

The Victorian Newsletter

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Cover: On the 100th anniversary of the death of Aubrey Beardsley, his *Ali Baba*

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Matthew Arnold's "Philistinism" and Charles Kingsley

Tod E. Jones

When Arnold had his article "Heinrich Heine" published in *Cornhill Magazine* in August 1863, he introduced his readers to terms that were to become something of a trademark in his cultural criticism. The most important of these terms, "Hebraism" and "Hellenism," were of such breadth in their application that they can now almost stand alone as signifiers of the Arnoldian world-view. However, the term, together with its cognates, that was most noted by Arnold's contemporary audience is, understandably, that term which gave considerable offense: "*Philistinism!*—we have not the expression in English. Perhaps we have not the word because we have so much of the thing. At Soli, I imagine, they did not talk of solecisms; and here, at the very headquarters of Goliath, nobody talks of Philistinism" (111).

Whereas the metaphorical significance of "Hebraism" and "Hellenism" can, in part, be traced back to the popular anthropological understanding of the ancient Hebraic and Hellenic peoples, there is no anthropological significance to "Philistinism," except in the superficial fact of the Philistines' military resistance to the nation of Israel. The Philistines were a sea-going people from Crete, who had settled on the southern coast of Palestine and fought against the Hebrews' conquest of their territory. The "Philistines" are, therefore, those who resist "the chosen people."

But who, in the modern world, are "the chosen people"? When the metaphor *Philister* was first coined in the eighteenth century by German students, those students recognized themselves, of course, as God's chosen ones. A *Philister* was a "townsman," not a member of the university (Cuddon 706); as such, he stood in sharp contrast and even in opposition to those who pursued intellectual enlightenment. Heine, a fervent admirer of the democratic movement in France, designated the French as "the chosen people of the new religion" and Paris as "the new Jerusalem" ("Heine" 112). However, by Arnold's cultural diagnosis, the French are a people representative of Hellenism, not Hebraism ("La Reforme" 44-45). Thus, the "Philistines" turn out to be, by a confusing twist of metaphors, those who are the enemies of Hellenism, the cultural force that leads toward intellectual advancement; furthermore, they may even be the strongest advocates of Hebraism. Arnold explains, "*Philistine* must have originally meant, in the mind of those who invented the nickname, a strong, dogged, unenlightened opponent of the chosen people, of the children of light." The "Philistines" must have been regarded "as humdrum people, slaves to routine, enemies to light; stupid and oppressive, but at the same time very strong" ("Heine" 112).

The "Philistines" have so little to do with the anthropological Philistines that W. R. F. Browning, the editor of the recently published *Oxford Dictionary of the Bible*, finds the metaphor not only historically useless, but also misleading. He points out that archaeological discoveries suggest that the Philistines were possessed of "an aesthetic appreciation richer than that of their Hebrew rivals" (294).

Arnold cannot be held accountable for the rhetorical twists that had determined the direction that the metaphor would take in his own cultural criticism. Yet, the method by which Arnold appropriated the term shows the critic at his worst. Arnold not only fails to recognize that the term "Philistine" had already been introduced into English usage, but he pointedly removes the credit from the very author who had introduced it: "Efforts have been made to obtain in English some term equivalent to *Philister* or *epicier* [grocer]; Mr. Carlyle has made several such efforts: 'respectability with its thousand gigs,' he says;—well, the occupant of every one of those gigs is, Mr. Carlyle means, a Philistine. . . . I think we had much better take the term *Philistine* itself" ("Heine" 111-12). David DeLaura has clearly shown that Carlyle had used the term repeatedly since 1824. In *Sartor Resartus* (1833-34) Carlyle speaks of a certain "Philistine, who even now, to the general weariness, was dominantly pouring forth Philistinism" (109). The *Oxford English Dictionary* notes that Coleridge had used the metaphor "Philistine" as early as 1817. Furthermore, DeLaura has convincingly argued that Arnold, while "deeply enmeshed in Carlylean terminology and ideas," holds toward Carlyle a "permanent conscious attitude . . . of rejection," based in part upon "an imperative need to dissociate his own ideas and practice" from Carlyle's ("Arnold and Carlyle" 107-108). When Carlyle, subsequent to the publication of "Heinrich Heine," stormed at Arnold for daring to place Goethe's mantle on the shoulders of Heine, Carlyle had, no doubt, more than this one reason to be angry with Arnold.

Carlyle was not the only one to be upset by the "Heinrich Heine" article. In a letter of November 14, 1863, Arnold wrote his sister Jane, Mrs. William E. Forster, of "the risk always before me, if I cannot charm the wild beast of Philistinism while I am trying to convert him, of being torn to pieces by him (Russell 2: 240). Arnold was willing to take that risk. Within the next year he would continue to criticize his countrymen, publishing such works as "The Literary Influence of Academies" in June, 1864, and "The Function of Criticism at the Present Time" in October, 1864. Finding that neither prophet nor critic is welcome in his own country, he appears to have taken some comfort in recognizing some similarity between Jesus's mission and his own. To the editor of the *Pall Mall Gazette* he wrote with tongue-in-cheek on March 19, 1866,

Sir,—

Although I certainly am rather pained to find myself, after my long and arduous labours for the deliverance from Philistinism of this nation in general, and the civilisation and embellishment of our great middle class in particular, an object of aversion and mistrust to my countrymen, when I expected nothing from them but gratitude and love, still I have learnt to try and wrap myself on these occasions in my own virtue, knowing very well that the benefactors of mankind are seldom popular and that your public favourite is generally some Barabbas. (*Friendship's Garland* 32)

By this date, Arnold had been calling his countrymen "Philistines" for nearly three years, a period of time that must have reminded him of the duration of Jesus's career before he was crucified—an event immediately preceded in the four canonical Gospels by the mob's petition for the release, not of Jesus, but of the anarchist Barabbas. With a view toward consoling the "wild beast of Philistinism" Arnold had made a small compromise the month before, in February 1866, when he published "My Countrymen" in *Cornhill Magazine*: "I have got into much trouble for calling my countrymen Philistines, and all through these remarks I am determined never to use that word; but I wonder if there can be anything offensive in calling one's countrymen a young man from the country"—that is, one whose discourse, though "excellent in itself, is felt not to touch the crisis vitally," one who "talks on, serenely unconscious that he is not at the centre of the situation" (12). Though the compromise might have been too little and too late, Arnold's fate was not to be the same as Jesus's. A change was taking place in Arnold's public reception. It had been found that his kingdom, so to speak, really was not part of this world, after all. That is to say, Arnold was not an immediate threat to the *status quo*. Rather, he was quickly becoming a cultural icon, and by the time *Culture and Anarchy* was published, in 1867-68, Goliath himself had learned to talk about "Philistinism."

Well over a century has passed since "Philistine" entered the English vocabulary, and though popular usage may have simplified its definition, there remains the need for Victorianists to know what the term signified to Arnold and, consequently, what implications the term would have had for Arnold's contemporary readers. This need became most apparent to me while I was reading Sheila Smith's article on Charles Kingsley in *The Victorians*, a volume that remains in print as part of the Penguin History of Literature. Smith makes the assertion, "Kingsley had something of the Philistinism criticized by Arnold" (261). In this essay I propose, first, to identify the characteristics of the Arnoldian Philistine and, second, to ascertain Kingsley's position relative to each of these characteristics. In doing so, I hope to arrive at a determination—and to enable the reader to make a final determination—what sort of breed or hybrid creature a Philistine actually is and whether Kingsley might legitimately be identified as such.

According to Arnold, in *Culture and Anarchy*, "The term Philistine conveys a sense which makes it more peculiarly appropriate to our middle class" (140). However, Arnold elsewhere explains, the middle class is of two types, for it "divides itself into a serious portion and a gay or rowdy portion" ("Equality" 293). Arnold is not concerned with the latter group; it consists of those whose course in life he had previously described as sadly pathetic in "Rugby Chapel":

Most men eddy about
Here and there—eat and drink,
Chatter and love and hate,
Gather and squander, are raised
Aloft, or hurl'd in the dust
Striving blindly, achieving
Nothing; and then they die—
Perish;—and no one asks
Who or what they have been, . . . (60-68)

The "real strength of the English middle class," says Arnold, "is in its serious portion," the group that "deepened and fixed for this nation the sense of conduct" ("Equality" 294-95). The term "serious," as it is used here, has certain religious connotations to which we must return. At this point in our discussion, it is sufficient to note that the middle class is not essentially Philistine; that is, Philistinism is not an intrinsic attribute or set of attributes that pertains to an entire social class. Furthermore, it cannot be attributed to only one social class, for "That part of the working class . . . which does really seem to lend itself to these great aims [of 'our middle class Liberals'] may, with propriety, be numbered by us among the Philistines" (C & A 142). It is this part of the working class, the part that is "zealous about social and political questions," that, although not the largest part, is nevertheless "the living and leading part of the whole to which it belongs" ("Church of England" 71). Thus, it would appear, the most vital group among both the middle class and the working class are the Philistines. The upper class, the Barbarians, are not altogether free from Philistinism; in fact, they are largely responsible for it, for "our shortcomings in civilization are due to our inequality"—that is, the "great inequality of classes and property." It is this inequality, and this "religion of inequality" that persists among the upper class, that "has the natural and necessary effect of . . . vulgarising our middle class, and brutalising our lower class" ("Equality" 299).

The first real attribute of Philistinism, one that "the religion of inequality" fosters, is the equation of wealth with greatness. Arnold observes, "Never did people believe anything more firmly than nine Englishmen out of ten at the present day believe that our greatness and welfare are proved by our being so very rich" (C & A 97). It is this equation that Carlyle, in *Past and Present* (1843), had dubbed "the Gospel of Mammonism," noting that, for Englishmen, "Hell" is "the terror of 'Not succeeding,' of not making money, fame, or some other figure in the world,—chiefly of not making money!" (148). Arnold notes that the true believers of this so-called gospel, "who most give their lives and thought to becoming rich, are just the very people whom we call Philistines" (C & A 97).

As Carlyle had invented the character of Diogenes Teufelsdröckh to serve as his spokesman in *Sartor Resartus*, so Arnold gave life to Arminius Von Thunder-ten-Tronckh to utter his own criticism in *Friendship's Garland* (1871). In a dialogue between Arminius and the narrator, Arminius makes the observation that the typical English middle-class man regards a steady and punctual postal and railway operation as "the highest pitch of development and civilisation," regardless that "the trains only carry him from an illiberal, dismal life at Islington to an illiberal, dismal life at Camberwell; and the letters only tell him that such is the life there" ("My Countrymen" 21-22). Success or greatness is measured by the Philistine in terms of material progress. This is the utilitarian viewpoint of Thomas, Lord Macaulay, whose *History of England* (1849-61) offers, perhaps, the clearest evidence that the Barbarians had not only fostered Philistinism, but that they were in training to be Philistines themselves. Both Arnold and Carlyle were fundamentally opposed to the whig-utilitarian historical thesis, "the thesis that the substance of history is material progress and that such progress can be attained

through the application of particular political principles" (Trevor-Roper 35). For Carlyle, the thesis was a form of atheism (P & P 149); for Arnold it was an expression of "faith in machinery"—a concept that we will soon examine more closely. According to Arnold, Macaulay could never see "beyond the apparent rhetorical truth of things . . . ; for their vital truth . . . he had absolutely no organ" ("Joubert" 210).

Macaulay would have approved of Sir Daniel Gooch's mother, whose "Golden Rule" Arnold offers as an example of a pernicious Philistine materialism. Gooch, who became chairman of the board of directors of the Great Western Railway in 1865, the same year that he was elected M.P., had recalled in a public speech the advice his mother had given him as a young man: "Ever remember, my dear Dan, that you should look forward to being some day manager of that concern!" (C & A 122, 428). To Arnold, this "Golden Rule" was a recipe for anarchy. Was this not the very maxim that had motivated the French populace to topple the aristocracy and seize the government, and would it not have the same effect upon "the Hyde Park rough" (122)? The Philistine ethic bred envy in the hearts of the working class, and envy could be a dangerous thing.

The second characteristic of Philistinism, is, then, that it advocates individual liberty instead of the idea of "the State"—that is, "the nation in its collective and corporate character, entrusted with the stringent powers for the general advantage, and controlling individual wills in the name of an mainly led, not by their class spirit, but by a general *humane* spirit, by the love of human perfection" (C & A 145-46).

A third characteristic of the Philistine is, however, "perfect self-satisfaction." He is, in fact, the last person to realize that he has not already attained human perfection. In attempting to establish this point with minimal offense, Arnold makes full use of his dry wit and facility with irony. Aristotle, in his *Ethics*, Book II, had noted that in every sphere of action or feeling there is an ideal as well as an excess and a defect. Not wanting to single out from the middle class a particular person to serve as an example, Arnold makes the "bitter and unpleasant" decision to offer himself "as an illustration of defect in those forces and qualities which make our middle class what it is":

This line . . . of a still unsatisfied seeker which I have followed, the idea of self-transformation, or growing towards some measure of sweetness and light not yet reached, is evidently at clean variance with the perfect self-satisfaction current in my class, the middle class, and may serve to indicate in me, therefore, the extreme defect of this feeling. (138)

It is difficult to read this humble confession without detecting certain undertones of self-satisfaction. Yet, Arnold has made his point. The Philistines are determined to transform the world in which they live, but they have not the inclination to transform themselves. In fact, when the individual's ability to transform and possess the world is perceived as decided by the power of resolve and the strength of mind and body, then an inward-seeking and an interior cultivation must be perceived as inimical to that ability. The Philistine divided against him-

self cannot stand, and so the very concept of "*Philistine* gives the notion of something particularly stiff-necked and perverse in the resistance to light and its children" (140). The self-satisfied Philistine, therefore, lacks "deference to a standard higher than [his] own habitual standard in intellectual matters." It is for this reason, says Arnold, that an Academy modeled on the Academy of France would never work in England ("Literary Influence of Academies" 237, 257).

A fourth attribute of Philistinism is that it follows its "natural taste for the bathos" (C & A 156). Its natural level is not at the heights of the sublime and the beautiful, but rather on the plateau of the trivial and the mundane, from which it occasionally descends to the depths of the ludicrous, the coarse, and the grotesque. It stands opposed to literary criticism, "a disinterested endeavor to learn and propagate the best that is known and thought in the world" ("Function of Criticism" 282). The apostles of Culture, on the other hand, stand opposed to the bathos of the Philistines. For Arnold, John H. Newman's "urbanity," particularly as found within the pages of his *Apologia*, gives no place to bathos, but rather conveys "that same charm, that same ineffable sentiment" which Oxford itself conveys ("Literary Influence" 244). In fact, "Dr. Newman's movement" nourished in England a "keen desire for beauty and sweetness" and manifested a "deep aversion . . . to the hardness and vulgarity of middle-class liberalism" (C & A 107).

Closely associated with Philistinism's preference for bathos is its tendency toward provincialism. In the "Preface" to *Culture and Anarchy* Arnold defines "provincialism" as "narrowness, one-sidedness, and incompleteness" (237). As such, the provincial is clearly opposite to what is classical and catholic. In "The Literary Influence of Academies," he makes clear that provincialism can exist only where there is no high standard by which to test ideas. As a result of this fatal want, "it gives one idea too much prominence at the expense of others; it orders its ideas amiss; it is hurried away by fancies; it likes and dislikes too passionately, too exclusively." Thus, from provincialism springs "the *eruptive* and the *aggressive* manner in our literature." Yet, the "true literature" of provincialism is the newspaper, "with its party-spirit, its thoroughgoingness, its resolute avoidance of shades and distinctions, its short, highly-charged, heavy-shotted articles" (249). As this passage suggests, provincialism and sectarianism are mutually supportive and equally pernicious to the idea of the State. For the development of Culture, getting rid of provincialism is, therefore, "indispensable" (245).

For Arnold, the Englishmen who are most representative of Philistinism are the Protestant Dissenters, for "the body of British Protestant Dissenters is in the main . . . the Church of the middle-class Philistines" ("Modern Dissent" 138). Dissenters—whom Arnold also calls "Puritans," regardless of the historical fact that Puritans were so-called because they aimed to purify the Church of England without leaving it—had, generally, adopted John Calvin's doctrines regarding salvation and believed in a presbyterian system of church government. Lionel Trilling observes that "the profound unintellectuality of the middle class surely had its roots deep in religious doctrine." The religion of the middle class was uniquely capable of breeding Philistinism: "Calvinism and the business activities of the middle class complemented each other with a

gratifying neatness; the Economic Man and the Calvinist Christian sing to each other like voices in a fugue" (227). To the Calvinist religious doubt was, in itself, evidence of a lack of confidence in God's saving grace, and was, therefore, a possible indication of a state of damnation. Work, however, was not only an evidence of faith (Jas. 2.17-18); it was also a means of escape from the questioning mind. In this aspect of their religion, the Dissenters were not different from the Evangelicals—those who had adopted Calvinistic doctrines but still remained within the Church of England. Ian Bradley notes, "It was only by leading a useful life, filled with good works and application to occupy every minute, that [the Evangelicals] could hope to escape from the promptings of their restless consciences and the dread of being found wanting. Ceaseless activity provided the only refuge from the horrors of self-examination" (25). Carlyle, in fact, as Trilling interest wider than that of individuals" (117). The working class, who have lost "the strong feudal habits of subordination and deference," and who, apparently, have the least sense of "the general advantage" of the State, have become "the very centre and stronghold of our national idea, that it is a man's right and felicity to do as he likes" (118). Yet, exercising one's right to do as one likes, says Arnold, "tends to anarchy" (119). Philistinism, the "stock maxim" of which is "Liberty is the law of human life" (207), strives to exercise its freedom not to affirm the collective and corporate good of the nation, but rather in order to affirm "its class and its class instinct" (143). Such an exercise of freedom is detrimental to the State and is, therefore, anarchy. "Anarchy," wrote Lytton Strachey, "is the most fashionable of creeds" (144). Arnold recognizes that the Philistine cherishes his ideals not as fashion, but as human "rights." However, "the only perfect freedom is, as our religion says, service; not a service to any stock maxim, but an elevation of our best self" (C & A 207).

These first two characteristics of the Philistine, his equation of wealth with greatness and his insistence on the right to exercise his liberty, are actually evidence of a more general feature of Philistinism—its "blind faith in machinery," its want of sufficient light "to look beyond machinery to the end for which machinery is valuable" (119). A reliance on wealth, freedom, physical or numerical strength, or coal, is "mere belief in machinery, and unfruitful." Such things, Arnold reminds his readers, are not ends in themselves, but are simply means toward attaining the true goal of humanity—"a more complete, a harmonious perfection" (104). Culture, in fact, tends to be "rather indifferent" about machinery, knowing that what is most needed is "an inward working, and not machinery" (254). Here Arnold most obviously departs from the company of Carlyle, who emphasized the value of work to such an extent that it practically ceased to be a means and became instead an end in itself: "All work, even cotton-spinning, is noble; work is alone noble" (P & P 155). In fairness to Carlyle, I must add that, in *Sartor Resartus*, he had put forth the precept "Know what thou canst work at" as a necessary prerequisite to that greater precept, "Know thyself" (126). Yet, for Carlyle, so essential is the means that it is often presented as the end: "There is endless hope in work, were it even work at making money" (P & P 148).

This message of Carlyle's had been received by the

Philistines as entirely orthodox; they were already converted. The counsel of Arnold, on the other hand, advises the Philistines to rearrange priorities—to have, for example, more regard for the quality of life at Islington and Camberwell and less regard for the English industry and technology that carries them and their mail from Islington to Camberwell;—to have, especially, more regard for the inherent freedom to inwardly cultivate sweetness and light and less regard for the political freedom to do as they like. In short, he counsels the Philistines to disentangle themselves from machinery and to become "*aliens*—if we may so call them,—persons who are points out, had been "perfectly consistent with his Calvinist training" in telling his readers "that only in work—almost any work—lies their hope of salvation from the transcendentalized fear of damnation" (227).

Despite their similarities in points of religious doctrine and social activity, the Dissenters differ from the Evangelicals in one fact of immense importance: they had divorced themselves "from the main current of the national life." Through the Church of England flows the stream of Culture, and so the result of disestablishment is obvious: "A generation or two outside the Establishment, and Puritanism produces men of national mark no more" (C & A 238-39). It is the Catholic aspect of the Established Church that has enabled it to produce a few men of genuinely classical merit; but Dissent is thoroughly Protestant, sectarian, and as a result, provincial. Even the settings and outward circumstances of Catholicism and Protestantism betray this vital difference. Whereas in connection with Catholicism they are seen to have "something European, august, and imaginative," when connected with Protestantism they have something "provincial, mean, and prosaic." The town of Margate, for example, is the very "brick-and-mortar image of English Protestantism, representing it in all its prose, all its uncomeliness,—let me add, all its sulubrity" ("Eugenie de Guerin" (96-98). The "serious" portion of the English have, in fact, created for England "a type of life and manners . . . which is fatally condemned by its hideousness, its immense ennui, and against which the instinct of self-preservation in humanity rebels" ("Equality" 295).

Protestantism, however "serious" in regard to conduct, yet shares with Catholicism "the same want of intellectual seriousness." Its advantage over Catholicism lies in its potential, in that it "possesses in itself the means of deliverance"; that is, it upholds the priesthood of every believer and every believer's freedom to interpret the Scriptures (*God and the Bible* 389). Arnold clearly recognizes that Protestantism can attain a position of intellectual seriousness. This potential has profound significance for Arnold. Whether England will deliver itself out of the hands of the Philistines, and whether the Church of England will be rescued from the threat of disestablishment—these issues of national weight will be determined by the future course of British Protestantism. Neither Dwight L. Moody (1837-1899) nor Charles H. Spurgeon (1834-1892) are fit to lead the middle class into the promised land of Culture (*G & B* 384-85, 388-89; *Russell* 2: 398-99), and so Arnold takes up the task himself, writing *St. Paul and Protestantism* (1870), *Literature and Dogma* (1873), and its sequel, *God and the Bible* (1875). Motivating this literary performance is the knowledge that "he who most seizes the real

significance of the Bible and of Jesus, will be least disposed to cut himself off in religion from his fellow-men" (*G & B* 396). In short, in his opposition to Philistinism, Arnold saw himself as standing in the gap between Culture and Anarchy.

If Kingsley was a Philistine, then Arnold must surely have recognized his as one of the enemies of Culture. That much is certain. But, whether Kingsley actually was a Philistine it is now our effort to ascertain. Sheila Smith, as I have already noted, suggests that he was. Walter E. Houghton makes the same suggestion when, in *The Victorian Frame of Mind*, he places Kingsley in the company of Macaulay, identifying them as "apostles of anti-intellectualism" (118). Nevertheless, having before us a clear definition of what a Philistine is, and allowing Kingsley, wherever we can, to speak for himself, we are, perhaps, in a better position than Smith and Houghton from which to make a determination.

We should begin by noting that Kingsley was of the upper class, or—as he states in his 1870 letter to Arnold—that he was "born a Barbarian" (*Letters and Memories* 2: 338). Thomas Hughes remarks, in his "Prefatory Memoir," "He was by nature and education an aristocrat in the best sense of the word, believed that a landed aristocracy was a blessing to the country, and that no country would gain the highest liberty without such a class, holding its own position firmly, but in sympathy with the people" (xxiv-xxv). Kingsley had learned from reading Carlyle what it meant to be an aristocrat in the era of Chartism. He had learned that the "Working Classes cannot any longer go on without government; without being *actually* guided and governed" ("Chartism" 187), that it was the responsibility of the aristocracy to provide this government, and that "Whatsoever Aristocracy is still a corporation of the Best, is safe from peril, and the land it rules is a safe and blessed land" (191). He had learned from Carlyle that, as a clergyman in the era of Chartism, his purpose was to educate, for "The world asks of its Church in these times, more passionately than of any other Institution the question: 'Canst thou teach us or not?'" (192).

Kingsley recognized that the cultural advancement of the working class depended on inter-class association. In his novel *Yeast* (1848) he has the laborer Tregarva remark plaintively to the upper-class Lancelot Smith, "If a few of you would be like the blessed Lord, and stoop to go out of the road, just behind the hedge, for once, among the publicans and harlots!" (71-72). Later, Tregarva asks, "Why should not the workman be a gentleman, and a workman still? Why are they to be shut out from all that is beautiful, and delicate, and winning, and stately?" (253). During his first years at Eversley Kingsley taught evening classes for his adult parishioners who could not read (Chitty 96). In 1848, determined to bring an element of culture into the lives of the working class, he wrote a series of articles on the National Gallery for the Christian Socialist periodical *Politics for the People*. In brief, he did what he could to participate in what he calls "the general increase of civilisation throughout the country" and to end "that hateful severance between the classes," which had been rife during the 1820s ("Preface: To the Undergraduates of Cambridge," *Alton Locke* xci). Kingsley's frequent association with the Populace and Philistines of the working class was, however, atypical of the Barbarians and resulted in alienating him from his own class (Chitty 145).

Kingsley had no interest in obliterating the class system, and he was no friend of democracy; but he did advocate that "the rich help and defend the poor, and the poor respect and love the rich," and pleaded that "all ranks bear each other's burdens" ("Association" 151). He preached that God "has knit the great family of man in one blessed bond of mutual need and usefulness," and that "wealth and comfort ought to increase year by year among the whole family of man, ay, and would increase, if it were not for sin" ("Providence" 176-77). According to Susan Chitty, Kingsley was the first Anglican clergyman to issue a Socialist manifesto, which he hastily wrote during the night following the Chartists' uprising of April 10, 1848 (109). This broadsheet addressed to the "Workmen of England" formally launched the Christian Socialist movement, a movement led by John Ludlow (1821-1911) and F. D. Maurice (1805-1872).

The "Socialism" of the Christian Socialists, it must be emphasized, is not the same as, say, that of William Morris (1834-1896)—who, incidentally, was reading Kingsley in the early 1850s. Alexander Vidler explains, "Socialism to Maurice meant an order of society which encourages and enables men to co-operate with one another instead of competing against one another; that is, it meant the opposite of individualism and *laissez faire*" (231-32). In this sense of the word, Kingsley could be a "Socialist" and still proclaim that personal property is "sacred" and that "It is a holy feeling which makes a man cling to the bit of land which he has inherited from his parents" ("Ahab and Naboth" 147, 151). The wealthy aristocrat could do little good in England by dividing his property with his laborer tenants and abjuring his title of distinction. Rather, he should see to it that his tenants receive adequate wages, are properly educated and housed, and have medical attention when it is needed. He should treat the laborer with respect, and he will then find that he is respected and loved in return. In this advocacy of a ideal feudalism, Kingsley in no way differed from Carlyle. The novelty of Christian Socialism was in its message to the industrialized worker, who had neither master nor patron to whom he might appeal for deliverance from poverty and squalor. For their benefit, the Christian Socialists helped establish "Co-operation Societies." Kingsley advised every journeyman to say to his fellow workman, "It is competition that is ruining us, and competition is division, disunion, every man for himself, every man against his brother. The remedy must be in association, co-operation, self-sacrifice for the sake of one another" ("Cheap Clothes and Nasty" lxxxv).

Kingsley's attitude toward wealth is complex. England is wealthy because she leads the world in the natural sciences and because, through "inventing, producing, exporting, importing," she has left her "indelible impress" upon every nation ("How to Study Natural History" 308). Furthermore, England's progress in the natural sciences can be directly related to her interest in natural theology, in the idea that, because God is "the Lord of Order" and "the Lord of Law," the evidences of nature support a faith in God ("The Hearing Ear and the Seeing Eye" 229; "The Natural Theology of the Future" 315-16). However, England's interest in natural theology began to decline with the advent of Evangelicalism or "personal religion," a departure from Anglican orthodoxy ("Natural Theology" 316). Thus, England's wealth is not her

greatness, but may be considered a symbol of her greatness, which takes its origin in the orthodox faith of her Established Church.

Wealth can be a blessing, if it is used for philanthropic purposes. When wealth is accumulated or hoarded, it "is far more dangerous to human nature" than poverty. "Bear in mind," he tells the London Diocesan Board of Education, "that the period during which the middle and lower classes of England were most brutalized, was that of their greatest material prosperity, the latter half of the eighteenth century" ("Religious Dangers" 251, 253). To a younger audience, he lectures, "Being quite comfortable is a very good thing, but it does not make people good. Indeed, it sometimes makes them naughty, as it has made the people of America" (*Water Babies* 115).

Clearly, for Kingsley, wealth is not to be regarded as an end in itself; neither is the English right to do as one pleases. In June 1851, when London was crowded with visitors who had come to see the Great Exhibition, Kingsley was invited to contribute to a series of evening sermons entitled "The Message of the Church to the Labouring Man." Hughes summarizes Kingsley's message:

There are two freedoms—the false, where a man is free to do what he likes; the true, where a man is free to do what he ought. Two equalities—the false, which reduces all intellects and all characters to a dead level . . . ; the true, wherein each man has equal power to educate and use whatever faculties or talents God has given him, Two brotherhoods—the false, where a man chooses who shall be his brothers, and whom he will treat as such; the true, in which a man believes that all are his brothers.

("Prefatory Memoir" xxxii-xxxiii)

The vicar in charge, G. S. Drew, responded by immediately denouncing Kingsley in public, charging him with equating Christianity with Socialism. The charge helped Kingsley's reputation among the Chartists, but probably did much to hinder an early advancement within the Establishment, despite the fact that Kingsley ultimately vindicated himself before Bishop Blomfield of London (*Chadwick* 2: 358-62).

The "spirit of Protestantism" is, for Kingsley "free inquiry" and "religious as well as civil liberty" ("The Light of God" 170); yet, the "freedom" of Protestantism is not the sort of freedom that is popularly extolled: "Some may say, It is our freedom which makes us strong. My friends, believe it not. . . . True freedom can only live with true loyalty and obedience" ("England's Strength" 192-93). Kingsley's definition of true freedom suggests that the false freedom is that which Arnold identifies as anarchy, a disloyalty and disobedience to the governing power of the State. To resist those in authority is to resist ourselves, for "what they are we are; we choose them, Englishmen like ourselves, and they truly represent us" ("Providence" 183). Anarchy is ultimately self-defeating, since the State, like the Church, is a single body with diverse parts. St. Paul reasoned, "If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? . . . But now God hath set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him" (I Cor. 12.15, 18). In *Two Years Ago* (1857) Kingsley described the saintly attitude

of Grace Harvey: "She found lord and ladies on earth, and seeing no open sin in the fact of their being richer or more powerful than she was, she supposed that God had put them where they were. . . . Of course they had their duties, as every one has: but what they were she did not know or care to know. To their own master they stood or fell" (278). Knowledge of the divine order enables Grace to exercise her freedom to do the duty that belongs to her social position, without protesting against or envying the positions of others.

Furthermore, Kingsley was ready to remind the working man that, when the foot serves the hand, it is in the hand's interest to care for and protect the foot. Therefore, if the worker would only acquire the character of a gentleman rather than protest with the spirit of a ruffian, then the lords and ladies in power would be more inclined, if not to broaden the worker's legislative rights, at least to pass certain reform bills in his favor. Kingsley was always ready to remind his hearers that all good things ultimately come to the people who seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness ("Abraham's Faith" 97).

The State is, for Kingsley, both a civilizing influence and the end result of civilization. He illustrates this point by appealing to his audience's familiarity with "some country lad, both before and after he has become a soldier." Before his enlistment he is, perhaps, "one of the worst and idlest lads, . . . hardly able to give an intelligible, certainly not a civil answer." After a year or two in a regiment, "he walks erect, he speaks clearly, he looks you boldly in the face, with eyes full of intelligence and self-respect. . . . His nature is not changed, but the thought that he is the member of an honourable body has raised him above his nature" ("Public Spirit" 296-98). The soldier has obtained the idea of the State and, through a commitment to loyalty and obedience, has gained true freedom. The State, Kingsley explains, is not made by "constitutions, and acts of parliament, and social contracts, and rights of the people," but rather it is made by "law, and order, and spiritual energy, and loving fellow-feeling, and patriotism, the spirit of wisdom, and understanding, and prudence" ("Abraham's Faith" 93). England's constitution—to which Macaulay attributes the nation's wealth, and to which nine out of ten Englishmen attribute their liberty—is but a product of that which has made England great, and Kingsley reminds his audience wherein that greatness lies.

Along a similar line of thought, Kingsley distinguishes means from ends: "All the talents, gifts, understanding, power, money, which God has bestowed on you, He has given you only that you may help your neighbours with them" ("The True Gentleman" 265). In striving to adjust working-class values, Kingsley sought to persuade his audience not only that what they already possessed was but a means and not an end, but also that what they sought to possess by way of political reform was but a means as well. Owen Chadwick observes that the Christian Socialists' "finest writing sought to convince the working man that the machinery of government was but a means" (1: 352). An example of this can be found in Kingsley's "Letters to the Chartists.—No. 1," which he signed by his pseudonym, "Parson Lot":

My only quarrel with the Charter is, that it does not go far enough in reform. I want to see you free; but I do not see

how what you ask for, will give you what you want. I think you have fallen into just the same mistake as the rich of whom you complain—the very mistake which has been our curse and our nightmare—I mean, the mistake of fancying that legislative reform is social reform, or that men's hearts can be changed by act of parliament.

(*Politics for the People* 28)

For Kingsley, as with Arnold, the outward reform of the nation must begin with the inward reform of the individual. The first-person narrator of *Alton Locke*, the eponymous character, confesses, "True, I desired the Charter at first (as I do, indeed, at this moment), as a means to glorious ends. . . . But soon, with me, and I am afraid with many, many more, the means became, by the frailty of poor human nature, an end, an idol in itself. . . . Fool that I was! It was within, rather than without, that I needed reform" (118-19).

The ends for which the Chartists argue are, when "spiritually" interpreted, good; freedom, equality, and brotherhood are Christian values when understood in their biblical context. Therefore, Kingsley could argue, "Christ is the ground of the Charter" (*AL* 403) and the Bible is "the only ground of all charters" (405). It might be said that Kingsley's mission among the Chartists was the task of redefinition. His triumph would be to redefine Chartism itself. Although he was never completely successful, his early attempts in this direction include his startling proclamation at a Chartist meeting on June 4, 1849, "I am a Church of England parson. . . . and a Chartist" (Hughes xix). It is safe to say that what Kingsley meant in calling himself a Chartist is not what Walter Cooper, the atheist and leading Chartist present at the meeting, understood by the designation.

Although Kingsley called himself a Chartist, he did not call himself a "muscular Christian." As Leslie Stephen notes, "He protested, fruitlessly enough, against the nickname." Kingsley rightly perceived that the term "suggested that he used Christian phraseology to consecrate a blind admiration for physical prowess and excess of animal vigour" (38). Yet, the term was applied not only to Kingsley and the fictional heroes of his novels, but also to the followers of the Rev. Dr. Thomas Arnold, who, without detracting from the virtue of Rugby athleticism, had supplemented it with the ideal of the Christian gentleman. When Matthew Arnold lists "our reliance on . . . muscular Christianity" as one of the forms of "mere belief in machinery" (*C & A* 104), he is not necessarily referring to Kingsley's doctrine. More likely, he is speaking of the popular faith in health and vigor that receives sanction from a misunderstanding of Kingsley or Dr. Arnold—a misunderstanding that places the emphasis not on what is central in their teaching, but rather on what is incidental. It needs also to be noted that Arnold is not finding fault with the "muscular Christian," but only with the popular "reliance on muscular Christianity." Whereas the former may be aptly regarded as a form of Barbarianism—since the Barbarians, Arnold tells us, have "the passion for field-sports" and a care "for the body, and for all manly exercises" (141)—the latter is appropriately identified as a form of Philistinism.

Unlike the Barbarian class in general, Kingsley was never self-satisfied. Stephen conceded of Kingsley, "We must

admit him to be excellent within his limits" (41), and no one was more aware than Kingsley just what those limits were. In a letter of 1855 to John Ludlow, he remarked, "Surely the wiser, the humbler path, is to give men credit for as much wisdom and rightness as possible, and to believe that when one is found fault with, one is probably in the wrong" (Hughes liii). He was adamant and uncompromising in following the light that he had, while maintaining a certain humble awareness that not all that he had was light. His vocation as a clergyman not only placed him in contact with the illiterate and the vulgar, but also kept him in contact with the intellectual and the spiritual. From his own experience he could say, "If there is a noble, if there is a holy, if there is a spiritual feeling in man, it is the feeling which bows him down before those who are greater, and wiser, and holier than himself" ("The Transfiguration" 116). Thus, he humbly referred to Maurice as "Master" (Tulloch 288).

When speaking of self-satisfaction, we are, perhaps, speaking less about intellectual perspective than we are about personal character. In Arnold's letter of condolence to Mary, Kingsley's daughter, after her father's death, he makes these remarks about Kingsley:

I think he was the most generous man I have ever known; the most forward to praise what he thought good, the most willing to admire, the most free from all thought of himself in praising or admiring, and the most incapable of being made ill-natured, or even indifferent, by having to support ill-natured attacks himself.

(Kingsley, *Letters and Memories* 2: 471).

If I am right in generalizing that those who are most self-satisfied tend to be those who are most indignant when others do not find equal satisfaction in them, then Kingsley's "incapability" of taking offense speaks strongly in his defense. Arnold possibly recognized in Kingsley a kindred spirit, a fellow "still unsatisfied seeker."

No one can read Kingsley for long without being struck with the fact that here is a man who, when he is not concerned with principles and ideals, it is only because his affections have momentarily led him into an idyll or a eulogy or a passage aimed to evoke horror at social conditions or sympathy with the impoverished and oppressed. If, in his writings, he does not quite reach the sublime and the beautiful, it is not because his thoughts are common or ignoble, but rather because he is so impatient with the message he has to express that he fails to take sufficient thought about the art of expression. No fair critic can place Kingsley among those who have a "natural taste for bathos." George Eliot had complained, in her review of *Westward Ho* (1855), of Kingsley's natural taste for sermonizing, his "parsonic habit," by which he "drops into the homily as readily as if he had been 'to the manner born'" (153). Yet, if I may anticipate the argument, a "parsonic habit" can hardly be equated with a "taste for bathos." One of the defining characteristics of the sermon—and probably the very characteristic that Eliot had in mind—is its appeal to the audience to escape from the mundane sphere of the ordinary self and to rise to the sphere of the best self. Arnold, we should bear in mind, had acquired from his father a considerable portion of the "parsonic habit" himself.

A more common error might be to confuse Kingsley's patriotism with provincialism. Although his reverence for England stirred his imagination as much as it did his historical curiosity, leading to inspired novels but dubious scholarship, it was the sort of reverence that, by Kingsley's estimation, made "poetic license" a virtue. To modern readers, such license must often seem mere narrowness of perspective, but we moderns have, for the most part, lost the Victorian sentiment of patriotism. Nevertheless, we allow parents to stretch the truth when boasting of their children; in fact, we might consider such boasting as evidence of praiseworthy parental affection, even though the parents' perspective may seem rather narrow. Furthermore, the parents themselves would probably have some tolerance for other parents' boasting, even when the differing perspectives are rival. Kingsley's patriotism is very much like the boasting of a parent; it requires our indulgence.

Two examples of Kingsley's patriotic license and zeal may be helpful at this point. In the manner of the *Beowulf* poet, Kingsley invests the Germanic history of English ancestry with Christian significance. It was "God's will" that the Romans "could never conquer our forefathers," although it was for that reason that they were not converted to Christianity until the fifth century. Yet, while "the light of the gospel . . . has died out" among the nations converted earlier, it has continued to shine from England. "So that our Lord's words have been fulfilled, that many that are last shall be first, and those that are first shall be last" ("A People Prepared for the Lord" 440-41). Kingsley not only saw the providence of God at work in the history of England, but he thought of England as a chosen instrument for God's purposes in the world. In reference to the Crimean War (1854-1856), Kingsley remarks, "I thank God from the bottom of my heart for this great and glorious victory. . . . If we cannot reach the Devil and his works by any other means, we must reach them as we are doing now, by sharp shot and cold steel" ("Providence" 178). Kingsley's "Devil" in this passage is Russia, and England is fighting not for self-interest, but for the kingdom of God, having been forced to fight "simply because these Russian rulers have chosen to seek first, not God's kingdom, but their own" (180).

Obviously, Kingsley indulges his native instinct for national pride; yet, he preaches that such pride can be justified only by national righteousness ("A People Prepared" 443). Arnold shares this perspective, although he expresses his own patriotism with a severe criticism that, perhaps, is aimed at compensating for the excess of praise that had come from Kingsley and many others. In an 1866 letter to his mother, Arnold writes, "I should be sorry to be a Frenchman, German, or American, or anything but an Englishman; but I know that this native instinct which other nations, too, have does not prove one's superiority, but that one has to achieve this by undeniable excellent performance" (Russell 2: 372).

Although Kingsley was patriotic, he was not provincial. In his 1848 lecture "On English Literature" he made these remarks:

To strive after any national exclusiveness, or mere John-Bullism of mind, in an age of railroads and free press,

would be simply absurd—and more, it would be fighting against the will of God revealed in events. . . . This age is craving for what it calls catholicity; for more complete interchange and brotherhood of thought between all the nations of the earth. (260)

To young clergyman Kingsley recommends Johann Gottfried Herder's *Ideen* (1784-1791) as a work "full of sound and precious wisdom" ("Natural Theology" 315), and in a lecture presented at the Royal Institution, he states, "I believe that we are not yet fully aware how much we owe to the Jewish mind, in the gradual emancipation of the human intellect" ("Science" 239). Thus, along with his national pride, there was not only an awareness of the intellectual accomplishments of other nations, but also a readiness to learn from and publicly recognize those achievements.

As with Arnold, Kingsley recognizes provincialism and anti-intellectualism as attributes of Dissent. In *Alton Locke* the narrator observes of the Methodist Rev. Bowyer, "Had his head been equal to his heart!—but . . . the dissenting clergy, with a few noble exceptions among the independents, are not the strong men of the day—none know that better than the workmen" (12). It is the workman Tregarva who, in *Yeast*, declares, "I sometimes think that there must be more good in that human wisdom and philosophy so called, than we Wesleyans hold" (70). Not all of Kingsley's Dissenters are provincial or anti-intellectual, however. Major Campbell in *Two Year's Ago* (1857), a Methodist who "loved and honoured his Bible" too much to deny fact, reason, common justice, and "the voice of God in his own moral sense," silences a few Dissenting preachers who were attempting to enlarge their flocks and make a profit out of a cholera epidemic. Of course, Major Campbell, although a Dissenter, is still vitally connected to the State, being a member of a regiment.

Both Kingsley and Arnold complain that the religion of Dissent breeds an un-Christian spirit. In "Modern Dissent" Arnold, in his characteristic manner of selecting a phrase loosely spoken and turning it to his own use, quotes Mr. Winterbotham: "There was a spirit of watchful jealousy on the part of the Dissenters, which made them prone to take offence." Arnold then responds to Winterbotham, quoting from 2 Cor. 12.20: "'Strife, jealousy, wrath, contentions, backbitings,'—we know the catalogue. And the Dissenters are, by their confession, . . . full of these, and the very existence of an organisation of Dissent . . . makes them a necessity" (133). Kingsley might well have been thinking of the latter half of the catalogue—"whisperings, swellings, tumults"—when he described Alton Locke's relationship with his mother, a brutally unaffectionate Calvinist, who can find in her son nothing more than a depraved, unregenerate nature. Locke, in turn, can see in his mother nothing less than an apology for Agnosticism (AL 9).

Kingsley and Arnold were not, of course, the only Victorian authors who presented Calvinists, whether Dissenters or Evangelicals, in a most unattractive light; other prominent authors who participated in the vilification include Charles Dickens, Charlotte Brontë, Samuel Butler, and to a lesser degree, George Eliot, Anthony Trollope, and William Hale

White. Partially responsible for Kingsley's stance against Calvinism may be his unpleasant memories of childhood. Like the Brontës, Butler, and Eliot, Kingsley had been raised by Evangelical parents, and his father was a remote and stern figure. Susan Chitty suggests that the stutter that affected Kingsley's speech throughout life was acquired during his early years, when he had to stand before his birch-bearing father and recite his lessons (31). Arnold had the privilege of growing up in a home that was both emotionally and intellectually nurturing; but, as a result, he may have found his vocational contacts with the Dissenters all the more unpleasant. As an Inspector of Schools, Arnold spied out the land of the Dissenting Philistines and brought back a bad report.

Given the evidence before us, Kingsley cannot be fairly regarded as a Philistine or even as an anti-intellectual. This is not to say that he never displayed a characteristic that is typically Philistine or that he never took an anti-intellectual position, but rather it is to affirm that in Kingsley not one of the attributes of Philistinism was prevalent. The vicar of Eversley was an intense, excitable, and impatient man, who had not the temperament of the detached and impersonal critic, but in what he believed, taught, and fought for, he had much in agreement with Arnold. Both were liberal Anglicans who contributed to the progress of the Broad Church movement, and both made the Philistine tremble.

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Figures of Restraint: The Ruskinian Gentleman and the Romantic Artist

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One of Ruskin's central ideas is that only a good man can be a good artist. From *The Stones of Venice* (1851-1853) through the *Lectures on Art* (1870), Ruskin consistently maintains that good art depends on the moral purity of its creator, and that, consequently, a nation's art is an exponent of its ethical condition. The first figure of my title, the Ruskinian gentleman, represents Ruskin's ideal of moral virtue. So it should follow that the good artist who is a good man closely resembles the Ruskinian gentleman. But this connection has not been much remarked upon by Ruskin scholars, although Ruskin is fairly explicit about it.¹ I want to explore this connection by reviewing the requirements and moral virtues of the gentleman, in order to define the moral ideal of the artist. The second figure of my title, the romantic artist, falls far short of that ideal, or at least the modern romantic artist does. As readers of Ruskin, then, perhaps we can use the figure of the gentleman as an interpretive tool in understanding Ruskin's critique of modern romanticism.

Ruskin's most explicit condemnation of modern romantic art and philosophy is his 1873 Oxford lecture, "Franchise," from the *Val d'Arno* series. The lecture is a scathing attack on modern British culture. Like the art and culture of the Italian Renaissance, modern art and culture are a corruption of Gothic "franchise." Ruskin locates the Gothic in twelfth-century France, the seat of established Norman power, and the source of Gothic franchise. This is Ruskin:

France is everlastingly, by birth, name, and nature, the country of the Franks, or free persons; and the first source of European frankness, or franchise. The Latin for franchise is *libertas*. But the modern or Cockney-English word,

liberty,—Mr. John Stuart Mill's,—is not the equivalent of *libertas*; and the modern or Cockney-French word *liberté*,—Mr. Victor Hugo's,—is not the equivalent of franchise. (23: 116)

The romantic artist, Gothic or modern, expresses himself under the impulse of passions. This distinguishes him from the classical artist, who is characterized by truth, flawlessness, and authority. Proper romantic art, however, is characterized by Gothic franchise, the central idea of which is deliverance from the slavery of passion. The modern notion of freedom and liberty is a perversion of "franchise" and "*libertas*" for to be frank or free is to be capable of controlling the passions.

Gothic franchise is most typically represented in medieval art, Ruskin tells his audience, in the figure of the *Debonnaireté*. In the lecture, he displayed two pictures. Figure #1 is a drawing of the *Debonnaireté*, done from the frescoes in the "Painted Chamber" of the Palace of Westminster (before the chamber was destroyed by fire in 1834). She's a young aristocratic lady, painted with long hair, a white forehead, and a fair neck. She wears a golden crown, sign of her royalty, and she carries the crimson shield of William the Norman, with golden leopards on it. She is, then, an image of gentleness and "high breeding," literally, Ruskin says, tracing the etymology of her name, "out of good-nestedness." In *Ariadne Florentina* (1876) he takes us through his version of the etymological history of the word "*debonnaire*," and traces its original meaning to "out of a good eagle's nest" (22: 314-15). His association of the derivation of eagle's nest with



Figure #1

debonnaire is tendentious, even though they come from the same root word in Latin, but his tendentiousness is instructive. Ruskin explicitly associates Gothic franchise, the distinguishing quality of the romantic temper, with gentleness, or gentlemanliness.

Figure #2 is the other illustration he showed his audience, a drawing of the sculpted figure of *Libertas* from the north porch of Chartres, taken from Didron's *Christian Iconography* (1843). Ruskin equates these two iconographical images: the *Debonnaireté* represents English royalty, "the grace of our proper kingdom"; the personified Virtue, *Libertas*, represents French royalty, "the grace of French kingdom." They both wear the crown of fleur-de-lys. Whether this is only an association made by Ruskin, or whether there really is a relation between these two images, I have not yet been able to determine. Ruskin uses this illustration in his lecture to make fun of poor M. Didron, because as a modern critic he's unable to apprehend the true meaning of the medieval virtue and confuses *Libertas* with the modern Liberty. But again, the important point is Ruskin's explicit

association of Gothic franchise, the distinguishing quality of the romantic temper, with gentleness.

It's no accident that the figure of a woman stands for his ideal symbol of high breeding and gentleness, for Ruskin maintains a gendered notion of feeling. "The 'tact' or 'touch-faculty' of body and soul" is a preeminently feminine quality (*Sesame and Lilies* [1865]; 18: 80). The "pure woman" possesses moral sympathy "above all creatures," Ruskin declares in *Sesame and Lilies*, that sympathy that comes only from fineness and fullness of sensation" (18: 80). This feminine quality the gentleman possesses in great abundance. Combined with his masculine powers of reason he becomes the ideal moral agent.²

Thus, the Ruskinian gentleman is primarily distinguished by his extraordinary capacity to experience sensation. His status depends upon physiological criteria, on the innate capacities of the body. He possesses an especially fine nature, an especially fine structure in body and mind which renders him capable of the most delicate sensations and sympathies. Ruskin does manage to separate "fineness of nature" from the



Figure #2

¹See "The School of Florence," the concluding lecture of *Aratra Pentilici* (1872) (20: 355-67), "The Discovery and Application of Art," the first lecture of *A Joy Forever* (1880) (16: 15-56), and *The Stones of Venice Vol. 2* (11:

49-58). Citations of Ruskin's works refer to *Works*. Subsequent citations will be noted in the text itself.

²My summary of Ruskin's idea of the gentleman owes much to Joseph Bizup's article, "Walter Pater and the Ruskinian Gentleman."

conditions of race and class—"purity of moral habit for many generations" will "enable" any family's blood (*Modern Painters V* [1860]; 7: 345). Presumably, if everybody in the family behaves well for a few generations that will have some effect on the bloodline. This sounds silly to us today, but we need to keep in mind the contemporary confusion over the "gentleman." Understood in the context of Victorian liberalism, as Robin Gilmour explains in *The Idea of the Gentleman in the Victorian Novel*, Ruskin's definition is an attempt to resolve the tensions between the traditional sense of "gentle" as in "gentle birth" and the more modern sense of "gentle" as "tender," which is a quality that can to some extent be acquired (86-87). As de Tocqueville said, the history of the gentleman in England is "the history of democracy itself" (Gilmour 4). Nonetheless, Ruskin's distinction between gentlemanliness and its antithesis, vulgarity, is ultimately based on bloodlines. Sensitiveness, or acute feeling, is the chief "sign of nobleness," and this is a matter of instinct.

As a figure of intense sensibility and feeling, then, the gentleman resembles the typical romantic conception of the poet or artist. Like Ruskin's gentleman, the romantic poet is essentially born, not made. I'm thinking of Wordsworth's definition of the poet as a man "endowed" with a more intense sensibility and susceptibility to passion than other men. Coleridge and Shelley define the poet in similar fashion, as does John Stuart Mill, whose poet has inherited "fine senses," and a specially constituted "nervous organization" ("Tennyson's Poems" 1835). But unlike the gentleman, the typical romantic artist of the modern period is deficient in those moral qualities that accompany this inheritance—sympathy, "apparent" reserve, and most crucially, self-restraint.

According to Ruskin, the truest sign of high breeding, the mark of the gentleman's emotional and moral superiority, is his sympathy. But it is a difficult sign to read, for another of the gentleman's chief characteristics is "reserve," or "apparent reserve" as Ruskin says (7: 347). The sympathy is always real, but the reserve is not; it's only "apparent." A genuine display of the gentleman's feelings will only create misunderstanding among ordinary people; reserve is his way of negotiating the social world. But social action, the true test of sympathy, confirms him a gentleman, and so distinguishes him from the "dandy," who is all show. The Ruskinian gentleman, as Joseph Bizup has written, is "the embodiment of Christian charity" (55), of medieval "largesse."

The modern artist fails as a gentleman primarily because he lacks self-restraint. He is unable to govern his passions and the result is the self-indulgent perception of nature, the fixation on one's own feelings at the expense of the world around, the failing of the pathetic fallacy. With regard to self-restraint the gentleman is the antithesis of the modern romantic artist, for his perceptions are so fine and true that he's in no need of self-restraint. He simply perceives and behaves perfectly at all times, and without effort. His morality is natural and intuitive; his extreme passions do not lead him astray.

A true gentleman has no need of self-command; he simply feels rightly on all occasions; and desiring to express only so much of his feeling as it is right to express, does not

need to command himself. Hence perfect ease is indeed characteristic of him; but perfect ease is inconsistent with self-restraint. (7: 349).

As the gentleman's intensity of feeling is the result of bodily instinct, so his standard of behavior is instinctive. "Self command," Ruskin argues, "is rather a way of imitating a gentleman than a characteristic of him. . . . [G]reat powers of self-restraint may be attained by very vulgar persons when it suits their purpose" (7: 349). Nonetheless, whenever the gentleman falls short of his own ideal and needs to command himself, he does so. If he doesn't possess self-command, it's only because he doesn't need it.

I'm suggesting that Ruskin's idea of the gentleman can help us to interpret the relation Ruskin draws between Gothic franchise and the overindulgences of the modern romantic. As everybody knows, these overindulgences are chiefly manifest in what Ruskin calls the pathetic fallacy. Ruskin never means the pathetic fallacy to be a protest against genuine imaginative power, but rather against the abuse of power. The gentleman, thanks to his high breeding and feminine qualities of tact, is ideally suited to avoid the abuses of imaginative power, and to do so in such a way that recapitulates Gothic franchise.

This accounts for Ruskin's odd judgment that Walter Scott is the representative poet of his age. As the representative modern poet, Scott shares the faults and weaknesses of his age—its faithlessness, its lack of aesthetic principles, its strange interweaving of levity and melancholy. Of all modern poets, however, Scott most closely approaches the gentlemanly ideal. He is born of the "purest Border race," Ruskin writes in *Fors* (1871-1878), summarizing Lockhart's biography, he possesses a "universal" sympathy manifest in action, self-command when he needs it, and a conspicuous reserve (27: 565). These qualities allow Scott to resist, or at least reduce the effects of, the pernicious tendencies of his age. And so he stands as an exception to the characteristic weakness of the modern intelligence, for he doesn't rely upon the pathetic fallacy. Scott is ultimately able

to conquer all tendencies to the pathetic fallacy, and, instead of making Nature anywise subordinate to himself, he makes himself subordinate to her—follows her lead simply—does not venture to bring his own cares and thoughts into her pure and quiet presence—paints her in her simple and universal truth, adding no result of momentary passion or fancy, and appears, therefore, at first shallower than other poets, being in reality wider and healthier.

(*Modern Painters III* [1856]; 5: 342-43)

Scott is an exception among modern artists, for the romantic art of the modern period lacks restraint, and is characterized instead by a dangerous, adolescent notion of liberty.

As Ruskin's language suggests perfect ease is not characteristic of Scott. He must conquer his emotions, and make himself subordinate to nature. In this respect, he falls short of the ideal gentleman, who simply feels rightly on all occasions, who has no need of self-command. But Scott's successful restraint of emotion results in a more intense moral sympathy than his contemporaries, and these qualities are manifest in his art.

Scott's habit of looking at nature is not altered by his own feelings. Rather he regards nature as

having an animation and pathos of *its own*, wholly irrespective of human presence or passion,—an animation which Scott loves and sympathises with, as he would with a fellow-creature, forgetting himself altogether, and subduing his own humanity before what seems to him the power of the landscape. (5: 340)

Ruskin, of course, begs his own question here, and this is always the critical problem in understanding his formulation of the fallacy. How is the claim that nature has a pathos of its own somehow less pathetic and less fallacious than Coleridge's dancing leaf or Kingsley's crawling foam? But that's the question of an unbeliever. For Ruskin regarded the beauty of the natural world as a gift from God, and so the apprehension of beauty is the apprehension of divine qualities and fulfills what is most God-like in man. As an embodiment of Gothic franchise, the figure of the gentleman represents the ideal beholder of the natural world, the moral ideal to which the modern artist must aspire if he is truly to sense the Divine presence in the world around him

I'll finish by looking at a brief passage from Scott's *Rokeby* that according to Ruskin does not contain the pathetic fallacy, although the personification in the lines is obvious:

And from the grassy slope he sees
The Greta flow to meet the Tees;
Where issuing from her darksome bed,
She caught the morning's eastern red,
And through the softening vale below
Roll'd her bright waves in rosy glow,
All blushing to her bridal bed,
Like some shy maid, in convent bred;
While linnet, lark, and blackbird gay
Sing forth her nuptial roundelay.

Scott's metaphorical depiction of the Greta as a rosy blushing bride happily rolling to her bridal bed is, Ruskin emphasizes, "not pathetic fallacy, for there is no passion in Scott which alters nature" (5: 341). Ruskin detects both sympathy and restraint in these lines, a profound apprehension of joy in the morning sun's soft reflection on the river's surface, despite the beholder's present unhappiness. "Is Scott, or are the persons

Tennyson, W. T. Stead, and "The Imperialism of Responsibility": "Vastness" and "The Maiden Tribute"

Cecily Devereux

Tennyson's poem "Vastness" was first published in the November 1885 issue of *Macmillan's Magazine*. The first new poem since his lines on the marriage of Princess Beatrice (written at the request of Queen Victoria and published in the *Times* of July 23rd), it was heralded with considerable fanfare for at least a fortnight prior to its appearance, and was

of his story, gay at this moment?" Ruskin asks. "Far from it. Neither Scott nor Risingham is happy, but the Greta is; and all Scott's sympathy is ready for the Greta, on the instant" (5: 341). Ruskin, then, recognizes in this landscape the representation of a noble spiritual reality, otherwise inexpressible.

The sign of restraint here for Ruskin is similar to that which he detects in his reading of Homer's ironic epithet for the graves of Castor and Pollux, which he describes as "high poetical truth" in the extreme (5: 212). The poet has to speak of the earth in sadness, for Castor and Pollux are dead. But Homer does not allow that sadness, that momentary passion, to cloud his perception of the earth, she is "our mother still, fruitful, life-giving" (5: 213). Linda Austin has recently observed that the simile is another form of control which Ruskin identifies. As opposed to metaphor, the simile subdues rather than projects emotion, for the figure proclaims its own fictiveness (113). Dante describes the falling spirits "as dead leaves flutter from a bough," never forgetting for an instant that these are souls and those are leaves.

Like Austin, other critics have observed that the presence and absence of sympathy and self-restraint are important criteria for Ruskin. Moreover, how Ruskin believes these qualities can be manifest in the art-object will continue to be an important question in any consideration of his aesthetic theory. I hope I've indicated that Ruskin's idea of the gentleman helps to give us a more nuanced understanding of that aesthetic theory, in particular the opposition between unrestrained modern romanticism and well-tempered Gothic franchise.

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littleness, goodness and wickedness, wisdom and folly, which the universe would present without any divine background or any spiritual sequel" (1466). Concluding that "Vastness" was best understood as a poem "about" "man [as a spiritual being], confront[ing] the majesty of the merely physical universe with a profound sense of his own greater majesty" (1466-67), *The Spectator's* representation of the poem accords well with Tennyson's own determinations: "His MS note" for "Vastness," Hallam Tennyson writes, "is 'What matters anything in this world without full faith in the Immortality of the Soul and of Love?'" (2: 343). This view of the poem "bemoaning," as Jerome Buckley has argued, "the insignificance of the human race in its cosmic setting" is persuasive since, as Buckley also points out, "The private note yields everywhere to the general" (231). Tennyson's MS note and subsequent interpretation of the poem's concern with "universal" matters of physical mortality and spiritual "vastness," however, effectively obscure its considerable cultural specificity. Contemporary readers of the poem, although certainly familiar with a rhetoric of "sublime" spirituality at "the ultimate ends of creation" such as *The Spectator* review propagated (1466), could not have failed to be aware of the engagement of "Vastness" with the far less transcendental rhetoric of the popular press in London.

The poem was released at the height of the trial of journalist W. T. Stead, editor of the *Pall Mall Gazette*, a middle-class London daily. Stead had been charged in September with abduction, following the publication in July of a scandalous exposé of "white slavery" in London. Stead's week-long account of child prostitution had appeared in the *PMG* between July 6th and 10th under the title "The Maiden Tribute of Modern Babylon," a reference to the Athenian story of seven youths and seven maidens sacrificed to the Minotaur. In London, Stead averred, "our English girls" were daily "sacrificed" to the monstrous lusts of degenerate members of the upper classes, the identities of whom he claimed to know, but which he did not reveal. In order to prove how easy it was to obtain a young virgin, Stead, with the assistance of the Salvation Army purity crusader Josephine Butler, and a reportedly reformed procuress named Rebecca Jarrett, had "purchased" a thirteen-year-old girl. Although it had initially been bruited about that he would be charged with obscenity for printing what were seen as pornographic details of the sexual exploitation of children, it was the mock abduction of Eliza Armstrong that finally sent him to prison for a little more than two months.

"The Maiden Tribute" created an unprecedented sensation, first at the time of its appearance in July, and subsequently throughout the trial in October and November. During the week of its publication, London was in an uproar. Bans on the sale of the paper within the City and in the railway newsstands owned by W. H. Smith contributed to the "Pall Mall fever" which had angry moralists along with would-be vendors and buyers anxious to obtain copies of the

issues storming the offices of the *Gazette* (Shults 136, 143). While the other London dailies attempted to ignore the event which was unquestionably the biggest "story" of the year, the provincial papers seized upon it. In addition to the national reverberations, as Judith Walkowitz has pointed out, "[t]elegraphic services rapidly transformed [the *PMG* scandal] into an international event" (82). "There is no exaggeration," writes Stead's biographer Frederic Whyte, "that ['The Maiden Tribute'] made the *Pall Mall Gazette* famous 'throughout the entire world'" (1: 166).

It was, however, the imperial connection which pushed "The Maiden Tribute" to the front pages of Anglo-colonial newspapers in, as Whyte puts it, "every corner of the British Empire" (1: 166). Stead had written the piece intending to "rouse the nation" to a crisis which he saw undermining the rectitude and the validity of the "civilizing mission," what he called "the Anglo-Saxon idea" (Scott 101).¹ He had consequently infused his account with the suggestion that the seeds for the fall of the Empire were to be found in this "strange inverted world" in which London, the very "centre of civilization," showed the kind of "savagery" which the expansion of England, as Sir James Seeley defined the "Greater Britain" in 1883, was supposed to be "curing" throughout the world (*PMG* 6 July 1885 2). The exploitation of "our English girls" at home, he implied, signalled a pervasive corruption which would have to be cleaned up at once in order to avert what he represented as an otherwise inevitable imperial decline.

There could be few readers, not only in London and in England, but throughout the British Empire, who would not have seen "Vastness" in November 1885 in relation to the matters which had been the subject of Stead's "revelations." A case in point is the response in English Canada to the new poem. In Canada, the *PMG* scandal and its intimation that the Empire was, as one newspaper headline trumpeted, "rotten at the core" had fuelled existing anxieties about the success of imperial expansion that had been precipitated by the Second North-West Rebellion earlier in the year (*Toronto Telegram* 7 July 1885 2). The impact and aftershocks of "The Maiden Tribute" were front-page news in the Canada for most of July, and the stories of "vice in London" ran side-by-side with reports of the Rebellion. While the appearance of a new poem by the Laureate, who was "as widely-known," as English-Canadian writer William Kirby observed in a letter to Tennyson, "as . . . our Queen herself," was always news (Pierce 54-55), "Vastness," with its resonances of the *PMG* revelations, was given particular attention in Canadian newspapers.

The impending literary event was noted on October 29th in *The Week*, the only intellectual journal in English Canada in 1885 which purported to represent the nation—or, at least, the educated middle-class Conservative élite who governed the nation—and "the central English literary tradition in Canada."² "Here is another piece of Tennyson gossip," *The Week* announced, "The November number of *Macmillan's*

Magazine, the first that appears under the new editor, will contain a poem by the Laureate" (29 October 764).³ Four days later, the *Toronto Globe* published "extracts from Tennyson's new poem" under the cross-head "Literary Matters" (2 November 1885 2). "The literary sensation of the week," ran the report, "has been Tennyson's poem called 'Vastness'" (2). The "sensation," the article indicates, arose not only from what *The Week's* review on November 19th would call its "poetic value" (802), but from its "apparently," according to the *Globe*, "satirizing various contemporary political and social movements" (2). Along with seven "Most Striking Verses" the *Globe* noted that "The fourth stanza is supposed to refer to the Salvation Army; the sixth to The Pall Mall Gazette [sic] exposures" (2).

The *Globe* extracted only seven of the fifteen stanzas which appeared in *Macmillan's*, and their order was inexplicably jumbled.⁴ Their "fourth" stanza was the sixth and their "sixth" actually the fifth in the *Macmillan's* text. What was identified, therefore, as referring to the Salvation Army is Stanza VI in the 1889 version of the poem from *Demeter, and Other Poems* (Ricks 3: 135):

Faith at her zenith, or all but lost in the gloom of doubts
that darken the schools;
Craft with a bunch of all-heal in her hand,
followed up by her vassal legion of fools . . .

(1889 11-12)

The Salvation Army had not emerged from the *PMG* scandal unscathed. Stead was in some circles regarded as a hero, even practically a martyr to the cause of passage of the Criminal Law Amendment Bill which had been one of his key motivations in writing "The Maiden Tribute."⁵ While it escaped criminal conviction when the Booths' son Bramwell, who had been charged with Stead, was acquitted, the Salvation Army added little that was favorable to its image, no doubt primarily because its motives in helping Stead were even more ambiguously perceived than his own.⁶

Although Tennyson, according to the *Globe*, may have seen the Salvation Army as a "legion of fools" following "Craft" rather than "Faith," the subsequent lines with their purported reference to the *PMG's* "exposures," suggest that his sympathies in the case that was then proceeding in the courts were with Stead. The more generous reports of the trial painted Stead as a well-intentioned, but overly enthusiastic and naïve man who had been taken in on all sides—by the unsavory parents of the victim, Eliza Armstrong; by the "underworld" types he cited as witnesses in the original piece;

³The other "piece of Tennyson gossip" was the announcement that this "new volume" [*Tiresias, and Other Poems*] would be published in December 1885, and would "consist, contrary to what has been reported, almost entirely of new poems" (*The Week* 29 October 1885, 764). Their subsequent review of the new volume, on December 31st, noted that many of the poems were, in fact, already known.

⁴The *Macmillan's* version of the poem in 1885 has fifteen stanzas. When it was included in 1889 in *Demeter, and Other Poems*, there were eighteen, two additional verses appearing between 1885 stanzas VI and VII, and one between 1885 VIII and IX. See Ricks 3: 134-37. The *Globe* printed 1885

and by the Salvation Army itself. At any rate, Tennyson, in the lines "supposed to refer to . . . the . . . exposures," shows that his concerns are the same as Stead's, with, that is,

Innocence seethed in her mother's milk, and Charity
setting the martyr aflame;
Thralldom who walks with the banner of Freedom,
and recks not to ruin a realm in her name.

(1889 9-10)

Stead had hoped to demonstrate to the court that Eliza's mother, who had brought the charge against him, was complicit in the abduction since she had, after all, willingly sold her thirteen-year-old child into what she appears to have believed was prostitution. In fact, it was public outrage about the mother's sale that had compelled a fearful Mrs. Armstrong to flee her angry neighbors and charge Stead several weeks after Eliza's transportation to a Salvation Army house in France: Mrs. Armstrong was unaware that Eliza was protected, and did not know where she had been sent. Stead's defense failed, but the sense that Eliza's "Innocence" was indeed "seethed in her mother's milk," which had emerged in the commentary upon "The Maiden Tribute," persisted in reports of the trial, and is echoed in this stanza. If it is the young girl's "Innocence" that is thus "seethed," the second line's foregrounding of "Thralldom" suggests that Tennyson, like Stead, is addressing the question of "white slavery." The "Freedom" to "enslave" young British girls which had so galvanized Stead, is represented here in terms similar to those so effectively deployed in the *PMG* story.

As in "The Maiden Tribute," in "Vastness" it is "Wealth with his wines and his wedded harlots" which exploits "honest Poverty, bare to the bone" (1889 19): Stead was convinced that child prostitution was a class issue, and Tennyson echoes him with this image of male "Wealth" and his "harlots." In the 1885 version, this stanza (1885 VIII), was followed by the lines on "Love," which Tennyson's note implies are the crux of the poem. Here too the "maiden" is invoked, and "marriage," "[h]ousehold happiness, [and] gracious children" are centrally situated as the poem's primary index of a balanced existence and, as in *The Princess* (1847), a balanced empire. It should be evident that the poem is to pivot upon this image of the "maiden" in love and marriage, for this (1889 XII) is the only stanza in the poem which is not broken into contradictory and mutually negating binaries. This ideal—suggested as a national hope (1889 XIII 25)—is threatened by all the "hatreds" which the poem addresses, but, with the "Innocence" of the earlier lines (1889 V), is at

stanzas I, II, and III in order (although with egregious errors in transcription); the VI fourth, IV fifth, V sixth, and XIV seventh.

⁵The Criminal Law Amendment Bill which was to raise the age of female consent from thirteen to sixteen, and to provide greater protection for young girls was stalled in Parliament. A crucial part of Stead's campaign was to force the passage of the bill, in which he succeeded: within days of the first installment of the *PMG* story, the Bill was passed.

⁶See, for example, *The Week* 26 November 1885, which cited the *Manchester Examiner*: "What are we to think of an organization which facilitates the kidnapping of an English child. . . ?" (827).

¹See Scott 125-27 on Stead's motives in writing "The Maiden Tribute."

²Roy Daniells cited in Bentley and Wickens (iii). In the introduction to their *Checklist of Literary Materials in "The Week,"* D. M. R. Bentley and

MaryLynn Wickens note the journal's importance to late-nineteenth-century English Canada (iii-iv).

greatest risk from the "Freedom" to keep "Innocence" in thrall, or slavery. This "Freedom," it is intimated in both Tennyson's and Stead's texts, marks not only the maiden's "ruin," but that of the entire "realm."

There are other suggestive references in the poem which are not noted by the *Globe*, but which, in light of the *Globe*'s comments, might be seen to be evoking the *PMG* story and the sensational trial which was taking place as "Vastness" went to press. The third stanza (1889), for instance, introduces an ambiguous note into the opening configuration of "vanish[ing] race[s]" as "a trouble of ants in the gleam of a million million of suns" (3): while the imperial implications of such an image are easily comprehensible, there is less obvious relevance in the ensuing observation of

Lies upon this side, lies upon that side, truthless violence
mourned by the Wise,
Thousands of voices drowning his own in a popular
torrent of, lies upon lies

(1889 5-6)

A similarly unidentified male figure also appears in the final line of the poem, which is separated from that which immediately precedes it by a line of asterisks: "Peace, let it be! for I loved him, and love him forever: the dead are not dead but alive" (1889 36). "The 'him,'" Buckley observes, "is usually taken to be a reference to Arthur Hallam," but this explanation offers little clarification to the source of the male voice which is "drown[ed]" out by lies in the third stanza (232).⁷ Conceivably, if the poem, as the *Globe* suggests, ought to be interpreted in light of its engagement with Stead's story in the *Pall Mall Gazette*, the male figure might be seen to be Stead himself, then on trial, and obviously moving toward inevitable conviction, his own "voice" really overwhelmed by the evidence presented for the prosecution.

There is no great leap to be made in linking "Vastness" with "The Maiden Tribute" and the *Pall Mall Gazette*. Tennyson had shown himself earlier in 1885 to be in sympathy with Stead's brand of imperialism, responding passionately to the alarmism which Stead had fostered with his influential "Truth about the Navy" campaign. It was in response to articles published in the *PMG* in early 1885 that Tennyson had written "The Fleet," printed on April 23rd 1885 in both the *Times*, under the title "The Fleet (On Its Reported Insufficiency)" (8), and in the *Gazette* under the title "'The Truth about the Navy.' A Warning by Lord Tennyson" (xli; see Ricks 3: 131-33). Stead, in fact, as Cecil Lang and Edgar Shannon note, had "sent Tennyson a copy of a leader, 'The Truth about the Navy Once More,' and an article 'Is Our Navy Ready for War? By One Who Knows the Facts,' accompanied by a letter 'calling his attention to the insufficiency of the British Navy' (*Pall Mall Gazette*, xli (13 Mar. 1885), 1-4; (23 Apr. 1885), 1" (Lang and Shannon 3: 311-12n). On March 14th Tennyson wrote to Stead, thanking him "for calling his attention to the article referred to. He has no doubt the Navy

is much below its proper strength" (Lang and Shannon 3: 311). Both "The Fleet" and Stead's campaign were extensively ridiculed: suggestions that Stead was exploiting imperial anxieties in an attempt to promote circulation of the *PMG* were rife; parodies of what the English-Canadian satiric paper *Grip* referred to as "That Poem by Tennyson" abounded (2 May 1885 n.p.) Taken together, however, "The Fleet" and the *PMG* articles served one crucial purpose, apart from prompting expenditure upon the British Navy by the reluctant Gladstone administration: the two related texts showed Tennyson and Stead to be in accord on imperial matters, and to share a sense of what Stead would call, after Cecil Rhodes, "'the Imperialism of responsibility' as opposed to Jingoism" (Scott 176).

The *Globe* short report on the connections of Tennyson's poem and the *PMG* story should thus draw our attention to what makes the intertextual engagement of "Vastness" and "The Maiden Tribute" so compelling: what brings the two texts into striking alignment is their almost simultaneous articulation of the profound anxiety which the Navy pieces had shown Stead and Tennyson shared about the condition of the British Empire, and their conviction of the responsibility of those with influence to address any weaknesses—military and moral—that would conceivably threaten the stability of all of "Saxondom," as Charles Dilke called the Empire in 1869. Tennyson wrote "Vastness," as he had written "The Fleet," to publicize matters of what he certainly saw as imperial importance. Where, in the earlier poem, he had aligned himself with Stead and "The Truth about the Navy" campaign, in this poem, he clearly engaged with the rhetoric of imperial decline which pervaded Stead's "revelations" of corruption at the "centre of civilization" and which emerged in many responses to it (*Halifax Herald* 10 July 1885 1).

One of the most influential responses to "The Maiden Tribute," and one which was widely disseminated throughout the Empire, was conveyed in a sermon delivered by the well-known London preacher Charles Haddon Spurgeon. Spurgeon announced at the Metropolitan Tabernacle on the Sunday following the first week of the *PMG* scandal that "Saxondom" should not expect to be exempted from the calamitous fate of other fallen empires. "The thoughtful reader of history," he urged, "will not fail to observe . . . how justice has dealt with empire after empire, when they became corrupt. Colossal dominions have withered to the ground, when sentenced by the King of Kings" (*Toronto Globe* 1 August 1885 7). When Tennyson opened "Vastness" with the observation that

Many a hearth upon our dark globe sighs after many
a vanished face,
Many a planet by many a sun may roll with the dust
of a vanished race (1889 1-2)

the echoes of Spurgeon's dire warning would have been evident to readers not only in London, but in all the "Greater Britain," for all of his sermons were regularly published in

such Anglo-colonial newspapers as the *Toronto Globe*. If, moreover, if it were not already apparent to what Tennyson was tending with the poem, the imperial connection becomes overt in the fifteenth stanza with its crucial rearticulation of his MS question:

Spring and Summer and Autumn and Winter,
and all of these old revolutions of earth;
All new-old revolutions of Empire—change of the tide—
what is all of it worth? (1889 29-30)

Why, in other words, pursue the "politics," the "glorious annals of army and fleet," and the "[t]rade" which are delineated in the poem as the workings of Empire, if "[a]ll that is noblest" continues to be matched by "all that is basest, all that is filthy with all that is fair" (1889 32)? Or, as Stead put it in a personal summary of his "political creed," "God has given us the most magnificent of missions, and it is impious to seek help from the devil to carry it out (Scott 109).

In one sense, the despair in "Vastness" may be seen as the result of a clash of mortality with "the divine life," as *The Spectator* review argued (1466). Tennyson's questioning, however, is not only concerned with "the general." When he asks,

What is it all, if we all of us end but in being our own
corpse-coffins at last,
Swallowed in Vastness, lost in Silence, drowned
in the deeps of a meaningless Past? (1889 33-34)

the plural subject returns to the specific "vanishing race" about whom this poem shows intense concern. In another important sense, therefore, "Vastness" ought not to be dissociated from

"No Sorrow I Have Thought More About": The Tragic Failure of George Eliot's St. Theresa*

June Skye Szirotny

*I dedicate this paper, a version of which I read before the Sydney Society of Literature and Aesthetics at the University of Sydney on June 12, 1992, to Catherine A Runcie, Ph.D., M.S.W. and Cheryl Krueckeberg, M. Div.

Whether George Eliot was in some sense a feminist has remained a moot question from her day to this. Though she knew "the supremacy of the intellectual life" (*M* lxxiii, IV:188)¹ and obtained for herself a "masculine" vocation that was life itself to her,² though she argued that women have a

its immediate cultural context, for to do so it lose the "value" of the poem as an index not only of Tennyson's own imperialism as it was involved with and related to Stead's, but of the effects which Stead's story had upon England and the Empire in 1885.

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right to education and that those deprived of love have a special need for independent work (*L* V: 107; see also *DD* xxxvi, III: 96), she speaks guardedly of women's right to self-fulfillment, and ultimately allows none of her idealistic heroines meaningful occupation outside the home. Dinah Morris, Maggie Tulliver, and Dorothea Brooke each makes a "sad . . . sacrifice" of her yearning for an "epic life" (*M*, Finale, IV: 370; Prelude, I: v, vi); Janet Dempster, Romola de' Bardi, and Fedalma, deprived of love, do not find the work

⁷Buckley suggests that "Tennyson may have been thinking, in both drafts, of his brother Charles" (232).

¹Abbreviations of George Eliot's works are: *George Eliot's Life as Related in Her Letters and Journals*, ed. J. W. Cross; *DD*—*Daniel Deronda*; *FH*—*Felix Holt*; "JR"—"Janet's Repentance"; *L*—*The George Eliot Letters*; *M*—*Middlemarch*; *MF*—*The Mill on the Floss*; *R*—*Romola*; *SG*—*The Spanish Gypsy*; *SM*—*Silas Marner*; *TS*—*Impressions of Theophrastus Such*. Unless otherwise noted, references to *M* are to the first edition. In *GE*'s

works, part numbers (book, chapter, or scene, or some combination of these) precede page, or volume and page, numbers. *GE* refers to George Eliot. ²Saying she lives for her art (see *L* III: 184, 187), *GE* repeatedly identified her work with her worth: *L* V: 133, 212, 244, 437; VI: 52; IX: 192; see also II: 221; VI: 23, 163; VII: 230; *Selections* 524.

that women ought to have to give them "joy in things for their own sake" (L V:107). While George Eliot laments their lack of fulfillment, she insists, especially in her early works, on its necessity.

Prior to the revival of interest in George Eliot in the fifties, most readers had seen her as conservative, if not retrograde, in advocating women's rights—"shar[ing] the conventional Victorian views of a woman's proper role" (Spacks 58).³ At the same time, readers have always seen *Middlemarch* as posing the Woman Question. And many, like Virginia Woolf, affected by George Eliot's seeming identification with her aspiring heroines,⁴ and by her criticism of the oppression women suffer, have sensed that she rebels against women's conventional roles.

Since the seventies, feminists interested in George Eliot have been preoccupied with trying to ascertain her precise position on the Woman Question. At first, feminists, looking for support in one who had successfully rebelled against society's strictures on a woman's pursuing a vocation outside marriage, but, persuaded, as Kate Millet says, that George Eliot's advocacy of women's right to vocations is little more than "an eloquent plea" (139), often denounced one by whom they felt betrayed.⁵ Then, when her critics had exhausted the vein they worked, others began to reclaim George Eliot as one of them. Some argued that she infuses the conventionally feminine with dignity, rejecting the notion that women's different nature makes them inferior to men.⁶ Others suggested that she views women as intellectually equal to men and deserving of the same autonomy, though tempering her enthusiasm for women's pursuit of the vocations men enjoy.⁷

But no one has seen in George Eliot that "healthy anger" that Ellin Ringler regards as appropriate in an author who

depicts the imbalance between male and female strength (59). No one disputes Françoise Basch's contention that George Eliot's awareness of woman's tragedy "never leads to militant feminism" (94), or Jeanie G. Thomas's that George Eliot's sensibility is not "a reforming one" (393; cf. 412).⁸ Without disputing that George Eliot is ambivalent, I want to suggest that she presents her most authentic view of the Woman Question in *Middlemarch*, and that that novel is a systematic indictment of a society that proscribes achievement for women—an indictment that tears at the very fabric of the social order. I shall show that, in *Middlemarch*, George Eliot denies that women do good by sacrificing, rather than fulfilling, themselves; and, demonstrating that men do appreciable good only when allowed to develop their own potentialities in a sympathetic environment, I will argue that she damns a society that deliberately deprives women of such an environment, only to satisfy its own selfish interests.

I

Though Dorothea yearns to find a channel for doing great good, she fails both in her chosen vocation as helpmate to her first husband and in her attempts to secure independent work. Readers have often explained her failure to do good to Casaubon, her first husband, by saying that she was selfishly concerned to do what she, rather than he, sees as helpful (see Harvey, "Intro." 14-16). But while George Eliot admires Dorothea's ultimate attainment of selflessness, she does not (always allowing for her ambivalence) confound this virtue with doing good, as in her early novels (where a superhuman ideal of selflessness only makes George Eliot irrelevant for the modern reader). On the contrary, she seems to make Dorothea

conform to the nineteenth-century ideal of women as self-sacrificing in order to explode the common view and show that a woman does good by fulfilling herself—by following her bliss, to use Joseph Campbell's phrase (see, e.g., *Hero's Journey* 33, 63-66, 210-214).

Intending to do good by trying to make herself into the person Casaubon wants her to be, Dorothea "shut[ting] her best soul in prison" (xlii, II: 374), becomes a veritable Griselda. But no sooner does she attain this character than she understands that her self-sacrifice will be useless. Prepared to pledge that she will carry on Casaubon's work after his death, she knows she is consigning herself "to work as in a treadmill fruitlessly" (xlviii, III: 94). Only after his death, when "Dorothea's native strength of will was no longer all converted into resolute submission" (liv, III: 198), when, possibly superstitious, she writes him that she will not go on with his work: "I could not submit my soul to yours, by working hopelessly at what I have no belief in" (liv, III: 202)—does she do good.

All her major acts after Casaubon's death show her doing good by following her inner warrant in opposition to society, though readers often cite two of these acts as evidence that Dorothea has finally become self-sacrificing and submissive enough to do good. Learning that Lydgate's reputation is besmirched, she sets about clearing his name. In disregarding others' "cautious weighing of consequences" (lxxii, IV: 180), she is seemingly moved by the same self-sacrificing passion to do good as Fedalma envisions in disciples spending their all, even if vainly, to save Christ from the cross (SG I: 154). But doing good being what she likes, she is by no means disregarding her own will. "The idea of some active good within her reach 'haunted her like a passion,' and another's need having once come to her as a distinct image, preoccupied her desire with the yearning to give relief" (lxxvi, IV: 230). Moreover, Dorothea succeeds in helping Lydgate because, in following her own inner warrant, she ignores the world's opposition. George Eliot creates an entire chapter to show that Farebrother, James, Brooke, and Celia all object to Dorothea's involving herself in Lydgate's problems. Likewise, in order to carry out her crowning work of charity—the ministrations that save Rosamond's marriage—Dorothea, believing that Rosamond has robbed her forever of all joy, must clutch her own pain. Yet because "[s]he yearned towards the perfect Right" (lxxx, IV: 282), her apparent self-denial is self-fulfillment—"self-forgetful ardour" (lxxxii, IV: 293). Furthermore, George Eliot seems bent on suggesting that Dorothea acts in opposition to public opinion. Even though no third person presumably knows what Dorothea says to Rosamond, George Eliot says that if Dorothea had not undertaken to save Rosamond, "why, she perhaps would have been a woman who gained a higher character for discretion, but it would certainly not have been as well for [Rosamond, Lydgate, and Ladislav]" (lxxxii, IV: 309). Finally, defying both Casaubon's and society's proscription, she marries Ladislav. And because she could have liked nothing better than that she should give Ladislav "wifely help," she becomes the helpmate Casaubon had rejected, living a life of "beneficent activity" (Finale, IV: 366, 365) by fulfilling herself.

II

When Dorothea follows her own passionate impulses, she does the good that her renunciations do not accomplish. But despite her ardor, she never succeeds in building cottages, becoming learned, or founding a village. At the end of the novel, she tells her sister that she could never do anything she liked (lxxxiv, IV: 340). What good she accomplishes is "not widely visible" (Finale, IV: 371). And since George Eliot sees doing good as the *summum bonum*, she laments Dorothea's failure—laments it especially because it is not in "the supreme unalterable nature of things" ("Address to Working Men" 10).

Asking herself in this novel what in the nature of things enables one to do good, George Eliot argues that success requires commitment to follow one's "inward vocation" (L VI: 438; cf. FH xxvii, II: 181), which in turn requires sympathetic support, especially of a spouse. Ranging over the whole of her society in this "Study of Provincial Life," she depicts each of her main male characters as encountering difficulties at the outset of his career that tempt him to succumb to the pressures of the world—either to ignore "the voices within" (xv, I: 254) in choosing a vocation, or to get entangled in money cares that cause him to abandon his calling. Only by marrying "a good unworldly woman" (xvii, I: 314) whom he cherishes as a partner—an intellectual equal—can he weather the battle with the Adam within and without (see xvii, I: 311-12), and succeed. He who marries one unsympathetic to his concerns or one his equal whom he refuses to regard as a partner—because supported in his vanity by tradition and *a priori* assumptions that women are ornaments, toys, or nurses—fails. Whereas, in *Felix Holt*, Esther says the lot of a woman depends on the love she accepts (xlili, III: 149-50; cf. M xxv, II: 58), in *Middlemarch*, George Eliot says the lot of a man depends on the love he accepts (see xv, I: 257).

Different as they are, Lydgate, Casaubon, Bulstrode, and Farebrother, for want of sharing their concerns with a sympathetic wife, all abandon their true vocations and so fail.

Classmates surely would have voted for Lydgate as the man most likely to succeed. "He was one of the rarer lads who early get a decided bent and make up their minds that there is something particular in life which they would like to do for its own sake, and not because their fathers did it" (xv, I: 253). Despite opposition from his guardian, Lydgate in pursuing medicine, which he considers "the grandest profession in the world" (xlv, III: 53; cf. xv, I: 258), is, as Farebrother says, "in the right profession, the work you feel yourself most fit for" (xvii, I: 314). But Lydgate never becomes another Vesalius. For when he tries to enlist his wife's aid, she, not identifying her interests with his, sabotages every one of his expedients for paying their creditors, with the result that he capitulates to the way of the world, renouncing his aspirations in order to amass money. Giving adornment "the first place among wifely functions" (xi, I: 163) and supposing it characteristic "of the feminine mind to adore a man's pre-eminence without too precise a knowledge of what it consisted in" (xxvii, II: 77), Lydgate supposed he had found the ideal wife in a conventional, small-souled woman. Too late he learns that to have married help, not care, he must have been able to

³Ellen Moers in her brilliant study, *Literary Women*, argues that GE was "no feminist" (194). John Halperin (161) uses the same words. Barbara Hardy says the novelist's "books make their feminist protest in a very muted way": she does not write "as a proselytizing feminist" (52, 51). In her classic study of literary women, Elaine Showalter (24) approvingly quotes Donald Stone as saying that nineteenth-century heroines "are hardly concerned with self-fulfillment in the modern sense of the term."

⁴Virginia Woolf says the story of GE's idealistic heroines "is the incomplete version of the story of George Eliot herself" ("George Eliot" 658b; see also 658a). Cf. Woolson 9. Lewes likened GE to Dorothea (L V: 163, 308, 332, 338, 352, 360).

⁵Lee R. Edwards in "Women, Energy, and *Middlemarch*," regarding *Middlemarch* as cherishing the values of Dorothea's world (see especially 224, 231, 237), declared that what had been "a sacred text" "can no longer be one of the books of my life" (224, 238). See also her *Psyche as Hero* 91-103. Jenni Calder says GE "diagnoses . . . 'the common yearning of womanhood' [i.e. women's aspirations—a misreading of GE, who, in *M Prelude* I: vi-vii, uses the phrase to mean women's desire for love], and then cures it, sometimes drastically, as if it were indeed a disease" (158). See Zeldia Austen.

⁶Several writers see GE's feminism in her very refusal to grant her heroines fulfillment. Patricia Spacks (36-47, 316) and Nancy K. Miller, the latter writing on Maggie (see especially 44), say GE views her heroine's selflessness as fulfilling. Kathleen Blake, in "*Middlemarch* and the Woman Question," claims that *Middlemarch* is "a great feminist work" because in it George Eliot protests that depriving women of their work as helpmates—"[w]omen's work is men" (285, 300)—is depriving them of identity. (Her argument is further supported by GE's repeatedly identifying herself with her work [see n. 2 above], and by her denial that the good of happiness is possible without the exercise of faculty [L VIII: 209; see also IV: 155-56, 168; V: 173].) Jeanie G. Thomas sees GE as "profoundly feminist" (393) in acknowledging women's disposition for nurture as a special strength. Susan Fraiman sees the author of *The Mill on the Floss* questioning whether women do not more effectively build character through social interaction than men through self-culture.

⁷Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar attribute to George Eliot covert rage against the patriarchal society that oppresses women, but argue that, in her later works, considering that "the injustice of masculine society bequeathes to women special strengths and virtues" (498), she balances her vengefulness against the countenancing of women's renunciation (499; see also 530). George Levine finds an ideal of vocations open to women "fully present in George Eliot's world," but colliding with "a strain of misogyny" that makes self-sacrifice "quintessentially the women's vocation" (13, 4). Blake, in a revision of her earlier article, more explicitly sees GE as arguing for women's right to a public life, but not as protesting the "self-postponement" women suffer in making men their work (*Love* 41). Carol A. Martin says GE protests against the obstacles that prevent women from realizing their aspirations, but seasons her protest with moderation. Gillian Beer says that GE, though "persistently work[ing] at the central dilemmas of feminism in her time," "was not . . . either a feminist theorist or activist" (1). Similarly, Deirdre David sees GE as sympathetic with intelligent women's desire for cultural and social power, but says her views of women's "womanly" character and love for the past make her complicit with male authority; she was not "actively feminist" (251 n. 3). Suzanne Graver, in "Incarnate History," no longer seeing GE as ambivalent toward feminism (64), argues that, in *M*, GE tries to fuse women's ethics of care and of rights—but says she legitimizes, as well as challenges, the *status quo* (73-74). (Earlier, in "Mill, *Middlemarch*, and Marriage" and *George Eliot and Community*, Graver argues that GE's responses to the Woman Question are contradictory. Like Spacks, Graver finds that "George Eliot's belief in the redemptive power of suffering caused her to see the very liabilities women suffered in marriage as contributing to their moral evolution" ["Mill," 62].)

⁸GE's contemporary Abba Gould Woolson is a possible exception. She says GE holds that "society is bound to promote [her heroine's ideals] by every means in its power. If, instead of this, it employs its institutions, customs, and structure of civilized society, as tending to the waste of its noblest energies, and to the cramping and debasement of the individual soul" (78; see also 46-47).

accord equality to a wife who, like Dorothea, would share his concerns.⁹

Casaubon, regarding his scholarship as "an outward requirement," by which he is to acquit himself in the eyes of others (xxix, II: 102), is driven by none of Lydgate's enthusiasm for his work. But, having married a good unworldly woman, he, unlike Lydgate, has help at hand. "[A]nxious to follow [the] spontaneous direction of his thought" (xx, I: 357), Dorothea might have enabled him to refocus his energies; "in spite of her small instruction, her judgment in this matter [of his opus] was truer than his" (xlviii, III: 92). But the same male ego that kept Lydgate from choosing a proper wife keeps Casaubon from seeing in his wife the "heaven-sent angel" (xlii, II: 372) he needs. Like Lydgate, having married "to adorn his life with the graces of female companionship, to irradiate the gloom which fatigue was apt to hang over the intervals of studious labour with the play of female fancy, and to secure . . . the solace of female tendance for his declining years" (vii, I: 104); and expecting his wife to observe "his abundant pen-scratches and amplitude of paper with the uncritical awe of an elegant-minded canary-bird" (xx, I: 363), he regards one who exhibits a mind as something he had to contend against (see xxix, II: 105), and thus he "achieve[s] nothing" (xlii, II: 357).

Bulstrode likewise fails because, like Casaubon, he seeks mastery in marriage and rejects the wifely help at hand. Like Lydgate, he early felt called to his work, but, seduced by the opportunity to make easy money that ultimately leads him to disgrace, he abandoned his dream of becoming a missionary. Candor with his first wife, "a simple pious woman" (lxi, III: 348), would have saved him by forcing him to give up a dishonest trade.

Like Lydgate, Farebrother is a clever man who does not fulfill the promise of his nature (see motto to xvii, I: 301). Possibly influenced by a dominating mother, whose father was a clergyman, he took "the fatal step of choosing the wrong profession" (xl, II: 333). Without interest in the Church, he is no more than "a decent makeshift" of a clergyman (xvii, I: 316). In love with Mary Garth and conscious that a woman may play so important a part in a man's life that "to renounce her may be a very good imitation of heroism" (lxvi, IV: 75), he might well have turned out differently if he had had Fred's luck in winning her. But he did *not* win her, and he cannot do anything remarkable.¹⁰

Those who succeed are no more ambitious or able, no less liable to difficulties, than those who fail. But Caleb Garth, Fred Vincy, and Will Ladislav succeed because, truly loving one who identifies her interests with his, each is able to stay focused on his true vocation.

Garth, motivated by his love of "business" (xxiv, II: 45; xl, II: 329; see also lvi, III: 238-39; lxxxvi, IV: 354), has pursued the work that had early been to him as poetry, philosophy, and religion (xxiv, II: 44-45)—the work that he regards as "the most honourable work that is" (xl, II: 329; see

also xl, II: 321). But unable to manage finances, he once failed in his business (xxiii, II: 8). Only because he leaned on his exemplary wife, who "[a]doring her husband's virtues" (xxiv, II: 29), devoted herself to supporting his aims, did he ultimately succeed. Only because he so much respected his wife's opinion that he took no important step without consulting her—in fact, allowed her to rule in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred (lvi, III: 247)—did he survive his money difficulties to become another Cincinnatus. As Farebrother says, without the partnership with his wife, Garth would hardly have pulled through (xvii, I: 314). With the partnership, Caleb, like his Biblical namesake, sees the promised land.

Fred, at the beginning of the novel, is as unpromising as Lydgate is promising. Desirous of feeding "a good appetite for the best of everything" (xii, I: 210), and pressured by parents to follow a genteel profession, he threatens to follow Bulstrode in letting the desire for money determine his vocation. But "thoroughly in love" (xiv, I: 248) with one who makes the condition of marriage with him renunciation of both his extravagant habits and a vocation in the Church for which he has neither taste nor aptitude, he takes up farming, for which he has a penchant. Because he cherishes the love of a good, enlightened woman, he succeeds in becoming a distinguished farmer.

Ladislav, not having early discovered his vocation, resists pressure that would make him "submissive to ordinary rule" (ix, I: 138)—in settling in a solid profession. Understanding that "[o]ur sense of duty must often wait for some work which shall take the place of dilettanteism [*sic*]" (xlvi, III: 59), he awaits "those messages from the universe which summon [genius] to its peculiar work" (x, I: 141; see also 142). But, abundant only "in uncertain promises" (xlvii, III: 78), though brilliant (xxxvii, II: 246; lxii, III: 369), he might have remained a dilettante but for his dread of doing what the woman he worships would disapprove (xxxvii, II: 263, 265; lxxvii, IV: 251). Without hope of winning Dorothea, he not only thinks to work at "the first thing that offers" (lxii, III: 377), but, dallying with a married woman, sees himself sliding "into that pleasureless yielding to the small solicitations of circumstance" (lxxix, IV: 272) that destroys Lydgate. With hope of winning Dorothea, he disentangles himself from Rosamond's snares and refuses to compromise himself by accepting Bulstrode's ill-gotten money (lxi, III: 362; lxxxiii, IV: 318). Married to Dorothea, he fulfills his dream of becoming an important reformer (see li, III: 146). For, humble enough to take "the pressure of [everyone's] thought instead of [like Casaubon] urging his own with iron resistance" (I, III: 126), and so respecting Dorothea's opinion (see xxii, I: 385; xxxvii, II: 251) that his feeling for her was "like the inheritance of a fortune" (xlvii, III: 74), he makes a partner of his wife. Readers who judge Ladislav unworthy of Dorothea because of his dilettantism and dependence on a beloved woman are approving the conformist values George Eliot contemns.

that she could save the former, not the latter. When Fred tells her that Farebrother was far worthier of her than he, she retorts, "To be sure he was, . . . and for that reason he could do better without me" (Finale, IV: 362-63; see also lvi, III: 277).

None of her usual ambivalence infects the answer George Eliot gives in these stories to the question what enables one to do good. At the height of her career in 1871, she is writing out of experience that made her believe "devoutly in a natural difference of vocation" (xxii, I: 405) and in the worker's need for a sympathetic spouse. Unattached and lonely for years, during which she lost hope of ever fulfilling her dream of writing a novel (L II: 406), during which she could scarcely envision any future for herself except as the lamp-holder Dorothea aspires to,¹¹ Mary Ann Evans became George Eliot only because, faithful to her "inward vocation,"¹² she linked her life to one who, caring more for her work than for his own (see L II: 260; III: 179; IV: 59; V: 175, 215, 261, 322; VI: 380), anxiously watched over her career. Having refused a marriage that would have "involve[d] too great a sacrifice of her mind and pursuits" (L I: 184)—having understood the difficulty for "a woman [to] keep her steadfastness / Beneath a frost within her husband's eyes / Where coldness scorches" ("Armgarth" ii, *Legend* 110)—George Eliot succeeded because she formed a liaison with one whose "perfect love and sympathy" stimulated her to "healthful activity" (L II: 343).

III

The stories of George Eliot's male characters suggest that Dorothea Casaubon fails to effect great good because she can neither follow her bliss, except in befriending the Lydgates, nor secure her husband's approval. But why is Dorothea, married to Ladislav—a sympathetic spouse, modelled on George Eliot's helpmate—"absorbed into the life of another" and "only known in a certain circle as a wife and mother" (Finale, IV: 366)? The answer is that the "epic life" she hungers after requires not only nurturing by a spouse but by society. Society's support is not lacking for the males in the novel, for an androcentric world approves of a man's pursuing a vocation, whereas it condemns a woman's ardor for meaningful work outside marriage as "extravagance" (Prelude, I: vii). And in a world where "the social air in which mortals begin to breathe" (Finale, IV: 370) lends no encouragement to the aspiring woman, where Dorothea's ardor finds no answering response in anyone but Ladislav (xxii, I: 401; xxxvii, II: 252; see also xxviii, II: 89-90), she feels stymied. Never able to rally support for her projects (Celia regards Dorothea's interest in drawing plans for cottages as only a "favourite *fad*"

[iv, I: 56]), she gives up. She says she might have done something better if she had been better, but no one in her environs "stated exactly what else that was in her power she ought rather to have done" (lxxxiv, IV: 342; Finale, IV: 366). In passages that enclose Dorothea's story—and George Eliot specifically directed a friend to the Prelude for an explanation of the story (L V: 330)—George Eliot plainly tells us that Dorothea fails because she cannot carve a life for herself outside "the framework of things" (xiii, I: 225).¹³ Forewarning us in the Prelude that Dorothea is a St. Theresa who is "helped by no coherent social faith and order" (I: vi), George Eliot explains in the Finale that Dorothea's "tragic failure" (Prelude, I: vi) is due to "the conditions of an imperfect social state" (Cabinet ed. III: 464), "[f]or there is no creature whose inward being is so strong that it is not greatly determined by what lies outside it" (IV: 370; cf. *SM* iii, 40; *FH* iii, I: 88; see also *MF* VI, vi, III: 76; *R* xxi, VI: 577; *M*, motto to iv, I: 52).

Some strong souls will say that an unsympathetic environment is too simple-minded an explanation for Dorothea's failure. Assuming that genius will out regardless of circumstances, as George Eliot's did, or perhaps unwilling to assume responsibility for having sent their infecting breath toward Dorothea (see xv, I: 257; see also Finale, IV: 370), some have insisted that Dorothea would have succeeded had she had the ability (as Maggie, had she had the initiative).¹⁴ But George Eliot stresses the worker's need for a sympathetic environment. In "Amos Barton," she had written, "That is a deep and wide saying, that no miracle can be wrought without faith—without the worker's faith in himself, as well as the recipient's faith in him. And the greatest part of the worker's faith in himself is made up of the faith that others believe in him" (ii, 7). In 1863, she commiserated with her friend Barbara Bodichon, who, living abroad, felt cut off from any artistic society that would help her and feed her faith:

It is hard to believe long together that anything is "worth while" unless there is some eye to kindle in common with our own, some brief word uttered now and then to imply that what is infinitely precious to us is precious alike to another mind. I fancy that, to do without that guarantee, one must be rather insane—one must be a bad poet, or a spinner of impossible theories or an inventor of impossible machinery. (L IV: 119)¹⁵

Finale, IV: 370), probably the most learned female saint, and to St. Catherine of Alexandria (liv, III: 195-96), patron of students.

¹⁵See also L IV: 494; VI: 96; *MF* I, viii, I: 139; *M* lxxviii, IV: 96; *DD* xlv, III: 300; liv, IV: 106-07. Virginia Woolf wrote, "Literature is strewn with the wreckage of men who have minded beyond reason the opinions of others" (*Room* iii, 85). Csikszentmihalyi writes: "Most of us deep down believe that a person who is creative will prevail regardless of the environment." But "even the greatest genius will not accomplish anything without the support of society and culture" (330).

Closely related to GE's notion that sympathy is necessary to one's successful pursuit of an occupation is her notion that sympathy may be essential for one's stability. Janet Dempster, Hetty Sorrel, Silas Marner, Esther Lyon, Rosamond Vincy, Gwendolen Harleth, and Mirah Lapidoth are saved from despair by another's sympathy, while Catherina Sarti, Latimer, and Don Silva are destroyed by rejection. Cut off from others' sympathy, Latimer, like GE, who in 1840 attributed a fit of sensitiveness to her need for sympathy (L I: 75), develops diseased psychic powers.

⁹Lydgate's story powerfully illustrates GE's argument, in her article on Fuller and Wollstonecraft, that men, by denying women partnership in marriage jeopardize their vocations.

¹⁰Mary suggests that one reason she married Fred rather than Farebrother was

In *Middlemarch*, George Eliot concerns herself with the influence of domestic conditions on success. But in other works, she shows that ardent men succeed or fail according as society smiles or frowns on them.¹⁶ The Rev. Mr. Tryan, supported by his congregation, does great good, but his pastoral work is cut short by his early death, due partially to his enemies' persecution of him; dependent on sympathy, suffering acutely from hatred and ridicule ("JR" viii, 203), and seeing death as the only escape (see xviii, 467), he "seemed bent on wearing himself out" (xi, 333). In "The Lifted Veil," written when George Eliot was suffering keenly over idle talk about her authorship, Latimer, endowed with the poet's sensibility but deprived of "the listening ear and answering soul"—suffering from "a fatal solitude of soul"—never becomes a poet: his nature "grew up in an uncongenial medium, which could never foster it into happy, healthy development" (i, 26). Savonarola is a formidable power as long as his party is dominant; when an antagonistic government imprisons him, he loses the faith in himself that no one, lacking external support, can sustain without "a stupid inflexibility of self-confidence" (*R* lxxi, VIII: 146), and withal his influence. Felix Holt, foiled by circumstances in which he is a lone voice crying in the wilderness, argues that he does not fear failure (xlv, III: 201), but, like Dorothea and George Eliot, he eventually moves away from his old home, presumably in search of a more sympathetic community. Zarca is, except for an assassin's blow, destined to save his people because he inspires their "savage loyalty" (*SG* V: 338). Daniel Deronda has good hopes of uniting his people because he feels supported by his ancestors and friends.

Except for Janet, who does not aspire to independent work, all George Eliot's ardent, idealistic heroines, who "care supremely for great and general benefits to mankind" (*DD* xlvi, III: 308), fail to find permanent, fulfilling work outside marriage because the world no more favors their aspirations than Dorothea's. Dinah gives up preaching when it is no longer sanctioned by the Wesleyan Conference. As "the only way of escaping opprobrium, and being entirely in harmony with circumstances" (I, xi, I: 193), Maggie renounces her aspirations for love and learning. Romola, commanded by Savonarola, abandons her hope to live as "an instructed woman" and devotes herself to charitable labors, for which "[s]he had no innate taste" (xxxvi, VII: 25; xlv, VII: 294). Fedalma, obeying her father's commands, renounces love and undertakes the futile, and hence dreary, task of governing her people.

Behind George Eliot's insistence on the worker's need for sympathy lies her own insatiable need for it, which proceeds from insecurity so deep that she could write in 1859, "[I]t is so difficult to believe what the world does not believe, so easy to believe what the world keeps repeating" (*L* III: 44). Necessary as Lewes's constant support was to her, it was not sufficient. She craved universal praise. Her "extraordinary diffidence" (*L* V: 228) having kept her from writing for years, she was so depressed by adverse criticism that she could con-

tinue to write only by ignoring criticism. Lewes wrote in 1862, "A thousand eulogies would not give her the slightest confidence, but one objection would increase her doubts" (*L* IV: 58; see also III: 157, 164, 397; IV: 481; VI: 218, 224, 318). But even general popularity did not satisfy her after the early years of her authorship; she must have understanding and influence (see *L* III: 198; V: 213, 228, 229, 244, 245, 250, 367, 374; VI: 258, 379; *Selections* 370). Repeatedly she wrote her worshippers that their approval, after her husband's, was encouragement she desperately needed. Imagine, she wrote an admirer in 1866,

the experience of a mind morbidly desponding, of a consciousness tending more and more to consist in memories of error and imperfection rather than in a strengthening sense of achievement—and then consider how such a mind must need the support of sympathy and approval from those who are capable of understanding its aims. (*L* IV: 300; see also II: 399-400; III: 6, 88, 170, 246, 393; IV: 248, 405, 434; V: 29, 185, 201, 229, 325, 358, 373; VI: 116, 226, 244, 394-95; *Selections* 370, 524)

The adulation did help to dissolve her "paralyzing despondency" (*L* V: 29). Lewes wrote Blackwood in response to the publisher's praise of *Daniel Deronda*, "Your note has been as good as a dose of quinine. As the drooping flower revives under the beneficent rain, so did her drooping spirits under your enthusiastic words" (*L* VI: 228). Though helplessly dependent on others' judgments—"I never think what I write is good for anything till other people tell me so" (*L* II: 260)—she came to have a sort of precarious belief in her power that enabled her to function. As Lewes wrote in 1871, when she was basking in the acclaim that followed publication of Book I of *Middlemarch*, "[S]he begins to feel that her life has indeed not been unavailing" (V: 228). For while "[a]ll the ringing chorus of praise . . . does not stifle her doubt," "by repetition the curing influences tell, for they become massed, and . . . enable her to *apperceive* the fact that her books are something more than mere amusements" (*L* VI: 226; V: 228; see also VI: 219; II: 406).

Four of her characters, three in poems she wrote while working on *Middlemarch* or shortly after, and the other in the novel succeeding *Middlemarch*, suggest that the "excessive diffidence" (*L* IV: 58) that paralyzed her in the absence of sympathy is rooted in her neurotic character. Like George Eliot and Zarca (see *SG* I: 153; III: 251), all four fulfill their "Caesar's ambition" for a "[s]upreme vocation" ("Armgart" i, *Legend* 77, 104) by determination to wrest success from a hostile world. But, deprived of their vocations and thus of the world's applause, they are assailed by guilt for the greatness they have secured by refusing to submit to the way of the world and "to be shapen after the average" (xv, I: 257). Recognizing the truth of the angel's words "'Twas but in giving that thou couldst atone / For too much wealth amid [others'] poverty," Jubal renounces his "litttle pulse of self"

and accepts an ignominious death ("The Legend of Jubal," *Legend* 45, 38). Accepting the condemnation in her friend's asking, "Where is the rebel's right for you alone?" when there is "the mighty sum / Of claims unpaid to needy myriads" ("Armgart" v, *Legend*, Cabinet ed. 130), Armgart, reborn from "that monstrous Self" nurtured by her success, does penance by resigning herself to a life in which she feels herself "Beating upon the world without response" ("Armgart" v, *Legend* 140, 133). Arion expiates the "born kingship" (Arion," *Legend* 237) that song confers on him, by consenting to his death. Though Leonora Alcharisi only temporarily loses her voice, she does not resume her glorious career. Behind her mysterious explanation—"I could not go back. All things hindered me—all things"—is loss of will begotten by guilt that she has pursued a career in defiance of her father and society. "I have been forced to obey my dead father," she says. "[E]vents come upon us like evil enchantments" (li, IV: 45, 29). With thunderous applause in her ears, George Eliot could forget that in writing she, like Leonora, was transgressing her family's and society's proscription against pursuing a vocation. But when the applause died away, then, aware that she had bought success by alienating the love that the child within her could not survive without, she ached for sympathy.

IV

George Eliot's enormous need for sympathetic support, which she shared with many of her female contemporaries, was partly due to the world's belittling of women. She had early understood the *a priori* notions upon which her androcentric society was founded: a woman is intellectually inferior to a man—"a man's mind . . . has always the advantage of being masculine,—as the smallest birch-tree is of a higher kind than the most soaring palm,—and even his ignorance is of a sounder quality" (ii, I: 27),¹⁷—or if undeniably superior, then a "mistake of nature" (*MF* I, ii, I: 14; cf. *M* x, I: 161)—"a woman's no business wi' being so clever" (*MF* I, iii, I: 22)—who would master her husband. In *Middlemarch*, explaining the important role women play in making their husbands successful, George Eliot tries to show that in fact some women are the intellectual and moral equals of men, and that, as she had said in her essay on Fuller and Wollstonecraft, these women are not the threat to men that unenlightened women are. But in her late works, perceiving the oppression and exploitation of women—seeing that society's notions of women's inferiority are only rationalizations of ruthless egoism—understanding at last that society projected its own selfishness on women who pursued vocations, she savagely turned on a world that she saw as more and more stupid and sinister. In *Middlemarch*, she not only indicts society for depriving Dorothea of the support she needs to succeed in the projects she undertakes after marriage, but she bitterly accuses society of consciously and insidiously sacrific-

ing Dorothea on the altar of sexism when she chooses her first husband. In the Finale of the first edition of the novel, George Eliot enumerates the conditions responsible for Dorothea's disastrous choice. She could not have married Casaubon if society "had not smiled on propositions of marriage from a sickly man to a girl less than half his own age—on modes of education which make a woman's knowledge another name for motley ignorance—on rules of conduct which are in flat contradiction with its own loudly-asserted beliefs" (IV: 370). Whatever reason George Eliot had for later deleting these words that have generated much controversy, she did not thereby delete from the novel the argument here.¹⁸

Society says nothing to disabuse Dorothea of the notion that in making a January-May marriage she is entering on what she thinks is a nurturing father-child relation. For indeed society approves what is in reality the master-slave relation that Casaubon seeks in deliberately choosing as wife "a blooming young lady—the younger the better, because more educable and submissive" (xxix, II: 98). When the "winter-worn husband" (xxxvii, II: 250) tells her, "The great charm of your sex is its capability of an ardent self-sacrificing affection, and herein we see its fitness to round and complete the existence of our own" (v, I: 80), he is clearly expressing a commonplace idea. Dorothea's friends would only substitute one such relation for another in preferring to Casaubon, James, who thought he would have been willing to put up with some predominance in Dorothea, since he could put it down when he liked (ii, I: 27).

In order to judge Casaubon rightly, Dorothea, who, as a woman, had been denied all but a toy-box education (see x, I: 147; iii, I: 39), should have been privy to masculine learning. For what she needed to know was that Casaubon's clergyman's gown concealed no holiness, and his voluminous notes, nothing but dryasdust pedantry—information that her world, regarding Casaubon as "a man of profound learning" (i, I: 9; see also xxx, II: 114) could hardly have supplied. Furthermore, the objections of her circle—"Mrs Cadwallader's contempt for a neighboring clergyman's alleged greatness of soul," "Sir James Chettam's poor opinion of his rival's legs," "Mr Brooke's failure to elicit a companion's ideas," and "Celia's criticism of a middle-aged scholar's personal appearance" (x, I: 143)—could not rightly carry any weight with one "whose notions about marriage took their colour entirely from an exalted enthusiasm about the ends of life" (iii, I: 39; see also v, I: 79).

Readers who argue that "Dodo" is culpable for her mistake in marrying Casaubon point out that none of her friends would have made her mistake (see ix, I: 124). But friends who would have had her marry one (James) who not only would have made her miserable but would not have been so obliging as to leave her a young widow, are hardly wise counselors. If Dorothea's friends happen to be right in opposing her marriage, they are so only because, as George Eliot

¹⁶Silas Mamer, who continues his weaving though "cut off from faith and love" (ii, 35), might seem to be an exception. But the world does not reject

his work. Moreover, his work does not involve his ego; he weaves "like the spider, from pure impulse, without reflection" (ii, 26). See *L* VI: 48.

¹⁷CF the impressions of GE's friend and biographer, Oscar Browning, after looking over examination papers, that, "irrespective of the marks he might give, the best woman was intellectually the inferior of the worst man" (qtd. in Woolf, *Room* iii, 81).

¹⁸Readers have seen GE's excising of the offending words as admission of her mistake. But it is more likely that she deleted the words on grounds that she

had already made the meaning of her story clear (she expressed a doubt that there should have been an Epilogue [*L* V: 405]). Furthermore, she may have had second thoughts about inflicting on her readers so savage an exhortation of society; elsewhere in her writings she deleted passages to tone down her original.

says in another context, "wrong reasoning sometimes lands poor mortals in right conclusions" (iii, I: 34). Readers who dispute the world's responsibility for Dorothea's marriage often impute to George Eliot an ironical view of her heroine's mistaken notions ("Dorothea . . . retained very child-like ideas about marriage"; "Celia, whose mind had never been thought too powerful, saw the emptiness of other people's pretensions much more readily" [i, I: 7; ii, I: 107]), forgetting that when Dorothea's marriage has failed, George Eliot no more blames Dorothea for her choice of husband than she blames Romola for hers. "Was it [Dorothea's] fault that she had believed in [Casaubon]—had believed in his worthiness?" (xlii, II: 374). Attributing Dorothea's naïveté both to ignorance for which she is not responsible, and to ardor that is more admirable than calculation and prudence,¹⁹ George Eliot merely smiles at Dorothea's naïveté as she smiles "with some gentleness" (Prelude, I: v) at the innocent child St. Theresa seeking martyrdom. Dorothea's idealizing of Casaubon (see iii, I: 31; v, I: 81; ix, I: 125), which is due to "that simplicity of hers, holding up an ideal for others in her believing conception of them, was one of the great powers of her womanhood" (lxxvii, IV: 252).

Not only Dorothea's ignorance but society's hypocrisy, which Milton says "neither man nor angel can discern" (*Paradise Lost* Bk. III, ll. 682-83), blinds Dorothea. Vociferous as are Dorothea's friends in objecting to her marriage, they do not fundamentally oppose the match. For it satisfies their most deeply rooted concerns that she marry money and social position. Dorothea's uncle and guardian reveals the priorities society dare not flaunt. He tells her he could not "have consented to a bad match. But Casaubon stands well: his position is good" (v, I: 72). Even faced with the disappointment of Mrs. Cadwallader, who consoles herself that Casaubon has money enough (vi, I: 92), shilly-shally Brooke holds firm. "I should have been travelling out of my brief to have hindered [the match]. . . . He is pretty certain to be a bishop, is Casaubon" (vii, I: 110).

Professing to object to Dorothea's sacrifice of herself to Casaubon, her companions, regarding their own interest, actually manipulate her into making a sacrifice of the sort George Eliot had deplored in the forties. According to her pupil, Mary Sibree, Mary Ann

thought that though in England marriages were not professedly "arrangés," they were so too often practically: young people being brought together, and receiving intimations that mutual interest was desired and expected, were apt to drift into connections on grounds not strong enough for the wear and tear of life; and this, too, among the middle as well as in the higher classes. (Cross ii, 58)

In fact, George Eliot emphasizes that society covertly approves of the match by implicitly comparing its reactions to Dorothea's two marriages. When Dorothea announces her intention to marry Casaubon, her friends do nothing but grum-

ble behind her back. Brooke refuses to forbid the marriage until she is of age—considering marriage a cure for Dorothea's vagaries, he is disposed to hurry it on when he sees her opposed to marrying James (vii, I: 110)—and her clergyman, who says he knows no harm of Casaubon (viii, I: 114, 118), will not intervene. But when Dorothea marries a second time—marries one neither well born nor possessed of any fortune but his brains (xxx, II: 121)—society does not stand by helpless. Brooke threatens to disinherit her, and all her family excommunicate her. When one critic asks what more society could have done to prevent her marriage to Casaubon, short of putting strychnine in his tea (review of *M* 550; see also Harvey, "Criticism of the Novel" 133-34), the answer is plenty.

If society, while smiling on Dorothea's first marriage, is at the same time dismayed by it, that is so because, as George Eliot says elsewhere, "mortals have a great power of being astonished at the presence of an effect towards which they have done everything, and at the absence of an effect towards which they have done nothing but desire it" (*DD* xxii, II: 64-65). Not to see the malevolent character of a society that regards women as pawns in the marriage game is to identify with the world that George Eliot makes the object of her most trenchant irony—a world that she will excoriate in *Daniel Deronda*.

V

The angry feminist critics of the seventies have largely been silenced by feminist apologists who have rallied around George Eliot since the late seventies. Yet the battle is not over. Christina Crosby, focusing on *Daniel Deronda*, has recently written that George Eliot relegates women to "the realm of reproduction," making them "but instruments to further man's transcendence" (23, 27; see also 161 n. 20). One must still say that George Eliot "occupies a profoundly uneasy position among feminist literary critics," as Ringler wrote in 1983 (55).

And for many this is not likely to change, given certain ineluctable facts. Most important is George Eliot's emphasis on sacrifice and submission ("[a]ll self-sacrifice is good" [*L* I: 268]). But as I have tried to show, George Eliot questions the value of sacrifice in *Middlemarch*, even endorsing Ladislav's dictum that "[t]he best piety is to enjoy" (xxii, I: 398). Her attitudes toward self-sacrifice and self-fulfillment are not the same throughout her works; at the end of her career, when she wrote *Middlemarch*, she was more given to "innovation" (*TS* ii, 40) than at the beginning.

Certainly, disposed to lead a contemplative, rather than an active, life (see *L* II: 383; IV: 473; V: 324-25, 344); plagued by a "doubting mind" (*L* IV: 472)—by "the labour of choice" (*MF*, II, i, I: 283);²⁰ and hating to sit in the judgment seat (see *L* VI: 418; see also II: 306, 383; IV: 207; V: 76, 344, 367, 471; VII: 44; GE's "German Wit" 7), she embarrasses apologists by her hesitancy to take a stand on the Woman

Question (see *L* II: 383, 396; IV: 364, 366; V: 58; VII: 44), except in the matter of women's right to a "masculine" education (see *L* IV: 364, 366, 399, 401, 468; "Woman in France" 472; "Art and Belles Lettres" 642-43). Cherishing "the relation of the sexes and the primary ties of kinship" as "the deepest roots of human wellbeing" (*TS* xvi, 286), she would not hold up a life of achievement as every woman's goal. Moreover, while she did not want any to suffer unjustly (*L* IV: 366; see also 364), she was, like her Armgart, an elitist, especially concerned that exceptional talent not be frustrated.²¹ Writing even as a radical youth²² that "woman does not yet deserve a much better lot than man gives her" (*L* II: 86; see also 157), she had no interest in spurring women on to imitate her in pursuing a career. Believing, as Klesmer insists in *Daniel Deronda*, that good work requires sacrifice²³ and that bad work is an offense,²⁴ she would not encourage dilettantes. Passionately concerned to disprove the conventional notion that women are inferior—convinced that they have "a precious specialty" ("Silly Novels" 461)—she was chiefly concerned with promoting the talented woman (see *L* V: 406).

Furthermore, if she would not encourage women to take up careers, neither would she tell women who needed no prodding to pursue a vocation that they, like her, could succeed if they, like her, were willing to suffer from prejudice. Many feminists are indignant that she did not present models of successful women. Lee R. Edwards says George Eliot could not imagine a world in which Dorothea could have succeeded by force of will ("Women, Energy, and *Middlemarch*" 234, 235-36, 237-38). Clearly she could, since she herself had succeeded by "willing to will strongly" (*L* VI: 166). But she wanted to expose the reasons of her suffering,²⁵ not celebrate her expensive victory.²⁶ Having dared to write only in middle age, though early preoccupied with fame (see *L* I: 7, 12, 47, 227, 237, 252; Cross ii, 53), and miserable that her life was of no consequence (*L* II: 93), then, able to write only by battling depression and despair that came partly from "suffer[ing] the slavery of being a girl" (*DD* li, IV: 30), she bitterly resented that, even though blessed with some conditions the most favorable for her development, she paid a terrible price, such as men do not pay, for her "far-resonant action" (*M* Prelude, I: vi). What she wanted to do, in her last three novels, *Middlemarch* especially, was to protest the sexism that made life intolerably hard for women like herself, able and ambitious—George Eliots who never find the living stream in fellowship with their own oary-footed kind (see *M* Prelude, I: vii).

And this brings me to a point seldom made. In an effort to ameliorate the conditions under which she labored, George

Eliot, always aware of the arguments against granting women equality, wrote not so much for women as for men, especially young men, as still impressionable. At the end of 1867, when she was already contemplating *Middlemarch*, she wrote that "young men . . . are just the class I care most to influence" (*L* IV: 397; see also V: 212-13, 367; VI: 405). Having early understood that woman's lot in a androcentric society is dependent on the lot men give her (see *FH* xxvii, II: 182; xliii, III: 149-50), she strives in *Middlemarch* to enfranchise women not so much by inspiring women, but by persuading men to see their own self-interest in according women the respect that would free them. Thus while George Eliot, by showing Dorothea's support of Ladislav's work, may not seem to have advanced an argument for women's right to an independent occupation, she was, by stressing Ladislav's acceptance of Dorothea as his equal (if not his superior [see *L* VI: 394]), responding to those, like her Mr. Tulliver, who fail to see that their own interest lies in dispossessing themselves of the notion that women are too stupid to be partners with men.

Add to her ambivalence and elitism, her consciousness that radical views on the position of women did not come well from one damned for her irregular life (see *L* IV: 364, 425), as well as her lack of sympathy for some feminists (*L* V: 58),²⁷ and one can understand her detachment, except as an "aesthetic" (*L* VII: 44), from the battle over the Woman Question.

Yet, despite the certainty that she would not have wanted to be called a feminist (had the word meaning an advocate of equal rights for women existed in her lifetime), I contend that her most authentic self was fiercely, if sometimes covertly, rebellious against the restrictions talented women suffered in pursuing a vocation, and that this self was passionately devoted to abolishing the prejudices of a society that would deny women public vocations. Having tried, unsuccessfully, in her earlier works to reconcile herself to women's sacrifice of their aspirations, as doing good; and having, in her latter years, won the "glorious achievement" (*R* lxxi, VIII: 147) that emboldened her to release her repressed anger at the establishment, she could express her true self in *Middlemarch*.

Feminists when they sensed in *Middlemarch* "a sacred text" saw more truly than when such of them as Edwards came to regard their original intuition as "an adolescent fantasy" ("Women, Energy, and *Middlemarch*" 238). Ellen Moers says that readers have always been surprised to discover that George Eliot was no feminist (194); and indeed one must disbelieve one's senses to think that George Eliot's experience would have made her other than passionately concerned with

¹⁹GE comments ironically on the superior insight Celia has about Casaubon by virtue of feeling less than Dorothea: "To have in general but little feeling, seems to be the only security against feeling too much on any particular

occasion" (vii, I: 107).

²⁰GE uses similar phrases in "JR" xxiv, 525; ; *R* lxi, VII: 705 (2 references); lxxviii, VIII: 133.

²¹In 1857, she wrote a friend, "'La carrière ouverte aux talen[t]s,' whether the talents be feminine or masculine, I am quite confident is a right maxim. Whether 'La carrière ouverte à la sottise,' be equally just, when made equally universal, it would be too much like 'taking sides' for me to say" (*L* II: 396). Feminists have criticized GE for isolating herself from her sister artists (see Showalter 107), but one can scarcely blame a woman naturally reserved, who was spit at by "the world's wife" (*MF* VII: ii, III: 249, 253). Incidentally, indifference to one's sisters is not now thought reason for questioning a woman's feminism.

²²GE became more conservative after her liaison with Lewes, and, then, after working through personal issues in her fiction, returning in later years to something approximating the radicalism she adopted after her apostasy.

²³In 1864, GE said that study, hard work, and heroism "must always go to the doing of anything difficult" (*L* IV: 159). See also I: 277; III: 177, 467; "Silly

Novels" 460; *DD*, xxiii, II: 97. Lewes thought GE was performing a service in setting forth in *DD* "the arduousness and difficulties of a career so facile in imagination" (*L* VI: 193).

²⁴See *L* II: 210, 396 n.7; III: 226, 241; IV: 367, 376, 425, 467; V: 33, 185, 212; VI: 113, 409; VII: 3; VIII: 384; "Silly Novels" 460-61. In 1879, GE refused to encourage a young writer whom she thought unpromising (*L* VII: 177-78).

²⁵In 1874, GE wrote, "[W]hat evil can be got rid of on a sudden? Only it makes a difference when the evil is recognized as an evil, because then action is adjusted to gradual disappearance instead of contemplated permanence" (*L* VI: 47).

²⁶Woolf, "George Eliot" (658b), saw GE's work as wearing her life away, as indeed GE herself did (*L* VI: 415).

²⁷GE insisted that women should remain feminine (*L* IV: 468; V: 406).

the right of women to pursue vocations. With Dorothea, commiserating with Lydgate over the failure of his life's work, George Eliot would have said, "There is no sorrow I have thought more about than that—to love what is great, and try to reach it, and yet to fail" (lxxvi, IV: 237; see also xlii, II: 367; lxxvi, IV: 243). And because in this novel she brilliantly and powerfully makes the case for reform—showing that women are deprived of their right to a public life because egoism and stupidity motivate the sexism of a society that exploits women to its own hurt—she has, I think, produced in *Middlemarch* the greatest feminist novel ever written²⁸—a novel that the successes of the feminist movement have not rendered irrelevant in our time.

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"A Total Subversion of Character": Dr. Jekyll's Moral Insanity

Mary Rosner

[R]eading the sciences alongside their contemporary fiction . . . reveal[s] the ways in which these two apparently separate domains of thinking and writing inform or advance or create tensions within each other. (Small 27)

One of those territories investigated by Victorian explorers in the age of empire was the mind. And for the Victorians, this "terra incognita" invited a growth of theories, including theories of insanity. By mid-century, definitions of insanity included disorders not only of the intellect but of "The [Animal] Propensities" and "The Moral Sentiments" (Bucknill and Tuke 98). These categories were not considered fixed but "only the points and headlands of a recently discovered coast, which navigators have but partially delineated" (Bucknill and Tuke 98). Like the external coasts that bounded the empire, these mental coastlines were sites of mystery and conflict—for both the medical professional and the educated Victorian since by the 1850s, "discussions of a wide range of theories about the workings of the mind, including the definition, classification, and treatment of insanity, were a significant feature of Victorian journals and periodicals. . . ."

(Taylor 29). And one of those widely discussed theories described a condition known as moral insanity. While some attention has been given to Stevenson's *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* as symbolic of a morally insane world (Lawler 256), and the main character as a victim of various kinds of disruption—for example, "psychological dis-integration" (Block 29), hysteria (Showalter), atavism (Arata), chemical dependency (Wright, Jagoda), blurred gender boundaries (Doane and Hodges)—little attention has been given to Stevenson's explicit evocation of moral insanity.

I

"[T]he functions of the mind are of a twofold nature—those of the intellect or faculty of thought alone—such as perception, judgment, reasoning—and again, those of the moral faculties—the sentiments, affections, propensities, and passions, which it has pleased Heaven, for its own wise purposes, to implant in the nature of man." ("The State Trials Report" [Alexander Cockburn speech] 42)

²⁸Was Lewes alluding to the feminist message of the novel when he wrote in December 1871 that he has "all along felt that women would owe [GE] peculiar gratitude for that book" (L V: 225)?

Claims that the brain was composed of several faculties, and that the brain and the mind were connected,¹ led some nineteenth-century physicians to challenge the conventional attribution of madness to a failure of intellect alone;² they argued that, in addition to the intellect, the moral faculty could be subject to disease. While the French were the first to develop an interest in this kind of disorder where "the intellect was not suspended, but . . . over-riden" and the "understanding could remain intact while the individual was *carried away* by some blind force. . ." (Eigen 34-35), it was the nineteenth-century English doctor James Prichard who developed a theory of moral insanity, with his 1835 publication of *A Treatise on Insanity* becoming "a source of systematic information on mental disorders for the half-century" to follow (Bynum 232). Prichard identified moral insanity as "a morbid perversion of the natural feelings, affections, inclinations, temper, habits, moral dispositions, and natural impulses, without any remarkable disorder or defect of the intellect or knowing and reasoning faculties, and particularly without any insane illusion or hallucination" (*Treatise* 16). The morally insane could appear perfectly normal; in fact, they could be diagnosed only when, *without* sufficient provocation, their behavior would change dramatically to become anti-social in some way—for example, morbidly depressed or angry or eccentric or short-tempered or destructive *due to an impulse they could not resist*.

Prichard suggested a number of causes for this disease—only some under the individual's control: heredity, anxiety, lack of moral education, excessive intellectual activity, head injury, sensuality, intestinal irritation, puerperal mania, and liquor. And he offered a number of case studies to demonstrate how widely the disorder affected the apparently respectable population, including histories of "an alcoholic squire, a middle-aged gentlewoman who suffered a strange restlessness, a gentleman who developed an obsessional tidiness, and so forth" (Donnelly 137). One type of moral insanity that seems reflected in Dr. Jekyll, for instance, could afflict men of "considerable age" and "unimpeachable reputation" who would display "a total subversion of character" and become "loose in their morals, depraved, reckless, and devoid of all moral principle" (*On the Different Forms* 59). Thus, a kind, generous, and affectionate gentleman, who possessed "the highest moral and religious principles . . . and the strictest regard for that correct conduct which is due to those of his own rank in society," succumbed suddenly to "an unfortunate excess": "He became irregular in his habits, negligent of his person, careless of the society he fell into,

addicted to drinking, suspicious of his friends, wantonly extravagant, perverse in disposition, irritable and overbearing" (*On the Different Forms* 51). Under Prichard's care, after some time the gentleman conducted himself like a sane man (i.e., like a gentleman), was released, and soon relapsed to be committed again, released, and again committed.³ In effect, he was labeled mentally ill when his behavior was inappropriate for his social status.

As the wide variety of cases suggests, Prichard failed to define the term precisely, using it to refer variously to overly emotional, inappropriate, and criminal conduct (McCandless 355, Taylor 48). Popularly used, Prichard's diagnosis allowed the boundaries between insane and evil to blur; as "the inability to distinguish between natural right and wrong" ("Moral Insanity" [1871] 323) characteristic of the disease was evoked to explain both moral perversion and criminal behavior.

The morally insane are unnatural in their thoughts and conduct. They have their own standard of right and wrong, and it is generally at variance with that which the community ordinarily accepts. They will lie, steal and even kill if their perverted natures so dictate. They are profane or obscene; are quarrelsome or cruel; are indolent and often become spendthrifts or drunkards. They are often extremely shrewd and even logical, and are capable of schemes, intrigues, and diabolical villainies. They are incapable of comprehending or doing right, because by organic defect, or morbid mental deficiency they are powerless to do otherwise. (Stahley 635)

II

[Moral insanity] has become the favourite resort in defending these desperate culprits, who give no indications of insanity but the enormity of their crimes.

("Moral Insanity" [1857] 348)

The concept of moral insanity was disturbing for several reasons. It could undermine the complacency of those Victorians who enjoyed their place in the world since the disease was said to paralyze the moral sense and leave "the emotions . . . in control," transforming not only members of the lower classes but British gentlemen and ladies into animals, "atavistic throwback[s], . . . anomal[ies], . . . monster[s]" (Carlson and Dain 138-39). It could also call into question long-established legal standards for ascertaining criminal

ing that some control of the individual over himself was possible. In *A Manual of Psychological Medicine*, for instance, Bucknill and Tuke cite the case of a man who felt the approach of an unexplainable "sudden fury" and tried to prevent its consequences by imposing mechanical restraints on himself (197). Mad doctor Forbes Winslow writes about the case of a man who, when he felt the approach of the disease, "begged to be secured and chained, that he might not commit some dreadful crime" (*Plea* 45); about a woman who "shuddered with terror as she described the impulse that took place within her, between her sense of duty and religion, and the impulse that urged her" to kill her husband and children (*Plea* 49); and another about a female servant who begged to be dismissed because she felt an "almost overwhelming impulse" to murder her mistress's child (*Plea* 46).

behavior. Thus, when these "monsters" killed, they often became the focus of legal debates about arguments for non-responsibility, with the defense describing them as victims driven by "blind . . . obedience to disordered impulses" (Jamieson 268)). While not strictly existing as a plea, "'moral insanity,' 'partial insanity,' and 'impulsive insanity' [terms often used interchangeably] . . . kept continually rearing their hideous heads in the dock" (Scott II, 336). At issue was the belief in self-control, and the security that comes with believing that restraint, order, and lawful/moral behavior result from choice. Moral insanity denied the individual that choice and self-control: "he who has been the slave, rather than the master of his animal nature, listens to its dictates without question . . . and is mad" (Barlow 12-13).

Perhaps the greatest outcry against the moral insanity argument was that it was frequently seen as protection for the criminal: "invented by doctors as an excuse for crime" (Blandford 218), it was attacked as "a *ruse*, by which to enable a guilty man to avail himself of the natural disinclination of juries to convict of crimes whose punishment is death" ("Jurisprudence" 330). Moreover, it was suggested that a successful moral insanity defense could encourage criminal behavior in those healthy individuals who chose not to exercise self-denial:

All that a man has got to do is only just not to exert his reasoning powers, never to control himself or to check his passions, only to give himself and his evil nature full swing, only to go on brooding over malicious and morbid, yet perfectly voluntary, thoughts and feelings, and he will very soon find his will too powerful for him. He is therefore insane—therefore irresponsible.

("Homicidal Mania and Moral Insanity" 371)

The consequences of successful moral insanity arguments could be far-reaching. Questions about justice under the law were raised "when a [moral insanity] defence is admitted which no one understands, and which has the peculiar advantage of requiring no evidence to support it" ("Criminal Irresponsibility" 218). Moreover, if, as one judge explained, moral insanity described a state of mind where a man killed under irresistible impulse, aware that he was doing wrong but unable to stop himself, then his plea would be "fatal to the interests of society and security of life" (*R v. Burton* 357). As it moved from medical to legal contexts, and to popularized accounts of courtroom battles, the fact of moral insanity was debated in specialized and popular literature.

III

Good moral feeling is to be looked upon as an essential part of a sound and rightly developed character in the present state of human evolution in civilised lands; its acquisition is the condition of development in the progress of *humanization*. Whoever is destitute of it is to that extent a

defective being; he marks the beginning of race-degeneracy. . . . (Maudsley 197)

Since the publication of *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* in 1886, Hyde has been associated with specific Victorian fears. For instance, identified with the primitive, "lower nature, which every one should seek to bring into subjection. . ." ("Secret Sin" [1886] 227; see also Elbarbary, Brantlinger, McLynn), he represents a stage that Victorians believed they had evolved beyond. As we have seen, moral insanity similarly described a condition in which this lower nature, associated with the animal sensibilities, predominated because it was not held in check by the intellect or by the moral disposition. For part of the century, criminality was similarly explained: "The born criminal was an atavism, a savage in the midst of civilization" (Russett 71). It knew no constraints based on logic or morals. In making Hyde criminally violent and suggestive of criminality⁴—"The mere sight of him is enough to provoke extreme aversion, a reaction recognized by contemporary criminologists" (Leps 205)—Stevenson evokes a disturbing and recognizable link between the respectable and the other (also see Auerbach, Brantlinger and Boyle, Heath, and Kalikoff)—just as Prichard had done in his case studies of the morally insane.

But Stevenson's novel does more than acknowledge that connection; like Prichard, he attempts to describe the nature of an anomaly: "the novel . . . emblemize[s] the generalized efforts to define deviance and normality in a changing industrialized society" (Leps 205); it shows "the composition and operation of the criminal mind" (Thomas 239), with Dr. Jekyll representing "the clearest vision of the respectable murderer" in Victorian England (Kalikoff 130). Like many of his contemporaries, Stevenson locates the anomaly known as "killer" in the borderland between insanity and evil, when Jekyll diagnoses Carew's murderer by referring to a specific mental disease: "I declare at least, before God, no man morally sane could have been guilty of that crime, upon so pitiful a provocation; and that I struck in no more reasonable spirit than that which a sick child may break a plaything" (49).

This diagnosis, which invites a reading that makes Hyde symbolic of Jekyll's moral insanity, does not deny other significances attached to Hyde; it simply suggests part of the text that we may be missing. Like Prichard's man of "unimpeachable reputation," the Jekyll that opens the novel is a highly esteemed friend and professional, with a face that shows "every mark of capacity and kindness" (12). Like Prichard's example, Jekyll succumbs to "an unfortunate excess" that destroys him. No longer restrained by "those balancing instincts by which even the worst of us continues to walk with some degree of steadiness among temptations" (49), as Hyde he participates in a series of monstrous depravities: "tales came out of the man's cruelty, at once callous and violent, of his vile life, of his strange associates, of the hatred that seemed to have surrounded his career . . ." (22); tales of "a being inherently malign and villainous; his every act and thought

¹As Russett explains, phrenologists argued that "the faculties of mind manifested themselves by means of the brain" through the analogy of "the brain as the instrument of the mind in much the same way as a violin created the music that issued from it" (17).

²Early definitions of insanity focussed on the raving lunatic. Following theories of association, which maintained "that the repetition of sensations and their resulting ideas become associated with one another and combine to form, in the vernacular, a 'train of thought'" (Eigen 28), in the eighteenth century madness was said to occur when that "train of thought" housed in the intellect was distorted or disrupted, causing faulty association of ideas leading to hallucinations and illusions.

³Later studies described cases of moral insanity where the afflicted could anticipate and act to contain the violence associated with the disease, suggest-

⁴Among the influences on his creation of Hyde may have been Stevenson's own interest in crime. Stevenson and Gosse had planned a series of articles

about famous murder cases for *The Century Magazine* (Heath 105); and he read accounts of trials avidly (*Robert Louis Stevenson* 95).

centered on self; drinking pleasure with bestial avidity from any degree of torture to another; relentless like a man of stone" (46). Thus, in Jekyll we see a once-good man who experiences the kind of dramatic transformation typical of the morally insane. As one medical text explains, "It would seem sometimes as if a universal badness had taken possession of [the individual], yet a badness so inexplicable that it can only be looked upon as madness" (Mann 136). In Prichard's terms, he has been transformed into someone "devoid of all moral principle" (*On the Different Forms* 59).

Like others suffering from moral insanity, Jekyll is no raving maniac; his intellect remains, yet it cannot save him from a "moral weakness" (49) and unprovoked episodes of "complete moral insensibility or insensate readiness of evil" (49). Both his inability to function as a moral being, as a Christian gentleman, and the pleasure he seems to enjoy in violence recall descriptions frequently offered of those deemed criminally and morally insane: "if the conscience is altogether dark and duty dumb . . . , if he neglects all precautions, discards all apprehensions, and glories in the murder he has committed, then, indeed, it may be affirmed that the controlling power itself is gone, and that he has ceased to be a moral agent" ("Criminality" 162). Jekyll finally loses the ability to choose to be a moral agent because he has too often chosen depravity and Hyde. Because his moral faculties are weakened, they are not able to ally themselves to his intellect in order to control his animal propensities. Simply put, he is unbalanced. Moral weakness has led to moral insanity, with the subject retaining "the most perfect consciousness of [his] impropriety, and horror at the enormity of the conduct to which [he is impelled]" (Guy 309).

Yet, at the same time that Dr. Jekyll suggests that he may have suffered from moral insanity, implying that what he did was beyond his control, this self-serving diagnosis is undercut by the excess of references to insanity in the novel. Utterson thought that Jekyll's naming Hyde his heir was "madness" (7, also 24); and that Jekyll's dramatic change signaled mental decline: "a week ago, the prospect had smiled with every promise of a cheerful and an honoured age; and now in a moment, friendship and peace of mind and the whole tenor of his life were wrecked. So great and unprepared a change pointed to madness" (24). Lanyon criticizes Jekyll's science for being "too fanciful . . . He began to go wrong, wrong in his mind. . ." (7); and considers Jekyll's note asking for help retrieving chemicals from his cabinet as evidence that his "colleague was insane" (37): "The more I reflected, the more convinced I grew that I was dealing with a case of cerebral disease. . ." (38). Guest calls the man who killed Carew "mad" (20). The maid-witness describes him as "carrying on . . . like a madman" (14). In this text, almost everyone is seen as "insane" in one way or another—suggesting perhaps that insanity may be a norm in the world of the novel or that medical terms like insanity may be almost meaningless.

Why does Stevenson evoke the specific disorder known as moral insanity? Of course, Jekyll/Hyde demonstrate how distinctions between criminal and gentleman, sane and insane can blur. But Stevenson did not need to suggest a specific diagnosis to make that point. Perhaps the epigraph that begins this paper may offer a clue: Small suggests the sciences and their contemporary fiction "inform or advance or create ten-

sions within each other" (27) when we study them. Stevenson may have introduced the concept of moral insanity to invite his readers to view the Carew murder in the context of Victorian legal and medical debates about individual responsibility and self control: To what extent was Jekyll responsible for Hyde? For Hyde's murder of Carew? To what extent was Jekyll a victim of an "impulse"? Was this impulse resistible? To what extent was he deformed by the demands of his public image and social role? Was the good doctor evil or was he ill? Questions like these suggest finally that Stevenson may have evoked this controversial diagnosis in order to highlight and undercut the oppositions of these debates.

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Of Eyes and Musical Voices in "The Great Temptation": Darwinian Sexual Selection in *The Mill on the Floss*

Eric R. Gardner

Many critics have noted George Eliot's detailed treatment of eyes and musical voices in *The Mill on the Floss*, especially in connection to the Philip-Maggie-Stephen-Lucy romantic quadrangle.¹ Full consideration of the Darwinian underpinnings of Eliot's work requires a backreading about sexual selection from Charles Darwin's *The Descent of Man*. Given Eliot's attention to eyes and voice, and to her reading of Darwin's notions of evolution during the time she was writing *The Mill on the Floss*, it is not unreasonable to employ this asynchronous reading. Such an effort not only sensitizes us to the sexual implications of "The Great Temptation," but it also helps us view this novel as more than a tale of Maggie's personal passion fettered by the patriarchal, rigid, Victorian mores of St. Ogg's.²

¹In *George Eliot and Music*, Beryl Gray conducts a thorough and convincing analysis of eyes/gazing/sight and musical voice, form, and content in *The Mill on the Floss*. I hope to augment her thoughtful and conscientious effort through connection to Darwin's notions of sexual selection and expression of emotion. Also see Swann, who points out Eliot's attention to eyes in *Daniel Deronda*: he asserts that Gwendolyn's "eye beams" shape the actions and interactions of Grandcourt and Deronda in that Eliot novel.

²See Woodward, who is among those who have noted Maggie Tulliver's sup-

pression and disenfranchisement at the hands of St. Ogg's society. Sally Shuttleworth, for instance, notes that "The Darwinian echoes in *The Mill*, and references in George Eliot's own personal writings, reinforce the idea of gradual change (though not necessarily progress) within a unified continuum" (53). Eliot seems to have been weighing the arguments of Lyell's theory of uniformitarianism against Darwin's emerging notions concerning evolutionary progress.

grand historic life of humanity, and raise up for me the vision of an epoch" (361-62). *Epoch* is also the word Eliot used to describe Darwin's *Origin* to Barbara Bodichon, so it may be more than coincidental that the narrator employs the term in pondering the evolution of human experience through the metaphor of rivers.

Eventually, the Floss becomes, for the narrator, "this rich plain where the great river flows forever onward and links the small pulse of the old English town with the beatings of the world's mighty heart" (363). Through the metaphor of these flowing rivers dotted with signs of former existence, and by connecting the narrow religious and philosophical views of the Dodsons and Tullivers to this scheme, Eliot's narrator describes the fate of Tom and Maggie through the scientific ethos of that time—a paradigm poised to shift from Charles Lyell's geologic uniformitarianism to Charles Darwin's scheme of evolutionary biology, as presented in his *Origin*.⁴ Indeed, this is most evident in the narrator's comment about "the suffering, whether of martyr or victim, which belongs to every historical advance of mankind . . ." (363):

For does not science tell us that its highest striving is after the ascertainment of a unity which shall bind the smallest things with the greatest? In natural science, I have understood, there is nothing petty to the mind that has a large vision of relations, and to which every single object suggests a vast sum of conditions. It is surely the same with the observations of human life. (363)

So Eliot, through her narrator, explores and defines her characters—especially Maggie and Tom—not only as troubled individuals in the St. Ogg's microcosm, but as predestined ingredients in the macrocosmic recipe of unity, development, or evolution that Lyell, Darwin, Spencer, and others were attempting to decipher in the mid-nineteenth century.

The Doctrine of Development is especially important since it is derived from Darwin's theory of natural selection, the principle that individuals possessing characteristics advantageous for survival in a specific environment constitute an increasing proportion of their species in that environment with each succeeding generation. In fact, Maggie's struggle to assimilate to the St. Ogg's environment for which her dark features and equally dark rebelliousness are disadvantageous for her survival exemplify Eliot's placing her in the scheme of natural selection. Maggie's "dark heavy locks . . ." and "gleaming black eyes . . . which gave her very much the air of a small Shetland pony" (61) are physical manifestations of her nature that's ill-suited to the St. Ogg's society, a society which favors Lucy's delicacy, her "little round neck . . . her little

straight nose . . . her little clear eyebrows . . . to match her hazel eyes" (117).⁵ In light of Darwin's scheme of natural selection, or "survival of the fittest," Eliot predestines Maggie to be "selected out" of the St. Ogg's society; her demise marks her Darwinian predestination.⁶

Because of this broad and evident placing of her characters in a framework of concern about development or selection, then, it is feasible to examine how Eliot's determined characterization of eyes and voice functions within that larger scheme. Inevitably, in part because of the abundance of eye references in the novel, critics tend to comment on Maggie's dark eyes, but not as the major thesis—only as an aside or supporting point for the contrast between Maggie's darkness and Lucy's brightness.⁷ However, eyes and also voices seem particularly relevant not only in terms of Darwin's *Origin of Species* and theory of natural selection, but especially so in light of his *Descent of Man* (1871), which essentially extends the application of his natural selection theory to human sexuality.⁸

The Descent of Man was published eleven years after *The Mill on the Floss*, but it is important to note, as Marston Bates and Philip Humphrey do, that "although Darwin had from the first presumed that the ideas of natural selection and evolution would apply to man as well as to the rest of nature, he refrained from mentioning the subject in the *Origin* beyond noting that by this theory 'light would be thrown on the origin of man and his history'" (263). As Bates and Humphrey say, the implications of Darwin's theory were the impetus of much debate; indeed, these scholars imply that Darwin held off on spelling out the implications, waiting until after Huxley's 1863 publication of *Evidence of Man's Place in Nature*, which made Darwin's *Descent*, when it appeared, "neither surprising nor shocking" (263). In any event, since Darwin's *Descent* is closely allied with the work in his *Origin*, it does not seem unreasonable to apply his notions about sexual selection retrospectively to *The Mill on the Floss*. Just as Darwin's *Descent* is his attempt to describe and explain human sexual selection, so too is Eliot's *The Mill on the Floss* an effort not only to depict human sexual selection, but to characterize it, like Darwin, in terms of a larger design. This is not to say, necessarily, that Eliot and Darwin reached identical conclusions about human sexual selection, but only to suggest that Eliot witnessed many of the same behaviors that Darwin observed, and that *The Mill on the Floss* thus is characterized not just by George Eliot's observations of sexual selection, but also by Darwin's. All of this suggests that Darwin is, in a sense, a commentator on the sexual behaviors that Eliot portrays in *The Mill on the Floss*.

Sexual selection, according to Darwin, is distinct from natural selection in that certain males searching for females

are not necessarily better fitted to survive in the struggle for existence, but have acquired more desirable traits than other males in terms of "certain organs of sense or locomotion" or other qualities that enable them to obtain a mate (*Descent* 234). In *The Descent of Man*, Darwin succinctly describes the sexual selection process:

The sexual struggle is of two kinds: in the one it is between the individuals of the same sex, generally the males, in order to drive away or kill their rivals, the females remaining passive; while in the other, the struggle is likewise between the individuals of the same sex, in order to excite or charm those of the opposite sex, in order to excite or charm those of the opposite sex, generally the females, which no longer remain passive, but select the more agreeable partners. (702)

These notions immediately evoke Philip's and Stephen's struggles to win Maggie's heart in *The Mill on the Floss*. The sense of drama Eliot creates from this sexual competition relies on the contrast in styles between the humpbacked Wakem, who fits the "charmer" prototype in Darwin's scheme and the gallant coxcomb Stephen, unquestionably the "exciter" of Maggie in Darwin's characterization of sexual struggle. In her Appendix to *The Mill on the Floss*, A. S. Byatt points out that critic Leslie Stephen expressed misgivings about Eliot's portrayal of the Stephen-Maggie romance. Stephen, in *The Cornhill Magazine* (1881), says, "The unlucky affair with Stephen Guest is simply indefensible. It may indeed be urged—and urged with plausibility—that it is true to nature. . . ." (qtd. in Eliot 688). However, Maggie's "unlucky affair" with Stephen does seem at least defensible, if not inevitable, because it is true to nature, to Darwin's conception of sexual struggle, and to Eliot's portrayal of her characters' sexual identities. Philip appeals to Maggie's intellect, her "higher" nature; Stephen appeals to Maggie's developing sexuality, her "lower" nature.

For both Philip and Stephen, however, Maggie's eyes are an essential catalyst in igniting their passion for her. Much of the sexual charisma of Maggie's eyes—especially for Stephen—stems from the contrast between Lucy's hazel eyes and her own dark ones. Darwin, in *The Descent of Man*, explains that men of any certain race tend to be most attracted not to the exact prototype of the beautiful woman as it is defined by that particular culture, but to a moderate and intriguing variation thereof:

The men of each race prefer what they are accustomed to; they cannot endure any great change; but they like variety. . . . Men accustomed to a nearly oval face, to straight and regular features, and to bright colors, admire, as we Europeans know, these points when strongly developed. (667)

This is a relevant and revealing comment when we consider that in "The Great Temptation," Stephen has been accustomed to Lucy's "hazel eyes" in which "an ever present sunny benignity" exists (476); she is "a little darling, and exactly the sort of woman he had always most admired" (478). The *exactly* here is what eventually dooms Lucy to being surpassed by

Maggie in terms of Stephen's attraction to the women for, as Darwin notes, men like a variation on the normal beauty traits of women, especially in the form of "strongly developed" characteristics. According to Darwin's conception of sexual attraction, then, Lucy is actually too perfectly beautiful by St. Ogg's standards for Stephen to remain faithfully attracted to her, especially after he meets Maggie, whose eyes exhibit the sort of accentuated traits that Darwin says appeal to men: "There was a new brightness in her eyes" when Lucy introduces her to Stephen (484). For Darwin, "a bright and sparkling eye is as characteristic of a pleased or amused state of mind, as is the retraction of the corners of the mouth and upper lip with the wrinkles thus produced" (*Emotions* 204). Thus, through her eyes, Maggie may be viewed as smiling at Stephen (even if she is not literally doing so), and this assuredly serves to increase his attraction to her: the narrator informs us that "Stephen could not conceal his astonishment at the sight of this tall dark-eyed nymph with her jet-black coronet of hair. . ." (484).

Furthermore, the notion that Maggie is an appealing variation from the normal understanding of beauty—a norm heretofore defined for Stephen by Lucy's blond hair, petite frame, and hazel eyes—is clearly enhanced by Lucy's "setting up" of Stephen: prior to his introduction to Maggie, Lucy has led him to believe that Maggie has "light hair and blue eyes" (485). Thus, his astonishment—but especially his attraction to Maggie's strikingly different dark eyes, hair, and height—is more apparent than it otherwise might have been if Eliot had not allowed Lucy at first to mislead Stephen about Maggie's features.

Almost immediately, Maggie's dark eyes—the exception to the lighter blue-grey eyes of her brother, Tom, and to the lighter features of her own mother, Mrs. Tulliver's "bunches of blond curls" (108-09)—tempt Stephen's sexual instincts and influence him to stray from proper social etiquette. He at first remarks that in Maggie there is "an alarming amount of devil there" (485), an important symbolic link back to Maggie's exhibition to Mr. Riley of the devil Tom colored in the copy of Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*: "The body all black, you know, and the eyes red, like fire, because he's all fire inside, and it shines out at his eyes" (68). As the novel's plot progresses, it becomes apparent that his description fits not only the devil, but also the emotional, rebellious Maggie.

But it's Stephen's second thought that's especially important here in terms of Darwin's comments about sexual selection and Eliot's emphasis on eyes: "I wish she would look at me again" (485). This is hardly the last time Stephen longs for the attention of Maggie's eyes, which, as a constituted aspect of her beauty, "made Maggie more unlike other women even than she had seemed at first" (487). Her dark eyes exhibit universal appeal. Philip, for instance, remarks that "They're [Maggie's eyes] not like any other eyes. They seem trying to speak—trying to speak kindly" and he wishes that he had a sister with dark eyes like Maggie's (260). So like Stephen, Philip perceives Maggie's Darwinian "bright and sparkling eye" that radiates kindness and invites heartfelt attraction. Other men in the novel are also keenly aware of the special magnetism of Maggie's eyes. Philip's father, for example, notes that she has "deuced fine eyes" and he con-

⁴For a thorough discussion of uniformitarianism, see Smith.

⁵See Tush, who notes the favored status of Lucy's light features and their vivid contrast with Maggie's dark ones. Her emphasis, as her title suggests, is on hair rather than eyes.

⁶See Smith, who makes important comments about the implications of the Flood in terms of evolution, uniformitarianism, and catastrophism. In contrast, see Bushnell, who argues against Maggie's doom by asserting that in Wordsworthian sublimity, she ascends to a higher state of reason at the end of the novel. Also George Levine comments that "In one of his letters Darwin notes that he did not very much like George Eliot's *The Mill on the Floss*"

(189); he suggests further that Darwin may not have liked the brutal implications of the novel's depressing conclusion.

⁷See LeVay, however, who does comment on eyes and compares Maggie's to those of Sidney's Stella.

⁸Gillian Beer notes the important influence of the publications of both Darwin's *Descent of Man* and *The Expression of Emotions in Man and Animals* on the realms of psychology, sociology, and biology (210). In connection to George Eliot, she examines how the Darwinian notions of these texts (especially *The Descent*) provide a background for reading *Daniel Deronda* in terms of descent, motherhood, fear, and patriarchal culture.

trasts Maggie's eyes with the grey ones of Philip's mother, who he says "looked gentler [than Maggie]" (545). Wakem concludes by referring to Maggie as a "dark-eyed damsel" (546). And not only does young Torry take note of "the dark-eyed girl there, in the corner [Maggie at Lucy's first evening party]" (512), but even Dr. Kenn thinks that "There's something wonderfully honest in those beautiful eyes" (554). All of this suggests that Stephen's attraction to Maggie's eyes is not a whim or an anomaly; the appeal is inherently part of Maggie's nature—or, rather, of Darwin's Nature. This universal regard for Maggie's eyes may imply that there is some inherent quality in the nature of all these men's sexual compositions that, when confronted with such eyes as Maggie's, results in quivering desire or "monomania," as it does in Stephen's case (519).

This "monomania" persists for Stephen from the first meeting with Maggie when he finds that "She doesn't look at me when I talk of myself" (489) to the commission of his social faux pas when "he was so fascinated by [Maggie's] clear, large gaze that at last he forgot to look away from it occasionally toward Lucy. . ." (490), to his isolated conversation with Maggie when he strokes Minny's head and hopes to persuade Maggie to "let him have one long look into those deep strange eyes of hers," after which "he would be satisfied and quite reasonable" (519). Many more such examples of Stephen's pull toward Maggie's eyes exist, such as the way his eyes meet hers in the conservatory, in "that long grave mutual gaze which has the solemnity belonging to all deep human passion" (561) and just at the cusp of their secret "elopement" when "he was looking into her deep, deep eyes—far-off and mysterious as the starlit blackness, and yet very near, and timidly loving" (588).

This linking of Maggie's eyes to the dark mystery of the sky links her to nature and thus implicitly to the mystery of it that Darwin was, at least in part, attempting to understand. An important symbolic connection here is to Maggie's rescue efforts in the Flood at the end of the novel. Here, Maggie's eyesight is important, as she begins her rescue needing to carry a candle (649), but concludes by dying in the machinery wreckage with Tom as the sun is rising (655). When the sky brightens and the mysterious nature of both Nature and her role in it are becoming more readily seen or perceived by Maggie, she is subjected to the tragic irony of death. She appears to be on the verge of understanding—at least in a limited way—that linking of "smallest things with the greatest" to which the narrator refers earlier (363). Perhaps Eliot kills off Maggie as a statement against human omniscience derived through the Lyellian, Darwinian, and Spencerian science of her age—a statement that even modern science is not enough to uncover the mystery of the universe.

In addition to eye characteristics, voice quality also affects the sexual selection motif among the major characters.

In *The Descent of Man*, Darwin notes that a particular type of gibbon (*H. agilis*) can emit an accurate octave of musical notes, which he believes "serves as a sexual charm" (602). He eventually provides a more complete assessment of music's role in sexual selection:

As the males of several quadrumanous animals have their vocal organs much more developed than in females, and as a gibbon, one of the anthropomorphous apes, pours forth a whole octave of musical notes, and may be said to sing, it appears probable that the progenitors of man, either the males or the females or both sexes, before acquiring the power of expressing their love in articulate language, endeavored to charm each other with musical notes and rhythm. (*Descent* 653)

Stephen and Philip, who are symbolically connected to their "quadrumanous" ancestors by the river Floss, the symbolic river of natural history, vie for Maggie through their singing, as both Beryl Gray and Judith Mitchell have pointed out.⁹ Philip's singing charm, however, is no match for the sexual excitement that Stephen's deeper, more resonant voice creates in Maggie.

For Darwin, "the capacity of producing musical notes are faculties of the least use to man in reference to his daily habits of life, [so] they must be ranked among the most mysterious with which he is endowed" (*Descent* 650). Yet he speculates that "the sensations and ideas thus excited in us by music, or expressed by the cadences of oratory, appear . . . like mental reversions to the emotions and thoughts of a long-past age" (*Descent* 652). In *The Mill on the Floss*, this regression to long-ago sensations or passions brought about by music manifests itself in the way Stephen's singing arouses an instinctive animal magnetism in Maggie—an instinct probably developed in Maggie's proto-human ancestors eons ago that's taken hold of her more acutely than anyone else in her immediate family.

If Darwin is correct, Stephen is surely predisposed by nature—by sexual selection—to drive away his rival, Philip, for

Maggie always tried in vain to go on with her work when music began. She tried harder than ever today, for the thought that Stephen knew how much she cared for his singing, was one that no longer roused a merely playful resistance, and she knew too that it was his habit always to stand so that he could look at her." (532)

So if it's Maggie's eyes that predispose her to gain Stephen's sexual attention—he always makes sure he can look at her—it's his vocal talent that predisposes him to stimulating her long-ingrained magnetism and winning her affection. Just

as important, Stephen's voice quality predestines his triumph over his sexual rival, Philip, "That pleading tenor [who] had no very fine qualities as a voice. . ." and whose singing arouses in Maggie only "quiet regret in the place of excitement" (533). In sum, Philip's charming tenor cannot match Stephen's exciting bass in the Darwinian singing competition that Eliot creates.

This "quiet regret" that Maggie suffers upon Philip's singing marks an important contrast with the effects of Stephen's voice, especially because his singing affects the character of her eyes:

She looked very beautiful when her soul was being played on in this way by the inexorable power of sound. You might have seen the slightest perceptible quivering through her whole frame, as she leaned a little forward, clasping her hands to steady herself, while her eyes dilated and brightened into that wide-open, childish expression of wondering delight which always came back in her happiest moments. (532)

Because Stephen is watching Maggie's reaction to his singing, her "brightening" eyes surely provide him only with further hope and encouragement in his amorous pursuit; such may be just the "sign of inclination from her" that he determinedly begins to seek at this point in the novel (534). In fact, Maggie's "wide-open" eyes are for Darwin a sign of assent to a claim:

A man, as Gratiolet remarks, who vehemently rejects a proposition, will almost certainly shut his eyes or turn away his face; but if he accepts the proposition, he will nod his head in affirmation and open his eyes widely.

(*Emotions* 32)

So our gestures in response to psychological or emotional influences have been developed through long-term associative habit, according to Darwin: we express denial or acceptance of abstractions through physical movements that cannot literally affect these abstractions. Thus, expressions of emotion are symbolic within a given context: widening of the eyes often suggests emotional or psychological approval; shutting the eyes, denial. In light of this scheme, then, Stephen successfully excites Maggie; his voice strikes a resonant and sexually stimulating chord at the very core of her nature. This musical scene is certainly one of the most vivid and revealing for noting Maggie's eyes and Stephen's voice as Darwinian instruments, and it demonstrates how Maggie's and Stephen's most strongly developed traits each influence the other: like an electrical charge leaping from positive to negative terminal and vice-versa, Maggie's and Stephen's most highly developed traits play off each other until a complete circuit is formed.

Ultimately, Stephen and Maggie cannot fulfill their romantic aspirations, which are based on natural impulses deeply rooted in their respective characters through eons of gradual, subtle sexual selection and evolution, because their natural inclinations conflict with the social conventions which also define and impinge upon the human animal. Darwin, in *The Descent of Man*, notes that

The moral sense follows, firstly, from the enduring and ever-present nature of the social instincts; secondly, from man's appreciation of the approbation and disapprobation of his fellows; and thirdly, from the high activity of his mental faculties, with past impressions extremely vivid; and in these latter respects he differs from the lower animals.

(698)

It's through sight (eyes) and sound (musical voice) that Maggie and Stephen draw together, but through "social instincts," "disapprobation," and "mental faculties" that they fall apart; in Maggie's oscillation between passion and duty, duty ultimately wins, as Maggie regrets her elopement: "[She] had made herself an outlawed soul with no guide but the wayward choice of her own passion" (597). Though Stephen argues for a Darwinian justification for their elopement—"We have proved that the feeling which draws us towards each other is too strong to overcome. That natural law surmounts every other. . ." (601)—Maggie applies her "mental faculties" and argues that "If the past is not to bind us, where can duty lie? We should have no law but the inclination of the moment" (601-02). This is a triumph in the evolution of Maggie's character, since she acknowledges her betrayal of Lucy and Philip. According to Darwin, we might say that her introspection makes her distinct from the lower animals, or makes her a "moral being": "A moral being is one who is capable of reflecting on his past actions and their motives. . ." (*Descent* 698).

The implications of Maggie's evolution to a Darwinian "moral being" are unclear, given her death at the end of the novel, but perhaps through the lens of Darwin's *Descent*, we can at least address some of the critics—both Victorian and later—who couldn't conceive with enthusiasm Maggie's attraction to Stephen. Byatt points out that a reviewer in the *Dublin University Magazine* of February 1861 condemned Maggie's attraction to Stephen as doubtful on the grounds that "no woman of [her] sort would have let herself be wholly drawn away from her love for the deformed and suffering Philip by a mere outside fancy for the good-looking, sweet-voiced cox-comb, Stephen Guest" (qtd. in Eliot 687). Byatt also notes how Swinburne and Leslie Stephen saw Maggie's attraction to Stephen Guest as delusional and misguided (Eliot 687-88). And even though F. R. Leavis recognized, according to Byatt, the "yearning side" of Maggie's attraction to Stephen, he still equates her impractical yearning with immaturity (Eliot 689).

One gets the sense from such criticisms that Eliot herself got caught up in Maggie's emotions toward Stephen and thus projected lustful or improbable impulses into the novel where they perhaps should not have belonged. On the contrary, what Eliot enacts in the Stephen-Maggie affair is consistent with Nature's appeal: in line with her Darwinian orientation throughout the novel, Eliot soundly demonstrates Maggie's entrapment between not only duty and passion, but between the appeal to higher nature (culture, morals, reading, intellectualism, art—all that Philip sensitively offers her) and her lower nature (sexuality, magnetism, charisma, excitement, physicality—all that Stephen offers through his persona, his

⁹Gray notes many of the same powerful workings of music on Maggie's emotions as I do; as well, she notes how the gazing of eyes and the singing of music combine to create the temptation in "The Great Temptation." Importantly, she makes explicit the operatic subtext, and demonstrates how the musical subtext is also a subtext for the amorous competition between Stephen and Philip. Her thorough examination is performed not through the perspective of Darwinism, but through the extensive musical (or music-

historical) insight.

In her feminist-psychological examination of *The Mill on the Floss*, Mitchell states that "Maggie and Stephen speak with their eyes . . . and communicate through the lover's language of music" (117). As Gray and I do, Mitchell believes the eyes and the music are essential to the sexual underpinnings of *The Mill on the Floss*.

voice, his very being). Seen in that light, perhaps we can accept not only Stephen's longing for Maggie, but her desire for him.

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Coming in

The Victorian Newsletter

Sally B. Palmer, "'Wishing Oneself Back': Public Needs and Private Auntidotes in Gaskell's *Mary Barton*"

Jacqueline Banerjee, "Sources and Outcomes of Adolescent Crises in *Wuthering Heights*"

R. S. Edgecome, "Collective Personification in Carlyle's *French Revolution*"

James Persoon, "'A Sign-Seeker' and 'Cleon': Hardy's Argument with Browning"

Jim Barloon, "Star-Crossed Love: The Gravity of Science in Hardy's *Two on a Tower*"

Books Received

Arata, Stephen. *Fictions of Loss in the Victorian Fin de Siècle*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1997. Pp. xii + 235. \$49.95. "[T]his book was originally motivated by a desire to bring within the same critical frame such disparate writers as Wilde and Kipling, Nordau and Stevenson, Symonds and Haggard, Doyle and Stoker. In the most general sense, I wanted to see what connections could be forged between fin-de-siècle 'decadence' and 'jingoism.' One link was immediately apparent: both terms were used by medical specialists and cultural critics alike to designate forms of degeneracy. Yet it also became clear that, from the perspective of contemporary observers, jingoistic imperialism seemed to have been called into existence by decadence, as a counterweight to aesthetic excess. . . .

"Since this study examines tropes of degeneration, and since late-Victorian degenerationism was obsessed with the decay of organisms both individual and collective, 'body' and 'nation' finally seemed more appropriate and more flexible terms to use than . . . 'decadence' and 'jingoism.' Loosely speaking, Chapters 1, 2, and 3 attend more closely to questions of the body, Chapters 5, 6, and 7 to the nation, with Chapter 4 serving as a pivot between the two sets of three chapters. Yet, as the following pages will amply show, anxieties about the decay of the individual body were inseparable from anxieties about the decay of the collective 'body' figured in national and racial terms" (5-6).

Benfey, Christopher. *Degas in New Orleans: Encounters in the Creole World of Kate Chopin and George Washington Cable*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1997. Pp. xii + 294. \$27.50. "Edgar Degas travelled to New Orleans during the fall of 1872 to spend a few months visiting the considerable American branch of his family. His visit is something of a legend in New Orleans, told and retold with the casual disregard for historical accuracy that affects many New Orleans memories, but it is barely known elsewhere. The journey to New Orleans marked a key moment in Degas's career, however. Distracted and stalled in his profession on his arrival, he left the city with a new sense of direction and resolve. He also took with him, in his portfolio and his mind, several unforgettable images of New Orleans life" (4).

Bidney, Martin. *Patterns of Epiphany from Wordsworth to Tolstoy, Pater, and Barrett Browning*. Carbondale & Edwardsville: Southern Illinois UP, 1997. Pp. 235. \$34.95. "There is general agreement that the modern epiphanic tradition begins with Romanticism, and specifically with Wordsworth. . . .

"Literary epiphanies are felt as aesthetically privileged. They are moments of imaginative or poetic intensity, comparable in imaginative power to traditional theophanies or appearances of the divine. Given their intensity, their import for writers favored with the ability to generate them, literary epiphanies have received surprisingly little systematic attention. In this book I will propose a method for the systematic study of epiphany,

and I will apply the method to a series of literary epiphanies ranging chronologically from Wordsworth to Pater" (1)—including Coleridge, Arnold, Tennyson, Carlyle, Tolstoy, and Barrett Browning.

Brennan, Matthew C. *The Gothic Psyche: Disintegration and Growth of Nineteenth-Century English Literature*. Columbia, SC: Camden House, 1997. Pp. [x] + 169. \$55.00, £42.00. "To explain how the nineteenth-century Gothic represents the failure of the psyche to achieve individuation, I begin with the Gothic poems of four Romantic poets, including Samuel Taylor Coleridge . . . His achievement in 'Rime of the Ancient Mariner' like that of other poems by Wordsworth, Byron, and Keats, is to move the Gothic focus inward, to memorably explore the unconscious. The next three chapters emphasize fictions of psychic disintegration, myths of encounter with the unconscious whose main plots lead not to centering of the Self but rather to its dissolution . . . : Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights*, and Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. However, unlike these works, *Dracula*—the subject of chapter 5—comprises two plots that figure psyche journeys with contrasting results . . . Finally, to consider an American case and to suggest the generic fluidity of the Gothic by the mid-1800s, I interpret Edgar Allan Poe's story 'The Fall of the House of Usher,' which not only supplies a paradigm of Gothic themes but also crosses aesthetic boundaries to include a poem and a painting. Like the story as a whole, these embedded works figure the collapse of psychic boundaries and thus parallel not only the British novels and poems but also pictures by artists such as Fuseli and Turner. This study, then, will show how all of these poets, fiction writers, and artists map nightmare journeys through the monstrously open boundaries of the Gothic psyche" (28).

Brontë, Patrick Branwell. *The Works of Patrick Branwell Brontë: An Edition*. Vol. 1. Ed. Victor A. Neufeldt. Garland Reference Library of Social Science, vol. 1238. New York & London: Garland, 1997. Pp. xxviii + 464. \$84.00. The projected three volumes of this edition "will contain all of Branwell's known writing, excluding his letters. Volume One covers 1827-1833, when Branwell was aged nine to sixteen" (xx).

"This edition serves as a record of [his] growth and development, and it is hoped, will help dispel some of the myths and misconceptions that have become associated with Branwell's name" (xxviii).

Brown, Julia Prewitt. *Cosmopolitan Criticism: Oscar Wilde's Philosophy of Art*. Charlottesville & London: UP of Virginia, 1997. Pp. xx + 137. \$30.00. "This book is about what I believe to be Oscar Wilde's most important, but also—especially today when it is in danger of being lost sight of altogether—most elusive legacy, his philosophy of art: of what art is and is not, of what the experience of art means in the modern world, and of the contradictory relations of the work of art to the sphere of 'life,' to the

ethical, the pragmatic, the everyday. Since Wilde's ideas on these subjects developed over time, I underscore the evolving, experimental character of his thought, taking *De Profundis* to represent the culmination of the Wildean aesthetic speculations. . . .

"In the chapters to follow, we shall see that Wilde made a distinctly Anglo-Irish contribution to an international tradition of ideas on art, a contribution composed of several different but interrelated elements: the theory of cosmopolitan criticism, the inquiry into the diminishing and equivocal place of art in the postindustrial world, and the great improvisation of his own life. . . (xxiii-xxiv).

Bryan, George B. and Wolfgang Mieder. *The Proverbial Charles Dickens: An Index to Proverbs in the Works of Charles Dickens*. New York: Peter Lang, 1997. Pp. 319. \$39.95. Proverbs and proverbial expressions "play a major role in [Dickens's] particular style and rhetoric, and it is surprising indeed that so little attention has thus far been paid to this major linguistic and folkloric aspect of his works. The Key-Word Index of this book with its many proverbs, proverbial expressions, proverbial comparisons, and wellerisms will now enable scholars and students to undertake detailed contextualized studies of the use and function of these fixed phrases in individual novels" (35).

Foldy, Michael S. *The Trials of Oscar Wilde: Deviance, Morality, and Late-Victorian Society*. New Haven & London: Yale UP, 1997. Pp. xv + 206. \$27.50. "The purpose of the present study . . . is not to re-cover old ground, or to rehash tired debates about Wilde's 'guilt' of 'innocence,' or once again to portray Wilde (rightly, in many respects) as an unnecessary 'victim' of an intolerant society and a repressive legal code. . . . Wilde's sexual desire, his 'passion for passion,' as it were, was well as his preferences for certain sexual practices and particular sexual objects, do play a significant role in the present study, but they do not play the only role, or even the most decisive one. . . . Where this study differs from others is in trying to reach a broader understanding of the many contributing factors that constituted Wilde's 'deviancy' within the context of late-Victorian society. As an historian, I have been especially preoccupied with reconstructing Wilde's 'deviancy' from two primary perspectives: as Wilde himself described it, and as the State and many (if not most) of his own contemporaries described it. . . .

"In this book I have endeavored to represent the trials within the context of the different forces and trends that were moving British politics and society, and of the views, values, and attitudes that were expressed by Wilde's contemporaries. . . .

"The book is organized in the following way. Chapters One and Two present a relatively straightforward narrative overview of the three trials. In addition to outlining the substantive issues, they highlight the legal maneuvering both inside and outside the courtroom, the strategies of both prosecution and defense, and the biases of the judges. The first chapter includes a speculative section

on the relationship between Queensbury and Lord Roseberry, the Prime Minister during the period. . . .

"Chapter three examines the trial coverage in the press and the reception of trials by the reading public. . . .

"Chapter Four, Five, and Six represent the heart of the Study. Chapter Four situates the trials within the prevailing cultural and intellectual climate, which I describe as 'heterosexual' and 'homophobic.' . . .

"Another goal of this chapter is to explore the paradox of the codification of fairly strict laws that prohibited same-sex practices and yet the general reluctance on the part of officials to enforce them, and on the part of society to demand that these laws be enforced. . . .

"Chapter Five changes course somewhat and explores the meaning and symbolism of the trials from Wilde's point of view. . . .

"Finally, Chapter Six foregrounds the trials against the historical background of the eighteen-nineties. . . ." (x-xv).

Gaskell, Elizabeth. *Sylvia's Lovers*. Ed. and intro. Nancy Henry; additional critical material Graham Handley. London: Everyman; Rutland, VT: Charles E. Tuttle, 1997. Pp. [xxxii] + 528. \$8.95; £5.99.

Gregory, Eileen. *H. D. and Hellenism: Classic Lines*. Cambridge Studies in American Literature and Culture 111. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1997. Pp. xii + 321. \$64.95. This work "concerns a prominent aspect of the writing of . . . H. D. (Hilda Doolittle): a lifelong engagement with hellenic literature, mythology, and art. H. D.'s hellenic intertextuality is examined in the context of classical fictions operative at the turn of the century: the war of words among literary critics establishing a new 'classicism' in reaction to romanticism; the fictions of classical transmission and the problem of women within the classical line; nineteenth-century romantic hellenism, represented in the writing of Walter Pater; and the renewed interest in ancient religion brought about by anthropological studies, represented in the writing of Jane Ellen Harrison, Eileen Gregory explores at length H. D.'s intertextual engagement with specific classical writers: Sappho, Theocritus and the Greek Anthology, Homer, and Euripides. The concluding chapter sketches chronologically H. D.'s career-long study and reinvention of Euripidean texts. An appendix catalogues classical subtexts in *Collected Poems 1912-1944*, edited by Louis Martz" (ii).

Hall, Donald E. *Fixing Patriarchy: Feminism and Mid-Victorian Male Novelists*. New York: New York UP, 1996. Pp. ix + 236. \$50.00 cloth, \$17.95 paper. "In charting [the] slow process of negotiation over forms of female empowerment and in exploring how boundaries determining men's and women's roles changed in small, sometimes nearly imperceptible, ways over the course of thirty years, I examine works of both fiction and nonfiction, for each genre provides data of an indispensable sort" (8-9). Includes discussions of *Martin Chuzzlewit*, *The Princess*, *Yeast*, *Alton Locke*, *The Newcomes*, *Little Dorrit*, *Tom Brown's Schooldays*, *Great Expectations*, Wilkie Collins and Trollope.

Horan, Patrick M. *The Importance of Being Paradoxical: Maternal Presence in the Works of Oscar Wilde*. Madison, Teaneck, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson UP; London: Associated UPs, 1997. Pp. 144. \$29.50 "This book 'talks about' but does not sensationalize the education that Wilde received from his mother. Speranza taught the Irish poet to respect his heritage, to speak out for sexual equality, to sacrifice for those he loved, and to find joy in suffering. As evidenced by his famous *De Profundis*, Wilde eventually learned to appreciate his mother's acceptance of diversity and to resolve many of the conflicting tendencies that also made him such an enigmatic and paradoxical personality" (14).

Johnson, Margaret. *Gerard Manley Hopkins and Tractarian Poetry*. Aldershot, Hants & Brookfield, VT: Ashgate, 1997. Pp. 310. \$67.95. "This early strand [the] Protestant, metaphorical strand", the teaching of Anglicanism and particularly Tractarianism which led Hopkins until his conversion, and which is evident in his poetry far beyond that moment, is the subject of this study, which examines the poetic and theological affinities between Hopkins' work and five Tractarians whose works were known to him [—John Keble, Richard Watson Dixon, Christina Rossetti, Digby Dolben, John Henry Newman]" (7).

Kipling, Rudyard. *Writings on Writing*. Ed. Sandra Kemp and Lisa Lewis. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1997. Pp. xxviii + 213. \$59.95. "A complete edition of Kipling's critical and metacritical writings would require, from the published work alone, a significant percentage of the 35 volumes of the Sussex Edition. . . . The present volume can only offer a selection from all this material. Rather than issue yet another anthology of well-known texts, the editors have concentrated on less accessible pieces, including some that are unpublished, and a selection of unpublished drawings. Some famous passages are represented by short extracts.

"This collection opens with a section that illustrates Kipling's opinions, ambitions and dreams in the 1880s, the decade that turned him from precocious schoolboy to famous author. . . . The next section, 'Aesthetics,' selects from Kipling's many reflections on the magic and power of words; on the nature of inspiration; on the human imagination and its workings, whether 'civilised,' primitive or mythic; on truth in fiction, or its absence; on the difficulties that beset a writer, and his need for independence and integrity. In part III, 'How to Write: Ingredients and Methods,' Kipling is advising would-be writers, discussing his own sources and the use he makes of them, reflecting on questions of metre and style. 'History and Contemporary Culture' opens with a rare example of a published review, then goes on to demonstrate his privately expressed opinions of other writers and his view of art as social force. There follows a section on the commerce of literature, then one on Kipling's response to his critics. Finally, in 'Afterwords' there are extracts from his last story, "'Teem"—a Treasure Hunter,' published in the month of his death, and from his posthumous autobiography. Within these

categories items are set out in chronological order" (xxvii-xxviii).

May, Brian. *The Modernist as Pragmatist: E. M. Forster and the Fate of Liberalism*. Columbia & London: U of Missouri P, 1997. Pp. xv + 210. \$37.50. "Among the multiple alternatives of postmodern literary and cultural theory is the pragmatic, which looks forward and backward at the same time, no less alert to utopian possibility than opportunistic with the past. The pragmatist's double-vision or cross-eyedness, the perils or empowerments such vision creates, is one of the chief topics of this study. At issue here is the debate between contemporary, progressive pragmatists who have turned to the liberal tradition as an avenue to utopian promise: the debate between Richard Rorty and opponents like Richard Bernstein, Robert Westbrook, and Cornel West. 'American pragmatism seems to have a split personality,' writes John Patrick Diggins, and one of my aims is to delineate the choice between Rortian 'liberal ironism,' a perhaps tougher-minded combination of reformist tinkering in the public realm with aesthetic self-fashioning in the private, and (for instance) West's more audacious and 'prophetic' brand of pragmatic liberalism—socially revolutionary, recognizably utopian, not individualist but indeed 'universalist'. . . .

"[A] good place to turn for pragmatic answers is to literature. . . . I bring the concrete particulars of literary history to bear upon the 'abstractly theoretical elements' of contemporary pragmatic philosophy. The consequence of this literary exploration of one of pragmatism's contemporary dilemmas, in turn, is a new-found sense of West's importance—indeed, the sense that West's universalism is not just desirable but practicable, that universalist pragmatism is the more pragmatic alternative.

"The particular literary work that best enables this understanding of universalist pragmatism as the better choice of pragmatists is E. M. Forster's *Passage to India* (1924). . . ." (ix-x).

Nash, Gary B., Charlotte Crabtree, and Ross E. Dunn. *History on Trial: Culture Wars and the Teaching of the Past*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1997. Pp. xiv + 318. \$26.00. "To understand why an ambitious widely embraced, and promising undertaking to improve history in the schools became a sensational national controversy requires the telling of three related stories. First, this book explores the extraordinary blossoming of historical research, writing, and teaching that has taken place in this country in the twentieth century as the history profession has become more diverse, more methodologically sophisticated, and more committed to an inclusive American history and a genuinely globe-encircling world history. Second, the book shows that the recent war over the National History Standards has had many precedents in earlier decades of the twentieth century. Not everyone liked the idea that historians were shedding so much new light on the past, and some charged that new textbooks and programs disturbed national memories, undermined students' patriotism, pulled down cherished heroes, and

even threatened national security. Third, we examine the 'long walk' that academic historians took away from the schools in the decades following World War I. An unfortunate result of this estrangement between scholars and public education professionals was that both history teachers and the public at large remained largely unaware of the great broadening of the past that occurred over these years" (x).

Rooksby, Rikky. *A. C. Swinburne: A Poet's Life*. Aldershot, Hants: Scolar P, 1997. Pp. xii + 322. \$49.95. "Swinburne's eccentricity is worth celebrating, but it need not and should not eclipse his humanity or cloud awareness of his best writing. There is a spirit in his life and work which, whatever odd forms it sometimes took, remains vital and uplifting" (6).

Sigler, Carolyn, ed. *Alternative Alices: Visions and Revisions of Lewis Carroll's "Alice Books": An Anthology*. Lexington: UP of Kentucky, 1997. Pp. xxiii + 391. \$34.00 cloth; \$20.00 paper. "Alternative Alices brings together some of the most lively and original of the almost two hundred literary imitations, revisions, and parodies of Lewis Carroll's enduringly influential *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking-Glass*" (xi).

"The works collected here date from the late 1860s to the 1920s, comment specifically upon the original novels and upon popular critical responses to them, and form a coherent body of *Alice* 'imitations.' They thus share specific characteristics with Carroll's *Alice* books and with one another: an *Alice*-like protagonist or protagonists, male and/or female, who is typically polite, articulate, and assertive; a clear transition from the 'real' waking world to a fantasy dream world through which the protagonist journeys; rapid shifts in identity, appearance, and location; an episodic structure often centering on encounters with nonhuman fantasy characters and/or characters based on nursery rhymes or other popular children's texts, including *Alice* herself; nonsense language and interpolated nonsense verse, verse-parodies, or songs; an awakening or return to the 'real' world, which is generally portrayed as domestic (a literal return home); and, usually, a clear acknowledgment of indebtedness to Carroll through a dedication, apology, mock-denial of influence, or other textual or extratextual reference" (xvii).

Waters, Catherine. *Dickens and the Politics of the Family*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1997. Pp. xi + 233. \$54.95. Dickens's "novels record a historical shift in notions of the family away from an earlier stress upon the importance of lineage and blood towards a new ideal of domesticity assumed to be the natural form of the family. I am concerned to analyse the ways in which his deployment of competing conceptualisations of the family are symbolically productive in the formation of middle-class cultural authority. Although I discuss a selection of Dickens's novels in chronological order [*Oliver Twist*, *Dombey and Son*, *Little Dorrit*, *A Tale of Two Cities*, *Great Expectations*, *Our Mutual Friend*], it should be clear from the omissions—*David Copperfield*, *Bleak House*, and *Hard Times* most notably—that no com-

prehensive survey of the representation of the family in his fiction is offered here. Rather, my concern is to analyse a range of texts which engage with the ideology of the family in various ways in order to show how Dickens's fictions work as enabling representations in the Victorian social economy" (27).

Wolf, Milton T., ed. *Shaw and Science Fiction*. Shaw: The Annual of Bernard Shaw Studies, vol. 17. University Park: Pennsylvania State UP, 1997. Pp. x + 294. \$35.00. Contents: Milton T. Wolf, "Foreword: Shaw and Science Fiction"; Ray Bradbury, "G. B. S.: Refurbishing the Tin Woodman: Science Fiction with a Heart, a Brain, and the Nerve!"; Ben P. Indick, "Shaw's Science Fiction on the Boards"; Elwira M. Grossman, "Witkacy and Shaw's Stage Statues"; J. L. Wisenthal, "Shaw's Utopias"; Bernard Shaw, "Utopias"; Jeffrey M. Wallmann, "Evolutionary Machinery: Foreshadowings of Science Fiction in Bernard Shaw's Dramas"; Rodelle Weintraub, "Bernard Shaw's Fantasy Island: *Simpleton of the Unexpected Isles*"; Elizabeth Anne Hull, "On His Shoulders: Shaw's Influence on Clarke's *Childhood's End*"; John R. Pfeiffer, "Ray Bradbury's Bernard Shaw"; George Slusser, "Last Men and First Women: The Dynamics of Life Extension in Shaw and Heinlein"; John Barnes, "Tropics of a Desirable Oxymoron: The Radical Superman in *Back to Methuselah*"; Julie A. Sparks, "Shaw for the Utopians, Capek for the Anti-Utopians"; Susan Stone-Blackburn, "Science and Spirituality in *Back to Methuselah* and *Last and First Men*"; Tom Shippey, "Skeptical Speculation and *Back to Methuselah*"; Peter Gahan, "*Back to Methuselah*: An Exercise of Imagination"; Reviews—R. F. Dietrich, "The War of the World-Betterers (*Selected Correspondence of Bernard Shaw: Bernard Shaw and H. G. Wells*, edited by J. Percy Smith); Leon H. Hugo, "Indefatigable! (*Selected Correspondence of Bernard Shaw: Bernard Shaw: Theatrics*, edited by Dan H. Laurence); Sally Peters, "Wit, Common Sense, and Prophetic Vision (*The Complete Prefaces, Vol. 2: 1914-1929*, edited by Dan H. Laurence and Daniel J. Leary); Margot Peters, "Intersections" (*Shaw's People: Victoria to Churchill* by Stanley Weintraub); Frederick P. W. McDowell, "The Latest Biography of Shaw (*Ascent of the Superman* by Sally Peters); J. L. Wisenthal, "Shards of Shaw (*Shaw and Joyce: 'The Last Word in Stolen Telling'* by Martha Fodaski Black); John R. Pfeiffer, "A Continuing Checklist of Shaviana."

Yalom, Marilyn. *A History of the Breast*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1997. Pp. xii + 331. \$29.95. "The assumptions we Westerners take for granted about the breast prove especially arbitrary when we adopt a historical perspective, which is the aim of this book. Covering some twenty-five thousand years, it will focus on certain moments when a specific conception of the breast took hold of the Western imagination, and changed the way it was seen and represented. Think of these moments as a kind of cinematic montage, progressing and sometimes overlapping, but not as a continuous reel of breast history" (3).

Victorian Group News

Announcements

Bosanquet and the Legacy of British Idealism is the subject of a conference 1 and 2 September 1999 at Harris Manchester College, Oxford, in association with The British Society for the History of Philosophy and The Bradley Society. Among the issues to be addressed at this conference are those of the legacy of this idealism and its relation to philosophers outside of the idealist "school" (e. g. Russell, Wittgenstein), to philosophers of succeeding generations in Britain (e.g. Collingwood, Oakeshott, Harris), in the Anglo-American world (e.g. Royce, E. Jordan, Whitehead), and on the European continent (e.g. Croce, Gentile, Husserl), and to such disciplines as sociology, aesthetics, psychology, metaphysics, political philosophy, logic, and epistemology.

The number of papers to be accepted for presentation will be limited to ensure as much breadth as possible and ample time for discussion. Papers, including some of those not presented at the conference, will also be considered for inclusion in a volume of critical essays based on the conference theme. Proposals for papers are due 1 October 1998; papers are due 15 December 1998. Proposals and papers to: Professor William Sweet. St. Francis Xavier University, Antigonish, Nova Scotia B2G 2W5, Canada. Tel. 1-902-867-2341; fax 1-902-867-3243; e-mail wsweet@stfx.ca

The New Woman: Gendering the Fin de Siècle, an interdisciplinary conference, will be held 27 February 1998 at the Centre for English Studies, University of London. For details, e-mail Chris Willis or Angelique Richardson on 100415.1234@compuserve.com or write to the Centre for English Studies, Senate House, Malet Street, London WC1E 7HU (e-mail ces@sas.ac.uk or fax 0171-436-4533).

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