or can believe worthy of attention. How different on the same occasion, was the conduct of Raphael! He took into consideration, not the real person of the saint, which is said not to have been of the most imposing class, but the intellectual vigour of his character, the importance of his mission, and the impression that ought to be made on the beholder; and, as a painter cannot make his hero speak like a great man, he knew it was his duty to render his mind visible, and make him look and act like one[.] (285)

That "unwashed artificer" seems to have prompted the invective against the "Dog-stealer" in *Little Dorrit* – and not only against him, but also against the Pre-Raphaelites as a body six years earlier.

With Opie's valuation of Raphael as a point of reference, Dickens inveighed against Millais' "mutilating accidents" in "Old Lamps for New Ones:"

In the fifteenth century, a certain feeble lamp of art arose in the Italian town of Urbino. This poor light, Raphael Sanzio by name...was fed with a preposterous idea of Beauty with a ridiculous power of etherealizing, and exalting to the very Heaven of Heavens, what was most sublime and lovely in the expression of the human face divine on Earth with the truly contemptible conceit of finding in poor humanity the fallen likeness of GOD, and raising it up again to their poor spiritual condition. This very fantastic whim effected a low revolution in Art, in this wise that Beauty came to be regarded as one of its indispensable elements. In this very poor delusion, Artists have continued until this present nineteenth century, when it was reserved for some bold aspirants to "put it down." (265)

Just as Opie had praised Raphael for not addressing "the eye or imagination only, but also to the understanding and the heart," so Dickens invests him with the mission of "finding in poor humanity the fallen likeness of GOD, and raising it up again to their poor spiritual condition." This is not a very coherent reduction of Opie because if the fallen likeness has been raised only to humanity's "poor

spiritual condition," it cannot have been raised very far. But that is neither here nor there. More to the point is the "idea of Beauty with a...power of etherealizing, and exalting to the very Heaven of Heavens, what was most sublime and lovely in the expression of the human face divine," for it recapitulates Opie's conception of beauty as the "discovery or conception of this great and perfect idea of things, of nature in its purest and most essential form." Dickens enriches this by alluding to Milton's blindness - "the human face divine" (*Paradise Lost* 3:44) - and so implies that any who deviate from a Platonic conception of art are similarly benighted. His disgust centers particularly on Millais' *Christ in the House of His Parents*, which he describes in the following terms:

In the foreground of that carpenter's shop is a hideous, wry-necked, blubbering, red-headed boy in a bed-gown; who appears to have received a poke in the hand, from the stick of another boy with whom he has been playing in an adjacent gutter, and to be holding it up for the contemplation of a kneeling woman, so horrible in her ugliness, that (supposing it were possible for any human creature to exist for a moment with that dislocated throat) she would stand out from the rest of the company as a Monster, in the vilest cabaret in France, or the lowest gin-shop in England. (265-66)

There is a hint here of Opie's diatribe against the Venetian school — "Everything appears to be burlesqued — put in the wrong place or called by a wrong name. . . . *black* boys, *dwarfs*, *dogs* gnawing bones, cats, and monkeys are not seldom obtruded upon the spectator, on the most solemn occasions, as the principal objects of the piece!!!" (330) and also against the Dutch school ("Gods, emperors, heroes, sages, and beauties, were all taken out of the same pot, and metamorphosed by one stroke of the pencil into Dutchmen. Noah was only the first skipper, and Abraham a fat burgomaster of Amsterdam" [310]). (This latter phrase also contains the seed of Casby's conception as a patriarch by the Academicians of 1856.) Dickens's ecphrasis of the Marian figure in the painting likewise recalls Opie's rejection of Bassano's Paul as an "unwashed artificer," and so too his objection to the carpenters in *Christ in the House of His Parents*: "Such men as the carpenters might be undressed in

hospital where dirty drunkards, in a high state of varicose veins, are received. Their very toes have walked out of Saint Giles's" (266). Finally, by way of postlude, we can remark how one of Opie's *obiter dicta* throws some light on Dickens's chief shortcoming as a novelist, viz., his presentation, in the early novels, at least, of under characterized heroes and heroines. Here, in his effort to ennoble his material, he has so far excinded "mutilating accident" that he has lost the very "essence of beauty":

to generalise beyond the boundaries of character, to compose figures of no specific age, sex, or destination, with no predominant quality or particular end to be answered in their construction, is to violate propriety, destroy interest, and lose the very essence of beauty in contemptible nothingness and insipidity. (245)

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## Books Received

Billone, Amy Christine. *Little Songs. Women, Silence, and the Nineteenth-Century Sonnet*. Columbus OH: Ohio State University Press, 2007.

"Amy Christine Billone analyzes the bond between lyric poetry and silence in women's sonnets ranging from the late eighteenth-century works of Charlotte Smith, Helen Maria Williams, and Anna Maria Smallpiece to Victorian texts by Elizabeth Barrett, Christina Rossetti, Isabella Southern, and other, lesser-known female poets. Although scholars acknowledge that women initiated the sonnet revival in England, *Little Songs* is the only major study of nineteenth-century female sonneteers."

Buzard, James, Joseph W. Childers, and Eileen Gillooly, eds. *Victorian Prism. Refractions of the Crystal Palace*. Charlottesville VA: University of Virginia Press, 2007.

"From the moment it opened on the first of May in the Crystal Palace in Hyde Park, London, the Great Exhibition of 1851 was one of the defining events of the Victorian period. It stood not only as a visible symbol of British industrial and technological progress but as a figure for modernity - a figure that has often been thought to convey one coherent message and vision of culture and society. This volume examines the place occupied both materially and discursively by the Crystal Palace and other nineteenth- and twentieth-century exhibitions in the struggle to understand what it means to be modern."

Felber, Lynette, ed. *Clio's Daughters. British Women Making History, 1790-1899*. Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2007.

"A fortuitous convergence of factors - including the popularization of history and the success of 102 lady novelists in the literary marketplace - contributed to women's emergence as writers of history and historical agents in the nineteenth century. These essays demonstrate that women were neither mere muses for nor passive consumers of history and histories. Though often denied recognition as professional historians, the women presented in this study appropriated historical subjects for fiction or disguised history in seemingly nonfictional genres."

Gilbert, Pamela K. *The Citizen's Body. Desire, Health, and the Social in Victorian England*. Columbus OH: Ohio State University Press, 2007.

"As the idea of citizenship became more inclusive in the nineteenth century, England confronted the problem of those who seemed less fit for the responsibilities of political power... *The Citizen's Body* traces the construction of citizenship through the figure of the healthy body, in parliamentary debates on the franchise, in sanitary and housing publications, and in novels. The rhetoric of the healthy body as the ground of civic participation permeated the discourse of the novel, as shown in the work of Dickens, Oliphant, Disraeli, Eliot, and Gaskell."

Hill, Kate. *Culture and Class in English Public Museums, 1850-1914*. Burlington VT: Ashgate, 2005.

"The nineteenth century witnessed a flowering of museums in towns and cities across Britain. As well as providing a focus for collections of artefacts and a place of educational recreation, this work argues that municipal museums had a further, social role. In a situation of rapid urban growth, allied to social and cultural changes on a scale hitherto unknown, it was inevitable that traditional class and social hierarchies would come under enormous pressure. As a result, urban elites began to look to new methods of controlling and defining the urban environment. One such manifestation of this was the growth of the public museum."

McKelvy, William R. *The English Cult of Literature. Devoted Readers, 1774-1880*. Charlottesville VA: University of Virginia Press, 2007.

"What constitutes reading? This is the question William McKelvy asks in *The English Cult of Literature*. Is it a theory of interpretation or a physical activity, a process determined by hermeneutic destiny or by paper, ink, hands, and eyes? McKelvy seeks to transform the nineteenth-century field of Religion and Literature into Reading and Religion, emphasizing both the material and the institutional contexts for each. In doing so, he hopes to recover the ways in which modern literary authority developed in dialogue with a politically reconfigured religious authority."

Stetz, Margaret D. *Facing the Late Victorians. Portraits of Writers and Artists from the Mark Samuels Lasner Collection*. Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2007.

“This volume uses materials drawn from the Mark Samuels Lasner Collection at the University of Delaware to offer a new interpretation of the significance and prevalence of the portrait image during the final decades of the nineteenth century in Britain. It focuses on how and why representations of writers’ and artists’ faces circulated through the periodical press, through exhibition spaces in London, and through book publishing, while it looks at the ways in which audiences learned to read these faces for information about masculinity, femininity, class status, and especially for an understanding of the concept of genius.”

Whitehead, Christopher. *The Public Art Museum in Nineteenth Century Britain. The Development of the National Gallery*. Burlington VT: Ashgate, 2005.

“During the mid-nineteenth century a debate arose over the form and functions of the public art museum in Britain. Various occurrences caused new debates in Parliament and in the press about the purposes of the public museum which checked the relative complacency with which London’s national collections had hitherto been run. This book examines these debates and their influence on the development of professionalism within the museum, trends in collecting and tendencies in museum architecture and decoration.”

Wimsatt, James I. *Hopkins’ Poetics of Speech Sound. Sprung Rhythm, Lettering, Inscap*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006.

“Hopkins’ characterizations of the poetical, both of speech sound as the substance of the poetical and of the nature of poetic rhythm, are indeed original, but they did not, of course, spring from his brain without parentage. In the first place, he read widely in classical Greek and Latin poetry and philosophy and in vernacular literature of all periods, especially English, and he developed opinions about most of his reading. At Oxford his studies revolved largely around early Greek philosophy and poetry; as a Jesuit he became teacher of rhetoric...In his practice as scholar and poet the mark of the classics is everywhere.”

## Martineau Society



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### Harriet Martineau

Harriet Martineau (1802-76), journalist and writer, was best known as a populariser of political economy, though her career spanned many other aspects of Victorian literary culture. The daughter of a Unitarian Norwich cloth manufacturer, she shot to fame in 1832 as author of the ‘Illustrations of Political Economy’ – 24 short stories showing how economic conditions impacted on the lives of ordinary people. She visited America from 1834-6 and identified with the anti-slavery cause, which she promoted in her journalism for the rest of her working life. She can be regarded as the first significant British woman sociologist. She wrote a lively and provocative ‘Autobiography’ in 1855. Despite two extended periods of ill-health, she continued to work as a journalist, primarily for ‘The Daily News’.

Harriet Martineau was a unique figure in Victorian culture, and a key contributor to a wide range of its intellectual and social debates. She never married but put much value on the importance of domesticity and home life.

### James Martineau

James Martineau (1805 - 1900), philosopher and theologian, is best remembered for his views on religion based on reason and conscience. An author and Unitarian clergyman, he started his ministry in Dublin, 1828, and married Helen Higginson in December, 1828. In the summer of 1832, he moved to Liverpool where he was a great success. He joined the staff of Manchester College in 1840, at the time of its return to Manchester. James was involved with Unitarian affairs nationally, including the Dissenters’ Chapels Act, the opening of the universities to dissenters without doctrinal tests, and the decision to remove Manchester College to London (associated with UCL). He became principal there, 1869-85, and president in 1887.

#### For more information

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