

## *The Victorian Newsletter*

*The Victorian Newsletter* publishes scholarly articles by many of the most prominent Victorian academics of the last half century. As such, the *VN* reflects the genesis and development of contemporary Victorian studies. *The Victorian Newsletter* is a refereed publication featuring analyses of Victorian literature and culture.

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

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## *The Victorian Newsletter*

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## *Greetings from the Editor*

*Victorian Newsletter* #116 offers a fascinating and lively set of contributions to Victorian literary and cultural studies. This issue's new work on Arthur Conan Doyle, Edward Bulwer-Lytton, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, and Wilkie Collins ranges from "deviant" masculinity to "irregular" law; from historical novels to "pyrodramas"; and from poetry to fine art investigating the Human Condition. I am pleased to present this eclectic selection of strong and innovative scholarship on both timely and unusual topics.

Tom Bragg's "Becoming a 'Mere Appendix': The Rehabilitated Masculinity of Sherlock Holmes" questions a standard assumption about Doyle's ambivalence towards his genre-making character: that is, that the author was reluctant to squander his abilities on the "lower stratum of literary achievement" represented by detective fiction. Bragg challenges this idea by arguing that the real issue was Holmes's "troublesome and contradictory masculinity." Originally depicted as "an effeminate and morally ambiguous character, with hints of sexual deviance," Holmes's enormous popularity was troubling to Doyle, who determined that sexual rehabilitation of the character was necessary in order to deflect the period's "homosexual panic" and to reify concepts of acceptable masculinity. Bragg's paper traces the development of Holmes's character over time, as Doyle attempts to deflect the impression of deviance onto a muscular brand of comparatively "normative" heterosexuality.

Stanwood Walker's paper, "Redeeming the 'City of the Dead': Metaphysical Fiction, Touristic Fantasy, and the Historical Other in Bulwer's *Last Days of Pompeii*," provides some unexpected insights on one of the period's most derided, dismissed, and yet compellingly popular authors. That Bulwer has an annual bad-prose contest named in his honor is a dubious claim to fame, to say the least; and yet, as Professor Walker's intensive analysis of *Last Days of Pompeii* and its various contexts illustrates, the ongoing discussions of Bulwer's status as an "opportunistic popularizer," "charlatan," and "third-rate" hack—or, alternatively, as an innovator in Victorian historiography and travel writing—invite fuller attention to this most unusual and least assessed of his novels.

"Impenetrable Dooms': Dante Gabriel Rossetti's *The Question* and Explanatory Sonnets" by D.M.R. Bentley investigates the connections between a drawing and two

poems, all composed at the end of Rossetti's career. The 1875 drawing, entitled *The Question*, takes its name from *Hamlet's* "To be or not to be" soliloquy; the 1882 explanatory sonnets similarly ponder such conundrums as mortality, the afterlife and spiritual immortality, religious belief and agnosticism. The sonnets, written just days before Rossetti's death, evidence his efforts to comprehend the seeming randomness of death, to envision a consolatory afterlife, and to reconcile the superstitions, doubts, and fears challenging anyone preparing for life's final transition. While Bentley's analysis emphasizes Rossetti's preoccupation with these issues during the last decade of his life, the discussion more fully contextualizes these concerns as they surfaced in other drawings, paintings, poetry, and correspondence. This study compellingly dramatizes W.M. Rossetti's claim that *The Question* constitutes one of his brother's "most important inventions" in its reflections on "the mystery of existence, or the destiny of man, unfathomable by himself."

Mary M. Husemann's "Irregular and Not Proven: The Problem of Scottish Law in the Novels of Wilkie Collins" considers a neglected aspect of Collins studies: Scotland's place in the imperial framework. The geographical proximity of Scotland, coupled with its apparently placid acceptance of British colonization, renders Husemann's point initially surprising; yet this emphasis is all the more unique for its obviousness, contrasting with the comparative exoticism of India (as in *The Moonstone*, for example). As a colony of the British Empire, notwithstanding the 1707 Union that implied full cultural assimilation, Scotland is unusual for maintaining a legal system separate from England's. This is a primary venue through which Scotland preserves its socio-cultural identity; it is also the focus of Collins's critiques of the "ambiguity" of Scottish marriage and criminal law in two of his novels. *Man and Wife* addresses the convention of "irregular" (common-law) marriages, while *The Law and the Lady* investigates "the social implications of the not-proven verdict"—as opposed to the polarizing guilty or not-guilty, which does not allow for any gray areas. These critiques effectually "orientalize" Scotland, by implication promoting the superiority of English civilization and facilitating an unfavorable comparison in its decidedly "untidy" northern neighbor.

As editor of *The Victorian Newsletter*, I thank Western Kentucky University for its support, in particular David Lee, Dean of Potter College of Arts and Letters; and Karen Schneider, English Department Head. Special thanks also to Tim Adams for his work as Editorial Assistant, and to Morgan Eklund and Zack Adams for technical assistance.

## *Becoming a "Mere Appendix":*

### *The Rehabilitated Masculinity of Sherlock Holmes*

Tom Bragg

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's weariness, even disgust, with his most famous literary creation is a familiar component of the Sherlock Holmes mythos. Aficionados recall the famous *Punch* cartoon of a submissive Doyle chained to Holmes, a collar of pipe smoke around his neck, or Doyle's petulant response to the playwright who asked permission to depict Holmes's marriage: "You may marry him, murder him, or do anything you like with him" (qtd. in Eyles 34). Always convinced that the long series—fifty-six stories and four novels—represented "a lower stratum of literary achievement" and had obscured his "more serious literary work," Doyle had contemplated "slaying Holmes" after the first half-dozen short stories (*Memories* 99). Accordingly, he sent him plunging to an uncertain death in 1893 only to resurrect him ten years later; he announced several stories as being the last and actually concluded the series in 1927 with the imperative comment, "And so, reader, farewell to Sherlock Holmes!" (*Casebook* 4). Commercial savvy aside, Doyle's disenchantment with Holmes seems genuine and has never been accounted for adequately. His explanation that writing the short stories was too time-consuming, requiring the same degree of planning and care as novels, seems unconvincing given the gaffes and contradictions that riddle the series. Likewise, his citing the necessarily finite number of interesting puzzles is not borne out by the hundreds of Sherlock Holmes pastiches since published, to say nothing of the explosion of puzzle-oriented detective literature that followed Holmes's popularity.

One likely reason contributing to Doyle's reticence that has not been considered fully is that Doyle—champion of traditional masculine values, author of chivalric historical romances and athletic tales, sportsman, adventurer, and a writer ever aware of his predominantly male readership—found Holmes's troublesome and contradictory masculinity wearisome to maintain. Sherlock Holmes had not been conceived as a

masculine role model or hero, but as a marginal, sexually-problematic figure. In his first appearance in 1887, he seems an eccentric and noteworthy, yet also suspicious and uncertain artifact of London's "great cesspool" (*Study* 6). Only through a series of deft and deliberate moves had Doyle managed to "rehabilitate" Holmes, recruit him for masculine causes, and distance him from his shadowy original manifestation; but the recovery was never complete. Despite Doyle's best efforts, he would never be so uncomplicated a proponent of manliness and normality as the soldiers, explorers, and athletes that people Doyle's other fiction.

Such a reading of Holmes at the beginning of his career in print is at odds with his established critical character: the "policeman of masculinity" attested to by Joseph A. Kestner (87) or, in Diana Barsham's view, "Doyle's most inspired diagnostician of breaches and vulnerabilities in the modern domain of the masculine sign" (1). As critics have noted, Sherlock Holmes is uniquely suited to celebrate many Victorian masculine paradigms, managing to move from one style to another with a seamless grace: the cold scientific reasoner but also the committed artist, the consummate professional but also the gifted amateur, an honorable conservative but also a "bohemian" outsider, and others. Rife with contradictions, he is able to reconcile differing models of masculine behavior and to police normative male values as a "corrective" force (Barsham 1); but those very contradictory qualities that suit him to this widely acknowledged role also problematize his masculinity, opening him to suspicions of abnormal behavior and transgressive sexuality which Doyle was always at pains to contain.

This essay examines the initial transformation of Sherlock Holmes's masculinity occurring within the first two novels, *A Study in Scarlet* (1887) and *The Sign of Four* (1890), and the first short story, "A Scandal in Bohemia" (1891). Never doubting the autobiographical factors that inform Holmes' characterization, this essay does question the aptness of critical tendencies to view Holmes as preeminently an upholder of normative masculine and heterosexual values. Despite Doyle's active promotion of such codes, he originally depicts Holmes as an effeminate and morally ambiguous character, with hints of sexual deviance. Increased interest and a wider male readership led Doyle to attempt to reclaim his creation for the moral and masculine right. In this attempt he is only partially successful. The Otherness that sets Holmes apart as a noteworthy *novum* also prevents his conversion into a standard hero figure, resulting in a sexless and even body-less character. In the first novel he sidesteps the character's dubious sexuality—a problem inherited mainly

from his source material, Edgar Allan Poe's Dupin stories—by grafting on a more conventional masculine adventure story. He confronts the problem in the next two stories, first by firmly establishing his narrator's heterosexuality, and then by casting Holmes in the unlikely role of chaste romantic hero. Following these stories, Holmes's sexuality becomes a conspicuous non-issue, as Doyle begins the slow process of erasing his body. In the end, neither Holmes's status as incorporeal "calculating machine" nor his support of masculine norms can eradicate implications of his sexual Otherness.

### *Dupin, Domesticity and the Armchair Detective*

The first mystery of the Sherlock Holmes canon, and in many ways its greatest mystery, is Sherlock Holmes himself. While it is easy to look back on the completed series and confirm Holmes's purpose as a restorer of order and bulwark of the status quo, such would not have been obvious to his first readers. This role is certainly not evident in *A Study in Scarlet*, the first two chapters of which detail Watson's puzzled attempts to determine what sort of man he has chosen for his fellow lodger. While his observations do not yield their chief objective—to learn Holmes's profession—they are laden with strange (albeit humorously related) hints of mysterious habits and potentially immoral behavior. Holmes entertains a string of "nondescript individuals" in the sitting room, whose private use he begs of Watson on such occasions (17). The doctor notes that Holmes's long walks through London "appeared to take him into the lowest portions of the city"; if London is "that great cesspool into which all the loungers and idlers of the Empire are irresistibly drained," Watson's roommate seems conversant and comfortable in its lowest depths (6, 13). Because of Holmes's indolence and "dreamy, vacant expression," Watson also suspects him of using narcotics, forging a link between the detective and the decadent aesthetes that would become stronger in the second novel (13). Watson's inclination simply to ask Holmes about his business and habits is curbed when "something in his manner showed me that the question would be an unwelcome one"; Watson concludes "that he [Holmes] had some strong reason for not alluding to it" (16, 18). Holmes's habits and occupation, as well as the sources of his unusually broad knowledge, seem at first a delicate, perhaps dirty secret. The humorous playfulness, the uncanny coziness of these early chapters do not belie Holmes' morally obscure, and potentially transgressive, first appearance to his soon-to-be friend.

Conan Doyle thus begins the first account of his great detective and masculine

champion not by *revealing* his manly frankness, but by *enshrouding* the detective in mystery, creating an ambiguous empty space in which all manner of deviant behavior may exist. It is a style of masculinity at odds with the Victorian norm of open manliness described by James Eli Adams as being "identified above all with honest, straightforward speech and action, shorn of any hint of subtlety or equivocation" (14). Such an atmosphere of moral haziness is hardly the ideal beginning for the chronicles of a masculine paragon. However, it is readily comprehensible when we consider Holmes's most obvious literary inspiration, C. Auguste Dupin.

While Doyle's creative debt to Poe's three Dupin stories has long been acknowledged, the sexual ambiguity that the French detective "passed on" to Holmes has not been so appreciated. In order to keep his reader in suspense without requiring the detective to withhold information or sound self-congratulatory, Poe establishes the device of the "intermediary as narrator" in "The Murders in the Rue Morgue" (Peithman 195), thus bringing a narrating, observing male into close proximity with another male, the extraordinary object of his gaze. This dynamic can work without creating moral or sexual ambiguity between the two men: the narrator of Poe's later detective story "The Gold Bug," for instance, remains baffled and appalled by the detective's eccentric behavior, fearing him insane. But the unnamed narrator of the Dupin stories seems infatuated, even smitten with his subject:

Our first meeting was at an obscure library...where the accident of our both being in search of the same very rare and very remarkable volume brought us into closer communion....I was astonished, too, at the vast extent of his reading; and, above all, I felt my soul enkindled within me by the wild fervor, and the vivid freshness of his imagination....I felt that the society of such a man would be to me a treasure beyond price; and this feeling I frankly confided to him. ("Murders" 200)

As J.A. Leo Lemay has noted in his reading of the story, the account of this meeting is romantic and sentimental, the diction here and elsewhere that of a lover. After the fashion of a lovesick young man whose finances are "somewhat less embarrassed" than his lover's, the narrator is "permitted to be at the expense" of setting up housekeeping with Dupin (Poe

200), thus assuming "the traditional male economic role in a marriage" (Lemay 171). The two men then follow a largely nocturnal existence, Dupin "enamored of the night for her own sake; and into this *bizarrierie*, as into all his others, I quietly fell; giving myself up to his wild whims with a perfect *abandon*" (201).<sup>1</sup> In contrast to the horrified surprise and suspicion of "The Gold Bug" narrator, Dupin's chronicler aligns himself with his idol even in lunacy, jealously guarding their domestic privacy against any encroachment (200). While these "madmen of a harmless nature" are in some ways consistent with other non-sexualized paradigms of male friendship rehearsed in the early nineteenth century—Carlylean hero-worship, for instance—the sexual ambiguity is rather more powerfully, even teasingly over-determined in the Dupin stories than elsewhere in Poe. Lemay notes this when he posits that homosexual suggestions are in fact doubled in "Murders," the Dupin-Narrator relationship being echoed by the L'Esplanayes, allegedly mother and daughter but possibly lesbian lovers (172-73).

Since Lemay's reading (1982), Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's *Between Men* has indirectly problematized his assumptions, arguing convincingly that male-male domestic partnerships were frequently depicted in mid-Victorian fiction with no implication of any sexually transgressive behavior. In her familiar example, Dickens's Eugene Wrayburn and Mortimer Lightwood (*Our Mutual Friend*) "live together like Bert and Ernie on Sesame Street," despite the prevalent "anality" of their relationship. Sedgwick lists a host of other fictional bachelors who share similarly unremarkable domestic arrangements (172-74). But in her division of male homosocial/homosexual styles according to class, Sedgwick also describes the class among whom "a distinct homosexual role and culture seem already to have been in existence" by 1865: "aristocratic men and [their] dependents," "bohemian" figures "in touch with the criminal," set apart from society by "money, privilege, internationalism" and "the ability to command secrecy" (172-73). Such markers certainly tally with both Dupin and the early Sherlock Holmes, which may not be said of the typical middle-class bachelor gentlemen Sedgwick characterizes.

In any case, such patterns of earnest male fellowship would become sexualized over the Victorian Era (as James Eli Adams notes of secret political assemblies [62]), especially in the age of Wilde and the Cleveland Street scandal, the era of Sedgwick's "homosexual

<sup>1</sup> Lemay postulates that, as the narrator is either an Englishman or an American, "a common assumption would be that the narrator is there for a sexual fling, [given] the nineteenth-century American image of Paris" (171). He further remarks that "the connotations of the diction...suggest that the narrator submits to—and relishes—the strange sexual practices of Dupin" (172).

panic” in which male homosociality is figured as “the most compulsory and the most prohibited of social bonds” (87, 114). It is therefore from a dubious homosocial relationship (or at any rate, one increasingly intuited as dubious), a sexually-problematic *mise en scene*, that Conan Doyle chiefly draws his inspiration for Holmes, Watson, and 221B Baker Street.

Although perhaps more likely to claim his old professor Joseph Bell as the primary inspiration for Holmes, Doyle acknowledges his debt to Poe in the first Sherlock Holmes novel, albeit in a rather backhanded way. Holmes receives Watson’s comparison of him to Dupin with bad grace, pronouncing Poe’s detective a “very inferior fellow” (21). Yet the early Sherlock Holmes is clearly beholden to him, making frequent use of his deductive maxims, openly disparaging the official representatives of the law, and peppering his speech with Gallicisms and classical quotes. Dupin’s nationality, his implied aristocratic background,<sup>2</sup> his rather snobbish erudition, his eccentricity, his secretive interiority, his self-imposed seclusion within a bohemian domestic setting, and even his penchant for nocturnal wanderings throughout the sleeping city all find their way into Holmes’s character, serving to mark him with similar connotations of moral ambiguity.

While Sedgwick’s enumeration of bachelor professionals suggests that Holmes’s domestic partnership with Watson need not be sexually significant, then, these Dupin-esque features of his character combine with Watson’s initially idle lifestyle and the exclusively domestic locus of Holmes’s profession to create a morally ambiguous effect. This latter point is a chord continually hammered upon in *A Study in Scarlet*, as the *sanctum sanctorum* of 221B Baker Street becomes a vital component of the character Doyle wishes to describe: that of a consulting or armchair detective. “I have a trade of my own. I suppose I am the only one in the world. I’m a consulting detective,” explains Holmes, pointing out that the novelty of his vocation is its location (19). Watson emphasizes these ideas: “But do you mean to say...that *without leaving your room* you can unravel some knot which other men can make nothing of, although they have seen every detail for themselves?” (20; emphasis added). Shortly before this scene, Watson characterizes Holmes’s anonymous magazine article “The Book of Life” as being the work of “some arm-chair lounge who evolves all these neat little paradoxes in the seclusion of his own study” (19). Ineffectuality

<sup>2</sup> On the one occasion in the canon when Sherlock Holmes discusses his family, he reveals that his ancestors were “country squires” and that his grandmother was the sister “of the French artist, Vernet,” adding that “Art in the blood is liable to take the strangest forms” (“Greek Interpreter” 193). These few remarks, confirming Holmes’s Gallic roots and his role of “gentleman artist,” bear out the connection in Doyle’s mind between Holmes and Dupin of the Parisian Left Bank.

is associated with domesticity by the narrating voice of the story—the seclusion of the study is no substitute for Watson’s practical experience outside of the home. Residents of the armchair cannot write *The Book of Life*. Holmes’s declaration that he is an armchair detective seeks to dispel this notion by linking two seemingly unlinkable ideas: the (masculine) professional and the (feminine) homebody.

From the beginning of the series, then, Holmes is differentiated from conventional detectives by his location outside the professional sphere, a distinction that jars with Victorian constructions of masculinity whereby “manhood cannot be *sustained* within domesticity, since the ideal is incompatible with ease” (Adams 10). After *A Study in Scarlet* the distinction lessens quickly, with Holmes actually solving only one mystery from his armchair (“A Case of Identity,” 1891). But Holmes’s flat remains the locus of both his private and public life—the location of his criminal library, the lab where he conducts chemical analyses, and the offices where he receives clients. Fifty of the sixty stories begin there, while only four do not depict the flat at all.<sup>3</sup>

#### *A Study in Scarlet: “Brag and Bounce!”*

For many reasons, *A Study in Scarlet* (1887) represents a special case in the series, featuring Holmes at his least prepossessing, most difficult and, in terms of masculine characterization, most sexually-problematic. Written hurriedly and with no ideas of the series to follow, *Study* takes no pains to make its subject likable; he is, rather, an extraordinary grotesquerie Watson has come across in his travels. All of the marginalizing features described above as compromising Holmes’s masculine heroism are present here; indeed, they remain more or less permanent features of the Sherlock Holmes formula, though Doyle is able to adapt, nullify or otherwise deemphasize them in later texts.<sup>4</sup> In addition to these, two character traits also damaging to Holmes’s masculine integrity appear in this first novel and nowhere else: a nervous energy seemingly approaching hysteria at times, and an excessive vanity, revealed in stereotypically priggish mannerisms. This first vision of Holmes is so distasteful (Watson can barely tolerate him) that Doyle seeks reassurance in a more conventional adventure narrative, an American frontier adventure.

<sup>3</sup> It is worth noting that the holy sites for Sherlock pilgrims—the Sherlock Holmes Museums in London and in Meirengen, Switzerland—each feature painstaking recreations of these domestic quarters as their central exhibit.

<sup>4</sup> For example, Holmes’s early impression of aristocratic snobbishness is lessened by the omission (after a few stories) of the Dupin-esque classical epigrams and balanced out by his evident dislike of haughty aristocrats throughout the stories.

The mystery surrounding Holmes's personality and occupation, described above, is exacerbated by his dramatic build-up. Before he appears, he is described by Watson's friend Stamford as eccentric, a bit cold-blooded, "a first-class chemist," possessing a "passion for definite and exact knowledge," and prone to drastic mood swings (7-8). For the first and only time Holmes is described both as a young man and a student, actively engaged in studies at St. Bartholomew's Hospital, though none can surmise his field of study; Watson later declares emphatically, "He was not studying medicine" (14). Stamford's only specific comment regarding Holmes's student activities hints that his eccentric behavior may include sexual perversion: "When it comes to beating the subjects in the dissecting-rooms with a stick, it is certainly taking rather a bizarre shape" (8).<sup>5</sup> Combined with Holmes's delay on the scene and Stamford's odd disclaimers to Watson ("You don't know Sherlock Holmes yet...perhaps you would not care for him as a constant companion"; and "You mustn't blame me if you don't get on with him"), this shocking piece of information prepares the reader to meet a social anomaly and sexual misfit (7-8).

Meeting Holmes in the chemical laboratory, Watson takes exception to his nervousness and impetuosity, rendered in both childish and effeminate terms. Holmes demonstrates a new chemical discovery while "clapping his hands, and looking as delighted as a child with a new toy....His eyes fairly glittered as he spoke, and he bowed as if to some applauding crowd conjured up by his imagination" (10). Later Holmes "[springs] from his chair with an exclamation of delight" (60) upon the discovery of new evidence, while a check to one of his theories elicits Watson's pity: "the utmost chagrin and disappointment appeared upon his features. He gnawed his lip, drummed his fingers upon the table, and showed every other symptom of acute impatience. So great was his emotion that I felt very sincerely sorry for him" (62). Eventually, Holmes recovers from his error "with a perfect shriek of delight."

Such emotional displays are highly incongruous for a character constructed as "a calculating machine," according to Conan Doyle's later memoirs (*Memories* 108). Indeed, Holmes's characterization in these scenes is identical to later characters in the series whose nerves have "unmanned" them. For instance, Joseph Kestner's specific example of a male figure emasculated by his nervousness is Percy Phelps from "The Naval Treaty" (1893), a

<sup>5</sup> Stamford's quasi-scientific explanation for this act—"to verify how far bruises may be produced after death"—is nevertheless embedded in a discussion of "excess" and the "bizarre" which invalidates its rationality (8). He reinforces the sensational impression when he adds, "I saw him at it with my own eyes" (9).

writer in the Foreign Office and the nephew of a Lord, yet also "a male prone to nervous breakdowns, depression and perhaps paranoia. [He] raises serious questions about the ability of the upper classes to govern the nation" (105). To underline the point, Kestner references George L. Mosse's commentary on the perception of nervous disorders in the late century: "Hysteria had previously been confined to women as a sign of their tender nerves and barely controllable passions. Nervousness, after all, was the very opposite of masculinity" (105). It is striking, then, that Holmes—whose steely nerves contrast with those of his "shrieking" client in "The Naval Treaty"—should exhibit many of the same behaviors in his first narrative outing. Watson, who has returned from military service with "shaken nerves" is yet master of himself enough to pity his hysterical outbursts.

If the conservative Watson—always closer to Doyle's preferred style of masculinity than Holmes—can pity nervousness in his companion, he is less tolerant about preening conceit. While Doyle frequently depicts Holmes as either lacking in or impatient with social graces, this Holmes seems unbearably overconfident in his deductive abilities and never tires of prattling about them. It comes as a shock to those readers of *Study* who know the characters only through their pop-culture manifestations to find Watson, far from adoring his friend, petulant and irritated by Holmes's unceasing self-congratulation. "This fellow may be very clever," thinks Watson, "but he is certainly very conceited" (21). When Watson's flattering comparison to Dupin causes Holmes to "sniff sardonically," his unspoken exclamation "Brag and bounce!" expresses his disgust with his roommate's conceited effeminacy (22).

Regarding an urgent summons from police inspectors Lestrade and Gregson, Holmes is both catty—alleging that the two official detectives "are as jealous as a pair of professional beauties"—and petulant: "I'm not sure about whether I shall go....Supposing I unravel the whole matter, you may be sure that Gregson, Lestrade, and Co. will pocket all the credit" (24-25). His behavior is a far cry from his pronouncement later in the canon that "my profession is its own reward" ("Speckled Band" 174).

At least once in *Study*, this overbearing vanity is constructed as feminine in unequivocal terms. When Watson compliments his skills in Chapter Four, Holmes's reaction is memorable: "My companion flushed up at my words, and the earnest way in which I uttered them. I had already observed that he was as sensitive to flattery on the score of his art as any girl could be of her beauty" (36). The circumstances of this most feminine simile are worth noting: for Holmes, the "science of deduction" is an art and the cultivation



of his faculties touch upon his tenderest emotions. In time, this privileging of the mental over the physical functions will replace sexuality in his character, working to nullify suspicions of sexual deviance, but only partially. This privileging will be Doyle's incomplete solution.

However compromised this version of Sherlock Holmes might be, the most unpopular feature of *A Study in Scarlet* has long been its second half, given over to a long flashback set in the deserts of Utah (Eyles 15). Yet the removal of focus from grimy London to the open air of the American West relieves much of the claustrophobic tension brought on by Holmes's pettiness and conceit. An impression of purity pervades this mini-historical novel, an adventure narrative peopled with hardy frontiersmen and treacherous Mormons, related in the third-person by an unnamed narrator.<sup>6</sup> However clumsily executed, the shift in genre and mood is intentional, allowing Doyle to celebrate in Jefferson Hope—a romantic frontiersman avenging the rape and murder of his wife—the most basic and uncomplicated manliness, and the type of raw chivalry associated with Scott and Fenimore Cooper.<sup>7</sup> Unnecessary to the resolution of the mystery story, which could be more easily wound up in a few pages of exposition, the lengthy rival narrative is Doyle's way of breathing manly life into a sexually conflicted atmosphere. As such, it is part of a larger scheme at work in *Study* to import elements of traditional masculine narratives into a story fraught with sexual uncertainty.

For example, the novel begins with a brief account of Watson's experiences in the Battle of Maiwand. Critics have read Watson's involvement in the action—a notorious British defeat—as expressing anxiety about the future of the Empire. Kestner notes that the battle “generated the stuff of legend, despite being a defeat,” although he de-emphasizes its relevance and stresses instead the psychological significance of Watson's wounding (22). To Victorian males, however, the reference would signify the most heroic qualities of British manhood in the face of adversity, representing a suitable proving ground for Watson. By including these conventional adventure stories and military references, Doyle masculinizes the ambiguous atmosphere of *Study*, just as he sterilizes it with the trappings of science, analysis, and medicine.

<sup>6</sup> Just how purely and conventionally masculine this Western narrative is may be judged by Zane Grey's adaptation of its frontiersmen versus Mormon conflict in his career-making *Riders of the Purple Sage* (1912).

<sup>7</sup> Doyle considered his historical romances to be among his “more serious literary work” (*Casebook* 4). Perhaps he preferred them for the opportunity they afforded of painting vivid and unambiguous, because historically distant, masculine characters.

### *The Sign of Four: The Decadent Holmes and the Marriage of Watson*

*A Study in Scarlet's* publication in *Beeton's Christmas Annual*, 1887, attracted little attention in England, but a stir of interest from America led to the commission of a sequel, to be published in the American magazine, *Lippincott's*. Though Doyle was already busy writing *The White Company*, he accepted the commission and in fact turned out a more cohesive novel in *The Sign of Four* (1890), one which again finds him navigating troublesome masculine dynamics. Rather than tacking on a disruptive rival narrative as in *Study*, however, Doyle weaves elements of military and adventure narratives directly into the main plot, relying on Stevenson's *Treasure Island* in particular. Joseph Kestner confidently declares that “Doyle's use of details from *Treasure Island* in the novel aligns it with male adventure narratives as part of a masculinist literary tradition” (59). In this atmosphere of stolen treasure, peg-leg villains and exotic locales, *Study's* fussy, effeminate Sherlock Holmes would indeed have been out of place. But while such elements certainly masculinize the story, they do not transform Holmes into a suitable hero of romance. The character is still marked as sexually-problematic in *The Sign of Four*, though he has perhaps exchanged some of his old marks for new ones: most notably, his drug use. Granting the effect of the Stevensonian echoes, then, I argue that *Sign's* increased masculine value owes more to the marriage of its narrator and to the inclusion of a figure even more feminized than Holmes, Thaddeus Sholto.

Holmes, “the most incurably lazy devil that ever stood in shoe leather” (*Study* 25), proves more of a pendulum in his moods here, though it is importantly established that work is the deciding factor in his mood swings. Neither money, nor the praise so important previously, but the mental stimulation of work itself makes the difference between his being “bright, eager, and in excellent spirits” or in “fits of the blackest depression” (*Sign* 17). His opening rant has become famous: “Give me problems, give me work, give me the most abstruse cryptogram or the most intricate analysis, and I am in my own proper atmosphere ... But I abhor the dull routine of existence. I crave for mental exaltation” (4). It is the beginning of the mental-physical hierarchy that will prove so vital a component of the later “reclaimed” Holmes, a privileging of the cerebral and the rational that will eventually equate intellectual abilities not with waspishness or effeminacy, but with power and masculinity.

But Holmes's restless “craving” for mental distraction has its dark side as well.

Watson had dismissed suspicions of Holmes's drug use in *Study*, concluding that "the temperance and cleanliness of his whole life [forbids] such a notion" (13). But *The Sign of Four* begins with an image designed to shock the reader into a new knowledge of Sherlock Holmes, one that introduces a set of different, if no less disturbing, variables into his character:

Sherlock Holmes took his bottle from the corner of the mantelpiece, and his hypodermic syringe from its neat morocco case. With his long, white, nervous fingers he adjusted the delicate needle, and rolled back his left shirt-cuff. For some little time his eyes rested thoughtfully upon the sinewy forearm and wrist, all dotted and scarred with innumerable puncture-marks. Finally, he thrust the sharp point home, pressed down the tiny piston, and sank back into the velvet-lined armchair with a long sigh of satisfaction. (3)

Significantly, the demons that drive Holmes to indulge in mind-altering drugs are the same that led him to "create" his profession, for, he repeats, "I am the only one in the world" (4). The logic is questionable: a restless intellectual who depends on new mental challenges, yet who lounges at home, waiting for the police to get "out of their depths" and consult him. The dynamic of driven specialist and lazy devil proved troublesome in *Study*; Doyle responds by changing Holmes from a shrieking eccentric who bows to imaginary crowds, to a tortured and fragmented recluse, a genius sighing over his own degeneration and the meaninglessness of life without "stimulation."

Holmes seems to have aged ten years between the two novels, though his comments on the Jefferson Hope case lead us to believe they are contiguous (5).<sup>8</sup> It is hard to imagine this sunken and pathetic figure leaping about the laboratory at St. Bartholomew's or beating corpses in the dissecting room for his own edification. He seems a spent force, a victim of his own idiosyncrasy who, in true decadent fashion, lives solely for the moment of "mental exaltation"—whether in the form of new work or cocaine and morphine:

<sup>8</sup> In terms of the convoluted Sherlockian chronology—always troublesome, since Doyle was never overly concerned with continuity—Holmes has indeed aged years. Doyle haphazardly inserted more than a dozen of the later stories between these two novels, perhaps seeking to make maximum use of Holmes's and Watson's less complicated bachelor partnership.

I cannot live without brainwork. What else is there to live for? Stand at the window here. Was ever such a dreary, dismal, unprofitable world?...What could be more hopelessly prosaic and material? What is the use of having powers, doctor, when one has no field upon which to exert them? Crime is commonplace, existence is commonplace, and no qualities save those which are commonplace have any function upon earth. (11)

The chapter which depicts Holmes in this Hamlet-like mood is entitled "The Science of Deduction"—ironically, the same chapter title used in *Study* for the chapter that introduces us to Holmes's abilities and profession. As Kestner notes, Holmes links his indulgence "with a declaration of his profession" (61). Implicitly, these are the conclusions which he has deduced from the world: that life is prosaic drudgery, and that only drug use or the distractions of his work (his "art," as he frequently calls it) can relieve his mental and physical *ennui*. What had been merely a means of providing "bread and cheese" in *A Study in Scarlet* (18) is now Holmes's only salvation: the apex of his mood swings, desperately sought after, is the only thing to live for.

The indulgence in cocaine fixes Holmes as a creature of mood as well as mind. Yet control rather than caprice is at issue here; he seems less a character who lacks the emotion or desires that bubble over in *Study* than one who suppresses them, which at once romanticizes and masculinizes his character. The drug use itself, however, is rendered in an onanistic mode intended to disturb: the "long, white" fingers, the fetishism of the leather and the needle, the sharp thrust home, the "long sigh of satisfaction" (3). Holmes is both penetrator and penetrated in the opening scene, a needle-phallus dynamic that expresses hints of impotence and sexual inadequacy: it is a "delicate needle," a "tiny piston" being manipulated by his "nervous fingers." Narcotics are clearly figured as a substitute for both work and sex at the novel's end. When Watson points out, "You have done all the work in this business. I get a wife out of it, Jones gets all the credit, pray what remains for you?" Holmes replies, "For me, there still remains the cocaine bottle" (119). Such an equation of drug use with degenerative masturbation may explain its declining presence as the series continues. By the time of "The Missing Three-Quarter" (1904) it has become a "sleeping fiend" that Watson watches for, a habit that he has "gradually weaned" his friend from embracing (243). Perhaps its most significant later reference occurs in "The Dying

Detective" (1913). It is a scant reference—Watson notices syringes among a litter of other objects on the mantel-piece—yet significant since the story finds Holmes dying, “a deplorable spectacle” with a “gaunt wasted face” and “a hectic flush upon either cheek” (139). His erratic behavior causes Watson to lament, “Of all ruins that of a noble mind is the most deplorable,” recalling Holmes’s Hamlet soliloquy by the window in *Sign*. Clearly, drug use is a herald of degeneracy and death in the stories. Its parallel association with “abnormal” sexuality such as masturbation suggests that the frankly indulging Holmes of *The Sign of Four* is a decadent in his prime, rushing swiftly down the path towards decrepitude and madness. The deviant of *Study* has not been expelled, but he is beginning to pay the price for his sexual transgressions.

In a further effort to leave behind the first Holmes, *The Sign of Four* introduces a new “enervated” and effeminate character in Thaddeus Sholto by way of distraction. Thaddeus’s nervous laughter, twitching movements, and constant indulgence in his hookah make him a sort of gross parody of *Study*’s Holmes, while his physical appearance evokes Oscar Wilde, as Vincent Starrett notes (14-15). He greets Mary Morstan with Holmes-like remarks that emphasize both his artistic temperament and his domesticity: “Pray step into my little sanctum. A small place, miss, but furnished to my own liking. An oasis of art in the howling desert of South London” (22). He is given to quoting Gallicisms like Dupin and the early Holmes, and carries his restorative potions and “quack nostrums” in a leather case (30-31). Diana Barsham sees Thaddeus Sholto as “a peculiarly repulsive hypochondriac” and notes his aestheticism (121). For Kestner, he recalls Wilde and Swinburne, while his mannerisms are “meant to evoke decadent aestheticism if not a stereotype of the homosexual in the culture” (86). I suggest he is rather more; partaking of the old Holmes’s troublesome features but lacking any of his redeeming qualities, Thaddeus Sholto serves as a measuring stick by which the reader may judge the more masculine Holmes. Where Holmes is “rather over six feet, and so excessively lean that he seemed considerably taller” (*Study* 14), Thaddeus is continually described as “the little man.” He is as self-absorbed as the *Study* Holmes, but with his own fragile health rather than superior intellect and abilities. Where Holmes possesses “a strength for which I should hardly have given him credit” (*Study* 9), Sholto is too weak and unnerved to mount a flight of stairs on his own (36). As identical twins, Thaddeus and brother Bartholomew are but one instance of the “doubling” that occurs throughout the narrative (Farrell 41; Kestner 60), yet Holmes is also a twin of these twins. When Bartholomew is found dead in a makeshift chemical laboratory, the

scene bizarrely echoes Holmes’s first appearance in *Study*, both in physical setting and in name (St. Bartholomew’s Hospital / Bartholomew Sholto). In short, while *Sign*’s Holmes does not lack markers of potentially transgressive behavior, his masculinity can only gain in comparison with the mincing caricature of Thaddeus Sholto.

But it is with Watson’s masculinity that Doyle especially concerns himself in *The Sign of Four*. While his role in *Study* had been solely that of an observer, a tag-along whom Holmes invites “if you have nothing better to do” (25), *Sign* finds him playing a variety of masculine roles. “As a medical man” he warns Holmes against the harmful effects of his drug use, taking personal responsibility for his health (4). He takes an active part in every facet of the investigation, providing Holmes with a medical opinion as to the cause of Bartholomew Sholto’s death, accompanying him on a bloodhound chase, and firing his pistol alongside Holmes’s to bring down an attacker. He compares a steamboat pursuit to a high-spirited hunt, remarking: “I have coursed many creatures in many countries during my chequered career, but never did sport give me such a wild thrill as this mad, flying man-hunt down the Thames” (86). The impression building over the course of the narrative is of a well-traveled and hearty old soldier, one with tales to tell. Even the notorious migration of Watson’s war wound, from his shoulder to his leg, adds to the impression of tried and true masculinity: instead of the fever-stricken, luckless victim of Maiwand’s disaster,<sup>9</sup> he becomes the limping ex-officer brandishing a heavy walking stick, a seasoned veteran.

For perhaps the only instance in the stories, Watson truly has a story of his own to relate: that of his courtship of Mary Morstan. *The Sign of Four* thus ends with the implication that Holmes and Watson are now following separate paths: Watson towards a respectable, healthy and normal life, Holmes down the slippery slope of degeneration. By firmly establishing his narrator within a sanctioned heterosexual relationship, Doyle attempts to “remove the curse” from the Holmes-Watson partnership. Scattered talk of chivalry and romance ensues between the couple during their rushed courtship, with Mary pronouncing Holmes and Watson “two knight-errants to the rescue” (71). Watson’s hopes for a normal domestic scene, revealed by his wistful remarks about Mrs. Forrester’s home in Chapter Seven, inspire him to new feats of bravery and sacrifice: “The treasure... belonged rightfully to Miss Morstan. While there was a chance of recovering it, I was ready to devote my life to the one object. True, if I found it, it would probably put her forever

<sup>9</sup> Watson describes his wounding at Maiwand and bout of enteric fever in Chapter One of *Study*, complaining “The campaign brought honours and promotion to many, but for me it had nothing but misfortune and disaster” (1).

beyond my reach" (65). Watson is frankly relieved when the Agra treasure is lost in the Thames, yet despite his own guilt over the matter, even this ill wish could be construed as manful and noble by the reader, stemming from his desire for Mary: "It was selfish, no doubt, disloyal, wrong, but I could realize nothing save that the golden barrier was gone from between us" (93).

Though the romantic subplot emphasizes his sentimental side, it is worth noting the shrewd professionalism that motivates Watson's courtship as well. A retired army surgeon on half-pay, he must find a wife as soon as possible if he wishes to start a private practice. The mainly female clientele of the Victorian general practitioner would be "reticent to seek advice from a bachelor medical man" (Peterson 92). In his 1857 survey of English professional vocations, *The Choice of a Profession*, Henry Byerley Thomson goes so far as to declare a wife "almost a necessary part of a physician's professional equipment" (162). Watson is unwilling to leech off a vulnerable heiress's good fortune, then, but he is mindful enough to consider his own financial and professional prospects, even during the hurly-burly of a murder investigation.

The new Watson is a departure from the passive, convalescent and weak narrator of *Study*, who writes "The reader may set me down as a hopeless busybody, when I confess how much [Holmes] stimulated my curiosity.... Before pronouncing judgment, however, be it remembered how objectless was my life, and how little there was to engage my attention" (14). In *Sign*, his roles as doctor, police surgeon, advisor, wife-wooer, "hunter" and "knight-errant" and, above all, narrator repudiate such apologetic excuse-making. No longer caught up in an unhealthy fixation with Holmes, he manfully looks after his own professional affairs in order to provide for his new wife. The novel's no-nonsense Watson is perhaps the most persuasive evidence for Owen Dudley Edward's assertion that "Scott gave [Doyle] Watson; Poe gave him Holmes" (xv). While Holmes remains a spectacle and a *novum*, a man we should meet, Watson becomes a trusted voice, a dependable ally—a man we should strive to be. His presence increases the masculine valence of the fledgling series tenfold.

#### "A Scandal in Bohemia": Holmes as Chaste Lover

The launch of *The Strand* magazine in 1891 and its editorial preference for short fiction over serialized novels gave Doyle the idea of reviving Sherlock Holmes (Eyles 19). The short story-length adventures would prove to be the cornerstone of Doyle's success as an author and a financial windfall he could not ignore, despite his misgivings about the

seriousness of the endeavor. *The Strand's* wider audience, comprised mainly of young men (Knight 374), thus necessitated the most dramatic phase in Holmes's development so far: from a troubled, fitful degenerate into a less problematic hero figure, a safe subject for Watson's gaze. The sexual ambiguity does not disappear, nor can it disappear from a character so fundamentally marked as Other, but Doyle at last confronts the subject head on—a necessary move if he is to allow Watson to celebrate Holmes before an impressionable male readership. Therefore, "A Scandal in Bohemia," the first Holmes story to reach a wide audience and the beginning of Doyle's popularity with English readers, is also the beginning of Holmes's establishment role as masculinity's policeman, the committed (if eccentric) upholder of conventional values. None of these changes is possible without the emergence of a new, more acceptable Holmes, one who will not alienate the *Strand's* readership by inviting improper suspicions. Doyle ingeniously solves the problem by centering this first short story on Holmes's ideal woman, reinventing him in the process as a chaste romantic figure.

"A Scandal in Bohemia" depicts the efforts of a petty German king (Von Ormstein) to retrieve an incriminating photograph from his former lover, Irene Adler, an American actress and "well-known adventuress" (12). Apparently wronged by the king, Irene threatens to send the photograph to the King of Scandinavia, spoiling Von Ormstein's political marriage to that kingdom's princess. Holmes is commissioned to retrieve the photograph and remove the threat. Though his task is a slight matter in comparison to the murder investigations of the novels, Holmes is unable to complete it successfully; Von Ormstein's reputation and marriage are "saved" not by Holmes's actions but by Irene Adler's decision to marry another man. Here, then, is another first for the series: Holmes fails. His agency is reduced in exchange for an increased humanity, however, while his sportsmanlike bow to Irene's abilities emphasizes his manliness, professionalism, and modesty, in marked contrast to his pettishness in *A Study in Scarlet*.

As it follows hard upon the heels of Holmes's misogynist remarks in *Sign*,<sup>10</sup> the opening of "Scandal" is nearly as shocking as that novel's opening cocaine scene: "To Sherlock Holmes she is always *the* woman. I have seldom heard him mention her under any

<sup>10</sup> *Sign* finds Holmes at his most misogynistic, assuring Watson that "the most winning woman I ever knew was hanged for poisoning three little children for their insurance-money," and insisting that "women are never to be entirely trusted—not the best of them" (45). When Watson announces his engagement in *The Sign of Four*, Holmes groans from his armchair: "I feared as much.... I really cannot congratulate you," and "I should never marry myself, lest I bias my judgment" (118-19).

other name. In his eyes she eclipses and predominates the whole of her sex" (5). Like the drug scene, this passage clearly signals a deliberate shift in Holmes's characterization; Watson is imparting new and qualifying information to be assimilated into the complete picture of his friend's personality. In an effort to reconcile the Holmes of *Sign* with that of "Scandal," he quickly insists that "It was not that he felt any emotion akin to love for Irene Adler" and tries to elucidate Holmes's true nature by offering an analogy similar to Holmes's love story/Euclid opposition: "Grit in a sensitive instrument, or a crack in one of his own high-power lenses, would not be more disturbing than a strong emotion in a nature such as his" (5). Here it is not women per se but "strong emotion" to which Holmes objects: "as a lover he would have placed himself in a false position. He never spoke of the softer passions, save with a gibe and a sneer" (5). Irene Adler, about whom the reader as yet knows nothing, seems to form a tantalizing exception to these rules. With this context of love and "the softer passions," Doyle shrewdly hooks his new readers, seeming to promise a Beatrice-Benedick love match for his confirmed bachelor detective. It is the first step towards achieving the general moral effect of "A Scandal in Bohemia": that of aligning the sexually ambiguous Holmes (or seeming to) with the dominant heterosexual discourse on love, marriage, and sexual responsibility.

In his analysis of the story, Michael Atkinson regards "Scandal" as a favorite among fans and casual readers alike "because it provides a story in which Holmes's vigilant virginity is at once sustained and relaxed" (48). In fact, with its over-emphatic discussion of "the woman," the story helps to promote Holmes's alleged virginity, replacing an apparent sexual deviant with a voluntarily celibate heterosexual. As with the conception of Holmes as masculinity's policeman, Atkinson's assumption of Holmes's "literal" or "biological" virginity can be assumed only with the benefit of hindsight (46-47). Far from working against an impression of manliness, Holmes's virginity is posed in such a way in "Scandal" as to promote traditional ideas of nobility and romanticism by its equation with sacrifice and self-control. Though his disguised surveillance of Irene Adler does not help him retrieve the incriminating photograph, it does facilitate the marriage of Irene to lawyer Godfrey Norton by providing a witness for their impromptu wedding. As Atkinson notes, Holmes "makes her marriage to another man possible, in that very act denying her forever to himself. This is the stuff of purest romance, chivalric or domestic, medieval or modern" (48). That the detective's virginity is confidently presumed is a testament to the success of Doyle's long-term desexing strategy. That his virginity does not carry connotations of

ineptitude and inexperience—that he in fact emerges as a more masculine and heroic figure than ever—is owing in no small part to his "sacrifice" in this story.

Holmes's attendance at this bizarre, almost farcical wedding is instrumental in establishing his apparent heterosexuality. For his services as a witness, he receives from Irene a sovereign which, he tells Watson, "I mean to wear...on my watch-chain in memory of the occasion" (19). The acceptance of the revered golden token against the backdrop of the wedding ceremony effectively marries Holmes to Adler, symbolically if not actually. It is contrasted with Holmes's refusal of Von Ormstein's "emerald snake ring," offered in gratitude for his efforts (28). The moment is a paradigm shift for Holmes's characterization, as he accepts the token of the woman and refuses that of the man—in effect, acknowledging the happily married wife and rejecting "Bohemia." Holmes's abnormal, vagabond existence is identified as "Bohemian" at the beginning of the tale, forging a link between him and the sexually irresponsible young king: "Holmes, who loathed every form of society with his whole Bohemian soul, remained in our lodgings at Baker Street, buried among his old books, and alternating from week to week between cocaine and ambition" (5). By the story's end, his evident disapproval of Von Ormstein's dalliances and his wholehearted admiration for Irene Adler have converted him from a dissolute and amoral transgressor to a moral champion and defender of the status quo, a role he was to play (uneasily) for the rest of his career. The scene is immediately followed by Watson's fairytale-styled wrap up: "And that was how a great scandal threatened to affect the kingdom of Bohemia, and how the best plans of Mr. Sherlock Holmes were beaten by a woman's wit" (29). A scandal has indeed threatened "the kingdom of Bohemia" (an apt description of Holmes's Baker Street citadel): namely, that of Holmes's aberrant sexuality.

What is Irene Adler's peculiar transformative power that prevents this threatening scandal? To ask the question is tantamount to asking why Irene is "*the woman*" to Holmes and determining what qualities he finds so persuasive. The crucial reason offered by the text is mental sharpness: she outwits him, thus besting him in the most crucial dimension of intellect. That he should appreciate this aspect of her personality is not surprising; even the misogynist Holmes of *The Sign of Four* grudgingly acknowledges Mary Morstan's "decided genius" (119). But the other attributes that appear to attract Holmes are perhaps less obvious, though more compelling, having less to do with her intellect or "that true cold reason which I place above all things" (*Sign* 119) than with her own marginal Otherness.

Irene's status as an American (always dangerous figures in the stories, despite

Doyle's feelings of brotherhood for the United States) and her ambiguous profession of actress/adventuress serve to mark her as potentially transgressive, like Holmes himself.<sup>11</sup> Her residence in "Briony Lodge," a thinly-veiled version of St. John's Wood, suggests that she is the mistress and "kept woman" of Godfrey Norton. Taken with her royal dalliance and "dubious and questionable memory" (5), the evidence points to her being a sexual "adventuress" above all, existing outside of conventional and sanctioned norms. While Joseph Kestner views this sexual Otherness as antithetical to Holmes, posing a threat "to the male and to male codes" (77), Irene's existence on the fringe of normative sexual behavior should be powerfully attractive to so sexually Othered and ambiguous a figure as the early Holmes.

Above all, it is Irene's streak of masculinity that seems to attract the hitherto effeminate detective.<sup>12</sup> Though Irene is praised for her beauty by all the main characters, even Holmes, Von Ormstein also marvels at "how quick and resolute" she is (28). "She has a soul of steel," he remarks, "the face of the most beautiful of women, and the mind of the most resolute of men" (14). The tenor of praise for Irene's intellect does not associate her with feminized instinct or intuition, but with a very masculine decisiveness and mental energy. Watson therefore seems cagey when he refers to Holmes's being "beaten by a woman's wit"—Irene clearly possesses and utilizes a set of "wits" associated with men (29). Her knack of obtaining, or approximating, masculine agency is never more apparent than when she follows Holmes back to Baker Street in male dress to wish him a bold good night. It is a flourish worthy of the theatrical Holmes himself, as indeed are most of Irene Adler's actions in the story.<sup>13</sup> "Male costume is nothing new to me," she confides, in the letter to Holmes that closes the story, "I often take advantage of the freedom which it gives" (28)—a declaration of independence that both looks forward to the New Woman and backward to the "Bohemian" liberty of a George Sand. When Sherlock Holmes, the acknowledged master of disguise, fails to recognize the sexless "slim youth in an ulster"

<sup>11</sup> Watson's remark that "the stage lost a fine actor" (21) in Holmes further aligns him with the actress/adventuress.

<sup>12</sup> Adaptors of Holmes for the stage and screen have noted and developed this subtle but palpable "streak." In the "Scandal" episode of Granada Television's *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* (1984), for example, Irene is depicted matching or besting the young king in feats of riding and marksmanship. She is also shown engineering the fateful photo session, taking advantage of a drunken and insensible Von Ormstein.

<sup>13</sup> The device of the disguise encapsulates the transformation that takes place in Holmes over these three narratives. Although frequently depicted as a master of disguise, he does not employ this skill in *A Study in Scarlet*. He is, however, fooled by a young man who visits Baker Street costumed as a woman, later describing him in admiring terms as "a young man—and an active one, too, besides being an incomparable actor" (*Study* 47). The cross-dressing man of *Study* and the cross-dressing woman of "Scandal" bracket Holmes's own disguise in *The Sign of Four*: that of an old sailor. Holmes thus admires this pair of actors who can transmute their gender, while he himself impersonates a member of a profession marked as being sexually ambivalent.

who hurries down the busy, darkened London street, his transformation from effeminate freak to male paragon is nearly complete (28). The retreating, androgynous figure might well have been the youthful Dupin-Holmes of *A Study in Scarlet*, lost in his nocturnal wanderings through the depths of the city.

### Conclusion: "A Mere Appendix"

When Doyle decided to end the Holmes stories in "The Final Problem" (1893), he was "amazed at the concern expressed by the public. They say that a man is never properly appreciated until he is dead, and the general protest against my summary execution of Holmes taught me how many and how numerous were his friends" (*Memories* 99). Young men expressed their grief by wearing black mourning bands; others exhibited their disapproval more emphatically by canceling their subscriptions to *The Strand* (Jaffe 9). While *The Hound of the Baskervilles* (1901) was a welcome new reminiscence of the character, readers wanted to know their hero yet lived, and Doyle at last bowed to popular demand.

Fortunately, the falls at Reichenbach, where Holmes and nemesis Professor Moriarty had allegedly plummeted to their deaths in "The Final Problem," proved a well-chosen site. At once suggestive of climactic heroism and psychological profundity, the "tremendous abyss" and "boiling pit of incalculable depth" is romantic enough to allow Watson's worshipful image of Holmes, "the best and wisest man whom I have ever known," toppling over the edge in mortal struggle with his foe, yet sufficiently chaotic to make any attempt at recovering the bodies "absolutely hopeless" ("Final Problem" 264, 267-68). Certainly Doyle's commercial savvy should not be overlooked—the questionable landscape and absence of bodies evince his reluctance in 1893 to burn his most profitable bridge. "I did the deed," Doyle joked later, "but, fortunately, no coroner had pronounced upon the remains" (*Casebook* 4). Yet in another sense, Reichenbach represents the last, most spectacular attempt to redefine Holmes as an incorporeal and sexless being, a transformation of primary concern to Doyle since the beginning of the series. For Doyle, Holmes's death provided a long overdue opportunity for moral baptism; the waters have cleansed him of his secret dark side—Moriarty, his "feared and desired Other" (Barsham 85)—seemingly by releasing him from his own body.

Holmes explicitly makes a point of denying his bodily presence in his explanation to Watson—"About that chasm, I had no serious difficulty in getting out of it, for the very

simple reason that I never was in it"—and the "ghostliness" of this resurrected Holmes becomes evident also in his spiritual pilgrimages to Lhasa and Mecca ("Empty House" 12, 15). Only after Reichenbach's erasure of the detective's inconvenient body can Holmes, starving himself during a difficult case, respond theatrically to Watson's entreaties to eat: "I am a brain, Watson. The rest of me is a mere appendix" ("Mazarin Stone" 7). Apparently included in the "appendix" of vestigial matter are the stomach *and* the penis.

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*Redeeming the "City of the Dead":  
Metaphysical Fiction, Touristic Fantasy, and the  
Historical Other in Bulwer's Last Days of Pompeii*

Stanwood S. Walker

Art, and art only, can make archaeology beautiful.—Oscar Wilde

The name Edward Bulwer-Lytton (as he is most commonly known)<sup>1</sup> has long been synonymous with bad English prose. "It was a dark and stormy night," the opening sentence of his 1830 novel, *Paul Clifford*, has of course gained lasting notoriety as the bit of doggerel with which Charles Schultz's Snoopy begins his never-to-be-completed masterwork. This appropriation in turn helped spawn the Bulwer-Lytton Fiction Contest, which according to the contest's official website "challenges entrants to compose the opening sentence to the worst of all possible novels." Started at San Jose State University in 1982, the contest's renown has grown to such an extent that it attracts submissions from all over the world, and several compilations of entries have been published, including five by Penguin Books.<sup>2</sup> This popular image of Bulwer as a ludicrously incompetent scribbler reflects over a century of critical and scholarly disparagement that cast him from his once pre-eminent position as nineteenth-century man of letters. In part, of course, the eclipse of his reputation was simply a function of changing aesthetic standards. However, to account for the virtual unanimity, not to mention virulence and rapidity, with which he came in the decades after his death to be viewed as a mere "opportunistic popularizer" at best, and at worst a panderer to middlebrow tastes and even a "charlatan" (Christensen [2004] ix-x; Brown 31-2), we must

<sup>1</sup> As Ted Underwood has recently pointed out, while his works tend to be indexed in libraries under "Bulwer-Lytton," "critics continue to refer to him as 'Bulwer,'" since his name "took its hyphenated form only in 1843, well after he had made his literary reputation" (442n2). I will refer to him as Bulwer in this paper.

<sup>2</sup> The most recent compilation, published by the Friday Project, appeared in 2007. For a history of the contest, submission guidelines, and much else, see the contest's official website at [www.bulwer-lytton.com](http://www.bulwer-lytton.com). (Note that the site's URL implicitly equates the contest, and thus bad prose fiction, with Bulwer's name.)



take extra-literary factors into account. Foremost among these factors, perhaps, was a set of trying personal traits which, as Andrew Brown has demonstrated, piqued a number of his contemporaries and helped lay the groundwork for his subsequent fall.<sup>3</sup> Later detractors could point to his turn to Toryism in the early 1850s and his prickly vanity about his aristocratic heritage, emblemized by the comic length to which his name eventually swelled.<sup>4</sup> His interest in the occult, too, while respectably adventurous in his day, was for a long time all but ignored by scholars, and no doubt came to seem less radical than retrograde, characteristic of the intellectual atavism associated by Patrick Brantlinger with "imperial Gothic."<sup>5</sup> As Robert Lee Wolff characterized the status quo in the academy almost four decades ago, "Bulwer is neglected, the scholars say, and, on the whole, he deserves to be. His style is impossibly baroque, his personality unpleasing, his fiction third-rate" (145).

The years since Wolff made this observation have witnessed a partial reevaluation of Bulwer and his legacy. Several book-length studies of his writings and influence (Wolff's among them) and scholarly editions of his works appeared in the 1970s; and, after a steady trickle of articles and unpublished dissertations in the 1980s and 1990s, interest in him has again picked up in the past decade.<sup>6</sup> In that time, attention has been focused across the spectrum of his varied output, from his first major work, the influential silver-fork novel *Pelham* (1828), to the Newgate novels of the early 1830s, *Paul Clifford* and *Eugene Aram*; his social and political analysis, *England and the English* (1833); his historical novels—*Rienzi* (1835), *The Last of the Barons* (1843), and *Harold* (1848); his popular dramas of the

<sup>3</sup> "Bulwer was not an easy man to like," Andrew Brown remarks, and he singles out Bulwer's arrogance about his own "artistic worth and intellectual standing" as having in particular "attracted...critical opprobrium" to him (34). More mixed in its impact on his reputation was his high-handed and at times cruel treatment of his wife Rosina. For a recent account of the Bulwers' notoriously stormy marriage, see Mitchell 23-65.

<sup>4</sup> See Sadleir 213-14, 182. Sadleir's account of the history of the growth of Bulwer's name (which eventually swelled to Sir Edward George Earle Lytton Bulwer-Lytton, Lord Lytton) is perceptive, if somewhat malicious.

<sup>5</sup> Concerning Bulwer's interest in the occult, see Wolff 148-49. For Brantlinger's discussion of "imperial Gothic," see pp. 227-53. In a recent essay, Lillian Nayder explicitly connects Brantlinger's analysis with one of Bulwer's late fictions (see Christensen, *Subverting* 212-21).

<sup>6</sup> The decade of the 1970s witnessed the appearance of Christensen's *Edward Bulwer-Lytton: The Fiction of New Regions*, the only recent book-length study of Bulwer's fiction, as well as Richard Zipser's monograph, *Edward Bulwer-Lytton and Germany*. Other studies appearing at this time that prominently feature Bulwer were Edwin M. Eigner's *The Metaphysical Novel in England and America: Dickens, Bulwer, Melville, and Hawthorne* and Wolff's *Strange Stories*. Scholarly editions of *England and the English* and *Pelham, or, the Adventures of a Gentleman* also appeared. Wolff's claims that passages in the novel *Zanoni* evoke "truly psychedelic state[s]" (188) and point to its author's "acquaintance with 'mind-expanding' drugs" (195), coupled with Bulwer's occultism, help account for the resurgence of interest in his writings during the decade. The recent increase in interest has featured Mitchell's biography, the first substantial account of Bulwer's life since Sadleir's incomplete *Bulwer and His Wife*; a book-length collection of essays, *The Subverting Vision of Bulwer Lytton*, edited by Christensen; and a scholarly edition of *The Coming Race*.

late 1830s and the 1840s, in particular *Money* (1840); his occult fictions—*Zanoni* (1842), "The Haunted and the Hunters" (1859), and *A Strange Story* (1862); and his late science fiction novella, *The Coming Race* (1871). Conspicuous in its near-absence from this general reevaluation of Bulwer's legacy, though, has been the work with which he is still most popularly associated, his blockbuster historical novel, *The Last Days of Pompeii* (1834). This critical silence is striking in a couple of respects. First, there is the way that it perpetuates older prejudices about the incompatibility of popularity and intellectual substantiality, a situation that reflects the peculiar intensity with which this opposition has shaped Bulwer's critical fortunes.<sup>7</sup> More curiously, this silence points to a failure to acknowledge that the very popularity of *Last Days* warrants some consideration, in particular given that it has continued to this day with so little support from critics and scholars.<sup>8</sup> This paper will locate an important source for that popularity in the novel's appeals to touristic fantasy and will consider how those appeals worked in concert with other, more "substantial" elements in the novel to speak to a significant anxiety at the heart of post-Enlightenment historicism. Before a more detailed thesis can be set forth, though, it will be necessary to look more closely at the novel's popular and critical receptions.

In popular terms, *Last Days* was an instant smash, enjoying "the most spectacular success of any novel issued since *Waverley*" (Sadleir 366) and quickly becoming, to borrow a phrase from H. L. Malchow, "part of the lumber of popular culture" (31). Bulwer's novel was frequently adapted for the stage, and inspired numerous visual representations of its characters and scenes.<sup>9</sup> In the latter part of the nineteenth century, its spectacular subject

<sup>7</sup> Concerning Bulwer's critical fortunes, see Brown 31-35. With respect to *Last Days*' disqualifying popularity, Christensen for example observes that in a 1956 essay, "Bulwer-Lytton and the Idealising Principle," Michael Lloyd "discovered—though he dislikes the result—that even the popular *Last Days of Pompeii* may have issued from its author's loyalty to a very personal theory of ideal art" (x). Yet Christensen himself, writing two decades later, claims that "*Pompeii*...lacks the intellectual content" of Bulwer's other historical fiction, and refers to it only in passing throughout his study ([1976] 121).

<sup>8</sup> Bulwer's contemporaries among the cultural elite responded very favorably on the whole to the novel (Sadleir 366-67), but this was soon to change. Writing at the end of the nineteenth century, George Saintsbury allowed grudgingly that "no competent critic, I suppose, would deny that *The Last Days of Pompeii* is one of the very best attempts to do what has never yet been thoroughly done" (*Collected* 3:45). Bulwer's reputation was already in decline, however, and esteem for the novel among subsequent critics has been scant. Jerome McGann, a notable exception, opines that "among [Bulwer's] novels, besides *Pelham*, only *The Last Days of Pompeii* sustains any sort of achievement" (xi-xii). More typical is the almost total silence with which studies of the historical novel responded to Bulwer's novel, the most notable example being Andrew Sanders who, while devoting a chapter to Bulwer's *Harold* (47-67), makes only a few passing references to *Last Days*. More telling still is Christensen's response, noted above. The recent collection, *The Subverting Vision of Bulwer Lytton*, does contain one brief essay devoted to the novel, Angus Easson's "'At Home' with the Romans: Domestic Archaeology in *The Last Days of Pompeii*"; a second, Esther Schor's "Lions of Basalt: Bulwer, Italy, and the Crucible of Reform," considers the novel along with *Rienzi* and two contemporaneous political works, *England and the English* and *A Letter to a Late Cabinet Minister on the Present Crisis* (1834), as reflections on Italian nationalism and domestic reform.

<sup>9</sup> For a brief account of the history of *Last Days* on the stage, see Mayer 20. Concerning nineteenth-century

matter helped make it “the most popular and longest-enduring” of the so-called pyrodramas, outdoor reenactments of the destruction of “a known historical city... by cataclysm” (Mayer 90-91), featuring elaborate fireworks displays; this in turn recommended it to the fledgling film industry, which produced several versions of the novel during the silent era.<sup>10</sup> While no new version of *Last Days* has appeared on the big screen since 1959, it returned as a lavish made-for-TV miniseries in 1984 and continues to be, as Brown puts it, “one of the most famous titles in all of nineteenth-century fiction” (34). This is evidenced by the fact that it remains in print in multiple editions, including a new digital version, and still inspires work in a variety of media, serving for example as the subject of an exhibit by photographer Eleanor Antin at the Feldman Gallery in New York City in early 2002 and as the name of a new alternative pop-rock band out of Chicago.<sup>11</sup>

The reasons for the scholarly and critical neglect of Bulwer’s novel seem at first glance straightforward enough. Besides the generally disparaged stylistic traits that it shares with the rest of his fiction, other aspects of the novel have tended to reinforce the prevailing view of Bulwer as opportunistic panderer, or at least as someone possessing what George Saintsbury described at the end of the nineteenth century (not without a hint of sarcasm) as a capacity for “exemplifying [public taste] with an almost unexampled quickness” (*History* 132).<sup>12</sup> The work’s initial popularity rested to some extent on its appeal to a contemporary taste for literary and artistic depictions of catastrophic events, a taste reflective of the “high level of...malaise and contention” that gripped the post-Waterloo period (Colley 322).<sup>13</sup> The novel also appealed to a widespread interest in Pompeii that had been generated by the work of Sir William Gell. Gell had extensively researched and documented the exhumed city, and published the results of his research, with copious engravings and in consultation with architect John Gandy, in the two-volume *Pompeiana: The Topography, Edifices, and Ornaments of Pompeii* (1817-19). Following the publication of Gell and Gandy’s volume, a

depictions of characters and scenes from the novel in the visual arts, see Wyke 154-56 and Brilliant 174.

<sup>10</sup> For a detailed description of the silent-era films, see Wyke 158-71.

<sup>11</sup> For a review of the miniseries, which aired over three nights on ABC, took five years and \$19 million to complete, and was partly filmed in the ruined city, see O’Connor C30. The new digital version of the novel was released in 2008 by LeClue22. In addition, Amazon.com lists editions of *Last Days* available from Adamant Media Corporation (2000), Book Jungle (2006), Echo Library (2007), Hard Press (2006), Indy Publishing (2002), and Wildside Press (2003). For Antin’s exhibit, see Feldman Gallery’s website: <http://www.feldmangallery.com/pages/exhsolo/exhant02.html>. For information on the band, see <http://profile.myspace.com/index.cfm?fuseaction=user.viewProfile&friendID=266162162>.

<sup>12</sup> McGann observes more positively that “one is not surprised to discover in all [Bulwer’s] writings a fine sensitivity to current tastes and interests” (xi). Whatever form the observation took, it was one, Christensen claims, that “few [early and mid-twentieth-century] critics of Bulwer... ignored” (ix). For a representative assessment of the “flaws” in Bulwer’s style, see Dahl (1953) 439-42.

<sup>13</sup> For the contemporary taste for representations of catastrophe, see Dahl (1953) 428-29 and Wolff 151.

series of more or less learned, and more or less sumptuously illustrated works on the city appeared that helped sustain a passion for things Pompeian.<sup>14</sup> These whiffs of commercialism, coupled with Bulwer’s use of his financial success to support a lavish lifestyle, not to mention a fortuitous eruption of Vesuvius a month before the novel’s publication, could easily seem to justify the judgment that in the case of *Last Days*, he was the opportunist far more than the artist.<sup>15</sup>

On closer examination, it is clear that Bulwer was courting more than a fleeting popularity with *Last Days*. Its composition coincided with that of *Rienzi*, one of his “serious” historical novels, and a substantial amount of research also went into it. Bulwer not only visited Pompeii and the museum in Naples where most of the portable valuables unearthed at the site were kept, but he also read the relevant classical sources and consulted with Gell, to whom he dedicated his novel. More noteworthy in this context is the relationship of *Last Days* to his developing ideas about the art of prose fiction. By the mid-1830s, Bulwer was using the term “metaphysical fiction” to characterize his idealist and generically heterogeneous form of “romance,” derived primarily from German models (particularly Goethe). “Metaphysical fiction,” he claimed in an 1835 essay, using Goethe’s *Wilhelm Meister* as his model, distinguished itself from the prevailing “dramatic” fiction of the day by “invest[ing] itself in a dim and shadowy allegory, which it deserts or resumes at will” (“Different” 1:ix). The aim of this allegory, he wrote three years later, was to “[realise] the Ideal,” the achievement of which “consists not in the imitation, but the exaltation, of Nature” (“Art” 143).<sup>16</sup> In principle, this “exaltation” was to be effected by joining his Teutonic idealism to a Radcliffean aesthetic that aimed for a “deliberate heightening of effect in terms both of the imagery of nature...and of his descriptions of emotion” (Punter 1:147).<sup>17</sup> If in practice this combination tended toward the melodramatic “surging grandiloquence” that has damned his style in the eyes of subsequent generations of critics (Punter 1:147), it also enabled him to create figures and scenes of real signficatory power—in the case of *Last Days*, to construct a potent emblem of spiritual and sociopolitical apocalypse around the Egyptian villain Arbaces and the climactic eruption of

<sup>14</sup> Concerning the works on Pompeii that appeared in the wake of Gell and Gandy’s volume, see Brilliant 154. For Gell’s influence, see Easson 102 and Jenkyns 82.

<sup>15</sup> On the Bulwers’ lavish lifestyle, see Meacham xiv. On the “timeliness” of the eruption of Vesuvius, see Simmons, “Bulwer and Vesuvius” 103-05.

<sup>16</sup> See also *Pelham* 177. The “metaphysical” designation was quickly picked up by critics and other commentators (see Brown 31).

<sup>17</sup> Sadleir (314-15) and Eigner (222-23) also note Bulwer’s debt to Radcliffe.

Vesuvius.<sup>18</sup>

The novel's blending of artistic reach, skillfully rendered melodrama, stylistic pyrotechnics, and opportunistic pandering provides twenty-first-century readers with probably the most ready explanation of its remarkable popularity. The significance of its appropriations from touristic discourse, and the way that those appropriations address historicist anxieties, is presumably less obvious. Even a cursory glance at *Last Days*, though, reveals tourism's importance in the novel, for it is the initial frame through which readers enter the novel: at the beginning of his 1834 preface, Bulwer presents himself as a "traveller," and casts the novel as in effect a piece of travel writing. The terms in which he does so, moreover, point to the primary connection between tourism and historicism in the novel. The spectacle of the disinterred Pompeii, Bulwer claims, stirred in him "a keen desire to people once more those deserted streets, to repair those graceful ruins, to reanimate the bones which were yet spared to his survey; to traverse the gulf of eighteen centuries, and to wake to a second existence—the City of the Dead!" (v). Bulwer is here drawing on a common trope in historical fiction of the early and mid-nineteenth century, the main terms of which have their basis in Sir Walter Scott's "Dedicatory Epistle" to *Ivanhoe*: the historical novelist as a traveler to the past, who like many an erudite Grand Tourist of the previous century composes his reflections on the sites that he sees, though in the form of an extended, imaginative re-animation of those sites.<sup>19</sup>

If tourism is an important constitutive discourse in *Last Days*, as it was in Scott's historical novels, there are major differences in the way that the two writers employ it, differences to which the phrase "City of the Dead" seems intended to call attention. Bulwer employs the phrase a second time midway through Book II of *Last Days*; and as he himself points out in a footnote there, the phrase is drawn from an anecdote in wide circulation at the time about Scott's visit to Pompeii in 1832, the final year of his life. Already very ill, the elder novelist saw the ruined city accompanied by Gell, and as Bulwer summarizes the episode, "almost his only remark was, 'The City of the Dead—the City of the Dead!'"

<sup>18</sup> In her brief discussion of *Last Days*, Esther Schor focuses on the sociopolitical aspect of the novel's emblem of apocalypse, which while analytically expedient, has a couple of problematic consequences: it substantially reduces the emblem's signifiatory reach, and it causes her to dismiss the climactic eruption of Vesuvius as "a fiery redundancy" (124). The eruption, though, represents not only the novel's primary "historical" event, but also its central allegorical signifier, for it is through the eruption that the novel's several complexly interrelated oppositions—sociopolitical (race/class) as well as philosophical and discursive (historicist versus typological or allegorical perspectives on history, and ultimately, materialism versus idealism)—are resolved, at least to the extent they can be given Bulwer's method of expanding signification through associative accretion.

<sup>19</sup> Hereafter cited as volume 22. See also Underwood 441-42.

(141). A couple of points are noteworthy about Bulwer's account. First, it omits key details from the episode to emphasize Scott's melancholy.<sup>20</sup> Second, and more telling still, is the context in which Bulwer chooses to insert the anecdote: Arbaces is surveying Pompeii just before dawn, and the sleeping city appears to him, we are told, "as, after the awful change of seventeen ages, it seems now to the traveller,—a City of the Dead." By implication, then, Scott's response to Pompeii is associated with the Egyptian's Lockean materialism, and thereby contrasted incisively with Bulwer's idealist perspective: while the one can generate nothing more than a despairing five-word phrase, the repetition of which emphasizes both the finality and the inescapability of "Dead," the other can "wake" the dead city "to a second existence" by conjuring up the novel, *The Last Days of Pompeii*.

Just why this distinction struck such a deep chord with Bulwer's contemporaries, and has continued to resonate for so many generations of readers, derives from the way that it addresses a significant anxiety about the accessibility and even the meaning of the past. In his recent discussion of select "historicist" fictions of Bulwer and George Sand from the 1830s, Ted Underwood characterizes this anxiety as a desire for "collective permanence." However, Underwood's claim that this sense of permanence had to be "represented as change," since the "age...believed that all determinate social systems were ephemeral," exaggerates the extent to which a rigorous historicism had (and has) eroded Christian and Enlightenment universalist assumptions about the relationship between past and present (445). By the same token, he overstates the degree to which Bulwer's perspective on the ancient past resembles Scott's historicism in "dwell[ing] on the deadness of the past to emphasize its difference" (443).<sup>21</sup> On the contrary, Bulwer's use of touristic discourse in *Last Days* countered the limits of Scott's genealogical historicism<sup>22</sup> by offering readers a comforting vision of historical continuity based on appeals to fantasy coupled with the universalist pretensions of his "metaphysical fiction." Before advancing this line of argument further, though, we will need to examine Bulwer's relationship to Scott more

<sup>20</sup> In Gell's account, which was subsequently printed in J.G. Lockhart's 1837 biography of his father-in-law, Scott "seemed generally nearly insensible" to the particulars of the scene, but instead "view[ed] the whole and not the parts, with the eye...[of] a poet, and exclaim[ed] frequently, 'The City of the Dead,' without any other remark." Gell goes on to record, though, that Scott was stirred from his melancholy by a particular mosaic, which "he seemed to view...with more interest," and that he was "cheerful and pleased" during a dinner eaten "at a large table spread in the Forum" (Lockhart 2:716). It is of course possible that Bulwer simply was not aware of these details at the time that he composed the novel, but he made no effort to revise his footnote for later editions.

<sup>21</sup> Though the focus of his discussion of Bulwer is a pair of somewhat later novels, *Ernest Maltravers* (1837) and *Alice, or the Mysteries* (1838), Underwood references *Last Days* at the start of his essay; indeed, he quotes the passage from the start of the 1834 passage cited above.

<sup>22</sup> See also Walker, "A False Start for the Classical-historical Novel."

closely and obtain a clearer picture of how he employs touristic discourse in *Last Days*.

### *Bulwer and Scott*

With *Rienzi* and his two historical novels of the 1840s, *The Last of the Barons* and *Harold*, Bulwer has been variously credited as “the great disseminator of Scott’s impulse in the early Victorian period,” or as the “innovator” or at least the “popularizer” of a new, “erudite” type of historical fiction.<sup>23</sup> This disagreement over whether Bulwer should be viewed as disciple, usurper, or pretender to the throne reflects the complex ambivalence of his attitude towards his illustrious predecessor. He frequently spoke highly of Scott in his critical writings, and composed a heartfelt notice on the elder writer’s death for the *New Monthly Magazine*, of which he was then editor. At the same time, he was careful to distinguish the elder writer’s aims and accomplishments from his own and did not shy away from criticizing him, at times forcefully. As early as *Pelham*, he voiced what was to become an increasingly common sentiment among later readers of Scott: that the Waverley novels “don’t contain the most accurate notions of history, or the soundest principles of political philosophy in the world” (145). Unsurprisingly, though, it was Bulwer’s idealist predilections that spurred him to his harshest critiques of Scott. In 1835, he paired Scott with Oliver Goldsmith and stated flatly that “neither of them is a metaphysician,” though he allowed them “perfect and unrivalled” success in such second-tier accomplishments as “representing the external effects of inward motives, the plainer and more common operations of the mind” (“Varieties” 479-80). By 1838, in probably his strongest extended critique of the elder writer, he declared that “Scott, with all his genius, was rather a great mechanist than a great artist” (“Art in Fiction” II:138). The terms, and indeed much of the substance, of this critique were appropriated from Thomas Carlyle,<sup>24</sup> to observe that Bulwer (like Carlyle) misses the point of Scott’s art is both obvious and unrevealing, nor is the force of his critique merely a function of some anxiety of influence. Bulwer’s animosity is

<sup>23</sup> See Fleischman 36, Simmons, “Novelist” 299, Dahl, “History” 61, and Sanders 48-49.

<sup>24</sup> Carlyle had of course spoken famously of the “Mechanical Age” in “Signs of the Times” (1829), and had formulated a near-identical opposition to Bulwer’s “artist”/“mechanist” in his 1830 essay, “On History” (27:90). Much else in Bulwer’s critique is drawn from Carlyle’s own recent essay on Scott (28:104-70), the perusal of which seems to have been a liberating experience for him. Bulwer would have recognized in Carlyle a member of the enemy camp in the early 1830s, when the latter was associated with William Maginn’s coterie at *Fraser’s*, which publicly attacked Bulwer on and off for several years. Yet as Dahl points out, the two “are exceedingly close on many political and social questions” (“Hustings” 64), notably in their belief that modern German literature and scholarship held the antidote to British materialism; by the early 1840s, Carlyle had, according to Christensen, “come...to recognize something of an ally in Bulwer” (80) and even, in Eigner’s phrasing, to “[credit] Bulwer with being, after himself of course, the most influential of the British apostles of Germany” (59).

fueled by real and fundamental differences in their philosophies of history, as well as their ideas about the art of prose fiction.

These differences will become apparent if we first consider those points on which the two agree; for indeed, on one level Bulwer adhered closely to many of the central tenets of the Romantic-era historicism that Scott in so many ways epitomized. Like Scott, for example, he subscribed to the prevalent belief that each historical period has its own particular ruling “spirit,” notably in *England and the English*, published the year before *Last Days* (Christensen [1976] 127). Similarly, his declaration early in *Last Days* that Pompeii “was the miniature of the civilisation of that age” is analogous to Scott’s thinking about character and plot in terms of their capacity to “function as...historical[ly] representative” (Bulwer 21).<sup>25</sup> This more generally reflects the explosion of evidence available to Romantic historiographic discourse, and the consequent necessity of selecting evidence for its ability to suggest the main outlines of a given historical *milieu*—what Carlyle termed giving “an Idea of the Whole” (27:90).<sup>26</sup> Another way in which *Last Days* reflects contemporary historiographic practice lies in Bulwer’s attention to the specificities of locale. Like Carlyle and Thomas Arnold, Bulwer was enamored of the scholarship of Herder and the German Romantics, in whose theories about the “intrinsic link between particular people [*Volk*] and specific places” (Young 38) this practice was rooted.<sup>27</sup> Thus he claimed in the original preface to *Rienzi* to have set aside that novel while staying in Naples in favor of *Last Days* because the latter “required more than ‘Rienzi’ the advantage of residence within reach of the scenes described” (v). Nor is it surprising to find him making a lot of the connection between tale and locale in *Last Days*. In that novel’s original preface, for example, he devotes a long paragraph to detailing how “the city...supplied easily, from the first survey of its remains, the characters most suited to the subject and scene,” after which he observes that these “characters...are the *natural offspring* of the scene and time”

<sup>25</sup> See also Shaw 135. Bulwer goes on to remark, “In its minute but glittering shops, its tiny palaces, its baths, its forum, its theatre, its circus—in the energy yet corruption, in the refinement yet the vice, of its people, you beheld a model of the whole empire” (21). A number of the chapter titles of *Last Days* also bear out the representative function that many of Bulwer’s details serve, for instance: “Description of the Houses of Pompeii—A Classic Revel” (I:iii); “The Gay Life of the Pompeian Lounger—A Miniature Likeness of the Roman Baths” (I:vii); “A Classic Host, Cook, and Kitchen” (IV:ii); “A Fashionable Party and a Dinner a la Mode in Pompeii” (IV:iii).

<sup>26</sup> Hayden White has located the epistemological and methodological shift that resulted in this explosion in Herder, and characterized it as an expansion of the “apprehension of the historical field” to include “an effectively infinite set of particulars” (70). Michael McKeon dates the emergence of the “quantitative” concern with evidence to what he calls the “naïve empiricism” of the seventeenth century, but he claims that it did not “[begin] to be confronted directly” as a problem until after the first half of the eighteenth century (93).

<sup>27</sup> For Bulwer’s debt to Herder, see Christensen 113-14 and 133.

(vii-viii; emphasis added). He returns to the subject in the novel's final chapter, and describes there his incorporation of the actual skeletal remains of a number of victims of the eruption (420-21). Indeed, one of the attractions of *Last Days* lay in its literalizing Scott's metaphor of the historical novelist's choosing his topic from among the "bones" of antiquity (22:xliv).<sup>28</sup>

Bulwer himself was prepared to acknowledge that *Last Days* shared some common ground with Scott's novels. He sets forth in a lengthy footnote to the novel's 1834 preface, for example, his debt to Scott's discussion of dialogue ("Dedicatory Epistle") and goes on in the body of the preface in effect to "transplant" Scott's principles into the late-classical period (viii-ix). Unsurprisingly, what we are confronted with in the novel is a sort of antiqued *lingua franca* not dissimilar to the one that Scott formulated for *Ivanhoe*. The dialogue that opens the novel, for instance, incorporates Shakespearean flourishes ("Ho, Diomed, well met!"), a classical oath ("By Pollux"), and a spate of casual references to things Pompeian or more generally Greco-Roman ("the temple of Isis," "amphoræ," "murænx" or lampreys [13-14]), all duly footnoted. Subsequent exchanges follow suit, although the extent to which this medley might have prevented Bulwer's readers from feeling "much trammelled by the repulsive dryness of mere antiquity" is debatable (ix).<sup>29</sup> The more significant point to note here is the relative superficiality of the debt that Bulwer is avowing. In part this superficiality is a function of the necessarily different role of dialogue in novels set in Greco-Roman antiquity: Scott's brand of genealogical historicism, based as it is on oral testimony and/or other forms of linguistic and cultural continuity between past and present, was not available to the classical-historical novelist.<sup>30</sup> Bulwer himself gestures towards this point in the 1834 preface: "With the men and customs of the feudal time we have a natural sympathy and bond of alliance.... But with the classical age we have no household and familiar associations" (v-vi).

There is a more fundamental difference to note here, however, for if Bulwer, like Scott in *Ivanhoe*, liberally resorts to historical analogy in *Last Days*, his approach is derived

<sup>28</sup> Concerning the appeal of this aspect of *Last Days*, Virginia Zimmerman observes that, in the nineteenth century, "[p]opular interest in Pompeii always focused on the people killed by the volcanic blast and the relics that offer insight into their private, final moments" (108).

<sup>29</sup> Escaping antiquarianism was not the only challenge that Bulwer and other classical-historical novelists faced. Thomas Macaulay, who read Bulwer's novel during a visit to Naples in 1839, took its author to task for, as he saw it, erring on the other side, writing in his journal that "all attempts to exhibit Romans talking slang, and jesting with each other, however clever, must be failures" (Trevelyan 2:44-45).

<sup>30</sup> I borrow the term "classical-historical novel" from the late-Victorian and Edwardian scholar-critic George Saintsbury (*Collected* 3:59).

from a perspective on history that is diametrically opposed to Scott's. This difference is evident at the end of the 1834 preface, where after acknowledging in Scott-like (though rather un-Bulwer-like) fashion that *Last Days* no doubt contains factual errors, he expresses his hope that the novel "may... be (*what is far more important*) a just representation of the human passions and the human heart, whose elements in all ages are the same" (x; emphasis added). The latter clause echoes (without the qualification) Scott's claim that "the passions... are generally the same in all ranks and conditions, all countries and all ages" (22:xliv); but while Scott's practice belies his claim, for Bulwer this principle represents a central tenet of belief. He repeats it on multiple occasions in his writings of the period,<sup>31</sup> and emphatically reasserts it midway through *Last Days*: "men, nations, customs perish; THE AFFECTIONS ARE IMMORTAL!... The past lives again, when we look upon its emotions—it lives in our own!... The magician's gift that revives the dead—that animates the dust of forgotten graves, is not the author's skill—it is in the heart of the reader!" (169). Bulwer again echoes Scott, but this time in order to refute him: Scott's "magician" need not be concerned, he claims, about choosing his subject from "amidst the dust of antiquity" (22:xliv); because "the affections are immortal," this dust must have been "animated" by the same loves and hatreds that move his contemporaries. In short, the ancients can be assumed to have behaved like post-Waterloo Englishmen, placed in similar circumstances.

If a consequence of this belief is that Bulwer's works lack the "sense of historical uniqueness" that characterizes Scott's fiction and is a hallmark of Romantic historiography,<sup>32</sup> documenting historical difference is ultimately of secondary importance for him. The primary task of the historical novelist, he claims in the 1834 preface to *Last Days*, is to "[raise] scholarship to the creative, and... not bow the creative to the scholastic" (viii)—that is, to penetrate the mass of accidents cluttering the historical record and highlight the evidence for the immortality of the affections, his belief in which underwrites the "dim and shadowy allegory" that is the basic expression of his "metaphysically" oriented art.<sup>33</sup> It remains now to consider how Bulwer's use of touristic discourse in *Last*

<sup>31</sup> See for example *The Disowned* (first ed.), chap. 30 (qtd. Christensen 18); *England and the English* (21); and "On Art in Fiction" (1:44).

<sup>32</sup> One can interpret Bulwer's insistence on a new level of "erudition" in historical fiction, a new degree of faithfulness to the "accidents" in the historical record (cf. *Rienzi* ix), and the air of pedantry and showiness that pervades his scholarship in *Last Days*—his frequent indulgence in the "extraordinary and antiquated terms" that Scott recommends against (22:xliv), and generally avoids himself—as a function of his desire to compensate for the lack of any other means to convey that sense of "historical uniqueness."

<sup>33</sup> See Fleischman 34; also White's discussion of Herder (69-80). Christensen observes, "Because of his strong intuition that the same human idea underlies every single individual zeitgeist, his historical romances keep

*Days* relates to his metaphysical aims, and why the two proved such a potent combination.

***Bulwer's Pompeii: Metaphysical Fiction, Touristic Fantasy, and the Historical Other***

It is easy to see, given the nature of his ideas about both history and art, why Bulwer would have been attracted to Pompeii. Indeed, if he characterizes the exhumed city as representative in the manner of Scott's historical subjects ("the miniature of the civilisation of its time"), there are several ways in which Pompeii and its fate lend themselves to his "dim and shadowy" allegorical treatment. The city's late-classical setting enabled him to draw on Imperial Rome's own complex archetypal status, while the strong Greek influence in evidence in its architecture and decorative arts allowed him to exploit the atemporal idealizing of contemporary philhellenism. The eruption of Vesuvius was of course readily appropriable as an emblem of apocalypse, and indeed thanks to its popularity as a subject for literary and artistic treatment in the 1820s and 1830s, it probably automatically carried this significance for much of the nineteenth century. The main historical accounts of the eruption—the eyewitness description of Pliny the Younger, and the late-second/early-third century account of the Greek historian Cassius Cocceianus Dio—would have reinforced its emblematic status. Pliny, for example, speaks in a letter to the historian Tacitus of his own belief and the belief of those around him that "the universe [had been] plunged into eternal darkness for evermore" and that "the whole world was dying" (1:445, 447 [VI.20.15, 17]), while Dio similarly alludes to the belief of eye-witnesses that "the whole universe was being resolved into chaos or fire" (8:307 [LXVI.23.1]). Unsurprisingly, Bulwer draws on both accounts for his own portrayal of the event.<sup>34</sup>

Also significant in this context is the dearth of historical documentation on Pompeii: little if anything besides the accounts of the eruption is extant, so that, "dignified only in its ultimate and singular destiny," as Gell observed, "its ruins alone are left to research" (32). Pompeii thus afforded Bulwer a great degree of freedom to address himself to the central concerns of his idealizing perspective, for it offered him a sort of historical *tabula rasa* on which to project those concerns. The unique glimpse that the ruined city provided of the Imperial Roman domestic sphere itself seemed to attest to a degree of continuity in human life that, if not subjected to a historicizing perspective like Scott's, could even be construed

emphasizing the patterns that are constant and universal above whatever is temporary and particular in a culture" (134).

<sup>34</sup> He explicitly cites both accounts twice, once each in chapters V.vii and V.ix (403, 404, 412, 415).

as essentially unchanging. It prompted Gell to remark that "almost every article of kitchen or other furniture now in use" had been found at Pompeii "except forks" (165). Bulwer, characteristically seeking out the upper registers, claimed that "we should paint life but ill if, even in times the most prodigal of romance...we did not also describe the mechanism of those trivial and household springs of mischief which we see every day at work in our chambers and at our hearths. It is in these, the lesser intrigues of life, that we mostly find ourselves at home with the past" (70).

Underwritten by his belief in the immortality of the affections, this feeling of domestic familiarity significantly impacts the form in which Bulwer casts his relationship with his readers in *Last Days*. That relationship constitutes another marked difference between Bulwer and Scott. The elder writer, because of his view that the past was in some measure unknowable, that "we can only visit [it], catch glimpses of it," assigned at least one character in each novel a measure of modernity, which enabled that character to function as what Harry Shaw calls a "historical sightseer," a sort of tour guide who could help readers "translate" the "historical" world of the novel into the more familiar terms of their own day (147, 160). Bulwer, recognizing only superficial differences between past and present, felt no need for such a mediating figure: because "the magician's gift that revives the dead...is in the heart of the reader," and not a function of "the author's skill," the role of "historical sightseer" in the novel was to be shared by novelist and reader (*Last Days* 169). He asserts this equivalence among novelist, reader, and "historical sightseer" at the beginning of the novel's original preface where, as noted before, he situates the very act of writing the novel in the context of typical touristic activity. There is more than a hint of disingenuousness in his formulation: his claims that it was "*perhaps*" "not unnatural" that he should have wished, as a bestselling novelist, to respond to Pompeii with a novel, and that he had "laboured, *however unworthily*, in the art to revive and to create," both notably ring false (v; emphases added). Still, in so implying, Bulwer is associating his novel not only with learned imaginative responses to touring like Chateaubriand's historical romance, *Les Martyrs* (written largely during his tour of the Holy Land in 1806), but also with the rash of travel literature produced by tourists over the previous century, much of it, following Joseph Addison's *Remarks on Several Parts of Italy in the Years 1701, 1702, 1703*, incorporating reflections on encounters with classical sites.<sup>35</sup> Readers of *Last Days*, then,

<sup>35</sup> On the popularity and influence of Addison's work, see Black 3 and 279.

are from the beginning of the novel embraced as fellow travelers by their erudite and celebrated guide.

This flattering association no doubt enhanced *Last Days's* popularity among Bulwer's contemporaries by enrolling readers in shared fantasies based on both social and intellectual exclusivism. At the same time, by assigning readers an active role in "reanimat[ing] the bones which yet were spared to [their] survey," it reinforced the appeal of Bulwer's vision of historical continuity, thereby preparing readers to assent to his idealization or "exaltation" of his historical subject on the "metaphysical" plane, and even tacitly eliciting their participation in that process (*Last Days* v). As noted earlier, it is often the fantasy element that predominates. Midway through the novel, for example, Bulwer the tourist-novelist identifies himself with Greek lovers Glaucus and Ione, and indulges in a daydream that with its evocations of timelessness and an enervating sensuality has as much the flavor of Orientalist as of philhellenist discourse:

And now, broad, blue, bright before them, spread that halcyon sea, fair as at this moment, seventeen centuries from that date, I behold it rippling on the same divinest shore. Clime that yet enervates with a soft and Circean spell...[w]hoever visits thee seems to leave earth and its harshest cares behind—to enter by the Ivory Gate into the Land of Dreams...The past—the future—are forgotten; we enjoy but the breathing time. (168)

There is a glimpse of historical continuity proffered in the phrase, "seventeen centuries from that date," and the adverb "yet." The image of the "Ivory Gate," too, suggests the passing from one level of awareness to another that according to Edwin Eigner marks the process of "mystical transformation" characteristic of metaphysical fiction's "exaltation" of the natural world (9). The dominant impulse here, though, is clearly escapism: the desire to "leave earth and its harshest cares behind." Some of the appeal of this escapism, in particular for later readers of the novel, no doubt derived from its nostalgic glimpse back to an earlier, more exclusive period of touristic activity: Bulwer's evocation of Naples as what Chloe Chard calls "a region of irresponsible, free-floating enjoyment" (17) recalls a

commonplace view of the region among eighteenth and early nineteenth century travelers.<sup>36</sup> This "Land of Dreams" is emphatically not the Naples of Murray's popular *Handbook for Travellers in Southern Italy*, with its "not undeservedly acquired [reputation] for typhoid fever" and its "crowd of facchini, drivers, touters, and vagabonds in general, who clamorously assail [the traveller] as he issues from the [train] station" (94, 75). Similarly, while Bulwer draws on the work of Gell,<sup>37</sup> his Pompeii is not that of the latter's *Pompeiana*, its walls "ill built, of the worst brick and rubble work, with mortar, generally, but insufficiently mixed" (Gell 152) and its future far from certain: "In the short space of time which has elapsed since their discovery, the alterations of winter and summer have generally effaced the paintings, and in many instances entirely stripped every trace of stucco from the walls" (6).

Not infrequently, though, there is a closer balance between escapism and "metaphysical" idealizing in Bulwer's appropriations of touristic discourse, so that it is less easy to say where one ends and the other begins. A paradigmatic example is an episode midway through the novel in which Bulwer sends Glaucus and Ione out of the city to seek "an old ruin, the remains of a temple, evidently Grecian" (216). Here the assertion of historical continuity is far more emphatic: the outing is cast as a touristic "excursion" (Vesuvius and Pompeii are both indexed as "excursions" from Naples in Murray's *Handbook*), and its particulars correspond to those involved in undertaking a similar excursion in Bulwer's own day. He begins by describing the available conveyances for such a journey, which he compares to the modern equivalents, noting that the carriage his protagonists settle on "answer[ed] very much the purpose of (though very different in shape from) the modern britzka." Such a choice would have been of equal importance in the 1830s, since an excursion of this sort would almost certainly, given the absence of railways in the region until later in the century,<sup>38</sup> have been undertaken by carriage. Bulwer then

<sup>36</sup> In a similar vein, Ellen Moers points to one of the appeals of the novel for initial readers when she claims that in *Last Days*, Bulwer "turn[ed] a melancholy and nostalgic eye on the departed world of his youth," seeing in Pompeii "a Regency London destroyed by sudden eruption" (83).

<sup>37</sup> Easson argues that in reading Gell and Bulwer together, one notes "the absence of direct borrowing" by the latter (103). Yet if he seems to have wanted to rely on his own observations (cf. Easson 104), Bulwer does occasionally cite Gell directly (e.g., in his description of Glaucus' house, the so-called "House of the Tragic Poet" [31]); and his descriptions not only contain certain details in common with Gell's, but also sometimes bear general structural affinities with those of the latter. In his description of the typical Pompeian house, for example, Bulwer like Gell begins by citing the authority of the Roman architect Vitruvius (*Last Days* 27; Gell and Gandy 145ff); and, in directing his reader on his imagined tour, Bulwer follows a similar itinerary to that of Gell. More generally, Gell's descriptions of the remains of Pompeii, other than being more thickly larded with technical terms, are very much of a kind with those in *Last Days*, as is his assumed role of tour guide (though Bulwer assumes this role more expressly).

<sup>38</sup> The first railway to be built in the state of Naples, and indeed in the entire Italian peninsula, was not begun until

sends his Greek lovers forth “accompanied by one female slave of Ione” (216), a companion who was a not so distant relative of the nineteenth-century travelling servant. This analogue would have been that much closer, given the increasingly racist attitudes of the British towards Italians and other “Southern” Europeans, if the servant were engaged in Naples.<sup>39</sup>

In associating first-century and nineteenth-century leisure activity in this manner, Bulwer is portraying such activity as one of the many “trivial and household” points of continuity that he felt bound all ages together; indeed, it is the act of “historical sightseeing” itself that he is universalizing in this case. At the same time, the episode is typical of Bulwer’s appropriations of touristic discourse in the important respect in which it differs from most travel writing: there is for Glaucus and Ione no question of having to rush past the sights in order to stick to an itinerary. Murray’s *Handbook*, of course, frequently advises its readers on time management, and even Gell’s *Pompeiana* has the harried Addisonian tourist in mind (xii-xiii). That time is never an object for Bulwer’s characters is in part simply a function of genre: as *Last Days* is a historical novel and not a tour guide or work of popular archeology, Bulwer is of course invested in creating a credible illusion of day-to-day life in the past. Nonetheless, much of the appeal of that day-to-day life lies in the degree to which it has been glamorized. It is often the case, as Richard Jenkyns observes, that “[l]ife in Lytton’s Pompeii runs as though on greased wheels, with an unnatural smoothness” (316)—as for example in the novel’s first chapter, when Clodius, the young aristocratic idler and companion of Glaucus, exchanges greetings with various fashionable passers-by, “the bells of [their] cars as they rapidly glided by each other jingl[ing] merrily on the ear” (14). One imagines a far bumpier ride, and a much more discordant music, on the streets of the ancient city, constructed of large lava blocks, with “the marks of chariot-wheels...everywhere visible, crossing and recrossing each other in the broader streets, but worn into one deep rut in the smaller ones” (*Handbook* 213).

Similarly, in the episode in which Glaucus and Ione set out on their excursion, the invitation Bulwer extends to the reader “to put himself in the shoes of the characters in the novel” might be less likely to impress on him the continuity between past and present than to encourage him to “indulge the tourist’s furtive fantasy” and “treat...with a casual

1839 (Duggan 106). The railway up the slope of Vesuvius, the destination of Glaucus and Ione, did not open until 1881 (*Handbook*, “Addenda and Corrigenda, 1883” 1).

<sup>39</sup> The *Handbook* advises “persons wishing for a travelling servant” to “enquire at the Hôtel des Etrangers” in Naples (82).

familiarity” the “celebrated objects” and scenes being placed before him, ignoring the “metaphorical ‘do not touch’ sign inscribed upon them” (Jenkyns 85). This fantasy is lent additional force by nineteenth-century philhellenism (a ubiquitous presence in the novel): readers are to have the privilege, that is, of donning the shoes—or rather, sandals—of Bulwer’s idealized *Greek* lovers. Given the associations between race and class in the novel, moreover, readers are further asked to imagine themselves as fashionable aristocrats—the possessors of *ton* that Bulwer had portrayed so compellingly in *Pelham*.<sup>40</sup> Besides tending to convert this episode’s vision of historical continuity into escapist fantasy—history as masquerade party<sup>41</sup>—the force with which the exclusivist daydream is rendered also largely offsets a thematically significant irony underlying the young Greeks’ excursion. Like nineteenth-century hellenophiles, Glaucus and Ione have decided to visit the ruined temple because “everything Grecian possessed an interest” for them (*Last Days* 216). But if things Grecian are “theirs” (as ancient Greeks) in a way that they can never be for Bulwer and his readers, Glaucus and Ione, as inhabitants of a half-Grecian city on the Italian peninsula, and living during the Imperial Roman period, “look back on the great age of Greece,” like Bulwer and his readers, “with a gaze of distant adoration” (Jenkyns 85). At the center of this fantasy is the absent ideal represented by ancient Greece, an absence that renders more ominous the association that Bulwer forges in the novel between the doomed Pompeii and post-Reform Act Britain.<sup>42</sup>

This latter example suggests that the frequency with which Bulwer’s more rigorous “metaphysical” and/or topical concerns melt into escapist fantasy in *Last Days* is in part a function of the pressure of contemporary events, of his unwillingness to face the full implications of living in an age that he had characterized in *England and the English* as one

<sup>40</sup> *Ton*, a word very much in vogue during the Regency period, denoted both a set of qualities (fashionable elegance, conversational ease) and the insider status that possession of those qualities—coupled with the proper class credentials—conferred. Bulwer both celebrates and satirizes *ton*, and the social circle constructed around it, in *Pelham*; later revisions, according to McGann, altered that balance by toning down what was “impudent and cavalier” in favor of its strain of “moral earnestness” (xv, xvi).

<sup>41</sup> See Jenkyns’ discussion of the nineteenth century’s love of “fancy dress,” and the relationship of Bulwer’s portrait of Pompeii to that passion (315-16).

<sup>42</sup> Bulwer does send Glaucus and Ione to Athens after they survive the eruption, and in doing so attempts to establish an emblematic opposition between the Greek city as the seat of the Ideal—“mother of the Poetry and the Wisdom of the World” (418)—and Pompeii as society under the sway of materialism (represented by Arbaces and Imperial Rome). The eruption, Bulwer asserts hopefully, had resulted in the “pass[ing] from the world *for ever*” of the “social system” ruled by materialism, thereby freeing Glaucus, as he informs Sallust, “in my own land henceforth [to] dwell *for ever*” (421, 417; emphases added). The glimpses that we are afforded of Athens, however, are not only notable for their ethereality—the city is rendered as a highly literary compound of English country estate and generic Mediterranean landscape—but also oddly contradictory: if the seat of the timeless Ideal (“for ever”), Athens is also a site of political struggle where the proffered model of democratic class harmony is still daily pressed by “the crushing weight of the Roman yoke” (419).



of “the dark passages in the appointed progress of mankind—the times of greatest unhappiness to our species” (318-19). It is worth noting in this context that during the climactic eruption, Bulwer retains more or less intact the major sociocultural hierarchies that inform the rest of the novel, so that the apocalypse that the eruption emblemizes is far from totalizing.<sup>43</sup> A further and, for our purposes, more significant cause can be attributed to these flights into touristic fantasy, one related to the nature of the exhumed city itself. Indeed, if Pompeii lent itself to Bulwer’s “timeless” idealizing perspective, it could also, as the anecdote about Scott makes clear, provoke a darker response, for there was in the fact of its survival something uncanny, a “poignant sense,” as Jenkyns puts it, “of being so near and yet so far,” like the figures on Keats’ urn both dead and eternally alive (82). Much of the force behind this response derived from the obvious Gothic aspect of Pompeii’s fate—the city was buried alive and, exhumed, was in essence “undead”; this aspect assumes a thematic importance in Book V of *Last Days* when the Gothic features of the eruption of Vesuvius tie it, and the fate of the city, to the villain Arbaces and his emblematic role in the novel.<sup>44</sup> But there was another dimension to the city’s fate that greatly enhanced this poignancy for Bulwer and his contemporaries, rendering Pompeii unique among ancient archeological sites.

The precise nature of this further dimension will begin to emerge if we examine a brief 1835 article in the *New Monthly Magazine* entitled “Pompeii by torchlight,” for the article exemplifies the multi-leveled relationship of Bulwer’s novel to touristic discourse. In it, the anonymous author recounts a night passed “some years ago” at Pompeii, which he says his reading of *Last Days* “has routed out and restored in all its brilliancy” (64). The night itself is the “tourist’s furtive fantasy” *par excellence*: “There was something charming,” he says, “in the idea...[of] visiting those relics of almost another world, not as mere sight-seers are wont—led by the nose and gulled by the improbabilities of a

<sup>43</sup> To cite a single example: in the midst of the eruption, Glaucus and Ione take refuge momentarily in the Temple of Fortune, where a flash of lightning reveals to them a singular tableau: a lion (the one, Bulwer remarks, for which Glaucus had only recently been destined in the arena) and a wounded gladiator crouching near each other “as for companionship” (406). “The revolution of Nature,” Bulwer is prompted to observe, “had dissolved her lighter terrors as well as her wonted ties.” Certain “wonted ties,” though, remain firmly in place, notably those associated with race (the gladiator’s name is Niger) and gender (when Ione beholds the scene, she responds “with a faint shriek,” and “cover[s] again beneath the arms of Glaucus,” who for his part is stirred only to a manly “shudder”).

<sup>44</sup> This connection is most readily apparent in the centrality of the theme of imprisonment in Bulwer’s rendering of the eruption. The novel’s Greek characters (Glaucus, Ione, and Nydia) and the Christian Olinthus are freed by the eruption—with a violence typical of such resolutions in Gothic fiction—from their respective imprisonments, all of which were effected directly or indirectly by Arbaces. The novel’s main Roman characters, by contrast, are imprisoned by the eruption in their places of retreat, while Arbaces himself meets the grisly death characteristic of many a Gothic villain’s end. *In toto*, these outcomes seek to convey the triumph of the (Hellenistic/Christian) Idealist over the (pagan Egyptian/Imperial Roman) Materialist perspective.

ciceroni—but as if we were to be assembled there, the old inhabitants and lawful owners of the place, feasting in our own palaces and pouring libations in our own halls.” In spinning out this exclusivist fantasy, the author repeatedly engages in what must have been a common sport among visitors to the place by relating his experiences to those of the characters and episodes of Bulwer’s novel. Thus for example while describing their dinner in one of the recently exhumed houses, he remarks, “Our champagne and cotelettes sauce Robert would have been as little appetizing to the palate of the edile Panza, or the epicure Sallust, as the cut of our garments to their persons” (67). At the end of his narration, though, these seemingly trivial sports gain a deeper resonance when he credits Bulwer with having “breathed life into my imaginings” and infused “light and life” into the “darkness and desolation” of the ruins by “furnish[ing] these dead walls, and peopl[ing] them with animate beings” (69). These sentiments are echoed by many of Bulwer’s contemporaries. Writing to him shortly after the novel’s publication, Isaac Disraeli claimed, “You have done more than all the erudite delvers have done. We can enter the city when we choose. We can follow the blind flower-girl as she threads its streets. We can join the pugilists in the tavern, and take a look at that female Amazon with any of them” (Bulwer-Lytton 1:444). John Auldjo, the dedicatee of Bulwer’s *Devereux* (1829), similarly remarked in an 1836 letter from Naples, “Pompeii was truly a city of the dead; there were no fancied spirits hovering o’er its remains, but now you have made poetical its very air, you have created a new feeling in its visitors” (1:446). Mary Shelley recorded during her second visit to Pompeii in 1843 what by then was a commonplace response, that “Bulwer has peopled its silence....[T]he account of its ‘Last Days’ has cast over it a more familiar garb, and peopled its deserted streets with associations that greatly add to their interest” (qtd. Brilliant 174).

What these remarks suggest is that for Bulwer and his contemporaries, there was something too horrible about the naked spectacle of the exhumed city; that unless its “dead walls” were “furnished,” and its streets “peopled...with animate beings,” it was indeed a “City of the Dead,” prone to a gloomy or even despairing response like Scott’s. There was more at the heart of this gloom than the Gothic atmospherics of the city’s “undead” state: there was a profound uncertainty about the relationship between past and present, and about the meaning of history, that the most popular historicist model of the day—Scott’s—was unable to dispel. Pompeii presented the nineteenth century with an unprecedented glimpse into the domestic life of a remote period—and not just any period, of course, but Greco-Roman antiquity; yet if that life were overwhelmingly *there* before the viewer, it was too

remote culturally and politically (“almost another world,” as the anonymous essayist remarks) to fit into Scott’s genealogical model of historical continuity. The effect of this paradox was to foreground the break with the past effected by the social, political, and economic ferment of the previous half-century, and the epistemological and ontological crisis that that break precipitated. With, that is, the waning of faith in the Christian and/or Enlightenment universalism that underwrote the accounts of earlier travellers like Addison, the question, to what extent nineteenth-century viewers could “know” how these Pompeians, whose remains confronted them with such grotesque immediacy, felt during the horror of the eruption, became fraught to an unprecedented degree. What the ancient city’s exhumed remains threatened nineteenth-century tourists with, then, was a uniquely poignant emblem of the otherness of the past—a vivid picture of relativized, random suffering and death that raised troubling questions about the meaning of these experiences in any period, including their own. Bulwer’s *Last Days* redeemed the “City of the Dead” for his contemporaries by in effect translating Christian and Enlightenment assurances of temporal continuity (based on the immortality of the soul or the universality of reason) into a contemporary domestic idiom (the universality of the emotions).<sup>45</sup> Bulwer’s assertion that the affections were immortal, in other words, and that “the magician’s gift that revives the dead” was thus in each of them, enabled his readers to approach Pompeii’s apparent immediacy with the security that no matter how horrifying, the scenes confronting them were nonetheless ultimately familiar, *knowable*; and this familiarity, in turn, implied that the seemingly unprecedented upheavals of their own turbulent time could also be sorted out, and their destabilizing effects ultimately neutralized.

Given the deep desires that Bulwer’s appeals to touristic fantasy answered, it is not surprising that the fantasy element in *Last Days* is consonant with the tendency of other early and mid-nineteenth-century treatments of Pompeii, notably Gell’s. In *Pompeiana*, the invitation “to indulge the tourist’s furtive fantasy” is often implicitly extended, as for example when Gell observes that “strangers did not uninvited go into the cubiculum, triclinium, bath or other apartments appropriated to the private and particular uses of the master of the house and his family” (148). The Addisonian tourist, like the researcher, is clearly no “stranger” here, a status highlighted by the extra emphasis that “uninvited”

<sup>45</sup> In so doing, Bulwer undertook a task that, according to Chard, travel-writing of the previous half century “constantly [set] itself, and define[d] as crucial to the efficient appropriation of the foreign” in its various manifestations: the conversion of “historical into personal time” (133).

receives in being placed before the verb “go.” Bulwer’s description of himself at the beginning of the novel’s preface as “a writer...labour[ing]...in the art to revive and to create” (v) can moreover be applied to Gell himself. Richard Brilliant notes of Gell’s description of the House of the Tragic Poet (assigned by Bulwer to his Greek protagonist Glaucus in the novel), “Not only is there an implication that the reconstruction is better than the normal experience of the ruin, but [he] makes no mention of his extensive restoration of the interior decoration” (142). Even Bulwer acknowledges in this case that “the colours are faded...the walls stripped of their paintings!—its main beauty, its elaborate finish of grace and ornament, is gone” (27). This preference for a reconstructed or enhanced original remained in force throughout the nineteenth century, as evidenced by Brilliant’s observation that photography “did not become important in the scientific or touristic world of Pompeii until very late in the nineteenth century, even after inexpensive cameras became available,” since the “apparent reality” of the photographic image “did not jibe very well with that imaginary view of the ancient town, so carefully created by scholars and poets” (166). Even in the last century, artistic restoration often dominated over photographic documentation in illustrated editions of Bulwer’s novel, and visitors to Pompeii continued to view a site colored by his reconstruction of its fate.<sup>46</sup> As the ongoing popularity of *Last Days* testifies, moreover, Bulwer’s treatment of Pompeii still resonates with readers today, suggesting that his response to the uniquely stark encounter with historical difference awaiting tourists there retains some measure of relevance almost two centuries later.

<sup>46</sup> In Dodd, Mead’s 1946 edition of the novel, for example (for which Curtis Dahl wrote the introduction), paintings and engravings (three reproduced from *Pompeiana*) outnumber photographs by two to one. A 1956 limited edition produced in Verona, Italy (Limited Editions Club, Officina Bodoni, Verona), offered only a series of monochrome woodcuts. When this edition was reissued in 1979 by Van Nostrand Reinhold (New York), several color photographs of mosaics and other art objects exhumed from Pompeii were added, but they were all located at the beginning of the book, and not interspersed throughout the text. Concerning the popularity of the novel with twentieth-century tourists, see Moers 187.

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Dante Gabriel Rossetti, "The Question"

(For a design)

I.

This sea, deep furrowed as the face of Time,  
Mirrors the ghost of the removed moon;  
The peaks stand bristling round the waste lagune;  
While up the difficult summit steeply climb  
Youth, Manhood, Age, one triple labouring mime;  
And to the measure of some mystic rune  
Hark how the restless waters importune  
These echoing steps with chime and counter-chime.  
What seek they? Lo, upreared against the rock  
The Sphinx, Time's visible silence, frontleted  
With Psyche wings, with eagle plumes arched o'er.  
Ah, when those everlasting lips unlock  
And the old riddle of the world is read,  
What shall man find? or seeks he evermore?

II

Lo the three seekers! Youth has sprung the first  
To question the Unknown: but see! he sinks  
Prone to the earth—becomes himself a sphinx,—  
A riddle of early death no love may burst.  
Sorely anhungered, heavily athirst  
For knowledge, Manhood next to reach the Truth  
Peers in those eyes; till haggard and uncouth  
Weak Eld renews that question long rehearsed.

Oh! and what answer? From the sad sea brim  
The eyes o' the Sphinx stare through the midnight spell,  
Unwavering,—man's eternal quest to quell:  
While round the rock-steps of her throne doth swim  
Through the wind-serried wave the moon's faint rim,  
Sole answer from the heaven invisible.

(Rossetti, *Letters* 4:1952-953)

*Impenetrable Dooms:*

*Dante Gabriel Rossetti's The Question  
and Its Two Explanatory Sonnets*

D.M.R. Bentley

Among the least discussed works of Dante Gabriel Rossetti's final decade is *The Question*, the highly finished pencil drawing of 1875 for which he composed two explanatory sonnets of the same title on 5 April 1882, four days before his death (see *Letters* 4:1952-953). Partially intended as a pictorial memorial to Ford Madox Brown's son Oliver, who died at the age of nineteen on 5 November 1874,<sup>1</sup> *The Question* was never developed into the "rather...small scale" painting that Rossetti envisaged in March 1875 (*Correspondence* 7:24), probably because he was unable to secure a commission for it. Instead, he turned his hand to the large-scale paintings of beautiful women in beautiful surroundings such as *La Bella Mano* (1875), *A Sea Spell* (1875-77), and *A Vision of Fiammetta* (1877-78) that were so popular with his patrons. Nor did the drawing serve as a frontispiece in the book of poems by Rossetti and Theodore Watts-Dunton for which he wrote the two sonnets of 1882. Indeed, *The Question* was not reproduced until 1894 in Frederic George Stephens' *Dante Gabriel Rossetti*; and the two sonnets, although published in 1932 in a pamphlet by T.J. Wise, did not become widely available until 1967, when they appeared in the fourth volume of Doughty and Wahl's edition of Rossetti's *Letters*.<sup>2</sup> They have since been reprinted in Jan Marsh's 1999 edition of the *Complete Writings* but do not appear in Jerome McGann's more widely available and frequently used *Collected Poetry and Prose* of 2003. It is therefore not entirely surprising that *The Question* and its two

<sup>1</sup> Rossetti did not identify *The Question* as a memorial to Oliver Madox Brown in any of his commentaries; but it has been widely accepted as such on the authority of Angeli (18). See also Rossetti's *Letters* 4:1952n2 and *Correspondence* 6:575; also Surtees 1:140.

<sup>2</sup> See the section on *The Question* in Jerome McGann's *Rossetti Archive* for this and subsequent reproductions of the drawing as well as a useful bibliography of what little commentary there is on it. See also the entry on the drawing and two sonnets in the "Rossetti Archive Doubleworks" section of the site.

sonnets have not been the focus of much critical commentary or properly recognized as important reflections of Rossetti's extended preoccupation—particularly during the last decade of his life—with the meaning of human existence and the fate of the soul after death.

## I

Rossetti's first written mention of *The Question* is in a letter of 9 March 1875 to Brown in which he makes no reference to the death of Brown's son but rather emphasizes that the subject of the picture is a departure from his current concentration on female figures, characterized as "all men and a sphinx!" (*Correspondence* 7:23). He explains that the work is "meant to be a sort of painted 'Cloud Confines'"—that is, a pictorial version of the meditation on the impossibility of knowing what lay beyond death that he wrote in the summer of 1871. After considering and rejecting more positivistic alternatives, he ends with a series of questions that bring the poem to a thoroughly agnostic conclusion:<sup>3</sup>

What word's to say as we go?  
 What thought's to think by the way?  
 What truth may there be to know?  
 And shall we know it one day?  
 (*Correspondence* 5:146)

A series of questions also concludes "Untimely Lost," the sonnet that Rossetti wrote in November 1874 in the wake of Oliver Madox Brown's death:

Does he see on and strive on? And may we  
 Late-tottering world-worn hence, find *his* to be  
 The young strong hand which helps us up that shore?

<sup>3</sup> For a discussion of Rossetti's agnosticism and its aesthetic implications, see my "From Allegory to Indeterminacy." Before publishing "The Cloud Confines" in the *Fortnightly Review* on 1 January, 1872, Rossetti revised it heavily but retained its fundamental agnosticism. In the final stanza of the published version, the "future" is envisioned as "a sealed seedpod" whose contents cannot be known on this side of the grave:

And what...are we?—  
 We who say as we go,—  
 "Strange to think by the way,  
 Whatever there is to know,  
 That shall we know one day."  
 (*Collected Poetry and Prose* 236)

Or, echoing the No More with Nevermore,  
 Might Night be ours and his? We hope: and he?  
 (*Works* 223; *Collected Writings* 346)

Although the questions of "Untimely Lost" and "The Cloud Confines" can be perceived in the subjects and moods of *Roman Widow* (1873-74), *Proserpine* (1872-82), "Adieu" (1876), "Spherical Change" (1881), and other pictures and poems of the 1870s and 1880s, nowhere are they and the searching agnosticism from which they arose more explicit than in *The Question* and its two explanatory sonnets. Not without reason did William Michael Rossetti, observing that his brother composed the two sonnets "on his death-bed," designate the drawing as "one of his most important inventions" because it turns on "the mystery of existence, or the destiny of man, unfathomable by himself" (93).

On 10 March 1875, a day after writing to Brown, Rossetti gave Jane Morris a detailed description of the central concept and main components of *The Question*:

The idea is that of Man questioning the Unknown....In the design, a youth, a mature man, and an old man, have made their way up a rocky ascent to a platform embowered in laurels which is the shrine of the Sphinx. The youth has fallen in death before he can question the oracle—the man peers into her eyes with his question, but they have no answer, staring at the unseen sky beyond the horizon of the picture—a creek of sea hemmed in by sharp rocks and having only the image of the moon reflected in its centre. Meanwhile the old man still toils up towards the Sphinx, eager to the last for her secret....The subject is in fact the same as that of my little poem "The Cloud [Confines]."

And eyes fixed ever in vain  
 On the pitiless eyes of Fate.  
 (*Correspondence* 7:24)

In the same letter, Rossetti states that he "proposes...in some degree" to "drape" the nude figures when painting them and gives "two reasons" for thinking that the painting should be "on rather a small scale": "to sell a big picture without women in it would be a double

difficulty, and...a moonlight subject on a large scale is always monotonous.”

Some five months later, Rossetti provided Stephens with a further description of the drawing for use in the preparation of “Pictures by Mr. Rossetti,” which would be published in the 14 August 1875 number of the *Athenaeum*. Similar though it is in its essentials to the description given to Jane Morris, this version contains differences in detail and wording that not only make the drawing easier to visualize but also anticipate the two explanatory sonnets of 1882. The three figures are identified as “Greek pilgrims” travelling in a “ship” that has “brought them from afar”; and the “creek of the sea” is both “difficult” and “the nearest navigable point” to the “elevated rocky platform on which the Sphinx is enthroned in motionless mystery, her bosom jutting out between the gaunt limbs of a rifted laurel-tree, & her lion-claws planted against them” (*Correspondence* 7:70-71).<sup>4</sup> In addition, the “youth” has fallen into a

sudden swoon from the toils of the journey & the overmastering emotion; the [full-grown] man leans forward over his falling body and peers into the eyes of the Sphinx to read her answer; but those eyes are turned upward and fixed without response on the unseen sky which is out of the picture & only shows in the locked bay of quivering sea a cold reflection of the moon; [and] the old man seen still labouring upwards and about in his turn to set foot on the platform, eager to the last for that secret which is never to be known.

The passage concludes by identifying the source of the drawing’s title as Hamlet’s ““To be or not to be, that is the Question”” and by stating that “[i]n the symbolism of the

<sup>4</sup> Obvious though it may be, the fact needs to be stated that the Sphinx in Rossetti’s drawing is Greek (or Theban) rather than Egyptian—that is, graced with breasts and wings, neither of which is the case with her Egyptian counterpart. In *Fictitious and Symbolic Creatures in Art, with Special Reference to Their Use in British Heraldry*, John Vinycomb quotes Sir Gardner Wilkinson’s *Manners and Customs of the Ancient Egyptians* (1878) in succinctly describing the differences “between the Greek and Egyptian sphynxes”: “[t]he latter is human-headed, ram-headed, or hawk-headed, and is always male; while the Greek is female, with the head of a woman, and always has wings, which the Egyptian never has” (165). He also provides a succinct version of the “Greek story” of the Sphinx: “the monster was sent by Hera (Juno) to devastate the land of Thebes. Seated on a rock close to the town, she put to every one that passed by the riddle, ‘What walks on four legs in the morning, on two legs at noon, and on three legs in the evening?’ Whoever was unable to solve the riddle was cast by the sphynx from the rock into a deep abyss. Oedipus succeeded in answering it, and thus delivered the country from the monster, who cast herself into the abyss” (165-66, and see 167 for his quotation of a description by Llewellyn Jewett in “The Museums of England, with Special Reference to Objects of Antiquity” in the 1871 volume of the *Art Journal* of a small, recently discovered statue of a sphinx as having the “fivefold attributes of a virgin, a lion, a bird, a dog, and a serpent”). It is just possible that Jewett’s description was known to Rossetti.

picture...the swoon of the youth may be taken to shadow forth the mystery of early death, one of the hardest of all impenetrable dooms” (*Correspondence* 7:71). It is difficult to read these concluding glosses without thinking that, in writing them, Rossetti had in mind his own gloomy broodings on “The undiscovered, country from whose bourn / No traveler returns” (*Hamlet* 3.i.79-80); his musings on the “impenetrable doom” of Oliver Madox Brown’s untimely death; and, his own close brush with suicide on 8 June 1872.<sup>5</sup>

Although Rossetti was “much out of health” (*Letters* 4:1951) when he composed the two sonnets for *The Question* (too weak to write, he dictated them to T. Hall Caine), the sonnets show no trace of self-pity or morbidity. As might be expected, some echoes of his prose descriptions of the drawing can be heard in both pieces: the three “seekers” question the “Unknown”; the “summit” (rather than the “creek”) is “difficult”; and the “Youth” represents the “riddle of early death no love may burst”—indeed, he “becomes himself a sphinx,” a mute embodiment of life’s inscrutable and insoluble mysteries (*Letters* 4:1952-953).<sup>6</sup> Driven by the requirements of rhyme, meter, concision, and line-length, many words and phrases in the sonnets are new and others awkward: the “creek” is a “waste lagune” (to rhyme with “moon”); the three figures are a “triple labouring mime” (to rhyme with “climb”); the representative of “Manhood” is “Sorely anhungered [sic], heavily athirst / For knowledge”; and “From the sad sea brim / The eyes o’ the Sphinx stare through the midnight spell, / Unwavering,— man’s eternal quest to quell.” No mention is made in either of the prose descriptions of the Sphinx’s wings or the butterfly depicted on the medallion on her headband, but here she is “arched o’er” with “eagle plumes” and “frontleted / With Psyche wings,” a classical representation of the soul that is used in this sense in several of Rossetti’s works, most notably *Sibylla Palmifera* (1866-70) and his illustrated “Sonnet on

<sup>5</sup> It is worth observing that *The Question* is not the only work by Rossetti that includes a sphinx. In “Jenny,” which was begun in 1847 and heavily revised in 1859-60 and 1869-70, the speaker describes the eponymous prostitute of the poem as a creation of “man’s changeless sum / Of lust” and, thus, “A riddle that one shrinks / To challenge from the scornful sphinx” (*Collected Poetry and Prose* 67). A Greek sphinx appears in the background of *Sibylla Palmifera* (1866-70) in close proximity to some red poppies that signify sleep and death. Begun after *The Question* and more pertinent to it is *Orpheus and Euridice*, the unfinished “design” that Rossetti had in progress on 20 July 1875 (see *Correspondence* 7:59), in which a Greek sphinx crouches on the steps leading up to Pluto’s throne. Decidedly female, graced with wings, taloned feet, the tail of a lion, and hindquarters that resemble the coiled tail of a chameleon, this sphinx differs from the one in *The Question* in being sighted; indeed, it stares malevolently at Orpheus and Euridice and, to judge by the position of its feet, is set to pounce on the latter. Since Pluto, his throne, and his accoutrements in *Orpheus and Euridice* appear to be modeled on the woodcut and description of him in Vincenzo Cartari’s *Le Imagini de I Dei de Gli Antichi* (1571), a copy of which Rossetti had owned since at least circa 1866 and, on 20 July 1875, asked to be brought to him from London to where he was staying at Bognor (see W.M. Rossetti “Books” and D.G. Rossetti *Correspondence* 7:143), it seems likely that the sphinx in Orpheus and Euridice is a substitute for Cerberus, who sits at Pluto’s feet (“gli stà à i piedi”) in the woodcut and in the accompanying description (see Cartari 278-79).

<sup>6</sup> See also *Collected Writings* 468.

the Sonnet" (1880), where one "symbol...for the Sonnet" is a "Coin" whose "'face' bears the Soul, expressed in the butterfly [and] its 'converse,' the Serpent of Eternity enclosing the Alpha and Omega" (*Letters* 4:1760).

As remarkable as any aspect of the two sonnets is their use of the sea as a trope for Time in words and phrases that echo back over thirty years to "The Sea-Limits" (1849), the first stanza of which introduces both the trope and the theme of the limitations of human perception and knowledge:

Consider the sea's listless chime:  
Time's self it is, made audible,—  
The murmur of the earth's own shell.  
Secret continuance sublime  
Is the sea's end: our sight may pass  
No furlong further. Since time was,  
This sound hath told the lapse of time.

(*Collected Poetry and Prose* 178)

In the first of the two explanatory sonnets for *The Question*, the emphasis falls first on the visual and then on the aural: the striations and ripples that variegate the surface of the sea in the drawing are like the "deep furrow[ed]...face of Time"; "the restless waters importune / The...echoing steep[s] with chime and counter-chime...to the measure of some mystic rune" (*Letters* 1952-953; *Collected Writings* 468). Between these lines and again at the end of the second sonnet, the sea is not just a visual and audible analogue of time but also a surface upon which the invisible and supernatural are reflected and ultimately inaccessible—a "wind-serried" "Mirror" displaying "the ghost of the removed moon" whose "faint rim" is the "Sole answer from the heaven invisible" to "the old riddle of the world." Confined to the terrestrial realm and unable to apprehend anything beyond what can be seen and heard, those who seek answers to ultimate questions will get nothing but silence from the Sphinx. Instead, they must content themselves, as Rossetti invites viewers of *The Question* and readers of the two explanatory sonnets to do, with reflections on an absence whose significance the dual meaning of "heaven" as the dwelling-place of God and merely the sky above the earth leaves purposefully and agnostically unclear.

## II

*The Question* itself has received more critical attention than its two explanatory sonnets, but the preponderance of commentary has centered on its indebtedness to Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres' *Oedipus and the Sphinx* (1808). First noticed in print by Carl A. Peterson in 1967, the debt of Rossetti's drawing to Ingres' painting is most striking in the resemblance between the Sphinxes in the two works: in both cases the Sphinx has voluptuously rounded breasts with prominent nipples as well as wings, feline feet, and a head band. Other resemblances abound, however: Oedipus has a cloak slung over his shoulder but is otherwise naked, while the three figures representing "Youth, Manhood, [and] Age" in *The Question* are entirely naked.<sup>7</sup> Oedipus carries two spears with triangular heads and all three of Rossetti's figures are similarly armed; both works are set on an elevated rocky ledge in a remote landscape; and at the forefront of both are exemplars of those who have questioned the Sphinx—a metonymic foot in *Oedipus and the Sphinx* and the body of the figure representing Youth in *The Question*. Linda Nochlin suggests that "Rossetti may have seen" Ingres' painting "in the Exposition Universelle of 1855 in Paris" (151n27); but such tentativeness seems unnecessary, since Rossetti had warm words for Ingres after visiting the Exposition in November 1855 and would have seen *Oedipus and the Sphinx* among the "Oeuvres de M. Ingres" that were on prominent display in the Galerie Française.<sup>8</sup> Moreover, he may have seen the undated engraving of the painting by Ferdinand Gaillard that was probably made prior to 1875 and, perhaps, acquired a photograph of it,<sup>9</sup> which would explain the extent of its presence in *The Question*.

In his entry on *The Question* in the Catalogue of the Pre-Raphaelite exhibition at the Tate Gallery in 1984, Alastair Grieve describes the drawing as a "disagreeable" "version...of a subject made famous by Ingres and [Gustave] Moreau [in *Oedipus and the*

<sup>7</sup> The only item of clothing worn by any of the three figures is the wide-brimmed, round-topped hat worn by the figure representing Manhood; this may have been suggested to Rossetti by a wood-cut in William Smith's *Dictionary of Greek and Roman Antiquities*, from which he drew extensively when conceiving *Roman Widow* (1873-74; see Smith 47 and, for a Greek soldier carrying two spears, 94). On the brim of the hat is what appears to be a brooch securing a neck or chin strap that is fastened at the other end to the rear side of the brim. The brooch is in the form of a flower (or, perhaps, a cluster of berries), echoing the butterfly on the Sphinx's headband.

<sup>8</sup> See *Correspondence* 3:213, 215-16. In a supplement of 8 January 1856 to a letter that he began on 25 November 1855 to William Allingham after returning from Paris, Rossetti regretted that he had been able to spend only a day at the "French Exhibition" and observes that "Delacroix is one of the mighty ones of the earth and Ingres misses being so creditably" (2:82). See Frank Anderson Trapp (302) for a photograph of the display of Ingres' works at the Exhibition and *Correspondence* 3:213 for Rossetti's remark after returning from another trip to Paris in November 1864 that "Old Ingres is done for."

<sup>9</sup> See also *Correspondence* (5:51, 53, 93, 111, 119, and 129) for letters by Rossetti to Charles Fairfax Murray concerning the albums of photographs of unspecified "works of art" that Murray assembled for him in the spring and summer of 1871.



*Sphinx* (1864)]” (307). He also makes the valuable observation that the pose of the dead or dying youth who probably represents Oliver Maddox Brown in *The Question* derives from the statue known as *Menelaus Supporting the Body of Patroclus*, a Roman copy of a Greek work that Rossetti could have sketched from an illustration, a photograph, or a plaster cast, examples of which, as Grieve observes, were “widely distributed” (308). More speculatively, Grieve suggests that the “glimpse of sea, coast and moonlight” in the background of the drawing may have been influenced by a frontispiece by “[James Tissot] to Tom Taylor’s *Ballads and Songs of Britanny* which Rossetti...greatly admired on its publication in 1865.” Another possible influence on the background (and, indeed, the foreground) of *The Question* is the National Gallery version of Leonardo’s *Virgin of the Rocks*,<sup>10</sup> which some twenty-five years earlier had inspired Rossetti to write “For Our Lady of the Rocks by Leonardo da Vinci.” This meditative sonnet focuses more on the painting’s background than on its figures, with a questioning emphasis on the inscrutable mystery of the afterlife that anticipates the drawing and its two explanatory sonnets: “is this the darkness of the end, / The Shadow of Death? and is that outer sea / Infinite imminent Eternity?... [T]he pass is difficult, / Keen as these rocks....[P]eace abides in the dark avenue / Amid the bitterness of things occult” (*Collected Poetry and Prose* 183). The resonances between “For Our Lady of the Rocks” and *The Question* extend to the drawing’s two explanatory sonnets where, as observed earlier, the “sea” is given temporal associations and the summit up which the pilgrims must labour is “difficult.”

In large part because the three male figures in *The Question* are naked and because the Sphinx is a decidedly voluptuous embodiment of “Time’s visible silence” (*Letters* 4:1953; *Collected Writing* 468), the drawing contains a sexual dynamic that is carried over into the phallic uprightness of the spears clutched by the representative of Manhood and into the contrastingly “feminine” fronds and fruit of the plants surrounding the Sphinx. In terms of the spatial geometry of the design, the intersection of the vertical spears and the near-horizontal branch that the figure of Manhood grasps to steady himself as he leans towards the Sphinx is a central part of the tension between the vertical and the horizontal that is as much a part of the drawing’s philosophical program as of its design. The Sphinx stares heavenward with unseeing eyes into which the figure of Manhood stares intently in

<sup>10</sup> In his note to the sonnet in his brother’s *Works*, William Michael Rossetti states that the “sonnet does not relate to the picture in the Louvre, but to the nearly similar one now in the National Gallery” that Rossetti saw on exhibition in “the British Institution” (663).

his search for answers to the riddle of life and death. Before him, the figure of Youth kneels on the rocky platform and behind him Age has ascended the summit and is about to step onto the platform. One of Youth’s spears lies flat on the platform and the other points downwards. A limb of the near-horizontal branch that must have been more vertical has been severed and removed,<sup>11</sup> but without affecting the lushness and fertility of the plant. Even in the most harsh and forbidding landscapes, plant life survives, reproduces and, in so doing, throws into stark relief the finality of human death, the sterility of the rocky platform to which the three pilgrims have ascended, and the futility of interrogating any object in the terrestrial sphere—even the oracular but sightless and flightless Sphinx—for knowledge of higher things.

Neither of the explanatory sonnets on *The Question* makes any reference to the plants that surround the Sphinx in the drawing, let alone to their species. As will be recalled, this is not the case in the earlier prose descriptions, where Rossetti explained to Jane Morris that “the shrine of the Sphinx” is “embowered in laurels” and to Stephens that the Sphinx’s “bosom [is] jutting out between the giant limbs of a rifted laurel-tree...[with] her lion-claws planted against them.” Rossetti’s choice of a laurel tree (*Laurus nobilis*) is appropriate both geographically and symbolically: a native of the Mediterranean region, including Greece, the laurel’s evergreen leaves have classical and Christian associations with victory, literary and artistic fame, and resurrection and eternal life. It is also associated with the Muses and Mount Parnassus (home to a grove of laurel trees) and with Apollo and Daphne (who was metamorphosed into a laurel tree). That the laurel tree in *The Question* is “rifted” suggests a condition of disfigurement that is more than just aesthetic: the Sphinx is “embowered” in a tree that is split and cleft not only physically, but also as a signifier. It gestures towards but frustrates clear meaning, and can no longer be read straightforwardly as a symbol of victory, fame, resurrection, and eternal life; instead, it must be understood, like the Sphinx herself and like the Youth who is “becom[ing] himself a Sphinx,” as an image of a life blighted by a fate whose workings are destined to remain unfathomable. The indeterminate symbolism, the indirect light, the remoteness of the Sphinx’s “shrine” and, above all, her unresponsive nature and fatal power convey a strong sense of the enormous difficulty and utter futility of any attempt to find answers to ultimate questions on this side

<sup>11</sup> The fact that this and another branch appear to have been cut or sawn off indicates that they have been deliberately removed (perhaps by keepers of the Sphinx’s shrine?).

of the grave.

A female figure "embowered" in a tree of one species or another is a *topos* to which Rossetti returned again and again in the pictures of his last decade, prominent examples being *A Sea-Spell*, *A Vision of Fiammetta*, and *The Day Dream* (1879-80). The earliest occurrence of the woman-in-tree *topos* in his work is in *Sir Launcelot's Vision of the Sanc Graal* (1857), where a sleeping Launcelot envisions Guenevere standing in the shade of an apple tree with one arm stretched horizontally along one of its branches and the other stretched forward to offer him an apple, a posture that simultaneously evokes Christ on the Cross and Eve providing Adam with the means of his fall in Genesis 3.6. Carrying as it does suggestions of both temptation and redemption, *Sir Launcelot's Vision of the Sanc Graal* is a highly ambiguous and enigmatic image that asks the viewer to participate in a mental state in which sexual love is envisaged as at once transgressive and transcendent. As a vision experienced during sleep—a dream vision—it has a demonic counterpart in "The Orchard Pit," the prose cartoon that Rossetti wrote in 1869 for a projected poem of which only a small fragment was written in the same year. Both the cartoon and the fragment center on a Siren-like woman who stands in a "wild apple tree," holding an apple and luring men to their death in the "deep" and "hidden pit" below her that the speaker knows will eventually be his resting place (*Works* 608, 240). Recurrent, recursive, and singular ("Men tell me that sleep has many dreams," begins the prose cartoon, "but all my life I have dreamt one dream alone"), "The Orchard Pit" increasingly resembles the rehearsal of a trauma as it moves toward the possibility of becoming a reality, with consequences that would be both liberating and catastrophic—indeed, fatal. *The Question* was drawn five years after "The Orchard Pit," and the two explanatory sonnets seven years after that, but all three pieces participate in a pattern that emerged in Rossetti's works in the late 1850s that occupied a central place there in the mid-to-late 1870s.

Like Rossetti's other works that contain the woman-and-tree *topos* in nightmare or dream-vision form, *The Question* consists of two principal components: (1) an alluring and enigmatic or inscrutable female figure, and (2) a tree with ancestry in the Tree of Knowledge in Genesis 2.17, whose fruit is the source of sin and death. At the psychological and philosophical heart of the *topos* lies a convolute of sexual temptation, forbidden knowledge, and ultimate and unfathomable mysteries that will only be unravelled, if at all, at death. While these elements are central to the woman-and-tree *topos*, different permutations and combinations of them appear in numerous other works by Rossetti, from

"The Card Dealer" (1849) to *Astarte Syriaca* (1875-77), including a cluster of important poems and paintings of the 1860s such as *Venus Verticordia* (1864-68), *Sibylla Palmifera* (1866-70), *Lady Lilith* (1864-68, 1872-73), "Eden Bower" (1869), and "Troy Town" (1869). In *Suspiria de Profundis*, Thomas De Quincey writes that many of "our deepest thoughts and feelings pass to us through perplexed combinations of *concrete* objects, pass to us as *involutes*...in [more] compound experiences incapable of being disentangled than ever reach us *directly*, and in their own abstract shapes" (130). It is thus that Guenevere appears to Launcelot in his dream vision and thus that the Siren-like woman appears to the captivated dreamer in "The Orchard Pit." It is also the way in which many of the more enigmatic women in Rossetti's pictures and poems were perhaps intended to appear to their readers and viewers; certainly, a considerable part of the fascination of many of the works just briefly canvassed is that they seem to be "perplexed combinations of *concrete* objects" that reflect profound "thoughts and feelings" even as they resist being disentangled and reduced to "abstract shapes."

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## *Irregular and Not Proven: The Problem of Scottish Law in the Novels of Wilkie Collins*

Mary M. Husemann

As many scholars have noted, Wilkie Collins's relationship to the British empire was vexed. Much of this scholarship concerning Collins and empire deals specifically with India or, even more specifically, with *The Moonstone*. In her review of Collins scholarship, Lillian Nayder contends that John R. Reed "inaugurated a debate over the imperial politics of Collins's novel [*The Moonstone*]" in 1973 when he asserted that Collins valorized the Brahmin priests and equated the mission of the empire with simple theft. Recent scholars have challenged that viewpoint. Both Ian Duncan and Hyungji Park have examined the disruptive impact of India on English epistemologies, while Melissa Free has demonstrated the complicity of families and domesticity in the mission of empire in *The Moonstone*. In her later article "Collins and Empire," Nayder argues that "elements of Collins's writing suggest his own ambivalence about imperialism and patriarchy, and his willingness to defend as well as criticise them" (140). She further cites "the pressures placed on him as a contributor to middle-class periodicals and presses and the necessity of challenging mainstream opinions covertly" to explain the mixed messages Collins conveys in his responses to imperialism (145). Nayder and others have examined other elements of foreignness in Collins's work, such as the character of Count Fosco in *The Woman in White*, but other aspects of Collins's relationship to the world beyond England have been neglected.

Notably under-represented in the Collins critical canon is work on Collins's relationship to a more immediate colonial context: Scotland. In light of Scotland's role in nineteenth century colonial endeavors, it is easy to forget that it too was a colonized nation. Nevertheless, the differences between Scotland and England and the way that those differences appear in literature by and about Scots clearly demonstrate that Scotland had a

unique national identity within Great Britain. While these differences may seem slight in comparison to the geographical and cultural differences between England and other colonial nations, the maintenance of a separate legal system in Scotland indicates that the Scots retained an independent sense of self. Although Collins's response to Scotland does contain some of the conflict he expresses in novels about the East, his overall response to the foreignness of the nation implies a more critical judgment. In *The Law and the Lady* and *Man and Wife*, Collins uses Scottish law as a vehicle for criticizing his northern neighbors. In particular, Collins attacks the ambiguity of Scottish marriage and criminal laws: *Man and Wife* depicts the potential dangers of irregular marriages, and *The Law and the Lady* traces the social implications of the not proven verdict.

The primary difficulty with Collins's approach to Scotland, particularly to Scottish law, is that it reinforces the colonial power relationship between England and Scotland. As many scholars have noted, a nation's legal system is central to that nation's sense of self. The legal system represents a country's decisions about what it considers to be the limits of proper action. The attempt by another nation to impose a different legal system therefore demonstrates an attempt to shift values. Colonial law, by supplanting the local customs for punishing criminals, making contracts, and establishing legal relationships, establishes itself as a "civilizing" force. Collins employs the language of imperialism—specifically about class, Christianity, and morality—throughout his representations of Scots law, Scotland, and Scots. The result is that Collins orientalizes Scotland; he exploits the differences between England and Scotland to justify English identity, suggesting that greater English authority in Scottish affairs would help the Scots manage their "untidy" legal system.<sup>1</sup>

In light of these novels' marginal place in the Collins canon, it is unsurprising that little scholarship exists on *Man and Wife* and *The Law and the Lady*. However, at least three articles examine Collins's treatment of the law in these and other novels. Dougal B. Maceachen traces Collins's drive for legal reform in *The Woman in White*, *The Evil Genius*,<sup>2</sup> and *No Name* as well as *Man and Wife* and *The Law and the Lady*.<sup>3</sup> Maceachen

<sup>1</sup> In *Orientalism*, Edward Said famously argues that the "Orient" is an active construction of the West: "Indeed, my real argument is that Orientalism is—and does not simply represent—a considerable dimension of modern political-intellectual culture, and as such has less to do with the Orient than it does with 'our' world" (12). Said's focus on the "political-intellectual culture" clearly demonstrates how depictions of the colonized by the colonizer contained aestheticized revelations of power relationships. Although Scotland is not part of the "Orient," it was treated in a similar manner.

<sup>2</sup> Collins's novel *The Evil Genius* (1885-86) critiques Scottish divorce law. Although it is beyond the scope of this essay, it is interesting to note some of the differences between English and Scottish divorce laws. For example, the Scots allowed more flexibility in divorce. As Graham Law writes, "judicial divorce had been available since the

argues that “Collins’s legal training...left him with a desire to bring about certain reforms in British law” but observes that his work did not necessarily cause reform through its critiques (123). Instead, “Collins made his readers aware of existing legal injustices that might not have engaged their attention at all had he not incorporated these problems” (139). Both Anne Longmuir and Aoife Leahy examine Scots law in *The Law and the Lady* and *Man and Wife*. Longmuir reads Scots law as disruptive of social and psychological ideologies; she argues that the law “serves not to build and support the notion of a unified British nation, but to undermine it—just as [Collins’s] vision of individual subjectivity subverts the Pre-Freudian Victorian ideal of the whole and essential self” (166). In contrast, Leahy takes a more positive view of Collins’s use of Scots law. Relating knowledge of the law to artistry, Leahy writes that “For Collins, the law is an art to be mastered and the author always implies that a more creative understanding of the law could lead to progress of the sort that mere reforms alone could not establish” (152). Leahy, therefore, argues that Collins’s praise of legal craft makes legal prowess equal to his own authorship. Although both Longmuir and Leahy provide thorough examinations of the role of Scots law in *Man and Wife* and *The Law and the Lady*, neither thoroughly examines the colonial implication of Collins’s negative depiction of Scots law.

These implications are important because, as Collins indicates in the plots of these two novels, much is at stake in a nation’s system of law. In fact, as Maceachen and others have demonstrated, Collins frequently examined legal consequences in his plots, and he used his writing to raise public awareness of what he believed were unjust laws. Collins was not alone in this endeavor. Over the course of the nineteenth century, the sense of the individual’s role in the legal system grew, making the law and lawyers increasingly popular

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sixteenth century,...desertion was also a ground for petition, and crucially,...there was a single definition of adultery which applied to both husband and wife” (11-12). In comparison, it was not until the Matrimonial Causes Act of 1857 that judicial divorce was instituted in England. Even then, divorce could only be granted to women if adultery was paired with some other form of cruelty such as desertion, abuse, or incest.

<sup>3</sup> Mary Rosner locates the character of Dexter within the contexts of the Victorian fascination with freaks and the psychological links between sound minds and sound bodies. Teresa Mangum similarly examines Dexter, but she focuses on the way that his body and that of the female detective disrupt a traditionally masculine detective plot. Both Karin Jacobson and Ellen Burton Harrington also approach the novel by examining the depiction of gender. Jacobson draws on the connections between *The Law and the Lady* and the Madeline Smith trial to demonstrate the way that feminine texts challenged the masculine narratives and power structures. Harrington compares *The Law and the Lady*’s Valeria to *Bleak House*’s Esther to elucidate how the female characters were able to justify their intrusions into the masculine world of detection. Janice Allan examines detection but focuses on Collins’s insistence on a linguistic instability, which challenges the conventions of traditional detective novels. Most recently, John R. Reed has examined how the action of *The Law and the Lady* “consciously though roughly approximates courtroom procedures” (218).

topics for writers such as Charles Dickens and Charles Reade.<sup>4</sup> Kieran Dolin notes that this interest in legal fiction arose from the Victorian fondness for reform: “The achieved reforms of the law imply a belief in the fundamental soundness of the legal system; but they also imply an acceptance that the ends and means of the law are under human control, and that a duty exists or social policy demands that the law be turned into an effective instrument of justice” (79). Because of the perceived malleability of the law, authors could use the media to put the law on trial. Writers often used the power of narrative to foster sympathetic connections between readers and characters who were the victims of the law, such as the Jarndyces in *Bleak House* and Laura Fairlie in *The Woman in White*; by identifying with victims, the readers gained a fuller understanding of the impact of the law on individuals. As legal fiction grew more popular, the public’s awareness of the consequences of the legal system increased. However, while a more informed populus is generally a good thing, this raised awareness also created problems. For example, Jan-Melissa Schramm discusses the competition between literature and the law for moral authority. In particular, Schramm describes the response of Fitzjames Stephens, who believed that fiction had a place in the public debate on law but “questioned the right of the authors to shape public opinion about the administration of justice when they had no concomitant responsibility to present evidence fairly or dispassionately” (432). Stephens’s comment draws attention to the danger of the freedom Victorian authors felt in their critiques: these critiques could be irresponsible because, unlike lawyers, authors were not subject to the restrictions of the court.

The critique Collins offers of Scottish law is derived from the many differences between the Scottish and English legal systems. Though the Acts of Union in 1707 made England and Scotland one political entity, they did not merge the legal systems. Indeed, drawing both on Roman traditions and common law, the Scots legal system continues to this day to differ from English law. In his popular history *How the Scots Invented the Modern World*, Arthur Herman outlines the different evolutions of Scots law and English law:

They sprang up at almost the same time, in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. But as time went on, the outlook of English lawyers and

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<sup>4</sup> A study by John Sutherland, cited by Dolin, “shows that in a sample of 676 Victorian novelists, one in five was a lawyer” (4).

judges became increasingly insular. They looked to the custom and precedent of their own past to settle virtually every dispute—hence the term common law, meaning common to the kingdom of England. The Scots, on the other hand, who had learned to cast wider for their fundamental legal principles, turned to the ancient Roman civil law. (86)

The Scottish system invests more power in individual judges to make decisions than does the English system: “A Scottish judge’s decision in a civil or criminal case looks beyond the facts to the underlying principles of fairness and equity that the case involves. His guide is not precedent but reason” (87).

As many sources attest, the Scots took pride in this separate legal system. Robert Ferguson aligns Scottish law with resistance to the English: “law in Scottish and American society represented both the primary means of public advancement and a vital source of national definition for countering the cultural hegemony of England” (qtd. in Dolin 48). According to Lindsay Farmer, Scottish lawyers embraced theirs as a more organic system of law that allowed for greater flexibility in interpretation:

With the progress of civilisation, it was said that “an unfettered, unwritten law grows with the nation’s growth and refines itself with the national refinement,” reflecting the national character and temper. This was contrasted unfavourably with the possibility of a code, which would freeze the life of the law, sundering it from the progress of the nation. Such an approach was regarded as profoundly anti-Scottish—though perhaps necessary in England where the common law was said to lack system and elegance. (139)

Because its organic nature placed so much emphasis on judges, much of the Scottish legal system was founded on the discourses of legal authorities, such as Baron David Hume. As an article in *North British Review* in 1844 explains, such discourses helped to refine legal implementation and to tame the “native vigour” of Scots law by preventing “a power of departing at pleasure from the ordinary province of judicial duty...a power, in short, of making, as well as expounding the law” (313). Scots were, therefore, accustomed to public

debate about their legal system. However, Scots were also clearly accustomed to defending their legal system as an important component of their cultural history.

This defense was necessary because of works like *The Law and the Lady* and *Man and Wife*, which attacked Scots law for its apparent ambiguity. On 25 October 1869, Collins wrote about *Man and Wife* to Frederick Lehmann: “I sit here all day, attacking English Institutions—battering down the marriage laws of Scotland and Ireland and reviling athletic sports—in short writing an unpopular book” (*Letters* 326). Significantly, Collins refers to Scots and Irish marriage laws as “English Institutions.” Not only does Collins here demonstrate his failure to perceive of the three nations as “British,” he also indicates that he felt a patriarchal responsibility to change these odd and obscure Scots and Irish laws. In this sense, Collins has framed his role as that of the Orientalist: “The modern Orientalist was, in his view, a hero rescuing the Orient from the obscurity, alienation, and strangeness which he himself had properly distinguished” (Said 121). Collins both reveals to his audience the problems created by Scots law and constructs a narrative that seeks to purge the Scots of their legal afflictions.

In *Man and Wife* Collins depicts four main characters, most of them English, as they try to navigate the seemingly labyrinthine Scottish irregular marriage laws.<sup>5</sup> Anne Silvester seeks to save her honor by arranging an irregular marriage with her lover, the wicked and athletic Geoffrey Delamyn. While in Scotland, Anne leaves the safety of a friend’s home to meet Geoffrey at a nearby inn so that they can declare themselves married in front of witnesses; however, Geoffrey is called away to his father’s sickbed and sends his friend Arnold Brinkworth in his stead. Anne fears that she is now legally bound to Arnold, a problem made worse by his engagement and marriage to Blanche, Anne’s best friend. Eventually Anne’s marriage to Geoffrey is proven, saving Arnold from being a bigamist.

*Man and Wife*’s primary criticism of the Scottish marriage laws regards their ambiguity. In addition to church-sanctioned marriages, Scots law allowed for three different types of irregular marriages: when a woman and a man declared themselves to be married in public or in writing, when a promise of marriage was consummated, and when a couple lived together and were considered man and wife “by repute.”<sup>6</sup> Because of the breadth of

<sup>5</sup> *Man and Wife* also criticizes the inability of the law to protect married women. Hester Dethridge, one of the minor characters, chronicles how she tried to escape an abusive and alcoholic husband. Every time she established herself in a new place with a new job, he would find her and take her property. Eventually Dethridge murders her husband to escape his tyranny. Geoffrey finds her written testament and uses it to blackmail her into helping him murder Anne.

<sup>6</sup> According to Scottish laws, Wilkie Collins could have contracted irregular marriages to Martha Rudd and Caroline

situations in which a couple could mistakenly marry, the narrator of *Man and Wife* describes the laws as a type of snare: "Neither of them had any adequate idea (few people have) of the infamous absence of all needful warning, of all decent precaution and restraint, which makes the marriage law of Scotland a trap to catch unmarried men and women, to this day" (132). The language—"infamous," "precaution," "trap"—clearly defines the law as risky and unethical. Blanche's uncle, Sir Patrick, describes irregular marriages as "dangerous" (197), as "an outrage on common decency, and common sense" (230), and as "a national calamity" (232). The novel's Scots lawyers, including Sir Patrick, remark upon the difficulty of interpreting the law and applying it to the case of Anne and Arnold. As both Sir Patrick and Mr. Camp note, "consent makes marriage" (231, 321). Consequently, the difficulty of proving marriage comes in proving consent, which could be as ineffable as a verbal exchange. Mr. Camp argues that Arnold's well-intentioned lie on Anne's behalf at the inn (in which he claims to be Anne's husband) constitutes a marriage by inference; however, Sir Patrick and Mr. Crum merely believe that there is no marriage but only "evidence in favour of perhaps establishing a marriage" (322). By dramatizing the problems of proving this fictional irregular marriage, Collins brings to light the problem of proving real irregular marriages.

In light of these critiques, the title of *Man and Wife* is especially appropriate because it suggests the ambiguity of these relationships: which man is the "man," and which woman is the "wife"? The novel suggests a number of pairings: Arnold and Anne, Geoffrey and Anne, and Arnold and Blanche. Moreover, the novel's title draws attention to all marital pairings. In response to the ambiguity of Scottish marriage law, both Sir Patrick and Blanche insist on various precautions to ensure the legality of her marriage to Arnold. Blanche refuses to be married in Scotland at all, having learned from Anne's example as "somebody who has been a victim—an innocent victim—to a Scotch marriage" (332). The treatment of Anne as "an innocent victim" of the law underscores Collins's casting of Scottish law as the villain of the novel. To the same end, Sir Patrick points out that marriage is a contract, not merely an idealistic exchange: "this is not a marriage in a novel! This is the most unromantic affair of the sort that ever happened...what is the consequence of this purely prosaic state of things? Lawyers and settlements, of course!" (299). In addition to its irony, Sir Patrick's assertion that "this is not a marriage in a novel" indicates Collins's

attitude toward the law. Unlike novels, which can indulge in romance, the law must maintain its dedication to reality. By calling attention to the constructed narrative, Collins invites readers to ponder the real-life consequences of ambiguous or arbitrary laws.

Scotland's criminal law, rather than its marriage law, is under attack in *The Law and the Lady*. In this novel, Valeria Brinton marries Eustace Woodville, only to find out that he is actually Eustace Macallan and that he has been tried for poisoning his first wife. Having received the unique "Scotch Verdict" of not proven, Eustace is positioned awkwardly in relation to the law and society. Though he has not been found guilty and may live a normal life, the lack of an innocent verdict has socially marked him (thus his marrying under an assumed name). Valeria believes that Eustace is innocent of this crime, but Eustace is convinced that she can never fully trust him and, therefore, abandons her. Valeria, being a loving wife and dashing heroine, dedicates her life to proving her husband's innocence. Like any good detective, she examines the facts of the case, interviews witnesses, and draws useful conclusions. Ultimately, Valeria hands her investigation over to Eustace's lawyer, Mr. Playmore, and her father's former clerk, Benjamin, when she is reunited with her husband as his nursemaid. Based on her work, the two men are able to conclude the investigation in Eustace's favor.

Over the course of the novel, the Scotch Verdict comes in for much abuse. The first description of the verdict comes from Major Fitz-David: "There is a verdict allowed by the Scotch law, which (so far as I know) is not permitted by the laws of any other civilized country on the face of the earth" (101). In response, Valeria declares Eustace to be "my innocent martyr" and claims that "a resolution, at once too sacred" has been "kindled" in her to overturn the verdict (102). Later, after reading the trial report of Eustace's case, Valeria describes the verdict as "timid and trimming," a "slur," and "lame and impotent" (182). Later, she refers to it as a "stain" (192). Most notably, when first she hears of the verdict, Valeria refers to the verdict as "vile" and sets out "to change that underhand Scotch Verdict of Not Proven, into an honest English verdict of Not Guilty" (117). As Ellen Burton Harrington asserts, Valeria's declaration demonstrates that hers is not merely a legal mission motivated by love: "This patriotic appeal and mission statement set up an opposition between her and the Law or, at least, between her and the underhanded 'Scotch' Law that permits the gross miscarriage of justice that the ambiguous verdict represents" (26). Furthermore, this early comment on the verdict sets the "honest English verdict" against the "underhand Scotch Verdict." Such a comment implies that the more definitive

English verdict is not only legally but morally superior to the Scotch Verdict. These kinds of ethical judgments commonly characterize legal discourse, but they also commonly characterize imperial discourse.

Collins's treatment of Scottish law calls into question the entire network of relationships between England and Scotland during the nineteenth century. In many ways, the nineteenth century witnessed increased similarities between the two nations. Over the course of the era, Scotland experienced a number of changes. The rise of industry, particularly in the Clydeside region, shrank the gap between Scottish and English markets. Furthermore, a variety of scholars, including Linda Colley, Simon Gikandi, and John McCaffrey have argued that the British Empire gave Scotland a greater sense of connectedness to England through its role in exploring and securing foreign lands. Fitzroy MacLean includes a number of other factors in this greater sense of unity, such as "improved communications, constant coming and going across the border and movement of population, intermarriage...the influence achieved by individual Scots in every field of British life and, in return, the gradual spread to Scotland of English ideas and fashions and habits" (206). As a consequence of these connections, Scottish national identity was extremely vexed during the Victorian era. As Colley observes, "It was quite possible for an individual to see himself as being, at one and the same time, a citizen of Edinburgh, a Lowlander, a Scot, and a Briton" (315).

Not surprisingly, the various identities of Scots also contributed to perceived differences between Scots and the English. In particular, the fetishizing of Scottish culture reinforced the differences between Scotland and England by focusing on inauthentic, outdated, or limited versions of Scottish identity. In addition to the establishment of the royal residence at Balmoral and the Queen's highland journals, Scots culture was represented through the popularity of tartans and highland dress.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, many popular depictions of Scotland focused on the countryside and the hunting to be had there rather than on the sophisticated pleasures offered by the cities, while *Punch* featured a stereotype of Scots as "dour and parsimonious" (Smout, Introduction 11). To some extent, Scots reinforced these cultural differences as a way to maintain their unique identity. As McCaffrey notes, "They did not want their particular mixture of social and cultural values to be taken for granted" (59). For example, the Kailyard School of writers at the end of the

<sup>7</sup> In *The Invention of Scotland*, Hugh Trevor Roper has famously debunked the tartan as an English invention that gained popularity at the beginning of the nineteenth century.

century, including James Barry (writing as Gavin Ogilvy), sentimentalized and romanticized Scotland.

The difference played out even more clearly in the international arena, where Scots still felt a cultural divide from England. The English did not feel the same camaraderie and pride in being British that the Scots felt. T.C. Smout indicates that the English remained devoutly English: "For the English the usual name both for their state and for the theatre of their lives was and still is England....The residual irritations that Scots had concerning their neighbours in the nineteenth century usually revolved (just as in the revolutionary decades of the seventeenth century) round England not being British enough" (Introduction 6). This failure to be "British enough" is clearly demonstrated in difficulties the Scots experienced in their political exchanges with England. I.C.G. Hutchison contends that Scotland was remarkably well-represented in Parliament but that Scots often felt their unique national concerns were not properly addressed and there was little understanding of Scotland by the Englishmen who drafted legislation.<sup>8</sup> Hutchison asserts that these issues were particularly problematic for Scots in the arena of legal reform:

As an instance of this, the House of Lords was the final court of appeals for Scottish cases, yet until 1876 there was no requirement that a Scottish judge should be on the panel. This resulted in many decisions being grounded in English legal precedents and jurisprudential theory, however contrary to Scots law, and, moreover, they were frequently accompanied by disparaging comments on the Scottish legal system. (252)

Being accustomed to an organic system of law, Scots were open to debating their system of law. However, they had no desire to have reform paternalistically dictated to them. English politicians often chose to remain ignorant of, or indifferent to, the distinct challenges of

<sup>8</sup> Paul Riggs traces the struggles Scots faced in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries to maintain the separate integrity of their unique legal system. Among other controversies, "In June 1857, reform debates led the journal [*Journal of Jurisprudence*] to note that Scots law was being 'contemptuously treated as a petty custom, and not as a system which, in its leading principles, forms the law of every European state'" (17). The Scots resisted the assimilation of their law into the English legal system, and they worried that "Scottish law was becoming 'disjointed and deformed' at the hands of 'English lawyers, who know little, and sometimes boast they know nothing of Scotch law'" (18). To complicate matters further, "several recent [1860] English reforms had been borrowed from Scotland." However, the struggles Scotland faced in defending its legal system against England eventually paid off; Riggs argues that the Scots' ability to defend their legal system paved the way for successful devolution.



Scottish “peculiarities” (259). In fact, Hutchison argues that “English politicians appeared eager to avoid any unnecessary involvement in Scottish affairs when these were being aired in parliament, and where evasion was possible, to treat any engagement as a tedious chore” (260).<sup>9</sup>

Collins treats Scottish law as tedious in his appendix to *Man and Wife* through a damning colonial critique of irregular marriage. Collins claims that all Scotland’s marriage law lacks is “a legal enactment for providing for the sale of your wife, when you have done with her” and concludes, “of the witnesses giving evidence—oral and written—before the Commissioners [of the Report of Marriage Commission], fully one half regard the Irregular Marriages of Scotland, from the Christian and the civilized point of view, and entirely agree with the authoritative conclusion already cited—that such marriages ought to be abolished” (646). Collins’s highly charged language—“Christian” and “civilized”—introduces colonial overtones into his critique. Collins further demonstrates his frustrations when he catalogs the Scottish response to the Commission’s report:

That Scotland doesn’t like being interfered with by England (!). That Irregular Marriages cost nothing (!!). That they are diminishing in number and may therefore be trusted, in course of time, to exhaust themselves (!!!). That they act, on certain occasions, in the capacity of a moral trap to catch a profligate man (!!!!). (646)

In this appendix, Collins challenges Scots’ defense of their legal system. He notes their logic but rejects the argument through his system of escalating exclamation points.<sup>10</sup> Collins’s dismissal of Scots law as barbaric and indefensible is characteristic of the

<sup>9</sup> Not surprisingly, Hutchison connects the neglect of Scottish political concerns at Westminster to an increased interest in home rule by the Scots.

<sup>10</sup> By no means was Collins the first to warn Englishmen of the dangers of Scottish irregular marriage. In fact, Lord Neave’s poem “The Tourists’ Matrimonial Guide through Scotland” (1868) sought to guide travelers through the potential dangers of irregular marriages. Two verses in particular apply to *Man and Wife*:

Suppose that young Jocky and Jenny  
Say, ‘We two are husband and wife’,  
The witnesses needn’t be many—  
They’re instantly buckled for life...

You’d better keep clear of love-letters  
Or write them with caution and care;  
For, faith, they may fasten your fetters,  
If wearing a conjugal air.  
(qtd. in Smout, “Scottish” 205, 207).

Of course, periodicals also sought to spread the word about irregular marriages. An article in *The North British Review* in 1847 on the Scottish Marriage Bill sought to clarify the law, but it also details a number of the problems caused by the challenges of proving an irregular marriage, including secret and accidental marriages.

colonizer’s desire to separate himself from the culture of the colonized.

Despite Collins’s enthusiasm, his critique—like that of many colonizers—is uninformed. Scottish law had been highlighted in a number of high profile legal trials, so Collins probably felt himself well educated about Scots law. In both England and Scotland, daily newspaper updates, court reports, and sensationalized descriptions of the cases made for popular reading and made the courtroom widely available for public scrutiny. For example, the not proven verdict had been rendered in the infamous Madeline Smith murder trial, and the marriage laws of both Ireland and Scotland had been called into question publicly in trials such as the Yelverton and Dalrymple marriage cases.<sup>11</sup> However, such familiarity with popular depictions of these trials does not necessarily entail a full understanding of the law. In fact, John McCaffrey indicates that such assumptions as Collins’s were part of a larger problem of public Scottish identity:

The growth of the popular press in this period not only provided a local context for the discussion of such [Scottish] issues: the speedier exchange of views...also brought the opinions of the English press before the Scottish public more readily than ever before and, when these appeared to be sometimes too critical or ill-informed about Scottish issues and sentiments, they created further irritation. (57)

Although Collins’s letters reveal that he researched certain points of Scottish law, his work does not demonstrate a nuanced understanding of that legal system.<sup>12</sup>

This flawed understanding is demonstrated in Collins’s ignorance of the cultural significance of the laws he seeks to reform. For example, Collins’s novels assume that the irregular marriage laws are damaging to those subjected to them, and he even dismisses the Scots’ defense of their marriage laws. However, despite the problems Collins identifies,

<sup>11</sup> The Macallan case presented in the novel closely mirrors the Madeline Smith case. Glaswegian Smith was accused of murdering her French lover, Emile L’Angelier, after he refused to return her correspondence to her at the end of their relationship. Like Sarah Macallan, Smith had procured arsenic on two separate occasions, claiming to want it to improve her complexion. Moreover, Smith’s own writing, like Eustace’s, is the most damning evidence against her. Both Karin Jacobson and Jenny Bourne Taylor discuss the connections between real legal cases and Collins’s novels.

<sup>12</sup> Collins wrote a number of letters about matters of law. For example, on 14 June 1871, he wrote to William Tindell asking how to find a copy of the Madeleine Smith trial report or the report of any Scottish case of criminal law. The next day he consulted Tindell again: “Am I right in supposing that if a man marries a woman under an assumed name, the marriage is nonetheless a lawful one, if the woman has acted in good faith?” (*Letters* 385). Both of these latter queries deal with situations in *The Law and the Lady*.

Scots were reticent to change their laws.<sup>13</sup> In fact, Maceachan argues that public support favored the irregular marriage laws:

*Blackwood's*, which threw its influence against the [marriage] bill, reflected the attitude of the Scottish nation. It resented English efforts to reform Scots laws. It defended irregular marriages by maintaining that the law which allowed these marriages promoted morality, for, as cohabitation so easily established marriage, concubinage was effectively discouraged in Scotland. (130)

Many of the objections Maceachan lists here echo the objections Collins dismisses in his appendix to *Man and Wife*. Nevertheless, popular sentiment also indicated that the Scots believed that their marriage laws better protected women, particularly those who had consummated an engagement.<sup>14</sup> Furthermore, it was not only Scots who benefited from the Scottish legal system. Before the imposition of the twenty-one-day waiting period on visitors to Scotland reduced accidental and “quickie” unions, Scots irregular marriage laws drew many to Scotland who sought to circumvent Lord Hardewick’s Act, which outlawed such marriages in England.

In a similar way, the not proven verdict had (and continues to have) uses and implications beyond those suggested by Collins. It is tempting to simplify the Scotch Verdict into a matter of juries not convicting despite feeling convinced of the defendant’s guilt; however, this explanation fails to recognize the broad spectrum of occasions for the verdict. In his 1852 volume *Narratives from Criminal Trials in Scotland*, J. Hill Burton describes some of the uses:

<sup>13</sup> One response to Collins comes from Margaret Oliphant. In her unsigned review for *Blackwood's Magazine*, Oliphant observes the limitations of Collins’s critique of Scots marriage laws in *Man and Wife*: “Its motif is the abuse and irregularity of the laws of marriage—an abuse, however, of which he indirectly and unintentionally shows the limits, by proving beyond doubt that only a thoroughly heartless and unscrupulous villain could make them work real harm; and villains thoroughly unscrupulous are, thank heaven! not very common in the world” (188). Though perhaps Oliphant defends the laws out of loyalty for her home country, her appraisal nevertheless demonstrates the weakness of Collins’s depiction of the law.

<sup>14</sup> Because marriage laws had already seen reform in the nineteenth century, the Scots were well aware that changing the marriage laws had a number of repercussions. Before the Scottish Registration Bills, which essentially legitimized civil marriage, only church and irregular marriages were recognized, and irregular marriages were illegal despite their validity. New legal marriage options threatened the Church of Scotland’s monopoly on legal, valid marriages. Nevertheless, the registry was a boon for the legal and medical professions because it allowed for a more official accounting of causes of death and lines of inheritance. Irregular marriages were officially abolished in 1939 (Longmuir 172).

This middle finding is peculiar to Scotland. Some have held it to be a valuable institution, as leaving the stigma of suspicion where there is not sufficient evidence to convict—a stigma which never leaves its object if he is guilty, and is easily removable if any event should occur enabling him to explain suspicious facts and make his innocence apparent. (qtd. in Taylor 422)

As Burton notes, not proven could be handed down where the capital sentences were legally mandated but not necessarily warranted. Additionally, juries could use this verdict to indicate moral culpability where no legal culpability was proven. In cases of a divided jury, the verdict represented the truth of the situation: impressions of both innocence and guilt.<sup>15</sup> Moreover, in an age of few forensic resources, the not proven verdict recognized the difficulty of proving guilt beyond doubt in the absence of a confession. The not proven verdict, made possible by the organic nature of Scots law, provides flexibility not built into the English system. Consequently, the Scotch verdict, instead of being “lame and impotent” (182), as Valeria claims, is actually very dynamic and potent because it recognizes a broader range of accountability than the absolutism of guilty and not guilty.

The plot of *The Law and the Lady* bears out these benefits of the not proven verdict. Despite Valeria’s derision of the verdict, the novel upholds its use to communicate Eustace’s moral, though not physical, responsibility for the death of his first wife, Sarah. Eustace is technically vindicated in the novel by the discovery of Sarah’s suicide note, but the shadow of his emotional abuse of his first wife stands. In addition to the oral and written testimony of Sarah’s nurse and friends, Eustace’s declaration of innocence betrays his recognition of his emotional abuse of his wife: “I was not only shocked and grieved by her untimely death—I was filled with fear that I had not, with all of my care, behaved affectionately enough to her in her lifetime” (151). Recognizing his responsibility for the suicide of his first wife, Eustace opts not to clear his name publicly (though he keeps the evidence in case his children need it). In light of Eustace’s situation, Leahy argues, “the working out of the plot seems to indicate the verdict was the fairest one at the time, in face of conflicting evidence. It made it less likely that an innocent man like Eustace would be

<sup>15</sup> Whereas English juries were composed of twelve individuals who had to agree unanimously on a verdict, Scottish juries were composed of fifteen individuals who did not need to come to a consensus. Instead, the majority determined the verdict.

found Guilty and executed" (152).

Eventually, Collins's critique of Scotland extends beyond the law to the people responsible for the law. In her analysis of *Man and Wife* and *The Law and the Lady*, Longmuir divides Collins's depictions into two groups: "the assimilated metropolitan 'North Briton' and the unashamedly unassimilated 'rough' Scot" (168).<sup>16</sup> Longmuir associates the people of this "country popularly held to suffer from a kind of cultural schizophrenia" with the dangerous laws that demonstrate that the people control "its uncivilised and irrational drives less successfully than England" (166). For example, in *The Law and the Lady*, Collins demonstrates this split identity; Valeria describes the Scots as having a dual nature. First she catalogs the trials of Sabbath-keeping and remarks that, from a distance, Scotsmen are "the most stolid, stern, and joyless people on the face of the earth" (272). Next, she relents and allows, "There are no people more cheerful, more companionable, more hospitable, more liberal in their ideas, to be found on the face of the civilized globe than the very people who submit to the Scotch Sunday!" (272). Ultimately, the novel plays out both types of Scottishness. Mr. Playmore is clearly the ideal Scot Valeria describes in her latter statements. However, the association of the Scotch Sunday with the Scotch verdict ties the negative aspects of the culture to its legal system and those responsible for it. Consequently, while Mr. Playmore acts as the positive model of a Scot, Scottishness itself looms in the background as a threatening and ruthless force.

This division between "rough Scot" and North Briton is also clearly seen elsewhere in the two novels. While working class Scots appear in Collins's novels, they are typically comic throwbacks of severe country folk. For example, *Man and Wife*'s Mistress Inchbare is "tall and thin, and decent and dry" (119). She has "unlovable hair" and "hard bones [that] showed themselves, like Mistress Inchbare's hard Presbyterianism, without any concealment or compromise." She is "savagely-respectable" and rules over a "savagely-respectable inn" (119). Customers accept her rules and prices or are forced to fare "on the scanty mercy of a Scotch wilderness" (133). Both Mistress Inchbare, whose name alone evokes unkindness, and the "Scotch wilderness" appear to have "scanty mercy." Leahy points to related issues with the depiction of the waiter at Miss Inchbare's inn: "[Bishopriggs's] inappropriate behaviour and lack of respect for the institution of marriage, punctuated by his colloquial expletives, seems to reinforce the idea that Scotland is to

<sup>16</sup> Collins was undoubtedly familiar with the refined Scot. His father's close friend Sir David Wilkie (after whom Collins was called Wilkie) was born in Fife, though he had moved to England by the time he was 20.

blame for its own irregular marriages" (150). In contrast, only anglicized North Britons are middle (or upper) class, urban, and modern.<sup>17</sup> Unlike *Man and Wife*'s Miss Inchbare, *The Law and the Lady*'s Mr. Playmore shows very little of the ill effects of being Scottish. Mr. Playmore, who resides in Edinburgh, is "only negatively remarkable" and "spoke perfectly good English, touched only with the slightest possible flavour of a Scotch accent" (272). Similarly, if Sir Patrick in *Man and Wife* did not go about Windygates whistling Scotch airs and complaining about the English fervor for athletics, readers might mistake him for an Englishman.

These divisions in Scottish types are not rare in literature, but they are significant.<sup>18</sup> Instead of being treated as a homogeneous group of people, the Scots are often depicted as culturally divided.<sup>19</sup> Characters such as Mr. Playmore and Sir Patrick claim their Scots identity, but both speak practically unaccented English. Bishopriggs, in contrast, retains the oral markers of Scottish culture through his heavy dialect. In light of the importance Benedict Anderson gives to language, Bishopriggs's speech is significant. Anderson writes,

The lexicographic revolution in England, however, created, and gradually spread, the conviction that languages (in Europe at least) were, so to speak, the personal property of quite specific groups—their daily speakers and readers—and moreover that these groups, imagined as communities, were entitled to their autonomous place in a fraternity of equals. (84)

In the sense of the empire, Mr. Playmore and Sir Patrick clearly fit into the imagined

<sup>17</sup> Linda Colley explains that the division between Highland and Lowland Scots was fairly prominent. In fact, Lowlanders often referred to their northern neighbors as "aborigines" or "savages," thereby re-inscribing the Highlanders within the scope of imperialism (314).

<sup>18</sup> Of course, this tradition of the dual nature of Scotland stems from Sir Walter Scott, who emphasized these cultural distinctions between lowlanders and highlanders. Because Collins himself revered Scott as "the Prince, the King, the Emperor, the God Almighty of novelists" (qtd. in Taylor xx-xxi), Scott's example in depicting his nation is important. James Buzard identifies the problematic legacy of Scott's work: "Scott devoted himself to shoring up the fiction of a self-consistent Scottishness, even if that undertaking meant setting his country in a cement of cultural stereotypes" (103). Moreover, Buzard links Scott to "fabricating to suit the touristic interests of English readers—a 'Scotland' (a unit identified with Highland tradition and the Jacobite cause) to which, evidently, a 'Scottish' writer, bore no simple relationship of indigeness" (64). As a lawyer, Scott also included a number of legal themes in his work. The two most comparable to these novels are *The Heart of Midlothian* and "The Two Drovers." Both deal with the interaction between English and Scottish legal systems (and litigants). In particular, "The Two Drovers" provides a useful contrast to *The Law and the Lady* and *Man and Wife* because it deals with a Scot who is subject to English law.

<sup>19</sup> Some critics have linked these cultural and other internal divisions to the development of the doppelgänger theme in Scottish literature.

community of Britain. Bishopriggs, by his imperfect mastery of English, clearly is merely a Scot. Although one could easily attribute Bishopriggs's heavy accent to his working class status, it is clear that *Man and Wife* conflates class and nationality. In particular, Collins makes this connection by identifying the North Britons (Sir Patrick and Mr. Playmore) with the critique of Scots law and the "rough" Scot Bishopriggs with the complications of Scots law (Bishopriggs steals the letter proving that Anne's marriage to Geoffrey precedes any perceived union with Arthur).

The use of outsider protagonists—Valeria, Anne, Sir Patrick, Blanche, and Arthur—plays into Collins's critique as well. The threat to these North Britons and their English middle-class friends comes from the Scottish colonial countryside and the legal system that Collins depicts as outmoded. In fact, several characters in the novel with Scottish colonial ties seek to shed them. Blanche rejects her Scottish roots in light of Anne's plight, and Eustace Macallan adopts the much more English name of "Woodville" after he receives the not proven verdict. Anne is Anglo-Irish, a fact that receives no attention after *Man and Wife*'s prologue. Sir Patrick, who identifies as Scottish, nevertheless spends most of his time at his dreary estate near London. Moreover, Sir Patrick criticizes Scots law and legitimizes English law:

Loose and reckless as Scotch law is, there happens to be one case in which the action of it has been confirmed and settled by the English Courts. A written promise of marriage exchanged between a man and a woman, in Scotland, marries that man and woman by Scotch law. An English Court of Justice...pronounced that law to be good—and the decision has since been confirmed by the supreme authority of the House of Lords. (523)

Sir Patrick's speech subordinates the "loose and reckless" Scottish law and instead takes its precedent from English laws. By the logic of his argument, Scots law is only reasonable if validated by English courts. Taken together, these examples indicate that Collins perceived something fundamentally problematic or foreign about Scottish identity. Furthermore, by having his characters demonize Scots law, Collins replicates colonial power relationships.

This depiction of the outside protagonist has a dangerous consequence. By inviting his audience to identify with outsiders against Scotland, Collins makes the audience

complicit in the imperial project of reforming Scots law. He encourages readers to think of Scotland as "other" and to marginalize those who are not like the "us" of the novel. As Dolin notes in his discussion of Sir Walter Scott's *The Heart of Midlothian*, "Law and narrative may be nationalist projects, but it cannot be assumed that they work with a common function—the representation of Scotland—or toward the same goal. Audience identity is an essential element of any nationalist thesis" (49). Both Scott and Collins wrote for a predominantly English audience. However, while Scott is Scottish and seeks to gain audience sympathy for the differences between England and Scotland, Collins is English and seeks to demonstrate how these differences are indicative of larger problems with Scottish identity. Consequently, though Scott "does not provide a radical critique of the citadel of Scottish law, but an account written from one within the discourse, one which might be addressed to the Bench," Collins does provide a radical critique of Scottish law, one which is addressed to an outside reader (70).

These negative impressions also manifest in Collins's depiction of the landscape. In these novels, Scotland seems to be in perpetual danger of returning to nature, which hints at the fear of atavism resulting from colonial encounters. *Man and Wife* begins by depicting Scotland, through Windygates, as a wild, unruly place. Although the property possesses "advantages," it "went the road to ruin....The mansion was closed. The garden became a wilderness of weeds. The summer-house was choked up by creeping plants" (53). The owls take over the summer-house, blurring the boundary between interior and exterior.<sup>20</sup> Although the rental of Windygates leads to some restoration of order, Windygates's summer-house remains an unsafe place. For example, it is the place in the novel where Anne meets with Geoffrey about her plan for an irregular marriage. Ultimately, because of its association with Anne's departure, Windygates becomes the object of Blanche's distaste. Moreover, by disrupting the happy order of her household through its laws, Scotland itself becomes the source of Blanche's frustrations. In a conversation with her friend Janet, Blanche declares, "I hate Scotland...I never was so unhappy in my life as I have been in Scotland. I never want to see it again" (332-33).

In *The Law and the Lady*, the death of Sarah Macallan, Eustace's first wife, occurs in his country estate of Gleninch, an estate not too different from Windygates. Valeria notes

<sup>20</sup> Like much of the description of these locales, this spatial ambiguity highlights the Gothic nature of the Scottish countryside. These Gothic elements then underscore the colonial threat that Scotland represents. Just as the organized space can be reclaimed by nature, so, too, can the organized mind be reclaimed by nature.

that Gleninch, abandoned after the trial, becomes even more threatening in its aspect:

Outside, it was as bare of all ornament as a prison. Inside, the deadly dreariness, the close, oppressive solitude, of a deserted dwelling wearied the eye and weighed on the mind, from roof to basement....The place was dreary and dreadful; the heavy air felt as if it was still burdened with its horrid load of misery and distrust....Go where I might, the lonely horror of the house had its still and awful voice for Me:—"I keep the secret of the Poison! I hide the mystery of the death!" (287)

Gleninch has become a house haunted by the "horrid load of misery and distrust" and by the secret that it hides. The language that Valeria uses to describe the house—"dreariness," "oppressive," "wearied"—emphasizes the emotional resonances. This use of Scotland, the house serving metonymically as the nation, points to some of the many differences between England and Scotland. For example, Valeria notes that the Scottish estate appears cluttered. One of Valeria's first comments upon the grounds notes this distinction: "The park was, to an English eye, wild and badly kept" (286). Moreover, Mr. Playmore, who takes Valeria to Gleninch, points to the dust heap (which, ironically, hides the key to Eustace's innocence) and notes: "In tidy England, I suppose you would have all that carted away, out of sight....We don't mind in Scotland, as long as the dust-heap is far enough away not to be smelt at the house" (288).

Mr. Playmore's observation about England and Scotland makes a central distinction in national character. The English seek to impose order on the world by removing what is perceived to be old and useless; the Scots are content to allow the past and present to intermingle as long as they do so peacefully. Because it privileges Valeria's perspective and situation, the novel suggests that greater value be placed on the English desire for reform. Consequently, by implication, Scotland as a whole, like its legal system, is "wild and badly kept" as well as untidy. The result is a rejection by Valeria: after Mr. Playmore suggests that "Everything at Gleninch...is waiting for the new mistress to set it to rights. One of these days, you may be queen here," Valeria responds, "I have done with Gleninch...when I leave here today" (288). Mr. Playmore's language is particularly significant because it enacts the language of colonialism: Gleninch needs someone to "set it to rights," one of the

imperatives of imperialism. By putting these words into the mouth of a Scot, Collins implies that the colonized recognize their inability to self-legislate and their need for an external source of order. Like Victoria, Valeria would be the "queen" of Gleninch. Valeria's rejection of Gleninch suggests that the estate and, by extension, all of Scotland contributes little of value; it is not worth her effort.

Through his depictions of the untidy landscape, the divided people, and the seemingly arbitrary laws in *Man and Wife* and *The Law and the Lady*, Collins appears ill at ease with the ambiguous nature of Scottish identity. In fact, based on Collins's depiction of Scottish laws, it would be easy to dismiss these laws as unjust, barbaric institutions arising from a land that is close to England in geography but distant from England in morality. Consequently, it is not entirely surprising that Collins's works suggest revising Scottish law to make it more definitive, more English. Indeed, both *Man and Wife* and *The Law and the Lady* ask their audiences to seek a Scotland re-imagined in terms of England—as a foreign land populated with civilized English people, modeled on tidy English landscapes, and legislated by ethical English law. Ultimately, Collins constructs an exclusionary narrative that reinforces English perceptions of cultural superiority and reaffirms the belief that Scots are incapable of ruling themselves.

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## *Book Reviews*

John Plotz, *Portable Property: Victorian Culture on the Move*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 2008. pp. xvii + 268. \$35.00 / £24.95. By Jessica Kuskey

In Charles Dickens's *Great Expectations*, Wemmick repeatedly recommends the economic advantages of "portable property." For Wemmick, it is the portability—an object's availability to be physically transported and its value financially translated—that makes property valuable. In his new book *Portable Property: Victorian Culture on the Move*, John Plotz likewise emphasizes the cultural value made available by the portability of objects, national identity, and Victorian novels themselves. Indeed it is portability that Plotz's book is most concerned with; the "property" his title references gets comparably short shrift.

Plotz defines "portable property" as a specifically Victorian phenomenon whereby objects come to participate in two systems of value simultaneously: they are fungible, given their financial value and exchangeability in the market; and they are irreplaceable, highly sentimentalized, and heavily culturally symbolic, given their use in the emotional domestic realm. Objects (and novels) become "portable property" because their ability to circulate within and between these two schemes of value allows them to take on forms of cultural value which Plotz argues did major national and imperial work in the nineteenth century. The book's introduction lucidly elaborates this argument through convincing readings of Mrs. Tulliver's personal property in George Eliot's *The Mill on the Floss* and the proliferation of odd objects that fill Elizabeth Gaskell's *Cranford*, as well as Margaret Oliphant's now forgotten *Kirsteen*. Chapter 1 provides a more fully developed analysis using Victorian diamond stories—Christina Rossetti's "Hero," Anthony Trollope's *Eustace Diamonds*, and Wilkie Collins's *The Moonstone*—as a rich test case. Here Plotz includes some discussion of the new "thing theory," but this brief reference lacks a full explanation of the theory's main concepts and their application to portable property.

Plotz's careful attention in this first part of the book to the very *things* with which Victorian novels overflow makes for an intriguing and rewarding analysis of value and portability. Chapter 2 makes a shift, though, and introduces the book's primary focus,

cultural portability: the portability of intact, untainted Englishness across the empire. English exports, even English quotations in Anglo-Indian texts, embody and symbolize the far reach of the power of the metropole. The "property" of Plotz's title here gives way to the "dematerialized" portability of national identity, race, and imperial power which hitch a ride as English things move through space and across borders. Racial and national identity in Eliot's *Daniel Deronda*, for example, are portable to the extent that they become internalized within a character's physical body. Plotz's original and insightful reading of the novel demonstrates how author, narrator, and reader are constructed as "outsiders," unable to represent or witness elements of Jewish culture only visible to "insiders."

The second half of the book describes authors who, Plotz claims, strongly resisted and challenged the logic of portability, primarily through their use of landscape and locale. Because portability seeks to establish a homogeneous Englishness, it requires locations like those in the provincial novel which stand in metonymically for an ideal England, not distinctive and discernable regional difference. The exception that proves the rule, R.D. Blackmore's *Lorna Doone* and his "failures" that followed, show there was no market in England for the kind of local color narratives that were gaining popularity in America. Plotz's assemblage of the etchings and photographs that accompanied *Lorna Doone* is fascinating, but could benefit from the attention to discourses of space and visibility exemplified by many new studies of Victorian culture. The same goes for Plotz's discussion of Thomas Hardy's novels and etchings in chapter 5. His analysis of the importance of "multiperspectivalism" (131) in Hardy's fictions (the heterogeneity of human perception) is astute, as is his conclusion that Hardy rejected the premise that meaning resides in objects (or locales) and insisted instead that only observers generate meaning. It seems a stretch, however, to gather from this Hardy's "hostility," "distrust," and "unrelenting assault" (125-27 *passim*) on Victorian ideas of cultural portability, as if Hardy were aware of Plotz's concept. Much of this chapter, therefore, seems inconsistent with the book's proposed project and, together with its careful defense of Hardy's syntax, disconnected certainly from its examination of portable *property*.

*Portable Property's* final chapter likewise argues that William Morris set out in his fictions to refute and unravel the logic of portable property. Plotz makes a convincing case for Morris's *News from Nowhere* as an "anti-novel" (150), and does a fine job examining that text's rejections of the Victorian novel's standard elements and project. This is quite a long way to go, though, to argue that Morris found portable property "repulsive and



politically oppressive" (176), particularly since the socialist utopian future that Morris's novel imagines has entirely relinquished all memory even of private property, thus obviating application of the concept. The overflow of Victorian oddities, treasures, and things described at this study's outset is gone long before its end.

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Rosemarie Bodenheimer, *Knowing Dickens*. Ithaca and London: Cornell UP, 2007. pp. x + 238. \$35.00 / £17.95. By Karen Laird

For those of us who haven't yet found time to read the twelve-volume collected letters of Charles Dickens (the final installment of which was released in 2002 by Clarendon Press), Rosemarie Bodenheimer's *Knowing Dickens* is a practical gift. Scholars who have already spent hours curled up with these delightful letters will find renewed inspiration in Bodenheimer's beautifully written study, which miraculously manages to tell Dickens' familiar life story anew by charting provocative intersections between the letters, the novels, and the biography. As in Lucasta Miller's recent metabiography of the Brontës (*The Brontë Myth*), Bodenheimer hybridizes the best aspects of biography and literary criticism to yield refreshing, eminently readable interpretations of the most well documented literary subjects.

This project of illuminating Dickens's published writing through the lens of his personal and professional letters is not without risks. The title alone—*Knowing Dickens*—optimistically assumes that we can come to know the innermost self behind the celebrity novelist's public personae. Chapter one, "What Dickens Knew," serves as an introduction to the book and posits tantalizing questions concerning Dickens's understanding of the nature of the unconscious, scientific principles, spiritualism, and his own psyche. At the end of this opening chapter, Bodenheimer outlines her rationale for eschewing a chronological format in favor of a more eclectic structure that traces "certain recurrent clusters of thought and feeling in Dickens's writing" (14). Arranging her study into six thematically organized chapters allows Bodenheimer to provide multiple angles on Dickens's own subjectivity; what proves somewhat disorienting is how she varies her position from the most aerial viewpoints (chapter two analyzes his habits of language, while chapter six analyzes his relationship to the city) to intimate spotlights (chapter five ponders his eccentric domestic

habits, chapter four chronicles his male friendships) to a few highly speculative stances (chapter three imagines his process of remembering and forgetting). This rather peripatetic arrangement, which moves from urban streets to subconscious ghosts, makes for an unforgettable journey for those not prone to vertigo.

Chapter two, "Language on the Loose," considers Dickens's characteristically defensive style of letter writing. Chronicling incidents that sparked his ire and accusations that elicited his defensiveness, Bodenheimer wades through Dickens's many protestations of his justness and innocence to reveal how unconscious anxieties were writ large in his very form of letter writing. She concludes, "Dickens simply could not be, would not be, at fault; any suggestion of it generated an overflow of defensive language" (29). Bodenheimer draws our attention to these epistolary eruptions to then show us how his emotional tone carries over into the fiction, particularly in his depiction of characters inspired by his loquacious father, John Dickens, and subsequent father figures from whom he worked to distance himself. Characters like Wilkins Micawber, Harold Skimpole, and Mr. Dorrit speak in hyperbolic, contradictory, or delusional styles, but they each, like their author, attain immortality precisely because of their gift for excessive gab. Bodenheimer suggests that Dickens's parodies of excessive talkers reveals his self-knowledge, but the chapter's lingering image is actually of his substantial linguistic neurosis.

In chapter three, "Memory," Bodenheimer revives the waning conversation surrounding Dickens's autobiographical fragment (which recounts his childhood trauma of working at Warren's Blacking factory) to stress its profound influence on his fiction. A brilliant innovation is made when she attends to how the structure of Dickens's recounted life memories—"first, highly detailed memories of places, food, and people; second, moments of spectacular drama when the narrator in the present watches the child being watched by others in the past; and finally, the interpolated passages of anger and outrage in which the present narrator heats up the emotional temperature of the piece"—is recreated in his novels (69). Her deft handling of this structural pattern expands to uncover various structures of feeling which shape Dickens's various fictions of memory. Both novice students and veteran scholars will find this exploration of Dickens's mind to be truly rewarding.

Chapter four offers less original material for seasoned Dickensians, as it recounts those often highly charged relationships with his most intimate male companions: John Forester, William Charles Macready, Daniel Maclise, and Wilkie Collins. What is new here

is Bodenheimer's interesting suggestion that male rivalry surfaces in the fiction in patterns of triangular desire—an argument which is most successfully illustrated in her fine analysis of *Our Mutual Friend*. Chapter five, "Manager of the House," interprets lesser known short stories ("The Bride's Chamber," "The Haunted House") and journalistic pieces ("A House to Let") as evidence for how the author's many moves to new abodes uprooted his work and even his self-identity. Moving seamlessly from the meticulously crafted studies carved into his increasingly grand homes to the famously anthropomorphic houses of his novels, Bodenheimer ultimately paints a man whose obsession with domesticity invites endless psychoanalytic scrutiny concerning his private domestic dreams and disappointments.

Bodenheimer's final chapter, "Streets," explores the interesting relationship between Dickens's penchant for walking and his patterns of writing. This chapter's highlight is an insightful reading of *Bleak House*, in which Bodenheimer parallels Lady Dedlock's final march towards death with Dickens's own habit of writing to escape his past. One wishes throughout this chapter that she had distinguished between specific types of walking in the city to account for differences between Dickens's tourism in Philadelphia, his role as a traveler in Paris, or his nighttime tours of London's underground. Although Bodenheimer begins considering the status of the *flâneur*, she refrains from distinguishing between other types of walking as looking—namely, the distinction between the tourist and the traveler. She also covers so many various journalistic pieces—from the early *Sketches* to the later Christmas numbers of *All the Year Round*—that she limits herself to providing brief illuminations where she might penetrate fewer texts more deeply.

Throughout all of these chapters, Bodenheimer's astonishing knowledge of Dickens's letters illuminates his fiction in exciting ways. Precisely because this study covers such a vast terrain in such rich detail, readers will inevitably be disappointed by Bodenheimer's use of vaguely narrated "Bibliographical Notes" in lieu of precise footnotes. Although these notes do provide helpful suggestions for further reading, they fail to point clearly towards the concrete sources consulted for her individual arguments.

In an afterward that addresses charges of Dickens's fantastical mode, Bodenheimer muses, "Perhaps the perfect reader of Dickens would embrace both the disturbing and the self-comforting fantasies with equal humanity" (205). Bodenheimer achieves near perfection in this regard. Her portrait of the author lovingly portrays Dickens's endearing eccentricities (his penchant for walking twenty miles a day, his love of gaudily colored clothes, his unshakable belief in séances) alongside his hypocritical stances (his attitude

towards the fallen women he housed at Urania Cottage, his desertion of his wife, his emotional negligence of his children in his quest to write fictions of domestic harmony). The complex psychological portrait that Bodenheimer skillfully paints moves us towards a greater understanding of Dickens's writing genius by shattering myths of his infallibility.

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Joseph Bristow, ed., *Oscar Wilde and Modern Culture: The Making of a Legend*. Athens, Ohio: Ohio UP, 2008. pp. xlv + 448. \$59.95. By Nikolai Endres

After his release from prison, Oscar Wilde renounced his name and published as a number, C.3.3. He died ignominiously and impecuniously, in a shabby hotel, abandoned by his family, most of his friends, and all of respectable society. Soon thereafter, however, his fame climbed to such heights that people now kiss his tombstone in Père Lachaise Cemetery. And, of course, perhaps no one has benefited more from Oscar than the academic publishing industry. *Oscar Wilde and Modern Culture: The Making of a Legend* offers ample testimony to this timeless legend. Joseph Bristow has collected twelve highly original essays (with only two partial chapters having been published previously) that are interdisciplinary, wide ranging, and fascinating.

The volume begins with a Chronology, listing major achievements during Wilde's life, followed by seminal biographical and critical studies; his legacy in dance, film, music, and the stage; and important literary representations. The concluding bibliography focuses on Wilde's modernism, celebrity, and socialism/anarchism; reception in visual and literary culture; and his homosexuality, Irishness, and aestheticism.

Bristow's Introduction shows how Wilde's friends salvaged his reputation remarkably quickly; but because of infighting among them, no coherent idea of Oscar Wilde emerged—although a mythical one certainly did. Bristow quotes the poignant line from *The Critic as Artist*: "Every great man nowadays has his disciples, and it is always Judas who writes the biography." Bristow outlines Wilde's final years after his release from prison and his interactions with his faithful friends Robert Ross and Reggie Turner, the more dubious Frank Harris, the tempestuous Lord Douglas, fellow aesthete Max Beerbohm, and one of the first Wilde scholars, Christopher Sclater Millard (known as Stuart Mason).

Bristow also chronicles the convoluted history of *De Profundis* (which he interprets as transcending a specific addressee); the watershed represented by Richard Strauss' opera *Salome*; and biographies (some hostile, like André Gide's; some moralistic, and others outright forgeries, such as a memoir supposedly written in West Africa, an account by "Dorian Hope," or a Wildean masque discovered by the widow of a nephew to the King of Thailand—sporting a parrot on her shoulder). In light of the release of Wilde's fourteen-volume *Collected Works* in 1908 and rumors of Wilde sightings in the United States, we might well conclude that Wilde yet lives.

Lucy McDiarmid's "Oscar Wilde, Lady Gregory, and Late-Victorian Table-Talk" proposes that late Victorian political life was increasingly shaped by the more private, less official realm of aristocratic table-talk, where risky subjects could be broached without fear of public ramifications. Fellow Irish writer Lady Gregory and Wilde moved comfortably in upper-class society (as Wilde's comedies wittily disclose), but for Wilde, "table-talk was deliberately and usefully trivial" (57), individualistic, enthused, charismatic, domineering, untruthful, and hence ultimately corrupting. As is well known, Wilde charmed at his peril. Some of his most eager listeners, such as future Prime Minister Herbert Asquith and his wife Margaret Tennant, would turn against him after his conviction for gross indecency.

Daniel A. Novak's "Sexuality in the Age of Technological Reproducibility: Oscar Wilde, Photography, and Identity" looks at the famous pictures taken at Napoleon Sarony's studio in New York during Wilde's American lecture tour. Novak asks whether a photograph depicts a person or a personality, that is, whether a photograph is an original work of art. When Sarony sued the Burrow-Giles Lithographic Company for reproducing one of his portraits, the U.S. Supreme Court accepted the view that Sarony had produced Wilde as a photographic fiction. These questions of authenticity, legibility and posing would then resurface in Wilde's trials. With regard to *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, a title crucial to Novak's interest, "Wilde's representation of the homosexual body is photographic precisely in its abstraction and spectrality" (66), an individual pose but, paradoxically, one that can be reproduced infinitely.

Erin Williams Hyman's "Salomé as Bombshell, or How Oscar Wilde Became an Anarchist" turns to the neglected question of Wilde's involvement in politics (often seen as antithetical to the creed of *l'art pour l'art*). In France (Wilde's second home), aestheticism, symbolism, and decadence were clearly linked with anarchism, a libertarian way of

destabilizing state power, and some of Wilde's Parisian associates, especially Stuart Merrill and Marcel Schwob, were self-proclaimed anarchists. So when the anarchist Théâtre de l'Œuvre staged *Salomé* in 1896, it was not only a protest against British injustice and solidarity with Wilde, but also a celebration of subversive sexuality and libidinal freedom (ultimately crushed, for both Wilde and Salomé, by society's repressive forces).

Richard A. Kaye's "Oscar Wilde and the Politics of Posthumous Sainthood: Hofmannsthal, Mirbeau, Proust" turns to the confluence of homosexuality and martyrdom, made by Wilde himself in the figures of John Keats and St. Sebastian. To posterity, Wilde's trials were regarded as a ritualized death presaging his hagiography. Kaye finds that Wilde's omnipresence—ranging from Hugo von Hofmannsthal's "Sebastian Melmoth" to Gustave Mirbeau's oeuvre, and Marcel Proust's *Sodom et Gomorrhe* to Terry Eagleton's play *Saint Oscar*, the martyr role has exhausted itself: "As we enter a new century of Wilde-worship, we may want to entertain other fantasies to evoke Wilde's claim on our imagination" (130).

Yvonne Ivory's "The Trouble with Oskar: Wilde's Legacy for the Early Homosexual Rights Movement in Germany" notes that Wilde's works were widely available in translation, often by Hermann Freiherr von Teschenberg, a homophile campaigner (and notorious transvestite) for gay liberation pioneer Magnus Hirschfeld's Scientific-Humanitarian Committee, which was established in response to the Wilde trials. Yet Wilde's narcissism caused problems for his appropriation in the early homosexual rights movement. While Hirschfeld embraced Wilde, another group (often clashing with Hirschfeld over ideology), Adolf Brand's *Gemeinschaft der Eigenen*, rejected Wilde, although Wilde's philosophy of Platonic superior/chaste *eros* corresponded more closely to Brand than to Hirschfeld's interest in medical and legal discourses. This discussion, I find, is the highlight of the volume, filling a much neglected gap in the history of sexuality and opening new doors to Wilde's *Nachleben*.

Julie Townsend's "Staking Salomé: The Literary Forefathers and Choreographic Daughters of Oscar Wilde's 'Hysterical and Perverted Creature'" turns to the ancestry and legacy of Wilde's most notorious tragedy. Salomé negotiates various contested issues: "the supremacy of artistic power in the face of political and religious authoritarianism; the assertion of female agency in the face of patriarchal authority; and the unapologetic expression of sexual desire in the face of cultural taboo and injunction" (156). Townsend

then surveys nineteenth-century French literary precursors, Wilde's approximation of the dance medium by choosing drama rather than poetry or prose, and early twentieth-century choreographic challenges by the inventor of modern dance, Loïe Fuller of the Folies-Bergère, whose dances inspired the avant-garde artists Sergei Diaghilev and Ida Rubinstein.

Lizzie Thynne's "'Surely You Are Not Claiming to Be More Homosexual than I?'" Claude Cahun and Oscar Wilde" focuses on Claude Cahun, née Lucy Schwob, a lesbian surrealist, whose uncle, Maurice Schwob, was close friends with Wilde. As a journalist, Cahun reported on the notorious libel suit that dancer Maud Allen brought against MP Noel Pemberton Billing, who had published the offensive "The Cult of the Clitoris," contending that Allen's audience for *Salomé* consisted of "perverts." In her artistic career, Cahun (together with her partner Marcel Moore, pseudonym of Suzanne Malherbe) produced fiction, autobiography, and photographs mocking and mimicking Wilde's dandyish American aesthetic garb. Anticipating gender as performance and recalling Wilde, Cahun's portraits provide a mask rather than a mirror.

Laurel Brake's "Oscar Wilde's *An Ideal Husband* and W. Somerset Maugham's *The Constant Wife: A Dialogue*" switches from Wilde's ideal and fallen husbands, men with a past, male autonomy, and various political/erotic secrets to the question of sexual equality in marriage, where successful cohabitation requires compromise. Maugham is revolutionary in that a wife might actually benefit from an extra-marital affair, which goes well beyond claims made by "social purists," who exposed the hypocrisy of women being required to be chaste before marriage whereas men were allowed, maybe even encouraged, to experiment sexually before wedlock.

Leslie J. Moran's "Transcripts and Truth: Writing the Trials of Oscar Wilde" questions the authenticity of the transcripts/facts of Wilde's trials. The anonymous and privately circulated *The Trials of Oscar Wilde from the Shorthand Reports* (1906), Stuart Mason's *Oscar Wilde: Three Times Tried* (1912), and H. Montgomery Hyde's edition of 1948 (revised and enlarged 1962) all claim authenticity, as does Merlin Holland's *Irish Peacock and Scarlet Marquess: The Real Trials of Oscar Wilde* (2003), although it sometimes disagrees substantially with Hyde. Most films about Wilde prominently feature courtroom scenes. In 1960, two eminent productions, Gregory Ratoff's *Oscar Wilde* (starring Robert Morley) and Ken Hughes' *Trials of Oscar Wilde (The Man with the Green Carnation in the US, starring Peter Finch)*, fought furiously to come out first, which led to another Wilde trial. At issue in *Warwick Film Productions Ltd. v. Eisinger* was who held

the copyright to the 1895 transcripts, and whether Hyde's book was fact or fiction (the court found it to be a literary work). As serious Wilde scholars know by now, most "transcripts" of the trials are actually based on newspaper reports, heavily edited and, to varying degrees, censored. Even Holland's recent contribution, Moran (a legal scholar) demonstrates, underwent a rigorous editing process and fails to adhere to the standard of truth.

Francesca Coppa's "The Artist as Protagonist: Wilde on Stage" presents path-breaking representations of Wilde (all of which tell us more about the individual artist's time than Wilde's time, Coppa claims). Coppa's discussion includes Gilbert and Sullivan's *Patience*, Forster's *Maurice*, Stokes's 1936 drama, John Gay's *Diversions and Delights*, Moisés Kaufmann's *Gross Indecency*, Stoppard's *The Invention of Love*, and Neill Bartlett's *In Extremis*. Coppa concludes that despite a certain Wilde fatigue, Oscar will continue to grip our hungry minds: "we have not yet had an Oscar Wilde for the post-post Stonewall, *Queer as Folk* generation, and today's well-heeled metrosexuals might well take Bosie rather than Oscar as their patron saint" (280).

Matt Cook's "Wilde Lives: Derek Jarman and the Queer Eighties" engages with Jarman's constraints as a filmmaker during the homophobic Thatcher years, when local governments were prohibited from "promoting" homosexuality (thus rendering it unspeakable) and the advent of HIV generated constraints similar to those constricting Wilde. In their coping mechanisms to, respectively, the New Right/AIDS and legal crackdowns/solitary confinement, both linked "sexual dissidence with temporal subversion and with a valuation of the sensual moment rather than a progressive life story" (291). They also created a distinctly "gay" aesthetics of lush gardens, where queer desire flourishes lavishly, superbly analyzed in Neil Bartlett's seminal *Who Was That Man? A Present for Mr. Oscar Wilde* (1988).

Oliver S. Buckton's "Oscar Goes to Hollywood: Wilde, Sexuality, and the Gaze of Contemporary Cinema" considers two recent mainstream movies: Brian Gilbert's *Wilde* (1997) and Oliver Parker's *The Importance of Being Earnest* (2002). The former takes homosexuality as Wilde's identity, yet also shows him as a loving family man, which Buckton dismisses as incoherent (I'd rather call it a record of Victorian hypocrisy). The latter, on the other hand, erases homoerotic desire altogether, showing Jack Worthing and Algernon Moncrieff consorting with rather tawdry showgirls: "there is an uneasy and at times covert collusion between the gaze of the modern cinema and the panoptic, punitive gaze of Victorian law and society that sought to imprison Wilde within the grid of sexual

perversion" (305). In their complementarity, however, both movies bring out Wilde's elusive reputation: Protean, intractable, wild(e), constructionist, essentialist, and endlessly fascinating.

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Maureen M. Martin, *The Mighty Scot: Nation, Gender, and the Nineteenth-Century Mystique of Scottish Masculinity*. Albany: SUNY P, 2009. pp. xii + 206. \$23.95 / \$71.50.  
By Brooke McLaughlin Mitchell

Both gender and nation are constructed entities, and Maureen M. Martin's volume uses their intersection as the focus of her text, which is part of the SUNY series *Studies in the Long Nineteenth Century*. Martin recognizes that Scotland inhabits a strange place. It is a nation without nationhood, one whose narrative is the distilled myth of the Highlander. This mighty figure stands, even now, as the symbolic figure of Scotland; however, this familiar form is problematic in its rejection of both Scotland's position as part of Great Britain and the contribution of the Lowlands to all parts of Scottish life.

Chapters one and two address the English appropriation of the Highlander to develop and express English masculinity. Scotland's relationship to England is different than that of any other imperial holding. Because of geographical proximity and racial homogeneity, Scotland serves as both member of the Empire and Other, an entity to be both embraced and controlled. Chapter one, "The Jacobite, the Marriage Plot, and the End of Scottish History," investigates how Scotland and the Scot has been contained within the marriage plot, most radically represented through the Act of Union of 1707. In this plot Scotland is the figure of subdued masculinity partnered to the strong and benevolent female figure of England, a depiction rooted in the historic references to the female Britannia and the contemporary figure of Queen Victoria.

Martin first references Millais' *The Order of Release 1746*, a painting that was displayed at the Royal Academy and that met with popular success—due not only to the beauty and emotion of the painting but to its re-enactment of the containment of Scotland. Marked by his kilt, the male is clearly a paradoxical depiction of Scotland, representing both the defeated Highlander after Culloden and the valourous Highland soldier contemporary to the painting's first exhibit. He leans heavily against his wife, who bears no

markings of Scottish identity, allowing her to serve as the symbolic representation of the strong and kind mother figure. From the painting, Martin turns to Scott's 1824 novel *Redgauntlet*, which contains a homoerotic variation of the marriage plot. Darsie, who is half English and half Scottish, identifies himself as an Englishman in spite of having lived in Edinburgh since the age of six. Martin argues that Darsie's contact with Redgauntlet is necessary in order for him to develop the masculine qualities that he must incorporate into his persona as English gentleman. Redgauntlet's position as Jacobite provides him with the wildness necessary for such influence, and his position as Darsie's uncle provides him with the necessary proximity to shape him. The subordinate, feminine role that Darsie accepts will eventually allow him to transition into a whole man as he returns to his genteel life.

Chapter two, "Stags and Sassenachs," examines how nineteenth-century representations of deerstalking further manifest the gendering of both Scotland and England. Martin asserts that deerstalking allowed Englishmen who lived largely contained—or "feminized"—lives the capability to not only assert and develop their masculinity but to do so in a way that re-enacted, like the representation of Millais' painting, the domination of Scotland by England. Martin moves beyond merely documenting Prince Albert's love of the sport to analysis of the ideological ramifications of both its popularity and the English accounts of it. In these narratives, Scotland is like the great stag himself, a beast to be honored yet ultimately contained. This chapter most strongly showcases Martin's use of a variety of sources. Here, she relies on several well known documents, including Landseer's famous and widely reproduced *The Monarch of the Glen*, Queen Victoria's *Leaves of Our Time in the Highlands*, and Arthur Clough's *The Bothie of Tober-na-vuolich*; she also references texts that may be obscure even to many scholars, such as unpublished deerstalking accounts and John Leech's cartoon representations of the activity that appeared in *Punch's Almanac*.

Chapters three and four, which both treat texts by Stevenson, turn away from England to examine the representation of Lowland engagement as a myth of the masculine ideal. Martin asserts that the complex issue of Scottish masculinity is the central problem of Scottish national identity. The romantic myth of the primal Highland male rejects the significant contributions made by Lowlanders to Scottish culture, particularly in the areas of intellectual, political and industrial life. Martin argues that because Lowlanders have been left out of the Highland narrative of national identity, Lowland men then seek to reassert their voice by mimicking the appropriation and containment that Englishmen have enacted

in the northern region. However, this authority breaks down because there is no great event that gives them this authority, such as the Act of Union.

In "The Lad with the Silver Button," Martin asserts that *Kidnapped*, through its mix of Lowland and Highland characters, reflects the fragmentation of Scotland that warring masculinities have caused. The Lowlander David Balfour faces both representations of masculinity; Alan Breck is everything that one of Scott's Highlanders would be, including Jacobite and powerful, while Rankeillor represents the urbanity associated with the Lowlander. Ultimately, David must choose which identity that he will embrace. According to Martin, each of these traditions contains threats. If David were to choose to identify himself with the Highlander, he would be rejecting his previous identity. Also, the powerful masculinity of Alan is threatening because David is in fact subordinate to him; David is either positioned as a dependent female or as an adolescent who is never allowed to develop into an adult. However, on the other hand, David's ultimate identification with Rankeillor also asks that he reject the self that came to life in the Highlands. According to Martin, this lack of integration reveals much about the national narrative, particularly in light of the boy's adventure story. This genre typically had a triumphant ending, but Stevenson subverts this: David makes a choice, but it is not a clear one, and the question of identity is not resolved.

In chapter four, "Crimes of Authorship: *The Master of Ballantrae* and the Telling of the National Tale," Martin moves from the boy's adventure story of *Kidnapped* to the gothic tale of Stevenson's last novel. However, the same paradigm holds true: the conception of masculinity is equivalent to the conception of the national narrative. Also, like *Kidnapped*, *The Master of Ballantrae* provides no easy answers to the question of national identity; instead, it leaves this question at the open grave of two brothers who represent the dueling versions of manliness, conveying that neither choice is acceptable and that each of them must be rejected. In particular, this text emphasizes the narrative problems embedded within the national identity crisis. While the novel's narrator, Mackeller, claims to be unbiased, in fact he cannot record the story without prejudice. His bias against James, which is rooted both in his own attraction to him and in James' actions against his own brother, is clearly revealed. In the construction of the national tale, Martin links this to the role of Scottish authors themselves, who shape it just as powerfully as any other force. In order for this nation to survive, the national tale must be told, even while the whole, true telling of it is impossible.

Martin's final chapter, "Into the Hands of Women: *The Wizard's Son*, the Glasgow Style, and the Return of the Feminine," examines the re-assessment of Highland masculinity's role in the national narrative. Here, Martin argues that in the late-nineteenth century, some authors and artists turn away from masculinity's ability to solve the problem of Scottish identity; instead, they look to the feminine. This change is somewhat paradoxical because it is influenced by an earlier time, as is the masculine ideal; yet, the ancient Celtic tradition to which it refers is so distant that it allows the narrative to become current and escape the stultifying past. Martin's treatment of Oliphant's novel *The Wizard's Son* highlights the shift into recognizing feminine authority as a way to engage in modern life. The island setting allows Oliphant to create a microcosm of Scottish experience where people of different classes and geographical origins are able to live together, creating a community built on respect and affection rather than on machinations for power that are associated with patriarchal communities. The wizard of the title represents the power structure that must be rejected, and his son Walter does this through his recognition of the wisdom and power of Oona. Martin argues that, ultimately, Walter comes into his own authority when he moves from being dependent on Oona to truly internalizing her power; in other words, Walter must become more feminine rather than more masculine, a move that is in direct opposition to the earlier narratives that Martin discusses.

Martin also sees this elevation of the feminine in the work of the Glasgow Style artists, although where Oliphant's depiction of femininity remains chaste, the Glasgow Style artists present a sensual and eroticized version. Also, like Oliphant, the Glasgow Style is strongly influenced by a Celtic tradition that is liberating rather than suffocating. The highly stylized figures reflected industrial and European influences, and these artists worked in unusual mediums such as architecture, interiors, and objects for use in the home. However, this turn to the feminine is brief; Martin notes that by World War I, the Highland male returns to the prominent place in the representation of Scotland, both within her borders and outside of them. According to Martin, this is caused by multiple factors. As industrial Glasgow wanes late in the Victorian period and political tensions with Germany make all things connected to it undesirable, the Glasgow Style falls out of prominence.

While the volume is generally strong, there are a few small weaknesses in the text. For example, at times organization is somewhat confusing. Martin makes references to the feminization of Scotland before she has explained what this means, and she begins the first chapter with reference to the 1853 painting by Millais before turning to the 1824 novel by

Scott. Also, the discussions of homosocial or homosexual issues that are included in the first four chapters are somewhat disjointed from the rest of their larger sections; while the information is pertinent and the analysis is insightful, the incorporations are abrupt. However, none of these issues significantly detracts from the text as a whole.

Overall, Martin's work is a sound contribution to Nineteenth-Century Studies in general and Scottish Studies in particular. Her research draws on important scholars of both Gender and Scottish Studies, and she adds to the conversation in the discipline. Also, the size of the volume is deceptive; although it is relatively small, Martin's coverage of the topic is excellent. The representative nature of her texts provides a viable foundation for her argument, and her readers will be able to apply her ideas to other works of the period. In fact, the scope of this volume offers an excellent framework for a course on the subject. She speaks both to the generalist who wishes to know more about Scottish literature and nineteenth-century England and to the specialist who could gain yet more particular knowledge. While the former benefits through Martin's analysis of widely recognized authors and visual artists of the period, the latter does so through her introduction of lesser or unknown texts. Ultimately, this is a vibrant, thought-provoking text that has much to offer to the discipline and that will benefit individuals with varied interests.

## Books Received

Banks, Stephen, ed. *Garvani in London: Sketches of Life and Character, with Illustrative Essays by Popular Writers*. Lambertville, NJ: The True Bill Press, 2009.

*Garvani in London* was originally published in 1849, edited by Albert Smith and illustrated by Paul Garvani. This new edition, annotated and introduced by Stephen Banks, reprints a "collection of essays from a dozen of Victorian England's most popular literary...flaneurs...[T]hese essays were intended to be ironic, occasionally tragic, but predominately witty and always artful in their observations of life in the then contemporary London."

Bodenheimer, Rosemarie. *Knowing Dickens*. Ithaca and London: Cornell UP, 2007. Reviewed in this volume.

Bristow, Joseph, ed. *Oscar Wilde and Modern Culture: The Making of a Legend*. Athens, Ohio: Ohio UP, 2008. Reviewed in this volume.

Bushell, Sally. *Text as Process. Creative Composition in Wordsworth, Tennyson, and Dickinson*. Charlottesville and London: U Virginia P, 2009.

"Bushell's aim...is to develop a research method for the study of compositional material. Although she draws on an international context—mainly French and German traditions—for current approaches to textual criticism, hers is the first book to apply a new form of critical analysis to authors in the Anglo-American tradition."

Cheshire, Jim, editor. *Tennyson Transformed. Alfred Lord Tennyson and Visual Culture*. Surrey and Burlington, VT: Lund Humphries, 2009.

"*Tennyson Transformed* explores how the life and work of the great Victorian Poet Laureate was interpreted by artists, illustrators, photographers and other creative practitioners. This book evaluates several strands of Tennyson's influence on Victorian visual culture, and sheds new light on this crucial aspect of his influence."

Engelhardt, Molly. *Dancing out of Line: Ballrooms, Ballets, and Mobility in Victorian Fiction and Culture*. Athens: Ohio UP, 2009.

Engelhardt "transports readers back to the 1840s, when the craze for social and stage dancing forced Victorians into a complex relationship with the moving body in its most voluble, volatile form...Engelhardt makes explicit many of the ironies underlying Victorian practices that up to this time have gone unnoticed in critical circles."

Fergusson, Sir James. *The Personal Observations of a Man of Intelligence: Notes of a Tour in North America in 1861*. Lambertville, NJ: The True Bill Press, 2009.

In 1861, Sir James Fergusson and Robert Bourke toured Canada and the United States, “entertained by political and military leaders on both sides of the Civil War.” Their objectives were “to assess the state of Canadian military preparedness and will to withstand what many feared to be possible invasion by Union forces. The second was to evaluate the condition and readiness of both Union and Confederate armies and to forecast the eventual outcome of the conflict...There is no evidence that they were acting in any official capacity.”

Freeman, Mark and Gillian Nelson, eds. *Vicarious Vagrants: Incognito Social Explorers and the Homeless in England, 1860-1910*. Lambertville, NJ: The True Bill Press, 2008.

“The period covered by this book was the heyday of the incognito social explorer. Many...travelled in disguise among the poor in England and published lively accounts of their experiences,” primarily about the homeless and vagrant. First-person accounts included in this book include visits to work-houses and “casual ward systems,” vagrancy, and homeless relief. “The distinction between ‘deserving’ and ‘undeserving’ [poor] is pervasive in the texts reprinted in this book, and the editors trace the long history of the distinction, as well as the specific policy proposals of the late Victorian and Edwardian era.”

Gray, Erik. *Milton and the Victorians*. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 2009.

“The Victorian period was a golden age for the study of Milton. Yet the influence of Milton on poetry, and on literature more generally, during the period is often obscure....Gray argues that...if Milton’s influence seems less remarkable than before, it is due not to his absence but to his pervasiveness.”

Hyman, Gwen. *Making a Man. Gentlemanly Appetites in the Nineteenth-Century British Novel*. Athens: Ohio UP, 2009.

“Gruel and truffles, wine and gin, opium and cocaine. *Making a Man*...addresses the role of food, drink, and drugs in the conspicuously consuming nineteenth century in order to explore the question of what...makes a man in novels of the period.”

Kaufman, Heidi. *English Origins, Jewish Discourse, and the Nineteenth-Century British Novel*. University Park: Penn State UP, 2009.

“Kaufman argues that the proliferation of Jewish discourse in nineteenth-century British novels was linked to the construction of English character and English origins....[This] marks a turning point in definitions of English national identity, not only because of a rise in modern racial thinking, but also because of the contradictory dimensions of Englishness that called out for resolution in novels.”

Kuper, Adam. *Incest & Influence: The Private Life of Bourgeois England*. Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard UP, 2009.

“Like many gentlemen of his time, Charles Darwin married his first cousin....Marriages between close relatives were commonplace in nineteenth-century England, and Adam Kuper argues that they played a crucial role in the rise of the bourgeoisie...in finance and industry, in local and national politics, in the church, and in intellectual life.”

MacKay, Carol, ed. *Autobiographical Sketches: Annie Besant*. Toronto, Ontario: Broadview Press, 2009.

“This Broadview Edition includes comparative passages from *An Autobiography*, written in 1893 after Besant’s conversion to Theosophy. Contemporary reviews, excerpts from publications about issues such as Socialism and trade unionism, and additional examples of Besant’s writing about secularism and labour reform are also included.”

Martin, Maureen M. *The Mighty Scot: Nation, Gender, and the Nineteenth-Century Mystique of Scottish Masculinity*. Albany: SUNY P, 2009. Reviewed in this volume.

Miller, Stephen. *The Peculiar Life of Sundays*. Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard UP, 2008.

“Sunday observance in the Christian West was an important religious issue from late antiquity until at least the early twentieth century....Miller explores the fascinating history of the Sabbath...[paying] particular attention to the Sunday lives of a number of prominent British and American writers—and what they have had to say about Sunday.”

Ofek, Galia. *Representations of Hair in Victorian Literature and Culture*. Surrey and Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing, 2009.

This “wide-ranging study elucidates the historical, artistic, literary, and theoretical meanings of the Victorians’ preoccupation with hair....[Victorians] had a well-developed awareness of fetishism as an overinvestment of value in a specific body part and were fully cognizant of hair’s symbolic resonance and its value as an object of commerce.”

Peterson, Linda. *Becoming a Woman of Letters. Myths of Authorship and Facts of the Victorian Market*. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton UP, 2009.

“During the nineteenth century, women authors...achieved professional status, secure income, and public fame. How did these women enter the literary profession, meet the demands of editors, publishers, booksellers, and reviewers, and achieve distinction as “women of letters”? Exploring the burgeoning print culture and the rise of new genres available to Victorian women authors, this book provides a comprehensive account of the flowering of literary professionalism in the nineteenth century.”



Plotz, John. *Portable Property: Victorian Culture on the Move*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 2008. Reviewed in this volume.

Rudy, Jason R. *Electric Meters. Victorian Physiological Poetics*. Athens: Ohio UP, 2009.

“Victorian poetry shocks with the physicality of its formal effects, linking the rhythms of the human body to the natural pulsation of the universe....Rudy connects formal poetic innovations to developments in the electrical and physiological sciences, arguing that the electrical sciences and bodily poetics came together with special force in the years between the 1830s...and the 1870s.”

Shires, Linda. *Perspectives. Modes of Viewing and Knowing in Nineteenth-Century England*. Columbus: Ohio State UP, 2009.

“*Perspectives* takes a fresh look at questions of perception and point of view in a variety of early- and mid-Victorian verbal and visual texts....[It] is not a study of poetry alone but an ambitious look at a variety of Victorian genres, including painting and photography, all from the point of view of...perspective.”

Simpson, Antony, ed. *The Maiden Tribute of Modern Babylon by W. T. Stead*. Lambertville, NJ: The True Bill Press, 2007.

“The persistence of organized prostitution reflected one of the less savory aspects of Victorian life....public opinion became less tolerant of the crime and disorder generally associated with a flourishing and highly visible *demi-monde*.” Support for a reform-bill raising the age-of-consent “was energized by a sensational report, serialized in the daily *Pall Mall Gazette* in 1885, documenting the complexity and reach of organized prostitution as an industry and its reliance on sophisticated techniques for the entrapment of young girls.”

Simpson, Antony, ed. *Witnesses to the Scaffold: English Literary Figures as Observers of Public Executions*. Lambertville, NJ: The True Bill Press, 2008.

“[E]xecutions were public spectacles as late as 1868. They were also commonly regarded as scenes of disorder, crime, and drunkenness. The crowds in attendance were immense, especially from the 1840s when a sophisticated railway system” facilitated the gathering of large crowds. This book addresses the following question: “How could this barbaric system of punishment have coexisted with the rapid emergence of a system of penal law and the strength of popular, though, minority, opinion which was against the whole concept of capital punishment?”

## Contributors

Thomas Bragg (Ph.D. University of Florida, 2009) is a Victorian scholar whose academic interests emphasize genre fiction, including mysteries, the historical novel, and horror and ghost fiction, along with Sherlock Holmes and detective fiction. Currently, Professor Bragg serves as adjunct lecturer at University of Florida. New and forthcoming work includes an article on supernatural knowledge in Scott's Waverley Novels.

Karen Laird is a Ph.D. candidate in English at the University of Missouri, where she teaches courses in British literature and film. Her dissertation, “Melodrama's Afterlife: *Jane Eyre*, *David Copperfield*, and *The Woman in White* from the Victorian Stage to the Silent Screen,” investigates the early adaptation history of three popular Victorian novels. She is particularly interested in intersections between authors' lives and works and is currently researching the commemorative dramatizations of *David Copperfield* that were staged following Charles Dickens' death.

Jessica Kuskey is a Ph.D. Candidate in the English Department at Syracuse University, specializing in Victorian literature and culture. Her latest project, an essay titled “Bodily Beauty, Socialist Evolution, and William Morris's *News from Nowhere*,” is forthcoming in *Nineteenth-Century Prose* (Winter 2009). She is currently working on a dissertation which will consider class and the body in Victorian fiction, science, and economics.

Stanwood S. Walker spent the past several years teaching at schools in the New York City area, most recently Drew University. His previous publications have examined the work of Walter Scott, John Gibson Lockhart, Charles Kingsley, and Joseph Conrad. He is currently finishing a book-length project on the nineteenth-century classical-historical novel.

Brooke McLaughlin Mitchell is an Associate Professor of English at Wingate University. Her work deals primarily with representations of trauma in literature, particularly in the novels of Scotland and of Victorian Britain. She is currently working on projects on the Highland Clearances and Anne Bronte's *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*.

D.M.R. Bentley is Distinguished University Professor and Carl F. Klinck Professor in Canadian Literature at The University of Western Ontario. Among his recent and forthcoming publications are “Pre-Raphaelite Typology” (*University of Toronto Quarterly*, 2009), “‘Polysemos, hoc Est Plurium Sensum’: Dante Gabriel Rossetti's Paintings of Jane Morris” (*Journal of Pre-Raphaelite Studies*, 2009), “The Post-Confederation Period: Poetry” (*Cambridge History of Canadian Literature*), and *Canadian Architexts: Essays on Literature and Architecture in Canada, 1759-2006*.

Nikolai Endres is associate professor of world literature at Western Kentucky University. He has published on Plato, Ovid, Petronius, Gustave Flaubert, Walter Pater, Oscar Wilde, E. M. Forster, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Mary Renault, Gore Vidal, and Patricia Nell Warren. His next project is a “queer” reading of the myth and music of Richard Wagner.

Mary Husemann earned her Ph.D. at the University of South Carolina. She is currently an assistant professor at Black Hills State University, where she teaches courses in British literature, composition, and philosophy. Her primary research field is Scottish—particularly Victorian—literature. Her future research projects include a study of nationalist sentiment in W.E. Aytoun's *Lays of the Scottish Cavaliers*.

## *Announcements*

**UPSTAGE**, a new peer-reviewed online publication dedicated to research in turn-of-the-century theatre and theatrical culture, seeks submissions for its inaugural issue scheduled for the spring of 2010. This is a development of the pages published under this name as part of THE OSCHOLARS, and will henceforth be an independently edited journal in the oscholars group published at [www.oscholars.com](http://www.oscholars.com), as part of our expanding coverage of the different cultural manifestations of the *fin de siècle*.

Topics may include, but are not limited to, the work of Granville Barker, Sudermann, Schnitzler, Ibsen, Strindberg, Bang, Wedekind, von Hofmannsthal, Hauptmann, Jarry, Clyde Fitch-Bernhardt, Duse, Mrs. Pat, Réjane-Grein, Antoine, Paul Fort, Meyerfeld. UPSTAGE welcomes a variety of theoretical and critical methodologies and invites scholarly articles of approx. 3000 words; book-views of approx. 500 words; reports on work in progress (book manuscripts and doctoral dissertations, approx. 500-1000 words); reviews of contemporary productions of turn-of-the-century plays (or plays about the turn of the nineteenth century); and announcements of future productions (approx. 500 words). The publication is international in scope. Although we will publish in English initially, we hope to include publications in other languages in the future.

By December 15<sup>th</sup>, 2009, please e-mail your submissions, as MS Word attachments only, to both Dr. Helena Gurfinkel, Department of English Language and Literature, Southern Illinois University Edwardsville, Edwardsville, IL, USA at [hgurfin@siue.edu](mailto:hgurfin@siue.edu) and Dr. Michelle C. Paull, Drama Programme, St. Mary's University College, Strawberry Hill, Twickenham, TW1, 4SX, England, at [paullm@smuc.ac.uk](mailto:paullm@smuc.ac.uk).

In order to undergo masked peer-review, scholarly articles must be submitted in the following way: the author's contact information and brief bio should appear in the body of the e-mail, while the Word attachment should contain no identifying information.

# Victorians Institute Journal

**New Editor:** Ellen Bayuk Rosenman

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