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Greetings from the Editor

Victorians Journal of Culture and Literature, Fall 2013 offers an exciting collection of articles, each one unique and each discussion leading compellingly into the next. “George Eliot’s ‘strange printing’: Exegesis, Community, and *Daniel Deronda*” by Michael Toogood investigates the relationship between Victorian secular humanism and the era’s book culture. *Daniel Deronda*’s singular formatting and “anecdotal” structure challenge expectations of novelistic linear narrative, instead facilitating an “exegetical” reading highlighting its “Biblical resonances.” Engaging Daniel’s concern with his religious heritage, Toogood revisits F.R. Leavis’ dismissive proclamation that *Daniel Deronda* is a divided novel with an unfortunate “Jewish half,” further hobbled by a thwarted romance plot, revealing that alternative reading strategies are in order.

Eva Chen’s “Dobbin’s Corduroys: Sartorial Display and Modes of Masculinities in *Vanity Fair*” examines Thackeray’s critiques of Victorian masculinity through men’s clothing styles. Posed against Jos Sedley’s ludicrous “sartorial vanity” is an evolving type of masculinity defined as “morally virtuous but distinctly unfashionable,” represented by the hapless Major Dobbin and his ill-fitting corduroys. In terms of “natural” or instinctive gentlemanliness, Chen’s discussion reveals that the new emphasis on “moral integrity and indifference to clothes” is itself a construction dependent on appearances. Victorian men’s rejection of dandiacal superficiality is part of the institutionalization of a bourgeois dress-code, the now-ubiquitous three-piece suit representing a standard “technology of self-fashioning.”

Peter Brier’s “Matthew Arnold and the Talmud Man” further investigates the Jewish Question through the lens of Talmud scholar Emanuel Deutsch, who influenced not only George Eliot’s *Daniel Deronda* but Arnold’s intellectual exploration of Hellenism and Hebraism. Arnold too urged a greater correspondence between exegetical and linear narratives, claiming that a self-empowering corrective to religious doubt is to read the bible critically, as literature, replacing dogma and superstition with the pursuit of righteousness and moral conduct. Such a reading, as modeled in the Talmud, is itself a “criticism of life,” privileging the exercise of “literary taste” over “indiscriminate literalizing.” Brier’s analysis illuminates the ways Deutsch’s challenge to British attitudes toward Jews and Judaism influenced Arnold’s critical synthesis of morality and culture in an era marked by doubt.

Alison Chapman’s “Robert Browning and the *Keepsake*: Memory, Memorialization, and the Future of Poetry” investigates the poet’s uncharacteristic contribution of two poems to *The Keepsake* annual—uncharacteristic because it suggests “his deep engagement with popular print culture and poetics” despite his critiques of periodical poetry. Annuals enjoyed a prominent position in print and commodity cultures from the 1820s to the 1850s, after which they were generally regarded “old-fashioned” and “aesthetically debased.” In an era marked by radical shifts in publishing culture, literacy levels, and a literary market aimed at affordability, Browning’s contributions signal the end of one literary era and the birth of the new.

Anastassiya Andrianova’s “‘fear them which kill the soul’: Marie Corelli’s Manifesto against Positivist Education” analyzes *The Mighty Atom* in the context of education debates. Corelli’s critique condemns education influenced by the philosophy of empiricism and the logic of positivism; pedagogically, empiricism “entailed a materialist ontology, a positivist espousal of the universality of the scientific method, and a largely secular, atheist

standpoint." As an alternative, Corelli offers a broad notion of religion, outside of institutionalized Christianity and grounded in the natural world. The novel contests the era's reigning scientific optimism by foregrounding its ethical, moral, and existential implications on human lives.

Victorians Journal is most grateful to these authors for the insights here contributed to Victorian studies. Many thanks to administrative assistant, Laura Wagoner; to editorial assistant Rachel Thomas; and to Carmen Herrera for her work on the cover art. For generous support, we thank Rob Hale, English Department Head; and David Lee, Potter College Dean.

Bowling Green, Kentucky

George Eliot's "strange printing": Exegesis, Community, and *Daniel Deronda*

by Michael Toogood

My books...are deliberately, carefully constructed on a basis which even in my doubting mind is never shaken by a doubt....[T]he inspiring principle which alone gives me courage to write is, that of so presenting our human life as to help my readers in getting a clearer conception and a more active admiration of those vital elements which bind men together. (*Letters* 4: 472)

Her books are more...like Bibles than books of mere amusement; and they have been treated and read with a reverence that was perhaps never before accorded to any works of fiction.—W. H. Mallock

George Eliot's *oeuvres* have been characterized as contemporizing the Judeo-Christian tradition. Not only have some of Eliot's best critics spent a considerable amount of time pouring over the author's letters and journals in an attempt better to understand the relationship between her quiet atheism and enthusiastic fiction, but much of the original, popular excitement over her texts is rooted in the author's evident concern for a "religion of humanity."¹ According to biographer Kathryn Hughes,

¹ See Bernard J. Paris, "George Eliot's Religion of Humanity." *ELH* 29.4 (1962): 418-43.

fan letters came to Eliot from “all over the world...bearing testimony to the way in which she had helped people lead moral lives. Feckless young men swore they had given up their foolish ways and wives said they had tried to love their husbands better” (303). To discuss Eliot in any context—past or present, critical or popular—necessarily requires discussing the relationship between the Victorian imperative for secular humanism and the culture of the book in the nineteenth century.

The humanistic root of Eliot’s fiction loses none of its fervor in her final novel, *Daniel Deronda*, a work that faltered with critics and average readers alike because of its “Jewish part” and because of Eliot’s narrative experimentation—most notably her decision to “thwart” a traditional marriage plot.² But the dual stories of Daniel and Gwendolen Harleth are still narratives that present “men and...women seeking texts by which to live, [seeking] sources, in historical and cultural memory that would sustain the private life and allow one to be part of a moral community” (Qualls 121-22). In order to expand our sense of how “faithful” readers assessed their relationship to this author’s call for “moral communities,” I consider *Deronda*’s original material profile in conjunction with its equivocal initial reception. The novel’s formatting—its series of titles, subtitles, chapters, books, and volumes—and its notably anecdotal narrative form facilitate “exegetical” reading that is not simply continuous but episodic and ongoing. In turn, *Daniel Deronda* was not simply “treated and read” like a Bible in some general way in the nineteenth century: it fosters a deliberate comparison between itself and the King James Bible. Paying close attention to *Deronda*’s original volumes can help concretize this work’s Biblical resonances, clarifying how it re-imagines the novel genre as something other than a linear narrative—one that attempts to resist a world of diffuse and disposable reading.

² Anti-semitism was common in Victorian society. On the “bad part” of *Daniel Deronda*, see F. R. Leavis, *The Great Tradition*. London: Chatto and Windus, 1948.

Such a perspective partially explains the apparent “disunity” that has been a frequent critical deprecation of *Deronda*. When placed in a Biblical framework that includes Eliot’s typography, the novel’s coherence appears to rely less on any totalizing interpretation of its narrative than on an understanding of its socio-cultural functionality—its ability to “bind men together” and generate communities of consolidated, dedicated readers. *Deronda* makes its many formal innovations legible as part of the novelist’s humanist project by placing them in a bibliographic profile encouraging the practice of communal reading. It does so at a time when serialization and mass-production began to shift the nature of book culture towards impermanency and expendability, suggesting that *Deronda*’s formatting fosters a community whose primary source of indivisibility and interconnection is not a unified text but a set of unifying reading practices.

The Formatting

The eminence, the nobleness of a people, depends on its capability of being stirred by memories, and of striving for what we call spiritual ends—ends which consist not in immediate material possession, but in the satisfaction of a great feeling that animates the collective body as with one soul.—*Impressions of Theophrastus Such*

The formatting of *Daniel Deronda*’s original four volumes makes its structure particularly conspicuous. Not only are volume, book, and chapter numbers printed at the top of each page, but a series of title pages underscores the intricate configuration of the novel as originally printed in 1876. Each volume begins with a page featuring only the work’s title, centered and in capitals, followed by a page with the novel’s leading epigraph; then, a title page with title, author, volume number, and publication information, followed in turn by another page offering the title for

a third time and including the book number and appropriate subtitle. The first page of the actual text reiterates the book number and subtitle before giving the chapter number (see Figs. 1-5). Such careful denominating does more than reiterate the organization of the work: it emphasizes the many subdivisions shaping the text; for example, Book VII, "The Mother and the Son," is its own unit that shares another larger unit (Volume IV) with "Fruit and Seed."³

Such repetition may seem over-determined, but consider Eliot's formatting in relation to those of her contemporaries. Trollope does title most of the individual chapters in his *Barsetshire* and *Palliser* series, but he does not collect chapters into larger thematic or ideological units. Dickens assigns titles to different chapters in certain novels—*David Copperfield*, for instance; but none of his texts title their different books or volumes. Thackeray makes no such distinction and neither do the Brontë sisters. Thomas Hardy's *Jude the Obscure* lists six parts, but it uses a geographically-linked chronological system distinct from *Deronda's* structure. Eliot's eight book-titles present autonomous formal units: "The Mother and the Son" is part of Daniel's larger spiritual quest, for example, but is its own story about the reunion of the eponymous hero with his mother, Princess Halm Eberstein. Unlike the formatting of most of her contemporaries, Eliot's titles and subtitles invite readers to think of *Deronda* as more than a linear narrative.

Wholistically, *Daniel Deronda* conforms to standard expectations of the novel genre;⁴ each unit participates in the larger

³ This kind of subdividing and titling is comparatively unique, as is the close relationship between Eliot and John Blackwood, documented in their lengthy correspondence. It signals an asequential principle at the root of Eliot's fiction that needed all the typographic indication the author could muster.

⁴ To Blackwood, Eliot wrote: "Unless my readers are more moved towards the ends I seek by my works as wholes than by an assemblage of extracts, my writings are a mistake" (5:458-59). She "meant everything in [*Deronda*] to be related to everything else there" (6:290).

narrative paralleling the moral quests of Daniel and Gwendolen. But the novel's units are also more than a sequence of well-plotted parts. Typographically, Eliot's headings and title pages also present a collection of unique pieces that come together and relate in more complicated ways. Not only do individual incidents invite comparisons between Deronda's story and Gwendolen's, but books relate to books, like "Maidens Choosing" and "Gwendolen gets her Choice." The leading epigraph Eliot places at the beginning of each volume also gives these parts a certain amount of individuation and interchangeability. One contemporary reviewer asserted that, as parts of a novel comprised of "prominent incidents...surrounded...with all the interest of a puzzle," *Deronda's* divisions encourage separate and intricately collective consideration ("*Daniel Deronda*" n.p.).

Eliot's typography may seem foreign in the context of nineteenth-century novels, but it was very familiar to readers of the King James Bible (KJB), an anthology of letters, narratives, and psalms that was simply "everywhere":

Births, marriages, and deaths were entered in specially designed pages in the larger family Bibles, sometimes together with photographs, making the KJB the most personalized printed text in Victorian culture. Family Bibles were clasped in brass and prominently displayed in the home....Personal Bibles, in black bindings, rested on Anglican and nonconformist bedside cabinets. Smaller Bibles, tastefully bound in morocco, nestled in ladies' handbags. Copies...were often to be found in the homes of the "deserving poor." (Wheeler 235-36)

It is no secret that such ubiquity led to a literary culture strongly indebted to the Bible. By the 1830s, according to *A History of the Bible as Literature*, both Biblical allusions and a strong "desire to discover the Bible as a prime source of English literary excellence" were prominent (Norton 2: 203-04). Such

emphasis on the KJB took shape in several different Victorian works, including Gardiner Spring's *The Obligations of the World to the Bible*, William Thomas Petty's *An Essay upon the Influence of the Translation of the Bible upon English Literature*, and George Gilfillan's *The Bards of the Bible*. These contemporary studies demonstrate "the importance of the Bible to literature" and indicate that many Victorian readers were determined to use the KJB as an exclusive literary lens—to "see its influence in every possible place" (2:217).

While there are appreciable bibliographic differences between the KJB and *Deronda*, there remains a basic set of typographic effects that the two have in common. *Deronda*'s division into four volumes, eight books, and seventy chapters resonates with the Bible's two Testaments, four Gospels, and sixty-two other books; both offer their subdivisions as positive divisions, not as mere linguistic pauses to an otherwise continuous stream of words. Exodus follows Genesis and "Meeting Streams" follows "The Spoiled Child," but both also arrange their subtitled books with individual headings at each initiatory page; and both, interestingly, have a book called "Revelations." Though their chapters are in a predetermined sequence, the subtitles for the books in both the KJB and *Deronda* make no such demand on readers: "Luke" and "Matthew" have as little inherent order as "Mordecai" and "Meeting Streams." The KJB is further organized by numbered verses, for example the oft-cited John 3:16—an individual unit in a chapter in the Gospels. This is a level of typographic detail that Eliot could not hope successfully to emulate—at least not without drawing heretically over-literalized comparisons with her work. Eliot is noted for her mode of citation, however, being frequently quoted in subsequent literary history. In short, despite apparent differences, the typography of both texts make a point of facilitating textual interpretations that move beyond linear sequence and continuous reading into the realm of sophisticated

hermeneutics and repetitious, episodic rereading.

The history of the Bible can also help emphasize how Eliot's typography encourages a critical engagement with text. Although in the modern world an "unorganized" Bible is almost unimaginable, the "traditional" formatting many Christians have known was not standardized until about the mid-sixteenth century. Unavailable even in English until the late-fourteenth century, when John Wyclif and the Lollards "aimed to make the Bible available to ordinary Christians in a language they understood" (Hamlin 3), the "chapter and verse" systemization of the text did not occur until 1560 with the very popular Geneva Bible (5). This feature was common by the nineteenth century, though still a relatively new codification of the Holy Book—one that was an explicit attempt to democratize its reception. As Norton explains,

Along with the use of the margin and other aids such as arguments, headers and appendices, the inclusion of verse numbers enhanced the studiability of the text. This...had a huge effect on the way translators and readers experienced the text. Rather than something to be read continuously, it became a text in bits, each bit numbered and presented like a paragraph...Verse numbers and cross-references move the reader and student from continuous reading towards what might be called concordant reading, a verse in one part of the Bible directing the reader not to its surrounding verse but to another some distance away. (*The KJB* 21)

The "studiability" of the Geneva Bible that emerged with the Holy Book's organized, accessible, and engaging typography made it the most popular edition for its age, rivaling the authorized KJB into the early seventeenth century. This Bible was advertised by printer Robert Barker "not so much in terms of its translation" or linguistic value "as in its extensive paratextual apparatus" or typographic and exegetical value (King 83). The text was a "reformed" version of the Bible because "it was a study Bible. As

comprehensively as possible, it gave to 'simple lambs'...all that was needed to understand the sense and doctrinal significance" of the text (Norton, *The KJB* 20). The interpretive potential and popularization of the KJB is thus closely related to its typographic evolution. The Bible's ability to foster a community of lay readers is predicated directly on those readers' collective capacity to comprehend, dissect, and share passages from the text in a manner far more complex than continuous reading could ever afford. Eliot's emulation of biblical formatting thus participates in a bibliographic history that invented the Holy Book as it was read by the Victorians. *Deronda's* typographically emphatic volumes do not just vaguely reference a Biblical type: they "move" the very devout "reader and student" of Eliot's final novel "from continuous reading towards [a] concordant" one, and in so doing attempt to generate and maintain reading communities that actually form themselves around interpretive practice.

In addition to Eliot's typography and formatting, there is also the linguistic register of *Daniel Deronda* to consider. The novel's structural logic is apparent through those incidents that readily stand on their own: for example, Gwendolen's meeting with Herr Klemser to discuss her potential as an actress and Daniel's two meetings with his mysterious mother—distinctive moments out of time, "tragic experience[s] which must for ever solemnize his life" (571). There is also the tour of Sir Hugo's stables by Daniel and Gwendolen in Chapter XXXV, which reads like a traditional parable as Gwendolen learns via her spiritual tutor that the stables' value have nothing to do with the horses they house in the present and everything to do with the Abbey they were a part of in the past.⁵

In terms of the novel's self-reflexive relationship with print

⁵ G. H. Lewes wrote to Blackwood that "Each part" of *Middlemarch* has "a certain unity and completeness in itself with separate titles" (*Letters* 5:146). *Deronda* more than follows suit.

culture and the book, Chapter XXXVIII provides one of the most enlightening examples of an autonomous-yet-interconnected episode, one that relies on typographic gestures to signal its complete interconnection with the rest of the text. About midway through the novel, young Jacob Cohen visits Mordecai's room:

The inducement was perhaps the mending of a toy, or some little mechanical device in which Mordecai's well-practised finger-tips had an exceptional skill; and with the boy thus tethered, he would begin to repeat a Hebrew poem of his own, into which years before he had poured his first youthful ardours for that conception of a blended past and future which was the mistress of his soul, telling Jacob to say the words after him.

"The boy will get them engraved within him," thought Mordecai; "it is a way of printing."

None readier than Jacob at this fascinating game of imitating unintelligible words; and if no opposing diversion occurred, he would sometimes carry on his share in it as long as the teacher's breath would last out....But most commonly a sudden impulse sent Jacob leaping away into some antic or active amusement, when, instead of following the recitation, he would return upon the foregoing words most ready to his tongue....Yet [Mordecai] waited with such patience as a prophet needs, and began his strange printing again undiscouraged on the morrow. (408)

The episode reads like an autonomous parable about youth, age, and cultural heritage, complete with a set of isolated characters, a contextualizing back-story, an epigrammatic "moral" about the importance of cultural "printing," and an appreciable narrative arc. Like so many episodes in *Daniel Deronda*, this one lends itself to an isolated analysis.

Jacob is a minor character. His few scenes with the novel's eponymous hero in the Cohen family shop are some of the few,

relatively negligible moments of comic relief in this otherwise heavy-handed novel. This means that Eliot is using the above tableau to do much more than familiarize her readers with Jacob's spiritual education in an isolated anecdote. She also illustrates Mordecai's sacred perseverance with this passing episode: Chapter XXXVIII is explicitly dedicated to describing "some facts about Mordecai" before it settles into the tale above (404). And Eliot clearly foreshadows the more successful "printing" of *Deronda* by the Jewish sage with this scene when this solitary incident in Chapter XXXVIII turns outward towards the rest of the narrative. That an anecdote can do so is not in itself remarkable: however, Eliot's episode—when *Deronda*'s typographic signals are taken into account—also prompts readers to reach across specific chapters, books, and volumes in interpretive ways that are much more complex and intricate than linear reading.

Eliot directs attention to this level of structural detail through her unapologetically directive narrator: "it is perhaps comprehensible now [after the anecdote about Jacob] why Mordecai's glance took on a sudden eager interest as he looked at [Deronda in the book-shop]" (410). A reader is guided back to Chapter XXXIII with this explicit "cross-reference," to the moment when an unnamed and oddly eager book-shop assistant interrogates Daniel about his potential interest in "Jewish history":

"I am certainly interested in Jewish history," said Deronda, quietly, curiosity overcoming his dislike to the sort of inspection as well as questioning he was under.

But immediately the strange Jew rose from his sitting posture, and Deronda felt a thin hand pressing his arm tightly, while a hoarse, excited voice, not much above a loud whisper, said—

"You are perhaps of our race?" (327)

Eliot solves a larger mystery staged in Chapter XXXIII when she reveals the meaning behind Deronda's encounter in the shop in

Chapter XXXVIII. The narrator's helpful reminder plays a part in managing the greater narrative arc of Daniel's spiritual enlightenment. Besides reaching back in a chronological way to a previous chapter, Eliot also stretches her readers across particular books and volumes with this cross-reference. Chapter XXXIII is contained within Book IV of Volume II—"Gwendolen gets her Choice"—while Chapter XXXVIII is a smaller unit of Book V in Volume III—"Mordecai." In addition to putting a plot point to rest in a typically "novelistic" way, then, *Deronda*'s typographic signals are also asking us to consider more frankly exegetical questions.

How, for example, is an anecdote about Mordecai's continuous failure with Jacob related to his instinctive first meeting with Deronda? How is the exposition that describes Mordecai's metaphysical search for a figure of spiritual transmission in Chapter XXXVIII affected by our reading of the episode that is not only Daniel's introduction to his eventual spiritual parent, but also the delineation of this other character's physical scouting for Mirah's mother and brother? What does it mean, by the end of the novel, that these searches come together and become one and the same search? Read side by side in an exegetical mode, Eliot's fiction encourages questions about *Deronda* that do not necessarily concern themselves with observing the linearity of the narrative and that move beyond an understanding of how a plot operates on a set of realistic characters.

Moving slightly further out structurally, Book V, "Mordecai," which brings Daniel and his spiritual parent together, relates to Book IV, "Gwendolen gets her Choice," which sees Gwendolen marrying Grandcourt. How is the "marriage" Daniel affects with Mordecai in some sense the real complement to Gwendolen's "Choice"—in a way that is much more significant than the former's literal marriage to Mirah? And how is Volume II linked with Volume III? How do the events of "Maidens Choosing" and

“Gwendolen gets her Choice”—books whose titles announce the decisions and consequences of Gwendolen’s character arc—compare with events in Daniel’s story detailed in “Mordecai” and “Revelations”? Treated as units that can relate in ways besides standard sequential order, *Deronda*’s formal units generate re-readings that have little to do with the novel’s larger narrative cohesion and everything to do with producing exegetical possibilities that invite ongoing interpretation.

Such interpretive efforts seem commonplace to literary scholars and astute readers who rethink and reassess as they move further into a novel. However, the point here is not simply that *Deronda* can be interpreted in complex ways that are available to many great novels, but that such interpretation is actively facilitated in a “lay” public with both the text’s carefully formatted original volumes and its series of self-contained incidents. *Deronda*’s subdivisions and subtitles, in an age as exegetical as the nineteenth century, present “Mordecai” and “Gwendolen gets her Choice” as if they were descendants of something like Ruth and Romans—individuated pieces of the Holy Book that can not only relate directly to one another, but in being related necessarily entail a comparison between the Old and New Testaments.

That such re-reading occurred in the 1870s becomes evident in *Deronda*’s reception history. Of its first printed run, Blackwood notes: “The reading in type transcends even the impression the M.S. had left upon me. In print one can turn back so much more easily to re-enjoy the splendid turns of thought, wit, and expression which adorn every page” (*Letters* 6: 182). Significantly, *Deronda*’s first reader was an enthusiastic rereader who anticipates “re-enjoy[ing] the splendid turns of thought, wit, and expression” in isolation; indeed, he reiterates, “I have been reading and rereading [*Deronda*] and always with increased wonder and admiration” (6: 195).

Similarly, reviews of the novel allude to a seemingly

ubiquitous practice of rereading by the public. As Carol A. Martin has noted, “Overall, contemporaries felt that *Daniel Deronda* had more ‘incident’ than *Middlemarch*” requiring more concentrated contemplation (249). According to *The Examiner*:

The different books of “Middlemarch” are almost as much separate works as the members of a Greek Trilogy; you might as well begin at the fourth and extend backwards and forwards, as begin at the first and read straight through; you might read one “book,” and leave off without a painful sense of incompetence. Indeed, we believe there are not a few readers of “Middlemarch” who have acquired their knowledge of it in the first way, and there are some perhaps who would plead guilty to having no further acquaintance with it than may be obtained by the second....“Daniel Deronda” promises to be in this respect like “Middlemarch.” (“A New Novel”)

This review both recognizes the autonomy of each book and points to a reception of the novel that was both episodic and repetitious.

Reading in this way may be rare for a novel, but it was, again, familiar to a Victorian audience steeped in exegetical reading. The KJB was itself never simply “read” in the nineteenth century but interpreted in a manner dependent upon self-contained formal units, non-linear cross-references, and the facilitation of typographic signals. Some of the most illustrative evidence of this fact comes from advertisements written by publishers of religious texts emphasizing the accessibility of their version of the Holy Book or the effectiveness of their particular study guide (see Figs. 6, 7, 8). The phenomenon underscores both how deeply implicit was the assumption of exegetical reading and how ingrained ongoing interpretive practice was to the Victorian sense of community. The KJB was not only “everywhere,” it was “everywhere” all the time; and it was prompting readers to connect one word, chapter, or book to another in an exercise that performed

the interconnectivity of a devout community.

In the case of *Deronda*, readers' understanding of Victorian exegesis and Eliot's typography establishes a defense against criticism that devalues the novel for its apparent "disunity." Despite Eliot's efforts to mark her novel as a sacred text, *Deronda's* reverential reception was immediately countered by confusion over its various literary experiments. Her efforts to advance the novel beyond linearity, though in at least one way a look back to a much older literary form, were also experimental in pre-modern ways that confounded a substantial portion of her original readers. These readers were trying to read *Deronda* like a Bible, but they were also trying to read a novel with a linear plot. J. Russell Perkin notes that some contemporary readers regarded the novel as disorderly, in both initial and subsequent readings:

[T]he issue of the unity of *Daniel Deronda* has been debated since the first reviews...the majority of the first readers of the novel showed that they lacked the kind of understanding of fictional form which would at least have enabled them to comprehend what George Eliot was doing in *Daniel Deronda*, even if they did not value the achievement. (73-74)

Since "many reviewers did not grasp Eliot's satirical tone and purpose" and treated both the "narrative commentary and the epigraphs...as separable items...without reference to their function as parts of a larger whole," *Deronda's* coherence has been debated for over a hundred years (71). The "Jewish material, and the 'open' form of the work...challenged...[readers'] assumptions" and have continued to frustrate critics ever since (75). Pulcheria in "Daniel Deronda: A Conversation" observes: "I never read a story with less current. It is not a river; it is a series of lakes. I once read of a group of little uneven ponds resembling, from a bird's eye view, a looking-glass which had fallen upon the floor and broken, and was lying in fragment. That is what *Daniel Deronda* would look like"

(James 684). Over one-hundred years later, Sally Shuttleworth—following F.R. Leavis' famous proclamation about *Deronda* as a divided novel with an unfortunate "Jewish half"—also speaks of its "divided structure...a result both of conscious experimentation, and of the final breakdown of the organic ideal":

English Society in *Daniel Deronda* does not conform to the conflict-free, harmonious whole of organic ideology, nor character to the idea of the unified rational actor which had sustained this social vision. Yet the moral and social values of organicism still furnish the framework of the narrative, thus forcing the novel into a radical divide. (201)

Eliot anticipated such criticisms: "What will be the feeling of the public as [*Deronda*] advances I am entirely doubtful. The Jewish element seems to me likely to satisfy nobody" (*Letters* 6: 238); correspondence between Blackwood and Lewes record similar worries. Fixated on "the Jewish element" and the disapprobation one could expect from a generally anti-Semitic readership, the novel's cohesion is almost always discussed in terms of its "Jewish half." But Eliot also complains more generally about how her efforts to introduce her readers to their own religious heritage caused them to "cut the book into scraps" (*Letters* 6: 290). This suggests that the "Jewish element" in *Deronda* is only the most obvious fragmentation in the work and belies a series of other subdivisions that the public was failing to weave together into a complexly structured whole. Though they wanted works like "second Bibles" from George Eliot, they also wanted conventional novels (*Letters* 6: 340).

Eliot's frustration with her audience stems from an interpretive failure; but this too confirms the novel's insistent relationship with its own typography. Readers skimmed, ignored, or outright avoided Daniel's search for his religious heritage in order to use the "scraps" of Gwendolen's narrative to generate a totalizing meaning in terms of a romance plot. To Blackwood,

Eliot expressed concern that her “poor heroes and heroines should have all the advantages that paper and print can give them” (*Letters* 6: 188); with the novel split into “scraps,” both its linguistic and typographic registers failed to foster community.

[H]er function is that of the aesthetic, not the doctrinal teacher—the rousing of the nobler emotions which make mankind desire the social right, not the prescribing of special measures. The supreme purpose of all her work is ethical....Her teaching was the highest within the resources to which Atheism is restricted. (Acton 463-64)

Recent scholarship on *Deronda*'s narrative disunity and failure to build communities of “faithful” readers considers its “inconsistent” aesthetics, citing “a crucial discontinuity between Eliot’s realist predilections and the socially constituted models of self she invokes as mechanisms for a renewed sense of community” resulting from her embrace of philosophical Realism (Freed 60-61). While Eliot envisions a reading community, “its realization in the material mechanism of social reality” is unlikely in a society that is ultimately urban, competitive, and self-interested (71). But the communities that this novel failed to engage have as much to do with the ways readers were reading as with the philosophical inconsistency embedded in its narrative; *Deronda* falters because readers struggled to reconcile tensions between its imagined communality and literary culture’s shift to mass production and the consequent disposability of literature: the “mechanization of book production—printing presses run by steam machine for collating and binding—enabled the mass production of books, periodicals, and the like, giving the general public access to literature of all kinds for very little money” (Hunter 123).

Although *Daniel Deronda* was serialized—published in eight parts (Feb.-Sept. 1876), Eliot typically resisted serializing her novels for aesthetic reasons:

I have the strongest objection to cutting up my work into little bits; and there is no motive to it on my part, since I have a large enough public already. . . the question is not entirely one of money with me: if I could gain more by splitting my writing into smaller parts, I would not do it, because the effect would be injurious as a matter of art. (*Letters* 6: 179)

As Henry James wrote: “The quality of George Eliot’s work makes acceptable, in this particular case, a manner of publication to which in general we strongly object” (362).

Daniel Deronda appeared at a time when readers strove to reconcile the sanctity of serious literature with the commodity culture of cheap, mass produced publications. It aimed to foster a reading community based on shared exegetical practices while also being a radically experimental, generically exceptional piece of narrative fiction. It is, like Mordecai’s efforts with little Jacob Cohen, its own form of “strange printing.” Determined to cultivate communities with a work that looked back in order to look forward, Eliot—like Mordecai—sought “such patience as a prophet needs” (*DD* 408). And she must have been conscious of an effort that did not entirely succeed or fail—not because Eliot had compromised her complex literary and bibliographic art, but because the readers she was attempting to bring together could not have been sure in which direction they were being asked to look: forwards or backwards, to the rich history of the Bible or to the future of the English novel.⁶

Tufts University

⁶ Figures 1-8 are taken from George Eliot, *Daniel Deronda*. Edinburgh: William Blackwood and Sons, 1876.

DANIEL DERONDA

BY
GEORGE ELIOT

VOL. IV.

WILLIAM BLACKWOOD AND SONS
EDINBURGH AND LONDON
MDCCCLXXVI

Fig. 3. Title page to original publication, Volume IV, *Daniel Deronda*, 1876.

DANIEL DERONDA

Let thy chief love be of thine own soul:
Thou, and the things of earthly desires
That tempt thee to the dead to please their soul,
Let them be thine, for they are thine;
And over the sweetest heap of earthly joys
Be thine the fairest portion.

DANIEL DERONDA
BOOK VII
THE MOTHER AND THE SON

Fig. 4. Title page for Book VII, "The Mother and the Son," the first book of Volume IV.

Fig. 1. First title page to the first edition of *Daniel Deronda*, 1876

Fig. 2. Leading epigraph to the novel, printed in each of the four volumes.

Fig. 7. Prospectus, page 3. "30,000 Various Readings"

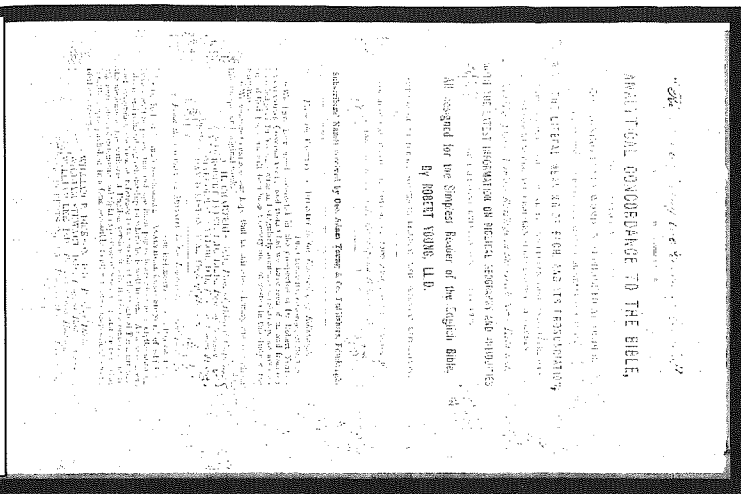


Fig. 8. Prospectus, page 7. "What a fund of thought and illustration does it not present . . ."

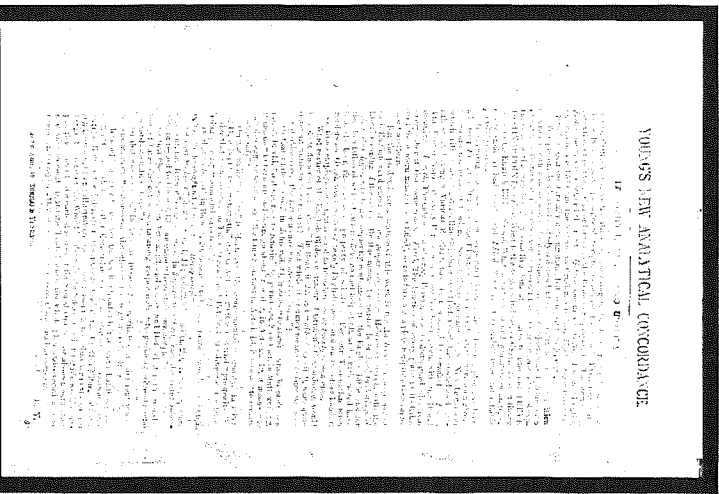


Fig. 5. First page of Chapter I in Book VII, Volume IV.

Thus was the letter which Sir Hugo put into
 Deronda's hands:—

TO MY SON, DAVID DERONDA.

My good friend and young, Sir Hugo Mallinger,
 will have told you that I wish to see you. My
 health is shaken, and I desire there should be no

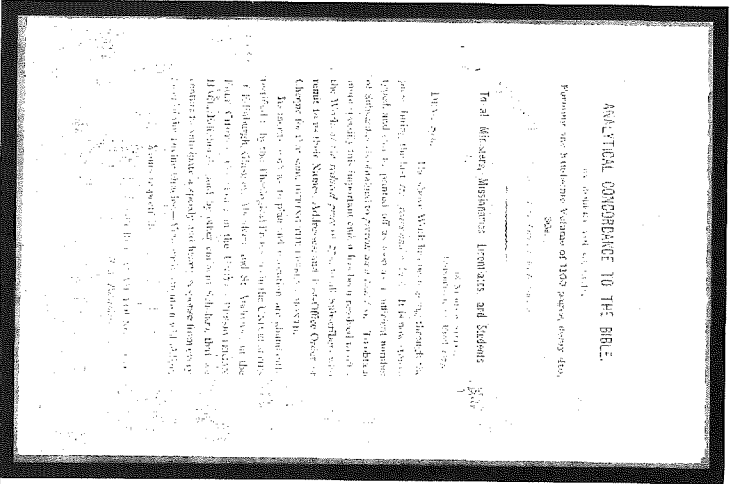
BOOK VII.

THE MOTHER AND THE SON.

CHAPTER I.

"It seem'd much, from his face,
 That he had seen in some great temple—the eyes
 Of his own mother's; and could then record
 The words they spoke who lay within his body,—
 Upon my quills, and his fingers were
 Among my hair. You'd be content; yet later
 I found no hair, scarce memory of the hair
 A wicker-chair when father cross'd his altar."
 —Deronda: Deronda

Fig. 6. Prospectus for an Analytical Concordance to The Bible, by Robert LL.D., page 1.



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Dobbin's Corduroys: Sartorial Display and Modes of Masculinities in *Vanity Fair*

by Eva Chen

The decline of what Carlyle called "the old ideal of Manhood" based on rank ("Characteristics" 927) prompted early Victorians to refashion a new ideal of masculinity to "fit a middle-class rather than an aristocratic context" (Ray 13). This ideal manifests itself in a variety of discourses, one major forum being the early Victorian debate distinguishing the gentleman from the dandy, a debate in which William Thackeray vigorously participates. The modern *gentleman* is recast as bourgeois and morally earnest, constructing a Victorian ideology of masculinity epitomized by the values of productive work, inner moral truth, and undemonstrative self-discipline.⁷¹

Crucially, clothing plays a key role in this endeavor, as the manly ideal is linked with the avoidance of superficiality and a proclaimed indifference to or even rejection of fashion, as opposed to the clothes-obsessed, decadent aristocratic dandy. Preoccupation with appearances is posed against inner moral virtue, mirroring fundamental class differences between the two male types; the point significantly impacts how Victorians perceived themselves in relation to the preceding era of Regency decadence.² It also has ramifications extending beyond Victorian normative masculinity into the area of male fashion, reflected in the idea of the "Great

Male Renunciation" of a concern with style. Fashion historians argue that mainstream male fashion continues to reflect that exchange of display and fashionable consumption with the dark suit, "the universal male uniform" signifying restraint and discipline (Flugel 111).

Vanity Fair was serialized in twenty monthly parts between January 1847 and July 1848, a period when Thackeray joined forces with William Maginn and Thomas Carlyle against the "clothes-wearing" dandy in *Fraser's*. He satirizes Jos Sedley's sartorial vanity and preaches the need for true manliness as represented in the morally virtuous but distinctly unfashionable Major Dobbin.³ Set in the Peninsular Wars era but intended for a Victorian audience, the novel aligns Regency excess with contemporary men's fashion consumption; the cautionary rhetoric of prescriptive writings and normative discourses suggests that sartorial discipline was not practiced by early Victorian men. Dandyism is to be rejected because clothing is the sum total of a dandy's identity, but gentlemanly manhood that prides itself on moral integrity and indifference to clothes is also revealed to be a construction in which outer appearance actually plays a crucial role. Dobbin may represent a "natural" gentleman, instinctually geared toward moral values rather than social display, but his evolution toward ideal manhood unveils the existence of a certain strict, though understated, sartorial code that requires arduous training, with deviation or failure stigmatized and glaringly conspicuous. The Great Male Renunciation is thus less about males' rejection of fashion than about institutionalizing the bourgeois dress-code. In other words, clothing makes the dandy, but it also articulates normative bourgeois manhood as a key technology of self-fashioning.

¹ The term gentleman is both exclusive and elastic as it suggests an elevated ancestral origin but also a certain moral character. This moral dimension makes the gentleman interrelated to but also separable from the aristocrat, and this elasticity helps the aspiring Victorian middle class to appropriate the term and redefine it to suit their own needs. See Gilmour 4.

² This attitude began to change by the 1890s, when a new form of aesthetic dandyism rejected bourgeois utilitarianism and sought a revival of Regency values of elegance, pleasure, and the art of the pose. See Moers 287-88.

³ The novel's original sub-title was not "A Novel without a Hero," but "Pen and Pencil Sketches of Society" (13), suggesting its links to the silver-fork genre. See Pollard (13) and Kendra (191).

Dress and Masculinity

Fashionable clothing has traditionally been linked to superficial rather than moral or ethical values, but recent scholarship has argued that clothing should be viewed as integral (rather than external) to self and identity, and that the subject is not only articulated through dress, but dress also articulates and constructs the subject.⁴ In this sense, fashion and clothes are not necessarily secondary to a more authentic self: they are neither a passive mirror nor an over-determined result of social change or personal identity. Rather, fashion also actively constructs the self, while both self and fashion play a role of mutual shaping and interaction.

By choosing what to wear and how to wear it, the self is located in a historicized discourse which prescribes norms and conventions on the practices of a presumably docile body. Fashion and clothing are thus a crucial means of inserting the self into social discourse, and by interpolating, taming, and reforming the self, subjects it to power. At the same time, clothes also shape and articulate the self which is only produced and achieves its interiority through its insertion in clothes as a Foucauldian technology of self and governance. The self is far from a natural, pre-given or pure self before the advent of clothes, but is instead always already significantly shaped by clothes, saturated by and participating in the discourse and techniques of fashion. As is succinctly pointed out by Elizabeth Craik, fashion is thus a technical device or a "face" which positively constructs or articulates an identity rather than disguising it (4).

⁴ See Warwick and Cavallaro 133. Past studies of fashion tend to distinguish it from dress/clothes, with the former viewed mostly as a theoretical system and a sociological phenomenon or linked to *haute couture* in a way that is far removed from the daily, subjective or experiential dimension of wearing clothes or dresses. Current scholarship tends to broaden the scope of fashion. This study acknowledges that while not all clothing is fashion, clothes and fashion are highly inter-connected.

Historically, fashion and sartorial display assumed critical social significance and often appeared as a form of control and hierarchy. The Stuart court, for instance, resorted to sumptuary laws to institute a hierarchy in dress explicitly indicating who could wear what, transgressions being punished as crimes.⁵ That dress has to be regulated indicates its centrality in signaling status and position, or as Veblen writes, as "an indication of our pecuniary standing to all observers at first glance" (167). Clothing's symbolism increased with the advent of modernity and industrialization, when appearance and display supplanted property ("real" estate) to indicate social mobility and identity.

By the early Victorian period, the emphasis on appearance and sartorial display conflicts with a gender discourse aimed at redirecting male physical energy into productive work. This new "utilitarian" masculinity reflects the bourgeois values of industry and useful work, moving away from an aristocratic model of male physicality and visual displays of leisure and pleasure (Hollander 87).⁶ Such a conception of masculinity is reinforced by the increasing influence of separate-spheres gender ideology, linking men with the public world of production and industry while relegating consumption and leisure to women and deviant men like dandies. This trend has important ramifications for Victorian

⁵ The Stuart court, for instance, set down a series of Sumptuary Law in the sixteenth century decreeing that strict sartorial codes of texture and style, with deviation punishable by law, should be followed by people of different social ranks so that clothes accurately reflect status. Silk, gold, and imported wool were to be worn only by the aristocrats, while cloth and plain decoration were the domain of "servingmen, yeomen taking wages" and "husbandmen." See Kuchta 35-37.

⁶ Early Victorians are preoccupied with introducing the bourgeois values of work and Christian discipline into the ideal of masculinity, calling on men to seek a "psychic armor" to control inchoate, sexualized male energy and transform it into productive, useful work and self-discipline (Sussman 19). See also Adams (4). This includes disapproval of clothing that sexualizes the male body in favor of the somber invisibility exemplified by the dark suit. Gender discourse emphasizing male productivity and aversion to display is also accompanied by a concurrent emphasis on female leisure and the conspicuous display of the female body, intended to showcase the virile, productive man who provides for his family.

perceptions of clothes and display: traditionally associated with status and position, clothing is further gendered to equate display with effeminacy and its suppression with productive masculinity.

These issues were reflected in Maginn's *Fraser's Magazine*, to which Thackeray and later Thomas Carlyle regularly contributed. Together, they launched a vitriolic attack on dandyism, initially prompted by the popular "silver-fork" novel *Pelham; or, The Adventures of a Gentleman* (1828) by Bulwer-Lytton. The magazine's satire targets the middle-class inclination to emulate aristocratic lifestyles during a time of increasing prosperity and shifting social stratification of urban commodity culture. Dandyism, as seen in the archetypal Beau Brummell, experienced a revival with the renewed pursuit of luxury and "fashionable levity" by the well-to-do sector (Rosa 6). As is pointed out by Bulwer-Lytton, such displays allow the "more mediocre classes...[to] outstep the boundaries of fortune and be quasi-aristocrats themselves" (qtd. Gilmour 53). *Pelham* features a complete chapter on clothes and tailors, and quotes from a character in a Restoration comedy of manners—"A complete gentleman, according to Sir Fopling, ought to dress well, dance well, fence well, have a genius for love letters, and an agreeable voice for a chamber" (68).

The preoccupation with clothes is the focus of *Fraser's* attack; Maginn terms the dandy a "false...tailor-made" gentleman who is only good at "swaggering" and "strutting," pleading instead for a "true," "natural" gentleman as a moral alternative (514). Thomas Carlyle constructs a philosophy of clothes in *Sartor Resartus*, also published in *Fraser's* (1833-34); attacking the clothes-obsessed dandy whose "trade, office and existence consists in the wearing of clothes" as detrimental to the moral health and greatness of the whole nation (205), he calls for the renunciation of sumptuous

clothes and for privileging the inner soul over outer appearance.⁷ But it is Thackeray, in his journalism and fiction, which provides the most detailed redefinition of the gentleman-and-dandy divide while also making clothes the key symbol of that divide. Several of his pre-*Vanity Fair* articles set the tone for mainstream Victorian opinions by attacking the aristocratic Regency's decadent vanity and by celebrating the Victorian bourgeoisie's industry and moral earnestness. *The Four Georges* reduces the Prince Regent, known by his fondness for fashion, to an empty, vain nothingness beneath a heap of flashy, extravagant clothes:

I try and take him to pieces, and find silk stockings, paddings, stays, a coat with frogs and a fur collar, a star and blue ribbons, a pocket handkerchief prodigiously scented, one of Truefitt's best nutty-brown wigs reeking with oil, a set of teeth and a huge black stock, underwaistcoats, more underwaistcoats, and then nothing. (388)

Thackeray then writes what is to become the classic idea of Victorian gentlemen:

Which is the noble character for after ages to admire;—yon fribble dancing in lace and spangles, or yonder hero who sheathes his sword after a life of spotless honor...? Which of these is the true gentleman? What is it to be a gentleman? Is it to have lofty aims, to lead a pure life, to keep your honor virgin; to have the esteem of your fellow-citizens, and the love of your fireside; to bear good fortune meekly; to suffer evil with constancy; and through evil or good to maintain truth always? Show me the happy man whose life exhibits these qualities, and him we will salute as a gentleman, *whatever his rank may be*. (emphasis added)

⁷ See Ellen Moers (181). Max Beerbohm, the late nineteenth-century aesthete and dandy, questioned Carlyle's qualifications to formulate a clothes philosophy as he "obviously dressed so very badly" (qtd. Carter 11). Carter argues that Carlyle emphasizes an authentic correspondence between exterior and soul (11).

The passage contrasts fundamentally opposing forms of masculinity. Adding to the moral connotations established by Maginn and Carlyle, Thackeray valorizes true masculinity as based on the bourgeois values of work and useful purpose, and derides dandies' decorative, frivolous form of masculinity based on surface display and the aestheticization of useless leisure. In "Men and Coats" (*Fraser's* 1841), Thackeray evokes the gendering of fashion by criticizing Bulwer's bloated, flowery, and almost effeminate writing, likely composed while wearing a "large-flowered damask dressing-gown" and "morocco slippers" and accounting for the "staring peonies and hollyhocks of illustrations...flaring cords and tassels of episodes" (601). If he had donned a simple, dark jacket, he would have written in a more honest, simple and masculine style, for only "a man IN A JACKET is a man."

Thackeray here risks reinforcing the importance of clothes in determining masculinity: both the man and his writing are emasculated by flowers but authenticated by a simple dark jacket, implying masculinity is not natural, inborn, or inherent but highly performative, predicated on a change of clothes and jeopardized by a damask gown. Nor does masculinity rest on a disdain or rejection of outer display but is articulated and constructed primarily by surface clothes, however simple and understated these may be. If clothes now decide the man, this suggests that the gentleman is likewise predicated upon a visual mechanism of performance and spectacle, and that behind this surface there is actually no essential core. The difference between the gentleman and the dandy is not one of surface and depth, nor of the artificial and the natural, but rather of surface and artifice, of types of clothes.

Dobbin's Corduroys and Sartorial Training

By declaring that only a man in a simple jacket is a real man, Thackeray both acknowledges and questions clothing's importance

to the gender and class identities of an ideal gentleman, thus highlighting the conflicted nature of discourse on normative masculinity and clothes. While ideal manhood is aligned with inner virtue, it is also dependent on a recognizable code of outer attire, a paradox evidenced in Victorian conduct books and etiquette literature.⁸ These writings stress the need to look natural and artless, thus indifferent to appearance; but they also emphasize the importance of proper dressing by stressing the arduous efforts required to appear effortless. Throughout *Vanity Fair* and particularly in the character of the ideal gentleman Major Dobbin, Thackeray reveals his own ambivalences and the highly problematic nature of his journalistic message. In a textual scene of fashionable elegance, material opulence, and "carnivals of consumption" (Lindner 564), Major Dobbin stands out with his distinct unfashionability and clumsiness. Awkward, ungainly, and with large hands and feet, he is an unconventional hero, but his personal clumsiness seems to be "to the point" (Gilmour 70), as it highlights a model of inherent inner virtue that is predicated upon a negation of surface, artifice, and fashion. Dobbin is a man of generous aims, constant truth, and simplicity, "who can look the world honestly in the face with an equal manly sympathy for the great and the small...We all know a hundred whose coats are very well made, and a score who have excellent manners...but of gentlemen how many?" (*VF* 987). His physical features are "rather ridiculous," his "large hands and feet" objects of ridicule; and yet "his thoughts were just, his brains were fairly good, his life was honest and pure, and his heart warm and humble." Perhaps "poor little Emmy" undervalued Dobbin, "But have we not all been

⁸ Shannon (28-40) cites various nineteenth-century conduct books warning of the narrow division between gentlemanly dress and offensive conspicuousness, whereby one may be mistaken for a dandy, or worse yet, a tailor's assistant. A quiet coat supported by a tie of neutral tint, a black hat and a shirt of small pattern and quiet color should be the ideal, and these must be "of the best quality, well-made, and suitable to his rank and position" (28-40).

misled about our heroes, and changed our opinions a hundred times?" Although Dobbin's physical unattractiveness highlights his inner virtue and modest simplicity, clothes and sartorial appearance are also essential to establishing his masculinity, which is both inherent and learned. Reflected in the evolution of William Dobbin into the ideal gentleman is a learning process that reveals the constructed or performative nature of the gentleman and undermines its touted naturalness.

Vanity Fair devotes much attention to Dobbin's kind deeds, his bravery in war and colonial service, his moral steadfastness toward Amelia's family throughout their misfortune, his generosity to his friends and particularly toward George Osborne, and his unwavering devotion and love to Amelia. The novel's devotion to his inner worth and good deeds is as conspicuous as its reticence about his outer appearance; while dazzling with meticulous details of the fashionable clothes and glittering lifestyle of the dandiacal Jos and George, this reticence over Dobbin emphasizes his inner virtue. After Dobbin joins the army he mostly appears in his military attire, a "hideous military frogged coat" (VF 64) and an old dark cloak, the one he finally wraps Amelia in when she agrees to accept his love (1091). In his civilian wear Dobbin is described as wearing "a blue frock-coat, with a brown face and a grizzled head" (900), and several pages later "a blue frock-coat and white duck trousers" (920). Overall, Dobbin's clothes are nondescript, failing to arouse any attention or comment.

However, such invisibility does not mean that clothes are not important to Dobbin's image, or that inner morality alone was sufficient to secure his claim to gentlemanliness. While he does eventually master the code of gentlemanly attire so that he is no longer conspicuous but invisible, the adolescent Dobbin wore clothing outside the norm, rendering him a target for ridicule at the snobbish school for bourgeois boys. Distinct from those schoolmates with claims to gentility, Dobbin dressed like the grocer's son

that he was, his tuition paid for by goods and commodities under the system of "mutual principles" (VF 56). For this Dobbin was ruthlessly mocked and despised by the other boys, who regarded their own merchant families as socially superior while condemning retail grocers as "shameful and infamous...meriting the contempt and scorn of all real gentlemen" (57)—his presumed inferiority further emphasized by his struggles with Latin.

Nicknamed as Heigh-ho Dobbin, Gee-ho Dobbin or "Figs" by everyone, Dobbin's clumsiness and plebian humbleness were particularly articulated by his clothes: he "stood there—almost at the bottom of the school—in his scraggy corduroys and jacket, through the seams of which his great big bones were bursting—as the representative of so many pounds of tea, candles, sugar, mottled-soap, plums, and other commodities" (VF 56). The image of the adolescent Dobbin is dominated by those scraggy, "tight" corduroy clothes (58), a salience seized upon by the other boys, who sewed them up to tease Dobbin, "tight as they [already] were." Suggesting the family's residual thriftiness despite increasing prosperity, the ill-fitting corduroys are unfashionable and lowly both in fabric and design at a time when gentlemen wore only silk or wool. During this period, Dobbin's clothes constitute a dominant part of his identity, pointing conspicuously to his plebian background and distance from the genteel gentleman.

This episode reflects Thackeray's critique of middle-class vanity and ideas about what constitutes the true gentleman. Yet the conspicuousness of Dobbin's corduroys also suggests they attract derision because they deviate from and fail to observe an implied sartorial code, a code that is generally accepted as gentlemanly and normative. This code does not necessarily mean the flashy, sumptuous fashion of the dandy, but a more subdued, genteel code that distinguishes the gentleman from the lower classes. In this sense, Dobbin's adolescent corduroys stand neither for his polar opposition to the ostentatious dandy nor for his role as the

paradigmatic gentleman of inner virtue and simple attire, as Thackeray implies. Instead, they stand for Dobbin's then gaping distance from that very role.

Along with polarizing the gentleman against the dandy, there is also the other implied figure of the less than gentlemanly plebian whose distance from normative bourgeois masculinity is not marked by a lack of inner virtue but by his failure to master the intricate code of gentlemanly attire. Dobbin's inner virtue has already been in abundant display during his adolescence. He has a "generous and manly disposition" (*VF* 67), and is always kind to young George, who first detects and exploits the links between Dobbin and the weekly grocery cart. When Dobbin cries out that George's father is also just a merchant, George proudly declares that his father is a gentleman and keeps his own carriage, snubbing Dobbin immeasurably by implying that Dobbin's is not because he keeps a grocer's cart. But Dobbin still comes to George's aid by fighting and beating the head boy who bullies George, because he nurtures a simple code of honor and a desire to shield the weak and the young. Dobbin's moral virtue has therefore always been his distinguishing quality and always been with him unchanged. What is lacking at this stage is polish and gentility, a lack most loudly articulated by his tight corduroys.

The mature Dobbin is no longer dogged by such mockery and derision; his manners are still clumsy, and the Osbornes still deride him for his lack of personal beauty. But his clothes, though far from fashionable, are at least appropriate and no longer become a topic of open contempt or even much notice. The elevation from a grocer's son to a gentleman is, for Dobbin, aided by graduating from public school, by joining the army as a commissioned officer, and by his family's rise in prosperity and social standing. His grocer-father becomes City Alderman and keeps a large house in a fashionable London square, with his daughters considered most eligible for their large dowries. But in this evolutionary road

toward the gentlemanly ideal, what has most visibly changed about Dobbin himself is this metamorphosis from sartorial conspicuousness to invisibility as he disappears behind a standard façade of respectable dress norm. This is a change that is only visible and apparent upon hindsight and by contrast, and by the loss of a previous obtrusive, coarse visibility.

This to some extent problematizes Thackeray's ideas on clothes and ideal manhood, for Dobbin's case shows that rather than anti-fashion or anti-display, the paradigmatic bourgeois man is crucially constructed by the right kinds of clothes and the right type of sartorial display. Such sartorial art may steer clear of the flashy dandiacal code most hotly objected to by Thackeray and his circle, but it remains nevertheless a distinct type of display and a distinct visual mechanism, with specific provisions for propriety. Ideal masculinity is neither natural nor does it rest on inner virtue alone, but rather a construction and performance where clothes and display function as a key technology of self-fashioning. The gentleman's rejection of sartorial ostentation is not equated with carelessness or ignorance but is a display that denies its nature as display, and disguises its own visibility by turning it into an institution and a norm against which all deviations (women or dandies or lower classes) are made visible. In Dobbin's case, it is the right clothes that articulate and construct his changed status as the ideal gentleman. Only when the sartorial reform is complete is he finally established as the fully-fashioned model of normative masculinity.

Dobbin's earlier sartorial failure suggests the efforts required to learn that invisible code; rather than natural or inborn, gentlemanly manhood is learned and cultivated. Seen in this light, *Vanity Fair* not only preaches inner virtue against superficial vanity, but also implies the need to update one's clothes and to learn the art of proper dressing in order to reach that gentlemanly ideal. This again points to the novel's links with the silver-fork

dandy, a genre with a professed aim to educate an aspiring middle class audience into the gentility of clothing and manners, though in the case of *Vanity Fair* this complicity is often camouflaged by the rhetoric of satire and denunciation.

Dandies and Swells

Fashion historians (Foster, Kuchta, Steele) have traditionally subscribed to the idea of the Great Male Renunciation, first postulated by the psychologist John Carl Flugel in *The Psychology of Clothes* (1930), which claims that Victorian debates about gentlemanliness created "a dramatic change" in mainstream, respectable male fashion that still resonates today (111). While eighteenth-century fashion makes little distinction between male and female clothes, with men wearing rich lace, bright colors, and elaborately embroidered and padded coats, by the nineteenth century a clear line of demarcation is drawn in mainstream discourse that urges men to forsake display and relegate to women the task of status-indicating display of sumptuousness and luxury. Yet Dobbin's example shows that Victorian ideal masculinity is less about the great male renunciation of dress and display than about the great male codification of bourgeois dress, an institutionalization of a dress code with distinct gender and class connotations.

The history of Victorian male fashion is anything but a scene of unchanging somberness, and male fashion consumption is actually a significant socio-cultural force integral to an understanding of nineteenth-century urban life.¹⁰ *Vanity Fair's*

¹⁰ Breward studies professional periodicals of the tailoring trade, shops, and retailers, as well as popular London magazines and Victorian literary works in terms of pleasurable male consumption and fashion pursuit. Shannon notes that male fashions of the era undergo rapid changes in styles and cuts, evidenced in the greater variety of color brought by the invention of aniline dyes in 1859, the different patterns of stripes and checks used, the changes in trouser cuts signaled by the popularity of the peg-top trousers in the late 1850s and again in the 1890s, and the use of different waistcoats, corsets, and

dandiacal figures, Jos and George, "bearded creatures" who are "as vain as a girl," "as eager for praise," "as finikin over their toilettes," "as proud of their personal advantages," and "as conscious of their powers of fascination as any coquette in the world" (*VF* 19), are Regency characters dressed in 1840s style. The laughable excesses of Jos, for instance, reflect those of Thackeray's own early Victorian bourgeois contemporaries. The novel's very first mention of Jos highlights his dandiacal appearance:

A very stout, puffy man, in buckskins and Hessian boots, with several immense neckcloths, that rose almost to his nose, with a red-striped waistcoat and an apple-green coat with steel buttons almost as large as crown pieces (it was the morning costume of a dandy or blood of those days), was reading the paper by the fire when the two girls entered, and he bounced off his armchair, and blushed excessively, and hid his entire face almost in his neckcloths at this apparition. (25)

Jos spends a fortune on clothes and personal grooming, drives his horses in the Park, dines at the most fashionable taverns, frequents the theaters attired "laboriously in tights and a cocked hat" (*VF* 30), and in general follows the lifestyle of a fashionable dandy.

But Jos's "red-striped waistcoat," "apple-green great-coat," "crown"-like steel buttons, "fine frilled shirts" and "variegated waistcoats" (*VF* 466) are not those of a dandy. Thackeray writes that Jos's fashion follows the style of "a dandy or blood of those days" (25), and Jos also flatters himself that he and the archetypal Regency dandy Beau Brummels are "the leading bucks of the day" (30). But the discreetly elegant Brummell is known for his dark frock coats over white linen and white waistcoats, and for his rejection of flashy colors and complicated, effeminate "muffs,

undergarments. All this suggests that men were vigorously invited to display their masculinity through fashion.

velvets, ruffles, gold lace and perfumed powder” that has been “the usual appendages of male attire” throughout the eighteenth century (Tuite 147).¹¹ As the symbol of Regency male fashion from 1800 to 1813, he may be fastidious over his clothes, as he is known to spend hours every morning on his toilette and a huge sum on “country washing,” so his linens are spotlessly white and his cravat without a single crease (Kelly 100). But he detests ostentation and avoids vulgar display, claiming “[i]f John Bull turns round to look after you, you are not well-dressed but either too tight or too fashionable” (qtd. Lambert 60). This motto certainly suggests a very different sartorial code from Jos’s pursuit of the loudest and the flashiest:

He never was well dressed; but he took huge pains to adorn his big person, and passed many hours daily in this occupation. His valet made a fortune out of his wardrobe; his toilet-table was covered with as many pomatums and essences as ever were employed by an old beauty... Like most fat men, he would have his clothes made too tight, and took care they should be of the most brilliant colors and youthful cut.... He was as vain as a girl. (31)

This reference to “an old beauty” and girlish vanity certainly feminizes Jos and underlines the emasculating narcissistic display of a dandy. But Jos’s style actually reflects popular male fashions of the 1830s-40s, which abandoned Brummell’s elegant style and reverted back to gaudy patterns and conspicuous designs. Descriptions of Jos’s “immense cravats,” his waistcoats “of a crimson satin, embroidered with gold butterflies,” or “of a black and red velvet tartan with white stripes and a rolling collar” (*VF* 751), are echoed in the real fashion trends at the time of

¹¹ Brummell’s rejection of flashiness in favor of simple elegance is not to be confused with mere sobriety or with the later bourgeois uniform of the dark, somber suit. Brummell’s elegance is cool, deliberate, achieved with hours of grooming and above all reflects a devotion to surface and style that rejects any need to be earnest, practical or useful.

Thackeray’s writing. The “Whole Art of Dress” (1830) reports, for instance, that the waistcoat “has become very gay latterly, the richest and most brilliant colored velvets and silks,” while cloth waistcoats “are never seen worn by any but a few professional men” (qtd. Lambert 66). In a study of nineteenth-century male fashion, Miles Lambert points out that male dress after the Napoleonic wars and particularly in the 1840s became increasingly flashy and exaggerated, with neckcloths ever higher and more severely stiff, chests padded, waists pinched with stays, and waistcoats made of exotic, rich fabrics and in striking color combinations. This situation is exacerbated by the increasing number of middle class “gents,” “swells” or “fast men” strutting down the streets, whose imitation of the aristocratic dandy is vulgarized by their predilection for the “gayest fast colors and the more the merrier,” as one 1848 *Punch* article “Model Fast Man” puts it (19). Such middle-class impersonation of the dandy, with his “white hat,” “chess-board pattern” trousers, and “enormous gooseberry shirt pin” renders him immediately recognizable as “the noisiest, the most conspicuous person wherever he is. His dress too, never fails to attract public notice. He is unhappy if not seen—he is miserable if not heard.”

This exposes the very middle class nature of Jos’s dandyism. Swells, gents, and fast men are nineteenth-century terms for middle-class or lower-middle-class men who are able to make use of the increasing expansion of commodity culture, and in the case of the gents and the fast men, the ever proliferating mass-produced clothing, to stage an imitation of fashionable gentility in style if not in substance. Peter Bailey writes that the term *swell* originally referred to early nineteenth-century fashionably-dressed upper-class men, those with “lordly figure of resplendent dress and confident air,” but this usage shifted by the 1830s to refer specifically to middle-class upstarts, while the term *gents* applies to lower-middle-class clerks or apprentices further down the social

echelon (101). Both swells and gents appeared in great numbers on London streets in the 1830s and 1840s and were much mocked for their sham gentility, outrageous clothes, and vulgar manners.¹² In Jos's case, though Thackeray refers to him as a Regency dandy, the solidly middle-class son of a London broker is obviously more a swell than a real dandy, and the rowdy fashion he displays reflects Thackeray's own time when gents or swells had taken on an increasingly ubiquitous presence.

The question is why Thackeray insists on calling this style the typical dandy fashion of the early Regency years. He could not have been ignorant of Brummell's dress style for he read and reviewed William Jesse's *Life of George Brummell* (1844) for the *Morning Chronicle* the same year. While the review focuses primarily on Brummell's perceived moral emptiness and impudence, and accuses him of being "heartless," a "swindler," "glutton," and "liar," this urge to construct a generally ludicrous image of fastidiousness, wastefulness, and triviality could not have blinded Thackeray to Brummell's sartorial details, for he notes with mockery that Brummell's only claim to greatness is the invention of the starched white cravat ("Review" 36).

In a footnote to the first edition of *Vanity Fair*, for which he also drew the illustrations, Thackeray wrote that he chose 1848 fashion because Regency fashion is simply too ugly: "when I remember the appearance of people in those days and that an officer and a lady were actually habited like this—I have not the heart to *disfigure* my heroes and heroines by costumes so hideous and have on the contrary engaged a mode of rank dressed according to the present fashion" (qtd. Lambert 63). Why, then, would Thackeray risk the charge of historical inaccuracy by switching to the seemingly more tolerable (to him) fashion of his

¹² Clair Hughes also writes that the swell would be familiar to a *Punch*-reading audience of the 1850s, as the dandy's leisured middle-class imitator who nevertheless vulgarizes the dandy's look with loud colors and fancy, eccentric cuts. Swells thus lack the dandy's *ton* (36, 53).

own time if his purpose is, at least in Jos's case, to attack and ridicule it? Critic Juliet McMaster argues that Thackeray's novels are riddled with historical inaccuracies and that despite this he still manages to reproduce "the feel of a past age" (313); yet the question still remains: would not the more hideous (to Thackeray) Regency style have better served to denigrate that decadent era and to champion his own morally superior age? If Jos, dressed in 1840s Victorian fashion, is an object of ridicule, would that not offend the audience for which Thackeray wrote?

Such sartorial anachronism indicates that, despite the Regency setting of *Vanity Fair* and Thackeray's satire of the dandy, his real purpose is to criticize and educate his contemporary audience, however indirectly. Far from admiring the industrious, simple, and disciplined bourgeois model he celebrates, Thackeray's readers are preoccupied with a clumsy adulation of aristocratic ways and are themselves guilty of dandiacal vanity and flashiness. They seek not the construction of their own distinct class identity but approval from the aristocracy that validates their performances of social climbing. Jos's conspicuous consumption reflects the class aspirations shared by the novel's middle class characters and its readers. It is this middle-class "lordolatry" that has alarmed Thackeray into a flurry of preaching for purposes of education and rectification (*Book of Snobs* 14). The word "snob" is thus popularized by Thackeray to refer to the "showy gentility of an insecure bourgeoisie" (Cole 139). *Vanity Fair* projects this excessive vanity onto the Regency dandy; but by dressing Jos in the early Victorian style of his own time, the criticism targets contemporary bourgeois public and its sartorial "snobbery."

Dobbin's and Jos's sartorial examples establish that clothes and display play a key role in articulating modes of masculinity. Dobbin's sartorial evolution unveils the performative nature of Victorian paradigmatic masculinity and its reliance on clothes and display as a key technology of self-fashioning. It also challenges

the binary oppositions, much insisted on in Thackeray's journalistic writings, between superficial clothes and one's inner core, or the natural and the artificial. Jos's example reveals that normative early Victorian discourse on bourgeois masculinity may be less a reality than an ideal, less something that is already true than something toward which he encourages the middle class to aspire. The era harbors a variety of competing forms of masculinity as a result of accelerating industrialization and shifting social stratification; and clothes and fashion—instead of being insignificant or dispensable to a more authentic self—importantly articulate these modes of masculinity and insert them into social discourse.

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Matthew Arnold and the Talmud Man by Peter Brier

Matthew Arnold could not identify with doctrinal Christianity, its miracles, and the Resurrection. An alternative to "the world of faith," however, was not "powerless to be born" (*Poems* 301): literature, "the best...thought and said (known) in the world," was not exactly a substitute for religion, but Arnold believed it could speak to the emotional and spiritual needs of a mind bereft of religion. Furthermore, if one really wanted to understand what the bible was saying, Arnold insisted that one had to learn to read it as literature. The religion of the day would not concede that it was, as Arnold wrote in "Stanzas from the Grande Chartreuse," "but a dead man's exploded dream." Trapped by their "old dogmas," traditional guardians of the bible would not allow literary culture, which Arnold credited with its own creed of "disinterestedness" and a natural instinct for "the pursuit of perfection" (*Prose* III: 283; V: 168) to provide a balm. Until the common reader learned how to read the bible as literature, Arnold argued in "Literature and Science," the English mind would continue to be clouded by religious illusions; the pursuit of "righteousness" and the true ideal of moral "conduct," according to *Literature and Dogma*, were deflected by dogma and superstition. Arnold did not devote his thought and energy to writing about religion because he wanted to revive its formal practice. *St. Paul and Protestantism* (1870), *Literature and Dogma* (1873), and *God and the Bible* (1875) were not written to bring back outdated religious institutions; they were written to show how a revived sense of the bible's literary power could reveal what the churches had lost or distorted. The bible was certainly representative of the "best that has been thought and said in the world," but it was also what was *most* read in the world by a broad cross section of people from those bred to literacy and those new to it. To read the bible as literature was in the deepest sense an

act of personal liberation, what Arnold had proffered as a definition of literature itself—a "criticism of life" (*Prose* III: 209; IX: 44 and 163).

The study of Arnold's prose, until fairly recently, has tended to concentrate on his cultural and literary studies, such as *On the Study of Celtic Literature* (1867), *Culture and Anarchy* (1869), and the two series of *Essays in Criticism* (1865, 1888). Those prose works with explicitly religious texts or ideas in the title—popular, controversial, and read seriously until World War I—have been largely ignored by modern critics. Scholars like Douglas Bush, who valued Arnold's poetry and understood its rooting in the melancholy of a lost faith, gave Arnold credit for trying in *Literature and Dogma* and the Pauline essays to save "Jesus from an untenable theology" (187). More recently, James C. Livingston argued: "Arnold believed that those who felt both the irresistible character of the *Zeitgeist* and the incomparable greatness of biblical religion must now seek to place the truth of that religion on 'a new experimental basis.' For Arnold that meant establishing the truths on the unassailable ground of human experience" (43). Livingston maintains that by distinguishing between the languages of science and literature, Arnold persuades us that the bible relies on the language of literature which means that it expects the reader to exercise his "literary taste" and not an "indiscriminate literalizing of everything he reads" (44). The mind that literalizes all that it encounters risks losing its humanity, a lesson Arnold had driven home with great effect in his best known essay of cultural and social criticism, "The Function of Criticism at the Present Time" (1865): the callous phrase "Wragg is in custody," used to describe an incarcerated indigent, shamed both the newspaper that printed it and its readers who could accept it without cringing (*Prose* III: 274).

Ruth apRoberts in *Arnold and God* (1983) dusted off the religious writings and showed their importance to Arnold's

personal growth. What Arnold thought the bible could do for the spirituality of the common reader, he did for himself on a greater scale by building on the bible's poetic power to effect the "criticism of life." What his own poetry did for him in his youth, his reflections on the bible transmuted from poetic creativity to a spiritually directed intellectual development. Arnold's definition of poetry—the "criticism of life"—yielded to "imaginative reason" and what the Germans called *Bildung*, an enlightened and far ranging command of a wide field of learning and knowledge that humanized the mind (apRoberts 110-11). Donald D. Stone's *Communications with the Future* makes an impressive case for Arnold's anticipation in his "religious" essays of the hermeneutic revolution in moderns as diverse as Nietzsche, Foucault, and Gadamer. Amanda Anderson, on the other hand, in an influential essay on Arnold's idea of "detachment" or "disinterestedness" returns to a preference for Arnold's secular prose and works with *On the Study of Celtic Literature* while shrugging off the later religious writings as "a form of mysticism" (96).

One way of exploring both the continuities and differences between the two writers of prose Arnold actually was—the critic of a smug and parochial culture and the apologist for a unique idea of religious sensibility—is to look at the way he negotiated both received ideas of modern Jewish identity and Jewish theology.¹ Specifically, Arnold's encounter with both Jewishness and Judaism provides a template for understanding what continues to be a vexing problem in Arnold studies—his rationale for bridging culturally and ethically driven religion in an increasingly secular and scientifically oriented world. Arnold's willingness to allow

¹ Jonathan Freedman suggests that Arnold's alien sense of himself as an intellectual in a Philistine society was linked to his appreciation for and identification with marginalized Jews like Heine and Spinoza who inspired his own ideas of the pursuit of perfection and the need "for some kind of place...in the social ensemble" (47-48). His exchanges with Emanuel Deutsch provide an unusual window into the capacity of both for "fusing horizons," a metaphor coined by Gadamer and singled out by Donald Stone (118) as appropriate to Arnold.

this rationale to be fed by Emanuel Deutsch's agenda of changing British attitudes toward Jews and Judaism suggests a stronger connection between Judaism and Arnold's ultimate joining of morality and culture than is commonly recognized.

Lord Byron awoke to find himself famous the morning after the publication of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*. A similar experience befell Emanuel Deutsch (1829-73), a Talmud scholar and epigraphist from Silesia working as librarian and cataloguer at the British Museum. After he published an article on the Talmud in October 1867 in the *Quarterly Review*, the magazine went through seven printings, and the essay itself was soon translated into almost every European language. Deutsch earned the sobriquet "The Talmud Man" and became something of a salon fixture with George Grove's Sydenham Circle and George Eliot's Sunday receptions at The Priory. He jostled verbally with Frederic Harrison and George Du Maurier, who were startled to learn that the Gospel owed more to Jewish sources than the scholarship of the day was willing to recognize. Readers of George Eliot are familiar with Deutsch because of his role in deepening her knowledge of Judaica—he also gave her Hebrew lessons—and because of his influence on her proto-Zionism. Deutsch is widely recognized as the model for Mordecai-Ezra, the visionary proto-Zionist who inspired the hero of Eliot's last novel, *Daniel Deronda* (1876). Deutsch had great hopes of writing a definitive work on the Talmud that would bring it into mainstream modern intellectual discourse. Before he died of cancer at the age of thirty-seven on his last journey to the Middle East, he requested that all his fragmentary notes for his opus on the Talmud be destroyed.²

² Deutsch's connection to Eliot is mentioned in all the standard Eliot biographies beginning with Gordon Haight's (1968). Deutsch's Talmud essay, reviews, lectures, and selected critical essays were published in 1874 by Lady Emily Strangford with a "Memoir" introduction based on his diaries and journals which, on his instructions, she later destroyed. For an overview of his career see B. L. Abrahams. Julius Rodenberg was a witness to Deutsch's early years in London. The revised entry on Deutsch in the new *Dictionary of National Biography* includes a secondary bibliography (931-32).

In the months following the publication of his Talmud essay, Deutsch's sudden celebrity brought him many invitations to speak publicly. In May 1868, he gave one of several "Lectures on the Talmud" that broadened the central argument of the original essay: that the Talmud was a seedbed of ideas that would define progress in educational and political institutions in the ensuing centuries. Directly refuting allegations by Christian missionaries that the Talmud condemned modern Jews to a world of superstition, obscurity, and inane argument, Deutsch insisted that the Talmud was a harbinger of European enlightenment. Its insistence on the importance of education—"learn, learn, learn" (3)—fueled intellectual opportunities for the rising masses in modern society; the rabbis' bringing of religious ritual from the Temple into the home and the synagogue not only encouraged literacy but also planted the seeds for the separation of church and state. These were astonishing claims for gentile ears and made the Talmud Man something of a religious comparativist *and* liberal and cultural apologist at one stroke. He seemed to be revealing ideas about Judaism and its place in religious discussion that no one had ever considered before in quite the same way; he was a gadfly for modernization in religion, politics, and society. This was similar to what Matthew Arnold was doing at the same time: in July 1867, he began publishing in *Cornhill Magazine* installments of what eventually became his most famous essay in cultural criticism, *Culture and Anarchy*.

In November 1867, in answer to his mother's query as to who had written "the article on the Talmud," Arnold wrote: "no doubt you have by this time heard that it is by a German in the British Museum called Deutsch. He is probably a Jew; a much better article on the Talmud and Jewish history is in the recent numbers of the 'Revue des 2 Mondes' by Reville" (*Letters* 3: 193).³ Albert

³ In "On the Study of Celtic Literature" (*Cornhill Magazine* 1866) Arnold writes: "But the quick, sure, instinctive perception of the incongruous and absurd not even genius

Reville was a Protestant theologian known for his progressive views and studies in comparative religion. Arnold's "Preface" to *Culture and Anarchy* alludes to Reville, "whose religious writings are always interesting [and who] says that the conception which cultivated and philosophical Jews now entertain of Christianity and its Founder, is probably destined to become the conception which Christians themselves will entertain" (*Prose* III: 251). In his Talmud essay, Deutsch conceded that Christianity had universalized the *ethical* teachings of Judaism ("I speak not of faith") and Arnold feels free to assume from this that the modern religious Jew had made his peace with the fact that he could not be in "the main stream of life"; that he was cut off from the kind of "spiritual growth" needed to bring "to perfection the gifts committed to him." In other words, while granting Judaism the parenting of Christianity, which Arnold maintains sensible modern Christians should do, he nevertheless avers that Jews cannot maintain their religion without being assigned to the margins of the world. Edward Alexander sees in Arnold's near contempt for "all post-biblical Jewish existence as little more than a 'speculative opinion'" a slap at the very heart of what Deutsch had alleged was of foundational importance to modern western institutions in the "post-biblical" Talmud (77).

Arnold's Hegelian dismissal of "post-biblical" Judaism in the 1869 Preface represents one side of the position he actually assumed, and perhaps the less operative in the total scheme of his thinking on the "Hebraic" or *Jewish* question as it figured in political and social debates throughout the century. For one thing, Arnold was disturbed by the fundamentalism and divisiveness of "Nonconformity," the sectarian Christianity of his day, which struck him as a far greater adversary in the battle for "Culture"

seems to give in Germany; at least, I can think of only one German of genius, Lessing (for Heine was a Jew, and the Jewish temperament is quite another thing from the German), who shows it in an eminent degree" (*Prose* III: 358-59).

than Jewish religious orthodoxy. On the Jewish Question, he was not his father's son: Thomas Arnold had objected vigorously to the removal of Jewish civil disabilities all through the 1830s, while Matthew took a more liberal position. Indeed, when he coined the term *Hebraism* in *Culture and Anarchy*, he was thinking of a distinction established by Heinrich Heine as early as 1840 in his *Ludwig Borne*. In that polemic, Heine contrasted "Hellene" and "Judean" as the difference between a world view grounded in materialism or spirituality. Christianity, as the inheritor of Judaism, was spiritually liberating for Europe, but true emancipation also required the aesthetic and philosophical values of Hellenism.⁴ In 1863, Arnold alluded to Heine's remarks on his own sensibility as being defined by the Hellenic and Hebraic "double renaissance" of the sixteenth century, when Greek beauty and form teamed up with Jewish sublimity and untamableness, the "longing which cannot be uttered" (*Prose* III: 127-28). Arnold massaged Heine's distinction in order to stress the righteousness and ethical imperative implicit in a "sublimity" focused on monotheistic awe. What was "Jewish" for Heine became "Hebraic" for Arnold, and it must have been difficult for Arnold to keep all the variables under control. He had decided by the time he was writing the essays which would constitute *Culture and Anarchy* that Hebraism, as he understood it, subsumed Judaism under its historical successor, Christianity. He differed from Heine in believing that Christianity, in its ideal state, balanced Hebraism and Hellenism, but he was also appalled at the narrowness of a Christianity embroiled in sectarian dogmatism. He had difficulty concealing his ambivalence over raising the Hebraic-Jewish Question, as made clear in the sentence following the announcement to his mother of Deutsch's authorship. What Arnold projects onto the "English religious public" is his own perplexity: "The *Quarterly* article is important from its effect on the English religious public, who will bear any amount of putting their religion

⁴ See Praver (349-50).

in a new light if it is to be done by means of the Jews and Judea; it is partly good for them to have this done, and partly, I think, not good" (*Letters* 3: 193).

Three weeks before writing his mother in November 1867, Arnold wrote a gentler and more politic letter on the impact of Deutsch's essay to Louisa Lady de Rothschild, who had become a sincerely treasured friend. They shared musical and poetic tastes, and interest in charitable causes; she was also acutely interested in Arnold's responsibilities as inspector of schools. Each was genuinely interested in the family of the other; illness and death haunted Arnold's young family, and Lady de Rothschild extended deep sympathy. After sharing his concerns over excusing invalid school boys (including his own) from "fagging or violent exercises," Arnold writes of the popularity of Deutsch's Talmud article:

What interests them...[is] the abundance of Christian doctrine and dispositions present in Judaism towards the time of the Christian era, and such phenomena as Hillel's ownership of the Golden Rule....It is curious that...the English people is so constituted and trained that there is a thousand times more chance of bringing it to a more philosophical conception of Christianity as something utterly unique, isolated, and self-subsistent, through Judaism and its phenomena, than through Hellenism and its phenomena. (*Letters* 3: 184-85)⁵

The last sentence passes over the same observation that Arnold would make three weeks later in the letter to his mother, namely that the "English religious public," as he puts it, inclines more toward Hebraism than Hellenism and is thereby fated to see matters in a religious context that should be considered cultural. He employs a tactful irony when addressing a Jewish friend but is

⁵ "Hillel" was "Hallet" in George Russell's 1896 edition of the *Letters*, not corrected until Lang's 1998 edition.

straightforward about his concerns when addressing his mother (“partly, I think, not good”).

The Reform Bill of 1867 extended the franchise to include many citizens from the Nonconformist classes. Although the growth of religious tolerance in the 1860s enabled the appearance of essays like Deutsch’s on the Talmud and contributed to the liberalism that made the Reform Bill—Disraeli’s “Tory” coup—possible, it could not defuse the rising anti-Semitism partially caused by the enfranchisement of the lower classes. Many felt that Jews were outside the parameters of the new “national community” in the making (Feldman 211). For all their differences, Anglicans and Nonconformists still had Christianity in common. Arnold came to realize that the very *Hebraism* he objected to in the English was responsible for their anti-Semitism; that a bit more *Hellenism* in their cultural orientation would have protected them from the *Philistinism* of a provincial Christianity.

Arnold singles out the “long extracts from the Talmud” in Deutsch’s essay as “fresh” and a source of “huge satisfaction” (*Letters* 3: 184-85). What pleased him most were the closing pages in which Deutsch strung together a rather long series of excerpts from the Talmud stressing such verities and values as repentance, good works, the honoring of children and wives, and anonymous charity. The list at first seems disconnected and fragmentary, but a careful oral reading reveals the very essence of the way the Talmud works. *Halachic* principles (law and rite) are interspersed with gnomic illustrations and *Haggadistic* stories, allegories, and parables. The mind remembers and associates in an approximation of the *pil pul* (give and take) of Talmudic study; the reader is led to imagine a sharing of voices—the illusion of a house of prayer filled with students in colloquy and bringing to the discussion all the relevant passages from the Talmud that support the different facets of the moral truths at issue. What Deutsch succeeded in doing here was to recreate the experience of the Talmud, not just

another classification of some of its teachings. We are reminded of James Livingston’s remark that Arnold believed the bible provided “the unassailable ground of human experience” for the pursuit of the highest human values. Arnold heard the resonance of biblical language in the language of the Talmud.

To an English reader, this sort of literary catalogue would have evoked the parabolic effect of a biblical text such as the Book of Proverbs or even a more recent offspring like Blake’s “Book of Proverbs” in the *Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, which was beginning to enjoy a Victorian rediscovery. Deutsch’s catalogue of Talmudic highlights also brings to mind Arnold’s idea of “touchstones” as formulated in “The Study of Poetry,” the introductory essay to an anthology of the English Poets published in 1881: “Indeed there can be no more useful help for discovering what poetry belongs to the class of the truly excellent, and can therefore do us most good, than to have in one’s mind lines and expressions of the great masters, and to apply them as a touchstone to other poetry” (*Prose* IX: 168). It is true that Deutsch’s catalogue is not poetry, but much of it approaches a kind of prose poetry and all of it is cross referential and chosen with an eye for the best of its kind. Arnold thought of touchstones as useful for literary evaluation as early as 1861 in his influential “On Translating Homer.” His “huge satisfaction” with Deutsch’s “extracts” was probably triggered by an innate appreciation for a mind similarly inclined in its ability to exercise a reliable taste on a wide body of knowledge and reading. When Lionel Trilling suggested that Wordsworth’s “wise passiveness” corresponded to the virtuous passivity of the Rabbis in the *Pirhke Abboth* (*The Sayings of the Fathers*), a distillation of rabbinical wisdom, he insinuates a similarity between Jewish and English moral consciousness that struck many in the 1950s as a bit hard to accept as feasible in Wordsworth’s England of 1805. By 1867, the intellectual and cultural climate (if not the religious) had changed. Indeed, Trilling

must have felt emboldened to make his claims for Wordsworth as a “Jewish” poet by his own insights more than ten years before the Wordsworth essay in his *Matthew Arnold* (1939), still considered by many the major work on Arnold’s thought. If Wordsworth’s “natural piety” had a Jewish ancestry, Arnold’s aphoristic definition of God in the conclusion to *Literature and Dogma* (1873), “The power not ourselves that makes for righteousness,” is even more explicitly Jewish in its origins (*Prose* VI: 405-06). Known for understating his Jewish perspective, Trilling is unusually explicit and even hortatory in the following passage:

Here is the crux of Arnold’s exposition and it is momentous in denying almost completely the centuries of Christian intellectual tradition, from Augustine to Aquinas and beyond. He goes back...for his theology, to the God of the Old Testament Jews. Originally, he says, Elohim, the Mighty, was not a specifically religious conception, but Elohim became Jehovah, the Eternal; “the Eternal what? The Eternal Cause? Alas, these poor people were not Archbishops of York. They meant the Eternal righteous, who loveth righteousness.” (324)

Arnold and Deutsch met for the first time at a dinner party on July 31, 1868 hosted by Deutsch’s old friend, Lord Percy Strangford and his wife, the future sole executor and heir of Deutsch’s estate and publisher of his *Literary Remains*. It was more than half a year after Deutsch’s essay had appeared and ten months since the articles published in the Cornhill under the rubric “Anarchy and Authority” that would eventually be compiled under the title *Culture and Anarchy* (1869). Deutsch charmed him, no mean feat since Arnold was himself a charmer, a man who was liked by some of his fiercest opponents in political and cultural disputes; the two “had a long talk...about Hebraism and Hellenism” (*Letters* 3: 277-78). Arnold’s assertion—“What wonderful vitality & power these German Jews have!”—reveals that German and Jew are no longer

separated by their distinctly different “temperaments” but united under the aegis of something larger than both. For Arnold, “vitality and power” were synonymous with “disinterestedness” and “culture”: “When I was introduced to him I felt rather a culprit at having said about Hebraism so much that was rather in the state of *aperçu* [perception] than of solid knowledge; but he told me that he had distinctly felt, while writing his article on the Talmud, that I had chiefly made it possible for him to write such an article in England, and for the English public to read it; so I was responsible.”

Deutsch had shared the proofs for his essay with George Eliot and Lewes while they were traveling in Germany during the summer of 1867; it is highly unlikely that he would have held back his own pen until having read the bulk of what Arnold had to say in the Cornhill installments that were appearing at the same time. Was Deutsch laying on flattery “with a trowel,” as Disraeli described his own fawning over Queen Victoria?⁶ Perhaps: but Deutsch was early aware of the main drift in Arnold’s cultural and literary essays; he recognized in Arnold an English intellectual dedicated to questioning British insularity. Unless the English started to read French and German books, how could they ever be made to appreciate something as exotic as the Talmud? In addition, the appreciative essay on Heine in Arnold’s *First Series of Essays in Criticism* (1865), with its crucially important, largely complimentary references to the Jewish component in Heine’s work must have warmed Deutsch’s heart. Heine’s bitterly sarcastic observations of the British after his short sojourn in London in 1827 had not left him in good standing with English readers, and Arnold’s praise was a welcome corrective.

Writing to Lady de Rothschild about the encounter, Arnold added: “I have had no such tribute to my powers of relaxing and

⁶ Disraeli commented: “Everyone likes flattery; and when you come to Royalty you should lay it on with a trowel” (*Collections and Recollections*. Ed. G. Russell, 1898).

dissolving yet paid. If one can but dissolve what is bad without dissolving what is good!" (*Letters* 3:279). "Good" and "bad" again, and this time to an important Jewish friend. He now had a clearer idea of what was at stake in the contrast between Hebraism and Hellenism, and he often raised the problem of "dissolving" one cultural perspective into another. He saw the process in historical terms, the long and pulsating struggle to reach "perfection." In his essay "Marcus Aurelius," Arnold measures the subtle changes from ethical stoicism to Christian morality and uses the word "dissolving" to track the process. Although the British suffered from an excess of Hebraism, cultural health demanded a judicious synthesis of the two. From everything we have seen in Deutsch's case for the Talmud, he and Arnold *did* have much in common.

Arnold's "St. Paul and Protestantism" went through several permutations between 1870 and 1887, but kept its balance by relying on the following insight:

Hebraism strikes too exclusively upon one string in us; Hellenism does not address itself with serious energy enough to morals and righteousness....we need to unite the two...Hellenism is a kind of amiable grace and artless winning good-nature, born out of the perfection of lucidity, simplicity, and natural truth;...the flower of Christianity is grace and peace by the annulment of our ordinary self through the mildness and sweet reasonableness of Christ. Both are eminently humane...the second being the perfection of that...which is moral and acts, the first, of that...which is intelligential and perceives and knows. (*Prose* VI: 125)

Judaism has "dissolved" into Christianity (Hebraism), but there is a slight culture lag in the way Arnold favors the language of Talmudic Jewish scholarship over that of patristic or modern Christian theology when it comes to genuine biblical hermeneutics. Calvinists and dissenters who have twisted biblical language to

support dogmas like predestination are misreading the "language" in which the bible actually speaks:

The admirable maxim of the great mediaeval Jewish school of Biblical critics: The Law speaks with the tongue of the children of men,—a maxim which is the very foundation of all sane Biblical criticism,—was for centuries a dead letter to the whole body of our Western exegesis, and is a dead letter to the whole body of our popular exegesis still. Taking the Bible language as equivalent with the language of the scientific intellect, a language which is adequate and absolute, we have never been in a position to use the key which this maxim of the Jewish doctors offers us. (*Prose* VI: 21)

In *Culture and Anarchy*, Arnold dismissed all post-biblical Jewish thought and expression as out of the mainstream of European culture and therefore incidental to its welfare. By 1870, he feels confident in his assertion that Christianity is the Hebraism of his day, but he relies on the Jewish heritage of a liturgical Hebrew still in touch with its literary nature, and not desiccated by misapplied rationalism, to keep Christianity faithful to itself. On the one hand, Arnold is grateful for Jewish recognition of the symbolic power of language; but when the Puritans objected that the very "righteousness" at the heart of Christianity was also the watchword of the Old Testament Jews, he retorted that the "Christian sort of righteousness" was transfigured by Christ's "mildness and sweet reasonableness" (*Prose* VI: 125). In all of this polemical to and fro, Arnold knew that when he credited Jewish biblical language with symbolic and literary powers, he could not simply step back and interpret all Old Testament violence literally. One would like to think that Emanuel Deutsch would have nudged him tactfully and told him so. There is no smoking gun—only this haunting suggestion: "I cannot lay my hand on a note I had from Deutsch, the man who wrote about the Talmud, speaking of St. Paul....The

criticism in that book will in the main stand" (*Letters* 3: 462). We do not know what Deutsch said in that note, but we can infer there were others.

From Arnold's appreciation of Deutsch's Talmud extracts to his bold insistence that the Bible was a work of literature devoted to the celebration of "righteousness" and *not* a record of phenomena (some purported miraculous) to be taken literally or as a form of theological knowledge driven by Christian typology, Arnold was pursuing a culturally inclusive approach to the Bible that helped bring Judaism in from the cold. The more Arnold insisted that cultural literacy was essential to a true understanding of the Bible, that an appreciation "of the best that has been thought and said in the world" was a *sine qua non* for religious health, the more difficult it became to ignore the contribution of Judaism, particularly Prophetic Judaism.⁷ This came to a head in *Literature and Dogma* (1873, 1878), in many ways Arnold's most ambitious single prose work, in which the battle for culture and the battle for an ethically grounded religious faith are joined. And, as already noted in Trilling's climactic paragraph in his *Matthew Arnold*, the inspiration for its central idea, "The power not ourselves that makes for righteousness," springs from Judaism (*Prose* VI: 405-06).

In March 1871, when he was writing the earliest drafts of "Literature and Dogma," Arnold sent his mother a note written by Deutsch for the family's autograph book: "I find it very useful and interesting to know the signification of names, and had written to ask him whether Jerusalem meant 'the vision of peace' or 'the foundation of peace'; either meaning is beautiful, but I wished for the first, as the most beautiful. However, you will see what he says" (*Letters* 4: 25). Wracked with pain and despondent, the ailing

⁷ On Arnold's distrust of Rabbinical Judaism, see Edward Alexander, *Matthew Arnold and John Stuart Mill* (New York: Columbia UP, 1965). See also Alexander's "Dr. Arnold, Matthew Arnold, and the Jews" on the centrality of the Jewish question in *Literature and Dogma*.

Deutsch was being cared for by his neighbors, the Reverend and Mrs. Haweis, when he responded to Arnold's query:

This is indeed a vexed question. I, for my part, hesitate to decide in favor of either Vision or Foundation (of Peace) though the latter has certainly better claims than the former. Another of the many suggestions, viz. inheritance seems almost preferable, though here too a great deal of coercion is requisite to make it fit. It is altogether one of those words the real meaning of which will always remain doubtful & the best course regarding it would seem to be that which the Talmud follows in problematic cases of a similar ilk. "Teku" it says: which, a corruption of the Greek, is explained to mean "let the matter be decided by the Messiah, whose business it will be to answer all questions impossible of present solution. (*Letters* 4: 24)⁸

Arnold incorporated Deutsch's suggestion in a singular way—by extolling the Hebrew people of the Old Testament: "No people ever felt so strongly...that conduct is three-fourths of our life and its largest concern...that succeeding, going right, hitting the mark in this great concern, was *the way of peace*, the highest possible satisfaction" (*Prose* VI: 180). Arnold situated the word *Jerusalem* in the following semantic context: "Their holy city, Jerusalem, is the foundation, or vision, or inheritance, of that which righteousness achieves,—*peace*." "Vision," the word that Arnold felt was "more beautiful," is embraced by Deutsch's terms "foundation" and "inheritance" (*Prose* VI: 180). Was he trying to do justice to the dynamic of righteousness and peace that he felt lay at the center of the Jewish legacy? The conjunction "or" leaves open the question as to whether Jerusalem is the *visionary*, New Jerusalem of Jesus' "sweet reasonableness" or the historical "foundation" and Covenantal "inheritance" of Mosaic tradition. Is

⁸ The *Jewish Encyclopedia* (1971) defines Jerusalem as follows: "The original name was IRUSALEM. 'Yahrah' = to found; West Semitic God = Shulmanu or Shalim. A later Midrashic explanation = foundation of peace (Shalom) is associated with the poetic appellation given to the city."

Arnold creating an urbane trinity ordained in the spirit of enlightened religious comparativism, one more balancing act in the synthesis of Hellenism and Hebraism, or do all the “ors” disguise an inchoate but purposeful unwillingness to support the “better claims” Deutsch made for the terms less appealing to Arnold?⁹

Throughout *Literature and Dogma*, Arnold reaffirms the obligation of Christianity to its Jewish sources—“as long as the world lasts, all who want to make progress in righteousness will come to Israel for inspiration”—thereby saluting an idea that Deutsch stressed emphatically in his Talmud essay (*Prose* VI: 199). Indeed, Arnold is so swept up in the certainty of his insight—that without righteousness revealed in conduct—there can be no religion, no spirituality worthy of the name, that he finds it difficult to separate his respect for Jewish righteousness from his “experience” of Jesus’ “sweet reasonableness.” Near the conclusion of *Literature and Dogma*, he fuses faith and ethics in a manner that obscures the difference between Judaism and Christianity. “Experience” takes him in a circle and in his end is his beginning, but not in the sense that T.S. Eliot envisioned in the *Four Quartets*:

So that the culmination of Christian righteousness, in the applying, to guide our use of the method and secret of Jesus, his sweet reasonableness or *epieikeia*, is proved from experience. We end, therefore, as we began,—by experience. And the whole series of experience, of which the survey is thus completed, rests primarily, upon one fundamental fact,—itself, eminently, a fact of experience: the necessity of righteousness. (*Prose* VI: 406)

⁹ Michael Ragussis suggests that Arnold in the 1870s was defending “Semitic culture” as Disraeli had done earlier in the century. Disraeli did speak of the importance of Semitic spirituality to Western civilization, but he usually celebrated Jewish genius as a racial inheritance. Deutsch was not an apologist for the genius of the Jewish race, the Talmud essay proving his egalitarianism. He would have approved of Arnold’s insistence that “only...one people...from whom we get the Bible” have given us “the Old Testament...filled with the word and thought of righteousness” (*Prose* VI: 180).

In one sense, the roundness of Arnold’s thinking, which is all embracing and not merely repetitive or mistakenly circular, is representative of exactly those virtues that made him such an outstanding critic. “‘Life itself’ was always at the center of Matthew Arnold’s critical writing,” writes Joseph Epstein: “as a critic, Arnold was able to grasp life in its interrelatedness: literary, moral, and spiritual values were for him twined” (30). Arnold’s critical attempts “to see things as they really are” takes him inexorably to a place where he cannot remain (*Prose* III: 258). There is no hierarchical distinction between Judaism and Christianity when it comes to “righteousness.” “Peace” and “sweet reasonableness” are finally “twined” and there is nothing in Arnold’s long argument in *Literature and Dogma* to support the idea that Christianity supersedes Judaism. He falls back on what he calls “experience” and in a somewhat self-delusional way insists that in choosing Jesus, Christianity has replaced “foundation” with “vision”; that Christians can claim the “inheritance” that the Jews have lost; that “Jerusalem” is Jesus and not the Torah. Arnold did not take Deutsch’s cautiously ironic advice and leave the ultimate definition of Jerusalem to the Messiah.¹⁰

What prevented Arnold from trusting to his best instincts, from remembering his dedication to “disinterestedness,” from forgetting his urbanity? Perhaps he could not consciously reject the religious culture of his fathers, certainly not a father like Thomas Arnold, master of Rugby and opponent of Jewish civil liberties. Matthew Arnold, if not a believing Christian in the doctrinal sense of the

¹⁰ Scholars have debated Arnold’s religious faith, some claiming he substituted literature for religion and others that his faith held firm though he dismissed all “doctrine” as illusory. Insofar as the language of literature, specifically poetry, embodies the best hopes for modern spiritual experience, it is somewhat contradictory that he does not give the palm to Judaism rather than Christianity. He alludes often to the superiority of the language of Hebrew poetry over anything in the New Testament. The famous lines in “Stanzas Chartreuse” should probably have the last word: “Wandering between two worlds, one dead [the world of faith] / The other powerless to be born.” See also apRoberts and Livingston.

word, was very much a man of Christian feeling, kind and modest to a fault. After the melancholy of his earlier years, the troubled poet of the "Strayed Reveller" had become a happily married family man, despite having lost three children. In an imperfect world, it was not always easy to extol the idea of a "not me" dedicated to the pursuit of righteousness, especially when there was a great deal of unrighteous experience. Arnold had rejected the norms of science, formal theology, and metaphysics as essentially useless for an understanding of the actual experience of religion, but a deeply ingrained aesthetic sensibility surfaced in various ways. Like his father, Arnold admired the Anglican Church for its flexible assimilation of tradition and change, but it was probably more its ritual and beauty that impressed him. The Jews were either God intoxicated—Spinoza being the primary example—or they were mired in cynicism, like the free-spirited Heine. The Jewish people, in general, who had created a religion based on the self-demand of righteousness, had been pounded into an aesthetically offensive mass. The Hebraism of England's Puritan middle class had rendered them narrow and intolerant. Had the original Hebraism of the Jews provoked Victorian anti-Semitism? It may be this that forces him, against the grain of his own liberal mind-frame, to embrace what some would call a *genteel* anti-Semitism and others would call the real thing.¹¹ The fact that "conduct represents three fourths of life" does truly constitute for Israel a most extraordinary distinction. In spite of all which in them and in their character is unattractive, nay, repellent,—in spite of their shortcomings even in righteousness itself and their insignificance in everything else,—this petty, unsuccessful, unamiable people, without politics, without science, without art, without charm, deserve their great place in the world's regard, and are likely to have it more, as the world goes on, rather than less. It is secured to them by the facts of human nature, and by the

¹¹ See also Cheyette (13-23).

unalterable constitution of things. 'God hath given commandment to bless, and he hath blessed, and we cannot reverse it; he hath not seen iniquity in Jacob, and he hath not seen perverseness in Israel; the Eternal, his God, is with him! Numbers, xxiii.20-21. (*Prose VI*: 199)

The Religious visionary giveth, but the Cultural critic taketh away. Somehow, the ordinary modern Jew, unidentified with what Arnold saw as the inspired alienation of his own modern prophets—Spinoza and Heine, has lost his capacity for "emotion and feeling," as he says repeatedly in *Literature and Dogma*, and also for "politics, science, art, and charm" and all the other qualities that make life worth living, such as Jesus embodied but that "national" crises and trauma prevented the Jews from experiencing. Fortunately, the "unalterable constitution of things," assisted by "human nature," will eventually give the Jews their due. Arnold is never explicit as to how this will come about, but from his many sympathetic portraits of modern Jewish personalities one gathers that the secret is through an assimilative process through which "unamiable" Semitic traits are somehow shed and the "love of righteousness" at the core of Jewish sensibility, no longer a convoluted and self-destructive force, will resurface to strengthen a Christian world adrift in abstract theology and dogmatic strife.

The accent is on *assimilation*. The Jewish "foundation" is unique and irreplaceable, but is it sufficiently "visionary" to draw us toward the "perfection" that Arnold held out as the moral, cultural and aesthetic goal of all human endeavor? Does it have the "sweetness and light," let alone the "sweet reasonableness" of Jesus, to get there? Not on its own. The great actress Rachel insisted on Jewish burial rites, but her favorite book was Thomas A Kempis' *The Imitation of Christ*. In one of his short poems on Rachel, Arnold celebrated and identified with her cosmopolitanism:

In her, like us, there clashed contending powers,
Germany, France, Christ, Moses, Athens, Rome.

The strife, the mixture in her soul, are ours;
Her genius and her glory are her own. (*Poems* 524)

Deutsch would have refrained from quarreling with Arnold's emphasis on the humanizing effect of cultural difference, which after all, he singles out as one of the most important aspects of the Talmud: its witnessing and absorption of the world's customs and thought paralleling its own evolution. Had he lived long enough to know *Literature and Dogma* in its finished state, Deutsch would have been pleased at the way Arnold had stopped using Hebraism as a whipping-post for Nonconformist Philistinism (as in *Culture and Anarchy*) and was now celebrating Hebraism, in its ancient Jewish form, as the well-spring of righteousness. Thirty years later, Mordecai Kaplan, founder of the Reconstructionist movement in Judaism, wrote in his diary, "I am more convinced than ever that Acad Haam's [Achad Ha'am] conception of nationality, plus Arnold's interpretation of Israel's [ancient] genius for righteousness contain that which could form a positive expression of the Jewish spirit" (qtd. Livingston 6).¹² Deutsch, however, would have winced at Arnold's insistence that, when all was said and done, experience gave the palm to Jesus. Deutsch was livid when he discovered that William Smith, the editor of the *Quarterly*, who supported him generously when he wrote for the *Dictionary of the Bible* and took considerable risks in publishing the Talmud essay in 1867, had "deliberately changed 'Jesus' into 'Lord' throughout the article" (Abrahams 63).

While Arnold was preparing his Oxford lecture on Heine in 1863, later to be published with the *First Essays in Literary Criticism*, he was also putting the finishing touches to his poem "Heine's Grave," a lyric at once critical and elegiac, inspired by a

¹² Achad Ha'am, pseudonym of Asher Ginzberg (1856-1927), Ukrainian-born Jewish advocate of cultural and spiritual Zionism.

visit to the cemetery in Paris where Heine is memorialized. In the essay, Heine's dedication to the liberation of humanity is inspired by his Jewish wit and sense of justice, but quirks of Jewish temperament compromise what would have been a heroic soul. In the poem, wit and irony are symbolized in Heine's enigmatic "smile" and all the bitterness of his physical suffering and cynicism in his "sigh." The poem reaches its climax in Arnold's plea to a pantheistic spirit drawn from Heine's own praise of Spinoza in his *Religion and Philosophy in Germany* (1835):

Spirit, who fillest us all!
...O thou, one of whose moods,
Bitter and strange, was the life
Of Heine—his strange, alas,
His bitter life!—may a life
Other and milder be mine! (*Poems* 517)

The distance Arnold wants between his life and Heine's is measured by the "sweet reasonableness" of Jesus, confirmed by an earlier passage in which Arnold pictures the young Heine climbing in the Harz mountains, a translation into verse of Heine's own prose description in his *Harzreise*. Here is Heine: "I surely should have fallen with giddiness, but that in my dire distress I held fast to the iron cross (set on the granite cliff of the Ilstein). And I am sure no one will think the worse of me for doing so in such a critical moment." And here is Arnold:

Climbing the rock which juts
O'er the valley, the dizzily perched
Rock—to its iron cross
Once more thou cling'st; to the Cross
Clingest! With smiles, with a sigh! (*Poems* 516)

While Heine's "reference to the cross could hardly be more demure," note editors Kenneth and Miriam Allott, it is Arnold who "heavy-handedly supplies the capital letter and the sigh."

Arnold's difficulty in granting Heine the detachment he genuinely feels when it comes to Christian belief is in proportion to his qualified appreciation for the emotional intensity of Jewish national consciousness, or for that matter any deeply felt tribal or racial identity that threatens the cosmopolitan spirit. What is lost, however, is rarely forgotten. Modern Jewish consciousness, until the establishment of the state of Israel at the middle of the twentieth century, is more haunted by homelessness than the delay of the Messiah: "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand lose its cunning" (Psalm 137: 5). Deutsch pays ironic deference to the Messiah in his last letter to Arnold, but we know from the use George Eliot made of his pre-Zionist vision that his preference for "Foundation of Peace" (as well as "Inheritance") over "Vision of Peace" in the "translation of Jerusalem" speaks of his longing for a rooting in history and place. It is appropriate here to note that Deutsch also had a keen appreciation for Heine, but it was explicitly committed to a strong identification with his Jewish heritage. Typical of his *Zerissenheit* (conflicting emotions), Heine's religious orientation is riddled with contradiction and irony, but Deutsch's favorite Heine passage is from his *Hebrew Melodies*, where the great Spanish-Jewish poet Jehudah Ben Halevy is contrasted to the medieval poets of his time. Unlike the troubadours, Halevy's muse of courtly love is not the traditional "lady" but rather the city *and* word of Jerusalem: "The lady Rabbi Yehuda loved / was sad and poor, / a melancholy image of destruction / and her name was Jerusalem.... / In the earliest days of his childhood / he already loved her with all his heart; / his soul trembled at the very word Jerusalem" (trans. S.S. Prawer; *Poems* 516, 525).

Disinterestedness is the cardinal virtue of Arnold's ethics and cultural criticism. It is what the Nonconformists lack because of their religious dogma, and its absence seems to be what many liberals today find offensive in a strongly felt Zionism. Trilling had

friendly things to say about Israel in his last years, but he was too much an Arnoldian ever to succumb to a tribal passion. As Adam Kirsch writes:

To be Jewish, for Trilling, is to stand both inside and outside the modern, to embrace its liberation and mourn its casualties. Or perhaps—since Trilling warned against finding in his work any specifically Jewish "faults or virtues"—to stand inside and outside the modern was Trilling's own destiny as a writer, and everything in his life, from his ambition as a novelist to his identity as a Jew was made to serve it. (90)

This need to stand both "inside and outside" any conviction or commitment is Arnold's principal legacy. It is what Donald Stone has in mind when he claims that Arnold balanced "change" and "tradition" in his pursuit of moral perfection. Standing at a crossroad provides clear vision in all directions, but morality requires action as well as perception.

Amanda Anderson explores Arnold's Disinterestedness "as a Vocation...as an ongoing achievement [that]...must emerge out of concrete practices, guided by shaping aspirations and intimately linked to...character and moral selfhood" (97). Concepts such as disinterestedness, detachment, or cosmopolitanism cannot be ends in themselves; they must serve a dialectical purpose, "where intercultural mixing and contingent historical conditions are ultimately in the service of a higher totality" (112). To Anderson, apparently, there is more than just a lurking contradiction in Arnold's "heroic singularity"; such an ideal, not dissimilar to the heroically "opposing self" of Trilling is, in her view, merely preparation for the discovery that "universalism enacted simply *is* tact, that objectivity simply is impartiality." This would not have been enough for Arnold or Trilling. To "see the object as it really is" has nothing to do with impartiality. It does entail "disinterestedness" but informed by conviction and *Bildung*. I find

revealing, as noted earlier, that Anderson dismisses Arnold's religious writings as "tending toward a kind of mysticism." Ethicism, maybe, but I question "mysticism." The "not me" that moves us toward "righteousness" is what Arnold and Deutsch tried to pin down in Jerusalem as a signifier for Peace. Arnold resisted Deutsch's wanting to come down too firmly on national, even racial, "foundation" or "inheritance" for the "unifying totality" a truly dialogic universality required. Nevertheless, the universal is rooted in the particular. Arnold knew that race could not be ignored.¹³ In order to see the thing as it really is, one cannot remain exclusively "on the outside." Something in Arnold finally enabled him to move from "or" to "or" with a Kierkegaardian daring, while his melding of "foundation, vision and inheritance" represented something other than a balance of Hebraism and Hellenism in dialectical combination.¹⁴

Arnold came to the realization that religion was a way of "dying," but the "sweet reasonableness of Jesus" had little to do with Jesus dying for the sins of others—not for a self searching for meaning in a world where the individual ultimately had to achieve a moral *authenticity* more demanding than the *sincerity* of an established religious piety.¹⁵ Deutsch was one of those "German Jews" Arnold found fascinating but dangerously seductive. And yet, Arnold took a strange leap in *Literature and Dogma*. Taking his cue from the triad Deutsch had managed to induce him to adopt—foundation, vision, and inheritance—Arnold seems to be

¹³ Anderson herself notes that "Arnold always returns to a bedrock theory of racial difference" (99).

¹⁴ Kevin McLaughlin suggests that Arnold's concept of disinterestedness was influenced by Kant's warning that disinterestedness may be rooted in deception or self-deception. From the 1860's Arnold was dedicated "to exclude the possibility that consciousness could be self-interested" (617). In other words, the "not ourselves" at the heart of the pursuit of "righteousness" guarded against a disingenuous disinterestedness. By resisting a dialectical solution (Hebraism and Hellenism) and relying strongly on Judaism in *Literature and Dogma*, Arnold was reaching for a *true* disinterestedness ready to embrace moral action.

¹⁵ See Lionel Trilling's *Sincerity and Authenticity* (1971).

stressing the role Judaism plays in supporting the visionary capacity of the modern ethical imagination. The ethics of the Torah enable Arnold to bring into sharp focus his conviction that the springs of moral action, "righteousness," are released by the disinterested ("not me") powers of the highest literary art.

When writing his earlier cultural criticism, his identification with Heine and Spinoza was tentative and detached. Despite their marginal visions, with which he identified, as Jews they were finally from a world no longer in the flow of modern history; in his later religious reflections, it is through Judaism that he was actually able finally to pinpoint the literary and ethical ideas necessary for saving modern culture from its alienation and spiritual confusion. The cultural criticism pivots on the dialectic of Hebraism and Hellenism, but the religious essays move beyond an intellectual or philosophical disinterestedness (with its political and social implications) to an aesthetic and moral disinterestedness. Arnold uses an outdated Judaism to criticize the Philistine society of his day in his cultural criticism but intones the true "inwardness" of "the Eternal who loveth righteousness," the original Jewish Mosaic revelation, as rediscovered through the "mildness and self-renouncement" of Jesus in his major "religious" work, *Literature and Dogma* (*Prose* VI: 230). Judaism supplies the model (Hebraism) for the rigidities of Christian dogma and superstition that stifle cultural development but is *aufgehoben*, "hidden and preserved" in the Hegelian sense, and re-emerges as a rediscovered Jesus, the fabulist, poet, and figurative wit who unites imagination and ethics. Ruth apRoberts sums it up urbanely: "We must consent, though it may seem to trivialize Jesus, that Arnold is saying Jesus is a master of language, he is the right kind of literary critic" (206). And Arnold had to become something of a Rabbi to discover him.

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Robert Browning and *The Keepsake*: Memory, Memorialization, and the Future of Poetry

by Alison Chapman

The conventional narrative of Robert Browning's career marks a fallow period between the publication of *Men and Women* in 1855 and Elizabeth Barrett Browning's death in 1861. According to this narrative, his time was occupied by pleasant conversations with literary friends and with "[c]areful measures for the guarding of Elizabeth's health and for Pen's development" (Liztinger and Smalley 14). But Browning did publish two poems—"Ben Karshook's Wisdom" (1856) and "May and Death" (1857)—in what was, for him, an unusual place: *The Keepsake*. These almost entirely overlooked poems are important for a reassessment of Browning because they suggest his deep engagement with popular print culture and poetics.

Browning attested frequently to his dismay at periodical poetry, as did Barrett Browning, who quipped to one correspondent that "[m]y husband and I are averse generally to the periodical vehicle of publication" (*Letters* 2: 444).¹ And yet they both contributed to a variety of print periodicals. Aside from *Keepsake*, Browning published poems in *The Monthly Repository*, *Hood's Magazine*, *Atlantic Monthly*, and *Cornhill Magazine*, and Barrett Browning in *New Monthly Magazine*, *Athenaeum*, *Finden's Tableaux*, *Blackwood's Magazine*, *Christian Mother's Magazine*, *Household Words*, *Cornhill Magazine*, and the *New York Independent*. As Linda Hughes and Kathryn Ledbetter have argued, Victorian poets often based their careers on the lucrative

¹ See also Alison Chapman, "Vulgar needs: Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Profit, and Literary Value" in Francis O'Gorman (ed.), *Victorian Literature and Finance* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2007).

periodical market, earning attractive income while circulating and marketing their personae, yet also deriding popular print.² Browning's particular publications in the *Keepsake* are notable because the annual was, in its later years, at the end of its market dominance. In fact, Browning's association with the annual is emphasized by his offer of a further poem in 1858, "Study of a Hand by Leonardo," along with Barrett Browning's "My Heart and I," neither of which appeared because the annual had folded (to reappear one last time in 1861).

The Brownings' venture into literary annual publication is usually explained through their friendship with the editor, Marguerite A. Power, the niece of Marguerite Gardiner, Countess of Blessington. Power, who supported herself through editing, periodical contributions, and novels after the death of her aunt in June 1849, edited the *Keepsake* from 1851 and was eager for famous names in her contents page to boost sales.³ As a personal favor through mutual friend and poet Bryan Waller Procter ("Barry Cornwall"), the story usually goes, the Brownings held their noses and published in an old-fashioned, aesthetically debased outlet, out of sympathy with Power's difficult financial circumstances. As Ledbetter points out, by the end of this decade other forms of periodical print were supplanting the annuals' hold on the poetry market—*Cornhill Magazine*, for example, which was less expensive, more frequently published, and self-advertized as offering a high literary value.⁴ The Brownings took advantage of this new market, placing several poems in the *Cornhill*.⁵ In

² See Linda Hughes, "What the *Wellesley Index* Left Out: Why Poetry Matters to Periodical Studies." *Victorian Periodicals Review* 40.2 (2007): 91-125; and Kathryn Ledbetter, *Tennyson and Victorian Periodicals: Commodities in Context* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007).

³ The Countess of Blessington edited the *Keepsake* (1841-50), as well as Heath's *Book of Beauty* (1834-49).

⁴ See Kathryn Ledbetter, *British Victorian Women's Periodicals: Beauty, Civilization, and Poetry* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

⁵ Barrett Browning's poems in the *Cornhill* were "A Musical Instrument" (July 1860: 84-85), "A Forced Recruit at Solferino" (October 1860: 419-20), and "Little Mattie" (June

addition, illustrated gift books were becoming dominant in the Christmas market, as annual publication became dated.⁶

Part of the context for Browning's late entry into the gift book culture involves Barrett Browning's publication history in the format. Indeed, their annual poems are in dialogue with each other, as well as with the conventional poetics and aesthetics of annual poetry. In 1856, Barrett Browning's "My Kate" was published in the *Keepsake*, followed by "Amy's Cruelty" in 1857. Dorothy Mermin terms these poems "high-class album verse" for their dramatic exploration of female characters and their gender subversions, a more overt exploration of sexuality and power than in her earlier ballads (239).⁷ The first *Keepsake* poem, spoken by a bereaved lover, praises his beloved for her ideal femininity: while she is neither too beautiful nor too clever, she has such good influence that "She has made the grass greener e'en *here*. . . with her grave" (17). Kate is most ideally feminine now she is dead, and he declares he can now "take thy part." The awkward and insistent possessiveness of his refrain at the end of each stanza, "My Kate," is emphasized by its typographical setting, indented to the extreme right of the line, breaking the neat and aphoristic couplets that make up each quatrain. The meter of the quatrain, anapestic trimeter—commonly used in this period for comic poetry, including the limerick—gives the couplets a sense of jocularity. But with the meaning of the anapest deriving from the Greek for "struck back" (*anapaistos*, referring to the reverse of the dactyl foot), the poem's form suggests both the underlying violence of the speaker's insistent possessiveness of "My Kate," as well as the

1861: 736-38). Browning published "Hervé Riel" in the following decade (March 1871: 257-60).

⁶ See also Kooistra, Lorraine J., *Poetry, Pictures, and Popular Publishing: the Illustrated Gift Book and Victorian Visual Culture 1855-1875*. Athens: Ohio UP, 2011.

⁷ Mermin also includes "A False Step" and "May's Love" under this genre of annual poetry, although neither were published in annuals. It is possible that "May's Love" responds to "Love and Death"; the poem was published in Barrett Browning's posthumous *Last Poems* (1861), but the date of composition is unknown.

double meaning of the poem that exposes such an underlying structure to the elegy.

Barrett Browning's association with the annual form, however, began several years earlier, with seven poems placed in *Finden's Tableaux*, edited by her close literary friend Mary Russell Mitford, beginning with "A Romance of the Ganges" in 1838. As Lorraine Jantzen Kooistra comments, Barrett Browning at this point did not yet have to her name a book of original poems on the commercial market, and Mitford intended the publication in her annual as a promotional venture to boost the profile of her friend, who enthusiastically (and as was customary in literary annuals) wrote a poem for a painting by J. Brown. Barrett Browning's appearance in *Finden's Tableaux* inserted her within an empowering "publishing community of women readers, writers and editors" (Kooistra 398), and a community that was also "interconnected." Barrett Browning's association with the literary annual demonstrates the format's association with femininity—both with women's participation in the literary market as producers and consumers, and also with the aesthetics of beauty and luxury, taste and ornament. The annual's visual and tactile qualities were designed for domestic display, as a parlor book, and contained illustrated poetry and prose often with themes and virtues acceptable to a female audience (something exposed and satirized by the well-known critical reference to the *Keepsake* in *Middlemarch*, which nevertheless also signals the annual's cultural prominence).⁸ And yet, as many critics on the gendering of the annual point out, the femininity of the annual's contents did not wholly embrace conventional gender norms; and, while conforming to heterosexual, middle-class virtues and values, many of the texts teach female resilience, as well as educate through

⁸ In *Middlemarch* (1871-72), Ned Plymdale gives as a courtship present to Rosamond Vincy a copy of the *Keepsake*. See Meg M. Moring, "George Eliot's Scrupulous Research: the Facts behind Eliot's Use of the *Keepsake* in *Middlemarch*." *Victorian Periodicals Review* 26: 1 (Spring 1993): 19-23.

contributions on travel, empire, and art.⁹ In addition, the annuals' community of women as editors, writers, and readers made it, as Kooistra puts it, "a site of potentially subversive female power" (396), enabling women's professional and social networking. The doubleness—decorative yet empowering—was intrinsic to the annuals, which commodified, celebrated and circulated the feminine ideal as well as female authors.¹⁰ The doubleness is also characteristic of the annuals' position in print culture, at once a dominant form (especially for poetry) from the 1820s to the 1850s, yet also derided by other titles in the periodical press, in reviews and commentary that judged them to be ephemeral toys, trash, trivialities.¹¹

The appearance of both Browning and Barrett Browning in the *Keepsake* is especially notable, for that annual typified and defined the literary annual genre. The *Keepsake* was the most popular, as well as the longest running, literary annual. Starting its thirty-year run in 1827, the *Keepsake* quickly made significant innovations to the annual format that had enormous influence, as Peter Manning observes: its engraved presentation plate promoted the volume's definition as a "status gift rather than a book to be read" (45), its bigger size (from pocketbook to octavo), and its sharp rise in price from the typical 12 shillings of other titles to a guinea—making it, in Feldman's words, "extraordinarily expensive" (55).¹² No expense was spared on the luxury of the product, including its

⁹ On the fantasies of escape offered to middle-class women by the annuals, see Kathryn Ledbetter, "'White Vellum and Gilt Edges': Imaging the *Keepsake*," *Studies in the Literary Imagination* 30.1 (1997): 35–49.

¹⁰ For more on the annuals as a site of beauty and ornament, see Ledbetter (2009).

¹¹ See Margaret Linley, "The Early Victorian Annual (1822-1857)." *Victorian Review* 35:1 (Spring 2009): n.p. *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* complained that *The Keepsake* was "somewhat vapid" (960). The ambiguous cultural power of the annual is emblematic of its part in a larger tension between literary status and popularity (Mourão 109-10).

¹² For background on the annual, see Katherine D. Harris, "Feminizing the Textual Body: Female Readers Consuming the Literary Annual." *PBSA* 99:4 (2005): 573-622; also Paula Feldman, Introduction. *The Keepsake for 1829*. Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview, 2006.

gorgeous crimson watered silk binding, and the eminence of the contributors; while the 1829 volume boasted contributions by Coleridge, Hemans, Landon, Scott, Percy Shelley and Mary Shelley, Southey, and Wordsworth, it would never again gather so many luminaries in one volume ("Monologue" 960).¹³ The Preface to the very first *Keepsake* staked its objective: "its pervading characteristic should be an elegant lightness" (vii). But with the publication of Barrett Browning's "My Kate" (1855), the *Keepsake* was already in steep decline. In 1828, the annual sold 15,000 copies, the expensive outlay in its attractive verbal-visual format and celebrity authors clearly paying off.¹⁴ But by its last few volumes, failing funds meant the editor struggled to attract high-profile contributors. The gamble of intermeshing, if not collapsing, high production costs, high profile authors and expensive cost—in other words, of collapsing economic and cultural capital, all bound up in the crimson silk fabric—no longer profitable in a print market flooded with cheaper literary titles. Harry Hootman's research starkly demonstrates that, by the late 1850s, poetic contributions in literary annuals had slumped to less than fifty poems per year, down from a high of 550 poems per year in the 1820s.¹⁵ By 1856, when Browning first appeared in the *Keepsake*, there were only three other literary annuals, according to Faxon's bibliography: *Court Album*, *Forget Me Not*, *Northern Poetical Keepsake*. The Brownings were jumping aboard a sinking ship.

The Keepsake's cultural value was predicated on its status as a material object, on its aesthetic beauty and gift-giving properties, something worth owning simply for the sake of keeping. As Mourão argues, the annual fashions itself as a cultural relic, something that should be collected—hence the titles such as

¹³ See *L.E.L.'s Verses and The Keepsake for 1829: A Hypertext Edition*, <http://www.rc.umd.edu/editions/lel/index.html>.

¹⁴ See Lee Erickson, "The Market" in Cronin, et.al. (345-60). On *The Keepsake* as a multi-media format, see Linley.

¹⁵ See <http://britannualstext.com/Figure31.html>.

Keepsake, Forget Me Not, The Literary Souvenir—and also a relic that is immediately dated and thus quickly old-fashioned. Furthermore, the logic of the annual's cultural value allowed its devaluation in other contemporary print media as ephemeral, and yet this logic also precisely and ironically makes the form relevant for literary historians (111). The memorialization inherent to the annual form, comments Sarah Lodge, is evident from the repeated homage to dead Romantic authors (especially Keats, Byron, and Shelley) and the repeated over-determination of memory and recuperation, something that leads her to assign them as "quintessentially Romantic artifacts" (25, 28-30). As Lodge points out, the very first *Keepsake* includes an essay by Leigh Hunt likening the annual to a precious miniature artifact, but also an object that may be mistaken for a casket (qtd. Lodge 31). Implied in the very logic of the keepsake is a memento, a relic, a memorial. And, with the *Keepsake's* gorgeous crimson watered-silk binding, the same fabric used in women's clothing, the annual is dressed up as a metaphor for the female body.

The 1857 *Keepsake* follows the conventional annual logic of homage and loss, but the usual recuperation is held in question. The very first poem, "On the Portrait of Lady Molesworth" by H. F. C. (1855), refers back to the frontispiece engraving of R. Thornburn's dark yet luxurious picture of Molesworth wearing a dress with deep folds of gorgeous textured fabric that catches the light, setting off the sharp white "V" of her lace neckline, the bright beads at her throat, waist, and sleeves, and the shiny white billowing material of her cuffs. The first part of the poem reads like a typical annual homage to an aristocratic female beauty, celebrating her feminine charms. But, immediately over the page, the poem has an addendum, a second sonnet at the top of the page mourning Lady Molesworth's death and dated the following year, a separate but thematically connected poem not indicated in the list of contents. The first poem celebrates her with jewels and clarions,

harps and flowers, singling her out for association with the natural and yet also the supremely fashioned: "There are some beauties fashioned to be crowned / By the pale blossoms of the young May-tree" (ll. 3-4). Like the sonnet itself, whose highly artificial and constrained form was widely figured in the nineteenth century as analogous to both nature and artifice (gems, coins, tear drops, waves), Lady Molesworth is represented as an ideal of natural and imaginative ornament, highly fashioned and yet naturally real, much like the annual form itself. The conclusion makes this clear, with its affirmation of the lady's decorum and decorousness: "Courteous and kind—mirthful, yet ne'er too free, / Fit for all joy and festival is she" (ll. 13-14). Not too free, and yet free within the confines of femininity, Lady Molesworth is constructed as a middle-class female icon, all the more ideal because dead and available for representing loss: "the rhyme half sung" (l. 1), the music startled "into silence dread" (l. 5), and the mourner's echo within the heart of the reader (l. 8). Molesworth here does not just figure the annual's own passing but annual poetry itself as the supreme form of loss. Any sense of a recuperation of or consolation for the loss is frustrated through displacement—Molesworth's frontispiece portrait separated from the poems, the homage and the elegy separated by the turning of a page, the elegy figured by poetry that is both interrupted and mediated.

Other poems in this final consecutive volume of the annual also deal with loss and a rejected, fragile or questionable recuperation. Gifford Forsyth's "Dream On" (45-46), for example, interiorizes a loss and asks memory to restore it, but the reiterated refrain of "dream on" is forced. The recuperation is wholly contingent on sleep: "Dream on, fond heart! Awaken not / To feel life's weary chain" (45). The final line—"O heart! dream on! dream on!" (46)—suggests the desperate and doomed attempt at consolation, and also echoes the modern idiomatic phrase for deluded fantasies. The eponymous speaker in Barrett Browning's

poem "Amy's Cruelty" refuses to apologize for haughty behavior to a prospective lover: until he gives his all and proves himself worthy, she will withdraw her affections. Although apparently more optimistic about the consolation of a friendship from the past, Barry Cornwall's "To an Old Playmate" (114-15) only *trusts* to brighter hours, projecting hope to a future that is uncertain. The translation of Hans Christian Anderson, in W. C. Bennett's "The Tale of a Mother" (180-81), allows some consolation to a mother grieving for her dead infant, but only after a terrible vision of her son's projected future filled with "want, and woe, and guilt," proving the mother's blindness in her grief. Power's narrative poem, "Not Lost, but Gone Before" (201-06), also gives a grieving mother some consolation, but based on an overtly crazed fantasy that a climbing rose tree is really her dead baby (when she finally cannot reach the last white flower with its "odours bland," she herself dies). On the other hand, Mrs. W. F. O'Neill's "To My Mother. Composed During Illness" (239) allows a daughter the consolation of maternal presence in sickness, but only through a dream vision that recalls her mother's bedside vigil when she was a child. The final poem, Alfred A. Watts's "Four Seasons" (271-72), moves through the stages of life and ends with refuting the beguiling dreams of his youth as "shadowy and vain" (272). Instead, a tentative hope is put on his age, his final season, as a return to the optimism of his childhood, although pointedly this desire is put in a question in the volume's final lines:

Who'd
Suppose the objects that engage
The hopes of Youth; the aims of Age;
Should find their end,—in Second Childhood?
(272)

While the question connotes surprise that old age returns to childhood values, the question also renders tentative and fragile the optimism of the poem's message and, finally, any recuperative

powers offered by the *Keepsake* at all. In this final volume of the most prominent literary annual, the uneasy logic of loss, recuperation, and consolation is laid bare. The editor's own poem, "Parting and Meeting" (240), underlines this deep structural uncertainty. The speaker, a male lover returning from a long absence to claim his bride, finds her married to another. The poem ends with his unconvincing expression of forgiveness: "The thought" of this betrayal "Is very bitter sometimes, yet I trust / I have forgiven her my broken life." Defining his life as "broken" undermines his expression of forgiveness, especially as he prefaces the line with "I trust," suggesting the very opposite of the final line's apparent resolution of loss.

Browning's poem is in dialogue with this cluster of poems repeating themes of withheld, fragile, and problematic consolation. In the context of its first publication in the *Keepsake*, it is a self-conscious annual poem, exposing the generic features associated with annual poetics.¹⁶ Browning wrote to Power on 26 February 1855, enclosing unspecified poems for publication by himself and his wife, referring to his contribution as "such a trifle" which may, if she deems it unworthy, be burned.¹⁷ Terming his poem "a trifle," even with his typically ironic self-deprecation, echoes those contemporary attacks on annuals as ephemeral and worthless toys. But this very act of devaluing his poem also exposes Browning's knowingness about the annual aesthetic that was, by the end of the 1850s, radically out of fashion. Even the courteous offering of the poem as a gift, for which he implies no payment is expected,

¹⁶ Browning's first *Keepsake* contribution, "Ben Karshook's Wisdom," is also in awkward dialogue with annual poetics, as a poem repeating the Jewish rabbinical injunction to repent the day before death.

¹⁷ Robert Browning to Marguerite A. Power, 26 February 1855 (Armstrong Browning Library). The poem enclosed with the letter by Browning may be "Ben Karshook's Wisdom," which appeared in the *Keepsake* for 1856 (the annual was typically published by the end of the previous year of the imprint, ready for the Christmas market). Barrett Browning did not publish in this annual in 1856; the poem she sent through Browning is unidentified.

gestures to the annual's status as a gift-book, but also to its decline (there was no money to pay him, as he well knew): "The rhymes are yours to do with as you will." Given the success of *Men and Women* in 1855, his gesture turns the very poem itself into a keepsake, a valuable offering from a well-known poet.

"May and Death," which appeared in the ultimate *Keepsake*, is identified in Sutherland Orr's *Life and Letters of Robert Browning* as an elegy for Browning's cousin and childhood friend Jim Silverthorne, whose mother had financed the printing of *Pauline* (46). The poem's narrator addresses Charles, lamenting his death by wishing that Spring did not remind him of the happy friendship. The speaker concedes that the season should remain the same for others, saving one particular plant in "a certain wood" (l. 17), whose blood-red streak reminds him of his loss. The plant should vanish, or else "Its drop comes from my heart, that's all" (l. 20). The poem plays throughout with the tension between the abstract and the literal, from the very first line, "I wish that when you died last May," picked up in the third stanza as "prove May still May!," implying both the month, the verb, and a conceptual sense of possibility, much as with Christina Rossetti's riddling "May." The poem memorializes the elegiac subject, playing on the boundaries between public and private significances, and refusing the consolation typical in both the elegiac tradition and also the annual aesthetic, by labelling the plea to erase the "delightful things" of Spring that remind him of his loss, "A foolish thought" (ll. 3, 5). The rhyme reinforces the refusal to console, with its abcb structure denying the expected "a" rhyme in line 3, but inserting an internal rhyme instead that is ironically jaunty (such as, in the first stanza, the rhyme of "Spring's" with "things" and, in the third, "streak" with "speak").

As an annual poem, "May and Death" lays bare the conventional expectations of the genre. Furthermore, as an elegy for a male friend, it revises the usual gendered dynamics of the

annual elegy, as epitomized by Barrett Browning's "My Kate." Indeed, Feldman suggests that the annual's conventionally deep associations with femininity and heterosexual courtship, both in terms of the contents and also the annual's traditional status as a courtship gift, might not be the whole story. Feldman's research into annuals' dedicatory inscriptions indicates that the readership for annuals was not wholly middle-class women of marriageable age; rather, a sizeable proportion of her research sample (27%) were owned by men. There is also evidence of women giving the annuals to other women (more than a quarter of the annuals in her sample collection were given by women) and that annual copies given within families outnumber the courtship gifts of annuals (57-58). Although it is true that the representation of the annuals in Victorian culture was often contingent on its associations with femininity, female authorship, and heterosexual courtship—and often these were the basis of the annual's cultural devaluation—Browning's poem in the last *Keepsake* underlines the discourse of masculinity in the annual poems and the frequent contributions by male poets.

Although challenging the conventional gender and genre expectations of annual poetics, "May and Death" also expresses hesitancy about the power of poetry to *do* something. The poem begins conversationally with a wish—"I wish that when you died last May"—that Spring would now lose its charms. But the poem quickly chastises itself for the foolishness of the wish, for other friends must deserve the pleasures of the season. Then the poem asks to "prove May still May" (l. 9) in a direct command, ironic of course given the conditional associations of "May": "I bid / Sweet sighs and sounds throng manifold" (ll. 11-12). The internal rhyme in this third stanza links "did" with "bid" to emphasize the performativity of the poem. But the poem qualifies its bold pronouncement to "prove May still May," asking for one spring flower to be spared in the particular wood of the speaker's memory

(possibly the arum or spotted orchid).¹⁸ Although requesting the removal of that plant, the speaker then nevertheless requests that, “when’er the plant is there” (l. 19, with the internal rhyme implying the insubstantial), the red color bleeds from his heart. Repeatedly, then, the poem asserts a power to enact something, only to undermine itself. And the final image of the bleeding heart, giving the plant its red streak, literalizes the speaker’s pain within the annual’s typically feminized discourse of affect and sensibility.

The poem’s play with assertiveness and the conditional, with performativity and failure, and with the abstract and literal, is structured through the figure of synecdoche. It offers part of something to represent the whole; in fact, the first stanza repeats the word “part,” asking that three parts of the beauties of Spring be dead with Charles, and even, for him, a fourth part too. Strangely, the poem does not specify what exactly the parts are but, presumably, the fourth part is the red-streaked plant. The second stanza only lists two delightful ideas about Spring still enjoyed by friends, “the warm / Moon’s birth and the long evening-ends” (ll. 7-8). Synecdoche is an act of conceptual substitution, itself a kind of loss and recuperation. For many of the annual critics, the volumes were all about surface, not depth and style, not substance. Manning comments that “appearance was all” (45), that the annuals were for show rather than reading. Browning’s poem, however, not only responds to the late annual poetic’s refusal to offer consolation, but also lays bare and metatextually eulogizes this very poetic through the questioning of the poem’s power to do something, to console, perform, command, assert. Furthermore, the poem’s place in the very last consecutive volume of the *Keepsake*, the quintessential literary annual, ironically confers the annual poetic with a structural failure and, consequently, with depth.

Intriguingly, Barrett Browning’s *Aurora Leigh* was published for the same gift-book market, Christmas 1856 and dated, like the

¹⁸ See *The Browning Society Papers* 12-13.71 (1890): 96-97.

Keepsake, the following year (Feldman 55). This epic poem criticizes writing for the popular market, and implicitly targets the annuals’ aesthetic as a debased form, lacking in literary value and over-feminized, through reference to a fictitious annual title, the *Lady’s Fan*. The poem offered the following year by Barrett Browning to the *Keepsake*, “My Heart and I” (not published), reworks the trope of blood in “May and Death” to satirize the sentimental transition’s excessive affect. The letter to Power that encloses the poem asks “Are we too late? or in time?,”¹⁹ pointing to the importance of publishing deadlines for the Christmas gift book market, but also to the over-determination of the annual’s date imprint, a datedness that was even more pointed in this year of the *Keepsake*’s folding. “My Heart and I,” like Browning’s poem, literalizes the heart as a site of suffering, with the trope of the heart’s blood as the ink for poetry: “And in our own blood drenched the pen” (*Works* 5: 41-42).²⁰ As a dialogue with Browning’s “May and Death,” Barrett Browning’s “My Heart and I” turns the conventional annual poetics of mournfulness and recuperation into a satirical elegy for the self, trapped in the ideology of sensibility, suffering, and affect: “We sit beside the headstone thus, / And wish that name were carved for us” (ll. 2-3). Finally, bombastically, the self has become its own relic.

Robert Browning’s entry into the literary annual market precisely at the end of the annual’s long publication (usually seen to have begun with the first *Forget-Me-Not* in 1823), is important for a fuller sense of his participation in print culture, popular poetry, and his literary dialogue with Barrett Browning. “May and Death” offers both a revision to the annual’s conventional discourse of memorials and elegies, homages and tributes, by

¹⁹ Elizabeth Barrett Browning to Marguerite A. Power, 1 August 1857 (Armstrong Browning Library).

²⁰ See also Alison Chapman, “‘In our own blood drenched the pen’: Italy and Sensibility in Elizabeth Barrett Browning’s *Last Poems* (1862)”, *Women’s Writing*, vol. 10: 2, 2003, pp. 269-86.

offering the poem as a meta-textual commentary on the end of the long dominance of annual poetics. As an intervention in annual poetry's cult of memorialization, Browning's poem figures itself as a private elegy for a personal friend as well as a memorial for the annual format. "May and Death" is an ironic relic, memorializing the annual poem's conventional association with elegy, and also questioning poetry's capacity to do something, to perform a function, to be relevant. At this crucial juncture in the late 1850s, with the dramatic shift in the print market for poetry away from sumptuous annuals and towards the new media's more frequent, cheaper publication, Browning's poem registers an anxiety and a caution about both the influence of annual poetics and the afterlife of poetry itself.

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**“fear them which kill the soul”:
Marie Corelli’s Manifesto against Positivist
Education**

by Anastassiya Andrianova

Woe betide those who crush the high aspirations of innocent and hopeful youth by the deadening blow of Materialism! Worse than murderers are they, and as a greater crime than murder shall they answer for it! For truly has it been said—“Fear not them which kill the body, but fear them which kill the soul.”—Marie Corelli, *The Mighty Atom*

Marie Corelli (1855-1924) enjoyed immense popularity among Victorian readers, “rank[ing] as the best-selling writer in the world for about thirty years,” surpassing even Mrs. Humphrey Ward and H.G. Wells (McDowell). Her most famous novel, *The Sorrows of Satan* (1895), can be considered the first modern bestseller (LaMonaca 153), included in James Joyce’s reading list and mentioned in *Ulysses* (Galvan 85). Born in London as Mary Mackay, the illegitimate daughter of Scottish poet, journalist, and songwriter Charles Mackay, Corelli claimed that she had been born a year earlier into Italian aristocracy; this fabrication was but a small part of her self-fashioning and quest for notoriety. Queen Victoria requested Corelli’s books in 1890 which, when mentioned in the papers, not surprisingly doubled her sales; she dined in Hamburg with the Prince of Wales, received calls from Prime Ministers William Gladstone and Herbert Asquith, and “enchanted” Oscar Wilde with one of her novels. Yet, while deliberately seeking notoriety, she also shunned photographers and concealed her true parentage, though this did not stop her from

moving to Stratford-on-Avon to “associate her reputation with that of Shakespeare” (McDowell).

Corelli’s now largely forgotten 1896 novel *The Mighty Atom* was an immediate hit or “fastseller,” to use Robert Escarpit’s term; it appeared on thirty-three bestseller lists submitted by bookshops around the British Isles over a period of seven months.¹ However stylistically flawed or moralizing in tone, the novel may also be rightly considered a manifesto against positivist education: that is, education influenced by the philosophy of empiricism and the logic of positivism. Empiricism had long prevailed in intellectual circles, and especially after 1859, that *annus mirabilis* of the Victorian era which witnessed the publication of Charles Darwin’s *On the Origin of Species* and set the stage for the 1860 Oxford evolution debates; the philosophical framework it entailed—a materialist ontology, a positivist espousal of the universality of the scientific method, and a largely secular, atheist standpoint—was not uncontested, as Corelli’s novel attests.

Although addressed to “Progressivists,” Corelli’s dedicatory note prepares readers of *The Mighty Atom* for a condemnation of all atheists who promote an irreligious education:

to those self-styled ‘Progressivists’ who by precept and example assist the infamous cause of education without religion and who, by promoting the idea, borrowed from French atheism, of denying to the children in board-schools and elsewhere, the knowledge and love of God, as the true foundation of noble living, are guilty of a crime worse than murder. (5)

Such “child murderers,” who let “French atheism” influence their pedagogy, are materialists and “[w]orse than murderers” (302). Writing around the same time, Leo Tolstoy described as

¹ See Bassett, Troy J., and Christina M. Walter. “Booksellers and Bestsellers: British Book Sales as Documented by ‘The Bookman,’ 1891-1906.” *Book History* 4 (2001): 205-236. *JSTOR*. Web. 10 Aug. 2013.

“foundationless” and “lacking in content” any debate about what, other than religion, should be the basis of education (*Polnoye* 17 354; all translations mine). By depicting the impact of “education without religion” on a perceptive young Lionel Valliscourt, the novel’s hero, Corelli also depicts the broader cumulative effect on late Victorian society of “the Mighty Atom.” The latter is not only metonymical for contemporary science, but also a hypernym for the century’s key “isms”: scientific positivism, materialism, empiricism, and atheism.

The theme of education helped Corelli focalize one of the most widely documented and discussed philosophical concerns in Britain’s intellectual culture in the *fin de siècle*: the search for purpose and a spiritual foundation. In this, Corelli echoed such contemporaries as Bernard Shaw, Tolstoy, and her friend George Meredith, all of whom were grappling with similar existential problems after Darwin, as Samuel Butler famously charged, had “banished mind”—teleological thinking and purpose—“from the universe” (Shaw, *Methuselah* 36). This discussion demonstrates that, while ostensibly a melodramatic account of the youthful romance and ultimate suicide of the eleven-year-old Lionel, *The Mighty Atom* is in fact a serious critique of contemporary pedagogical methodology and its philosophical underpinnings. As an alternative to such an education, Corelli offers a broad notion of religion, outside of institutionalized Christianity but welcoming to spirituality, and thereby participates in what has been called “the revolt against positivism” (Baumer 371) during the 1860s through 1890s.

“the undying spiritual quality of life as it truly is”

Corelli’s attack on “education without religion” is, first of all, an attack on the philosophical materialism in which its conceptual underpinnings rest, and according to which all that exists is matter and all phenomena and interactions are material, a worldview that

entails the non-existence of spiritual entities such as the soul. In the Prologue to a later novel, *The Life Everlasting* (1911), Corelli distinguishes “between the perishable materialism of our ordinary conceptions of life, and the undying spiritual quality of life as it truly is” (26). What contemporary philosophy did, Corelli suggests and the hero of *The Mighty Atom* realizes, was to obliterate this “undying spiritual quality” and replace a transcendent God with “the Almighty Atom,” a substance equally powerful, equally inaccessible to the naked eye, and yet one that empties the universe of purpose and leaves the individual at the mercy of an ungraspable, incomprehensible randomness. In his 1944 Postscript to *Back to Methuselah* (1921), even the iconoclast Bernard Shaw describes the “discouragement” that the philosophy of materialism entails as tantamount to death, suggesting that “it is better to cling to the hoariest of the savage old creator-idols, however diabolically vindictive, than to abandon all hope in a world of ‘angry apes,’ and perish in despair like Shakespear’s Timon” (318).

What exactly is meant by “religion” in this signal phrase? Corelli was an advocate of the spirit and especially of women’s “naturally elevated” spirituality, though not of the gender-biased implications of this in the popular practice of spiritualism (Galvan 83-84).² The conflicting and unconventional ideas about Christianity featured in her novels invite readers to see “religion” in a broader, non-denominational sense. In *Thelma* (1887), Corelli criticizes Low Church Protestantism and sentimentalizes Roman Catholicism; in *Barrabas* (1893), she rewrites the crucifixion story; her other works, moreover, “operate outside the conventional paradigm of Christianity, for they discard or redefine some of the verities of virtually all mainstream Christian traditions,” such as disputing that Jesus came as a sacrifice, a

² Spiritualists preferred to use women as channels (mediums) due to their “personal and especially intellectual passivity”; their “mindless ‘mechanism[s]’” would not interfere with the communications they were employed to deliver (Galvan 83-84).

bleeding victim being incongruous with “the Creator of Love and Beauty” in *A Romance of Two Worlds* (1886) (Hartnell 285-88). Corelli offers another iteration of her notion of religion in *The Master-Christian* (1900):

I am not moved by the church to feel religious. I would rather sit quietly in the fields and hear the gentle leaves whispering their joys and thanksgivings above my head, than listen to a human creature who has not even the education to comprehend the simplest teachings of nature, daring to assert himself as a teacher of the Divine. My own chief object in life has been and still is to speak on this and similar subjects to the people who are groping after lost Christianity. (133)

“Religious” feeling is identified here with a solemn communion with the natural world, outside the confines of “the church,” and it is the knowledge of “the simplest teachings of nature” that such communion yields, rather than the pretence of “a teacher of the Divine” whose education is inadequate in this and other respects, that is suggested to those “groping after lost Christianity.” For Corelli, the “religious” is not to be found in the contemporary institution of Christianity, which has fallen out of touch with the natural world; nor is it to be found in contemporary science dominated by the philosophy of empiricism, the view that we acquire knowledge through the senses by means of regular observation and inference, along with its logic of positivism, in which nature and life have been stripped of their “undying spiritual quality.”

During the era’s intellectual and religious crises, even agnostic thinkers who still believed in order, purpose, and the life of the spirit aligned with religion over science; had Corelli participated in the 1860 Oxford debates, she likely would have opted for religion,

as well.³ This claim must be qualified, however, to account for the fact that it is not science in general but its particular Darwinian/materialist/positivist species that Corelli opposed (as did Meredith, Butler, and Shaw). This may explain why in the postscript to *A Romance of Two Worlds*, Corelli’s novel from a decade earlier in which technology provides fruitful metaphors for Christian worship and Christ figures, she stated, “The greater and wider the discoveries of Science, the nearer shall we feel the actual presence of God” (qtd. Galvan 83, 87). The science that *did* “kill the soul” and that against which Corelli revolted was, in the words of Franklin L. Baumer, “the cult of science and the world picture projected by science, which, it was believed, denigrated life and mind” (379); it is more accurately characterized as “scientism,” according to which all knowledge could be brought under the purview of science and which also entailed the notion of determinism, “or ‘the tightening grasp of law,’ which, it was thought, impeded freedom.” Meredith quite strikingly accused “Science” of doing little more than “introduc[ing] us to our o’erhoary ancestry”; all that “Science” taught us, the narrator of Meredith’s *The Egoist* (1871) insists, is that “[w]e were the same, and animals into the bargain” (4). This was science’s projection of our “world of ‘angry apes,’” to recall Shaw’s phrase.

The Mighty Atom was published the same year as Alfred Fouillée’s *Le Mouvement idéaliste et la réaction contre la science positive* (1896), in which the French philosopher essayed to reconcile idealist metaphysics and contemporary positivist science. The “nub of the positivist movement,” in Fouillée’s definition, was “[t]he extension of science to everything which hitherto had been excluded from its domain” (qtd. Baumer 372). Positivism is often associated with the Frenchman Claude Bernard (1813-78), who

³ See Felicia Bonaparte’s Introduction to *Middlemarch* (Oxford UP, 1997) and Elizabeth J. Hodge, “The Mysteries of Eleusis at Howards End” (*International Journal of the Classical Tradition* 13.1 [Jun. 2006]: 33-68).

aimed to move medicine away from its less rigorous descriptive domain toward “hard” science through the application of experimental method. Bernard argued that the internal environment of living beings had physical and chemical properties that mirrored the external world, enabling science to analyze the mechanism of human passions as accurately as bodily functions. Such validation of medicine exemplifies how positivism extended beyond its original domain into the natural world.

Starting in the eighteenth century as “the science of man,” and evolving in the nineteenth into “moral and social sciences,” positivism “embodied a method that could, potentially, be applied to anything”; because its supporters upheld “science as the major tool for social progress,” positivism “generated optimism about the progressive growth of reliable, objective knowledge” (Jordanova 30-31). Although “anti-theoretical” in their distrust of metaphysics, the positivists generated theories that surpassed the concrete data in which their observations were meant to be grounded. Ironically, given such stance against dogma, Auguste Comte’s particular strain of positivism (Comtism) came to be seen as “the religion of humanity” (*OED*). Comtism maintained its influence in France among social scientists and social reformers, along with humanists, well into the *fin de siècle*: in 1898 the Sorbonne celebrated the centenary of Comte’s birth and, as part of its “remodeling itself along positivistic lines,” the university erected the bust of the thinker on the Place de la Sorbonne in Paris four years later (Baumer 367-69). At the International Freethinkers Conference in Rome (1904), German biologist Ernest Haeckel (1834-1919) attributed to positivism the bringing about of “the wonderful height of culture, which man achieved in the nineteenth century, the astonishing progress of natural science and its practical application in technology, industry, medicine, etc.” (qtd. Baumer 369).

While the *Anschaung* (intuition) of the positivists—who were confident about science, reason, and humans’ ability to master the

external world—prevailed in intellectual circles, it was also coming under attack, prompting a “revolt against positivism” that peaked in the 1890s. In his discussion of intellectual history in the *fin de siècle*, Baumer describes this period as “a world in revolt, not only against positivism but against the whole pattern of bourgeois values and conventions” and “above all a disoriented world (or one trying to stave off disorientation)” (370). Honing in on the notion of “disorientation,” Baumer continues,

In Nietzsche’s metaphor, Europeans had cast themselves adrift, burning their bridges behind them and putting out to sea in ships. Before them stretched the open sea, mysterious, infinite, and dangerous. If homesickness for solid land should overtake them they were in serious difficulty, for there was no longer such land. Nietzsche, to be sure, was speaking only of a minority of “free spirits.” He knew perfectly well that “most people in old Europe” still needed, and still clung to, the supports of religions, metaphysics, or science. Nobody, however, could expect to live for long in comfortable certainty....Disorientation, more radical than in any previous epoch, was its inevitable accompaniment: a feeling of not quite knowing where certainty lay, or even if there was a certainty, other than change itself, and of knowing what the future might bring.

Shaw admits to being “intellectually intoxicated with the idea that the world could make itself without design, purpose, skill, or intelligence: in short, without life”; but hails the Vitalist Butler as “a prophet who tried to head us back when we were gaily dancing to our damnation across the rainbow bridge which Darwinism had thrown over the gulf which separates life and hope from death and despair” (*Methuselah* 36). This was, in sum, a paradoxical world split between great optimism about science as a cure-all, on the one hand, and deep pessimism due to the ethical, moral, and existential

implications this scientific knowledge had on human life, on the other.

When addressing *The Mighty Atom* to the "Progressivists" who adapt ideas from "French atheism" and when, later on, the narrator identifies France with "general 'free' morality," Corelli refers to the far-reaching influence of materialism and positivist science (5, 67). England, in turn, is blamed for fostering an "arrogant egoist-generation" that "mar[red]" the world (117), echoing Meredith's earlier criticism in *The Egoist* of the positivist application of scientific theories to the social domain. The hero of the novel, Sir Willoughby Patterne, "has a leg": that is to say, he not only has "the leg of the born cavalier" who is destined to "walk straight into the hearts of women," but also an evolutionary "leg"; being "[a] deeper student of Science than his rivals," Sir Willoughby "scientifically know[s] that in the department of the universal struggle, success is awarded to the bettermost" (Meredith 11, 31). According to this "scientific" understanding, a woman reviews her potential mate in competition with others and "selects" the one who is "superlative": "Science thus—or it is better to say, an acquaintance with science facilitates the cultivation of aristocracy" (31). The latter refers to positivism's extended application of Darwin's Natural selection and the knotty social ramifications thereof, namely, the expectation that "the bettermost" individuals prevail over the weaker ones (social Darwinism).

Lionel's suicide in *The Mighty Atom* brings the century's key "isms" together by dramatizing the devastating effects of an education molded by "scientific positivism, and lack of all religious training...in board-schools and elsewhere," as the dedicatory note indicates (331, 5). Because of his father's "'system' of education and ideas concerning religion or rather non-religion," Lionel had no faith and was only too quick to ridicule those who appealed to anything beyond the senses (55). From his materialist tutor, he learned that the "First Cause of the universe

was merely an Atom, productive of other atoms which moved in circles of gratuitous regularity, shaping worlds indifferently, and without any Mind-force whatever behind the visible Matter" (73-74). Thus is an alloy of positivism ("his father's 'system'"), atheism ("non-religion"), and materialism (the "Mighty Atom" as the "First Cause of the universe" and "without any Mind-force whatever") forged.

What Baumer terms the "disorientation" created by the new philosophical and scientific ideas has both existential and ethical connotations. Lionel's conclusion is what Corelli fears all children raised by materialists will also conclude: if nothing exists except matter, and if we were created as the result of some senseless coincidence, there is little reason for us to live, let alone live ethically. In his personal writings, Tolstoy highlights the vitality of faith in the purpose and "force of life": "If a man lives," he maintains, "then he must believe in something. If he did not believe that life had a purpose, then he would not live" (*Polnoye* 23 35). In the same vein, Shaw writes in *The Quintessence of Ibsenism* (1891), "the reasonable thing for the rationalists to do is to refuse to live...for positive science gives no account whatever of this will to live" (42-43). When his professor asserts that "All creation...is the result of a fortuitous arrangement of atoms... We know nothing of the reasons why we live," Lionel concludes that "life is a very cruel thing, and not worth having....If there's no reason for anything, and no future object for anybody, I don't see why we should take the trouble to live" (Corelli 163-64). By "the reasons why we live" his Professor means a rational explanation for the world's origins; however, the moral connotation is obvious: we do not know our purpose, and that is what challenges and ultimately shatters Lionel's belief system.

A major section of Tolstoy's *Confession* (1884) is devoted to existential issues akin to those troubling Corelli's Lionel. The question Tolstoy sought to answer was whether life's meaning was

negated by the inevitability of death. He confirmed that science gave an answer (all physiological functions cease, and the body disintegrates), but it neglected to consider the question; metaphysics addressed the question, taking account of the material and the spiritual, but gave no definite answer. The so-called “semi-sciences” (judicial, social, and historical) only pretended to solve the problem at the general level of humanity and thus really missed the point about how it affected the individual. All three failed to illuminate life’s purpose, its *telos*.

Konstantin Levin, the hero of *Anna Karenina* (1877), faces similar turmoil. Although a natural scientist by training, he never associated scientific deductions concerning the animal origins of human beings and the behavioral patterns they share with other species with questions concerning the meaning of life and death. At one point Levin walks in on a discussion of whether there is a boundary between psychical and physiological occurrences in human activities, a “fashionable topic.” One of the interlocutors accuses the other of having surrendered to the materialists for whom consciousness of being is but a compound of sense perceptions, a typically Humean empiricist claim and one that implies that we can never know what happens to the body after death for which “[w]e have no data” (32). Although empirically valid, such knowledge fails to address Levin’s existential doubts and spiritual needs. Finding no solace in his study of philosophy, he goes out into the fields and works with the peasants; he instinctually yearns for the earth—“like a scythe”—because only there does the possibility of real knowledge and happiness arise (390).

Anna Karenina was first translated into English by the American Nathan Haskell Dole in 1886, and could have been familiar to Corelli. Although in an interview with a correspondent from *The Manchester Guardian* in 1905 Tolstoy admitted that “[h]is estimate of Miss Marie Corelli...was extremely

unfavourable” (“Tolstoy on Politics”), it is likely that the feeling was not mutual; and, by naming her hero Lionel, Corelli intended for us to think of Levin along with Tolstoy, whose given name in Russian is Lev and whose own spiritual quest many have been recognized in the novel’s hero.⁴ (“Levin” is the possessive form of Lev, the Russian for “lion.”)

“murdered by over-cramming”

Corelli’s Lionel does not have the critical capacity or the life experience of Tolstoy’s Levin; lacking any spiritual foundation, his brain having been “crammed” with the tenets of contemporary science, he discovers in Christianity a mirror image of what he already knows: a God just as cruel and inexplicable as the “mechanical twisty thing,” the “Almighty Atom” (*Atom 202*). This brings us to the pedagogical methodology criticized in *The Mighty Atom*, namely, that of “cramming.” Methodologically, “cramming” is inherently misguided: while it provides learners with knowledge, it fails to provide them with the skills necessary to form opinions about that knowledge. Further, when the facts “crammed” are exclusively those of science dominated by empiricism, as is the case with Lionel, such knowledge offers no spiritual foundation; in effect, the learner is indoctrinated and lacks critical capacity for and openness to other viewpoints. Science becomes the new dogma, the new religion even, detrimental insofar as it denies teleological thinking and a sense of purpose and hope.

The term “cramming” was first used in 1741 in its colloquial sense to refer to “prepar[ing] (a person) for an examination or special purpose, in a comparatively short time, by storing his memory with information, not so much with a view to real learning

⁴ The autobiographical dimension becomes more obvious when we examine the novel alongside Tolstoy’s *Confession*. The thirteen-year gap in the author’s lifelong diary-keeping from 1865 to 1878 was also the period during which he wrote *War and Peace* and *Anna Karenina*—novels that are, according to R.F. Christian, virtually “surrogate diaries” (vii).

as to the temporary object aimed at" (*OED*). It was often employed in a depreciatory and hostile manner as, for example, in Book III, Chapter viii of Walter Scott's *Tales of a Grandfather* (1828), to describe "[a] boy of fourteen...with as much learning as two excellent schoolmasters could cram him with"; and in Book II, Chapter ix of Charles Knight's *Passages from a Working Life During Half a Century* (1864), to refer to "[c]ramming Ministers and Members of Parliament with statistical facts" (*OED*). "Cramming" figured in Victorian pedagogical debates as well as in fiction. Matthew Arnold, who served for thirty-five years as Her Majesty's Inspector for the Education Department, criticized teachers for attempting "to cram [their] pupils with details enough to enable [them] to say...that they ha[d] fulfilled the departmental requirements, and fairly earned their grant" (140). Such "cramming" is ridiculed in Charles Dickens' *Hard Times* (1854), which famously opens with Thomas Gradgrind's insistence that children be taught "nothing but Facts" and seen as "little vessels...ready to have imperial gallons of facts poured into them until they were full to the brim" (3). Gradgrind, the founder of Coketown's education system, is himself a "cannon loaded to the muzzle with facts" and "a galvanizing apparatus, too, charged with a grim mechanical substitute for the tender young imaginations that were to be stormed away" (5).

Filling the heads of students with facts and imposing opinions without requiring that these be critically evaluated or challenged—in a word, "cramming"—is one of the cornerstones of the education Corelli opposed. She stresses the dangerous effects of "cramming" on Lionel's mental and physical wellbeing throughout *The Mighty Atom*. The narrator observes, for example, that "[o]verstudy is fatal to originality of character; and both clearness of brain and strength of physique are denied to the victims of 'cram'" (149). Education limited to "cramming" students' brains with facts stressed rote acquisition over critical thinking and analysis,

producing individuals who were, in the words of J. S. Mill, "mere parroters of what they have learnt" (96); indeed, Corelli's commentary resonates with the concerns expressed in Mill's *Autobiography* about the results of a strictly utilitarian pedagogy. Utilitarianism was also empiricist in nature: utilitarian educators treated the child's mind as a Lockean *tabula rasa*, promoted learning through empirical experimentation, and emphasized the sciences and practical skills over the humanities. In his essays on education, Herbert Spencer described art and culture as merely "ornamental" supplements to "Science"—the latter being more essential to self-preservation by preparing the child more effectively for "the production, exchange, and distribution of commodities" (43-44). The primary goal of such an education is economic self-sufficiency, a prerequisite to surviving in a capitalist world privileging quantity over quality.

Reflecting on his education, which was "not of cram," Mill protested against the uncritical memorization of facts. He noted that those who were "crammed with mere facts, and with the opinions or phrases of other people" failed to evaluate those ideas and to develop "the power to form opinions of their own" (96). When evaluating his own education, the shrewd Lionel says, "I am not clever. I am only crammed" (Corelli 43). Echoing Mill's criticism that "cramming" renders individuals "incapable of using their minds except in the furrows traced for them" (Mill 96), Corelli gives Lionel one such "thinking furrow," a detail that supports her indebtedness to the *Autobiography*, as well as her uneasiness about "cramming." The initial description of the "solitary little student" emphasizes that "the 'thinking furrow' already marked his forehead" (8-9). Indeed, "This is often the fate of brilliant and intelligent children...the more quickly they learn, the more cruelly they are 'crammed,' till both heart and brain give way under the unnatural effort and forced impetus, and disaster

follows disaster, ending in the wreck of the whole intellectual and physical organization" (148).

Contrary to his father, who is the architect of Lionel's positivist education and a staunch believer in "cramming," the doctor who treats the ailing boy advises that he be kept as far away from the schoolroom as possible, prescribing "[p]lenty of fresh air, nourishing food, and rest" (Corelli 234). Lionel himself admits at one point that he is "tired of books!—and [loves] to be out in fresh air" (93). Contrary to Spencer, John Ruskin, and other nineteenth-century educators who opposed bookish learning and promoted activities suited to the individual child's natural aptitude and disposition, Mr. Valliscourt favored books and considered the knowledge derived from them "necessary to life" (Corelli 127, 129). Professor Cadman-Gore, whom Valliscourt hires to replace Lionel's former tutor (the latter, in turn, having replaced "a Mr. Skeet" who was "a Positivist"), seems at first no better than his employer: he values discipline and is "an advocate of 'cramming'"; presented as rigid and coolly rational throughout the narrative, he is identified primarily by his dedication to "the severe training and discipline of boys." Yet he also opposes "parrot-like repetition merely" (another allusion to Mill) and expects his students to develop "absolute and distinct comprehension" (149). Upon recognizing Valliscourt's striking indifference to his son's death, Cadman-Gore reiterates the accusation in Corelli's dedicatory note by claiming that the boy was "murdered by over-cramming" (325).

An earlier account of bad Victorian parenting and misguided educational philosophy can be found in Meredith's *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel* (1859). Meredith offers a variation on the father/son scenario in which the son's principles—or, more precisely, the principles meant to have been instilled by his father's "System" as set out in "the pilgrim's scrip"—fail to prepare him for independent adult life. The novel is not so much a

condemnation of "education without religion" as of education designed according to a pseudo-scientific system rooted in Christianity and informed by positivist thinking, a combination which proves fatal. Having been abandoned by his wife, Sir Austin Feverel decides to employ the "Scientific eye" so as to shield his son Richard from "the Apple-Disease," the temptations of an Eve much like his mother; at the same time, he means to promote Richard's animal health "by advancing him to a certain moral fortitude" and ultimately producing "something approaching to a perfect Man" (11-12).

Not unexpectedly, any prospect of Richard's developing healthy relationships, let alone "perfect" ones, is thereby thwarted. Despite his obsession with the "Scientific eye," the stages in Sir Austin's "System" are based on mere assumptions, true also of contemporary educators Meredith criticizes in the novel. However singular, "the System" is "a patchwork of various ideas which for the most part were pretty generally held in mid-nineteenth century England and most forcibly expressed by Herbert Spencer" (Grabar 131-33, 140-41). The labeling of these stages, moreover, exposes the incongruity between the language of organic growth ("Blossoming," "Seed Time") and the underlying scientific design meant to transform "the young Experiment" into "a perfect Man." Meredith stresses the point by having the narrator describe "the System" as being "not yet ripe" on Richard's seventh birthday, the time of the young man's first ordeal, and by having it "gr[o]w as the boy grew" (22). Using the same verb to signify two very different processes—animate and inanimate—Meredith highlights that which is absent: nature, the healthier counterpart to human growth in the implied analogy. Once again accentuating its artificiality by describing its failure in organic terms, Sir Austin's disciple concludes, "So dies the System!" (367). A series of increasingly more damaging decisions brings tragedy to Richard's life; too late, his father realizes the irreversibility of a pedagogical

method praised for having had “all the advantages of Science” (537).

“The young truant whom Mother Nature coaxes out into the woods and fields”

While most of the novel details the effects of bad education, Meredith does include a suggestion as to what could have helped the titular hero of *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel* avoid personal tragedy: according to the “Wild Oats” special plea, this requires not careful homeschooling by a misguided disciplinarian, but freedom from compulsory education and an opportunity to socialize. Lord Heddon, the character who proposes the measure, insists that “the best fellows were wildish once,” and they became men by eating “man’s food”: “Feverel, it’s a dangerous experiment, that of bringing up flesh and blood in a harness,” he says to Sir Austin referring to Richard’s health in the scientific idiom with the implication of determinism (Meredith 179-80). But Richard’s father deems this advice “headless” (not *head on*, as Heddon’s name clearly connotes), as well as “degenerate [and] weedy.” What he fails to realize is that weeds and wild oats are more beneficial than meticulously crafted and spoon-fed domesticated cultures. The same idea reappears in *The Egoist*: it is not with Sir Willoughby Patterne but with the young Crossjay, who “play[s] truant with [Vernon] Whitford” and who has “never cared for school-books,” that the novel’s heroine, Clara Middleton, chooses to spend her time (57-58). Vernon’s name ties him to (vernal) nature, and it is he, not Sir Willoughby, that Clara ultimately marries (428).

It was his communion with and appreciation for nature’s vitality that helped Mill overcome the crisis that forced him to re-evaluate the pedagogy that left him “stranded at the commencement of [his] voyage, with a well-equipped ship and a rudder, but no sail” (*Autobiography* 123). His education “failed to

create [the] feelings [of happiness] in sufficient strength to resist the dissolving influence of analysis” (x). What did prove beneficial was reading poetry—specifically, an 1815 two-volume edition of Wordsworth’s poems. The “power of rural beauty” and “natural scenery” taught him to appreciate “states of feeling, and of thought colored by feeling, under the excitement of beauty”; these, in effect, confirmed “that there was real, permanent happiness in tranquil contemplation”—a paraphrase of Wordsworth’s celebrated definition of poetry (126).

Meredith’s and Mill’s critiques of contemporary education find their way into *The Mighty Atom*. Space functions symbolically in Corelli’s novel to further indict the practitioners of positivist education but also to offer a potential alternative. Gaston Bachelard defines a house as “a body of images that give mankind proofs or illusions of stability” (17). The “stability” Lionel’s father hopes to instill proves, however, entirely illusory: when the boy leaves the schoolroom, his carefully controlled pedagogical laboratory, he learns that his knowledge, although meant to fulfill the positivist promise of universal applicability, proves useless when applied to real life. Through the aforementioned figure of the doctor and the image of the furrow, the enclosed space of the schoolroom is associated with physical and spiritual illness. Lionel experiences no delight in his studies; it is only “respite from study” that enables his “physical nature to breathe and expand,” and “a sense of the actual pleasure of life when lived healthily, [rouses] his exhausted faculties to new and delightful vigour” (Corelli 104-05). The “sad little furrow on his forehead, which is so indicative of painful thought and study”—the result of his education by “over-cramming” and another reference to Mill’s *Autobiography*—becomes “scarcely perceptible” when Lionel is outside, looking “as nature meant all boys to look, bright and happy-hearted” (18).

According to the narrator, “The young truant whom Mother Nature coaxes out into the woods and fields when he should be at

his books” is likely to “prove himself a hero of the first rank...one of the leading pioneers of modern progress and discovery” (Corelli 148-49). When proposing “respite from study” and “truancy” as a remedy, Corelli draws on the Romantic trope of a vitalized “Mother Nature,” and her revolt against positivism is therefore also an example of the late nineteenth-century reaction, including that of Henri Bergson and his doctrine of intuition, which Baumer describes as having “a neo-romantic look” (372). The embedded reference to “modern progress,” whether intentional or not, may be her way of re-appropriating and thus challenging the putative claims of scientism. This trope is, moreover, common to many Romantic and Victorian texts, from Wordsworth’s *Lyrical Ballads* (1798) to Meredith’s *Poems and Lyrics of the Joy of Earth* (1883). The former, for example, locates the generative energy of a living Nature in the “divine vitality” of the Forest-tree (“‘a poet’!—He hath put his heart to school,” 1842), while Walter Pater, alluding to the nature poetry of Wordsworth and Percy Shelley, identifies it with “a spirit of the Earth” in “The Myth of Demeter and Persephone.”

When applied to pedagogy, the Romantic imperative to join “Mother Nature” meant that true learning occurred not exclusively through books or rational scientific inquiry. Jean-Jacques Rousseau urged teachers to interfere as little as possible in their pupils’ education so that they would learn to rely on their inner resources. Similarly, those nineteenth-century educators who followed Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi (1746-1827), the Swiss reformer who saw education as a way to bring together the “subjective will” with the “objective will,” emphasized the harmony of the individual with nature based on an innate moral sense (Grabar 131-32).

This was markedly different from the way Spencer conceived the natural world and education. Even though he stressed the importance of parental involvement in the initial stages, to ensure that children become “self-sufficing,” Spencer advised parents to

let them learn “organic[ally]” through direct observation and trial-and-error, the cornerstones of empiricism: learning, for instance, that boiling water can scald or a pin can lacerate the skin (112-13). “It is the peculiarity of these penalties, if we must so call them,” Spencer explains, “that they are nothing more than the *unavoidable consequences* of the deeds which they follow: they are nothing more than the *inevitable reactions* entailed by the child’s actions”: “The burnt child dreads the fire” (185). Both the followers of Rousseauian pedagogy and Spencer called for less involvement from parents and teachers; yet, whereas the former imagined nature as a living, spiritualized being, Spencer’s was a material nature with which the child could have only causal (and, from the few examples Spencer cites, largely punitive and painful) interaction.

Although she lets Lionel’s studies, discipline, and futile quest for answers consume him, Corelli does suggest an alternative—albeit one ultimately unsuccessful—which combines Meredith’s “Wild Oats” with Mill’s espousal of nature poetry. Relying on natural instinct, Corelli suggests, will help humans reconnect with a living earth on an innate level inaccessible to the empirically compromised senses. The language of “instinct,” in fact, prevails over that of “cramming” or “parrot-like” mimicry once Lionel steps out of the stifling schoolroom environment. Walking through a cemetery full of birds and headstones grown with green ferns and mosses, a setting where humans have morphed with nature, he is described as “[h]ushing his little footsteps instinctively” (57). Among the graveyard’s “forgotten dead,” he meets Reuben Dale, a gravedigger in “a pit of earth, which the boy’s instinct told him was a grave” (58). But his “instinct” is almost immediately undermined. When the gravedigger brings up the notion of an afterlife, Lionel dismisses it as “nonsense”: “Now it surely *is* nonsense, isn’t it, to think you can come to life again after you are eaten by the worms?”—the boy interjects, revealing his deeply

inculcated commitment to a materialist, scientific explanation of death (60).

Lionel's natural instincts and acquired tenets of scientific positivism forcefully clash in one scene in particular. When he meets Jessamine, Dale's daughter, he "quite los[es] his head" and remembers only "the natural facts that he was a little boy, and she was a little girl" (71). His initiation into the natural world is signaled by the young couple's embrace and exchange of a red apple, which he proceeds to feed her. In addition to what looks like an imaginative reenactment of Paradise in *Genesis*, the scene is also marked by floral imagery: "Jessamine" is a flower, as is "Lylie" (as his mother called him); when Jessamine asks, "Wot's Li'nel? Tain't a flower?" she evokes the traditional attribute of mother Mary, the symbol of purity (72, 79). The concurrence of biblical and pagan natural imagery adheres to Corelli's more comprehensive notion of religion discussed earlier, along with her acknowledgement of women's heightened spirituality. Floral imagery and biblical allegory temporarily bind Jessamine and Lylie into a spiritual community, and although Lionel initially cannot help dismissing Jessamine's faith as "semi-barbarian," he learns to love her nonetheless (74-75).

Cast in feminine terms, the spiritual is associated with "Mother Nature," Lionel's mother, and Jessamine, an association between femininity and creativity, spirituality and the earth not uncommon to nineteenth-century texts (Thomas Hardy's *Tess* is, for example, "a fresh and virginal daughter of Nature" in Angel Clare's eyes [119]). Yet both women depart, through flight and death, leaving the boy to perish under the force of science and discipline, both in turn identified with masculinity—Lionel's father and tutors. The only exception is Montrose, through whose influence the boy starts to question his father's system—an influence quickly replaced by the positivist Cadman-Gore, whom Valliscourt deems more suited for the position.

An analogous gendered dimension to science can be found in *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel*. "Science is notoriously of slow movement," the narrator notes at one point, stressing the difference in the way Richard's father and one of the female characters, Lady Blandish, perceive the world: too preoccupied with his System, he cannot grasp the latter's "proposition" and challenges it because it is "far too hasty for [him]" (518). "Women," the narrator asserts, "rapid by nature, have no idea of Science." Instinct figures as an antidote to science in the novel, and this privileging of the one which renders ignorance of the other an advantage culminates in Sir Austin's admitting, under the influence of two other women (Mrs. Berry and Richard's beloved Lucy), that "Instinct had so far beaten Science" (559).

Lionel's inability to cope as a result of his positivist education is further conveyed through the legend of Richard the Lion Heart and the myth of Cupid and Psyche. The two ideas are evoked through the imagery of "splendor" which, in turn, evokes the attribute of light traditionally ascribed to a God conspicuously absent from Lionel's life. There are several references to Richard Cœur de Lion, Lionel's ironic namesake whose "perpetual oath 'Par le Splendeur de Dieu!'" the boy ridicules, describing the king himself as "a very dense...brave dunce" (Corelli 201-02). Lionel also compares himself to the unfortunate Psyche, whose story the narrator summons more than once: like Psyche who "didn't know" and "wanted to find out," humans too "light our little lamps, and begin to try and discover things" only to see our Eros, whether it be the Mighty Atom or God, vanish forever (255). We are, however, ultimately worse off than Psyche: while she at least "feels her lover; and though the darkness of earth's perplexities stretches out yearning hands to grasp the actual Divine which Is," our human "lamps of learning, ill-trimmed and dull, cannot shed light on such Eternal Splendour" (301). In his final letter to his tutor, Lionel brings up the story of Psyche once again in

connection with his failed quest for faith: he “got it into [his] head,” he explains, “that if [he] put[s] out [his] lamp altogether [he] shall see much better,” for “God must be far too splendid to need any lamps to look at Him” (321). Through the repetition of Splendeur/Splendour/splendid, Corelli connects King Richard with Psyche in order to stress that neither path is available to Lionel. The hero’s recourse to narrative and his attempt at empathetic identification with legendary and mythic characters do not sufficiently help him cope in a crushingly chaotic, random universe ruled by selfish atoms. Whereas the old gravedigger is consoled by the thought that he will soon be reunited with his daughter and wife in the world beyond, to Lionel Jessamine’s death only confirms that “[t]here is no God,—there is only the Atom which does not care!” (276). Recalling his predecessor Montrose (and the author’s dedicatory note), Cadman-Gore concludes, in the closing pages of *The Mighty Atom*, that Lionel’s education “without a faith!” was indeed “a monstrous crime” (324). Science failed to provide moral guidance and solace. The experimental method gave Lionel no alternative to learn about the afterlife other than to test it out himself.

Corelli’s thoughtful critique of Victorian pedagogy and her revolt against positivism should be sufficient reason for revisiting *The Mighty Atom*. A bestselling author who drew and built upon her contemporaries, resonating with the work of Meredith, Tolstoy, Mill, and Shaw, she offers an invaluable window onto late Victorian intellectual and popular culture. Her portrayal of pedagogy is, moreover, relevant not only to Victorianists but to twenty-first century psychologists, teachers, social workers, and guidance counselors engaged in discussing the need for children to develop a sense of belonging to and a curiosity and wonderment about the world, an awareness of the self and others, and a capacity to confront difficult questions and life events. Corelli anticipates these concerns in her critique of positivist education and her

concern with incorporating spirituality into education to help students address philosophical questions of being, purpose, and meaning. *The Mighty Atom* will most certainly provide food for thought to those who are willing to shed the manacles of “cramming” (today, “teaching to the test”) and explore alternative pedagogies.

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Book Review
by Nikolai Endres

Roy Morris, Jr. *Declaring His Genius: Oscar Wilde in North America*. Cambridge, MA and London: Belknap Press of Harvard UP, 2013), ISBN 978-0674066960, 248 pages

“I have nothing to declare except my genius” – while one would probably get arrested these days for making such a statement upon entering the United States (if one can brace the wait in the customs hall for several hours), Oscar Wilde’s declaration of independence inaugurated a uniquely American phenomenon: the cult of celebrity, later to be perfected by the likes of Andy Warhol, David Bowie, or Lady Gaga. In his delightful little book, Roy Morris argues that Wilde “helped to alter the way in which post-Civil War Americans, still reeling from the most destructive war in the nation’s history, understood and accepted traditional concepts of masculinity” (3). In nine chapters, with preposterously precious titles, Morris covers Wilde’s 15,000 mile trek of 1882.

“Too Too Utterly Utter” provides background information on Wilde’s eccentric family. His mother supposedly claimed “There is only one thing in the world worth living for and that is sin” (7). His father was appointed Surgeon Oculist to the Queen in Ireland, “which meant that if Her Majesty visited the Emerald Isle again and got a sty or a coal cinder in her eye, he would be the one to remove it.” One of Wilde’s first sweethearts, Lillie Langtry, is treated rather cruelly by Morris. While Wilde praised her beauty effusively, Morris, upon carefully inspecting her physique as captured by photographs, disagrees: Langtry lamentably “displays in them a blunt nose, low forehead, cold eyes, prominent chin, and ruddy complexion” (15). Ouch! And while Morris was disappointed by Langtry, Wilde was disappointed by the smooth

sailing across the Pond in the middle of winter. “Mr. Wilde Disappointed with Atlantic,” the press proclaimed, to which a reply appeared the following week in the *Pall Mall Gazette*: “I am disappointed in Mr. Wilde, signed ‘The Atlantic Ocean’” (22).

In “More Wonderful Than Dickens,” drawing attention to Charles Dickens’ (rather less fabulous) earlier lecture tours of the US, Ross notices that Americans were as fascinated by curiosities and monstrosities (shaved monkeys, 900-pound human beings, four-legged women, or girls with size 30 shoes) as their Victorian counterparts; living in Mark Twain’s Gilded Age, they were also as confident as their oversees friends and thus ready for Wilde’s wildness. It was indeed in New York, at Napoleon Sarony’s studio, that Wilde took some of his most famous photographs, cementing his reputation as the Apostle of Aestheticism (courtesy of *Patience; or, Bunthorne’s Bride*, the comic opera by W. S. Gilbert and Arthur Sullivan). A more dubious claim, however, is that Wilde attracted a heavy gay audience, for many historians propose that it was not until Wilde’s trials that aestheticism, effeminacy, transvestism, and the like connoted homosexual desire; even more problematically, Morris speaks several times of Wilde being “openly gay” (58, 68) after his seduction by Robert Ross. But Oscar was not the only poet on the American scene. In the purple press, he would receive homely homages such as “Go it, Oscar! You are young / Owing a conviction, / To which you have wisely clung – / Beauty is no fiction!” (43). Less flatteringly (and more dangerously), the *New York Daily Graphic*, hinted at Wilde’s mercenary mission:

Conceive me if you can,
A pallid and thin young man,
A crotchety, crank’d young man,
A greenery-yallery, chickering gallery,
Dollar and a half young man. (47)

“Those Who Dawnce Don’t Dine” chronicles all the famous

people Wilde met during his visit, some even more famous than Wilde himself: Abraham Lincoln's son, Ulysses S. Grant's daughter, Henry James, and Walt Whitman. In "What Would Thoreau Have Said to My Hat-Box!" we learn about Wilde's sartorial measurements – 38.5 waist, 32 sleeve, 17 neck – and his visit to Niagara Falls, which Wilde found insufficiently majestic, on which the New York Tribune commented: "What the Falls thought of [Wilde] will probably never be known. The Falls, so far as we know, kept on falling" (95).

"No Well-Behaved River Ought to Act This Way" transitions to Wilde's greeting by the Chicago press; Wilde in the Windy City

comes with words sublimely dull,
In garb superbly silly,
To tell us of the beautiful,
The sunflower and the lily...
We like to look at Western mules,
But not aesthetic asses. (97)

"A Very Italy, Without Its Art" speculates about a meeting, in Springfield, IL, that never happened: "Mad Mary Lincoln, with her well-documented love of fine clothes, expensive jewelry, and lavish home decorations, might well have made a better audience for Wilde's words than her more prosaic neighbors did" (122). Too bad Wilde and Jackie Kennedy never met either. But Wilde did meet the more prosaic Ambrose Bierce, author of the short story "An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge" and of the satirical lexicon *The Devil's Dictionary*, who dished out a particularly foolish folly:

That sovereign of insufferables, Oscar Wilde, has ensued with his opulence of twaddle and penury of sense. He has mounted his hind legs and blown crass vapidity through the bowel of his neck, to the capital edification of circumjacent fools and foolesses. The ineffable dunce has nothing to say and says it with liberal embellishment of bad delivery, embroidering it with reasonless vulgarities of

attitude, gesture and attire. There was never an impostor so hateful, a blockhead so stupid, a crank so variously and offensively daft. He makes me tired. (136)

"Don't Shoot the Pianist; He's Doing His Best," a poster in a saloon in Colorado, describes Wilde's descent to the underworld that the movie *Wilde* (with Stephen Fry and Jude Law) memorably begins with. Cool Colorado contrasted with uptight Utah, where the Salt Lake City Herald wondered why "so strikingly awkward, so sorry at elocution, so ugly, so straight of hair, so vulgar of front teeth, so painfully dreary in manner of expression should be the best card in the pack of current lectures, barring female minstrels and leg dramatists" (146). We might concede Wilde's execrable elocution (surprisingly, Wilde did much better with a small audience), but photographs of the time show both dental orthodoxy and lush curliness.

"You Should Have Seen It Before the War" continues with Wilde's tour of the South, which culminated in a meeting with the unfortunate ex-president of the Confederacy, Jefferson Davis – who was not impressed with Oscar. More impressively, a Wilde impostor, Wild Oscar, had prepared the stage for the real Oscar, sporting sunflower shoes, wearing a sunflower watch fob, and doing a sunflower dance. All good things must come to an end, though. Having proclaimed that "The Oscar of the first period is dead" (208), Oscar pocketed the equivalent of well over \$100,000 in today's money, recovered from his American exhaustion, and cut his hair upon arrival in London.

A wonderful volume, really a coffee-table book, despite its tiny size. But, I am sorry to say, it completely fails to tell us how Wilde affected his American audience, especially the promised post-Civil War masculinity. What was Wilde's influence on architecture and art, furniture and literature, pots and poets, wallpapers and wallflowers? And what exactly did Wilde do to/with American men? Later, Morris lamely claims "In the end, America changed

Wilde more than Wilde changed America" (210). Did America do the unspeakable to Wilde? Did it gaily turn Wilde gay?

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