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Editor

Ward Hellstrom

Managing Editor

Louise R. Hellstrom

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From "Ladies' Business" to "Real Business": Elizabeth Gaskell's Capitalist Fantasy in *North and South*

Pamela Corpron Parker

In the final scene of Elizabeth Gaskell's *North and South*, the heroine, Margaret Hale, offers the manufacturer, John Thornton, £18,075 to invest in his failing cotton mill. Though "she was most anxious to have it all looked upon in the light of a mere business arrangement, in which the principal advantage would be on her side" (529), Thornton accurately interprets Margaret's business proposal as a marriage proposal and drops to his knees in speechless reverence of Margaret and her £18,075. While this peculiar scene effectively delivers the happy ending readers have come to expect of Victorian novels, it also highlights what most romantic plots hide: Margaret's and Thornton's marriage is a business arrangement; all marriages are.

In Gaskell's conclusion, as in the rest of *North and South*, the private language of romantic courtship is displaced by the public discourse of "Political Economy," the nineteenth-century precursor of modern economics. Political Economy was embraced by many Victorians as a unifying moral science through which the vast social changes of the age could be comprehended and controlled; to others, such as Carlyle, it was a "dismal science" which advocated materialism, wealth accumulation, free trade, and unbridled economic competition (Jay 16). The courtship of Margaret and Thornton is grounded in this economic debate, with Margaret resisting Thornton's deterministic social views and his emphasis on the economic rather than moral or spiritual welfare of his workers. Early in the novel, Margaret warns Thornton, "'I know so little about strikes, and rate of wages, and capital, and labour, that I had better not talk to a political economist like you'" (165). Margaret's comment is not a frank admission of ignorance; rather it veils a subtle combination of class and gender snobbery, a strategy for communicating her disinterest in both political economy and its champion, John Thornton. Yet by the novel's end, Margaret's indifference to Thornton and the Political Economy he represents has been replaced by an earnest emotional *and* capital investment in both.[1]

Margaret's and Thornton's passionate discussions of strikes, wages, capital and labor lead inevitably to the novel's conclusion—not so much to their marriage as their business merger. *North and South* eroticizes capitalism and its closing brings the elision of language to a satirical pitch. As Margaret's and Thornton's "business arrangements" slide into domestic arrangements, they speak to one another in terms of ownership "'I shall claim you as my own'"), relative worth ("'I am not good enough'"), and repayment ("'I requited you with my insolence'"). Even their first kiss becomes an opportunity for commercial exchange: Thornton "draw[s] out his pocketbook in which were treasured up some dead flowers," and when Margaret demands he give them to her, he tells her she must "pay" him with a kiss. Later, when Thornton offers to tell Aunt Shaw of their engagement, Margaret uses images of her indebtedness, insisting "'Oh, no! I owe to her'" (all references 529-30).

Until recently most critics have read this conclusion as a tidy retreat from the complexity of industrial relations into the "simpler" solutions of the marriage plot. Raymond Williams, Nancy Armstrong, Rosemary Bodenheimer, Deirdre David, Catherine Gallagher and others have commented on the tendency of nineteenth-century industrial novels to resolve potentially explosive class conflicts with conventional marriage plots. This narrative sleight-of-hand displaces public conflicts with private, domestic resolutions, thus allowing the marriage to do the ideological "work" of reconciling classes. While I agree with Gallagher that the marriage plot intertwines the "social and familial themes and plots so thoroughly that the very conventional resolution of the novel's love plot appears to be a partial solution to industrial social problems" (148), I would also argue that *North and South* does more than march Margaret to the altar; more than cross-dress domestic fiction in industrial clothes.

The intertwining of industrial and domestic plots in *North and South* represents neither Gaskell's failure of imagination nor a failure in the "condition of England" novel to achieve its goal of resolving difficult social dilemmas. *North and South* advocates an integration of domestic and industrial economies, male and female spheres of influence, and public and private life. Gaskell recognizes the interdependence of domestic and political economies, even as she disassociates private and public life and reproduces the domestic ideologies she is criticizing.

Perhaps more than any other Gaskell novel, *North and South* examines the uneasy convergence and inherent contradictions of both domestic and political economies. By "domestic economies," I acknowledge the Victorian house and its mistress as significant adjuncts to her husband's or father's business endeavors. For instance, in the opening chapters of *North and South*, Margaret is caught in the "whirlwind" of her cousin Edith's marriage. Margaret's "weariness" with the wedding is largely due to her recognition that the flurry of activity is "for a pretty effect" (41). In other words, Edith's marriage to Captain Lennox has become an occasion for consolidating and extending the Shaw's social and economic influence. Although Edith's "expectations" as a "young and pretty heiress" (37) are high, her mother is secure enough in her own social position as a wealthy widow to afford the luxury of allowing Edith to marry "for love." She, after all, "deliberately marr[ied] General Shaw with no warmer feeling than respect for his character and establishment" (37). And

[1]Margaret's words echo Gaskell's earlier disclaimer in the Preface of *Mary Barton* that "I know nothing of Political Economy, or the theories of trade. I have tried to write truthfully; and if my accounts agree or clash with any system, the agreement or disagreement is unintentional" (38). In both instances, this feigned ignorance acts as feminine disavowal, veiling an assumption of moral superiority.

though Edith "might have had little qualms of ill-concealed regret that Captain Lennox could not have united in his person everything that was desirable"—that is, a "fine house, a fine estate, and a fine title to boot" (37)—her marriage is a satisfactory domestic and business arrangement for all parties involved.

Gaskell satirically details the opportunities the wedding provides the Shaws for displaying the family wealth. Numerous parties are given and Edith's expensive trousseau is brought out for the ladies' approbation. While the cynical Henry Lennox separates this "ladies' business" from his business, "which is the real true law business" (42), even he recognizes that "'There are forms and ceremonies to be gone through not so much to satisfy oneself, as to stop the world's mouth, without which stoppage there would be very little satisfaction in life'" (42). What Henry frankly acknowledges is the important economic and public dimensions of private life. Maintaining the family's social position (or "stopping the world's mouth") is precisely a lady's business. As Elizabeth Langland has noted, women performed an important economic function in middle-class society: the "mid-Victorian husband depended on his wife to perform the ideological work of managing the class question and displaying the signs of the family's status—duties to which he contributed a disposable income" (291). Her argument counters the view that Victorian women were passive victims suffering under patriarchal social structures and suggests that the domestic realm was involved in public agendas such as class management (291).

Throughout the novel, Gaskell demonstrates these public dimensions of domestic life. Through a wealth of detail, she reveals an elaborate semiotic system of etiquette, clothing, and home decoration which served to distinguish the classes. Margaret's successful mastery of the signs of the genteel bourgeois femininity is evidenced in the pointed contrasts between the Thornton and Hale families. The Thorntons, or rather Mrs. Thornton and Fanny, are guilty of the "vulgar display" of the *nouveau riche*. For though they can afford many of the accouterments of gentility, they have not learned many of the subtle and constantly changing practices for displaying them appropriately. Mrs. Thornton's dinner parties are characterized by excess rather than elegance, and the silly Fanny Thornton is but a tawdry shadow of Margaret.

The difference between their two households is most thoroughly described in the chapter entitled "Wrought Iron and Gold," in which Thornton goes to tea at the Hales. Thornton notices that his own dining room lacked what he called the "sign[s] of feminine habitation" (119). Even though it "was twice—twenty times as fine' [it was] not one quarter as comfortable" (119). What Thornton assumes are merely gender markers are in fact signifiers of class. The mirrors, chintz-covered furniture, fresh floral arrangements, work baskets, leatherbound books, and particularly the tea table with its white table cloth, cocoa-nut cakes, and imported fruit are all signs of surplus income and gentility. Though unfamiliar to him, Thornton recognizes that "all these graceful cares were habitual to the [Hales]; and especially of a piece with Margaret" (120). Whether conscious or not, his attraction to Margaret is in large part her successful mastery of the signs of her class and gender. Indeed, Margaret has so interpolated "these graceful cares" and social signifiers that they appear to be natural or "of a piece with" Margaret. His fascination with Margaret's tea table performance confirms her position as a perfect signifier for the class he earnestly works toward.

Another example of "ladies' business" occurs when Margaret attends a dinner party at Thornton's. She witnesses a feminine version of power brokering in the ladies' dull after-dinner conversation. Margaret likens it to a game in which

> they took nouns that were signs of things which gave evidence of wealth,—housekeepers, under-gardeners, extent of glass, valuable lace, diamonds, and all such things; and each one formed her speech so as to bring them all in, in the prettiest accidental manner possible. (221)

Margaret recognizes their verbal competition for what it is: a manipulation of the "signs of things which gave evidence of wealth." In her thinly-veiled stance of moral and class superiority, she is able to satirize their semantic games of "vulgar display" even as she recognizes the industrialists' economic superiority.

Though Margaret gives the impression of being above such class competition, she haughtily assures the working-class Bessy Higgins, who is surprised by Margaret's invitation to dine with all "the first folk in Milton" (199) that though the Hales hadn't much money, they were "educated people and had lived amongst educated people" (199). She asks Bessy,

> "Is there anything so wonderful, in our being asked out to dinner by a man who owns himself inferior to my father by coming to him to be instructed? I don't mean to blame Mr. Thornton. Few draper's assistants, as he was once, could have made themselves what he is." (199-200)

Margaret's class consciousness is all too clear here, both in her need to distance herself from Bessy and from her "inferior," John Thornton.

As in many mid-century "condition of England" novels, the narrative goal of *North and South* is one of reconciliation and education, a kind of fictional philanthropy in which Gaskell aims to bring both the middle-class reader and Margaret Hale beyond their class prejudices of "shoppy people." Margaret's narrative movement toward a more sympathetic consideration of the concerns of the workers and the masters of industrial England might be described as her growth from private-mindedness to public-mindedness. For Victorians, being "public minded" meant taking an interest in the world beyond one's narrow domestic and class boundaries and extending to those "less fortunate" the sympathy which characterizes the private sphere. For Margaret, this process begins with her exposure to the working-class Higgins family and to the foreign language of Political Economy.[2]

Margaret's involvement in working-class family affairs repeats her former pattern of house-to-house visiting among the rural poor of Helstone. Her philanthropic work serves as a logical extension of her role as domestic angel and becomes a model for class relations. Her visits to the Higgins home provide yet another example of class containment, however. By focusing on the family unit rather than the work place, domestic and personal behavior subordinates the issue of wages and unemployment to domestic behavior (Langland 297). For instance, Margaret prevents Nicholas Higgins from drowning his sorrows in drink by inviting him to her home for conversation and prayer with her father, but she can do little to alter his class bitterness or unemployment.

Margaret's involvement in the workers' plight eventually takes her beyond their homes and into the public arena of a mill strike. This narrative intersection between the domestic and industrial plots produces one of Victorian fiction's most dramatic moments. The class and gender collisions of the strike are what create its drama and have elicited ample critical comment on this scene (see Gallagher, Bodenheimer, Harman, Schor). My interests lie not so much in Margaret's appearance in the public sphere as in her shift from class maintenance (what Henry Lennox called "ladies' business") to class negotiations.

Margaret's sudden movement from the parlor to the public arena of industrial relations requires some fancy ideological footwork. She must defend her "unmaidenly" behavior with protestations about "the sanctity of our sex as a high privilege" and her "reverenced helplessness" (252-53). She claims the protective instinct is "natural" in all women, telling Thornton, "'If I saved one blow, one cruel, angry action that might otherwise have been committed, I did a woman's work'" (247). Margaret thus presents her actions as an extreme form of female philanthropy, or what Rosemary Bodenheimer calls a fantasy of female rescue (49). Yet her impulsive actions come out of a specifically middle-class notion of femininity. To put it slightly differently, Margaret has moved from class competition (or "ladies business") to a form of class reconciliation (or "woman's work"). Gaskell is clear, however, that, "If she thought her sex would be her protection—she was wrong" (247). Margaret's protective gestures toward Thornton make her yet another object of class hostility rather than the female protectoress she imagines herself to be. The pebble which strikes Margaret's temple hits its mark. She is (as Thornton observed earlier) "of a piece" with the higher classes that oppress and starve the strikers.

What Margaret views as a gesture of feminine privilege, the workers interpret as an act of upper-class solidarity. Though Margaret's inert body temporarily quells the violence, no real progress is made in industrial relations. The strike continues, the Irish workers resume their labor, and Thornton's mill struggles on until the arbitrary forces of a capitalistic economy bankrupt him. At last Margaret's sympathies rest squarely with John Thornton, the captain of political economy. Her unexpected and well-timed inheritance from Mr. Bell, her godfather, enables her to come to John Thornton's rescue. By extension, she also rescues the mill and those who work there. Her newfound financial power also enables her to propose to John Thornton in the guise of "a mere business arrangement" (529). In short, she's moved from "ladies' business" to "woman's work" to the "real business" of capitalism. Gaskell's final fantasy is one of real financial power for women, not only the power to direct their resources towards the objects of their desire but to benefit themselves and their wider communities.

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Valparaiso University

[2]*In her Scherherezade in the Marketplace*, Hilary Schor aptly states that *North and South* "serves as a glossary of industrialization" (129).

Aesthetic Intertextuality as Cultural Critique: Vernon Lee Rewrites History through Walter Pater's "La Gioconda"

Christa Zorn

In Vernon Lee's story "Amour Dure," an uncanny presence rises from the text. It is the presence of Medea da Carpi, a woman "dead these three hundred years." Born in 1556—and thus exactly three hundred years before Vernon Lee—Medea comes to represent a line of deathly women, the "race of Faustinas, Marzias, Bianca Capellos."[1] The ghost of this Renaissance woman haunts an obsessive nineteenth-century historian, Spiridion Trepka, who is studying for a German university the history of the (fictitious) Italian city of Urbania.[2] But his growing desire for Medea da Carpi confuses his sense of reality and drives him to madness. At the end, a short newspaper clip abruptly ends the narrative: "Professor Spiridion Trepka of Posen, in the German Empire, had been discovered dead of a stab in the region of the heart given by an unknown hand" (126).

Read as a supernatural tale, "Amour Dure" is another clever sample of its genre. The story's multiple literary allusions—a favorite Victorian device—not only create the mystery and ambiguity of a gripping ghost story, but also reveal the overdetermined character of the cultural text. The curious effect of this story lies in its evocation and simultaneous deconstruction of another subtext. "Amour Dure" can be read as an animated version of Pater's portrayal of "la Gioconda" in *The Renaissance*, and at the same time, as a trope of the entire nineteenth-century craze for the Italian Renaissance—from Goethe to Burckhardt, from Browning to Swinburne. But most evidently, Lee's phantom woman Medea da Carpi, who owes a lot to Bronzino's *Lucrezia Panciatichi*,[3] echoes Pater's famous Mona Lisa, "the presence that rose thus so strangely beside the waters" *The Renaissance* 96).[4]

Pater's Mona Lisa is figured both as origin and as culminating point of a temporality, a summation of history in which the "ten thousand experiences" of the past are swept together in one mythical image, which enfolds all narrative of history in the aesthetic form. Historical and mythical time are conflated in one point and in one aesthetical object. But Lisa's enigma demands interpretation, Paterian interpretation, which enfolds all the disparate moments of the past and thus embodies the myth of the modern spirit. In Pater's aesthetic and epiphanic rendering of history, to quote Carolyn Williams, "an emporal series of successive stages is recast as an image or spatial figure" (119).

Whereas Pater conjures up the picture of an enigmatic woman who resolves the antinomies of history, Lee reverses the mythmaking process and lets us see the mind behind it. Her female figure (Medea da Carpi) is just as "strange" as Pater's Mona Lisa. What is different is Lee's interpretation of the enigma, for she tells Medea's story mediated through a modern historian's mind. Lee here investigates how apparently timeless mythical images not only reflect but also reproduce—concretely and subjectively—collective history in individual minds. She undoes Pater's fusion of aesthetic object (the image) and subject (the historian) as she places both into their specific historical conditions. By sexualizing her narrator's perspective,[5] she shows the limitations of the "modern" mind whose time-transcending consciousness simply reproduces cultural relationships between male and female, subject and object, past and present. While Pater's immortal Mona Lisa locks "Leonardo's artistic development, the processes of history, and the movements of his own essay" (Williams 111) in synchronic unity, Lee's Medea escapes from her mythical deathbed, disrupting her makers' historical text while creating her own. Although Lee employs Pater's configuration of historical transmission as aestheticized female form, she breaks it down into its historical (and sexualized) components, which she then reassembles to construct woman's historical visibility—on her own terms.

In "Amour Dure," Pater's famous reverie of the modern spirit ("what in the ways of a thousand years men had come to desire") becomes literal (sexualized) history in the Renaissance femme fatale; Medea da Carpi devours her lovers as Mona Lisa devours centuries.

> Her magic faculty is to enslave all the men who come across her path; all those who see her, love her, become her slaves; and it is the destiny of all her slaves to perish. Her lovers . . . all come to an untimely end; and in this there is nothing unjust. The possession of a woman like Medea is a happiness too great for a mortal man . . . he must be willing to love and suffer and die. This is the meaning of her device—"Amour Dure—Dure Amour." The love of Medea da Carpi cannot fade, but the lover can die; it is a constant and a cruel love. (103)

Medea's sinister and seductive smile means death, not in a mystified or symbolic sense, but frightfully real. Like her "namesake of Colchis" she takes revenge and kills her lovers as the mythical Medea killed her children.

The Renaissance woman's story is (temporarily) "mastered" by Spiridion Trepka as he retrieves her history from documents in the archives of Urbania. But she soon emerges phantom-like from the pages of his diary and, once out of control, begins to haunt the hysteric historian's mind. Trepka, it seems, has found in Medea the embodiment of all his unfulfilled desires, which are motivated by both sexual repression and the alienation from his national identity. An exile Pole in the new German Empire, he feels oppressed by the rigid intellectual sterility of German historical scholarship, which leaves no room for fantasy and romance. For years, Trepka had longed to "come face to face with the Past," and he had "sighed like Goethe in Rome," full of desire for a grand passion, for a woman "for whose pleasures to die" (100). But when he finally comes to Italy, his quixotic yearning is instantly frustrated by the profane reality of Urbania's provincialism and the barrenness of the wintery landscape. In his dismay, Trepka flees into the imagined reality of Medea da Carpi. His obsession for her becomes most intense around Christmas time when his yearning for Medea is merged with wistful recollection of his eager expectation of Christmas Eve back in his childhood in Poland. Convinced that he is "reserved for something wonderful in this world," Trepka wishes and works for the reappearance of the woman from the past, who promises to be even more exquisite that Goethe's "Fraus," for he is "after all a Pole, accustomed to something very different from 'Fraus'" (99).

Trepka's national pride as well as his secret revolt against both German authorities and pedantic historiography obviously emulates Medea's rebellion against the relentlessness of sixteenth-century Italian patriarchy. For Trepka, there is no doubt that his own oppression as "a Pole grown into the semblance of a German pedant" makes him the elect protector of this "imperious woman . . . treated like a chattel" (101). Ostracized and maligned through a biased historiography, Medea becomes a model for Trepka's own disempowerment. At the same time, her untamed, uncanny sexual attraction offers him an escape from dull historical scholarship into the fantastic past of the Duchess Medea. Through her image, he endows history with romance and excitement and himself with

Fig 1: Agnolo Bronzino, "Lucrezia Pantiatichi." Florence, Galleria degli Uffizi. c. 1540.

Fig. 2: Leonardo da Vinci, "Mona Lisa." Paris, Louvre. 1503.

[1]"Amour Dure" first appeared in *Murray's Magazine* 1 (1887): 49ff; 188ff. It was later republished with other supernatural tales by Vernon Lee in *Hauntings: Fantastic Stories* (London: W. Heinemann, 1890). All quotations in this article are from Vernon Lee, *Supernatural Tales: Excursions into Fantasy*, intro. Irene Cooper Willis (London: Peter Owen, 1987).

[2]The name as well as the historical, geographical, and architectural characteristics of Urbania suggest that Vernon Lee used the city of Urbino as a model.

[3]The alleged portrait of Medea da Carpi which Lee's narrator describes is in fact Agnolo Bronzino's *Lucrezia Panciatichi*, Galleria degli Uffizi (c. 1540). Trepka's description is precise: the red bodice, the ornate hairdo, and, most notably, the necklace with the inscription "Amour Dure—Dure Amour." Bronzino is considered the creator of "Courtly Mannerism," which dominated Florentine painting in mid-sixteenth century. His portrait of Lucrezia Panciatichi (wife of the French Huguenot Bartolomeo Panciatichi) emphasizes her more abstract and intellectual qualities despite her superb attire and evident beauty.

[4]The intertextual link between Lee and Pater also has biographical reality: Vernon Lee dedicated her first book on the Renaissance, *Euphorion* (1884), to Walter Pater and concluded its sequel, *Renaissance Fancies and Studies* (1892), with a eulogy on her "master." Lee first met Pater at a dinner party in July 1881. On her subsequent visits to England, she always spent some time at his house where they exchanged ideas on each other's publications. In a letter to her mother (24 July 1882), Lee mentions Pater's plan for a historical novel in connection with a similar project of her own: "By the way, I told Pater the idea (not the plot) and he thought it very good; he himself seems to be writing something very similar in the way of a novel about the time of Marcus Aurelius." But Lee did not seem too impressed with Pater's draft as she wrote home on 20 June 1884: ". . . and he has read me part of his philosophical romance about the time of the Antonines. Fine, but I think lacking vitality." Her own (Renaissance) novel, first entitled *Medea da Carpi*, was not published because Blackwood objected to the mingling of fact and fiction. Thus she trimmed it down to the present shape of the tale, which appeared first under the title of "Amour Dure" in *Murray's Magazine* in 1887.

[5]To be sure, Pater's metaphor for historical transmission is also sexually charged. However, as Thäis E. Morgan has argued, his Mona Lisa is "not a womanly 'type' in the conventional Victorian sense. Rather, it is another kind of manliness, one that Pater implicitly exalts above the womanliness of women" (328).

an identity, one, however, outside the confines of society.[6]

Trepka's quixotic narrative also mimics the wistfulness of Pater's imaginary portraits: sensitive, isolated, and somewhat esoteric characters, whose search for beauty or innovation is often thwarted by adverse social forces. Pater's hypersensitive artists, loyal only to their impressions, appear as the true bearers of the "modern spirit" which can only be recovered by a kindred (aesthetic) temperament, namely Pater himself. His "La Gioconda," the myth of myths,[7] the "strange presence" that rises from the waters, is a symbol of the timeless moment against the flux of history. Lee takes Pater's time—transcending image of the "modern idéa"—"the fancy of a perpetual life, sweeping together ten thousand experiences"—and translates it into concrete historical experience. In "Amour Dure," she tracks a myth back to its making. Lee examines the images of a Renaissance woman through the historian's mind to investigate how is imagination interacts with the cultural assumptions in past and present. Trepka's quest for Medea at first merely reproduces her traditional image as a femme fatale whose history and character reminds one of that "of Bianca Capellos, and at the same time of Lucrecia Borgia" (90). But her portrait is increasingly permeated by his intrusive self-conscious monologue, which not only disassembles the myth of the Renaissance woman but also exposes the historical conditions of its production, thereby subverting the notion of myth itself.

At first, Medea's portrait reads like another version of "La Gioconda,"

> The face is a perfect oval . . . . Tight eyelids and tight lips give a strange refinement, and, at the same time, an air of mystery, a somewhat sinister seductiveness . . . . The mouth . . . looks as if it could bite or suck like a leech . . . . A curious, at first rather conventional looking beauty, voluptuous yet cold, which, the more it is contemplated, the more it troubles and haunts the mind . . . . I often examine these tragic portraits, wondering what this face, which led so many men to their death, may have been like when it spoke or smiled . . . . (96-97)[8]

Like Lisa with "the unfathomable smile always in touch of something sinister in it" (*The Renaissance* 97), Medea also epitomizes what men desire, but her history has come to represent rather what they fear. Medea's "sinister seductiveness," which "has led so many men to their death" ("Amour Dure" 97), elicits the attraction of her terrible beauty. Between these two poles, fear and desire, (or in Trepka's words, "the feeling terrifies me, but it is delicious") Spiridion Trepka pieces together what is remembered of Medea da Carpi in historical archives and traditional folklore. Her image gradually emerges from official documents, personal letters, and, most formidably, from pictorial representations. On another level, she is evoked as an evil woman through the legends and superstitions of oral history, which is the site of people's informal cultural memory. The children of nineteenth-century Urbania, for instance, still tremble at the spook of "Madonna Medea, who rode in the sky on a black he-goat" (104).

At the same time, Medea is associated with the ancient sorceress through her name. The mythological connotation brings a pagan otherness into the Christian setting of Urbania, where "all the bells are ringing for the approach of Christmas" (116). Like a foreboding of Trepka's fate, she appears to him while he hallucinates a Christmas service in the long deserted church of "San Giovanni Decollato" (John the Baptist) with a picture of "the daughter of Herodias dancing upon the altar" (117).[9] In an almost surrealistic break through time, Trepka retains from these supenatural encounters two tangible tokens of evidence: a rose and a letter. These symbols impart Medea's historical transcendence which gives Trepka's spiritual-erotic fantasies a larger dimension. The dissolution of boundaries between imagination and reality, past and present, which brings together cultural incommensurabilities, occurs repeatedly during Trepka's plunges into heightened spiritual sensation. Through the wintery landscape, the smell of incense, and the ceremonious atmosphere created by the bright illuminations of the ongoing Christmas festivities, Trepka relives the sensations he felt on Christmas Eve in his childhood "long ago at Posen and Breslau." In these moments of recollection, "all seems a dream; everything vague and unsubstantial . . . as if time had ceased" (124). Spiridion's awaiting of the Christ Child as a little boy parallels his eager anticipation of Medea's revelation to him; and the Christian myth, which speaks of annunciation and the birth of Christ, unfolds for the reader in the substratum of the text. Medea, on the other hand, plots her own rebirth vampire-like, for her return requires Trepka's death. In the end, his wish to be selected for something wonderful is fulfilled in a macabre sense: he believes himself to be Medea's executor for the destruction of the effigy of Duke Robert, Medea's brother-in-law and greatest rival, to enable her fantastic return to history. But the Pole's final triumph is a Pyrrhic victory, for he does not survive this task. His "mission" ends at the very moment he is about to receive Medea's "reward." When his excitement becomes overpowering ("At last, Medea, Medea! Ah! AMOUR DURE--DURE AMOUR!), his narrative is abruptly stopped and the text laconically informs us that Spiridion Trepka was found "dead by a stab in the region of the heart" (126).

Medea's fatal stroke on Christmas Eve and the fulfillment of Spiridion's desire in the moment of death ironically reverse the traditional conception of Christmas as a feast of birth and new life. The "immaculate" Mother-and-Child myth, eagerly promoted by religious discourses of the nineteenth century,[10] is thus evoked and mocked by the conniving Renaissance Medea, who kills her lovers, and her mythological "double," who kills her children. Medea da Carpi's appearance obviously commands traditional Christian iconography: while she appears in the red and black garb of the Compassionate Madonna,[11] she undermines the religious symbolism by the fear she spreads through her pattern of love and revenge. Like the mythological figure, Medea da Carpi is the "unfeminine" woman and the "unmotherly" mother (a female Cronos), who is a latent threat to the established order. The Medea myth has been read as a construction of certain historical circumstances, especially in Euripides's drama, where she represents women's oppression and desperate revolt.[12] Both the antique sorceress and the Renaissance specter are culturally unintelligible. In either case, female rage threatens the social order and signifies an end to history—at least as men have known it.

In "Amour Dure," Spiridion Trepka's version of Medea da Carpi's story shows that historiography, and not her innate evil, has turned her into a femme fatale. Throughout history—as Trepka's research brings to light—, Medea da Carpi has only been visible through her fatal connections with men. The eager Polish historian, however, show us Medea's "hidden" text, namely her alternative identity as an intelligent and learned woman who can "read Petrarch and Plato," but who is forced to play a merely sexual role in men's power games. Although her quest for wealth and power is not different from the quest of her male contemporaries, she appears uncanny and threatening to them because of her sex. Thus, she has gone into history as the evil seductress, whereas her archenemy and executioner, Duke Robert, is praised for his rule of clemency.

Trepka reveals that either image is false. He exposes the limitations of the male point of view from which conventional historiography is written and discovers behind the glory of "great" men in history immense fears and anxieties. Behind the myth of Duke Robert's clemency, for instance, the Polish historian finds the cowardliness of "a cunning, cold, but craven priest," who fears Medea as something "almost supernatural" (103). Trepka's investigation, then, suggests that the ruler's cruelty—he has her incarcerated and finally strangled by two women—can only be justified by historiography if Medea is invested with evil powers so that the stroke against "la pessima Medea" appears as an act of self defense. As Trepka's historical text deprives the Duke of his "goodness," Medea's alleged wickedness becomes relative. At the same time, the text shows that Medea's image is overdetermined in so many ways that it points to its own cultural construction rather than to historical "truth."

On the other hand, Trepka's mytho-historical narrative ironically perpetuates the maligned image of the "femme fatale" while he pretends to undo her historical distortion. His obsessive narrative shows that his desire for Medea is not different from that of the other men (lovers and historians alike), which is, in short, the desire to possess a woman through possessing her text. In this respect, Spiridion Trepka repeats precisely the patriarchal tradition. As he does not put into perspective (i.e. historicize) his own role, he becomes another "victim" of Medea's revenge. Although Trepka redeems the maligned woman from her historical exile, he imprisons her again in his frenzied mind, blinded by sexual obsession and the desire for self-aggrandizement. Through what Paul Connerton would call "mythical identification" (62), Trepka adopts the Renaissance woman's past as his own possibility. His ritualistic re-enactment (signified by the Christmas celebrations) of the collective cultural memory stored in the conception of "Medea" not only reincarnates the past, but also heightens his sense of self-importance. In his obsession with being Medea's elected lover, he can envision himself to have been "reserved for something wonderful" in this world: "Why should she not return to earth, if she knows that it contains a man who thinks of, desires, only her?" (118). Although he is aware that all her other lovers acted in the same manner, the Pole feels exceptional because his love makes her immortal: "But she shall love me best—me by whom she has been loved after she has been three hundred years in the grave" (122). The readers recognize the dramatic irony of Trepka's Oedipal arrogance although, it seems, he is willing to pay the price for her love: "all had to die, and I shall die also . . . . The love of such a woman is enough . . . " (122). As the hyperbolic cliché (death for a woman's love) is made literal, symbolic and realistic discourse become confused.[13] Spiridion Trepka assumes a "real" position as another rival among figures who exist only on paper. This "ungrammaticality" exposes his ludicrous obsession with the masculine role. He claims to assign to Medea a new historical importance, but, unable to think outside conventional gender images, he gives her first and foremost a sexual identity. The narrator leaves intact the traditional (sexual) patterns of gender relations, and so they will continue repeating themselves,[14] just like the run-on inscription of Medea's golden necklace with "lozenges at

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Spiridion Trepka's homelessness is evident in all aspects of his troubled life. Severed from his Polish ties, he remains an alien in the German Empire wistfully idealizing his memory of the past. Similarly, he romanticizes Italian history but keeps aloof of the native people, whose mundanity he disdains, for fear of having his illusion dispelled.

[7] See Williams (11-123) for a discussion of Pater's mythicism.

[8] Interestingly, the words here recall another portrait by Leonardo—a red-chalk drawing in the Louvre—as it is described in Pater's essay on Leonardo da Vinci. But while Pater speaks of the face being "voluptuous and full in the eyelids and lips" (90-91), Medea's beauty, although likewise "voluptuous," is of a different quality, "tight eyelids and tight lips."

[9] The ambivalence of the imagery (Madonna, Medea, Salomé) is reminiscent of Pater's reading of a Leonardo painting, in which "Saint John's strange likeness to the *Bacchus*" conflates pagan and Christian imagery in an erotically daring picture.

[10] See Atkinson, Buchanan, and Miles on alledgedly "truthful" accounts of the Holy Mother's apparitions in the nineteenth century.

[11] Medea's image bears a striking resemblance to Piero della Francesca's *Madonna della Misericordia* (begun in 1445). When she appears to Trepka, she loosens "her heavy black cloak, displaying a dress of deep red with gleams of silver and gold," details which echo the open black cloak over a red dress of Piero's frontal Madonna, a massive cylindrical form which towers high above the smaller-scale human beings who invoke her. The *Madonna della Misericordia* conveys a sense of power similar to Medea's overbearing magnetism during the imaginary church service.

[12] In Euripides's drama, the gods approve of her revenge because her motive is Jason's betrayal of her unconditional love. On this point see Schulz. Schulz argues that man can recognize woman only in the function she has in *his* social order. The archaic woman (Medea) appears on the borderline between all orders. The fear she arouses is only the effect of her oppression. To assert herself she has to annihilate all social order and thus becomes a constant provocation for the male world. In Seneca's or Klinger's representations, Medea is the terrible reminder to the civilzation that it was built on war and oppression.

[13] Rosemary Jackson has pointed out that the fantastic often takes metaphorical constructions literally. In fantastic stories, one object does not *stand* for another but literally *becomes* that other. Fantasy resists allegory and metaphor and it is precisely in this resistance that Jackson—like Todorov—sees its subversive power.

[14] In "The Economic Parasitism of Women" (282-83), Vernon Lee speaks of the sexual over-investment of gender relations. "And here we touch the full mischief. That women are over-sexed means that, instead of depending upon their intelligence, their strength, endurance and honesty, they depend mainly upon their sex; that they appeal to men, dominate men through the fact of their sex . . . . The old, old story is repeated with slight variations from Schopenhauer to Nietzsche, and from Michelet to Dumas fils".

intervals, on which is engraved the posy or pun . . . 'Amour Dure—Dure Amour'" (97).

The round of the necklace repeating the Renaissance paradox "in my beginning is my end," reinforces the cyclical movement characteristic of mythological time. Medea's image also speaks to Trepka in the language of myth, which appeals to the unconscious levels of the mind. His "grandiose" insight into the nature of Medea's love—"The love of Medea da Carpi cannot fade, but the lover can die," (102)—ironically paraphrases the self-perpetuating potency of the unreflected content of mythical images. In this respect, the dramatic irony in the text is not produced by Trepka's ignorance of the repetitiveness of "fate," but by his blindness to the cultural conditions which engender the imaging of such repetition.

As Trepka's obsessive quest aptly demonstrates, one of the most powerful factors to obstruct critical awareness and insight is unrestrained desire. The image of Medea signifies Trepka's longing for all that is lacking in his frustrating reality as a Polish subject of the German Empire: the "at-home" feeling of his Polish boyhood, his national (and masculine) identity, and emotional fulfillment. The text does not connect these aspects explicitly, but the reader can recognize their actualization in Medea. Paradoxically, it takes Trepka's desire to recover her from the mythological bind of centuries, but the same desire arrests her image subsequently, this time in the hothouse of his imagination which re-establishes the myth of "the eternal duration of *La Femme*."[15]

Still, the narrator's dramatic monologue (almost Browning's "My Last Duchess" in reverse)[16] reveals to us the text of a learned, powerful woman, obviously no more ruthless than her male contemporaries but rather their equal in craft and cunning. This aspect of gender "equality" can become visible only as Trepka leaves behind the traditional historiography of "great men" and individualizes the abstractions and universal identifications built into historical discourse. By shifting Medea da Carpi from the margins of history to the center, he gives the Renaissance woman a new identity, which alters the historical myth and shakes the belief in its eternal duration. By presenting Medea's story through the historian's mind, Vernon Lee shows that myth of time-transcending images is primarily the construction of a certain cultural and political reality, the product of a craven Renaissance duke or of an overwrought Polish professor in the 1880s. When Trepka claims to "understand" Medea, he fails to recognize the cultural condition of his desire as well as the Renaissance woman's historical otherness. As he does not connect his alienation and repression with his sexual attraction to the powerful women, his fate has to follow that of her former "lovers." Trepka's sense of reality dissolves to the degree that he desires Medea's presence, and the historian writes the Renaissance woman into history by the same movements as he is written out of it.

In "Amour Dure," masculine desire becomes disturbed when the image itself (Medea) begins to desire—not erotic fulfillment, but recognition and power. The text endows Medea da Carpi with the "strange presence" of Pater's Mona Lisa, but it also shows what happens when woman desires power in order to create her own presence. Vernon Lee slips into a male narrator's voice to construct a female subject, which was supposed to be an object, and she manages to create a voice for a woman without putting her back into the traditional historical void. Thus, Lee's story designs a possible female position in history while revealing the (male) discourses that have kept her outside.

"Amour Dure" can be read as an inversion of Pater's modern myth. Whereas he projects a picture of the romantic and enigmatic woman, who resolves the antinomies of history, Lee breaks down the model into its components. She reverses the mythmaking process and lets us see the mind behind it. Her female figure is just as enigmatic as Pater's Mona Lisa—but only from the male point of view. Pater, as Ian Fletcher has argued, "was trying to create an image or model, a design, into which he could pour all the female fluid matter of his understanding of the world so as to locate it there and make it legible" (13). The phrase, "men in the ways of a thousand years," can then be translated into Pater himself for whom the Mona Lisa expresses what he himself desires. In this sense, Pater's "fancy of a perpetual life, sweeping together ten thousand experiences," becomes an attempt to give universality and authority to the image by arresting in its aesthetics a synoptic history of the development of civilization.

> All the thoughts and experience of the world have etched and moulded here . . . the animalism of Greece, the lust of Rome, the mysticism of the middle age with its spiritual ambition and imaginative loves, the return of the Pagan world, the sins of the Borgias. (*The Renaissance* 98-99)

"The return of the Pagan world, the sins of the Borgias," is not Medea da Carpi all that, too? Are these not the metaphors of her story? And yet, her image differs from that of the Mona Lisa as it includes the viewer's perspective. "Amour Dure" not only represents the mythical female object but it reveals the relationship between the object and the maker, in other words, the male subject in history.

Whereas Pater's reverie of the Mona Lisa gathers history through the heightened sensitivity of the artist whose temperament is mystically linked to the aesthetic critic of the modern age, Lee looks into history from the woman turned into myth. Similar to the way her heroine Medea da Carpi haunts her narrator's life, Lee enters historiography from the unknown, i.e. the female subject position. Through complex arrangements of various cultural images, Lee constructs the visibility of woman in history. She borrows her male narrator's voice and point of view so that she can speak as a "subject-I" in historical discourse. But she puts her narrator at an ironical distance, which is evident, for instance, when Trepka's inflated male ego deludes him into a manic competition with Medea da Carpi's previous lovers. As Trepka's madness unfolds, the historical construction of his (male) subjectivity and thereby that of his object become evident. However, Trepka's madness creates a potential reality for Medea's voice and allows her, if only temporarily, to become a subject in history.

Vernon Lee employs the impressionistic historical style of Walter Pater as she reenacts his subjective revisions of "objective" historical discourses, but she writes into her text a different, we may say, female subjectivity. Lee questions the validity of historiography altogether by denying that it can yield "truth" or knowledge unless we inquire *who* is asking the questions.[17] In other words, an understanding of history has to remain incomplete and distorted as long as it excludes woman's point of view.

Lee could not totally bask in the modern aesthetic spirit because it evolved from a tradition of imagination of male subjectivity. Therefore, she is writing *with* Pater and at the same time against him. She still shares Pater's own ambivalence about historicism's demand for historical authenticity and the claim to represent "the thing itself." In "Amour Dure," for instance, she ridicules the pedantic methods of the German historians ("dryasdusts"), whose imperious belief in the fact-producing potency of "objective" scholarship turns history into a dead object for microscopic dissection. Combined with the arrogance of the newly established German Empire, historical science was becoming a powerful instrument of oppression, which silenced diverging positions. Lee shows that such oppressive conditions always imply their own deficiencies and escapes in "otherness" and, therefore, they are conducive for certain minds and temperaments to withdraw into an "other," imaginary reality. Trepka's madness in "Amour Dure" points to the dangerous character of such escapes, especially when they become an end in themselves. Vernon Lee saw a version of such escapist self-indulgence also in the early Walter Pater (as opposed to the "mature" Pater in *Marius the Epicurean*), namely in his hedonistic aestheticism whose limitations she criticizes in the "Valedictory" to *Renaissance Fancies and Studies* (1895);

> For Walter Pater started by being above all a writer, and an aesthete in the very narrow sense of twenty years ago: an aesthete of the school of Mr. Swinburne's *Essays*. . . . The cultivation of sensations, vivid sensations, no matter whether healthful or unhealthful, was, after all, but a theoretic and probably unconscious disguise for the cultivation of something to be said in a new way, which is the danger of all persons who regard literature as an end, and not a means. . . . And of this Mr. Pater's first and famous book was a very clear proof. (251)

Pater's self-centered (male) glance into history implies a yearning for "lost contents" (Ellen Friedman), without naming *what* was lost. Historical consciousness on the verge of modernism therefore appears as nostalgic desire—so evidently captured in Pater's account of Winckelmann's longing for home—[18] for an experience which came to fill in for the "unpresentable" contents of the old master narratives. Ellen Friedman argues that women's texts of the modernist period also express a yearning for the unpresentable, but that their texts often evoke it as the "not yet presented."[19] Women do not look into history in the same way as men do. Being denied subjectivity and with it, agency, they think back through different identities. Thus they show "little regret for the no longer presentable," in other words, the old paternal order. The female paradigm for missing contents, therefore, should be read as a look forward, beyond patriarchy, into the unknown, the not yet presentable.

In her works, Lee keeps coming back to an equation of the unknowability of history with the (yet) unknowability of woman. She keeps referring to the possibilities of future methods to find in history what her contemporaries for lack of knowledge cannot yet see so that they "sometimes throw away noble ore, for lack of skill to separate it from base alloy" (*Renaissance Fancies and Studies* 251). Vernon Lee's "female aesthetic historicism,"[20] as we may call her approach for now, can be considered as such an attempt at a new way of reading the past. Her method uses the language and skills of her more famous mentors,[21] but at the same time, she rewrites their texts by introducing a modified point of view. Lee exposes the cultural construction of historical myths by wearing the transparent disguise of a male historian whose imagination is conditioned by the suppressed fears of individual and collective patriarchal history. The ghost (myth) of the past, personified in a femme fatale, appears as a production of male hysteria and thus suggest a connection between male anxieties and cultural images.

The late nineteenth century produced a number of lasting mythical images of women, of which Pater's reverie on Leonardo's "la Gioconda" is the most famous example. Between painting and text arises the aesthetic critic's "masterpiece" meant to give universality and authority to the image and at the same time, to inscribe in it moments of free-

[15]Lee uses this expression in "The Economic Parasitism of Women," (284-86) in which she blames the "modern" discourse of Symbolists and Decadents for mythicizing and perpetuating an image of woman which disagrees with her historical reality.

[16]In an "aside," Julia Briggs suggests Lee's reversal of the Browning poem. Lee's close literary and personal exchanges with Browning, whose poetic invocations of Italian history she greatly admired, indeed invite a close analysis of their intertextual relationship. On Lee's encounters with Browning see Gunn (122).

[17]In the introduction to her Renaissance study *Euphorion: Being Studies of the Antique and the Medieval in the Renaissance* (10), which she dedicated to Walter Pater, Vernon Lee discusses the question of individual perspective versus objectivity and abstraction in historical writing. Here Lee compares the view into history with the prospectus of a landscape: "But, like a real landscape, it [a period in history] may also be seen from different points of view, and under different lights; then, according as you stand, the features of the scene will probably group themselves— . . . all the rest is the result of cunning abstraction, and representing the scene as it is always, represents it (by striking an average) as it never is at all."

[18]See Pater's essay on Winckelmann in *The Renaissance* (141-185).

[19]For a detailed discussion of the yearning for the unpresentable, see Friedman (240-52).

[20]I am using this expression in adaptation of "female aesthete," a term which was used in an article on Vernon Lee's *Vital Lies*, "Are Myths Necessary? Vernon Lee's Exposure of the Syndicalist Myth" (313-14). The expressions "female aesthete" (or "female thinker" as she was also called) reflect her unconventional entry into male-dominated discourses.

[21]Vernon Lee shared her enthusiasm for the Renaissance not only with Walter Pater but also with John Addington Symonds, with whom she corresponded frequently, yet not always kindly, as Symonds resented her arrogance and "cleverness." On Lee's correspondence with Symonds, see Grosskurth (222-24).

dom, "exquisite pauses in time" (*The Renaissance* 118). Thus, Pater's Mona Lisa represents the male aesthete's view as a kind of "remastering" of Renaissance picture.[22] But Lee's story "Amour Dure," reverses Pater's controlling symbolism: the portrait of Medea da Carpi is a (Bronzino) painting come alive—with all the forces that man has put into it. In this respect, Vernon Lee's story is a key text for her rethinking of Paterian aesthetic historicism as well as her exploration of the relationship between history and historian, writer and text. By focussing on the absent or suppressed female text, Lee changes history as it has been known. The end of the story leaves her narrator dead and the historical text unwritten. Medea's story is history suspended: what she was, is, or will be cannot be known—at least not in man's terms.

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Indiana University Southeast

Romance and the Self-Made Man: Gaskell Rewrites Brontë

Catherine Barnes Stevenson

For two decades, feminist critics have examined the representations of women in Victorian literature as these have been shaped by gender ideology. Recently, with the advent of gender studies, a growing body of work is emerging on nineteenth-century constructions of masculinity. In light of that body of work, this essay investigates how two women novelists of the mid-nineteenth century, Elizabeth Gaskell and Charlotte Brontë, "wrote the masculine." Specifically, it examines the ways in which Gaskell's *North and South* rewrites and extends the critique of the "new man" of the 1850s (Leverenz 72) first presented in Brontë's *Shirley*. It takes as its starting point Margaret Oliphant's perceptive essay "Modern Novelists—Great and Small," which wittily chastises women novelists of her day for depicting heroes who "rule with . . . hand[s] of iron" (559). In discussing *North and South* Oliphant asserts that "it is Mr. Thornton's fierce and rugged course of true love to which the author is most anxious to direct our attention" (560). Oliphant here reveals that she, like those contemporary romance readers studied by Janice Radway, finds the emotional development of the male protagonist to be an essential component of a successful romance (65-67).

Indeed, although contemporary critics have written extensively about the heroine's development—or lack thereof—and the novel's conclusion,[1] the male protagonist's development, achieved through the agency of the romance plot, has been largely ignored. To examine the construction of the character of John Thornton and the plotting of his life is to discover that *North and South* is a woman novelist's ambitious attempt to anatomize and critique certain paradigms of "the masculine" that existed in mid-nineteenth-century culture. In creating Thornton, a draper's assistant turned Manchester "master," Gaskell limns a recognizable social type—the self-made or the "new" man of the 1850s. In so doing, she responds both to the social discourse of mid-century Manchester, where successful men prided themselves on being the "architect[s] of [their] own fame"[2] and to the literary discourse begun in *Shirley*, a novel whose plot Gaskell confessed to "disliking" (*Letters* 116).

Gaskell's novel, I will argue, critiques and extends the discourse about "masculine achievers" (Rotundo 36) begun by Brontë: it investigates what happens when the story of a man's self-propelled rise in the public world—the success plot—is transformed into the story of man's "fall" into love, painful understanding, and complex social and interpersonal connections. Put another way, *North and South* explores what happens when you put the "man" squarely in the center of romance. The result is a refiguring of the male calculus of success, a destabilizing of the ideology of separate spheres, and a playful redefinition of the plots of success and love.

The cult of the "masculine achiever," the "new" man, the "self-made man," as he has been variously labeled, was an American phenomenon that made its way to Britain and took root (Cawelti, Leverenz). As J. F. C. Harrison notes, it achieved poularity in the early 1850s through books like *Success in Life: A Book for Young Men* and cheap periodicals designed for family reading. These works created paradigms for self-development for working-class boys and young men (Gallagher 142). Although "in its original expression, as a spontaneous response to working-class needs, self-help frequently assumed a collective form" (Harrison 142), by the 1850s it had become a middle-class individualistic ideology. Davidoff and Hall confirm that by the early 1850s where was a shift toward "the equation of masculine identity with an occupation" (230). The publication in 1859 of Samuel Smiles *Self-Help* inscribed as a cultural myth the notion that habits of character, "government from within . . . prudence, forethought, self-denial" (236) can lead to professional success. *Self-Help*'s illustrative male biographies (women appear only as helpmeets) demonstrate the habits and virtues that enable men "to form a manly character, and to work out the best development possible" (306). Self-help stories enshrine the power of personal agency in achieving autonomy and, of course, success. The classic self-help plot, minimizing or denying the determining force of social structures, propels its male protagonist toward a future which is in his control because of the superiority of *his character*.[3] Smiles insists "it may be of comparatively little consequence how a man is governed from without, whilst every thing depends on how he governs himself from within" (17).

Before the self-made man became a full blown cultural myth at the hand of Smiles, however, Charlotte Brontë and Elizabeth Gaskell anatomized and criticized this figure. Initially at least, the lives of Robert Moore in *Shirley* (1849) and John Thornton of *North and South* (1855) closely parallel the biographies of Smiles's exemplary figures in *Self-Help*. Driven by paternal financial failure to pay off the family debt and thus redeem their compromised masculinity, both Robert Moore and John Thornton transform themselves into prototypical self-made men—thrifty, self-denying, entrepreneurial, contemptuous of others who haven't "made it." For example, galled by the "narrowness" of his capital and the slow progress of his attempt to rebuild the family business, Moore "ever wanted to push on" by introducing machines into his factories: "he did not sufficiently care when the new inventions threw the old work-people out of employ" (*Shirley* 61). John Thornton, whose father died "under miserable circumstances" was taken from school at sixteen and "had to become a man in a few days" (*North and South* 126). Beginning as a draper's assistant, he rose to the position of Manchester master because of "motherwit" (124) and "habits of character" (126). Others, he claims, ought to be able to do the same, without his help: "a working-man may raise himself into the power and position of a master by his own exertions and behavior; in fact, everyone who rules himself to decency and sobriety of conduct . . . comes over to our ranks" (125). Moore and Thornton, then, are types of the new manhood which, according to David Leverenz, began to establish its hegemony between 1825-1850 and which located masculinity "in work and entrepreneurial competition" (74).

Scorning the female world of emotion, both men embrace the autonomous and competitive individualism essential to masculine success under capitalism. As Robert Moore bluntly puts it: "'our thoughts are occupied with other things than courtships, establishments, dowries: the cloth we can't sell, the hands we can't employ, the mills we can't run . . . fill our hearts . . . pretty well at present, to the tolerably complete exclusion of such figments as love-making, etc.'" (56). Moore presents an extreme case of a man's identification with his business; even his body reifies his commercial venture: it is a "human mill" which houses "machinery" and is powered by "'the boiler, which I take to be my heart'" (496). This "boiler" is used chiefly in the service of business: first, he tamps down his affection for Caroline Helstone and then he fires up a passion for Shirley Keeldar—or at least for her money. Shirley even castigates Moore for turning human relationships into commercial ventures: "'you—you want to make a speculation of me. You would immolate me to that mill—your Moloch'" (499).

Both self-made men are schizophrenic beings whose divided selves instantiate the private-public caesura created by industrial capitalism wherein the body and the emotions remain cloistered in the female world of the home (Davidoff, "Class and Gender" 18-19). Hard, unyielding, sharp-tongued to their "hands," these "masters" prove inflexible in the face of their workers' demands, and are determined to employ outside force when enraged hands attack their mills. Describing the

[22] In Ian Fletcher's words, "She shows the action of mind and soul, shows man dealing with his experience so as to control it, thus, giving him back his sense of freedom" ("Walter Pater" 43).

[1] See Bodenheimer, Harman, Holstein, Lansbury, Morgan, Schor, and Stevenson.

[2] John Davies to the Manchester Mechanics Institute in Briggs 101. Briggs calls Manchester the "shock city" of the industrial revolution and notes how the city spawned a "new order of businessman, energetic, tough, proud, contemptuous of the old aristocracy" (90). Resonant of this description is John Thornton's self-characterization as the "architect of his own fortunes," a man proud of "the commerical character which he had established for himself" (511).

[3] Catano has a fascinating discussion of the effect of this thinking on the rhetoric of American undergraduates of the 1980s.

"mischievous sardonic visage" that Moore wears in discussing business with men, the narrator of *Shirley* observes: "What would a certain young kinswoman of his have said, could she have seen her dear, good, great Robert—her Coriolanus—just now? Would she have acknowledged . . . the same face . . . which had bent over her with such gentleness last night?" (151). Thornton is seen by the workers as "an obstinate chap," "dour as a door-nail . . . th'oud bulldog" (184). Thornton and Moore both invest their emotional capital in a female family member whose domestic economy helps them rise in the world: Moore with his sister, Thornton with his mother.

For their harshness, their assumption of self-sufficiency, their lack of compassion for the women and the workers in their lives, these men are punished by being "unmade," forced into suffering and dependence. Moore, shot by a disgruntled workman, is invalided and imprisoned in a sickroom by two women who, according to Martin Yorke, "'mean to make either an idiot or a maniac out of him'" (551). Physically weak, isolated from other adults, forbidden any productive action, with a mind rendered "dark, barren, impotent" (542), he is "unmanned." His experience, of course, exactly parallels that of Caroline Helstone, who tells him: "'I understand your feelings: . . . I too have been very ill . . . I thought I should die. The tale of my life seemed told'" (542). Thornton, as we shall see, also suffers a symbolic physical wound and endures pain and loss parallel to that experienced by the female protagonist.

Having been wounded, rendered dependent, and re-educated about their emotions, both Robert Moore and John Thornton are "rehabilitated" through love. After his emotional rebirth, Robert emerges as a man no longer obsessed with the need to succeed, a person now seemingly concerned with the larger social implications of his actions. Yet, his "conversion" seems imperfectly realized in the narrative—Gilbert and Gubar call it "mere wish fulfillment" (398). Rather than having internalized a sense of communal responsibility or having revised his exploitative stance toward others, Robert in the end simply reaffirms the sexual division of emotional and moral labor. Caroline, now cast as the angel in the house, is to be his conscience: "'I *will* do good: you shall tell me how'" (596). Yet, his wife/conscience is horrified by and unable to stop the "doing good" which entails rooting up the copse and polluting the atmosphere (598). Robert's "feminine" experiences have been only a diversion on the conventional path to success: he has "risen" (with some setbacks), succeeded in business, gotten the girl, and committed himself to "progress." The conclusion of the novel suggests how problematic that progress is. Moore's prosperous mill resembles a "Tower of Babel"; the female mysteries of the copse have given way to the ugly realities of the Industrial Revolution.

North and South and *Shirley* delineate self-made men who see their lives as examples of the power of individual agency; in both, the trajectory of the hero's "ascent" is interrupted and rechanneled along the lines of seeming "descent"—physical weakness, economic dependency, and professional failure. The self-made protagonist is un-made, only to be remade through immersion in the romance plot.[4] But Brontë stops short of Gaskell's radical challenge to the ideological assumptions behind and the narrative shape of the male success story.[5] Robert Moore, socialized to love through one dramatic episode, quickly resumes his role as achiever; on the other hand, John Thornton is fully immersed in the workings of the romance plot and, as a result, his life and values undergo a more complete transformation. The opening chapters of *North and South* sketch the outlines of a prototypical male self-help story only to destabilize that story and to devote more than half of the novel to the self-made man's psychological and emotional reorientation. The result is a more comprehensive re-evaluation of notions of masculine autonomy, vulnerability, and success than is offered by Brontë's novel.

Early in *North and South*, John Thornton insists that his character has determined his fate and that others who would emulate his discipline and self-denial might also rise (ch. 10); the narrative, on the other hand, undermines his claim that manly strength of character alone determines fate. In trumpeting his individual achievements, Thornton makes a set of assumptions endemic to the myth of the self-made man: that the self is autonomous and self-determining, that individuals can transcend their origins (Catano 421-28). His stance is predicated on a corresponding set of denials: he rejects the notion that institutions, social forces, and gender ideologies can be more powerful than individual character in shaping destiny. Mr. Hale, however, indirectly counters Thornton's claims when he reports that he was "helped on *materially* by the circumstance of one of the creditors . . . taking in Mr. Thornton as a kind of partner" (129, emphasis added). Refusing to admit the extent to which his success is due to others' assistance, Thornton, like many self-made men, has "aggrandiz[ed] self-isolation" and mystified the class bases of self-definition (Leverenz 74). In this, he has denied his awareness of community and abandoned a sense of the complex human network of which he is a part: "He valued the position he had earned with the sweat of his brow, so much that he keenly felt its being endangered by the ignorance or folly of others . . . he had no thoughts to spare for what would be the consequence of their [the workers'] conduct to themselves" (196).

Although John Thornton would deny the class basis of his definition of his manhood, the novel, on several occasions, establishes a counterpoint between Thornton's masculine self-definition and those of men from other classes. Contemporary scholars of nineteenth-century manhood have categorized popular paradigms of manliness in various ways. David Leverenz, for example, discerns three dominant models: "patrician" manhood grounded in property ownership, ideals of decorum and commitment to "institutionalized social structures"; "artisan" manhood deriving from a pride of craft, freedom, and deference to superiors; and "entrepreneurial" manhood arising from success in work and entrepreneurial competition. To this should be added the category of "Christian gentlemanliness" advanced by Norman Vance and Anthony Rotundo, which includes notions of physical manliness, chivalry, and morality. The narrative method of *North and South* suggests that this novel is in part a study of the shifting grounds on which contemporary notions of manhood are built.[6]

During Thornton's first extended appearance in Chapter 10, his "severe and resolved" expression, his determined and unyielding character, and his powerful physique are directly contrasted with the more undulating and "feminine" presence of Mr. Hale, a man who has abjured the power, worldly success, and even family authority associated with manliness (121). Mr. Hale's gentle good manners, his compassion, his spirituality, and his lack of concern for material benefits exemplify a kind of Christian gentlemanliness opposed to the materialistic "new man." Yet, his physical weakness, his ineffectuality in the face of family crises, and his failure to communicate with the women in his family highlight the limitations of his masculine authority. Later Thornton is paralleled with and contrasted to the working-class Nicholas Higgins, whose ferocious pride in his work, independence of spirit and sense of dignity (manifested in Chapters 17 and 38) and "citizenship" (manifested through his labor union activity) seem to qualify him for Leverenz's category of "artisan" manhood. Yet, Higgins's manly virtues are initially qualified by agnosticism, ferocious anger, a potential for violence against women, and a penchant for going "spreeing."[7]

If Thornton speaks for an emerging middle-class, secular notion of masculinity as against Hale's Christian model or Higgins's working-class one, then the chapter entitled "Men and Gentlemen" airs a distinctly upper-class or "patrician" idea of masculinity. In the context of a dinner party attended by the male power brokers of Milton, John and Margaret debate the meaning and class implications of the term "man." When Margaret queries if one of the guests is a "gentleman," John retorts, "'I don't quite understand your application of the word. But I should say that this Morrison is no true man'" (217). Margaret, who harbors patrician notions about manliness, confesses that she conflates "gentleman" and "true man."[8] John, in a speech in which competing ideologies play off each other, denies the class basis of manliness, elevating that term to metaphysical status: "'a man is to me a higher and completer being than a gentleman. . . . gentleman is a term that only describes a person in relation to others; but when we speak of him as "a man" we consider him not merely with regard to his fellow men but in relation to himself,—to life—to time—to eternity'" (217-18). Here the self-made man voices an idealistic vision of manliness redolent of Christian gentlemanliness; yet his words are ironized by their context: a dinner party in which entrepreneurial men exult in their economic power and engage in "rampant . . . display" (217) of their potency while their female auditor, Margaret "like[s] the exultation in the sense of power which these Milton men" have (217). In keeping with the "dialogic" technique of this novel, the debate is never resolved; Thornton is called away before Margaret can respond and the ideas presented are left vibrating in the air.

The first half of *North and South* then limns a self-made man as he fits into a constellation of mid-Victorian ideas of manliness and enacts a debate in mid-Victorian society about appropriate male behaviors: the second half of the novel undermines the paradigm of "entrepreneurial manliness." The turning point, Chapter 22 "A Blow and Its Consequences," rewrites the confrontation between Luddites and mill owners in Chapter 19 of *Shirley*, inscribing the female that Brontë repressed.[9] In Brontë's novel, women are superfluous to masculine conflict, their intended warning late and unnecessary, their presence an embarrassment. Shirley acerbically points to the caesura in men's lives between public action and private emotion: "'men never want women near them in time of real danger . . . . It is not for love or beauty, but for ledger and broadcloth, he is going to break a spear. Don't be sentimental; Robert is not so'" (333-34). In contrast, *North and South* places its heroine at the center of both the emotional and physical action. Harking back to Thornton's own definition of a "true man," Margaret insists that he confront his workers: "'Go down and face them like a man . . . go out and speak to them, man to man'" (232). Thornton, however, insists on being "master" and tauntingly refuses to communicate with the crowd. When violence erupts, Margaret's body and blood become the male participants' medium of exchange, the language through which they speak to each other.[10] In fact, in the novel's second half, the female becomes the vehicle for male conversation (Thornton and Higgins talk through her and Thornton learns not only to speak to his workers but to "cultivat[e] some intercourse" with them [525]). As a result of this pivotal moment, moreover, the master's life is transformed; he enters a female plot, lives out a set of experiences coded as "female" by his society, and initiates a new relationship with his body, his emotions, and his "hands."

From the moment when Margaret's blood substitutes for his, John Thornton's sensations, emotions, values, and social

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[4]Several commentators have observed the similarities between these novels: Bodenheimer, Holstein, and John Pikoulis. None, however, have explored the startling similarities between John Thornton and Robert Moore. Even more importantly, none have examined the way in which *North and South* offers a radical critique of the male self-help story by exposing its emotional and moral bankruptcy.

[5]Bodenheimer (53) observes that *North and South* "is in serious struggle with *Shirley*: it is more progressive, more challenging to traditional conceptions of social order." To that I would add "to notions of masculinity and progress." Holstein contrasts *North and South*'s progressive vision with the "oddly regressive" movement of *Shirley*.

[6]Stoneman was one of the early critics to argue that Gaskell's work critically examined masculine codes of conduct and roles, particularly the role of the father.

[7]For examples of his agnosticism see Chapter 11 (133); his violent anger manifests itself on two occasions: he "shakes off" a weak and pleading Bessy (260); he first strikes "wildly and blindly" at Mary (281) and then shakes off Mary "with violence" and "looked ready to strike Margaret" (282); the latter episode is of course prompted by his desire to go out drinking "again" on the night of Bessy's death. See also Ch. 17 (185) on his drinking.

[8]This debate echoes an article in *Eliza Cook's Journal* 7 (1852): 62, entitled "Quite the Gentleman," which attempts to make the title of "gentleman" one that is achieved, not inherited. The author asserts that a "gentleman" who boasts of ancestry as the key to status lacks the quality of a "true man" and that "a gentleman" must earn his title by force of character, high-toned principles, a sense of honor, and self-control. Shirley Robin Letwin argues persuasively for the "instability" of the term "gentleman" in British culture.

[9]Bodenheimer (54) observes that this scene "mixes industrial and sexual politics in a way that speaks directly back to the Luddite attack scene in *Shirley*." Holstein also comments on Gaskell's more radical reworking of Brontë's scene (23).

[10]Hilary Schor writes eloquently of the problems attendant on Margaret's role as "mediatrix," the "isolation of male and female languages," (135) and the novelist's own sense of her work as capable of interpreting or mediating social conflict." See also Homans.

position are "feminized." The male rags-to-riches story, in which character is assumed to be destiny, is intersected by a plot of physical vulnerability, emotional awakening and turmoil, financial dependence, uncertainty, and finally marriage. "Character" no longer stands in proud isolation but exists as a focal point in a series of relationships; government from within gives way to the sway of external forces. Having "risen" from failure to success by his own efforts—or so he believes—Thornton "falls" again into failure and dependency, but the valence has changed. As Sally Shuttleworth argues, Victorian gender differentiation fulfilled the ideological role of allowing men to renew their faith in personal autonomy and control: "Unlike women, men were not prey to the forces of the body. . . . rather they were their own masters . . . living incarnations of the rational individualists and self-made men of economic theory" (55). Having begun the novel firmly rooted in this ideological position, John Thornton now proceeds to lose "mastery" over his body, emotions, and other people as he moves into a plot in which the fiction of personal autonomy gives way to an understanding of the contingent nature of the self.

Margaret Hale, vulnerable to the angry mob gathered before Thornton's mill, receives a physical wound; John Thornton, unharmed by the mob, is later wounded by Margaret's rejection of his marriage proposal. The narrative symbolically parallels the two "blows." In Chapter 22, the injured Margaret sits on the steps of the Thornton house, tears flowing, her head resting against the door frame. When she tries to rise, a "film" covers her eyes and she faints. Four chapters later (in a chapter whose title "Mother and Son" signifies the hero's movement into the nexus of family, dependency, and emotion), John, reeling from Margaret's contemptuous rejection of him, feels "blinded" and "dizzy" as if he has received a blow. Experiencing "positive bodily pain—a violent headache and a throbbing intermittent pulse," he longs to sit down on the doorstep and cry (267). Tender "female" emotions begin to assume a much larger role in his life; twice, for example, he is described as feeling toward Margaret as a mother does toward a child (339, 415). Participating in a new emotional calculus, Thornton engages in acts that embed him in a new network: eschewing the purely cash nexus, he enters the female world of gift-giving. He buys fruit for the ailing Mrs. Hale and, causing quite a stir among his peers, carries it himself through "the busiest part of the town for feminine shopping" (275). Furthermore, the language of the novel links John Thornton's responses with those of the heroine of romance: his nerves repeatedly "thrill," his pulses beat, his heart throbs (Chapters 22, 24) and he "writhe[s] . . . like one in bodily pain" (387) because of love. Hilary Schor comments that *North and South* moves beyond the conventional marriage plot "in its focus on male desire and its relation to the authority . . . of the master" (128), although she does not elaborate on this, but focuses instead on the heroine's plot. Indeed, the novel devotes as extraordinary amount of time to anatomizing the consciousness of its male protagonist, particularly his emotional torment (sizable portions of Chapters 23, 24, 26, 33, 35, 38, 39 are devoted to his roiling feelings). But *North and South* goes even further: it locates the hero in the center of the economy of desire at the heart of the romance plot, *as* it dislocates him socially, morally, and economically.

As Thornton's physical and emotional vulnerability increases, his moral and social values begin to shift. In her study of male characters in women's writing, Jane Miller comments that when women writers immerse male characters in the "romance plot" the effects are subversive: "in that case men too are bound to sacrifice everything for love, as women are asked to do, absolving themselves from responsibility for the world, for work, for maintaining law and order" (260). John Thornton the master does not abandon his sense of responsibility; but John Thornton the magistrate does radically change his attitude toward "law and order" when he must decide whether to force Margaret to testify at the inquest about Leonard's death. Having experienced a powerful inner turmoil, Thornton has changed: his feelings, not his respect for law, govern his actions: "There should be no inquest. He would save Margaret. He would take responsibility. . . ." (351).

In writing this final section of the novel, Gaskell was concerned that "Mr. Thornton ought to be developing himself" (*Letters* 321).[11] Since his emotional maturation is by this point fairly advanced, other facets of his *bildung* are clearly being called into play. In fact, Thornton "develops" by abandoning "himself," by abjuring atomic individualism, particularly the stance of "unquestioned and irresponsible master" (171). His "latent tenderness" is awakened by Nicholas Higgins's patience and his care for the children of his dead coworker (403), and Thornton, "as if by some spell," "forget[s] entirely the mere reasonings of justice, and overleap[s] them by a diviner instinct" (404). The female valence of the diction—"spell," "instinct," "tenderness"—suggest that romance has done its work by altering his sensibility and by allowing him to "overleap" the great Victorian divide between private/public, home/workplace, female/male. As Thornton moves literally into the domestic space of the unemployed worker to offer him a job, he advances symbolically into a new conception of industrial practice. As *he* was helped to get ahead, so he now helps another. The master's rights have been replaced by a constellation of responsibilities.

Ironically, Thornton's development is also accomplished in this final part of the novel through his loss of social and professional status. The letter in which Gaskell talks about Thornton's need to develop himself also contains a fascinating discussion of her struggle to finish her portrait of him without "marring" it. "I want to keep his character consistent with itself, and large and strong and tender, and *yet a master*" (321). In a real sense, Gaskell here confronts the conflicting discourses of masculinity in her society: how can her character be "a master," an "entrepreneurial man," and also be a "developed" human being? How can a novelist create consistency between inconsistent ideologies? Within the novel, Nicholas Higgins comments openly on the bifurcation of Thornton's self: "'He's two chaps. One chap I knowed of old as were measter all o'er. T'other chap hasn't 'n ounce of measter's flesh about him. How them two chaps is bound up in one body, is a craddy for me to find out'" (418). Those "two chaps" can, in fact, inhabit the same body simultaneously only after Thornton is integrated socially and economically into the female position in the marriage plot.

The event that precipitates him into this position is his symbolic rejection of the masculine model established by his father: he refuses to speculate with creditors' money when ruin threatens his business. A bankrupt master with no "hands," Thornton occupies an ambiguous and dependent social state when he encounters Margaret at the novel's end. A displaced person, his social niche parallels that occupied by Margaret during her first weeks in Milton Northern. Ironically, his "development" is nearly complete. The imperative to rise in the world has been replaced by the desire to network: "'My only wish is to have the opportunity of cultivating some intercourse with the hands beyond the mere "cash nexus"'" (525). But, of course, another kind of intercourse gives him the cash to move into a new nexus of relationships. Like a heroine of romance, he is rescued from his position of social and romantic indeterminacy by an economic/romantic proposition (529). Deirdre David comments on the novel's final demolition of the myth of the self-made man: "He is rescued . . . by Margaret's money, and not by 'good habits'" (18).

North and South, then, plays with two gendered fictional plots: the romance plot serves to destabilize the model of masculine character inherent in the rags-to-riches story. The self-made hero becomes a success by losing status and autonomy; his sexual energy, the restraint of which is so essential to masculine self-regulation (Davidoff, "Class and Gender" 20) is released but rechanneled within the romance plot into "development." At the same time, the romance plot itself is ironized.[12] The heroine, having achieved a remarkable degree of personal maturity and a measure of autonomy, gains financial power and social status through inheritance. As the hero loses control, she "[takes] her life into her own hands" (508), moving from the tight family nexus into the worlds of social work and then business. If in traditional romance plots women succeed by "marrying up" (as did Aunt Shaw), in this novel men like Captain Lennox and John Thornton do it. If in the classic romance plot, the aristocratic male marries down the social ladder for the sake of love, in this novel women like Edith and Margaret do it.

Moreover, *North and South* confounds facile distinctions between the romance plot and the success plot as it blurs the boundaries between a man's world and woman's. The male/female, public/private split central to the Victorian ideology of male success is mocked from the novel's beginning. In the opening chapters women's preparations for a wedding are dismissed as frivolous "ladies' business" by the lawyer Henry Lennox, who sneers in a 5honortone reminiscent of Brontë's Robert Moore: "Playing with shawls is very different work to drawing up settlements" (41). Yet, in the context of the scene, the resonance of the word "settlements" undermines the manifest content of Lennox's statement. The lawyer has just been negotiating about the bride's marriage settlement, her only way of protecting her own property. The financial well-being and independence of an heiress like Edith necessitate close attention to the "real true law business," a fact that her mother, at least, has not forgotten. Indeed, the final scene of the novel humorously echoes its opening as another "match" is made between an heiress and a poorer man, with Lennox as intermediary.

As a kind of coda to her critique of the "new" man, Gaskell reintroduces Henry Lennox at the novel's end, wittily prefacing the inevitable union of John and Margaret with Lennox's fantasy about his own romantic/economic prospects. Very much the "clever and ambitious" entrepreneurial man, Lennox misreads Margaret's request for legal help as a sign of her increasing emotional dependence on *him*. He calculates the career benefits of a romance with a rich woman: "Eventually he would earn such success and such honours, as would enable him to pay her back, with interest, that first advance in wealth which he should owe to her" (507). As Lennox fantasizes about a romance that will enable him to fulfill his ambition, the plot rewards a man whose ambition has been redirected.

Although commentators on *North and South* (Bodenheimer, Schor, Showalter) often assume that the romantic ending is *Margaret's alone*, it is in fact the logical and inevitable conclusion to Thornton's story, the culmination of John Thornton's "development" from the self-constituting individual of the opening to a man who chooses to position himself at a series of nexuses: his family, her family, his workers, her/his business. The final scene of the romance plot cleverly recapitulates in a new key earlier actions, thereby providing benchmarks of the hero's progress. As earlier in his life, Thornton is being "helped on *materially*" by entering into a partnership, but now the partnership encompasses both the domestic and the industrial. Again Margaret saves him, placing her arms "as they had once before been placed to protect him from the rioters" (530). But now, John Thornton reads her actions correctly when he interprets her embrace as a sexual act. The entrepreneurial man still wants to engage in lucrative exchange, but in this case the merchandise is Helstone roses and the currency, embraces.

North and South, then, extends *Shirley*'s critique of a popular mid-Victorian definition of manhood rooted in industrial competition and social power, questioning the degree to which "character" does indeed "make the man." Indeed, it also anticipates Eliot's *Mill on the Floss*, which, as Susan Fraiman has recently argued, repudiates the "tale of individual agency and wealth-associated growth" epitomized by the self-made Tom Tulliver (146). In Gaskell's novel, the romance plot functions not as a space of disengagement from public action but as a locus in which the "two chaps" created by capitalist ideology can become one. Brontë's capitalist hero

[11]Janice Radway points out that the "development" of the emotions of the characters is a key concern of readers of contemporary romances.

[12]In this my argument resembles that of Hilary Schor, who observes that *North and South* problematizes both the industrial plot and the romance plot, ultimately offering not resolution but a "continued series of oppositions."

remains a divided person—his wife is his social conscience; Eliot's entrepreneurial man can achieve neither love, nor public action for the larger good. Gaskell postulates a more positive solution: her masculine achiever changes and his change creates the possibility of both erotic satisfaction and social improvement. As Susan Morgan observes, *North and South* "imagines a personal and community success [that] are not only connected but literally identical" (114). The very nature of that "success" has been redefined, however, through a playfully ironized romance plot in which the hero lives out a heroine's fate and business propositions are never what they seem.[13]

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University of Hartford

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Wilde's Gracious Enclosures: A Brief Tour

Gareth Noon

Oscar Wilde's fictions abound in torn veils, pierced walls and violated zones of privilege—signs of an acute understanding of the troubled and uncertain nature of distinction. As Gary Schmidgall puts it, Wilde as a "born trespasser" was "always testing the security of the boundaries presented to him" (28). Wilde's consciousness of the permeability of boundaries and the complex interrelation of opposites is most strikingly represented in a range of works published between 1881 and 1894, by a series of what may be called "gracious enclosures": walled gardens, intimate temples, sequestered palaces from whose precincts the undistinguished, the ugly, and the poor are firmly excluded. The Happy Prince's playground, Sans-Souci, and the notoriously private property of the Selfish Giant are perhaps the most obvious examples. In Wilde, the secluded enclave is typically the frame for a figure of overpoweringly pure, but ultimately cold beauty: an emphatically defined, ideal figure whose remoteness from the commonplace is expressed in a high indifference to the appeals of its votaries and in the unsullied whiteness of its perfectly delineated form. The Infanta, Athena in the long poem "Charmides," and Jokanaan in *Salomé* are representatives of this characterization. The demarcation of Wilde's gracious enclosures, however, is unstable, and the reality from which such figures stand calmly disengaged—a realm of turbulent energy, of motion and metamorphosis, of lurid color, fantastic shapes, and vigorous passions—does not remain forever excluded. Wilde represents in a pervasive imagery of incursion, staining, convulsion and transmutation the fragility of distinction and the encroachments of this clamorous world on the cold domain of privilege.

One of the most notable things about Wilde's handling of differentiation is his interest in social relations, expressed in a close interweaving of political, economic and religious with aesthetic distinction. The subtleness of his grasp of the mechanisms of social distinction is demonstrated by the nature of the barriers tested in his work: for not only tangible walls, but diction, costume and exhibitions of taste in *objets d'art* may serve to elevate the figure of indifferent beauty from its surroundings. Athena in "Charmides" is replete with social significance. Secured in a sacred space behind brazen gates and a wooden door, encased in martial armor and veiled in ritual garments, Athena is a civic deity, not only set apart as beautiful, but distinguished also from the unhallowed and the vulgar. The sin—the crime—of her boyish admirer Charmides is not simply to adore her image from the prescribed appropriate distance, but to break into the sacred enclosure, open up the armor and indulge his desire for physical contact. A "flower of the flowerless foam" (*CW* 764), an outgrowth of that sensual realm of which the compassionate "foam-born" Aphrodite is queen (Graves 49), Charmides smudges the clear line distinguishing the austere object of indifferent beauty. Driven by lust, he violates the beautiful aristocracy of the sacred, reaching across its boundaries to stain it with the sordid touch of the profane. He must, accordingly, die. Charmides's offense is civic as well as ritual because it threatens the breaching of a greater barrier than merely the doors of a shrine: since the virginity of Athena was a certification and a guarantee of the impregnability of her cities (Graves 99), his impious fondling of the palladium is the polluting touch of the stranger in the heart of the community. The sanctum he invades is the symbol of a society's integrity. His carnal impulse cuts straight through the careful gradations of social and religious hierarchy and ceremonial order.

At first glance, "The Happy Prince" seems to bear little relation to "Charmides"; but the basis of the tale's plot—the progressive evaporation of a defining boundary, parallel to an increasing engagement with the sufferings of humble people—presents a close analogue to the poem's violation of sacred and corporate space. The inhabitants of the Happy Prince's Sans-Souci enjoy a life of enclosed privilege, of elegance and social pleasures removed from the sordid suffering and ugliness of the common world. A high barrier insulates their exclusive society from the shabby realm of the undistinguished.[1] Like Prince Siddartha in his palace, the Happy Prince is sealed away from the drudgery, oppression and ugliness of ordinary existence. His home is a place of gracious dancing and courtiers, the playground of the elect. Removed from its walls, the Happy Prince becomes suddenly immersed in the common gray world beyond. Involving himself with the poverty and suffering he witnesses, he begins physically to shrink and, by slow degrees, dissolves into that world as he willingly sheds his jeweled and gilded carapace. Ultimately he melts away in the municipal furnace, utterly losing his beautiful form, so that in the end he is nothing more than a lumpy leaden remnant on a dustheap—one fragment in an undifferentiated mass of refuse. "Beauty," Henry Wooton says to Dorian, "makes princes of those who have it" (*CW* 31); but the protagonist of "The Happy Prince" gradually loses—or gives up—the distinctions of his beauty, princely status, elevation, and eventually shape. Unlike that other "image of the desirable," Athena (Shewan 40), who reacts violently to the removal of her defining armor, the Happy Prince *voluntarily* shrugs off his golden shell. The divine verdict at the conclusion of the tale is a rejection of the lofty exclusiveness of the figure of indifferent beauty. Like the soft-hearted Venus of "Charmides," the fictional God of "The Happy Prince" smiles upon the dissolver of boundaries.

The same is true of the ending of "The Selfish Giant," whose enclosure is enshrouded in the chill white emblem of that which is pure but harsh and lifeless. The Giant wishes clearly to distinguish his territory and embrace the egotistical security of solitude: sterile cold is his reward. Only a little

[1]Davis Coakley has noted that in Wilde's youth his family enjoyed privileged access to a garden at the center of Merrion Square: it was locked, perhaps to exclude the inhabitants of some of the worst slums in Europe a few streets away. Coakley points to a connection between this circumstance and the exclusive gardens of "The Happy Prince" and "The Selfish Giant."

hole is required in the wall which encompasses him, however, for fruitful life to trickle in again. In the case of the Young King in the story of that name, the inlet is through the tumultuous, uncontrollable realm of sleep. His enclosure, the palace of *Joyeuse*, is a precursor of the aesthetic zone of privilege found in *Dorian Gray*. Closeted within its walls, the Young King fondles rich and rare artifacts: anticipating the protagonist of the novel, he surrounds himself with the finest specimens of palpable beauty, a sparkling shell of *objets d'art* extruded by his unique sensibility which confirms and reinforces the demarcation of his status. His palace is also a political enclosure, structured by a court ceremonial which, missing the "freedom of forest life," he is apt to find stifling (*CW* 225). In the uncanny depths of sleep, however, harsh realities reassert themselves. That which is suppressed and excluded from the precincts of the "joyous" erupts from the shadow-world of the unconscious: in oracular dreams the Young Prince witnesses the suffering of anonymous weavers and slaves—of the undifferentiated mass of humanity out of whose midst he has been raised. Horrified by this vision, he resolves to emerge from the regalia which define his royal position, and embrace the pain of the common world. His subjects react with shock, confusion, amusement, scorn and open rebellion: the loss of these visible, tangible sartorial boundaries of monarchy seems to throw the whole apparatus of state into disarray, and only a timely transfiguration and a miraculous confirmation of his rank saves him from prompt assassination. If the sovereign identity is not to disintegrate and be diffused into the formless multitude, the gilded boundary of privilege must be replaced. Nothing less than a direct manifestation of the Glory of God, moving statues, mystical lights and another, more glorious golden robe are sufficient to re-establish the status of the Young King—and even then, so emphatically celestial must he become that he is obliged to pass in angelic solitude "through the midst of the people" (*CW* 233).

In "The Birthday of the Infanta" the gracious enclosure is again the abode of a royal elite; and the Young King's image of "Death in the heart of the pearl" (*CW* 230) is extended into a general sense of inner corruption, claustrophobia and sterile gloom in the Infanta's magnificent surroundings. The Infanta's clothing is suggestive of ponderous ritual, a dense accretion of ceremonious distinction. It is rich, "cumbrous," "puffed," "stiff," "heavily embroidered" and "studded" with pearls. Even her hair isolates her face in a halo of rigid tresses (*CW* 234). This suit of formal armor suggests a superabundance of definition, a redundant weightiness and thickness of boundaries—a character entirely in keeping with the quality of the court the Infanta inhabits, which is a domain of "elaborate ceremonies" governing "every separate action of life," whose acute niceties of precedence are commemorated in the solemn progression of the palace's chambers. It is also an enclosure of aesthetic refinement sumptuously adorned and stocked with precious objects—a place of recherché pleasures, of which the Dwarf's performance is the most successful. Imported, like the Young King, from the wild forest into the exquisite cultivation of this setting, the Dwarf is a figment of the earthly, a twisted rendering of "humorous" nature's disregard for the classical regularities of form fixed in the "wonderful white statues" with their "sad blank eyes" and strange smiles (*CW* 239, 243). He has a heart, and the glittering sterility of the palace breaks it; the Infanta keeps her heavy clothes and the hierarchies of the Court—splendid, intricate and cold—remain inviolate.

The gracious enclosure of *Dorian Gray* is figurative rather than literal: unlike Huysmans's Des Esseintes or Collins's Mr. Fairlie, Dorian does not remain firmly rooted in the stifling environment of the aesthetic nest, but roams abroad carrying his exclusiveness with him. Where the scouts of the Young King and the emissaries of the King of Spain scour the world outside their palaces for precious objects and outlandish entertainments, Dorian himself ventures out in quest of pleasure into the darkest corners of "this grey, monstrous London" (*CW* 49). But the barrier of distinction is never compromised: wherever he goes Dorian bears the uncanny charm of his appearance, which silences opprobrium, deflects threats and compels awed respect. He consorts with the greasy, sordid mass of the undistinguished, but his perfect form remains magically "unspotted" (*CW* 102).

Transferred to the context of London society, the architectural enclosure of indifferent beauty survives only in the fragmented form of the tastefully-decorated chambers frequented by Dorian and his peers—particularly in the houses, furnished with collections of *objets d'art*, of Henry Wooton and of Dorian himself. It is in these collections, rather than in walls like those of "Charmides," "The Happy Prince" and "The Birthday of the Infanta," that the boundaries of Dorian's domain are indicated. For, as Ian Small puts it, "Wilde as much as any figure in the nineteenth century knew of the way a man's possessions" could locate him "very precisely in political and social spheres" (119). Wilde, imitating Huysmans, describes the contents of his fictional collections with a specificity which invokes a delicate refinement of *choice*, of the subtle discriminations of a rare sensibility and an esteem for the details of provenance and the marks of the unique artistic identity. This, but not *that* is beautiful, the careful household arrangements of the aesthete declare. Henry Wotton displays not just a copy of *Les Cent Nouvelles*, but particularly a copy "bound for Margaret of Valois by Clovis Eve, and powdered with the gilt daisies that Queen had selected for her device" (*CW* 46); Dorian Gray must have not any "sonorous green jaspers," but the singular ones "found near Cuzco" (*CW* 107). The aesthete's concern for detail is simultaneously an obsession with concrete definiteness, and the insistent expression of his own unique personality.

There is a sense, too, in which spoken discourse assumes a socially distinguishing function analogous to that of Dorian's *objets d'art*.[2] Like the teasing green carnation, the elegantly constructed epigram can even identify an élite within an élite. At Lady Narborough's dinner-party repartee generates a sparkling field of "distinction" around Dorian, Wotton and the hostess as lesser characters—"one of those middle-aged mediocrities," "an over-dressed woman of forty-seven," "a pushing nobody," "a dowdy dull girl, with one of those characteristic British faces, that, once seen, are never remembered," and "a red-cheeked, white whiskered creature" who talks "in a loud voice"—sink into the background, their conversation unnoticed (*CW* 135, 138). The tendering of epigrammatic coinage confers individuality, while poverty of wit is a relegation to the formless multitude of nobodies.

With his fateful wish, Dorian Gray tries to shrug off the reality of change. His aristocratic shape, unlike that of the Happy Prince, or Pater's "statues worn with kissing" (131), is not eroded by involvement with the lowly world. His petrified ideal beauty is a reproof to the flux, the ceaselessly mutating forms of earthly life, to which even his mentor, for all his clever talk, is subject. At least in public, Dorian attains the static perfection of the *objet d'art*, the priceless centerpiece of the Wottonian world of fine artifacts and brittle wit remote from that which is "common as muck." But in the intimate space of the old nursery, veiled like a sacred object, the picture festers. Like the ghastly black-draped image of corruption uncovered by the heroine of *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (249-49, 662), it is a reminder of the smoldering, devouring energies of life and the relentless metamorphosis of the flesh. Dorian tries to contain and isolate it in an enclosure of monstrosity, but its magnetic power torments him beyond the walls of its shameful prison, poisoning his elegant life with its influence. The result of his ultimate attempt to sever himself from it completely demonstrates that no absolute separation from the churning energies of fleshly existence is possible: the boundary of indifferent beauty is never entirely secure. Henry Wotton's reflection that the observer of life cannot "keep the sulphurous fumes from troubling the brain, and making the imagination turbid with monstrous fancies and misshapen dreams" (*CW* 55) shows awareness of this circumstance.

Salomé and *The Sphinx* are celebrations of the vivid reality from which the figure of indifferent beauty stands aloof. The poem's lurid panorama of bizarre lust and clamorous exoticism gives a striking impression of natural fecundity, convulsive force and menace. The dense fruit-bearing arabesques of Rickett's frontispiece signify a recognition of the text's concerns. The illustrator's ornamental initial "I"—whose upright linearity is pierced by vegetable twinings, and which melts and curls sympathetically at the serifs—mirrors the spongy, "organic" character of the poem's development, which is fittingly "aggregative rather than clearly argumentative" (Corbett 30). The text suggests instability of form in a profusion of composite deities and creatures, of which the Sphinx herself is merely the foremost. Violent spasm and palpitation are even more evident here than in the novel. Libidinous impulses erupt in images of ferocity and devouring, and the poem is awash with slime, honey, milk, wine and blood—fluid antitheses to the static, marmoreal clarity of indifferent beauty. The decadent profusion of the style itself intensifies the impression of seething power. In the sumptuous catalogue of the Sphinx's exploits orderly itemization is overwhelmed by a copiousness of detail: the security of system and category is entirely lost in the feverish meanderings of the narrator's imagination. The Holy Family follows in the train of Thoth and Io, and is succeeded by Antinous; lizards mix with gryphons, dragons with hippopotami; the Chimera impregnates; Leviathan and Behemoth consort with the Tragelaphos—and so on, the rolling couplets spawning one vivid monster after another in organic prodigality. The narrator's delight in this luxuriant turmoil is palpable.

Salomé depicts a headlong clash between the whimsical but overwhelming force of lust and frigid, ascetic devotion to the abstract ideal. It is unclear who, in this duel, is the winner: the mighty onrush of Salomé's desire seems to surmount the obdurate chastity of Jokanaan, but the victory signified by the possession of his head appears somewhat ineffectual, and in the end the harpy herself is crushed as though beneath the smothering weight of her own violent cravings, as primeval obscurity inundates the closing scene. As in *The Sphinx* the style is suggestive of anarchic fecundity: specificity of reference dissolves in a proliferation of images, endlessly repeated and densely interwoven, embodying in every repetition tiny mutations which give the text the character of a monstrously fruitful, uncontrollably propagating organism. As with *The Sphinx* the decadent prodigality of the illustrator's decorations conveys a congruous impression: Beardsley's title page is choked with a profusion of interweaving vegetable tendrils, while his rendering of the scene which initially inspired him, "J'ai baisé ta bouche, Jokanaan," abounds in liquid oozings and drippings, writhing locks of hair, lumpy, bristling surfaces, and aggressively sprouting cells—the forms of Pater's "fantastic, indeterminate life of the animal and vegetable world."[3] Beardsley is associated with sparse blankness, solid blacks and a crisp line, but this picture demonstrates how easily in his hands the clean duality of black and white was bent into the service of sensual riot, just as in the ornate lists of *Dorian Gray*'s chapter 11 clarity and distinction are perverted into decadent superabundance.

Wilde repeatedly stresses the corrosive effect of involvement in the reality beyond the boundaries of the gracious enclosure. I have noted, for instance, that the Happy Prince's immersion in the common life outside the haven of his palace entirely dissolves his form and his royal identity. Similarly, to learn the cruel nature of the world and acquire the emotion of the oppressed the protagonist of "The Star-Child" is compelled to embrace deformity. The body of the Dwarf, a child of the wilderness outside the Infanta's court, is the cruel joke of a whimsical nature. The mere proximity of that "hideous animal" the Sphinx threatens her reluctant host with nameless horrors of metamorphosis—horrors not merely of poison or disease but of unwilled evolution into "what I would not be" (*CW* 842). The grotesque body at the end of *Dorian Gray*—to which the servants have difficulty applying a name suggestive of architectural purity of form—is not so much the work of the mysterious painting as the result of Dorian's intimate involve-

[2]Several critics have attributed to the oral discourse of the dandy a defining function comparable to that of his carefully managed costume. See Godfrey (26, 25), Zima (65-67), Dawson (140-42).

[3]Reproduced in Walden (129), Pater (132).

ment with the world. His fate demonstrates how a pseudo-scientific detachment is no more able to isolate the Wootonian epicurean from the deforming influence of experience than Athena's shrine and armor are able to protect her from the desecrating hand of Charmides.

The foundation of Wilde's treatment of indifferent beauty, reduced to the barest possible formula, is a concern with the problem of distinction, expressed in the image of the border—the wall, or garment, or layer of gold, or merely the clean contour—which separates the graceful white form from the matrix of sensuous reality. The delineation of this shape of pure human beauty follows the immediately recognizable conventional template of its age: it is classical, statuesque, void of imperfections, idiosyncrasies, odd bumps, irregular outgrowths or vaguenesses. Its sharp edge holds out the uncertain world of stains and adulterations, excluding the contamination of the commonplace. Being perfect it is aloof from change, for change implies decline from perfection. Yet in dividing the holy, royal figure of beauty from the realm of the imperfect, of the profane and vulgar, the defining line also isolates it from the essential energies of social and even biological life, sealing it into a chill and barren stasis. The figure described is wonderfully beautiful, but harsh and inhumane. Yet again, if the boundary of indifferent beauty is abandoned—as in the case of the Happy Prince, through an excess of compassion—its purity is sullied, and the principle of distinction itself seems threatened. The vivid profusion of sensuous experience beyond the pale has its own perils, represented in the imagery of disease, decomposition, convulsive violence and monstrosity. For, as the smothering darkness in the dénouement of *Salomé* implies, when the defining line of remote perfection is abandoned to vigor and disruption, the floodgates are opened to extinction as well as animation, horror as well as ecstasy, loss of identity as well as empathy, and frightening metamorphosis as well as luxuriant proliferation.

The almost heroic representation of Charmides's daring profanation suggests Wilde's relish for the restless energies outside the frigid calm of the gracious enclosure: but the annihilation of *Salomé*, the hidden degeneration of *Dorian Gray*, and the violent menace of *The Sphinx* imply disquiet. The stasis and emphatic distinction of the figure of indifferent beauty, the body as art object, may prove sterile and unsympathetic, but they also signify a sacred refuge from the terrifying mutation and uncontrolled proliferation in the world outside. The abandonment of delimitation—severe and unyielding though it might be—releases titanic energies both beneficent and destructive. It introduces exciting variety of form, like that of *The Sphinx*, and horrifying instability of form, like that of the Star-Child and Dorian Gray. It allows empathy, like that of the Happy Prince, and wasteful dissolution of self, like that of the "Devoted Friend" Little Hans, and the uselessly suicidal songbird of "The Nightingale and the Rose." It encourages the kindly fraternity of the Selfish Giant, and exposes the holy to the polluting hand of the common mortal, the Czar to murderous violence of the mob, and the sensitive aesthete to the wretched abasement of the East End.[4]

On the other hand, the static white figure of indifferent beauty, serene and self-contained in ideal perfection, is cold, inhumane and deadly. The enclosure which surrounds it is selfishly exclusive, a place of stifling regulation: the high wall or clean line which preserves it from the anonymous mass of humanity and defines it in contrast to the sensuous tumult of experience, excludes it from human contact and human warmth, deprives it of vitality, and estranges it from color and animation. It is in the face of this spotless sterility, and against the resistance of its vulnerable barrier, that convulsions of empathy, lust, rebellion, proliferating growth and the hunger for sensation force themselves. Here, as Wilde knew, is the paradox of the contest: that the contraries are inextricably involved. Whiteness cries out for a stain; exclusivity demands the mob; sanctity requires despoiling; chastity craves ravishment. A mysterious gravity or irresistible osmosis brings them together.

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London, England

[4]In, respectively, "The Selfish Giant," "Charmides," *Vera* and *Dorian Gray*.

Reconceiving the Mother: Deconstructing the Madonna in *Aurora Leigh*

Patricia Murphy

Much intriguing commentary has illuminated the issue of motherhood in *Aurora Leigh* (see, for example, Mermin, Steinmetz, Gilbert), the mid-century narrative poem that conveys the eponymous protagonist's troubled response to the Victorian conception of the ideal mother with its inextricable associations to sacrifice, subservience, and silence. Helping to inform the poem's image of maternal perfection are its many allusions to the Madonna, which critics have occasionally addressed but not pursued extensively as their primary focus.[1] I suggest that the poem's Madonna resonances are crucial to readings of the poem that foreground Aurora's empowerment through linguistic potency, since this Christian icon extended a powerful influence over Victorian perceptions of womanhood in general and female vocalization in particular. With her rectitude and reticence, the Madonna provided a useful model through which a patriarchal culture could narrowly draw the parameters of appropriate female behavior and minimize disruptions to a stable societal structure. In the 1856 poem, however, Elizabeth Barrett Browning recuperates motherhood from constrictive representations by problematizing the myths emerging from the story of Mary to confer a measure of power upon the woman as mother. Specifically, *Aurora Leigh* interrogates the Madonna's limited relationship with language, rejecting the passive acceptance of the male word that this feminine avatar evinces in favor of the authority and validity of female utterance.

A brief investigation of Mariology is first necessary to establish a context in which to engage *Aurora Leigh*. As Julia Kristeva claims in "Stabat Mater," Christianity has "produced one of the most powerful imaginary constructs known in the history of civilizations" through the cult of the Virgin Mary (163). In the seminal text *Alone of All Her Sex*, which provided the foundation of Kristeva's essay, Marina Warner comments that Christian faith since its inception has continued to position Mary as "a fixed immutable absolute" who stands apart from cultural influence (334). Changes in Mariology that have occurred through modifications of Christian doctrine have been viewed by the faithful not as part of historical forces but rather as "a gradual discovery of a great and eternal mystery." Because history has been drained from the symbol of Mary, the components of her image "seem to be the spontaneous expression of enduring archetypal ideals" (335); divorcing the figure of Mary from her cultural underpinnings enables "the distortions and assumptions the symbol perpetuates in our lives [to] become invisible." Invoking Roland Barthes' "principle of myth" by which history is transformed into nature, Warner thus remarks that "[n]othing it seems, even to non-Catholics, could be more natural than this icon of feminine perfection." The dominant culture in nineteenth-century England, as Lynda Nead points out, emptied this image of its Catholic inferences to provide a Protestant model of chaste and devoted motherhood (26).

The theorization of Mariolatry is borne out by a contemporary Victorian response to its influence, Anna Jameson's book-length study, *Legends of the Madonna*. Identifying Mary as the personification of "the feminine character of beneficence, purity, and power," Jameson argues that the Madonna represents the "one prevailing idea" extending through the Middle Ages and the Renaissance to Victorian culture (1). Asserting that the Madonna is not merely "an indisputable religious truth of the highest import" to Roman Catholics, Jameson cautions "[t]hose of a different creed" not to dismiss the Madonna as a product of superstition. Rather, Jameson urges her readers to "seek to comprehend the dominant idea lying behind and beyond the mere representation" because of its pronounced effects upon both ancient and modern thought:

> [T]he worship of the Madonna did prevail through all the Christian and civilized world for nearly a thousand years; . . . in spite of errors, exaggerations, abuses, this worship did comprehend certain great elemental truths interwoven with our human nature, and to be evolved perhaps with our future destinies. Therefore did it work itself into the life and soul of man; therefore has it been worked *out* in the manifestations of his genius . . . and becomes one great monument in the history of progressive thought and faith, as well as in the history of progressive Art. (1-2)

Yet the "elemental truths" of "human nature" that Jameson approvingly attributes to Mariolatry reinforce the disconcerting ideological underpinnings of patriarchal authority and female inferiority traceable to Christianity's original biblical writings. Built on "a radical separation of the sexes" (141), as Kristeva argues, the montheistic system necessitates the exclusion of women "from the single true and legislating principle, the Word," and the knowledge and power it represents ("About Chinese Women" 143). Identifying Eve's encounter with the serpent as "the best summary of this exclusion," Kristeva views the lapsarian moment as sexually fraught, dividing carnal woman from a more spiritual man and God. Indeed, in her letters, Barrett Browning indirectly alludes to the unclean status accorded women under Christianity in discussing her treatment during a visit with Italian monks. She comments, for instance, that the monks cleaned "pigsties with their bare hands, without spade or shovel; but *that* is uncleanliness enough—they wouldn't touch the little finger of a woman" (1: 337). To the abbot, "a petticoat stank in his nostrils" (1: 343).

If, as Kristeva suggests, women can participate in the

[1]*See the critics above and Zonana, for instance.*

Christian "symbolic community" (145) only by detaching themselves from "carnal *jouissance*" (146), then the role of the Madonna becomes critical. As a kind of second Eve, Mary offers a redemptive model for women to emulate, representing untainted chastity rather than corrupting sexuality. In contrast to Eve as agent with her disobedience that led to the destruction of Adam, Mary unquestionably followed divine dictates. That submission extended to language, for the Madonna gained access to the Word only as a vessel through whom it was transmitted and enacted to enable Christ to be born. Through the influence of Mariolatry, the silent mother was conflated with the woman, suggesting a "masculine appropriation of the Maternal," in Kristevan terms ("Stabat Mater" 163), to create a powerful emblem of female apotheosis. Even though such a "resorption of femininity within the Maternal," as Kristeva observes, "is specific to many civilizations," only in Christianity was it brought to "its peak." In *Aurora Leigh*, however, the protagonist's maturation process can be viewed as an attempt to complicate and unsettle the restrictive construction of femininity that Mariolatry created and Victorian culture inherited, for Aurora both diminishes a contemporary exemplar of the Madonna and gives voice to the silent mother through the poetic word. I begin my investigation of this problematization of the Madonna ideal by locating and evaluating the Marian resonances threading through the poem, examining their implications for women's relationship with language by focusing on crucial textual moments.

Barrett Browning's various portrayals of the mother in *Aurora Leigh* suggest the pervasive influence of Christianity in general and Mariolatry in particular by interpolating the female into a patriarchal construct of womanhood, beginning with the description of Aurora's mother as the poem opens. When first glimpsed by Aurora's father, she is associated with Christianity since she is part of "[a] train of priestly banners, cross and palm" (1.80). As one of "[t]he white-veiled rose-crowned maidens" (1.81) in the procession, Aurora's mother is suffused with Marian imagery: the white veil is a symbol of purity, appropriate for the virginal connotation of "maiden," and the rose is a traditional Marian symbol. The next line of the poem implies, however, that the role marked out for the female under patriarchy, as represented by the maidens' participation in this ritual of male-dominated Christianity, is oppressive, for the "[t]all tapers" the maidens carry are "weighty for such wrists" (1.82). The slanting of the tapers causes the maidens to "drop the white wax as they went" (1.84), which transfers the oppression of the weighty candles onto motherhood as well, since the droplets of white wax resonate with the allusions to maternal milk that permeate the poem.

As part of the "long trail of chanting priests and girls" (1.86), Aurora's mother is deprived of speech through a subtle allusion to the biblical story of Miriam. In that account, Miriam "took a timbrel in her hand" to celebrate Moses' defeat of Egypt (Exodus 15: 20-21). The metaphoric timbrel of Aurora's mother, however, is soundless; her face "flashed like a cymbal" (1.87) on the face of her future husband, creating only "silent clangour" (1.88). Aurora's mother is given the power of speech only once in the poem, and in that incident she silences her daughter in a perpetuation of valorized feminine behavior. Standing in a mother's appropriate space "at her post / Beside the nursery-door" (1.15-16), Aurora's mother cautions her child, "Hush, hush—here's too much noise!" (1.17). The mother can defy the silent female role only non-verbally, as "her sweet eyes" (1.17)—which are blue, another Marian resonance—"[l]eap forward, taking part against her word / In the child's riot" (1.18-19). Women are accorded no linguistic facility in this opening passage, reflecting the cultural view absorbed by the young Aurora through which the female is essentialized as a "weak and frail" (1.33) nurturer, governed by emotional behavior rather than rational language. Aurora thus learns that women, who know "[t]he way to rear up children" (1.48), have a "tender knack" (1.49) of "stringing pretty words that make no sense, / And kissing full sense into empty words" (1.51-52). Even Assunta, in her role as maternal substitute, is deprived of language; when Aurora is wrested from her to be taken to England, Assunta can respond only "with a shriek" (1.226) and a moan (1.231).

Motherhood, as Kristeva intimates in "Stabat Mater" and Aurora's mother illustrates, creates both pleasure and pain in a patriarchal society, generating "ambivalent feelings," as Donaldson comments in similarly making the point (58). As Kristeva notes in characterizing the maternal body, women are "crossroads beings, crucified beings" who live on a "border" (178); as Marilyn Edelstein remarks in discussing Kristeva's essay, mothers are poised between a profound sensual experience of "maternal *jouissance*" and a state of pain that recalls the Madonna's sufferings with Christ's crucifixion (33). That dual sense of maternity as both generative and destructive is apparent in the depiction of Aurora's mother: because "[s]he could not bear the joy of giving life" (1.34), in one particularly telling reference that critics have cited as evidence of the ominous consequence of maternal love: the "mother's rapture slew her" (1.35).

This sinister potentiality of maternity is conveyed throughout the poem with death images, as in the description of the portrait of Aurora's mother. Drawn after she had died, the portrait captures both a figurative and literal demise, for female subjectivity is deadened within the Victorian culture's limited conception of women. Fixed within the frame of patriarchal representation, the mother's face "did not therefore change" (1.151). The portrait evokes both the negative and positive qualities that patriarchy associates with the female, as critics have noted,[2] causing Aurora to gaze upon the painting "half in terror, half / In adoration" (1.137-38). The mother "was by turns / Ghost, fiend, and angel, fairy, witch, and sprite" (1.153-54); she is, in one respect, "a loving Psyche" (1.156) and "Our Lady of the Passion" (1.160), and in another respect, "[a] still Medusa" (1.157) and "Lamia in her first / Moonlighted pallor" (1.161-62).

As Dorothy Mermin comments, the two contrary representations presented in the portrait's "composite maternal image" subsequently divide into Marian Erle and Lady Waldemar, "the good mother and the bad" (192), or, as Virginia Steinmetz characterizes them, "the mad, sexually mature, devouring mother and the chaste, virgin mother, an utterly passive victim of male lust" (360). Despite her positioning as a feminine ideal, however, Marian is a problematic character, as Aurora's ambivalent appraisal will later suggest. Marian, as her name implies, evinces many of the qualities of the Virgin Mary,[3] and like that archetypal mother, she is presented both as a unique figure and as a model for other women. With her "ineffable face" (3.798), which suggests the radiance of Mary conveyed in religious paintings and statues, and her ability to touch Aurora "with her face and with her voice" (3.805), Marian is set apart from other women; as a "daughter of the people" (3.806), however, she is made one of them. Marian's capacity to function as a universal symbol is conveyed through her initial physical description, since she seemingly takes on the qualities of all women. Marian "was not white nor brown, / But could look either, like a mist that changed" (3.810-11); her hair was "[i]n doubt 'twixt dark and bright, nor left you clear / To name the colour" (3.814-15).

Underlying Aurora's depiction of Marian is a sense of discontent and disapproval with this exemplar of womanhood, imparted more emphatically later in the poem, and, in this description, recalling the disturbing portrait of Aurora's mother. Marian's hair associates her with the Madonna since it resembles "a full-blown rose," but this flower is "uneasy with its weight" (3.818). Marian's "milky" teeth foreshadow her maternal nurturing, but that role is problematized because her teeth "dissolved" into "so infantine a smile" (3.822-23). Though Marian's smile presages the pleasure of motherhood, the "eyes [that] smiled too" (3.824) hint at its pain, since they looked "as if remembering they had wept" and knew "they should, some day, weep again" (3.825-26). After Marian becomes pregnant, peasants tie "Mary's image" around her neck (6.1256), a signifier of motherhood that felt "as heavy as a stone" (6.1257); indeed, Marian recalls, "[a] woman has been strangled with less weight" (6.1258)

Like the Madonna, Marian Erle is wholly self-effacing, as her relationship with Romney Leigh attests. Beaming a "radiant smile" (4.172) while telling Aurora about her romantic relationship with Romney, Marian repeatedly stresses her comparative lack. "'I know I am nor worthy'" to be his wife (4.208), she remarks, believing herself "'[m]uch fitter for his handmaid'" (4.227). Marian accentuates her presumed lesser status by figuratively lowering her physical position before Romney: since "'[i]t pleasures him to stoop for buttercups,'" she says, "'I would not be a rose upon the wall'" (4.212-13) but would "'rather far be trodden by his foot'" (4.217). Marian unquestioningly accepts the servility expected of a Victorian wife, asserting that she will "'[s]erve tenderly, and love obediently'" (4.229). In effect, Marian repudiates all agency, transforming herself from individual to object—a vessel to be filled, a paper to be written upon—that exists solely to satisfy Romney's pleasure:

> . . . She felt his
> For just his uses, not her own at all,
> His stool, to sit on or put up his foot,
> His cup, to fill with wine or vinegar,
> Whichever drink might please him at the chance
> For that should please her always: let him write
> His name upon her . . . it seemed natural. (6.906-12)

Marian's self-abasement seemingly parallels Mary's abjection before God. In Marian's first encounter with Romney, he is depicted as a Christ figure; he "raised and rescued" Marian "[w]ith reverent pity" (3.1224-25), and "[h]e had good to do / To others" (3.1234-35). Moreover, Marian recalls that "she had loved upon her knees, / As others pray" (6.904-05). References to Romney's speech recall the words of the divine Father and suggest male control over the Word, resonating with biblical stories about God's disembodied voice addressing Moses and other faithful. The first time Marian met Romney, for example, she regarded him as "he who came and spake" (3.1175), and his presence is announced through "a voice [that] said, 'Marian Erle'" (4.76) during "the hour for angels" (4.77).

Furthering the conception of female subservience and voicelessness is Marian's response to her later motherhood, which again is suggestive of Mary's relationship with Christ through an effacement of the self to serve the child. Indeed, descriptions of Marian with her infant evoke the poses of Mary with Christ in Western iconography, as in this example:

> I lifted up the curtains of the bed
> Where Marian Erle, the babe in her arm,
> Both faces leaned like a pair
> Of folded innocences self-complete,
> Each smiling from the other, smiled and slept.
> (7.380-84)

This picture of maternal contentment recalls not only such medieval and Renaissance representations of the devoted Virgin Mother as Ambrogio Lorenzetti's fourteenth-century "Rapolano Madonna" and da Vinci's sixteenth-century "Virgin and Child with St. Anne and St. John," but also Raphael's numerous portraits of Mary and Christ with which Barrett Browning was undoubtedly familiar through her residence in Italy. Indeed, she remarks in a letter that its recipient "may suppose that I am able sometimes to go over to the gallery and adore the Raphaels" (1: 355). *Aurora Leigh*'s poetic picture evokes frequent qualities that Anna Jameson traces in artistic renderings of the Madonna and child: situated in a throne-like setting, Christ is held by the mother, with a look of adoration upon her face. Such a tender bond between

[2]Gilbert, for example, characterizes the portrait as including "all the patriarchal myths of femaleness" (195). For helpful discussions of the portrait, also see Zonana, Gelpi, and Cooper, as well as Gilbert and Gubar, who observe that the mother is a "somewhat sinister 'ghost'" dead "to her own desires, her own self" (25). Other critics, such as Steinmetz and Stevenson, also have remarked in interesting ways on the negative consequences of motherhood upon femlae subjectivity that the poem suggests.

[3]Armstrong takes the Christian resonances of Marian Erle in a somewhat different direction in discussing Barrett Browning's "rewriting [of] Christian myth" (368), noting that "Marian takes on not only the attributes of Mary as mother with child but also the attributes of Christ, who is through her persistently gendered as a woman" (369).

mother and infant drew an approving response from Victorian culture, as evidenced by the numerous entries depicting that relationship in the Royal Academy's exposition listings, which Lynda Nead points out (26). Reviewers of *Aurora Leigh* likewise lauded the poem's rich portrait of maternal devotion. The *Westminster Review* maintained that Barrett Browning's representation of "innocence and maternal fondness" may be unequaled in verse, adding that the "picture . . . reminds one more than anything else of the masterpieces of Raphael" (409). Similarly, *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* praised the character of Marian [which] is very beautifully drawn" (33), a phrase that intimates the visual quality of that description.[4]

Numerous textual references to the child strengthen Marian's bond with Mary, for the infant is repeatedly presented in Messianic terms. Marian, for instance, identifies her son as "[m]y lamb, my lamb" (6.627), which recalls biblical references to Christ as the lamb of God. She bends over her baby, "drinking him as wine" (6.599), in a veiled reference to the blood of Christ in the Eucharistic feast. Marian's "sinless babe" (7.84) is "half with her and half with Heaven" (6.593), befitting Christ's position as the mediator between God and humanity. Similarly, the infant accepts his mother's face "[i]n change for heaven itself" (6.590); he is "half perplexed between the angelhood / He had been away to visit in his sleep, / And our most mortal presence" (6.586-88). Marian, like Mary, seemingly is blessed among women, carefully chosen as the infant's mother, for she remarks that "God knows me, trusts me with the child" (6.741). In addition, Marian figuratively shares Mary's status as the virgin mother who is worthy of such a son, retaining her innocence despite the brutal rape. Aurora, for example, calls her "[s]weet holy Marian" (6.782) after hearing the story of the rape, emphasizing that Marian "shall be innocent / Before my conscience" (6.785-86).

Through the subjugation of the self to the child, Marian, like Mary, in effect becomes her son's Other, reflecting and deferring to the son who represents a continuation of the male lineage of patriarchal society. As Kristeva argues, Mary was "*mother* of her son and his *daughter* as well . . . and besides his *wife*" (169), providing a model for the three appropriate positions of the Victorian female. Marian's specular status is accentuated in passages such as the following:

> . . . Self-forgot, cast out of self,
> And drowning in the transport of the sight,
> Her whole pale passionate face, mouth, forehead, eyes,
> One gaze, she stood: then, slowly as he smiled
> She smiled too, slowly, smiling unaware,
> And drawing from his countenance to hers
> A fainter red, as if she watched a flame
> And stood in it a-glow . . . . (6.604-11)

Marian is a weak reflection of her son—she is "[a] fainter red" since she stands in his glow—as well as a passive figure who responds to the son's smile rather than initiating the act. Moreover, the poem implies that Marian, like the Madonna, finds motherhood to produce contradictory reactions, recalling Kristeva's comments on both the *jouissance* and pain that characterize the maternal experience. Marian's face, for example, is "pale" and "passionate," suggesting both an absence and a plenitude of life; and Marian feels both pleasure and misery, for the "extremity of love" that a mother feels "'twill pass / For agony or rapture" (6.600-01).

As the reference to Marian's "drowning" in the sight of her son intimates, however, motherhood can be not only painful but destructive through the subordination of self to another. The death images that Marian employs in relating her violent path to motherhood—her "murder"—help to establish that connection. Marian comments, for example, that although "'the mother in me has survived'" (6.821), "'I'm not less dead for that: I'm nothing more / But just a mother'" (6.823-24). She exists solely to nurture her son: "'[o]nly for the child'" she tells Aurora, "'I'm warm, and cold, and hungry, and afraid'" (6.824-25). Aurora, too, associates Marian with death. Aurora's first glimpse of Marian after the infant's birth reminds the poet of "something [that] floats up suddenly" from a pond (6.238), "a dead face, known once alive" (6.239).

Motherhood, as epitomized in Marian, is limiting, suffocating, and disturbing to Aurora, an assessment intimated in Aurora's description of the maternal space that Marian occupies when she is discovered in France. Marian's home serves as an analogue to the condition of a nineteenth-century woman who absorbs Mariolatry's teachings through the structure's depiction as an enervated and invaded entity. The house, like a subservient female, could not "stand there by itself" (6.528). Rather than representing a site of growth and fulfillment, the house is "meagre, unripe" (6.533). From behind, the house is elbowed" (6.534) by "a line / Of rigid poplars" (6.533-34); from the front, its "lime and bricks . . . wronged the grass" (6.535-36). Marian's room is "[s]carce large than a grave, and near as bare" (6.552). Further, the panoptic room offers no place from which scrutiny can be escaped or disciplinary power evaded:

> A mouse could find no sort of shelter in't,
> Much less a greater secret; curtainless—
> The window fixed you with its torturing eye,
> Defying you to take a step apart
> If peradventure you would hide a thing. (6.554-58)

Aurora responds to the disconcerting picture of womanhood and maternal devotion that Marian represents by reinterpreting Christian dogma, deconstructing the powerful mythology of the Virgin Mary to construct her own version of

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[4]Mermin likewise comments on the artistic connection, noting that Barrett Browning was profoundly affected by the "endlessly reiterated, narrowly defined images of women in Italian art" during her sojourn on the Continent. Mermin adds that "[t]he multitudinous depictions of the Virgin seem to have issued in her picture of Marian" (211), such as a "fine emblematic set-piece" (194) in the poem that evokes "figures of Florentine painting" (195). In citing the *Westminster Review* quotation on the poem, Stenimetz adds the important point that the reviewer failed to recognize the "shadow cast over the picture" (353). In discussing the iconographic passage I quote above, Stenimetz makes the intriguing observation that Aurora "gives way to the regressive impulse to seek shelter in the circle of mother-child symbiosis" (361).

female authority. Aurora rewrites Mary's story through a reworking of the Annunciation, transforming woman from receptacle to speaker through the poetic process. Poetry offers her an alternative to the cultural construct presented to a Victorian female, enabling Aurora to become a different type of nurturer—one who is not made submissive to male will but one who acts according to her own will.

Marian's paradoxically "virginal" state, despite her motherhood, establishes the initial connection to the biblical story of the Annunciation.[5] In biblical accounts, Mary functioned as a vessel, impregnated by the Holy Spirit, to produce the son of God (Matthew 1:18); through Mary, the Word was made flesh (John 1:13). Marian, too, becomes a vessel, serving as a receptacle for male lust and creating a child who, like Christ, lacks a true human father. And, as with Mary, Marian's pregnancy is discovered unexpectedly. Mary, espoused to Joseph, was "found with child" before "they came together"; Joseph, "being a just man," did not want to "make her a publick example" and therefore "was minded to put her away privily" (Matthew 1: 18-19). Similarly, the innocent Marian does not even realize she is pregnant until her employer casts her out of the house for her supposed sinfulness (7.72).

In the biblical version of the Annunciation, Mary is told by the angel Gabriel that she has been chosen as the vessel through whom Christ can be conceived and delivered. As Gabriel informs her, "the Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee (Luke 2:35). In effect, Christ is conceived through the Word of God entering Mary's ear and growing within her. Similarly, the young Aurora is a receptacle of the patriarchal word, which the image of the ear helps to convey. On her arrival in England to meet her aunt for the first time, Aurora recalls that in "my ears, my father's word / Hummed ignorantly, as the sea in shells" (1.317-18). In her aunt's household, Aurora continues to accept without question the language of another patriarchal figure, a cleric, for she "[g]ave ear to her [aunt's] vicar" (1.493). As a poet, however, Aurora will progress from an inert vessel receiving the father's word to become, in a sense, the father himself as the creator of the word. Through her poetry, then, the word is made flesh; the woman is no longer reduced to an ear that accepts a command but instead becomes the voice that transmits the message. Aurora thus becomes both mother and father through poetry, combining the gendered functions of both to give birth to the word and contesting the image of the silent maternal figure through her own powers of language.

Aurora establishes the link between poetry and motherhood in references to her artistic development, recalling that the "heart" of her early verses "was just an embryo's heart / Which never yet had beat, that it should die; / Just gasps of make-believe galvanic life" (3.247-49). As life "deepened all / The course" she took (3.334-35), however, Aurora felt "[m]y heart's life throbbing in my verse to show / It lived" (3.339-40). Though imperfect, her verse revealed through "its very tumours, warts and wens" that it was "[s]till organised by and implying life" (3.342-43). The connection between poetry and fatherhood emerges through its associations to the divine Father. Indeed, Aurora's memory of her first exposure to poetry evokes Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel mural of Adam straining to reach God's finger: "my soul / At poetry's divine first finger-touch, / Let go conventions" (1.850-52). Like God, moreover, the poet has a "voice like thunder" (1.874). Numerous references position the poet as the bringer of the word: the poet, for example, "says the word so that it burns you through / With a special revelation" (1.905-06); and through verse, "a familiar thing / Becomes divine i' the utterance" (1.909-10). In a sense, the poet also becomes Gabriel through the "palpitating angel in his [the poet's] flesh" (1.912).

Without the poetic link, motherhood is characterized not only by the silence of Aurora's mother but especially by the inarticulateness of Marian. Initially, Marian is not even empowered to relate her own story; Aurora tells it for her "with fuller utterance" (3.828). In her muteness, Marian resembles "dumb creatures" who communicate with gestures (4.159): she is characterized as Romney's "bird upon the blackthorn" (4.367) or a "doglike" entity (4.281).[6] More importantly, Marian's lack of facility with language, coupled with her frequent tears and maternal milk, aligns her with the Mater Dolorosa, the grieving mother of Christ in religious iconography; tears and milk, Kristeva observes, are this figure's "privileged signs," representing the "metaphors of non-speech, of a 'semiotics' that linguistic communication does not account for" ("Stabat" 173-74).

Marian's limited opportunities to read accentuate her powerlessness within language. Marian "had grown . . . [t]o no book-learning" (3.998-99); rather, her access to texts came only occasionally from "some stray odd volume" (3.973), "half a play of Shakespeare's" (3.975), or "a sheaf of leaves . . . torn out from the heart of books" (3.979-80). The minimal power that Marian holds over language comes from imitating the male: "'I'm poor at writing at the best,'" she informs Romney, "'and yet / I tried to make my *g*'s the way you showed'" (4.983-84). Like Mary, Marian is a vessel for transmitting the male's word and accepts that role gladly, reminding Romney of "'the times you made me weep for joy / At hoping I should learn to write your notes'" (4.975-76). Again, iconographic resonances to the Annunciation underscore this distancing from language. As Margaret Homans observes, portraits of Mary as Gabriel arrives show her reading, but paintings after this incident are strikingly different; if a book is present, it is

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[5]Sandra Gilbert provides an interesting interpretation in this regard, commenting that Barrett Browning "revises the story of the annunciation to question the brutality of a male God who uses women merely as vessels for his own ends" (205). Gilbert also makes the point that the "rhetoric of Mariolatry" that Barrett Browning adopts in portraying Marian's motherhood "implies the theological force she wants to impute to this 'maiden' mother's female energy" (204). Indeed, Marian's son "is in some sense a divine child, a baby god whose sacred birth attests to the divinity of his mother" (205). In a similar vein, Mermin comments upon Marian's status as "virgin in spirit if not in fact" (192) that her motherhood suggests.

[6]Aurora's belittling references to Marian imply a class bias as well. That interpretation is bolstered by the fact that the poem's Madonna figure is drawn from the lower classes and is ultimately expelled from the poem so that the more secular and socially superior Aurora can succeed with Romney in her stead. Rather than functioning as a equalizing agent that obviates class distinctions, Christianity in this poem accentuates such divisions.

either unopened or ignored by Mary (158).

Aurora's rejection of Romney's first marriage proposal is, in effect, a refusal to accept his "word" by contesting the vision of the female as wife and mother that he had expressed early in the poem:

> . . . . —Women as you are,
> Mere women, personal and passionate,
> You give us doting mothers, and perfect wives,
> Sublime Madonnas, and enduring saints!
> We get no Christ from you—and verily
> We shall not get a poet, in my mind. (2.220-25)

Aurora's refusal of his proposal serves as an empowering act through which she appropriates the male voice: "with the word, / Meseemed I floated into a sudden light / Above his stature" (2.357-59). When Romney reiterates his proposal by letter, Aurora again is the initiator of the word while Romney takes on the subordinate position of the vessel in a subtle reversal of gender roles. "Take this word," she writes him, "[a]nd let it stop you as a generous man / From speaking farther" (2.842-44).

When Aurora finally expresses her love for Romney at the end of the poem, she does so by refusing to heed his command of "'Silence!'" (9.608) and by again putting him into the feminized position as the receptacle of the word: "'when a woman says she loves a man,'" she tells Romney, he "'must hear her'" (9.613-14). A Miriam allusion is invoked in this scene, as it was in Romney's earlier proposal, but with very different results. In the first proposal, Romney denied that Aurora's "cymbal" deserved to be heard unless it was to glorify the male: "'When Egypt's slain, I say, let Miriam sing!— / Before—where's Moses?'" (2.171-72). By the end of the poem, however, Romney validates Aurora's right to be heard and reveals his desire to listen to "'[m]y Miriam, whose sweet mouth, when nearly drowned / I still heard singing on the shore!'" (8.334-35).

Aurora's acceptance of Romney's proposal comes, then, because he has assented to her view of the proper role for a woman—a figure who is neither submissive nor silent. The poem's privileging of such a model for the Victorian woman is evidenced not only by Romney's recognition of its validity, but also by the banishment of the patriarchal ideal, Marian, from the poem. In her final appearance, Marian again evokes strong associations to the Virgin Mother in her abjection, but especially in her Assumption-like departure. In religious teachings, Mary is bodily raised from earth and assumed into heaven; in the poem, Marian adopts a similar pose as she prepares to reject Romney's offer of marriage:

> She stood there, still and pallid as a saint,
> Dilated, like a saint in ecstasy,
> As if the floating moonshine interposed
> Betwixt her foot and the earth, and raised her up
> To float upon it . . . . (9.187-91)

As the perfect mother, Marian pledges to devote herself to her child, dismissing the possibility of marrying Romney or any other man so that she can "'tend my boy until he cease to need / One steadying finger'" (9.433-34). Like Mary, she will care for her son until he is ready to do his work and must "'desert / (Not miss) his mother's lap, to sit with men'" (9.434-35). Marian's refusal to marry also implies the denial of sexuality that is associated with the Virgin Mother. As Kristeva comments, "We are entitled only to the ear of the virginal body, the tears, and the breast," since the "female sexual organ [is] changed into an innocent shell, holder of sound" ("Stabat" 172-73). Marian's expulsion from the poem suggests a departure from these asexual models, as does Aurora's passionate embrace of Romney, which she characterizes as a "convulsion," and "a kiss / As long and silent as the ecstatic night, / And deep, deep shuddering breaths" (9.721-23). Aurora's acceptance of sexuality as an integral part of a woman's life thus serves as a rejection of the limitations of the model of female perfection embodied in the Madonna. Aurora's earlier return to Italy, where her conceptions of motherhood originated in her girlhood, can be seen as enabling her to rework those perceptions, formed in a place so suffused with Mariolatry that peasants unceasingly pray to "thou beauteous Queen of heaven" (7.1256) for even the most insignificant of concerns.

The picture of redeemed womanhood and motherhood that Barrett Browning leaves with the reader at the end of *Aurora Leigh*—that of a vocal, authoritative, and potent female—thus is one far different from the versions presented throughout the poem. Aurora, initially only a receptacle of Christian and Victorian discourses on the ideal woman and mother, ultimately deconstructs those images through her own power within language. By refusing to accept the cultural conception of womanhood, Barrett Browning provides a textual space through which a woman is transformed from an inert vessel for the word into its vibrant and powerful creator.

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University of Iowa

The Domination of *Dorian Gray*

Barri J. Gold

For the last century, male-male attraction has virtually defined how we think about alternative sexuality. From out of what Eve Sedgwick calls "the panoply of nineteenth-century sexualities" only one has come to represent "*the* pathological (just as the phrase 'sexual orientation' now refers quite exclusively to gender of object choice)" (168). This definitional privilege necessarily structures—and has been structured by—our critical approach to texts which explore alternative sexuality. So persuasive (which is by no means meant to imply incorrect) has gay criticism been that it becomes difficult to look at *The Picture of Dorian Gray* in any other way. Undoubtedly, the juridical life of this novel[1] and Wilde's own iconographic status contribute to the predominance of this perspective. In return, these readings of *Dorian Gray* have helped to consolidate a list of categories and codes by which we now recognize male-male erotics, especially where the pressures of potential persecution or prosecution have rendered their presentation oblique.[2]

Within the privileged space which homoerotics are accorded by critics concerned with the sexuality of *Dorian Gray*, other erotic forms tend to be subordinated. Nonetheless, they are importantly and pervasively present. As the novel multiplies its art forms, so does the multiplication of erotic forms, the pursuit of "myriad lives and myriad sensations," seem to supersede any single type. Thus, in addition to the homosexual, we detect traces of heterosexual attraction (the apparently inevitable foil), autoeroticism (itself often held to encode the homoerotic), incest, and necrophilia. We also find a strong component of erotic domination in most—if not all—of the erotic relationships which the text explores. I find the dominance aspects of these relationships to be as compelling as their homo- or hetero-erotic elements. Moreover, the variety of sites at which erotic domination emerges suggests that this erotic form is largely indifferent to the question of gendered object choice.

Nonetheless, certain challenges attach to such a reading, challenges which result in part from our current critical orientation. In particular, we remain rather hard pressed to recognize the presence of erotic domination in literature without such aids as Sacher-Masoch's arsenal of accoutrements—whips, chains, leather and furs—without the explicit details of O's elaborate violation, and outside of popularized s/m scenarios such as master and slave (see Sacher-Masoch and Réage). *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, however, which has been so helpful in elucidating some of the ways in which homoerotics may be encoded, also suggests the ways in which the desire for domination and the desire to dominate are intimated. As this paper traces the narrative of erotic domination which Wilde's text produces, it will also elaborate how this sexual form may be more or less manifestly

[1] For a discussion of the way *The Picture of Dorian Gray* was included in the charges of immorality against Wilde, see Ellman 443-44.

[2] Within *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, gay male attraction now seems to announce itself at virtually every turn. Dorian himself, according to Ed Cohen, is "an image—a space for the constitution of male desire." Establishing art itself as a way to encode homoerotics, Cohen documents the "symbolic displacement of the erotic onto the aesthetic" in which the portrait "establishes a gap whereby unverbalized meaning can enter the text" (806). Richard Dellamora tags scandal (for Wilde's contemporaries) and Sybil's cross-dressing (for us) as signals of *Dorian Gray*'s homoerotics ("Scandal" 194-208, "Homophobia" 83). Finally, Eve Sedgwick traces a plethora of binaries by and through which narratives of male-male attraction emerge. Within *Dorian Gray*, male-male desire enters the narrative through the proliferation of open secrets, through "Wilde's gay-affirming and gay occluding orientalism" (175), and through the tension between Greek and Christian aesthetics and ethics—the Greek signaling the removal of prohibitions which are at once Christian and belied by the Christian (especially Catholic) fixation on the male body (136). Drug addiction, too, "is both a camouflage and an expression for the dynamics of same-sex desire and its prohibition" (172), the need for food and the addiction to drugs matching point for point the opposition between "natural" desires and those deemed *contra naturam.* Finally, the novel's now-familiar narcissism provides a protective/expressive "collapse of homo/hetero with self/other" (161): It is not that I love him, but that I am him; it is not that I love him, but that I love me.

expressed—not the least of which is through the simple and striking recurrence of the word *dominate*, a term whose near-synonyms come to include *influence, enthrall, fascinate* and even *vivisect*. This proliferation of terms itself begins to suggest the variety of the ways dominance relations reveal themselves in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*.

Although we are accustomed to considering relationships within *The Picture of Dorian Gray*—both hetero- and homosexual—according to the relative gender of the participants, dominance relations within the text seem to cut across lines of gender. Among Dorian Gray's love interests, Sybil Vane is second only to Lord Henry in the amount of textual attention which she receives. Sybil's love for Dorian is expressed in terms which eloquently and unmistakably reveal the desire to be dominated. "The joy of a caged bird was in her voice." "She was free in her prison of passion" (55). She insists on Dorian's mastery—"'Prince Charming rules life for us now'" (54)—and when warned that "'He wants to enslave you'" she replies, "'I shudder at the thought of being free'" (61).

Henry tags this desire to be dominated as characteristically female:

> "I am afraid that women appreciate cruelty, downright cruelty, more than anything else. They have wonderfully primitive instincts. We have emancipated them, but they remain slaves looking for their masters all the same. They love being dominated." (90)

Henry's gendering of masochistic desire, however, is at best only half right. Indeed, we have a counter-example in hand when he makes his assertion, for Basil's domination is established in the first few pages of the novel. Basil, in fact, introduces the term *dominate*: "'As long as I live,'" Basil confesses "'the personality of Dorian Gray will dominate me'" and later, to Dorian, "'I was dominated, soul, brain, and power by you . . . . I worshipped you'" (14, 100). Basil articulates his relation to Dorian in a variety of ways. He is dominated by Dorian. He worships him. Dorian's personality will absorb him. Dorian will influence him—this anticipates, perhaps sows the seeds of, Henry's formulation of his own desire to dominate. And Dorian will be his master—this at once belies Henry's belief that it is only women who are slaves looking for their masters and cuts across the lines of gender to suggest an erotic form constructed around another set of categories.

This is not to say that gender does not affect the individual's experience of masochistic desire. Where Sybil seems to understand perfectly and to bask in her desire, Basil is quite perplexed by the exquisite joys and sorrows which he is about to undergo. "'I find a strange pleasure in saying things to him that I know I shall be sorry for having said.'" And indeed, he is occasionally sorry, when Dorian's sadistic side is most evident (14). The effect of gender on a character's masochism cannot, however, be summed up by the simple binarism: women like it; men don't. The Duchess of Monmouth, for example, seems to experience masochism as a compromise. She is perhaps of the school that erotic domination is not so much an option as an inevitability. Her comments about her attraction to Dorian, that "'a burnt child loves the fire,'" that "'there are worse things than capture,'" and that she "'must keep an opportunity for retreat'" (171) are a far cry from Sybil's "'I shudder at the thought of being free.'" Nonetheless, dominance relations, though they are no doubt influenced by gender, are certainly not exclusive to one gender or one gender-combination.

The profound indifference to the relative gender of object choice suggested by Sybil, Basil, and the Duchess seems, moreover, not merely an incidental characteristic of such relations. *The Picture of Dorian Gray* suggests that this failure of gendered boundaries grounds, in part, the desire for domination. On closer inspection, it becomes clear that the subject(s) of such desire need not even be confined to a clearly determinate gender. This indeterminacy in turn proves essential to a form of erotic role playing which characterizes dominance relations throughout the text.

Apparently the object of Dorian's one great heterosexual attraction, Sybil evinces a femaleness which actually proves rather hard to pin down:

> "One evening she is Rosalind, and the next evening she is Imogen. I have seen her die in the gloom of an Italian tomb, sucking the poison from her lover's lips. I have watched her wandering through the forest of Arden, disguised as a pretty boy in hose and doublet and dainty cap. She has been mad, and has come into the presence of a guilty king, and given him rue to wear, and bitter herbs to taste of. She has been innocent, and the black hands of jealousy have crushed her reed-like throat." (46-47)

Which woman is she? Sometimes, she is Imogen; others, Desdemona. She is Juliet on the first night when Dorian sees her, and on the last. Rosalind, however, is the one who proves irresistible, for it is on the night when she plays Rosalind that Dorian finally agrees to meet her. It is entirely possible (indeed, compelling) to attribute Dorian's attraction to *Sybil as Rosalind* to the fact that Sybil/Rosalind appears disguised as a "pretty boy." Dorian's attraction to this "pretty boy" can then be understood to ground his lifelong interest in boys who are, by more familiar standards, boys all the way down.[3]

Dorian's interest, however, is heavily invested not just in her occasional maleness, but specifically in her *changeability*. The line between playing Rosalind, and playing Rosalind playing Ganymede is a fine one. Does one somehow require more performance than the other? Or does her performance of the second emphasize that the first is thoroughly performance as well? In fine drag style, Sybil's performance of gender has the capacity to render gender unreliable (especially in light of Henry's later claim that "'She [i. e. Sybil] was less real than they [her roles] are'" [91]).[4] Moreover, the role(s) of Rosalind represents an opportunity to occupy a variety of positions within the comedic love plot: Sybil plays a girl, dressed as a boy, wooed and wooing a man and a woman simultaneously. Her gendering is further complicated by the Shakespearian joke just beneath the surface—the fact that Rosalind would originally have been portrayed by a boy whose gender would humorously belie the apparently ultimate confession of her girlness. Rosalind is, moreover, not only a boy and girl at once, but also simultaneously pursued and pursuer. And, in a more blatantly s/m vein, she enacts several scenarios representing possibilities in the giving and receiving of pain: voluntarily drawing poison from her lover's lips, making a king suffer, and dying at her lover's hands.

In both her gender performance and in these scenarios, Sybil is—to use an erotically charged term—role-playing. What Dorian wants is for her to continue that role-playing under his direction. He determines to marry her specifically in order to manage and expand her stage career. When this plan fails, when Sybil settles into her single-minded love of Dorian and in so doing, loses her ability to act—to be Imogen, Desdemona and Rosalind, to be boy and girl, pursued and pursuer, murderer, victim, and suicide, serially or simultaneously—Dorian immediately and angrily loses interest. It seems that it is precisely her evasion of a fixed identity that attracts him. When she stabilizes, he splits.

Sybil's appeal, then, seems to reside in what could be termed her fluidity—a fluidity which Dorian cultivates in himself later on. His closing act, for example, suggests that he has filed away for future reference a number of the scenarios which this multiply-gendered love object has enacted. In the final moments of the novel, he too plays the simultaneous roles of murderer, victim, and suicide. Dorian's attraction to Sybil sets the stage for the proliferations of erotic forms, the "myriad lives and myriad sensations" which he pursues throughout. She embodies for him "the complex multiform creature" whom Dorian wants not only to possess/master, but ultimately, to become (124). Thus the appeal of *dominating* Sybil seems to reside (or result—the causality is unclear) in Dorian's desire to acquire a similar fluidity for himself.

Where the juxtaposition of Basil and Sybil suggests that the desire for domination is not gender specific, the ways Dorian and later Henry react suggest that indeed, that is part of its appeal. Rosalind and role-playing represent an opportunity to occupy different positions within various erotically-charged scenarios; erotic domination, with no strong claim to biological determinism, promises similar mobility. Through the course of the novel, Dorian and especially Henry move freely in and about apparently contradictory positions of sadist and masochist, scientific subject and object, creator and creation.

Henry makes this emphasis on changeability in dominance relations explicit when he responds to Basil's accusation, "'You can't feel what I feel. You change too often.'" with "'Ah, my dear Basil, that is exactly why I can feel it'" (14). But Henry's erotic vision differs significantly from Basil's, Sybil's, and even Dorian's in its early stages. For one thing, Henry is the first to self-consciously embrace the position of dominator:

> "Yes; he would try to be to Dorian Gray what, without knowing it, the lad was to the painter who had fashioned the wonderful portrait. He would seek to dominate him—had already, indeed, half done so. He would make that wonderful spirit his own." (35)

Where Dorian's domination of Basil originates within Basil himself with Dorian as its somewhat passive and unknowing agent, Henry sets out to dominate Dorian. In doing so, he not only reiterates the flexibility which inheres in dominance roles (Dorian has dominated, and Dorian is subject to domination), he also introduces another crucial characteristic of dominance relations within Wilde's text: the fantasmatic reproduction of the self. Henry re-produces Dorian—"To a large extent, the lad was his own creation" (52)—and creates him, moreover, in his own image. Henry's desire to *possess* Dorian contains within it this intention: to make Dorian's "spirit his own" signals also to make Dorian's spirit over, as Henry's. As we shall see, Henry will also make "that wonderful spirit his own" in yet a third sense by adopting it, by making himself over as Dorian.

Henry expresses his intention to reproduce himself in and on Dorian through the action of *influence*:

> There was something terribly enthralling in the exercise of influence. No other activity was like it. To project one's soul into some gracious form, and let it tarry there for a moment; to hear one's own intellectual views echoed back to one with all the added music and passion of youth; to convey one's temperament into another as though it were a subtle fluid or a strange perfume; there was a real joy in that . . . . (39)

Henry's desire for self-reproduction is specified to include self-improvement, glorious magnification, rejuvenation. To forward these ends, Henry elsewhere introduces another set of terms through which the process of reproduction-through-domination may be articulated. Tellingly, Henry employs the rhetoric of science, an arena which claims to be largely without affect: "It was clear to him that the experimental method was the only method by which one could arrive at any scientific analysis of the passions; and certainly Dorian Gray was a subject made to hand . . . " (53). By placing himself and Dorian in the roles of scientific subject and object, Henry assumes a stance of "objectivity" which enables him to profess a paradoxically disinterested fascination. Eveyln Fox Keller has observed, however, that it is in objectivity and in the corresponding process of objectification, that the scientific subject intersects with the sexually sadistic. She argues that each uses this stance to secure his physical and emotional inviolability, in part by asserting his difference from his object by polarizing their roles (67-115). This polarization is certainly at work as Henry articulates his interest in Dorian:

> Certainly few people had ever interested him so much as Dorian Gray, and yet the lad's mad adoration of some one else caused him not the slightest pang of annoyance or jealousy. He was pleased by it. It made him a more interesting study. He had always been enthralled by the methods of natural science, but the ordinary subject-matter of that science had seemed to him trivial and of no import. And so he had begun by vivisecting himself, and he had ended by vivisecting others. (51)

[3]Richard Dellamora, who makes this observation, reads the violence with which the passage proceeds as evidence of "the homophobia impelling Dorian's rush into Sybil's arms" ("Homophobia" 83).

[4]For a discussion of how drag subverts gender identity, see Butler (134-41).

As he channels passion into analysis, Henry models his domination even more specifically on the science of vivisection, a technique particularly well-suited to Henry's erotic goal of self-reproduction. The specific currency of "vivisection" is rooted in its capacity to predict the response of the living human subject, to reproduce the responses of the subject in an on the object. Live subjects are necessary because "Even the simplest operation performed on a dead body may differ notably in its results for the same operation performed on the body when alive" (Wallace 246).

Thus Henry assumes the role of the vivisectionist not only in his scientific stance, but also in his rejection of the ordinary object of such study, what Wilde terms "subject-matter." But even as Henry establishes his inviolate scientific/sadistic stance, he begins to obscure the distinctness of this role, because Henry begins by vivisecting himself. Object to his own subject, he occupies from the start apparently contradictory roles at once (recall Sybil's gender performance). The linguistic paradox that the *subject* of science may in fact be the scientific object *or* its opposite, not only produces a great deal of confusion in discussion, but also suggests—as does Henry's vivisecting himself—that such roles are not as clearly delineated as science would have us believe.

The simultaneity of self-vivisection, moreover, establishes the pattern for future vivisections. Even as he sets out to dominate, locating Dorian as object to his subject, Henry finds himself *enthralled*—a word which signals eroticism and dominance, suggesting at once infatuation and enslavement. Henry collapses the boundaries which distinguish dominator and dominated. Scientific objectivity is thus revealed as a subjective and potentially erotic stance, which in turn enables Henry to create a space in which he at once dominates and is dominated without the assistance of a dominator. In his reconception, he is enthralled not by an individual but by the methods of natural science which make his domination possible.

In this way, Henry comes full circle. In his effort to dominate Dorian, always-already invested in reproducing Dorian as himself, Henry also reproduces himself as Dorian. Determining from the start "to be to Dorian Gray . . . what the lad was to [Basil]," to make "that wonderful spirit his own" in the final sense, Henry reconceives reproduction. No longer the exclusive province of normative hetero-sex, it emerges as a reflective process in which creator and creation mutually and fluidly produce each other. At the same time, Henry begins to interrogate the professed distinctness between scientific subject and object and reemphasizes the importance of fluidity to erotic domination—the reversibility, simultaneity of, and flow of characteristics between dominator and dominated.

The structures which Henry articulates characterize dominance relations throughout *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. Basil's attraction to Dorian changes him in telling ways: "'I see things differently. I think of them differently. I can now recreate life in a way that was hidden from me before'" (12). Dorian's domination at once gives Basil new life as an artist, reproduces him so to speak, and teaches him a new way to reproduce. Moreover, in reproducing Dorian, Basil inadvertently reproduces himself. It is for this reason, that he refuses to show his picture to Dorian: "'My heart shall never be put under their microscope. There is too much of myself in the thing, Harry—too much of myself!'" (13). Both the mutual reproduction which domination effects, and the rhetoric through which Basil imagines his own vulnerability—as the object of scientific study, dissected, with his heart under the world's microscope—anticipate Henry's carefully and self-consciously cultivated sexual imagination. And, of course, it is Basil's material reproduction of Dorian that enables Dorian to pursue the "myriad lives and myriad sensations" of which Sybil gives him only a glimpse.

Thus, alongside its portrayal of male-male desire, Wilde's text also posits another erotic form. The text reveals the investment in (gender) fluidity, in role-playing, and in mutual reproduction which grounds the desire for domination. *Dorian Gray* thus complicates the traditional picture of s/m—a simple or pathological pleasure in pain—and begins to suggest its potential as a social, political and critical practice. Erotic domination emerges as a practice which may subvert the same discursive constructs through which it is articulated. Within *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, this translates to a rethinking of not only s/m, but also science (a form elite enough to seem inaccessible to social critique) and literary interpretation. The clear hierarchical distinction between dominator and dominated, between creator and creation, and even between scientific subject and object strains in the face of this elaborate eroticization, and we discover one of potentially many new ways to consider sexualities which are not consolidated according to categories of gendered object choice.

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Bryn Mawr College and *Muhlenberg College*

Trollope's Admirable Women and Their Literary Sisters: A Continuing Quest for the Bearer of the Country House Tradition

Yoko Hatano

Anthony Trollope's Barsetshire Chronicles present a recurring type of heroine who is eventually elevated to the status of "the lady of the manor" by virtue of her fine qualities which entitle her to be designated as "the admirable woman." Mary Thorne, after overcoming obstacles, is finally accepted at Greshamsbury Park, "a fine old English gentleman's seat."[1] Lucy Robarts similarly fights Lady Lufton's opposition and becomes the lady of Framley Court. Grace Crawley makes a clerical version of elevation by marrying into the Grantly family, "a clerical aristocracy" (*DT* 5) in the world of the Anglican church. Significantly, these admirable women all possess the virtues and value system inherent in the tradition of the English gentlewoman, the very qualities which make possible their social elevation. In their turn, these heroines rejuvenate the decaying old order, now threatened by the invasion of the new power of the middle class; this new vigor helps preserve the old rural tradition symbolized by the country houses. The purpose of the present study is not only to enumerate the specific qualities of Trollope's admirable women, but also to prove that the restoration of the three Tory families by them and their rise in social status are the results of two interrelated factors: the English preoccupation with the rural tradition and the possibility of social mobility unique to the English class system. Thus, the characters and circumstances presented by Trollope are a clear indication of the dominant psyche of an era reacting to dislocating industrialization. This study also aims to demonstrate that the quest for the admirable woman of lower origin as the legatee of the declining country house tradition is not exclusively Trollopian. This theme can also be found from the early nineteenth century till the early twentieth century.

The dominant motif of the Barsetshire Chronicles is the conflict between the traditional power based on land and the new power based on capital. The conflict extends beyond the commercial and political spheres to the moral and spiritual spheres, thus threatening the old order on all fronts. Trollope's acute sense of loss of the inherited culture symbolized in the country house permeates the Chronicles. He delineates the encroaching power of the new order, which has already finished its initial stage of invasion, having incorporated some Whig families, and is now subtly spreading its materialistic influences in certain Tory families. The Greshams, who live in "the finest specimen of Tudor architecture" (*DT* 12) have largely surrendered to the new power due to Squire Gresham's marriage to Lady Arabella de Courcy, the sister of a great Whig earl. Through his intimacy with his wife's relatives, "the respectable young Tory husband" is turned into "a second-rate Whig bantling" (7). The de Courcy ways have also undermined the financial condition of the Greshams. Lady Arabella's strong wish to have her husband in parliament has incurred a serious cost, as have her extravagance and dissipation. Thus, by the time young Frank comes of age, the Greshams are in a critical financial situation, and Frank is compelled to marry money in order to rescue the family.

To a lesser extent, Framley, which was "decidedly true blue" in the old days, is also suffering from "backslidings" (*FP* 14). Lord Lufton "jeers and sneers at the old county doings" through his association with Whig landlords, and he is almost an absentee landlord with "no idea of duty" (33). Mark Robarts, the clergyman of the parish, is also tempted by the new mores and disappoints Lady Lufton with his neglect of clerical duties and his improper conduct. Financially, the Luftons are not in a serious predicament, but Lord Lufton's imprudence has caused some loss of the family property.

Similarly, the Grantlys, who belong to the High Church, are threatened with the erosion of their values. They may not belong to the ruling class, but they are evidently part of the privileged class. Although the Grantlys are not a gentry family, they are elite not only in the ecclesiastical world but also in Barset. To begin with, the clergy and the gentry were the vital components of the rural community, "with both sharing the same values and observing the same social conventions" (Lansbury 199). As Avery states even more clearly

> Though much in the Anglican church was reformed during the Victorian period, the clergy still remained what they always had been—gentlemen, drawn from the ranks of the upper classes. It was this that made them so markedly distinct from the dissenting clergy . . . . The Anglican clergyman . . . was usually a gentleman by birth, very likely to be a relative of the squires, at any rate a man who had been to Oxford or Cambridge." (156)[2]

Moreover, the Grantlys' family background and the archdeacon's high position in the Church easily legitimize their privileged status which naturally leads to their political and religious alliance with the Luftons. Yet, Dr. Grantly's failure to succeed his father, the bishop, causes the family's power in the diocese to diminish, while at the same time increasing their attraction to worldly power, an attachment which leads to their slight spiritual decline. A. D. Miller rightly points out that "'War, war, internecine war' is in the

[1]Doctor Thorne, to be designated *DT*. The same applies to the other Barsetshire novels: *Barchester Towers* as *BT*, *Framley Parsonage* as *FP*, and *The Last Chronicle of Barset* as *LC*, which is further divided into two volumes like *LCI and LCI*.

[2]It is stated "[h]ad Lady Lufton had a second son, that second son would probably have had the living . . ." instead of Mark Robarts (*FP* 3). Similarly, in Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park*, Edmund Bertram, the second son of the Bertrams, becomes a clergyman, acquiring the Mansfield living.

archdeacon's heart. . . " (112). The camp in direct opposition to the Grantlys is the Proudies, who, as political allies of the Whigs, belong to the Low Church. Clearly the Tory gentry and clerical aristocracy are both threatened by Whigs who embody the new power.

Accordingly, the division of Barsetshire into the two interests is manifest: "The eastern moiety of the country is more purely conservative than the western; there is, or was, a taint of Peelism in the latter and then, too the residence of two such great Whig magnates as the Duke of Omnium and the Earl de Courcy . . . " (*DT* 6). The power of these Whig magnates overshadows the lesser gentry and the clergy of Barsetshire, infecting them with mercenary worldly values. This is the setting of the Barsetshire Chronicles, and in this arena the Greshams, the Luftons and the Grantlys strive to repel the invasion of the new power.

The former stability of these three Tory families can be restored only by the three heroines who preserve the old rural tradition due to their admirable virtues and value system. Mary, Lucy and Grace are characterized by strong-mindedness, perseverance, independent spirit, firm principles, sound judgment, intelligence and a sense of *noblesse oblige*. It must be noted that these characteristics correspond to those of the traditional landed class. In particular, strong-mindedness, sound judgment based on intelligence, and *noblesse oblige* are essential requisites for the lady of the manor or "Lady Bountiful." History tells us that gentlewomen were not docile "angels," but were women brave enough to fight enemies. These women could manage estates and tend the poor. In addition, there were many educated women in the landed classes, especially in the Elizabethan court. As to paternalistic attitudes, of course, *noblesse oblige* is a traditional ideal of the English landed class.[3] McMaster rightly claims that Trollope "shares Jane Austen's concern with the responsibilities attached to the proprietor of a considerable estate" (71). Clearly Trollope has endowed his "admirable women" with the virtues that enable them to carry out the duties and responsibilities that are necessary for the continuation of the inherited culture of the privileged class.

Their strong-mindedness is strikingly revealed when the three women are asked about their marital intentions by their lovers' parents. Mary, declaring her engagement, looks at Lady Arabella "full in the face . . . boldly and . . . with defiance" (*DT* 425). Mary's argument so convinces Lady Arabella of her reasonable nature that the letter acknowledges that she is "in the presence of a spirit superior to her own . . . " (427). Lucy demonstrates similar determination when she confronts Lady Lufton, who feels that Lucy is "taking too much of the initiative in this conversation, and . . . playing the game in her own fashion" (*FP* 417). As a result, Lucy has "grown bigger in her eyes while sitting there and talking" (419), and Lady Lufton even acknowledges Lucy's "talent, good temper, and sound judgment" (420). In the same manner, Grace shows her strong, independent spirit. Although she tells Archdeacon Grantly that she will not marry Major Grantly unless Mr. Crawley is cleared of the accusation of theft, Grace also asserts her right to marry into the Grantly family. When the archdeacon tries to insinuate the inappropriateness of the match, Grace replies, "'I don't think our being poor ought to signify a bit. . . . Papa is a gentleman, and a clergyman, and mamma is a lady'" (*LC* II: 167). Moved by her just assertion, the archdeacon fully understands her "noble spirit" and "the beauty which comes from breeding." These three heroines, far from submissive, all possess strong principles and even the courage to defy their superiors, and thereby convince the parents of their superb inner qualities.

The intelligence of the three admirable women underpins their sound judgment and firm principles. Mary's intelligence is evident since childhood when she was quick to lean and studied both German and French. From Dr. Thorne, she also learned "the choice . . . of English books for her own reading, and habits of thought somewhat akin to his own . . ." (*DT* 40). Consequently, Lady Arabella admits that Mary, though obstinate, is "reasonable," while Frank is "both obstinate and unreasonable" (427). Although her education has been deficient in society's view, Lucy, too, exhibits intelligence. Lady Lufton cannot help acknowledging that Lucy is "ready-witted . . . prompt in action, gifted with a certain fire" (*FP* 520), that she is "the cleverest" of all the Robarts children, as indicated by her "fine eyes" (117). In sharp contrast to Griselda Grantly's "silent beauty," Lucy's "talking beauty" attracts people to her inner qualities (407). Herbert justly maintains that Trollope "knows well that a woman need not be beautiful to be charming . . ." (80). Just like Mary, who is without "one attribute which many consider essential to feminine beauty" (*DT* 415-16), but with a face "full of intelligence" (415), Lucy is blessed with "mental faculty" (416). In the case of Grace, her excellent education in Greek and Latin under the tutelage of her father, who was an excellent scholar in university, affords her the reputation of the best-educated girl in the county. In the days when excessive education was thought to spoil femininity, Grace attains irresistible charm fostered through intelligence.[4] All three heroines are made of finer mettle than their lovers, who occasionally exhibit immaturity, and often prove to have less mental acuity than their brides-to-be.

Along with strong wills and intelligence, Mary, Lucy and Grace exhibit traits associated with *noblesse oblige*. Mary rescues a little servant girl's reputation by clearing her from an accusation of robbery. This incident indicates not only her strong-minded refusal to yield to the opinion of the majority, mostly comprised of her betters, but also her sound judgment and sense of responsibility for the people under her. Understandably, "[f]rom that time Mary Thorne was dear to the tenantry of Greshamsbury" (*DT* 41). Lucy Robarts also shows great potential to be a true gentlewoman. Her heroic behavior in rescuing the Crawleys from contagious disease alone suffices as a qualification to be elevated to the lady of the manor, but she even risks her own life by personally nursing Mrs. Crawley. Lady Lufton, witnessing this heroic conduct, is moved to acknowledge the "power . . . of Lucy's sacrificing herself for the sake of others . . . " (*FP* 520). Grace, too, shows *noblesse oblige*, though less conspicuously that Mary and Lucy. She teaches the village children in Sunday school, and she even decides not to marry Major Grantly, in an effort to shield his young daughter from any disgrace that might arise from Mr. Crawley's unjust accusation. Though they are not born into the upper class, these three women clearly show kind aristocratic concern for the lower class.

Here it must be noted that these admirable women drastically differ from the Victorian ideal of womanhood, the "angel in the house," nor can they be identified with "the new woman," who seeks political and economic equality and independence for her fulfillment. Their strength, intelligence and firm principles often surpass that of their lovers, sufficing to set them apart from the typically submissive angel. Mary owes to her "vehemence" the fact that "all her friends so loved her" (*DT* 40). Lucy's heroic conduct is considered masculine in a conventional sense, requiring the quick decisiveness and active faculty normally associated with men. This is why one must reject Nardin's claim that "[b]y learning to exercise influence in feminine ways, these women [Lady Lufton and Lucy] finally succeed in arranging the world according to their desires—they earn the very reward that Victorian theory promised the enduring, self-sacrificing woman" (78). Nor does Lucy gain the reward of the angel, who is confined to domesticity. Instead, she is acknowledged by Lady Lufton, who, unable to bear estrangement from her son which her disapproval of Lucy might cause, yields reluctantly to her son's wish, recognizing Lucy's virtues, which correspond so well with those of the traditional landed class. Perceiving Lucy as qualified to be the lady of the manor who, just like herself, would always desire "that all the farmers round her should be able to pay their rents without trouble, that all the old women should have warm flannel petticoats . . ," (*FP* 16), Lady Lufton accepts Lucy as her successor. In Grace's case, her classical education easily negates her identification with the angel, who was denied higher education beyond those "accomplishments" that were supposed to please men without threatening their authority. The "masculine" qualities of the heroines, however, do not categorize them as new women, often portrayed as "malcontents" who cannot find self-fulfillment in a patriarchal society. Rather than struggling for independence under the yoke of convention, the three heroines find fulfillment in establishing good marriages within the hierarchical society which rewards their virtues and value system.

Armed with the most noble qualities of the landed class, the three heroines rescue the Tory families from the decay of their rural tradition and values. Although Mary is an illegitimate child, born to a working class woman raped by Dr. Thorne's brother, she preserves the inherited culture of Greshamsbury Park with her traditional value system bequeathed from Dr. Thorne. It is true that Mary's money, left by her *nouveau riche* uncle on her mother's side, enables her to marry Frank, saving the Greshams from their pecuniary predicament, but it is equally true that Mary's fine qualities save the spirit of the old Tory family that has been corrupted through the de Courcy connection. Dr. Thorne describes his traditional values thus: "Yes; that's what all country gentlemen do: take the land there into your own hand, and occupy your mind upon it'" (*DT* 379). Surely Mary will carry on this tradition, and, bolstered by her solid sense of responsibility as a member of the landed class, Frank will in turn become a mature resident landlord avoiding Lord de Courcy's example as an absentee landlord. Likewise, Lucy restores the rural tradition to Framley by bringing Lord Lufton back to the pastoral world, having rescued him from the evil influences of Whig landlords. Lucy proves herself to be much more qualified than Griselda Grantly to be Lady Lufton's successor, patroness of her people and of rural values. If Lord Lufton had married Griselda, according to Lady Lufton's wish, the couple would not have settled into Framley, but rather would have spent most of their time in London, neglecting their duties to their tenants.

Similarly, the Grantlys are confronted with the erosion of their clerical legacy. Their filial connections with Mr. Harding, a moral touchstone of the Chronicles, as well as with the late good bishop place them in the excellent clerical tradition, but these traditional values are vulnerable to the corrupting influence of the new power embodied in Griselda. Her cold attitude and contempt toward good old Mr. Harding, the faithful country pastor, reveal her vanity and depreciation of genuine clerical work. When she marries Lord Dumbello in London, another Whig magnate, her desertion of clerical tradition based on rural community and her alliance with the new urban power become evident, and both suggest the Grantlys' moral deterioration. Mrs. Grantly's worldly ambition for her daughter's marriage overrides the difference in religious, and thus political, standings between the Grantlys and the Hartletops. By marrying Griselda to Marquis Hartletop the Grantlys violate their faith, because the "Hartletop people were not in her [Mrs. Grantly's] line. They belonged altogether to another set, being connected . . . with the Omnium interest . . ." (*FP* 134). The Grantlys' clerical tradition, however, will be restored by Grace's strong sense of duty passed down from her parents, whose faith in God and devotion to their duties are paramount in the county despite their lowly status.

Trollope also presents one further example of the admirable woman in the person of Miss Dunstable, a secondary character in the Chronicles. Miss Dunstable, the epitome of commercialism with her fortune deriving from the ointment of Lebanon, restores the rural tradition of Chaldicotes, Crown property, by settling there with Dr. Thorne after buying it from Mr. Sowerby. Her marriage to Dr. Thorne can be considered a reward for her fine qualities which, despite her birth, are not tainted with materialism. Due to her noble spirit, she wins Dr. Thorne, who, although a displaced squire, is descended from an ancient family. Thus, she becomes the lady of the manor of an ancient seat. Her contribution to the pastoral tradition is worth noting, since the spirit of Chaldicotes had been degraded by Mr. Sowerby's Whig materialism.

[3]For the traditional strength of gentlewomen, see Haskell. About paternalistic attitudes of gentlewomen, see Roberts. About learnedness, especially in the Elizabethan court, see Stenton (120-150).

[4]Trollope's delineation of Mary, Lucy and Grace particularly strikes readers as feminist in tone, as does this statement in his *Autobiography*, where he formulates his ideal of men and women equally to be "energetic, having opinions of their own, quick in speech, with some dash of sarcasm at their command, always intelligent. . . "(261). For Victorians' idea of women's education, see Burstyn (41-45).

The struggle for survival paralleled in the three Tory families is simply a reflection of the predominant psyche of the Victorians. Drastic transformation of society not only in its physical landscape but also in its socio-economic structure as a result of industrialization caused great anxiety in the Victorians who consequently looked back nostalgically to the past. Their acute sense of loss led to a romanticization of the irretrievable past as "the rustic Eden," together with the idealization of the rural society of the gentry as organic, humane and serene. This rural ideal contrasts sharply with the city, a symbol of the evils of industrialization. In this process of romanticization, the essentially exploitative nature of the landed system was ignored, and the myth of the benign landlord was created. The miserable condition of factory workers further contributed to the Victorians' bleak perception of the modern city life, thus strengthening their idealization of the landed system and the past. In reality, however, the fall of the landed class due to their mismanagement of their estates, together with the rise of the middle classes, signaled the collapse of the traditional hierarchical society and the erosion of traditional values and customs, reinforcing the Victorians' nostalgic impulse.

This preoccupation with the idealized past, often referred to as "Victorian medievalism," was accelerated by industrialization. Chandler explains:

> More significantly, the Middle Ages became idealized and in the works of writers such as Southey, Carlyle, and Ruskin, to name but a few, were used as a standard by which to measure and modify current-day life. Neither Scott nor the latter medievalists would have been able to popularize the Middle Ages, however, were it not for the era in which they wrote. Medievalism was a philosophy rather than a fad because it satisfied the nation's need. (12)

The prevalence of this philosophy was such that it left its mark on various aspects of Victorian life. It is well known that Disraeli's Young England, the Oxford Movement, the Gothic Revival with Pugin as its central figure, as well as the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood are representations of medievalism. Medievalism also finds its champions in William Morris, as well as Carlyle and Ruskin. Although it is not as commonly acknowledged as Tennyson's *Idylls of the King* as a literary example of medievalism, the Barsetshire Chronicles can be viewed as such. In addition to the country house setting, the delineation of the erosion and eventual restoration of the inherited culture of the Tory families is a literary manifestation of this preoccupation. Trollope's tie with medievalism is also evinced by his affirmation of the High Church. It is not a mere coincidence that Dr. Arabin, one of the heroic figures of the Barsetshire Chronicles, was a Tractarian in his youth and a descendent of an old family, "the Arabins of Uphill Stanton" (*BT* 191). The Barsetshire Chronicles thus represent an elegy to the old order as it struggles frantically for survival, desperate in its quest for an inheritor of its spiritual tradition.

The redemption of the rural tradition portrayed in the Barsetshire Chronicles is inextricably linked to the elevation of heroines of lower status, a move which benefits both the heroines and the higher class. Mary's low birth is clear, although "[t]here was no better blood to be had in England" than her uncle's (*DT* 26). Her illegitimacy as a result of a rape is an unerasable stigma and a sufficient bar against the match between Mary and Frank: "He was well born—as well as any gentleman in England. She was basely born—as basely born as any lady could be" (308). By marrying Frank, she obviously attains great elevation. Lucy's case, as a doctor's daughter and a sister of a clergyman who had ascended a social step, is not as dramatic as Mary's. Therefore, as Lord Lufton protests to his mother, who opposes the match on the grounds that Lucy's "father was a doctor of medicine," the Robarts are essentially of the same class as the Grantlys (*FP* 516). Yet, Lady Lufton's answer that "[t]he Grantlys have moved in a different sphere of life" indicates Lucy's lesser social position (404). That the the elevation would be greater for Lucy is further suggested by the archdeacon's surprise at Mrs. Grantly's ambition to marry Griselda into the Luftons.

The issue of social elevation is also applicable to the courting between the Grantlys and the Crawleys. Although they are both clerical families, thus essentially of the same class as suggested by Mr. Harding to Mrs. Grantly, a great disparity not only in wealth but also in social position exists between the archdeacon of a diocese and a perpetual curate of an extremely poor parish. Thus, in the ecclesiastical world of Barsetshire, the Grantlys operate as the privileged class, equivalent to the gentry, while the Crawleys are relegated to the lower level despite Mr. Crawley's excellent scholarship. In true gentry fashion, the archdeacon owns land and appreciates its value. He says to his son, "'Land is about the only thing that can't fly away. And then, you see, land gives so much more than rent. It gives position and influence and political power, to say nothing about the game'" (*LC* II: 178). Not surprisingly, Mrs. Crawley thinks it is a great promotion for Grace to climb to the pseudo-gentry position of Major Grantly, who keeps up "the good name of Grantly in a successful way" (*LC* I: 21).

This elevation of the three heroines can be defined as "blood restoration" (Kincaid 114). The blood restoration observable in Barsetshire does not originate from Trollope's literary imagination. The infusion of energetic and vital blood from the lower classes into the higher classes is the result of a relatively open class system, defined by Asa Briggs as the English system of 'removable inequality,'" which traditionally tolerated social mobility (106). Such a social commentator as Alexis de Toqueville was surprised at "the ease with which it [England] has opened its ranks . . . ." (qtd. in Castonovo 106), whilst in Letwin we read, "from early medieval times, there has always been much movement in England from one status to another and a remarkable confusion of classes. . . . As a result, no man in England can safely boast of his ancestors" (6-7), and even Queen Elizabeth I was "the sixth in descent from a villein" (8). It follows then that Sir Roger could exist in reality, and so could such women as Mary, Lucy and Grace. Herbert attributes Trollope's "recurring tales of women who fall in love with wholly unsatisfactory men" (96) to "hierarchical relations between the sexes . . . that could induce a young woman like Mary to bestow herself upon such a man as [Frank]" (97). The three heroines' superior qualities, however, are indispensable for Trollope to demonstrate the process of blood restoration.

The elevation of Trollope's admirable women reflects the cross-class marriage which was profitable to the classes from which these women came. In her discussion on *Pamela*, Armstrong sums up Pamela's elevation which parallels that of the three heroines:

> This is the principle of hypergamy, or marriage "up," which both cuts the female off from the political power that might inhere by birth and, at the same time, enables the family to achieve higher status through her, should she marry into a higher social position. (131)

This possibility of joining the privileged class contributed to the unique English psyche of gentriphilia and the middle class desire for gentrification. After their financial success, middle-class men often copied the life-style of country gentlemen and sent their sons to Oxbridge so that their sons would enter "gentlemanly" professions. This often meant the negation of their own values and religion, since only Anglicans were accepted at Oxbridge, while a great majority of industrialists were dissenters.[5] For the middle class desperate for gentrification, then, cross-class marriage must have been an effective means to promote their social elevation. Augusta Gresham's determination to use her blood as a weapon indicates the middle-class attraction to old blood: "That which she had of her own was blood; having that, she would in all ways do what in her lay to enhance its value" (*DT* 53).

Still, the advantages for the ruling class account for their tolerance towards social mobility. First, the possibility of gentrification contributed to political stability, stimulating deference and gentriphilia in the mind of the lower classes, since it was far more profitable and reasonable for the lower classes to join the privileged than to overthrow them.[6] Even the leaders "of the agitation for a widened franchise who were prominent in the years before the 1867 Reform Act were not asking for a revolutionary change in the style of government, or indeed in public policy; they were simply asking for admission to a higher echelon of the already-existing system" (Blake 41). Second, social mobility, particularly cross-class marriage, provided affluent brides from the middle classes for the financially troubled landed classes and for younger sons of the landed classes, who were hindered from inheritance due to primogeniture.[7] Third and most important, the relatively open class system prevented inbreeding, which would have caused not only physical but also mental stagnation in the landed class. Instead, it brought in fresh blood energetic enough to survive the age of transition. By means of the new blood, the effete landed classes that had been losing their resilience and generative ability were revitalized so as to continue their old lineage. Significantly, accepting brides from the lower classes did not lower the social status of the landed class, as indicated by Dr. Thorne's answer in response to Mary's anxiety that her marriage to Frank will debase him: "'A man raises a woman to his own standard, but a woman must take that of the man she marries'" (*DT* 83). Thus the blood restoration resulting from social mobility was beneficial to the ruling class.

It is clear that the advancement of Mary, Lucy and Grace by means of virtues so closely linked to the rural tradition represents a fusion of Victorian medievalism and the unique English class system, whose traditional tolerance of mobility was accelerated by industrialization. The admirable woman is not exclusively Trollopian, however, for women of this type are also portrayed by other novelists. In *Wives and Daughters* Elizabeth Gaskell presents Molly Gibson, a country doctor's daughter, who is accepted by the Hamleys, a declining ancient Tory family, despite Squire Hamley's initial reluctance on account of her lower-class origin. Mary Garth in *Middlemarch* is George Eliot's version of the admirable woman. Mary, a land surveyor's daughter, marries Fred Vincy, a mayor's son, overcoming the Vincy's objection, and finally contributes to his reputation as a theoretic and practical farmer. Eventually, they settle in Stone Court and live "happily ever after." Even Dickens, whose literary imagination was inspired most often by urban scenes, produces Esther Summerson, who, despite illegitimacy, marries noble Woodcourt, who "can claim kindred with Ap Kerrig" (313), and finally becomes the mistress of the new Bleak House "with such a rich and smiling country spread about it . . ." (648). These heroines all come to live in country houses, except Molly Gibson, who must remain as only a spiritual legatee of the country house tradition due to primogeniture, which hinders Roger Hamley's inheritance. And these heroines all possess the strong-mindedness, sound judgment, firm principles and paternalistic attitudes associated with the Lady Bountiful. These novels, like the Barsetshire Chronicles, all depict the admirable woman, the woman who can rise from a lower class to inherit the rural tradition.

The quest for a new inheritor of the country house tradition is already observable in Austen's *Mansfield Park*. Fanny Price, a middle-class woman, marries Edmund Bertram despite Sir Thomas's initial hesitation to adopt her. In this and other instances *Mansfield Park* is remarkably similar to *Wives and Daughters*. Both Fanny and Molly marry the second sons of the landed class, young men who are initially infatuated by beautiful girls with city inclinations. The two landed families have not only financial problems but also spiritual problems caused by social change. These financial and spiritual difficulties are foreshadowed by the incompetence of the first sons in both families. Thus, the eligible second sons have to remain as spiritual heirs of the country houses. Under the docile and sweet surface easily associated with the angel in the house, Molly and Fanny both possess the strength and firm principles characteristic of the traditional gentlewoman. Their virtues and traditional value system earn them the affection of the heads of the families who come to regard these girls as the daughters they have always wanted. Finally, these two heroines become the bearers of the country house tradition, revitalizing the decaying families with their humbler, yet new and energetic blood.[8]

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[5]For gentrification of industrialists, see Wiener 127-54, and Thompson 109-40. For the relationship between industrialists and Protestantism, see Ashton 14.

[6]For deference, see Houghton 99-106.

[7]For primogeniture and its effect on the landed classes see Landes 41-123.

[8]The similarities between *Mansfield Park* and *Wives and Daughters* are demonstrated in Hatano.

Significantly, the quest for the bearer of the country house tradition continues in the twentieth-century works of E. M. Forster, whose admirable women are compelled to transform themselves under the pressure of social change. In *A Room with a View*, Forster exhibits his preoccupation with the country house tradition, albeit with a twentieth-century twist. Windy Corner, though a middle-class creation without a long history, is a place with regenerative power. It is "the home of people who loved their surroundings honestly" and acts "as a beacon in the roaring tides of darkness" (185). Lucy Honeychurch's marriage to George Emerson, a man of lower origin, is thus a reversed version of the unification of two classes. Although Lucy's marriage compels her to leave Windy Corner, the final scene of the novel suggests that her spiritual connection to the house will continue. If she had married Cecil Vyse, a man who symbolizes the city and ridicules the Honeychurch ways, she would have destroyed her bond with her brother Freddy,the heir of Windy Corner, who opposes her marriage with Cecil. Thus, she would have broken her tie with the rural tradition. Unlike Cecil, George is invited by Freddy to swim in the Sacred Lake, a symbolic baptism or initiation into the family of Windy Corner. In *Howards End*, Forster more explicitly presents the quest for the legatee of the country house tradition. The dominant theme of *Howards End* is the search for Mrs. Wilcox's successor, a woman who can understand the spirit of Howards End. The conflict between the old and new powers is replaced by the dichotomy between the Schlegels' spiritualism and the Wilcoxes's materialism. This dichotomy, however, is resolved by the marriage of these two families with different cultural backgrounds, suggesting the unification of two classes traditional to the English class system. As Overton asserts that "*Doctor Thorne* is a kind of mid-Victorian *Howards End*," the literary legacy is passed down from Trollope to Forster.

The host of admirable women as bearers of the country house tradition, a line traceable from Fanny Price to Margaret Schlegel, suggests that the retrospective preoccupation with rural tradition is embedded in English culture. Trollope, in particular, depicts a distinct quest for the bearer of rural tradition in his Barsetshire Chronicles. His vision represents the epitome of Tory aspiration in the mid-nineteenth century. His is a vision which still contains hope in the possibility of restoring the traditional values and sense of community that are associated with the landed gentry. In the character of the admirable woman recruited from a lower class,Trollope finds the best means of salvation for the embattled class, thus exemplifying the fusion of nostalgic medievalism and the removable inequality of the English class system. Such seemingly contradictory, yet inextricably linked elements are exquisitely combined to produce a recurring type of ideal womanhood.

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Brantlinger, Patrick. *Fictions of State: Culture and Credit in Britain, 1694-1994.* Ithaca & London: Cornell UP, 1996. Pp. xii + 291. $42.50 cloth, $17.95 paper. It is impossible to summarize in a short space the many arguments articulately developed in this very readable book.

Burwick, Frederick. *Poetic Madness and the Romantic Imagination.* University Park: Pennsylvania State UP, 1996. Pp. 307. $49.50. "I have chosen to examine the strange entanglement of life and art, reality and imagination. Rather than impose the theories of Freud, or Jung, or Lacan, I have emphasized the prevailing social and medical attitudes toward madness and the so-called poetic rapture. To demonstrate the dilemma of the mad rhapsodist during the later eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, I have addressed three major topics: the appeal to poetic madness in critical theory, the thematization of the mad poet in literature, and the reception of mad poets" (7-8).

Christ, Carol T. and John O. Jordan, eds. *Victorian Literature and the Victorian Visual Imagination.* Berkeley, Los Angeles & London: U of California P, 1995. Pp. xxix + 371. $50.00 cloth, $20.00 paper, £40.00 foreign. Contents: "Introduction"; Susan R. Horton, "Were They Having Fun Yet? Victorian Optical Gadgetry, Modernist Selves"; Gerard Curtis, "Shared Lines: Pen and Pencil as Trace"; Judith L. Fisher, "Image versus Text in the Illustrated Novels of William Makepeace Thackeray"; Jennifer M. Green, "'The Right Thing in the Right Place': P. H. Emerson and the Picturesque Photograph"; Ellen Handy, "Dust Piles and Damp Pavements: Excrement, Repression, and the Victorian City in Photography and Literature"; Ronald R. Thomas, "Making Darkness Visible: Capturing the Criminal and Observing the Law in Victorian Photography and Detective Fiction"; Margaret Homans, "Victoria's Sovereign Obedience: Portraits of the Queen as Wife and Mother"; Linda M. Shires, "The Author as Spectacle and Commodity: Elizabeth Barrett Browning and Thomas Hardy"; James Eli Adams, "The Hero as Spectacle: Carlyle and the Persistence of Dandyism"; Richard L. Stein, "Street Figures: Victorian Urban Iconography"; Susan P. Casteras, "Seeing the Unseen: Pictorial Problematics and Victorian Images of Class, Poverty, and Urban Life"; Robert M. Polhemus, "John Millais's Children: Faith and Erotics: *The Woodsman's Daughter* (1851)"; Miriam Bailin, "Seeing Is Believing in *Enoch Arden*"; Audrey Jaffe, "Spectacular Sympathy: Visuality and Ideology in Dickens's *A Christmas Carol*"; Garrett Stewart, "Reading Figures: The Legible Image of Victorian Textuality."

Dickens, Charles. *The Amusements of the People and Other Papers: Reports, Essays and Reviews 1834-1851.* The Dent Uniform Edition of Dickens' Journalism, Vol. 2. Ed. Michael Slater. Columbus: Ohio State UP, 1996. Pp. [xxxix] + 408. $39.50. Includes 24 pieces from *The Examiner* and 24 from *Household Words*, 12 from *The Morning Chronicle* and 1 each from *Hood's Magazine and Comic Miscellany* and from *Douglas Jerrold's Shilling Magazine*. "In order to fully understand and appreciate Dickens's journalistic achievement the modern reader inevitably needs a certain amount of background information and explanatory annotation. This Uniform Edition supplies such help in the form of headnotes preceding each piece, supplemented at the end of the volume by an index that is also a glossary and a dictionary of proper names" ([ix]).

Dickerson, Vanessa D. *Victorian Ghosts in the Noontide: Women Writers and the Supernatural.* Columbia & London: U of Missouri P, 1996. Pp. 166. $34.95. "By investigating Victorian women's contributions to the supernatural furor and debate that was as much a component of the age as its railroads and reform bills, this work specifically aims to do a combination of three things. First, it will define the sociocultural and historical context of women's supernatural writings. Next, it will shed more light on Victorian ideas about women's spirituality. Finally, it will offer specific readings of women's supernatural fiction. These readings, which are the core of the book, are not meant to demonstrate that Victorian women all wrote the very same ghost story; instead, they are meant to describe a grouping, if not limn a tradition, of women's supernatural fiction that addresses issues of gendered energies and spirituality, of power and powerlessness, of women's precarious position on the continuum of materialism and spiritualism, of women's visibility and invisibility, of what amounts to the in-betweenness of ghosts" (8-9).

Field, Kate. *Kate Field: Selected Letters.* Ed. and intro. Carolyn J. Moss. Carbondale & Edwardsville: Southern Illinois UP, 1996. Pp. xxxii + 255. $49.95. Includes nearly 300 letters, many to Whitelaw Reid (managing editor of the New York *Tribune*) and to Edmund Clarence Stedman and Cordelia Riddly Stanford, but also letters to Mark Twain, Longfellow, Dickens, Emily Faithfull, and Grover Cleveland. There is also a calendar of letters not included and their locations and a selected list of publications by Field.

Fennell, Francis L. ed. *Rereading Hopkins: Selected New Essays.* ELS Monograph Series No. 69. Victoria, B. C.: U of Victoria Department of English, 1996. Pp. 194. $10.50 paper. Includes: Lesley Higgins, "'Bone-house' and 'lovescape': Writing the Body in Hopkins Canon"; Howard Fulweiler, "Hopkins and Patmore: Sexual Sentimentality and 'the Woman Question'"; David Anthony Downes, "'Self Flashes': Ricoeur's Achieved Self in Hopkins"; Joanna Shaw Myers, "Hopkins and Mrs. Humphrey Ward's *Helbeck of Bannisdale*"; Francis L. Fennell, "Hopkins's 'Spring and Fall': An Approach from / to Reception Theory"; Rachel Salmon, "Hopkins and the Rabbis: Christian Religious Poetry and Midrashic Reading"; Varghese Mathai, "Breath, Utterance, and the Word: Three Elements of the 'Arch and Original' Sound in Hopkins"; James Finn Cotter, "Rhetoric and Poetic in Hopkins." There is also an index of poems discussed.

Gaskell, Elizabeth and Sophia Holland. *Private Voices: The Diaries of Elizabeth Gaskell and Sophia Holland* Eds. J. A. V. Chapple and Anita Wilson. Keele: Keele UP, 1996. Pp. 125. £17.95. The diaries of Gaskell (21 pp.) and her cousin Holland (11 pp.) are accompanied by extensive introductions by Anita Wilson and by appendices. The Gaskell diary was previously published by Clement Shorter in 1923 in an edition limited to 50 copies; the Holland diary has not been previously published. Gaskell's diary runs from 10 March 1835 to 14 October 1838; the Holland diary from 10 February 1837 to 26 July 1839.

Gissing, George. *The Collected Letters of George Gissing, 1900-1902.* Vol. 8. Eds. Paul F. Mattheisen, Arthur C. Young, and Pierre Coustillas. Athens: Ohio UP, 1996. Pp. xlix + 446. $70.00. More than 420 letters to and from his brother, Algernon, his sisters, Margaret and Ellen, his nephew Walter as well as Eduard Bertz, F. G. Kitton, Morley Roberts, Edward Clodd, Gabriellle Fleury, H. G. Wells, James B. Pinker but also Ouida, George Meredith, Henry James, W. H. Hudson, Mrs. Stephen Crane, and others. Editors include a lengthy introduction, a chronology, and indexes.

__________. *The Collected Letters of George Gissing, 1902-1903.* Vol. 9. Eds. Paul F. Mattheisen, Arthur C. Young, and Pierre Coustillas. Athens: Ohio UP, 1996. Pp. xxv + 451. $70.00. The final volume of the collected letters, this volume includes a Cumulative Index of Recipients, Letters to Gissing and Miscellaneous; a cumulative Corrigenda and Addenda; a Cumulative Index of Persons; and a Cumulative Index of Titles, Places, and Miscellanea for all nine vols. It also includes an appendix: "Letters Posthumous and Consolatory, and an appendix: "Letters Recovered after Publication", and an appendix: "Gabrielle Fleury's Recollections of George Gissing." There is also a 19 pp. introduction to the ninth vol. There are some 168 letters in this volume (not all of them from Gissing) that include correspondence with H. G. Wells, Conrad, Hardy, Meredith, Henry James, John Morley, Edmund Gosse. The editors have made a very painstaking and valuable contribution to Victorian scholarship and deserve our thanks.

Green-Lewis, Jennifer. *Framing the Victorians: Photography and the Culture of Realism.* Ithaca & London: Cornell UP, 1996. Pp. xii + 255. $35.00. "This book examines how certain kinds of photographs were engaged, mediated, and ultimately co-opted by the contemporary but self-consciously opposed Victorian schools of positivist realism and metaphysical romance, and it explores some of the ways in which photography, from its very earliest beginnings, has both figured and been a figure of the debate between them. Perhaps the best evidence of the pervasiveness of photography in the nineteenth century remains its appropriation by both philosophies; photography's power lay in its potential to be identified either as validation of empiricism in its surface documentation of the world or, conversely, as proof that any visual account inevitably represents the world inadequately. Realism's triumph over the meaning of photography in general was ironic in that science deemed reliably truthful a process of representation that had achieved notoriety and popularity through its potential to lie" (2).

Guy, Josephine M. *The Victorian Social-Problem Novel: The Market, the Individual and Communal Life.* Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1996. Pp. ix + 238. $45.00 cloth, $14.99 paper. "In Part One, I examine . . . accounts [of particular works] in some detail, drawing out the historiographical assumptions which underwrite them in order to to show how a particular view of history produces a particular evaluation of the novels in question. My account, though, is critical as well as descriptive, for I also highlight what I see as the limitations of these ways of doing history, and I offer to the reader an alternative historical method which attempts to overcome these limitations. . . .

"The second and more specialist ambition of my book is contained in Part Two where I use the historical method sketched in Part One to offer some new insights into the literary history of the mid-Victorian period" (vii-viii).

Harden, Edgar F. *A Checklist of Contributions by William Makepeace Thackeray to Newspapers, Periodicals, Books, and Serial Part Issues, 1828-1864.* ELS Monograph Series No. 68. Victoria, B. C.: U of Victoria Department of English, 1996. Pp. 100. $10.50 paper. "This checklist is intended to record his prodigious working life as expressed in these media [monthly serial parts, magazines, newspapers, and books compiled by other people in his lifetime]. Immediate, authorized, serial reprintings of these writings by Harper and Brothers are included . . . but piratings and printings of excerpts are ignored" (9).

Holland, Sarah.—See Gaskell.

Howe, Elisabeth A. *The Dramatic Monolgue.* Twayne's Studies in Literary Themes and Genres. New York: Twayne, 1996. Pp. xix + 166. $24.95. "This book is intended as a guide to the genre for students and other interested readers, pointing out areas of disagreement, summarizing some of the arguments, and presenting, it is hoped, a balanced view of the dramatic monologue form" (ix). Poets treated include Browning, Tennyson, Swinburne, Christina Rossetti, Meredith, Hardy, Kipling, Pound, Eliot, E. A. Robinson, Masters, Lowell, Jarrell, Frost, and Richard Howard. The text includes an "annotated bibliography of critical works on the dramatic monologue and on individual poets, followed by a list of dramatic monologues by major practitioners of the form" (x).

Hufton, Olwen. *The Prospect Before Her: A History of Women in Western Europe, 1500-1800.* Vol. 1. A Borzoi Book. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1996. Pp. [xi] + 638. $35.00 Originally published in London by HarperCollins in 1995. "This book is about the interaction between beliefs about what was appropriate to men and to women and what occurred in the practices of everyday life. I wish to explore notions of womanhood and manhood and how such notions influenced the lives of people, as they were distinguished by wealth and geographical location, and to see how such notions and practices were modified by time. Above all, however, my aim is to integrate any experience that was defined by gender into the wider social and economic framework, a specific material world, and one in which ideas about gender were only one thread in an entire web of beliefs. The work draws upon more than two decades of writing devoted specifically to women and gender, upon a huge and ever expanding corpus of social history written with a sensitivity to the differing experience of women and men, and also upon a great deal of social, economic and cultural history which predates the pursuit of a specifically female experience" (7).

Kelly, Richard. *The Art of George du Maurier.* Aldershot, Hants: Scolar P, 1996. (Order Ashgate Publishing Co., Old Post Road, Brookfield, VT 05036-9704.) Pp. x + 254. $99.95. "The present collection sets forth a substantial sampling of du Maurier's drawings, sketches, illustrations, and paintings that display the range of his artistic talent, from his sparkling satire of the Victorian drawing room and the aesthetic movement to the tender, Edenic scenes of middle-class family life and to the horrific nightmare visions conjured from his subconscious mind. . . . In order to give the reader a more complete understanding and appreciation of du Maurier's art, I have included several of [the] preliminary pencil sketches and original pen and ink drawings that preceded the final woodblock reproductions of his work" (ix). Includes more than 200 illustrations, a selection from du Maurier's essay "Social Pictorial Satire" (1898) and an annotated list of books illustrated by him.

Kern, Stephen. *Eyes of Love: The Gaze in English and French Culture, 1840-1900.* New York: NYU P, 1996. Pp. 283. $50.00. "My argument is based on images of a man and a woman shown in the same painting, although some of the nudes in chapter 4 are an exception. That argument does not apply to individual portraits in which artists captured an equal amount of detail and character in their male and female subjects. But when artists positioned a man and a woman amorously, they consistently gave the eyes of the woman a commanding prominence" (28).

Laity, Cassandra. *H. D. and the Victorian Fin de Siècle: Gender, Modernism, Decadence.* Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1996. Pp. xix + 215. $54.95. "This book argues foremost that H. D. eluded the male modernist flight from Romantic 'effeminacy' and 'personality' by embracing the very cults of personality in the British fin de siècle that her contemporaries most deplored: the cult of the demonic femme fatale and that of the Aesthete androgyne. As I hope to demonstrate, Swinburne's decadent Hermaphroditus or the crystal man of Pater's androgynous, homoerotic Aestheticism lies behind the mask of the 'crystalline youth' H. D. adopted throughout the 1920s in *Hippolytus Temporizes* and elsewhere, while in her later work, Swinburne's and Rossetti's Pre-Raphaelite femmes fatales inform *Trilogy*'s exploding, abject poetic of reviled Venuses—Venus herself, Lilith, Mary Magdalene, and others" (ix).

Moss, Sidney P. and Carolyn J. *The Charles Dickens-Thomas Powell Vendetta: The Story in Documents.* Troy, NY: Whitson, 1996. Pp. xiii + 151. $18.50. "This story is told here with all its pertinent retrievable pieces collected and in place for the first time. The documents, together with the headnotes, are designed to give the reader a sense of being an eyewitness to the events as they suspensefully unfold" (xiii). "From this decade-long episode, the novelist's ideas for the Carker brothers (*Dombey and Son*), Uriah Heep (*David Copperfield*), and Jarndyce and Jarndyce (*Bleak House*) derived in large part" (xiii).

Munich, Adrienne. *Queen Victoria's Secrets.* New York: Columbia UP, 1996. Pp. xx + 254. $27.95. "What secrets permitted the culture to accommodate Queen Victoria's contradictory meanings?

"In posing that question, I draw on three slightly different but related senses of *secrets*. Regarding her office, *secret* applies to the mystery enshrouding all monarchical authority. . . . *Secret* not only means 'covert' but also 'a method or formula upon which success is based'—my second use of the word. . . . Finally *secret* in its more familiar meaning as *mysterious* . . . applies to Victoria's gender. The age's notions about woman's mysterious power adds a special aura to Victoria's monarchy. In reference to women, *secret* connotes what has been taken to be an unknown female essence. Far more mystery surrounds the notion of a queen, not only a woman but also a sovereign" (3-4).

Nissenbaum, Stephen. *The Battle for Christmas.* A Borzoi Book. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1996. Pp. xiii + 381. $30.00. "For the real subject of this book is not so

much Christmas itself as what Christmas can tell us about broader historical questions. In writing about the commercialization of Christmas, for example, or the way Christmas made children the center of attention and affection, I have always tried to remember that those changes were expressions of the same forces that were transforming American culture as a whole. But it has been equally important for me also to see Christmas as *one* of those very forces—as a cause as well as an effect, an active *instrument* of change as well as an indicator and a mirror of change. From that angle, Christmas itself played a role in bringing about both the consumer revolution and the 'domestic revolution' that created the modern family" (xii).

Reynolds, G. W. M. *The Mysteries of London.* Ed. and intro. Trefor Thomas. Keele: Keele UP, 1996. Pp. xxvii + 337. £30.00 "The purpose of this edition . . . is to put back into circulation substantial extracts from a novel that once had considerable cultural, political, and social significance [sales were said to be over a million]. Its historical placing in the mid 1840s [1844-1856], at a moment when Europe was riven by pre-revolutionary tensions and when a new market for cheap popular fiction with values radically unlike those of the improving and moralistic penny magazines of the 1830s was evolving in the cities, gave it an almost emblematic status in the raging cultural battle for the minds of the working classes" (vii). Includes a number of original woodcuts.

Shaw, George Bernard. *Bernard Shaw's Book Reviews, Vol. 2 1884-1950.* Ed. and intro. Brian Tyson. University Park: Pennsylvania State UP, 1996. Pp. ix + 588. $115.00. Included are 73 reviews in 27 different publications with copious notes.

______________. *Unpublished Shaw.* Eds. Dan H. Laurence and Margot Peters. Shaw 16. University Park: Pennsylvania State UP, 1996. Pp. viii + 245. $35.00. Includes some 32 pieces by Shaw from a verse fragment written in 1877 to "Bernard Shaw on Peace" dated 1950; the pieces are introduced by commentators. The text includes also 3 reviews of Shaw and a checklist of Shaviana.

Shaw, W. David. *Alfred Lord Tennyson: The Poet in an Age of Theory.* Twayne's English Authors Series, No. 525. New York: Twayne, 1996. Pp. xi + 181. $26.95. Shaw uses a variety of critical approaches, borrowed from Nina Auerbach, Mieke Bal, Eric Griffith, Helen Vendler, Richard Wollheim, J. L. Austin, and applies feminist theory to *The Princess* and "Demeter and Persephone" and deconstructionist theory to *Idylls of the King* and "By examining fantasy and bad faith in Tennyson's monologues, and by showing how monologues make us intimate with speakers unsuited for their roles, [he] advances a new theory of the most innovative poetic genre of the nineteenth century" (vii).

Sturrock, June. *"Heaven and Home": Charlotte M. Yonge's Domestic Fiction and the Victorian Debate over Women.* English Literary Studies Monograph Series No. 66. Victoria, B.C.: U of Victoria Department of English, 1995. Pp. 125. $10.50 paper. "This book examines mid-nineteenth century concepts of gender by looking at three phases of the Victorian debate over women in the light of Yonge's novels of middle-class life and, in an epilogue, by considering the way her imagining of gender roles interacts with her exploitation and re-creation of the domestic novel. All the novels discussed here deal with contemporary life (her historical fiction and works for Sunday School children are ignored) and are drawn from the period of her greatest popularity and productivity, the quarter century after the publication of her best-selling *The Heir of Redclyffe* in 1853" (15).

Tasker, Meg. *Francis Adams 1862-1893: A Bibliography.* Victorian Research Guides 24. Queensland: English Department, University of Queensland, 1996. Pp. iv + 51. $12.00 paper. Order from English Department, University of Queensland, Queensland, Australia, 4072. "This bibliography is the first complete listing of work by and about Francis Adams . . ." (18). Includes an intro. and 221 entries for Adams's writings and some 131 references to, notices about, or works on Adams.

Thomas, Charles Flint. *Art and Architecture in the Poetry of Robert Browning: An Illustrated Compendium of Sources.* Troy, NY: Whitson, 1991. Pp. xii + 521. $65.00. "This reference tool identifies sources for art and architecture mentioned or implied in the poetry of Robert Browning. Spanning over 70 poems, it comprises the greatest number of such sources ever brought together in a single study. Of the approximately 500 source notes entered (not counting obvious repetitions of sources) the author advances over 100—or more than one out of five—that purport to be original discoveries" (1). Lavishly and beautifully illustrated with some 230 illustrations.

______________. *Art and Architecture in the Poetry of Robert Browning: A Illustrated Compendium of Sources, Appendix A.* Troy, NY: Whitson, 1996. Pp. xii + 211. $35.00. *Appendix A* clarifies, updates, supplements, revises, and corrects *Art and Architecture in the Poetry of Robert Browning: An Illustrated Compendium of Sources. Appendix A* is designed after and is to be used in conjunction with the *Compendium* [ix]. Includes an additional 39 illustrations.

Vann, J. Don & Rosemary T. VanArsdel, eds. *Periodicals of Queen Victoria's Empire: An Exploration.* Toronto & Buffalo: U of Toronto P, 1996. Pp. x + 371. $80.00. Essays included are: Elizabeth Webby, "Australia"; N. Merrill Distad with Linda M. Distad, "Canada"; Brahma Chaudhuri, "India"; J. Reginald Tye, "New Zealand"; Brian D. Cheadle, "Southern Africa"; J. Don Vann and Rosemary T. VanArsdel, "Outposts of Empire."

Wharton, Edith. *The Ghost-Feeler: Stories of Terror and the Supernatural.* Sel. and intro. Peter Haining. London & Chester Springs: Peter Owen, 1996. (Order: Dufour Editions, Chester Springs, PA 19425-0007.) Pp. 188. $28.95. Includes: "The Duchess of Prayer" (1901); "The Fullness of Life" (1893); "A Journey" (1899); "The Lady's Maid's Ball" (1904); "Afterwards" (1910); "The Triumph of Night" (1914); "Bewitched" (1926); "A Bottle of Perrier" (1930); "The Looking Glass" (1935).

Victorian Group News

Announcements

Conference: *Nineteenth-Century Reversions* 7-10 August 1997, University of Santa Cruz. Please send two-page proposals by 1 February 1997 to Joseph Childers, Center for Ideas and Society, University of California, Riverside, CA 92521; CHILDERS@ucracl.ucr.edu.; FAX: 909-787-6377. For more detailed call-for papers write: The Dickens Project, UCSC, 1156 High Street, Santa Cruz, CA 95064; dpj@cats.ucsc.edu.

Arthuriana, Quarterly of the International Arthurian Society, North American Branch, Cultural and literary studies of the Arthurian Legend from the Middle Ages to the Present. Special Issue Fall 1996. WILLIAM MORRIS AND KING ARTHUR Ed. Debra Mancoff and Bonnie Wheeler. Essays by Florence Boos, Frederick Kirchhoff, Debra Mancoff, Laura Struve. Individual Issues $10.00. Available at: Arthuriana, P. O. Box 750432, Southern Methodist University, Dallas, TX 75275-0432.

Margaret Oliphant Centenary Conference 13 September 1997, Westminster College, Oxford, UK. An one-day conference offering an opportunity to reassess the remarkably diverse achievement of this prolific writer. More details from Dr. Elisabeth Jay, Senior Research Fellow, Westminster College, Oxford, OX2 9AT or from Dr. Francis O'Gorman, email: f.orgorman@ox-west.ac.uk.

The 28th annual conference of the Research Society for Victorian Periodicals will be held in Chicago 12-13 September 1997. For further information, contact Barbara Quinn Schmidt, English Department, Box 1431, Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville, Edwardsville, IL 62026; e-mail: bschmid@daisy.ac.siue,edu.

With the twenty-fifth anniversary issue of *Victorian Literature and Culture* Cambridge University Press announces that it will begin publishing the journal and will expand to two issues per year. *Victorian Literature and Culture* encourages high quality original work concerned with all areas of Victorian literature and culture, including music and the fine arts. Thematic clusters of articles are offered and contributions are welcomed from international scholars and younger members of the profession. Also included are *Review* essays, offering an authoritative view of important subjects together with a list of relevant works serving as an up-to-date bibliography, a *Works in Progress* section, and a *Special Effects* section allowing publication of material either previously unavailable or unknown to most readers. Subscription rates are $28.00 individuals, $72.00 institutional. Contact the press at 40 W. 20th Street, New York, NY 10011-4211.

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