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Combining the Two Nations: Trade Unions as Secret Societies 1837-1845

Albert D. Pionke

It was not unusual in 1839 in England to find Tories and Whigs, aristocrats and factory owners, MPs and merchants, *Blackwood's* and *The Edinburgh Review*, united in their condemnation of trade unions as conspiratorial secret societies. This consensus among the relatively privileged owed much to the publication of *The Report of the Select Committee on Combinations* by the House of Commons in 1838, the results of which achieved national notoriety when they were summarized in *The Annual Register, 1838*. This summarized version of the *Report* encourages its readers to respond to the practice of combination according to conventions of respectability and class prejudice, and in so doing reveals some of the characteristic tendencies of the rhetoric surrounding trade unionism in the 1830s and 1840s.

The first of these characteristics appears in comments on secretive organizations generally. According to the *Annual Register*, trade unions, "Like all secret associations . . . begin by the institution of certain mystic and superstitious rites, which not only impose upon the imagination of their neophytes, but give a dramatic interest to their proceedings, and dignity to their lawless schemes" (204). This generalization that all secret associations are superstitious and lawless tacitly rests on two premises: 1) that the majority of associations are "open" rather than secret; and 2) that these "open" associations are rational and lawful. Once accepted, these premises create a tautology whereby "secret" and "unlawful" become interchangeable terms; ergo, if trade unions employ secretive practices, then they must be unlawful. That trade unions did employ secretive practices is made clear when the paragraph moves on to describe a mock union initiation ceremony:

> Thus it appears, that the apartments in which their nocturnal conclaves assemble, are often, on occasions of especial solemnity, decorated with battle-axes, drawn swords, skeletons, and other *insignia* of terror. The ceremony of inauguration itself, is said to partake of a religious character. The officials are ranged on either side of the room, in white surplices; on the table is the open bible. The novice is introduced with his eyes bandaged—prayers and hymns are recited—and certain mystic rhymes pronounced; after which an oath is administered, of which the imprecatory form, may be easily conceived, and the new member, his eyes being again bandaged, is led out.
> (*The Annual Register* 104-05)

This example both specifies the more general charges of superstition and lawlessness by introducing the word "terror," and reinforces the connection between this terror and the use of ritual secrecy. At the same time, the tone of this passage hovers uneasily between absurdity and deadly seriousness, with the superstition implicit in "certain mystic rhymes" vying with the deadly threat posed by battle-axes and drawn swords. Such a divided tone appears repeatedly in denunciations of trade unionism from the 1830s and 1840s, as critics of the unions seek to arouse public anxiety without attributing too much power to these irrational organizations.

Surrounding this titillating and arguably self-divided account of the initiation ceremony, a lengthy diatribe against trade unionism summarizes the statistical findings of the Select Committee. It is itself preceded by a much briefer passage demonstrating "the subtile activity of the principle which regulates the price of labour" among "the more educated circles of society. . . where moral and social considerations are paramount [and] the mere force of public opinion is found adequate to the desired end" (*The Annual Register* 204). Here, the evils of trade unionism are used to generalize about the working class and its inability to self-regulate except through the "much coarser means" of violence and secrecy (*The Annual Register* 204). Among these "much coarser means" were the confirmed acts of violence during prolonged strikes—i.e. vitriol burning, physical assaults on "nobs," or strikebreakers, and arson. These actions made unions appear especially dangerous to those with a monetary stake in the various industries where unionism had a significant presence. Crimes directed at industrial capital also carried with them the aura of insurrection associated with such movements as Luddism (1811-1817), the Pentridge rising (1817), the "Last Labourers' Revolt" (1830) and the Captain Swing riots (1830-1831), thereby reinforcing the equation of secrecy and lawlessness already proposed and making such secrecy and lawlessness a primarily working-class phenomenon.

The secretive practice that receives the most attention in *The Annual Register* is oath-taking among union members. As a quintessential example of this practice the following oath, "said to have been administered by the combined spinners in Scotland, in 1823," is included:

> I, A. B., do voluntarily swear in the awful presence of God Almighty, and before these witnesses, that I will execute with zeal, and alacrity, so far as in me lies, every task or injunction, which the majority of my brethren shall impose upon me, in furtherance of our common welfare; as the chastisement of "*knobs*," the assassination of oppressive and tyrannical masters, or the demolition of shops, that shall be deemed incorrigible. (*The Annual Register* 204-05)

Thus strategically presented this oath would have alarmed the middle- and upper-class readers of *The Annual Register* for a number of reasons. At the basic level of content, the oath challenges laissez-faire economics and the system of social privilege it helped to perpetuate by demanding the unswerving and self-abnegating loyalty of members to democratically-ordained violence against the established social order. Also, the above mock-union initiation intimates that most trade

union oaths were sworn on the bible, making them not merely socially binding—and therefore subject to the greater authority of constitutional law—but almost sacramental—and therefore unbreakable—by virtue of being sworn before God. The presence of union oaths could therefore interfere with the administration of justice by making union members unwilling to betray their sacred word and reveal the union's secrets.

Union oaths were additionally suspect because of the lingering effects of the Combination Acts of 1799. Made law in an effort to stamp out radical discontent and Jacobin sympathy with the French Revolution, the two Combination Acts severely restricted public assemblies and made all oaths not administered by an officer of the Crown acts of treason.[1] These restrictions were directed mainly at working-class organizations, with the result that memories of the Combination Acts tended to reinforce the class-bias already present in the anti-union position. The Acts were repealed in 1824, but their prohibition of oath-taking retained a powerful hold over the English imagination. This hold is best illustrated by the *Report* itself, which grounds its pejorative examination of trade unions on an oath said to have been sworn fifteen years before, when such absolute solidarity was necessitated by the illegality of combination.

In part, this tendency to conflate past and present evidence can be attributed to the difficulty of gathering accurate information about contemporary organizations defined as fundamentally secretive about their own inner workings. In other words, because he was bound by a powerful oath, one could never be absolutely certain that a given member knew everything, or had shared everything that he knew, or even if what he had shared was reliable. At its extreme, this problem of incomplete knowledge and potential unreliability could lead to the eschewal of evidence altogether, since lack of evidence might just as readily prove the existence of a secret conspiracy dedicated to, among other things, withholding that evidence. Once accusations of such secretive practices as oath-taking presented themselves as true by their very assertion, corollary accusations that a given trade union was really a dangerous conspiracy could also be accepted as true, thus allowing the trade union to become a secret society, something dangerous, wholly other and distinctly un-English.

Such specious reasoning was resisted by a number of social actors whenever it appeared. Trade union members and radical politicians and periodicals rightly considered it unfair, both because it forced unions into a position from which there was no escape and because it relied on tacit and contestable definitions of secrecy and Englishness. Even those willing to condemn trade unions recognized a potential danger in the interdependence of these definitions. By making oath-taking and other practices of secrecy the final arbiter of meaning, those who applied the figure of the secret society to trade unions left themselves open to the effects of their own rhetoric. If it could be demonstrated that supposedly "English" institutions also employed secretive practices analogous to those attributed to trade unions, then, according to the definition already implied in the initial collapse of secrecy and lawlessness, those English institutions could be labeled unlawful as well. This capacity of the figure of the secret society to cut both ways could ultimately lead, therefore, to a complete breakdown of the very binary opposition between open English institutions and their secretive un-English counterparts that middle- and upper-class critics of trade unions had sought in the first place.

The potential instability of the rhetoric surrounding trade unionism can be seen most clearly in the 1838 trial of five Glasgow cotton-spinners on charges of conspiracy and murder. Reactions to the trial appeared in the periodical press, Parliamentary debates, and fiction of the period. With varying degrees of uneasiness, the majority of these texts portray trade unions as secret societies by making oath-taking an essential element of their representations. In 1) the 1838 trial and its aftereffects in Parliamentary debate, 2) the periodical press, and 3) Thomas Carlyle's *Chartism* (1839), treasonous oath-taking becomes the basis for the pejorative labeling of trade unions, and by extension the working classes, as dangerous secret societies. However, the irony and hypocrisy of this collapse of secrecy, lawlessness, and the working classes can be challenged using two of the novels that follow the trial, since in Charles Dickens's *Barnaby Rudge* (1841) and Benjamin Disraeli's *Sybil* (1845), the figure of the secret society is extended to the upper classes as well. Dickens's novel represents the trade unions as secret societies through an initiation ceremony into the fictitious 'Prentice Knights, but acknowledges that secret conspiracies may involve members of the upper and lower classes. Oath-taking at an initiation ceremony also grounds Disraeli's presentation of trade unionism, even as his novel as a whole demonstrates in a far more ambivalent fashion the degree to which secretive institutional practices operate at all levels of British society.

The Trials of the Glasgow Spinners

On the 3rd through the 11th of January, 1838, the High Court of Justiciary at Edinburgh conducted what Sidney and Beatrice Webb refer to as "one of the 'leading cases' of Trade Union history" (170), the trial of Thomas Hunter, Peter Hacket, Richard M'Neil, James Gibb, and William M'Lean, better known as the Glasgow spinners. The Crown's thirty-four-page indictment charged these five men with twelve separate crimes: 1) conspiring to commit violence and forming a guard committee for that purpose (9)[2]; 2) assaulting, by means of the members of the guard committee, John Farmer and William Gordon at the Oakbank Factory (10-11); 3) assaulting, also by means of the guard committee, various unspecified operatives at the Mile-End Spinning Company (11-13); 4) attempting to set fire to the William Hussey and Son cotton mill, then trying to force the masters of various Glasgow cotton mills to rehire their struck operatives (130-16); 5) forming "a secret select committee, or a secret committee," the members of which were chosen "by ballot, or lot, or some other secret mode," in order to illegally raise or keep up wages (16-19); 6) assaulting, by means of persons unknown, David Gray and Edward Kean (19-20); 7-9) writing three threatening letters to various managers of cotton manufactories in Glasgow (20-24); 10) breaking and entering the house in which Thomas Donaghey was staying (24-26); 11) attempting to set fire to the house of James Wood (26-27); and 12) hiring William M'Lean to "assassinate and murder" one John Smith for the sum of £20, which he did (27-30).

The majority of charges in the indictment are structured around an elaborate attempt to cast the Spinners' Union as a conspiratorial secret society. Only charges one through three can stand alone, and these accusations of the resolution to use intimidation and its actual use at the Oakbank and Mile-End Factories are the least serious of the indictment. In contrast, charges four through twelve all rely to a greater or lesser extent on the presence of a "secret select committee" and the defendants' membership on that committee in order to be proven.[3] Decided on by some sort of dangerously democratic process and bound by an oath of secrecy, this committee—if it did indeed exist—would effectively transform the otherwise legal Glasgow Spinners' Union into a conspiratorial secret society headed by the first four defendants. Charges four through twelve were by far the more serious, then, not only because the punishments for fire-raising and murder were greater than those for assault, but also because definitively proving any of the latter charges would effectively make the Glasgow Spinners' Union an illegal combination.

Following the pattern established by the indictment, the greater proportion of the trial focuses on the conspiracy charges. Three of the prosecution's main witnesses, James Murdoch, William Smith and Robert Christie, all testified to the existence of oath-taking and other secret signs. According to Murdoch, the union had administered an oath since his induction in 1816, and had altered it in 1822, "and the change on the oath was a great deal for the worse; it became more vicious in its nature" (73). Though he could not recollect the exact wording, he did remember that both oaths were sworn on the bible, with the words "Ashdod" (Isaiah 20.1) and "Armageddon" (Revelation 16.16) being used. Murdoch also testified that the union had had a "secret committee" intermittently since 1818, and that this committee had in the past employed intimidation, fire-raising, and other illegal acts under the code-word "Colliery" (74). His testimony concerning the existence of a secret committee appeared to confirm earlier statements by the prosecution's star witness, James Moat, that there had definitely been a secret committee during the strike of 1824 and that he believed that a similar committee had been formed in 1837. Smith corroborated the practice of oath-taking and the use of the word "Armageddon," though he denied ever seeing a bible at his initiation (161). The majority of the defense witnesses then testified that their initiations into the union had featured neither an oath nor the words "Ashdod" and "Armageddon," and that they had never heard the word "Colliery" used in connection with any secret committee, of which they knew nothing. For the purposes of this study the most striking testimony may have come from Robert Christie, who confirmed Murdoch's testimony on the presence of oath-taking using a bible opened to a passage featuring the word "Armageddon" (142), even as he admitted his own reluctance to testify due to "fear, and the dread of breaking the oath" (152). Christie's fear and dread were doubtless partly founded on the possibility of union retribution, but his reluctance also points to the fact that the union's practice of oath-taking introduced a basis of allegiance that could conflict with one's duty as a subject of the Crown.

Oath-taking and other practices of secrecy remained central through both sides' closing statements. Relying largely on the testimony of Murdoch and Moat, the Lord Advocate declared that "while this association pretended to be doing nothing but what was perfectly legal, they were secretly and darkly carrying into effect. . . the greatest crimes" (245-46). These "deeds of violence and atrocity" were carefully distanced by being labeled "so unlike the character of this country; and so different from the usual feelings of Scotchmen" as to be almost incredible to any who do not suffer from the "perversion of moral feeling which gave rise to them" (246). Almost apologetically, the Lord Advocate also admitted the "great difficulty, on the part of the Crown, of establishing this prosecution by evidence" (248), due largely to the "strong impression" caused by the administration of "an oath on the Scripture, not to reveal the secrets of the association" designed to "pervert" the mind of those who take it (248-49).

This clear reference back to the reluctance shown by Robert Christie introduces the possibility that hard evidence may not be the only way to detect a union conspiracy. Combined with the retroactive proof of a past conspiracy established by the testimony of Murdoch and Smith, this explanation of the difficulty of establishing proof due to the presence of un-English, un-Scottish, morally perverse oath-taking forms the basis of the prosecution's case, which is now proven not only by actual evidence, but also by the lack of that evidence.

These two paralogisms come under direct attack in the closing statements by the defense. Mr. M'Neil, lawyer for all but M'Lean, begins his remarks by reminding the jury that despite the fact that "the largest, and by far the most striking part of the evidence . . . related to . . . offences said to have been committed between the years 1818 and 1830," most of which occurred prior to the repeal of the Combination Acts, the defendants "are now on trial for certain offences said to have been committed between the months of April and July,

[1] The Acts sought to do this primarily by combining these two distinct strands of popular discontent. As E. P. Thompson observes, "The Combination Acts (1799-1800) served only to bring illegal Jacobin and trade union strands closer together," both in fact and in the popular imagination (181). For more on working-class societies at the turn of the century see Thompson 102-85, 500-01, or Pelling 11-34. For more on the Combination Laws, see Pelling 15-17, 20-23.

[2] All quotations from the trial come from Archibald Swinton's *Report*, the appropriate page numbers of which will be parenthetically noted in the text. A somewhat biased and much abridged summary of the trial is given in the Chronicle section of *The Annual Register* for 1838, pp. 7-12.

[3] This tendency toward grounding most of the charges under the rubric of a central conspiracy is even more pronounced in the aborted trial of these men in November, 1837. In this original trial, the spinners were charged with only nine crimes— charges three, four and five of the later trial did not yet exist—but all of them relied on the presence of the "secret select committee" or a similar conspiratorial body for validity. Given the results of the second trial, it seems fairly certain that had this first trial been allowed to continue, the men would have been acquitted on all charges. For a transcript of the first trial, see *The Rights of Labour Defended*.

1837, and for these only" (283). By revealing that the prosecutor's case implied that the defendants "are in this way answerable, not directly, but indirectly, for offences not committed by themselves, but committed by other persons long before the prisoners . . . had even become cotton-spinners" (285), M'Neil effectively undercuts the first paralogism undergirding the prosecution's case. He then goes on to show how the bulk of the charges rely on the presence of a secret committee, the existence of which he disputes using conflicts among the testimony of various witnesses, thereby attacking the second paralogism by discounting the initial accusation of secretive practices (291-95).

The conventions of the Scottish court allowed for a further restatement of the entire case by the Lord Justice-Clerk after the defense finished. In his lengthy (thirteen-and-a-half-hour) re-presentation of the case, the Lord Justice Clerk attempted to repair some of the damage done by M'Neil's closing statement by reminding the jury of the difficulty of obtaining evidence due to the complicating factor of oath-taking (357) and by rereading verbatim some of the testimony of the prosecution's key witnesses, minus cross-examination and the defense's counter-witnesses (358). His restatement of the defense's case was somewhat less generous in that he punctuated his remarks with questions and even reminders of key elements of the prosecution's case.

Despite the efforts of the prosecution and of the Lord Justice-Clerk on behalf of the prosecution, the jury returned a verdict largely in favor of the defendants. Specifically, after a deliberation of five hours a majority found charges one, two and three "against all the pannels proven" and all other charges they unanimously found "not proven."[4] Such a verdict was possible in Scotland because at the time a trial verdict required only a majority decision, whereas in England a unanimous decision was necessary. This peculiarity of Scottish law made even this partial conviction of the least serious offenses seem less condemning than one might have expected from the rhetoric of conspiracy bandied about during the trial, especially when compared with the unanimous verdict of not proven for the majority of charges.

Even with this mainly exculpatory verdict, the judges returned the unusually harsh sentence of seven years transportation, making it clear in their final remarks that they, at least, believed the defendants guilty of far more than they had been convicted of. Indeed, Lord Mackenzie seemed to ignore entirely the jury's verdict in his remarks, declaring, "the conspiracy in which the prisoners joined, was a combination not merely to raise wages, but to do so by using illegal means" (376), and describing this "conspiracy" as "widely spread, as all the evidence shews" (379), despite the fact that the charge of conspiracy had been found not proven. His closing remarks applied his assumption of the defendants' guilt to the Glasgow Spinners' Union as a whole: "I consider this Association as one of the most dangerous conspiracies that has been seen in this country for a long period" (380). The Lord Justice-Clerk concurred, misrepresenting the jury's verdict in the strength of his own conviction that

> The verdict of the Jury has stamped this Association of cotton-spinners in Glasgow, as an unlawful Association; and no man that heard the evidence, with regard to its nature, its character, and its proceedings, even for a considerable period of time previous to commission of those acts of conspiracy, can entertain the slightest doubt, that it was unlawful in its structure, utterly unlawful in its objects, utterly unlawful in the means which it resorted to for the purpose of effecting those objects. . . . this was an Association of a most illegal and dangerous description—illegal in its nature, most injurious and dangerous in its consequences, not only to the public, but to the members of the Association themselves. (381)

He continued, characterizing the Glasgow Spinners' Union as "a species of slavery," and finding it the duty of the court, "to convince the people of this country, that the practice of this most dangerous system will no longer be permitted to exist within the bounds of this kingdom" (381). Thus, for the purposes of "deterring others" and "bringing a part of the community back into a state of order. . . . particularly that class to which you belong" (381), the sentence was meted out. These comments by Lord Mackenzie and the Lord Justice-Clerk provide the clearest indication of the process of distancing as dangerous others not only the defendants, but the members of the spinners' unions and even the entire working class, permitted by the strategic accusation of the presence of a "secret select committee," or more broadly of a "conspiracy." Even though this accusation was found "not proven" by the jury, its very articulation was enough to prompt moral disapprobation and seven years transportation. By all but ignoring the jury's verdict and punishing the defendants with seven years transportation, the judges effectively underwrote their decision using the figure of the secret society, and in so doing made secretive practices the final measure of meaning in the trial and in future public reactions to it.

These public reactions sided almost unanimously with the prosecution and the judges. Perhaps the best measure of public feeling in the aftermath of the trial comes from the unusually sympathetic opening of an article in *Tait's Edinburgh Magazine*:

> We have no ambition to emulate the elegant invectives against the proceedings of the Glasgow Cotton-Spinners' Union, in which a large portion of the press have been indulging. Their proceedings have been bad enough, to be sure, but we cannot see the parallel between them and the crimes of Burke. Neither can we see in them any trace of national demoralization. Comparatively speaking, there are few, even of the working-classes, implicated in these transactions; and, as to their enormity, 'let him who is without sin throw the first stone.' ("The Trial" 78)[5]

[4]Initially, the jury also found charge ten proven, but this decision was reversed by the court because of its dependence on the charge of conspiracy, which had been found not proven.

[5]The opening follows its final biblical exhortation with examples of how "their betters" are acting to "monopolize a good thing," citing the Corn Laws, dueling, and the suppression of Canada as upper-class parallels of trade-union intimidation.

Contemporary articles in *Blackwood's* and the *Edinburgh Review* were more typical in their reactions to the trial. Both felt quite sure not only of the defendants' guilt but of the propriety of generalizing about the guilt of trade unionism generally:

> although the evidence, in the opinion of the jury, failed to connect the prisoners with the more aggravated of these charges, yet they were all fully proved to have been committed by some person connected with, and in the interests of, the Combination ("Trades' Unions and Strikes" 233)[6];

> not a human being can doubt that the whole were proved to a demonstration against the combination generally. ("Practical Working" 296)

Combinations were especially dangerous because of the relatively high level of education enjoyed by their members. Indeed, one article laments that trade union debates "are conducted by these highly educated and skillful workmen, in the language, and with all the forms of the House of Commons" ("Practical Working" 284). However, this very education makes the individual workmen susceptible to logical persuasion, and both articles assiduously attempt to employ such persuasion in their largely statistical proofs of how injurious strikes are for the striking workers. At least one article, however, has a back-up plan in case such proofs fail: the establishment of a permanent police force "*capable of supporting the civil magistrate* in his contest with such organized and formidable confederacies" ("Practical Working" 302).

Feelings in Parliament toward the spinners largely matched those of the periodical press. On February 9, 1838, Lord Brougham presented a petition before the House of Lords asking for clemency towards the five cotton-spinners on the grounds that they had only been convicted of the least serious charges against them and that had the trial taken place in an English court, the conviction never would have occurred. Further, he argued that even had an English jury convicted these men of the same charges, the seven months they spent in jail prior to their trial would have exceeded by five months the maximum sentence that could have been handed down in an English court (*Hansard*, vol. XL: 931-35). This petition for clemency was greeted by a spirited denunciation of illegal combinations and of trade unions more generally offered by Viscount Melbourne, who declared "that these men had been convicted of an offence of a most pernicious character. . . . and [that] the more open the law had been made for allowing men to enter into combinations, the more necessary it was to check any attempt at violent proceedings by the most serious punishments which the law allowed" (*Hansard*, vol. XL: 937). He continued, reflecting on the abolition of the combination laws in 1824: "when the combination laws were abolished. the fault which was found with the proceeding was, that the penalties were too weak and too light, and he must say, that if the offence were proven to the extent charged against these persons, the punishment which was assigned to it was not excessive, nor the infliction of it unjust" (*Hansard*, vol. XL: 938).

In the House of Commons, the reaction to the trial went a bit farther. From a largely sympathetic petition presented by Mr. Wakely on the twenty-fifth of January, 1838, calling for a select committee to investigate the Glasgow spinners' union and the trial (*Hansard*, vol. XL: 473-76), the House quickly moved to appoint the much more general Select Committee on Combinations to investigate trade unionism throughout the British Isles. This shift to a more general committee was the brainchild of Mr. Daniel O'Connell, who in his remarks offered several pregnant observations on the practice of combination:

> The fact was, that there was nothing but combinations amongst the rich from one end of the country to the other. He had no hesitation in saying that there was a trade union in that House. The landed proprietors in that House constituted a large majority, and took care to prevent any alteration in the law which would make corn cheap. . . . Again, had they not a trade union in the Temple? Had they not in that place a recent and remarkable instance of conspiracy? . . . When there was such a remarkable instance of the preventing the acquisition of rank and wealth in a liberal profession, by a combination of a detestable clique in the heart of the metropolis, they should not make such loud complaints of combinations of working men at distant places who had such difficulties to contend with. (*Hansard*, vol. XL: 1067-68)

These rather broad hints of upper-class conspiracies went unacknowledged in the House, which elected to confine the select committee's scope to trade unions only, with the results already noted above.

Despite the vehemence and extent of the periodical and Parliamentary reactions to the trial, however, it remained for Thomas Carlyle in *Chartism* to offer the most scathing representation of the Glasgow spinners. Scattered among his more general comments on the nature of working-class unrest and the need for a national program of religious education to end it, are three references to something called "Glasgow Thuggery." The most general of these connects this phenomenon to past examples of semi-revolutionary working-class unrest, representing them all as symptoms of a national disease: "Glasgow Thuggery, Chartist torch-meetings, Birmingham riots, Swing conflagrations, are so many symptoms on the surface; you abolish the symptom to no purpose, if the disease is left untouched" (120). These "symptoms" had all been extensively recorded in the popular press, accompanied by appropriate catch phrases and a certain amount of moral horror. Carlyle appears dismissive, or a least distrustful, of these accounts, even as he reproduces them in his critique: "'Glasgow Thuggery,' 'Glasgow Thugs'; it is a witty nickname: the practice of 'Number 60' entering his dark room, to

[6]Note especially the first clause, "in the opinion of the jury," which follows the example of Lord Mackenzie and the Lord Justice-Clerk in implicitly discounting the jury's verdict.

contract for and settle the price of blood with operative assassins, in a Christian city, once distinguished by its rigorous Christianism, is doubtless a fact worthy of all horror: but what will horror do for it?" (119). Indeed, Carlyle seems to share the newspapers' horror at this violation of the sacredness of his "Christian city," though his disapprobation is expressed in more exacting terms:

> Glasgow Thuggery speaks aloud, too, is a language we may well call infernal. What kind of 'wild-justice' must be in the hearts of these men that prompts them, with cold deliberation, in conclave assembled, to doom their brother workman, as deserter of his order and his order's cause, to die as a traitor and deserter; and have him executed, since not by any public judge and hangman, then by a private one. . . . Not only loving obedience to those placed over them must animate these men! (148-49)

In Carlyle's diagnosis, "Glasgow Thuggery," with all of its violent disregard for "Christianism," displays an infernal inversion of the moral order. Horror by itself, then, will not suffice for reinstating the proper "loyal loving obedience"; only a religious reeducation can save those implicitly dammed by their own violent circumvention of civil order.

Carlyle's specificity in these passages makes it quite clear that, as Patrick Brantlinger observes, "When Carlyle speaks of 'Glasgow Thuggery' in *Chartism*, he has in mind a specific strike—that of the Glasgow cotton spinners in 1837—and the violence arising out of it" ("The Case" 37).[7] Somewhat less obvious for a modern reader, but perhaps more important, are the implications of the term "Thuggery." This "witty nick-name" would have called to mind a very specific reference for readers in the 1830s and 1840s, as it did for Friedrich Engels, who explains that the Glasgow Thugs were "so called from the East Indian tribe, whose only trade is the murder of all the strangers who fall into its hands" (221). These worshipers of the Indian goddess Kali had first come to the attention of British authorities in 1799, but it was not until the publication of Dr. Richard Sherwood's "Of the Murderers Called Phansigars," in 1816 that the extent of their organization became known. Readers in the 1830s would have had this group fresh in their minds from the publication of Captain W. H. Sleeman's *Ramaseeana, or a Vocabulary of the Peculiar Language used by the Thugs, with an Introduction and Appendix, descriptive of the System pursued by that Fraternity, and of the Measures which have been adopted by the Supreme Government of India for its suppression* (Calcutta, 1836).

Sleeman's book was reviewed in the *Edinburgh Review* (January 1837) and the *Foreign Quarterly Review* (April 1838), either of which would have made Carlyle and others' association of the Spinners with Thuggee particularly damaging to trade unionism. According to the reviews, Sleeman's book had provided "overwhelming evidence" of "a vast fraternity of murderers, consisting of many thousands of persons," operating until recently without restraint throughout the Indian subcontinent ("The Thugs; or, Secret Murderers" 357). This "extraordinary organized society of ruthless villains" was composed of two classes, Burkas, or stranglers, and Kuboolas, or novices ("The Thugs, or Phansigars" 1),[8] a distinction which neatly mirrors the difference between members of a "secret select committee" and ordinary union members. Readers of the Report of the Select Committee on Combinations as summarized in *The Annual Register* might also recognize similarities between the committee's generalizations about mystic ritualism in trade unions and the Thugs' "variety of signs and symbols" and veneration of the pickaxe ("The Thugs, or Phansigars" 5).[9]

Specific textual similarities between these reviews and *Chartism* make Carlyle's characterization of the Glasgow spinners as the Glasgow Thugs even more explicit in its labeling of the Glasgow Spinners' Union as a dangerous secret society. Carlyle's disgust at the "wild-justice," or alternative morality, grounding the spinners' alleged acts of terrorism and murder exhibits a remarkable similarity to one reviewer's amusement over the "superiority which the Thugs assume over ordinary murderers" as a result of "the peculiar religious belief , . . that they draw a distinction between Thuggee and murder" ("The Thugs; or, Secret Murderers" 383). This distinction leads quite naturally to one-sided comparisons between Christianity and the Thugs' "distorted state of morals" much like Carlyle's implied contrast between the once "rigorous Christianism" of Scotland and the moral system adopted by the Glasgow spinners ("The Thugs; or Secret Murderers" 383, 394). Carlyle's metaphoric relation of Glasgow Thuggery and disease also echoes a similar representation of the nature of Thuggee prior to Sleeman's finally organizing a national body dedicated to systematically prosecuting them:

> The full extent of the evil, however, was not then known; and whilst our active magistrates flattered themselves that they had put a stop to the practice, it was really only temporarily suspended in their own neighborhood. A system which embraced the whole of India could not be suppressed by a few partial inroads upon it. The dispersion of the gangs had the usual effect of a persecution which does not go the length of entire eradication.
>
> ("The Thugs; or Secret Murderers" 383)

The subtle application of the term "persecution" instead of "prosecution" makes clear that what was needed in India was not a strictly legal solution. The reviewer's horror at the depravity of the Thugs leads him to righteously conclude, "If any practice at all approaching in atrocity to that of Thuggee, were to be discovered in England, it would be immediately put down by a united effort of the whole people" ("The Thugs; or Secret Murderers" 383). Those who considered the Glasgow spinners as a kind of English Thuggee sought to motivate just such a reaction by the judicious application of the label of

[7]See also Brantlinger, *The Spirit of Reform*, 93.

[8]For more on the differences between Burkas and Kuboolas, see "The Thugs, or Secret Murders of India" 358-59.

[9]For more on the symbolism and rituals of the Thugee, see 5-6 in the same source; and "The Thugs; or Secret Murders of India" 375.

secret society to English trade unions in the aftermath of the Glasgow spinners' trial.

From the 'Prentice Knights to the SEVEN

The trial of the Glasgow spinners, and the strategies of representation that emerged from it remained active in public opinion and the fictional press for at least ten years (see Brantlinger, "The Case" 37). In fact, two of the most important political/historical novels written in the next decade, *Barnaby Rudge* and *Sybil*, both employ much of the information collected about trade unionism as a result of the trial in their own representation of trade unions (See Brantlinger, "Case" 38-39 and *Spirit of Reform* 92-93). Both Dickens and Disraeli also rely upon the corollary method of valuation-by-secrecy popularized during the trial. However, their use of the figure of the secret society ultimately reveals its capacity to define not just trade unions, but also wealthy associations and even Parliament. In this way the novels work together to respond to the latent implications of the trial, finally suggesting that a definition of Englishness negatively constructed out of condemnations of secrecy cannot hold up under scrutiny.

Originally conceived of in 1836 as a historical romance in the tradition of Scott's *Waverly* and *The Heart of Midlothian*,[10] *Barnaby Rudge*, by the time Dickens began writing it in earnest in 1839, and certainly by the time it began appearing in 1841 in *Master Humphrey's Clock*, had grown to include far more than the story of Gabriel Varden set against the Gordon Riots of 1780.[11] Certainly the most visible shift from 1836 to 1841 is the change of title characters from Gabriel Varden to Barnaby Rudge, related to which is the addition to the final novel of the double murder plot and the subsequent inclusion of the long-standing Hareton/Chester rivalry. Also changed are Dickens's original plans to have the mob riots led by escapees from Bedlam and the expansion of the roles of Gashford, Hugh, and Grip, all of which have received ample critical attention.[12] Critics have been comparatively reticent on the inclusion in the final novel of Sim Tappertit and his quasi-trade union, the 'Prentice Knights, later renamed the United Bulldogs. This reticence is curious, since Sim not only plays a role in the riots comparable to that of Dennis, Hugh or Barnaby, but he arguably provides for their participation by his own activity as a mob leader.[13] Moreover, as the founder of the 'Prentice Knights/Union Bulldogs, Sim allows for the introduction of a fictional secret society based at least in part on the Glasgow spinners. Though, as A. E. Dyson notes, it is singularly difficult to determine the novel's tone towards Sim and his organization (68), a close examination of the structure of *Barnaby Rudge* reveals that they occupy a pivotal role in the novel's representation of social disorder.

Sim Tappertit enters the narrative in the fourth chapter of *Barnaby Rudge*, and even in this first presentation the novel displays a remarkable ambiguity of tone toward him. Sim's first appearance, when he is unknowingly caught in the act of eavesdropping on a conversation between Gabriel and Dolly Varden, is marred by being focalized through the locksmith's consciousness. Thus, his initial illicit listening and elaborate toilet are filtered through Varden's judgments of them as "A bad habit . . . a sneaking, underhanded way" and "Now he's going to beautify himself—here's a precious locksmith," making Sim's later admiration of his legs, "which, in knee breeches, were perfect curiosities of littleness," and "the power of his eye" seem that much more ridiculous to the reader (78, 79; ch. 4). This initial focalization is almost certainly what moves Dyson to describe Sim as "Neat, dandified, a vain and bumptious little malcontent, he is as ludicrous to his allies as to his foes" (55). However, a darker, much more serious side to Sim's character is revealed by the narrator, who compares Sim's fatuous self-admiration to an overfilled cask: "As certain liquors, confined in casks too cramped in their dimensions, will ferment, and fret, and chafe in their imprisonment, so the spiritual essence or soul of Mr Tappertit would sometimes fume within that precious cask, his body, until, with great foam and froth and splutter, it would force a vent, and carry all before it" (80, ch.4). It is easy to see the sexual overtones of this characterization and even to predict that Dolly Varden will be seriously threatened by Sim's bottled virility later in the novel. However, Sim's incipient explosiveness has much wider social implications than just the sexual menacing of Dolly Varden. Sim also has plans to menace his mother country:

> Sim Tappertit . . . had a mighty notion of his order; and had been heard by the servant-maid openly expressing his regret that the 'prentices no longer carried clubs wherewith to mace the citizens: that was his strong expression. He was likewise reported to have said that in former times a stigma had been cast upon the body by the execution of George Barnwell, to which they should not have basely submitted, but should have demanded him of the legislature—temperately at first; then by an appeal to arms, if necessary—to be dealt with as they in their wisdom might think fit. These thoughts always led him to consider what a glorious engine the 'prentices might yet become if they had but a master spirit at their head; and then he would darkly, and to the terror of his hearers, hint at certain reckless fellows that he knew of, and at a certain Lion Heart ready to become their captain, who, once afoot, would make the Lord Mayor tremble on his throne. (80; ch. 4)

[10]For more on Dickens and Scott, see Case, Michasiw, and Newman; for connections between Dickens's novel and other literary works, see Crawford, Schroeder, and Steig.

[11]For more on the composition and publication history of *Barnaby Rudge*, see Butt and Tillotson's chapter in *Dickens at Work* and Thomas J. Rice's "The Politics of 'Barnaby Rudge'" in Giddings.

[12]For more on all these topics, see McKnight. For more on Gashford, see Gottshall and Marcus's groundbreaking chapter on *Barnaby Rudge*. For more on Hugh, see Hollington, Marcus, Monod, and Stuart. For more on Grip, see Buckley.

[13]See Steig 68. Despite his observation on the important role assigned to Sim, Steig uses him only as a means to connect *Barnaby Rudge* to Samuel Warren's *Ten-Thousand-a-Year* (1839-41), concluding from his comparison of the two novels that Dickens's presentation of Sim reflects his "irrational class bias" (68). Certainly, this is an incomplete reading of the political ramifications of the novel, as I hope my analysis will show. However, Steig's article is one of few to recognize Sim's importance in the novel. Sim also receives some small attention in Marcus (185-86) and Magnet (61-62). One measure of the degree to which Sim has been forgotten is his absence from studies in which he would be highly relevant, including Michasiw, Rice, and Friedberg.

The outlet for Sim's fantasies of power are the self-described "secret society of 'Prentice Knights" (112; ch. 8), a group of disaffected "reckless fellows" who gather in the blind-man Stagg's basement room in the Barbican to play at skittles, dice and cards and to hatch plots against "the masters." As with their leader, the 'Prentice Knights seem on several levels to suffer from a certain amount of ridiculousness. Historically, the presence of an apprentices' conspiracy in the late eighteenth century is anachronistic, to say the least.[14] Indeed, Dickens's choice to include a trade-union-like conspiracy departs from all of his known historical sources. Three of these sources—Thomas Holcroft's *A Plain and Succinct Narrative of the Late Riots, The Thunderer*, and Robert Watson's *The Life of George Gordon*—do propose a conspiracy theory to account for the Gordon riots, but all believe that this conspiracy originates outside of England, from either American, French or Papal sources.[15] The most common and widely-accepted explanation for this historical anomaly is that, in his depiction of the Gordon Riots in *Barnaby Rudge* "Dickens was, consciously or unconsciously, suggesting that something similar was the case with the then contemporary Chartist movement and its leaders" (Jackson 28). Certainly the 'Prentice Knights seem much more at home in the 1830s than in the 1770s, and this connection becomes almost incontestable when we know that Dickens read Carlyle's *Chartism* while writing *Barnaby Rudge* (see Rice's entry on Chartism in *"Barnaby Rudge": An Annotated Bibliography*).

However, this explanation of their historical infidelity does not absolve the 'Prentice Knights of their institutional ludicrousness. Born out of the foaming and spluttering of Sim Tappertit's soul and dedicated to securing the rights of apprentices to their masters' daughters, the 'Prentice Knights conduct their secret meetings in a snail- and slug-rich cellar used, "at a no very distant period . . . as a storehouse for cheeses; a circumstance which, while it accounted for the greasy moisture that hung about it, was agreeably suggestive of rats" (110; ch. 8). These meetings of the member-rats parody to absurdity the "*insignia* of terror" said by *The Annual Register, 1838* to characterize the nocturnal meetings of trade unions: "battle-axes, drawn swords, [and] skeletons" become a "rusty blunderbuss," a "very ancient saber," and a "chair of state, cheerfully ornamented with a couple of skulls" (114, 114, 112; ch. 8). The organization's credibility is not increased by its changeable name; in the second half of the novel, an exchange between Gashford and Lord George reveals that the members have found it necessary to rename their group the United Bulldogs because of the "indentures of the old members expiring by degrees" (344; ch. 36). In other words, the hated masters have been so unjust as to promote the leaders of the group into journeymen, making their earlier name, and by implication their earlier goals, obsolete.

Given the silly side of the 'Prentice Knights, it may be tempting to simply dismiss them as comic relief. This conclusion would be premature, however, in light of their much more serious side as expressed in their initiation oath. This oath, "which was of a dreadful and impressive kind," binds the new member

> at the bidding of his chief, to resist and obstruct the Lord Mayor, sword-bearer, and chaplain; to despise the authority of sheriffs; and to hold the court of aldermen as nought; but not on any account, in case the fulness of time should bring a general rising of 'prentices, to damage or in any way disfigure Temple Bar, which was strictly constitutional and always to be approached with reverence.
>
> (115-16; ch. 8)

Though accompanied by various burlesqued elements of a trade union initiation, the content of this oath amounts to a declaration of revolution against that portion of government presiding over the City of London. Moreover, instead of requiring agreement among the majority of members, this revolution can be ordered by a single man, making it that much more dangerous even than the oath of the Glasgow spinners and their contemporaries. Finally, as Spence's note to this passage makes clear, in its reverence for the Temple Bar, the 'Prentice Knights' oath was meant to further horrify early nineteenth-century liberal readers: "How constitutional the gateway erected after the Great Fire must have appeared to Sim Tappertit, may be judged from the fact that it was ornamented with statues of James I, Charles I, and Charles II—monarchs whom Dickens hated—and was garnished, until 1772, with the mangled remains of traitors" (749, note 3).

The actions of members of the Knights—now known as the United Bulldogs—during the riots reveals the organization's latent revolutionary tendencies in action. The newly-initiated Hugh especially distinguishes himself for ferocity, declaring before the assembled Bulldogs, "'Here's my captain—here's my leader. Ha ha ha! Let him give me the word of command, and I'll fight the whole Parliament House single-handed, or set a lighted torch to the King's throne itself!'" (368-69; ch. 39). Later during the same meeting, even Hugh becomes aware "of the presence of an air of mystery, akin to that which had so much impressed him out of doors. It was impossible to discard a sense that something serious was going on, and that under the noisy revel of the public-house there lurked unseen and dangerous matter" (371; ch. 39). Indeed, once the riots get underway, Hugh and other members of a similarly serious nature demonstrate just how dangerous the United Bulldogs can be by besieging Parliament (457; ch. 49), assaulting the Horse Guards (459; ch. 49), destroying Catholic churches (464; ch. 50 and 481-82; ch. 52), burning the Warren

[14]T. A. Jackson goes a bit farther, calling Sim's inclusion "totally without historical warrant." His remarks are worth quoting in full, not only for their historical sensitivity to proto-trade unionism, but also because they offer a critique of Dickens's politics as reflected in his presentation of the 'Prentice Knights: "Not only is the whole notion of an apprentices' conspiracy in 1774 one as totally without historical warrant as it was made to appear ludicrous; it is open to serious objection on the ground that it burlesques most unforgivably the genuine 'conspiracies'—the earliest form of trade unionism—of the adult journeymen of the period. Dickens, in short, cannot be acquitted of the charge of concocting a burlesque of the 'underground' Radical clubs of a period of struggle against anti-Jacobin reaction, and of the trade unions of the period before the repeal of the Combination Acts in 1825—a burlesque based upon caricatures circulated by malevolent Tories and reactionaries—and palming this off, by implication, as a picture of the operative machinery of Chartist agitation" (28).

[15]A listing of all of Dickens's known and suspected historical sources for *Barnaby Rudge* can be found in Rice's *"Barnaby Rudge": An Annotated Bibliography*.

(ch. 55), breaking the prisoners out of Newgate after "swearing a great oath . . . to force the doors and burn the jail; or perish in the fire themselves" (550; ch. 60), and altogether making it appear "as if the city were invaded by a foreign army" (464; ch. 50).

As these quite serious actions during the riots make evident, the 'Prentice Knights/United Bulldogs are positioned in the thick of the novel's complex representation of civil disorder. Numerous critics have noticed that *Barnaby Rudge* is structured by means of the characteristically Dickensian motif of doubling. Steven Connor argues that the novel at its most abstract level presents a conflict between two visions of the city-as-body (215, 217). This conflict is itself embodied in the temporal discrepancy between the novel's conflicting portraits of England in 1774-75 and in 1780 (chapters 1-32 and 33-79) and in the plot by the parallel representations of disorder evidenced by the Haredale murder and the Gordon Riots. At the level of characterization, even, the novel seems to generate characters who are physical and moral shadows of one another (see Rosenberg 21). Such a grouping of characters into complementary pairs underlies, for example, Steven Marcus and Myron Magnet's psychoanalytic readings of the father and son figures in the novel. The almost obsessive devotion to this doubling motif leads Kim Michasiw to identify the central "message" of *Barnaby Rudge* as a moral dialectic between rebellion and stability, madness and civilization: "Rebellion is essential to the formation of identity, yet some bounds must be placed upon it. What *Rudge* posits is that the sources of madness and of civilized order in its highest form are identical—in the rivalry between father and son, between the present and the dead weight of anteriority" (581). What all of these analyses of doubling fail to account for is the structural role that the novel accords to the 'Prentice Knights/United Bulldogs; in fact, this self-proclaimed secret society serves as the center point connecting the novel's doubled poles of disorder.[16]

These poles are most obviously represented by the novel's double plot. The two narratives of the Haredale murder and the Gordon Riots bring together ruptures of the social order at the individual and the national level into an almost organic whole. By making the early murder, with its undertones of fratricide, the frame within which the Gordon Riots take place, Dickens seems to suggest that national disturbance can be traced to individual wrong-doing, thereby making the novel "preeminently concerned with the implications of individual action" (Rice, "The End" 174). Steven Marcus offers the most succinct summary of the implications of this connection between individual and national disorder when he states that *Barnaby Rudge*

> is concerned with authority in political and social relations, as well as in personal and private ones. Among its most notable qualities are the intelligence and skill with which it connects these two kinds of relations, and the steadiness with which it elucidates the "intimate relation" between them. This insistence upon the reciprocal dependence of politics and character . . . in effect denies to politics the autonomy—the claim to "objectivity"—that those involved in politics regularly need to assert. (172)

One might add that the opposite is also true: the reciprocal dependence of politics and character denies to the private sphere the autonomy from public life that it was so often accorded in the Victorian period. This parallel relationship between the supposedly "separate spheres" is implicit throughout the novel, which reveals the origin of the Gordon Riots in the machinations of Gashford and the irrational nostalgia of Gordon even as it finds the solution to those same riots in the restoration of domestic peace through the marriages of Edward Chester to Emma Haredale and Joe Willet to Dolly Varden.

However, there are also at least two more explicit connections between the domestic and national scenes in *Barnaby Rudge*. The first emerges from the plotting of Sir John Chester, whose efforts at preventing the marriage of Edward and Emma intriguingly parallel his exertions at fomenting the riots. Recognizing that Dolly Varden serves as the illicit messenger between Edward and Emma, Sir John wisely appeals to her mother, winning her over in language more reminiscent of international politics than interfamilial relations: "Mrs. Varden was but a woman, and had her share of vanity, obstinacy, and love of power. She entered into a secret treaty of alliance, offensive and defensive, with her insinuating visitor; and really did believe, as many others would have done who saw and heard him, that in so doing she furthered the ends of truth, justice, and morality, in a very uncommon degree" (274; ch. 27). His reason for securing such a "secret treaty" is principally his lingering jealousy as an unsuccessful suitor of the woman who became Haredale's wife. This same personal rancor motivates his actions behind the scenes of the Protestant Association's crusade against English Catholics, including especially Mr. Haredale, who perceptively responds to Sir John's denial of direct involvement with the Protestant Association, "Men of your capacity plot in secrecy and safety, and leave exposed posts to the duller wits" (404; ch. 43).

The 'Prentice Knights/United Bulldogs provide the second explicit connection between the domestic and national, past and present scenes of disorder. As a secret organization of socially and professionally similar individuals—and the echoes of trade unions like the Glasgow Spinners should be clear—the Knights as an institution occupy a middle ground between the public and private spheres. Moreover, the individual members of the Knights live with one foot in each of the novel's two plots: Sim Tappertit, when not presiding over midnight meetings of his society, lives at the home of Gabriel Varden, who is at once the father of Dolly, for whom Sim tends a secret flame, and the novel's heroic symbol of domestic and social order; likewise, Hugh, when not leading attacks on the Warren or Newgate on behalf of the Bulldogs, serves as the stablehand at the Maypole Inn, itself the novel's

[16]The longest discussion of the 'Prentice Knights in print appears in Magnet, where he identifies the group as a typical millenarian organization rather than placing them within the structure of social disorder presented in the novel (see 133-45).

[17]Folland arrives at a similar interpretation of the novel, and this interpretation leads him suggestively to identify John Chester, rather than the elder Rudge or Gashford, as the novel's principal villain.

main symbol of an ordered past. This connection between the various ordered and disordered worlds of the novel through these two members of the Bulldogs is stated explicitly in one exchange between them:

> "Come!" said Mr Tappertit, growing a little impatient under this disrespectful treatment. "Do you know me, feller?"
>
> "Not I," cried Hugh. "Ha ha ha! Not I! But I should like to."
>
> "And yet I'd have wagered a seven-shilling piece," said Tappertit, folding his arms, and confronting him with his legs wide apart and firmly planted on the ground, "that you once were a hostler at the Maypole."
>
> Hugh opened his eyes on hearing this, and looked at him in great surprise." (367; ch. 39)

Doubtless some of Hugh's surprise comes from the unremarkability of Sim Tappertit to anyone but himself, but this surprise may also reflect a moment of "eye-opening" on the part of the reader, who is made to realize in this scene just how porous the divide between order and disorder can be.

The 'Prentice Knights/United Bulldogs' practices of secrecy also provide a way to begin to connect two more of the novel's doubled poles. Chapter 37 begins with some general observations on the seductiveness of secrecy:

> To surround anything, however monstrous or ridiculous, with an air of mystery, is to invest it with a secret charm, and power of attraction which to the crowd is irresistible. False priests, false prophets, false doctors, false patriots, false prodigies of every kind, veiling their proceedings in mystery, have always addressed themselves at an immense advantage to the popular credulity .... (347; ch. 37)

Given the earlier secretive rigmarole depicted in the 'Prentice Knights' first initiation ceremony and Hugh's perception of a "sense of mystery" immediately after his initiation, one might expect that these general observations are meant to apply to Sim's secret society. Thus, it is rather surprising when in the next paragraph the passage continues,

> . . . But when vague rumors got abroad, that in this Protestant association, a secret power was mustering against the government for undefined and mighty purposes; when the air was filled with whispers of a confederacy among the Popish powers to degrade and enslave England, establish an Inquisition in London, and turn the pens of Smithfield market into stakes and cauldrons; when terrors and alarms which no man understood were perpetually broached, both in and out of Parliament, by an enthusiast who did not understand himself, and bygone bugbears which had lain quietly in their graves for centuries, were raised again to haunt the ignorant and credulous; when all this was done, as it were, in the dark, and secret invitations to join the Great Protestant Association in defense of religion, life, and liberty, were dropped in the public ways, thrust under house-doors, tossed in at windows, and pressed into the hands of those who trod the streets by night. . . . then the mania spread indeed, and the body, still increasing every day, grew forty thousand strong. (348; ch. 37)

This parallel between the 'Prentice Knights and the Protestant Association, coupled with Sir John's own secretive plotting implies that the division between rich and poor proposed in the aftermath of the Glasgow spinners' trial by Lord Mackenzie, the Lord Justice-Clerk, the *Report of the Select Committee on Combinations* and Carlyle's *Chartism*, may not hold up if one examines their common reliance on secretive practices.

The next logical step, that secretive practices may be a ubiquitous condition of modern England, never quite materializes in *Barnaby Rudge*. In fact, the novel seems at pains to back away from this conclusion, scrupulously punishing everyone who ever kept illicit secrets. Sir John is killed in a duel with Mr. Hareton, and his body left unfound for two days on the Warren estate. The leaders of the riots, Hugh and Dennis the hangman, are hanged in the square outside of Newgate prison, while Lord George is confined to the Tower, where he eventually dies seven years later, imprisoned on unrelated matters. For Sim is reserved the most viciously reciprocal punishment of all: his legs "crushed into shapeless ugliness" and later replaced by wooden prosthetics (647; ch. 71), he becomes a shoeblack and marries the widow of a rag and bone collector, who occasionally resolves their domestic disagreements "by taking off his legs, and leaving him exposed to the derision of those urchins who delight in mischief" (734; ch. 82).

Even in this final restoration of social order, however, there remains a hint at the suppressed ubiquity of secretive practices in the fate of Gashford. After escaping official retribution and abandoning his position as Lord George's secretary and aide-de-camp, he "subsist[s] for a time upon his traffic of his master's secrets; and, this trade failing when the stock was quite exhausted, procure[s] an appointment in the honourable corps of spies and eavesdroppers employed by the government" (733; ch. 82). Though the 'Prentice Knights and the Protestant Association are no more, there remains a place in the world for secretive practices, and thus a continuing suggestion that the binary opposition between rich and poor, between the government and the governed, may not be able to survive a full exposure of its secrets.

This fuller exposure of secretive practices would come from a rising member of Parliament, Benjamin Disraeli, in the form of a political novel which, though "his least typical work,"[18] is also his most enduring fictional text. In fact, *Sybil, or, The two Nations* suffers somewhat from its own enduring popularity, or at least the enduring popularity of its subtitle. This subtitle, "The Two Nations," and the doctrine that it represents have come to dominate present perceptions of Disraeli's *Sybil*. The novel's theory of social division is first proposed to the novel's hero, Charles Egremont, in the ruins of Marney Abbey:

> "Two nations; between whom there is no intercourse and no sympathy; who are as ignorant of each other's habits, thoughts, and feelings, as if they were dwellers in different zones, or inhabitants of different planets; who are formed by a different breeding, are fed by different food, are ordered by different manners, and are not governed by the same laws."
>
> "You speak of—" said Egremont, hesitatingly.
>
> "THE RICH AND THE POOR."
>
> (65-66; bk. 2, ch. 5)

From the moment of *Sybil*'s publication on May 8, 1845, many critics have fastened on this succinct explanation of the condition of England, making it independent of and larger than the novel in which it first appears.

However, as Robert O'Kell points out, the concept of the "two nations" is finally rejected by Egremont as a false doctrine that sustains class-based and religious prejudice (214). Though O'Kell is concerned mainly with how the "Two Nations" doctrine sustains Sybil's prejudice, his point may be expanded in order to explain the effects of a number of characters' (and readers') firm belief in societal binarism. Marley's own prejudicial belief in the "Two Nations" doctrine finally prompts him to conspire with Bishop Hatton to assault Mowbray Castle (bk. 5, ch. 11), where he is shot and killed by a division of yeomanry led by Egremont. What Egremont and the reader come to learn is that the "Two Nations" doctrine is insufficient to explain what Brantlinger calls the complex "diversity of the class system," which in England is filled with spuriously-titled aristocrats like the Marneys and the Firebraces, latent working-class nobility like the Gerards, independent but morally flawed mechanics like Bishop Hatton and the Hellcats, and equally flawed masters like Diggs ("Tory-Radicalism" 17).[19]

These characters complicate the fallaciously simple binary opposition between the rich and the poor in two ways simultaneously. At the level of fact, the novel leaves no doubts about their moral and social worth. Lord Marney has as little compassion for his grossly underpaid tenants as, the descendant of "a confidential domestic of one of the favourites of Henry VIII" (9; bk. 1. ch. 3), he does legitimate claims to a noble title. By contrast, though one of the leaders of moral force Chartism, Walter Gerard is descended from dispossessed Saxon nobility. Other working men do not share Gerard's latent nobility, however; Bishop Hatton, for example, is described by Stephen Morley as "'a clear brain and a bold spirit; you have no scruples, which indeed are generally the creatures of perplexity rather than of principle'" (343; bk. 5, ch. 11). Lacking these "scruples" makes Hatton capable of abusing his apprentices, assaulting the Trafford factory and leading the Plug Riots. These and the novel's other cast of characters are then juxtaposed throughout the text, adding to the confusion of any simple binary division of England by their very incongruity. This technique of juxtaposition has been identified by Daniel Schwarz as "Disraeli's principle mode of rhetorical argument," occurring at the level of character and scene to construct meaning through opposition ("Art" 24).[20]

Undoubtedly, the critic to get the most mileage from this mode of rhetorical argument is Catherine Gallagher, who, in *The Industrial Reformation of English Fiction*, offers the most cogent and theoretically sophisticated analysis of *Sybil* in print. Arguing that Disraeli's task in *Sybil* is "to legitimize one kind of representation through opposition while delegitimizing another" (203), or, to establish "an identity of interests" between the aristocracy and the poor while discrediting "a new usurping oligarchy of aristocratic families" whose claims to the peerage rest on spurious grounds (202, 203), Gallagher concludes that "the novel ultimately legitimizes both" (203). In other words, *Sybil* attempts to proffer a theory of political representation—Tory Democracy—but fails because of its own energetic efforts to discredit the novel's aristocracy through ironic representation.

This theory of Tory Democracy rests in part on a complex binary opposition between the rich and the poor that at once firmly differentiates between them while asserting that their extreme difference aligns their political interests. However, as Gallagher notes, the "binary structure of the book finally impresses us . . . not with the differences between the classes, but with their similarities," since in "*Sybil* both typical aristocrats and workers are not so much representatives of their own class as ironic representatives of the opposite class" (203) She demonstrates this similarity through a close reading of the abruptly juxtaposed dinners of Dandy Mick and Devilsdust at the Temple of the Muses, a working-class club (bk. 2, ch. 10), and of the de Mowbray party at de Mowbray's country house (bk. 2, ch. 11) (Gallagher 203-04). After suggesting but not analyzing a number of parallel scenes, including "A Parliamentary division . . . followed by a trade union initiation" (204) Gallagher concludes that

> All of these and many other passages direct our attention to the underlying ways in which the classes indicate one another. This ironic form of representation through opposition, then, is morphologically similar to Disraeli's wished-for political system. . . . According to Tory Democracy, however, representation through opposition should bring out the best in both classes. . . . The novel's ironic representations, on the other hand, bring out the worst in both classes: their common pretension, selfishness, and ignorance.
>
> Despite its structural similarity to Disraeli's political ideal, therefore, irony is not a means of infusing facts with values in *Sybil*; rather, it is a means of devaluing what should be significant facts. (205)

In other words, the ironic similarities between the two nations produces a breakdown of signification in which the "fact" of aristocratic social standing can no longer serve as a guarantee of noble "value." Gallagher concentrates on this gap between

[18]O'Kell 211-12. Thom Braun similarly refers to the novel as "untypical of the author" (85). For more of the genesis of the novel, see Braun 85-90.

[19]This article offers one of the best early analyses of the complex class dynamic at work in the novel. See also Brantlinger's discussion of the same topic in *The Spirit of Reform* (97-104).

[20]The article is reprinted in a somewhat revised form in *Disraeli's Fiction* (105-27).

the "aristocratic signifier and its signified" in order to reveal Disraeli's underlying vision of history and the subsequent collapse of his ideal of political representation through literary irony (205).

However, this breakdown of signification can also be traced through Gallagher's neglected parallel between a Parliamentary division and Dandy Mick's trade union initiation in order to demonstrate the degree to which Disraeli's ironic representation of the collapse of social binaries depends on the figure of the secret society. This figure is most overtly invoked by Dandy Mick's initiation into a secret trade union. Brought by his friend, Devilsdust, to a seemingly deserted warehouse in a suburb of Mowbray, Mick is confronted by "two awful sentries" who subdue him, bandage his eyes, and lead him through a maze of rooms until he is "in the presence of the SEVEN" (218-19; bk. 4, ch. 4). These SEVEN turn out to be the executive committee of a local trade union. They preside over a series of denunciations of both workers and masters for actions ranging from accepting only piece work—the practice of being paid by the task rather than by the hour—to firing workers because of their membership in the union. Once the denunciations are completed, the SEVEN then lead the union members in a prayer and in singing the "Hymn to Labour."

After these preliminary matters, Mick's eyes are uncovered, revealing to him and to the reader the spectacle of a trade union initiation. The walls of the room are hung with black cloth, and at an elevated table sit "seven persons in surplices and masked, the president on a loftier seat; above which, on a pedestal, was a skeleton complete" (220; bk. 4, ch. 4). Guarding the skeleton and Mick are four disguised men armed with drawn swords and battle-axes, and sitting on the table is a bible. In the presence of these ritual forms, Mick is sworn into the union on the following oath:

> Do you voluntarily swear in the presence of the Almighty God and before these witnesses, that you will execute with zeal and alacrity, so far as in you lies, every task and injunction that the majority of your brethren, testified by the mandate of this grand committee, shall impose upon you, in furtherance of our common welfare, of which they are the sole judges; such as the chastisement of Nobs, the assassination of oppressive and tyrannical masters, or the demolition of all mills, works and shops that shall be deemed incorrigible? (221; bk. 4, ch. 4)

This oath and the ritual surrounding it should look familiar since, as Brantlinger points out, "The oath which Dandy Mick takes is that which the Glasgow spinners were accused of using. Disraeli gives it to us verbatim, and the rest of the details of union ritual come from the evidence taken by the Committee on Combinations" ("The Case" 39).[21]

However, the union oath and ritual also bear a certain similarity to something much closer to hand: Disraeli's description in the previous chapter of a Parliamentary division. This description is necessarily sketchy, since "The mysteries of the Lobby are only for the initiated" (211; bk. 4, ch. 3), but the reader is permitted to see the prelude to the division. Foreshadowing the perspective of the blindfolded Dandy Mick, the chapter begins with a disembodied voice announcing "STRANGERS must withdraw" (210; bk. 4, ch. 3), followed by the overheard exchange of a pair of insiders who talk of the mysterious practice of "pairing," which seems to mean leaving in pairs before being forced to vote. While the division bell continues ringing, peers, diplomats and members rush about in apparent confusion, and then, "The doors were locked" (211; bk. 4, ch. 3), effectively removing from the uninitiated view the internal proceedings of Parliament. As the novel had earlier remarked, "the obscure majority, who, under our present constitution, are destined to govern England, are as secret as a Venetian conclave" (37, bk. 1, ch. 6).

One might also say "as secret as a trade union meeting," given the proximity of this scene to Dandy Mick's entry into the initiated and the novel's penchant for rhetorical argument through juxtaposition. In fact, this tendency toward conspiratorial secrecy seems to be the crux of the narrative's representation of the unrepresentability of the Parliamentary division. Just like trade unions, Parliament can be described using the figure of the secret society. Of course, the irony of this critique of Parliamentary secrecy is that it comes from an initiate—Disraeli had been elected to the House of Commons in 1837—one who can show the inner workings if he so chooses, but who instead decides to preserve the division between outsiders and initiates that he critiques. In many ways, this final assertion of his own privileged position as an insider cements the relationship between "the SEVEN" and the House of Commons better than any exposure could have done by embodying the analogous secretive practices that make the authority of both groups possible.

Conclusions

Together, the Trial, *Barnaby Rudge* and *Sybil* demonstrate the inherent instability of any attempt to demonize trade unions by evoking the figure of the secret society. In the Trial, the supposedly clear relation between the jury's verdict and the truth of the case is not adhered to by the judges, who attempt to recast the spinners and trade unions more generally as un-English others by locating them within a rhetoric of conspiracy. This strategy is further reinforced by the weight of a Parliamentary Report and of Carlyle's allusions in *Chartism* to Indian Thuggee. However, the prominence accorded to secretive practices in this negative definition of Englishness always has the potential to work in reverse. Dickens's *Barnaby Rudge* shows how secretive practices are central not only to trade unions, but also to more upper-class institutions like the Protestant Association, and possibly even the government's attempts to maintain a network of social observation. *Sybil* follows this initial insight with the implication that the Parliamentary division between outsiders and initiates might also bear some similarity to trade unions' practices of secrecy. The result of all this attention is that the attempted application of the figure of the secret society, and the attendant emphasis on secrecy as the essence of meaning, backfires as English institutions at all levels can be shown to employ secretive practices.

That this result was always already present in the figure of the secret society seems evident from the degree to which both Dickens and Disraeli continue to function within the rubric of the trial. Neither seriously questions that trade unions employ secretive practices, as their mutual reliance on the Committee Report as reprinted in *The Annual Register* for 1838 makes evident. Both also rely on the intellectual construction of social binaries fostered by the trial to construct their texts: Dickens's characteristic motif of doubling and Disraeli's mode of argument-by-juxtaposition. Even the eventual implications of their fictions reproduce two observations that went largely unexamined at the time of the trial. Both the *Tait's* article "The Trial of the Glasgow Spinners" and the Parliamentary speech given by Daniel O'Connell, suggest that combinations may be more widespread than popular prejudice allowed, that the House of Lords, the House of Commons, and the Temple Bar might all be legitimately seen as trades' unions of the more well-to-do.

Ironically, neither Dickens nor Disraeli would have been entirely comfortable with the implications of their own texts. Middle-class liberalism and Tory Democracy were both grounded in some ways on a definition of Englishness that included a deep distrust of secretive practices, especially among the working classes. Despite their authors' political biases, however, the novels finally undermine the basis for this definition of Englishness altogether by emptying the figure of the secret society of its particularizing significance. If a supposedly "English" institution like Parliament is also "un-English" by virtue of its reliance on practices of secrecy, then attempting to cast trade unions as dangerous others by labeling them secret societies seems ironically counter-hegemonic. In fact, insisting upon the binary opposition between secret and open societies makes Thuggee appear every bit as English as the House of Commons.

[21]Disraeli's fidelity to historical sources like, in this case, *The Annual Register* of 1838, is well-documented. For his use of Blue Book evidence, see Smith, "Willenhall and Wodgate" and "Blue Books and Victorian Novelists." Bueler and Fido both add to the list of Disraeli's historical borrowing, proposing Tudor chronicles and William Dodd's *The Factory System Illustrated in a Series of Letters to Lord Ashley*, respectively, as likely sources.

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Kathleen's Legacy: Dora Sigerson Shorter's Vagrant Heart

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The cultural paradoxes defining the life of Dora Sigerson Shorter created an identity crisis repeatedly illustrated in her writing. Born in Dublin and raised in an environment peopled with intellectuals, artists, and fervent patriots, Sigerson[1] (1866-1918) spent all of her adult life in England. Rather than diminishing with time and distance, Sigerson's girlhood passion for Gaelic culture and Republican political values intensified after marriage to Clement Shorter resulted in her permanent move to London. According to Douglas Hyde, Sigerson's "very absence from Ireland has made her . . . more Irish than if she had never left it."[2] As her literary—and particularly poetic—themes illustrate, Sigerson never left Ireland in spirit. Her life's work and, according to popular legend, even the circumstances of her death reflect her compelling commitment to Irish independence yet comprise a strangely obscure episode in the Anglo-Irish conflict, one deserving of a more prominent place in literary history.

Sigerson's poetic themes, like those of Yeats,[3] reflect the values of the period's renaissance of Irish culture,[4] including its promotion of the Gaelic language, its recuperation of Celtic mythology, and its tendentious relationship with Irish resistance to British rule. From her earliest volume of *Verses* (1893) to *The Tricolour: Poems of the Irish Revolution* (published posthumously 1922), Sigerson's themes ranged from gentle ballads featuring fairy changelings to various depictions of Kathleen ni Houlihan, and from impassioned eulogies for Irish freedom fighters to satirical, politically acute nursery rhymes ridiculing British intervention.

[1]Throughout this discussion, I refer to the poet by her maiden name, Sigerson. That sources refer to her alternately as Mrs. Clement Shorter, Dora Sigerson Shorter, Dora Sigerson, and Mrs. Dora Sigerson Shorter presents challenges to scholars attempting to locate her works. I have chosen to employ "Sigerson" exclusively because, judging by her poetry, her primary identification is with her Irish heritage. Further, most traditional literary-biographical sources refer to her as, first and foremost, the wife of Clement Shorter and the compatriot of Yeats. My aim is to present Sigerson as a poet in her own right, aside from her associations with these men.

[2]According to *Victorian Women Poets: An Anthology*, Sigerson joined the Pan-Celtic society in 1888 and was also a Parnellite, "attending [Charles] Parnell's meetings and siding with him when it came to the split with the Church" (642). Clement Shorter (1857-1926), editor, journalist, and biographer was editor of the *Illustrated London News* (1891-1900). Douglas Hyde quoted in *Collected Letters of W. B. Yeats*. Vol. 3, 1901-1904, 35 n.1.

[3]Yeats frequented the Sigerson home in Dublin and was later often a dinner guest at the Shorter home in London. According to one anecdote, Yeats regarded Sigerson's poem "Cean Duv Deelish" (Dear Black Head) as "magnificent" and liked to read it aloud like a "chant." Although Yeats reputedly "advised" Sigerson on her poetry, he seems never to have commented on its quality or otherwise assessed it in writing, unlike such prominent male writers of the period as Thomas Hardy, George Meredith, Swinburne, and Francis Thompson.

But three crucial factors distinguish Dora Sigerson Shorter from the more widely known Yeats: her Catholicism, her gender, and her (acquired) English citizenship. Although geographically removed from Irish politics, Sigerson offers a compelling alternative perspective of a conflict dramatically split in terms of cultural and religious values and, for her, exacerbated by her subaltern status as both a woman and as an Irish emigrè. During the era in which Sigerson lived and wrote, Victorian gender and sexual mores were still in full force. The Victorian period is curiously distinguished by its casting of social problems in terms of questions: "The Woman Question," "The Irish Question," and "The Catholic Question" make Dora Sigerson a triple threat. Sigerson's early poetic themes—most prominently, men's betrayal of women, Kathleen ni Houlihan as the personification of Ireland, and the poet's frustration as a woman prevented from action by cultural prohibitions[5]—mature throughout her career to culminate in her last creative projects, all dedicated to the cause of Irish independence. Tracing Sigerson's poetic growth as she matures in her craft clarifies the significance of her last and most important book, *The Tricolour*, and at least begins to fill in the blanks of Irish literary history in which the feminine perspective has long been peripheral.

Given the intensity of Sigerson's patriotism, one cannot help speculating about the quality of her marriage to a prominent English literary man. Love and marriage being central to the values of the period, her removal to what was, in effect, enemy country was perhaps not as surprising then as it would be now. Judging by the number of Sigerson's works Shorter had privately printed and distributed, he seems to have supported rather than hindered (more typical of traditional Victorian husbands) her creative work. Shorter's editorial position and Dora's early fame as a writer of poetry, fiction, and drama placed them at the forefront of London's literary set, which included George Meredith, Thomas Hardy, and A. C. Swinburne. Neither biographical nor literary sources suggest tension in their union as a result of possible political or cultural differences; most such accounts assert that theirs was a happy marriage. Alternatively, Leighton and Reynolds observe that Katherine Tynan's comment in her introduction to *The Sad Years*—"No one will say she was not happy in her English life"—"hints loudly at the opposite" (642). Love and marital happiness are not among her poetic themes, although men's betrayal of women and women's cultural powerlessness are two ideas which for Sigerson mirror the larger political issues of the period.

One of the poet's earliest depictions of faithlessness in terms of intimate relationships occurs in 1893's *Verses*. "Man's Discontent" features a narrator who first loves, then leaves, a young maiden (Spring), a young woman (Summer), a mature woman (Autumn) and a wise old woman (Winter), each broken heart punctuated by the refrain, "I stayed till I grew weary—man's discontent, I ween" (9, references are to page rather than line). Sigerson's critique of the double standard that requires women's compulsory monogamy but permits men to roam from partner to partner with impunity finds suitable expression through the poem's conclusion, in which the man's old age is marked by loneliness and regret.

Two other early poems offer a religious, though still gendered, variation on the theme of faithlessness. "The Me within Thee Blind!"[6] features a worldly narrator who marries a sheltered, convent-raised girl. Rather than protecting his child-bride and their infant as the period's separate spheres marital ideology promises, in his cynicism he exposes both to life's harsh realities. When his wife and child die as a result, he wanders the earth grieving, yet remains incapable of spiritual faith: "I go from church to church, from clime to clime, / A lone man, haunted by his unbelief" (157). Another poem about faith also illustrates Sigerson's love for animals. "A Cry in the World" depicts cattle, birds, and sea creatures all "crying piteously" because "man has bereft us and taken our young ones from us" for economic gain. The poem's unusual links between male duplicity and animal rights are illustrated by the "piteous" weeping of another mother who lost her child through man's faithlessness. Her child, the "king of the world" although born in a stable, is characterized by his compassion toward all creatures, both human and animal.[7]

More mythically oriented are "The Woman Who Went to Hell" (1902) and "The Story and Song of Black Roderick"

[4]The movement loosely termed "The Irish Literary Renaissance" refers to a revival of interest in Gaelic culture and language and in Celtic mythology that was popular during the late Victorian, early modern period in Ireland. The movement included establishing the Irish National Theatre and a national art gallery, and involved usch figures as Yeats, AE (George Russell), and Lady Gregory. Some regard the rise and fall of Charles Parnell (1846-1891) as a motivating factor in the Irish cultural renaissance. Under pressure from British Prime Minister Gladstone, Parnell was ousted as head of the Irish Party through political intrigues and romantic scandals; the wrecked career of the controversial Parnell resulted in an intellectual and creative climate mobilized by an assertion of traditional Irish culture made relevant to the demands of the modern world, a culture no longer content with assimilation into the British perspective.

[5]Along with the sexual double standard which favored men, familial economy dictated women's place was in the home while men's was in the public marketplace. The poet's protests against this system center more on the limitations they imposed on her creative and spiritual growth than on a more tangible issue like women's franchise (implemented in England the year of Sigerson's death).

[6]Printed in 1899's *Ballads and Poems*, this poem features an epigraph from Edward Fitzgerald's translation of Omar Khayyam's *Rubaiyat*:

> Then of the thee in me who works behind
> The veil, I lifted up my hands to find
> A lamp amid the Darkness, and I heard,
> As from without—"The me within thee blind!"

[7]As a girl in Dublin, Sigerson was regarded a character for her habit of collecting stray street animals and finding homes for them. *A Dull Day in London and Other Sketches*, short stories linked by animal motifs, suggests her affinity with animals and birds. In his "Introduction" to this volume, Thomas Hardy observes that Sigerson's sympathy towards what "we are accustomed to call the less favoured of our fellow-mortals who are often nobler than ourselves . . . seems to embrace all animate and inanimate nature" (7). "A Cry in the World," *My Lady's Slipper and Other Verses* (52).

(1906), both ballad narratives similar in their depiction of women serving multiple seven-year terms in Hell, striving with Satan for the soul of an unworthy lover. In each case, the heroine's unflagging compassion and willingness to suffer for others redeems the lover from his unworthiness, creating in him a change of heart and attitude that serves as its own reward. But the most compelling example of faithlessness in Sigerson's work is seen in relation to the cultural icon Kathleen ni Houlihan. As the personification of Ireland, Kathleen is cast in guises ranging from young maiden to wizened crone and assigned various names and symbolic associations—yet the underlying theme of each variation remains the same: Kathleen (Ireland) is betrayed by those of her "children" unwilling to die for love of her. By the time Sigerson compiles *The Tricolour* at the end of her life, the number of those ready to die for Irish freedom had increased dramatically—a tragic, but necessary, means to independence.[8]

"Kathleen's Charity" is such that she gives until she has nothing left to give the needy but tears of compassion. Cast as a peasant girl spinning cloth for "a robe all straight and white, / That I a bride may go," she gives the fabric to a beggar maid "so pale and wan / I fear you scarce can live." Similarly, she gives her only seeds to an "aged man and frail" and her tears to warm an orphan "so weak and small." Having relinquished love, food, and warmth out of compassion for impoverished outcasts, Kathleen feels greater distress over others' suffering and realizes that the problems Ireland presents her with are far greater than her capacity to resolve them (*Collected Poems* 89).

"Lady Kathleen" offers a striking departure from these humble images. This more mystical Kathleen recalls Tennyson's Lady of Shalott, lamenting her imprisonment alone in a tower where she is compelled to spin and wait for the lover who will break the spell. As life passes her by, the elegant, pristine Kathleen decides that love, not passive waiting, is what "keeps a woman's summer young" and leaves to find her lover. As she steps outside the tower, the spell breaks and her beauty fades. The fairies ridicule her sacrifice of youth and beauty in exchange for union with her lover, but even crueler is the lover's rejection of this aged crone whose "hands grew hard as they wove for thee. . . . My face grew sad, and my hair grew white, / In the silent horror of many a night" (*Complete Poems* 200). Lady Kathleen's compassion and willingness to sacrifice match those of Sigerson's earlier heroines, yet for her no vindication is forthcoming:

> But, ah, for woman whose heart is strong
> To weary never and love too long!
> And what is life to a heart denied?
> Fair Lady Kathleen drooped and died. (199)

The metaphor of weaving employed in both poems, representative of a feminine style of regeneration—a piecing together, the creating of a whole cloth out of disconnected threads, mirrors Kathleen's broader attempts to reweave the torn fabric of a culture made threadbare by unrelenting deprivation.

Although Sigerson's many romances attest to her thematic affinity for the ancient ballad form, poems like "Lady Kathleen" also depict political criticism relevant to the early-modern period. As a symbol, Kathleen's effectiveness resides in its capacity to illustrate contemporary issues while preserving the weight of a history of cultural oppression, a tradition facing an even more violent future. Consistent with the values of the Irish cultural renaissance, Sigerson's approach to social change was not concerned with guns, physical violence, or other aggressive behaviors but with instilling in the Irish people a firm cultural foundation, a sense of pride stemming from a recuperation of traditional Irish culture that is made relevant to the modern world; the emphasis, in other words, is on regeneration and internal strength rather than external force. Lady Kathleen is the Irish spirit diminished by neglect and by waiting for "lovers" or patriots who are willing to give as much for her as she is for them. In this version, the fairies—generally cast as evil spirits in Celtic mythology—represent the cultural outsiders, the British invaders taking fiendish delight in Kathleen's being abandoned by her own kind. Whether depicted as a peasant or a queen, the spirit of Ireland is beset by enemies without—the aggressive British—as well as within—the more insidious enmity of a people made passive by prolonged demoralization.

Sigerson's poetic persona occasionally shifts away from subtle presentations distanced by ancient lore and quaint poetic devices towards more concrete depictions of personal frustrations. Attempts to grapple with her despair over Ireland's continued struggles increased as the social and political conflicts escalated, a pattern which intensified through the end of Sigerson's life. Although she wrote prolifically, almost exclusively employing Gaelic- and Celtic-related themes, she was frustrated in part from an inability to contribute more materially to the cause of Irish freedom. Like the fiery revolutionary Maude Gonne,[9] Sigerson seems inclined towards more aggressive participation but, unlike Gonne, does not act on that inclination. Those poems rehearsing an unrelieved resentment against the cultural strictures confining her to more discreet modes of social criticism provide insight on her reluctance to break the social code. Sigerson's struggles to reconcile her dual cultural identities (Irish and English) with a conflicted gender ideology (a woman with a political agenda was at that time a contradiction in terms) provided the poet with her own private battleground.

One of the clearest evidences of this internal struggle is "A Vagrant Heart," which begins with the lament "O to be a woman! to be left to pique and pine, / When the winds are out and calling to this vagrant heart of mine." The narrator envies the sailor his adventurous life: even the gulls who "whirl up shrieking" and the boats bobbing frantically on the angry sea inspire not her fear but an excitement and danger she wants to

[8] Even more tragic is the violence and loss of life in the name of that freedom that continues unabated eighty years after Sigerson's death.

[9] Maude Gonne (1866-1953) was a flamboyant Irish actress and revolutionary. Critics argued that, despite her aggressive patriotism, Gonne's violent, erratic behaviors, including numerous affairs and illegitimate children, hindered rather than promoted the cause of Irish nationalism. As the unrequited love of Yeats's life, she is the subject of many of his poems and acted the lead in his play *Cathleen ni Houlihan* (1902).

participate in: "There is danger on the waters—there is joy where dangers be— / Alas! to be a woman and the nomad's heart in me." As a woman, she is compelled to watch passively from the shore, with a restless heart unappeased by society's remedy for unwomanly desires:

> Thrust a cloth between her fingers, and tell her she must
> sew;
> Must join in empty chatter . . . for the sake of social laws.
> O chatter, chatter, chatter, when to speak is misery,
> When silence lies around your heart—and night is on the
> sea

Although as a professional writer, and a childless one at that, Sigerson enjoyed more freedom from social strictures than did most women of the period, she still railed against "little fashions" and "petty passions," the "laws confused that man has made" that comprise the "root of all our strife" (*Collected Poems* 249-50).

Part of Sigerson's struggle with this issue stems from the compromises any reigning ideology requires of individuals. Her compromise in exchange for marriage to Shorter involves leaving her beloved country; a compromise common to most marriages concerns relinquishing freedoms desired by "the nomad's heart" for the safe, if dull, sanctuary of domesticated family life. This idea is illustrated in the image of birds, a prominent device found throughout her works denoting unfettered freedom. Of the seagulls "The Vagrant Heart" asks,

> Would you leave your world of passion for a home that
> knows no riot?
> Would I change my vagrant longings for a heart more full
> of quiet?
> No!—for all its dangers, there is joy in danger too:
> On, bird, and fight your tempests, and this nomad heart
> with you!

Sigerson's final entry in *The Collected Poems*, "The Enemies," also employs bird imagery, claiming, "I could have sung as sweet as any lark" if not for the persistent "grey and stinging throng" presented by life's difficulties. Applied to her life's work, the self-criticism is clearly misplaced, leading again to the speculation that Sigerson's sense of inadequacy in terms of the political arena that categorically excluded her was both a constant source of frustration and, more significantly, of creative inspiration.

Sigerson's major poetic achievement, *The Tricolour*, which incorporates the concerns of modern politics with her earlier themes of faithlessness and Gaelicism, is also her last. As the horrors of World War I shocked the period's lingering Victorianism into the modern age, the poet responded with such anti-war poems as "Comfort the Women: A Prayer in Time of War" (1915) and "An Old Proverb: It Will Be All the Same in a Thousand Years" (1916)—(both poems were privately printed). Published only a year apart, the two poems exhibit markedly different reactions to the period's unprecedented numbers of deaths and the social chaos resulting from global conflicts. "Comfort the Women" questions Christ's awareness of the suffering endured by those on the homefront—an inglorious contribution to the war effort but a kind of bravery nevertheless. Sigerson's appeal for divine intervention in "this discord of Thy Christian World" is a pointed reminder of the bonds which, according to reigning family and religious ideology, outweigh political and geographical disputes—bonds experienced even by Christ:

> Protect the women—they so helpless slain
> By each sharp sword that strikes a dear one down, . . .
> Comfort the women, let this cry be heard,
> For Thou has known a human mother's tears.

"Comfort the Women" illustrates Evelyn Hanley's claim that Sigerson's "attitude toward war, in advance of her time, was humanitarian rather than imperialistic" (223-24), but this analysis does not account for the dramatic alteration in Sigerson's world view during this period. For example, Sigerson's other anti-war poem, "An Old Proverb," marks a striking shift away from maternal ideology: proclaiming "It will be all the same in a Thousand Years . . . whether or no / Women's tears flow," this poem reflects an existential despair. Composed of short lines, brittle diction, and harsh imagery, the poem argues that humans, who have never learned from war in the past, are destined to repeat the same mistakes in the future, even after The Great War. Fortunately for literary history, Sigerson ultimately overcomes the incapacitating effects of such despair to harness her poetic energy for her final poetic achievement. Although her response to the British massacre of Irish freedom fighters in Dublin during Easter week, 1916, proved to be fatal, it was also clearly the source of her finest creative achievement.

Published posthumously, *The Tricolour. Poems of the Irish Revolution* serves as Sigerson's extended eulogy to the dead freedom fighters, and eloquently disproves her earlier claim in "The Enemies" that grief diminishes her capacity to create. Like the event it immortalizes, *The Tricolour* reflects the remarkable realization that the tragic deaths of Easter week are a necessary prelude to the resurrection of Kathleen's spirit, which is a cause for celebration. The appropriateness, to her Catholic perspective as well as to what George Meredith, in his introduction to Sigerson's *Collected Poems*, called her "Celtic mind" (vi), of the timing of this event presents a striking irony: although the freedom fighters died during the Christian celebration of death and resurrection, the Irish spirit seemed reborn as a result, ready for the level of mobilization required to fight for political independence.

The romanticized legend that Sigerson died as a result of her response to the Easter massacre was fueled in part by her own claim, according to Kathryn Tynan, that her final illness was due to her "intense and isolated suffering over the events following Easter Week, 1916, in Dublin. . . . She broke her heart over it all; and so she died, as she would have chosen to die, for love of the Dark Rosaleen" (9). The sentiment is echoed by the editor of *The Tricolour*, who notes that "The publication of this book is a sacred obligation to one who broke her heart over Ireland," adding that Sigerson's awareness of her impending death led her to devote her final weeks to writing a dedication, organizing the order of the poems, and

arranging for the statue she had designed and sculpted to be erected on the burial site of the sixteen dead men (i).[10]

There are two editions of this last work, the first entitled *Sixteen Dead Men and Other Poems of Easter Week* (1919) and the second, *The Tricolour. Poems of the Irish Revolution* (1922). Aside from slight alterations in the front matter and the addition of a photograph of Sigerson's monument (1922), both editions are identical. The dedication "To the Tricolour" in *Sixteen Dead Men* is shorter than its successor, but identical as far as it goes: it is actually part one of the two-part version found in *Tricolour*. Only the earlier edition features the author's allegorical introduction, "The Lion," symbolizing Britain as the king of beasts: "I do not like the lion . . . a treacherous beast" (11). Although as political criticism the effectiveness of allegories may be somewhat muted, "The Lion" evidences Sigerson's increasingly outspoken anti-British sentiments, a tendency veiled in her earlier poetry through Celtic mythological devices. Writing literally from within the lion's den, the poet charges that this lion does not offer protection but rather feeds "on the flesh of his subjects. . . . deceitful[ness] . . . is usual to him." As later poems reveal, Sigerson's use of the pronoun "he" is more than just generic; the pronounced presence of Kathleen's feminine persona throughout her writing repeatedly dramatizes her perception that cultural power imbalances reflect gender as well as imperialistic relations and that the two are, in fact, superimposed.

Sigerson's dedication to *The Tricolour* warrants close scrutiny in terms of its prose rendering of the myths central to her poetic themes, here set in Dublin's war-torn streets. With an immediacy demanded by the murders of sixteen Irish patriots, Sigerson's opening words initiate the tripartite device that symbolizes more than just a flag: through "the crash of falling houses . . . the roar of guns . . . [and] the crackling flames rose the tricolour, and for a few mad days it shone into the hearts of the people" (1). Recognizing the importance of naming names, Sigerson matches each form of external devastation with a dead patriot and the ethical values he represented: James Connolly, campaigner for improved housing and wages, represents Labour "shot down because it dared to be discontented with its fortunes"; Pearse represents Idealism "shot down because it dared to dream"; Sheehy-Skeffington is Peace, shot down "because it got in the way of militarism" (2). Observing that these events, like Easter itself, prove that resurrection results from death, she draws a striking analogy between these three men, their values, and Christ. "Who will take it upon himself to crucify Labour, since Christ was the Son of a carpenter; Idealism, for Christ was an idealist; Peace, for did not Christ our Lord say 'Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God'"?

Part two of the Dedication takes a different approach by superimposing the ancient idea of Kathleen on her modern incarnation as the old woman Sean-Bhean Bhocht, "weak . . . trembling . . . useless . . . [an] old woman who had no place in the revolution" (3). Bhocht stumbles out of some dark corner of the slums, crossing the "gun-swept" streets to kneel in "the danger zone saying her rosary," praying for the revolution's success. "Think of it," Sigerson marvels, "meditate on this. . . . This is the spirit of patriotism:"

> Without hope of gain, without hope of honour, without love of life, without fear of death, who mourned for nobody, for whom nobody would mourn, she knelt in the streets . . . and prayed.

No longer a young maid or bride, never an elegant lady or a queen, but an aged crone broken by the weight of what Sigerson elsewhere calls "the sad years," Sean-Bhean Bhocht personifies the spirit of Kathleen grown old with waiting, but having lived long enough to witness vindication, resurrection, and rebirth. Like Kathleen, who is made a beautiful, young queen by those willing to die "for love of her," Sean-Bhean "threw off the rags that poverty held about her and was beautiful in the tricolour of faith, hope, and love" (4). The patriotic fervor of the poet's tone here hurries readers past the disturbing revelation that hours later Sean-Bhean lay dead: whether from natural or unnatural causes is immaterial, since the significance of her example resides in its relevance to the regenerated Irish spirit, born, like the phoenix, out of the ashes of sixteen dead men.

Like the dedication, the poems in this volume also reflect unlikely but curiously effective associations between the mystical Celtic tradition Kathleen represents and contemporary figures particularized by personal names—"Wolfe Tone, and Emmet, too," by numbers and dates—"Sixteen Dead Men" and "The Wreath / Easter, 1917," and by terms relevant to the modern age—"Conscription," and "A Catholic to His Ulster Brother," which seeks to heal yet another internal breach dividing Ireland against itself. "The Sacred Fire," for example, of ancient origin but long reduced to cold ashes, is re-ignited by "the souls of men, / To make thee warm once more, Kathleen, to bid thee live again" (5), while the sacrifice of "Sixteen Dead Men" ". . . on our nation's hearth made old fires burn" (7).

Given Sigerson's frustration with her gender's social limitations, "In the Years of Sarsfield"[11] seems to express a desire for more active political involvement than writing poetry:

> I wish I were over the Curlew Mountains,
> Marching to Sligo by valley and fen,
> I wish I were back in the years of Sarsfield,
> Tramping the rough roads with him and his men.
> (12)

The poem goes on to express the desire to fly with "the Wild Geese across the sea" (14). An earlier poem, "The Flight of the Wild Geese," mourns the freedom fighters forced into exile in France, their flight marked by howling wolves (British soldiers) and, more ominously, by banshees crying "thrice . . . in the stormy night" (*Collected Poems* 122-23). Sigerson's final wild geese poem, celebrating their return after the pivotal events of 1916, features a cryptic epigram quoted from an Irish newspaper: "'Wild Geese are very numerous in this district, especially around Lough Esknahinny'—'Cork Examiner,' December 12, 1916" (24). The return of the wild geese aptly symbolizes the resurrection generated by the tragedies of Easter week and hints at the need for secretiveness and subversive tactics that become more crucial as the conflict intensifies. Although it is common knowledge that the geese have returned home, in order to protect them none dare "say the word" (25).

Ironically, the spirit of optimism is particularly strong in this volume, growing as it did out of a climactic event and causing Sigerson such despair that illness and death were for her the indirect result. Of the poet's many depictions of Kathleen ni Houlihan, "The Queen" is perhaps her most eloquent and loving elegy:

> I saw her many years ago, my gladness and my grief.
> She stood amongst the barley fields to bind the wayward sheaf.
> . . . But O, those hours of yesterday, mo storeen and mo crie,
> I saw her turn her face away to hide her grief from me.
> (26)

The narrator's distress over Kathleen's martyrdom is sufficient to regenerate Kathleen's bowed spirit:

> I saw her come with dancing feet and glad of face like a child,
> Her red-gold hair, her snow-white brow, her gown of silken green;
> Out through the ruins of her home, she walked as would a queen.
> Ni Houlihan, Ni Houlihan, she came a splendid queen.
> (27)

Such transformation recalls the social outcast Sean-Bhean made beautiful by the power of faith, hope, and love despite—or perhaps because of—imminent death.

"Ourselves Alone" or *Sinn Fein Amhain*, a term better known today for its political associations with the Irish Republican Army, is another Kathleen poem. The narrator hears Kathleen, a "sweet colleen a-making her moan," and asks:

> Oh, why drive me forth from your hearth into exile
> And into far dangers? Your house is my own.
> Faithful I serve, as I ever did serve you,
> Standing together, ourselves—and alone. (46)

The themes of exile and loneliness, poised against the paradoxical construction "together . . . and alone," symbolizes alienation on many levels: that of the Wild Geese who return from a bitter exile only to face certain death, of Kathleen's spirit forced underground in her own land, and of Sigerson's exile in a country she could never regard as home.

Strategically placed toward the end of this volume and contrasting with the idea of a "sacred obligation" are several poems less typical of Sigerson's Celtic nostalgia. These poems are notable for their playful yet caustic anti-British messages, an approach rarely employed by the poet until now. Reflecting the dramatic change in world view resulting from World War I, the more gentle approach to social change initially embraced by the Irish cultural movement seemed no longer appropriate to the violence of present circumstances. "Empire Building" and "Kitty's Toys" assume the taunting tone typical of children's nursery rhymes—not to minimize the seriousness of the situation but to ridicule Britain's self-righteous imperialism.

Both poems cast Britain as "John," whose "ways were crude: / Your smile was pharisaical, your manners rude":

> Ah, no, I never liked you, John, because
> You were a braggart and a pharisee,
> Held many slaves, yet prated "Liberty."

Oblivious to the suffering of his people, John takes "the lion's share" from English working classes and "swagger[s] past, proud of their dull amaze." Beyond English soil, John builds empires on the backs of those too weak to protest. The poem's criticism of British imperialism is not limited to Ireland but includes India, whom "John"—a nation that can never aspire to the greatness of Rome, Greece, or Egypt—presumes to instruct in the ways of civilization. Even John's religion underscores his sanctimonious posturing as he crushes those who "tell the beads" with his eyes hypocritically "uplifted" in prayer. But what is worse in terms of Sigerson's compelling conflation of gender and imperial issues is his bullying of the young girl, Kate. John even resorts to such ungentlemanly acts as deliberately muddying the pinafore of Kate, "who lived next door." Rewriting the poetic tradition of eroticizing the natural landscape, Sigerson boldly casts British occupation of Ireland as a rape:

> A jealous and a greedy boy you were,
> And love to make a spectacle of her,
> Because she never liked you, John, since you
> To her sweet garden forced your rough way through.
> ("Empire Building," *Tricolour* 50-51)

Although this poem's childish, sing-song rhythm undercuts the exploitative implications of a term like "empire building," its criticism—like that of "An Old Proverb"—is biting and uncompromising, a distinctly aggressive shift from the symbolism of faithless lovers, broken hearts, and weeping colleens. More ludicrous is the language of "Kitty's Toys":

> When Johnny gets a whacking, a whacking, a whacking,
> When Johnny gets a whacking, I think he'll let me be,
> And I shall have my penny, my penny, my penny,
> And I shall buy a bright flag to wave my victory.
> (*The Tricolour* 65-67)

Sigerson's feminization of Ireland and masculinization of Britain reflects the gender inequities she strives against in earlier poems and exposes the politics of intimate relationships

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[10] Tynan (1859-1931), a poet and novelist, was part of the Irish literary circle shared by Yeats and Sigerson. The editor's remarks, featured in the front matter of both the 1919 and 1922 editions, add that Sigerson willed the proceeds of literary sales for all works for which she held the copyright to her native country.

[11] Patrick Sarsfield (1650-1693) successfully led James II's troops in defending Limerick against the Protestant William of Orange.

on an unlikely, and strikingly broad, field. The predominance of the feminine Kathleen throughout Sigerson's poetry is typical of both ancient and modern Irish poetic tradition. But the combined forces of Sigerson's gender, religion, and dual-citizenship distinguish her from the period's other Irish writers, blurring the boundaries between poet and poetic persona in potentially illuminating ways. As a woman anywhere and, in particular, an Irish woman living in England, Sigerson is more than just romantic or figurative in her affiliation with Kathleen's oppression and presents a striking case in terms of modern feminist thought and its intersections with colonialist theory.

Throughout this discussion I have drawn analogies between two of Sigerson's primary poetic themes—men's faithlessness compared with women's loyalty and Gaelic influences seen primarily through the idea of Kathleen—and the poet's own position as a late-Victorian, early-modern woman whose status as a cultural outsider is exacerbated by escalating Anglo-Irish tensions. A central debate in contemporary feminist scholarship questions the need and desirability for a feminist pedagogy by which to assess a non-canonical woman writer like Sigerson. One implication of this debate is that, to some degree, those women writers traditionally incorporated into the literary canon are there by virtue of their ability to participate in or subvert what Dorothy Mermin terms "the conventional gendering of the speaking subject as male and the object as female, with the wide-ranging polarization it imposed" (152). Sigerson's distinction resides in her participation in controversial gender and political issues seen through the lenses of one standing opposed to, yet a part of, the period's dominant ideology. As a woman writer in a discipline, a culture, and a world designed to perpetuate patriarchal interests, she shares Kathleen's political oppression on both material and spiritual levels. Perhaps this explains why she is known less as a writer than as the wife of Shorter and the countrywoman of Yeats, and why her exceptional literary output is long out-of-print. Both Sigerson and Yeats wrote Kathleen and wild geese poems, both wrote elegies to dead freedom fighters and memorialized Easter, 1916: yet only Yeats enjoys a position in the literary canon. Is Yeats simply the "better" poet? The answer remains unattainable until we arrive at a clearer understanding of how "the conventional gendering" of both men's and women's writing affects the value systems by which literature is assessed.

Perhaps the quality of despair characterizing most of Sigerson's writing stems from her efforts to *deviate from* tradition enough to satisfy her own creative impulses while also *conforming with* enough to ensure her work's publication. Another of Mermin's observations, although taken slightly out of context, offers useful insight into this kind of despair: "These poems describe a female poetic tradition that eludes a system of differences geared to the male subject, only to find itself trapped in a world of undifferentiated sorrow and forced to seek a new principle of difference in *religion*" (my emphasis). Replacing "religion" with Kathleen ni Houlihan in a sense places Sigerson within "a poetic tradition in which women write to one another instead of being written about by men" (151, 149). Kathleen's suffering mirrors Sigerson's, for whom the boundaries between poetry, politics, and gender merge, as in "Sick I Am and Sorrowful":

> Sick I am and sorrowful, how can I be well again . . . .
> Since the friends I loved are dead, all stricken by the sword.
> Full of anger is my heart, full of rage and misery,
> How can I grow well again, or be my peace restored?
> (*The Tricolour* 9)

The *Tricolour*'s images of death and resurrection transform sorrow to rage, nostalgia for a Celtic twilight into active resistance against oppression, and romanticized depictions of Kathleen into an explicit call to arms. Positioned on the last page of Sigerson's last book, "The Dead Soldier" encourages the realization of dreams too long deferred, even if acts of aggression are the only means possible:

> The way of the sword a man can follow. . . .
> When falls the oak must the acorn perish?
> He lifts the blade and his eyes are dreaming,
> He dreams the dream of the dead soldier.

Thus is the weight and force of tradition (the sturdy British oak) and the importance of striving to realize dreams (the vulnerable Irish acorn) cast in terms of warfare and death by a woman whose life's work is complicated by the conflicting claims of humanitarian ideals and violent realities.

Men can follow "the way of the sword" but what do women do? Sigerson resists the sewing needle but implies the pen is also an inadequate weapon. Her earlier inclination toward peaceful resolutions transformed to the idea that violence must be met not with tears but with equal or greater violence. But to acknowledge this shift is not necessarily to accept it. The "way of the sword" that defined Irish politics during the last years of her life opened the way to death for Sigerson, whose vagrant heart, in the end, seemed to take the poet's own advice:

> . . . seek some solitary place beneath a cyprus tree,
> And dig a grave both wide and long, O! dig it wide and deep
> To hold a woman's restless heart and hush her soul to sleep. ("The Sister," *Madge Linsey* 42)

Despite its lapse into historical obscurity, Dora Sigerson's writing offers significant insights for those seeking to resurrect women's literary history. Though it is long buried, its very restlessness precludes permanent sleep.

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[12]Although Mermin discusses earlier Victorian women poets, her analysis resonates with the Victorian influences still active during Sigerson's life.

Christina Rossetti's Nightmares: Fact or Fiction?

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In 1852 G. H. Lewes published an essay in the *Westminster Review* in which he argued that women were better suited than men to writing novels because the content of novels more closely paralleled their experience (133). He contended that Jane Austen and George Sand were the best female novelists of the time—Austen because she never "transcend[s] her own experience" and Sand because her works are "her confessions. Her biography lies there" (134, 135). Lewes's biographical assumptions regarding women's texts were not unusual among Victorian critics. In fact, according to Allon White, many Victorian critics and reviewers read nineteenth-century texts "symptomatically"; that is, they believed that by scrutinizing the text carefully for signs of hidden and at times even repressed desires and fears, they could arrive at an understanding of the mind—even the subconscious mind—behind the text. In contrast to what I describe as "autobiographical reading" practices, which develop interpretations of the text based on a knowledge of the life, symptomatic readings move in the opposite direction: symptomatic readers or critics construct a version of the author's life based upon what they regard as "clues" gleaned from the text. White also demonstrates how late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century male authors resorted to "secrecy, lying, obscurity, impression and withdrawal" to create a gap between art and life and thus frustrate these symptomatic designs (54). These symptomatic critical practices, however, were routinely applied throughout the century to women authors. Most Victorian readers believed that women could write only from personal experience since women were emotional and experiential rather than intelligent and imaginative. Symptomatic reading practices coupled with this belief in women's essential nature placed female authors in an even more tenuous position than their male counterparts. To be successful, women authors, through their work, needed to appear to conform to Victorian ideals of womanhood.

Christina Rossetti's success at negotiating Victorian reading practices and beliefs regarding women is evident in the warm reception her work received throughout her lifetime. Theodore Watts-Dunton, with his review of *Verses* (1893) published shortly after Rossetti's death, summarized public response to Rossetti and her work:

> In the volume before us, as in all her previously published writings, we see at its best what Christianity is as the motive power of poetry. The Christian idea is essentially feminine, and of this feminine quality Christina Rossetti's poetry is full. . . . The history of literature shows no human development so beautiful as the ideal Christian woman of our own day. She is unique indeed. . . . We should search in vain through the entire human record for anything so beautiful as that kind of Christian lady to whom self-abnegation is not only the first of duties, but the first of joys. Yet, no doubt, the Christian idea must needs be more or less flavoured by each personality through which it is expressed. With regard to Christina Rossetti . . . there was in the order of things a sort of ether of universal clarity for all others. (qtd. in Bell 189-90)

Rossetti's reputation as a saintly woman ensured her continued popularity and literary success. Not until after her death did biographers begin to provide increasingly intrusive readings of her work. In the process, these critics unknowingly perpetuate and reinforce Victorian beliefs and reading practices.

Mackenzie Bell published the first biography of Rossetti, *Christina Rossetti: A Biographical and Critical Study*, in 1898. Throughout the work Bell constantly concerns himself with revealing to whom, or to what event, Rossetti may have been referring in her poetry and prose. Although he did nothing to suggest that Rossetti was less than a respectable Victorian woman, his obsession with identification suggested ways in which future critics could construct far more intrusive

readings than his. First, he hinted at a possible method for reading the overt references to silence in Rossetti's poetry:

> Much of her finest work in both verse and prose is the veiled expression of her own individuality. She was deeply religious, and carried her convictions into every detail of life, and her clearly-defined religious opinions gave a special interest to her religious verse. Hers was emphatically a character that it was needful to know personally in order to understand: I doubt if anyone who had not the privilege of knowing her can understand in its fullness, in all its sweetness, in its profundity, and in its fascination, her personality, and the effect of that personality both on her poems and on her prose. (4)

If Rossetti's "finest work" is the "veiled expression of her own individuality," then perhaps those references to secrets are the clue to understanding that personality. Since to know her is to understand the effect her personality had on her work, then why cannot the reverse be the case? Bell points the way to reading the many silences, secrets, and riddles in her poems and prose as a means of understanding the woman behind the work. Second, Bell provided two possible explanations, besides her religious devotion, for the "veil" in Rossetti's poetry. He claims that the poem "What?," which was written in May 1853 and published in *New Poems*, is one of many in the volume "to depict what her younger brother has called 'an unhappy love-passage' in his sister's life. During 1849, or possibly late 1848, she was sought in marriage by a painter very well-known in her circle. She regarded him with favour. But he was a Roman Catholic, and she determined to decline his suit owing to 'religious considerations'" (30-31). A few pages later, Bell reveals that

> Rossetti received a second offer of marriage—her suitor in this instance, being a man of letters and pre-eminently a scholar. Again she was favourably disposed towards her suitor, and again, actuated by religious scruples, she was constrained to reject his offer, for, in the words of her surviving brother, he was "either not a Christian at all, or else was a Christian of undefined and heterodox views." This incident, which terminated about 1866, was more deeply felt by her than was her first attachment, and it is to this that the touching poem entitled "Il Rosseggiar dell' Oriente" relates. This incident, and the other incident of a similar kind, make clear many allusions in her poetry, particularly the fine lyric called "Memory." Both of her suitors pre-deceased her. (40-41)

This is all that Bell has to say on the subject of Rossetti's two love affairs and their relationship to her work, but later commentators could not resist the temptation to embellish upon this information by imitating Bell's method.

In her biography of Rossetti, published in 1931, Eleanor Walter Thomas expands upon Bell's brief statements concerning Rossetti's two proposals of marriage. Thomas is certain that Rossetti's failed love affairs resulted in Rossetti's obsession with religion and her passionate love poetry. When she discusses Rossetti's relationship to James Collinson, Rossetti's first suitor, she admits that it is dangerous "to trust imaginative lyrics for biographical facts, [but] some of [Rossetti's] poems of 1848-50 give rise to conjectures as to her state of mind and the causes for it, just as her letters suggest she was not altogether easy with regard to Collinson" (52). Poems Rossetti wrote during the period in which she was engaged to Collinson become fodder for Thomas's suppositions. Thomas is careful to note that "the emotional disturbance of Christina's twentieth year and the months immediately preceding and following were surely not wholly due to a broken love affair"; however, the relationship was certainly partly responsible (53). "A Pause for Thought," written shortly before Rossetti met Collinson, "expresses 'a hope of youth' for the achievement, the fame, which ever seemed to flee away and yet was ever pursued" (52), but by the time the engagement was broken more than two years later, the last section of the "Three Nuns" "voices the century-old cry of the soul which sees the fair beauty and the sweetness of the world but turns away from it to find its one true home only when it obeys the command of the Spirit—'Come'" (53). Engagement with the world has turned into renunciation of the world, and the only explanation for this change that Thomas is aware of is Rossetti's broken engagement to Collinson.

Thomas is more certain about the effect Rossetti's second relationship had on her poetry. She contends that Rossetti recorded her relationship with Charles Bagot Cayley in many poems written during the 1860s. Of "Il Rosseggiar dell' Oriente," she argues, "The facts that [Rossetti] did not show anyone the poems [William found them in her desk after her death] and that they were written . . . in Italian suggest that the writer intended them as an unlocking of her heart for herself alone" (72). The first two poems in the series are tentative explorations of love; the third refers to a gift from Cayley, and in the remainder Rossetti "lets herself go and reveals passionate yearning for the presence of her lover [Cayley] and for ever-renewed assurances from him of his love" (73). Even her devotional poems are read in light of Rossetti's relationship with Cayley. "Despised and Rejected" indicates Rossetti's difficulty in accepting Christ because she prefers the love of another, while "I go, Lord, where Thou sendest me" shows Rossetti's sad resignation yet commitment to her faith (75). "Cor Mio" and "By Way of Remembrance" strike a note of "self-accusation for having bartered roses for rue in life's mart, and that of praise for a friend silent, and strong, and true, and generous" (75). Thomas contends that these poems indicate Rossetti took comfort in her love for Cayley and her belief in the triumph of love in the hereafter (75). At no point, apparently, in Rossetti's poetic representation of her relationship with Cayley does she blame him for their failure to marry: "If there was error, it was hers" (75). "Monna Innominata" is also a chronicle of Rossetti's love affair with Cayley. According to Thomas, "the title and the explanation [Rossetti] prefixed to the series are just such a gesture of concealment for the intimately personal as the title 'Sonnets from the Portuguese'" (75-76). The donna innominata is Rossetti speaking "a dignified and tender utterance of love and of regret at separation from one of high and honored excellence, and yet of loyal faith in love and its immortality" (76) In conflating Rossetti's speaker with Rossetti herself, Thomas continues the symptomatic readings of the Victorian period. Thomas's method is both autobiographic and symptomatic; she uses details of the life to illuminate the poems, and she also uses the poems to provide details of the life.

Lona Mosk Packer, in 1963, moved from autobiographical reading to a form of symptomatic reading that continues to the present. Instead of being satisfied with linking Rossetti's work to known incidents in Rossetti's life, she reads Rossetti's work and then constructs events to fit her thesis. Unlike Victorian symptomatic readers, however, Packer, through her speculations, suggests that Rossetti was less than an ideal Victorian woman. Packer notices that there is a span of approximately twelve years between Rossetti's rejection of Collinson and the beginning of her relationship with Cayley. During this time, she observes, Rossetti wrote much of her "passionate love poetry" (43). The impact of Rossetti's broken engagement to Collinson cannot be the impetus behind this work, she argues, because research has shown that Rossetti was not all that committed to Collinson in the first place. To fill the gap, Packer claims that, during this period, Rossetti was emotionally involved with William Bell Scott, a married man (43). To build a case for their relationship, Packer refers to Scott's meetings with the Rossettis, which Scott mentions briefly in his autobiography—he was a good friend of the Rossetti brothers; to the dates of Scott's trips to London and abroad; to Scott's poetry; and, most important of all, to Rossetti's work written during this period.

Packer builds her case on nothing more than speculation. As a result, critics and biographers were quick to point out the problems with her argument, but that has not discouraged others from symptomatic readings of Rossetti's work.[1] In 1994, Jan Marsh in her biography of Rossetti, *Christina Rossetti: A Literary Life*, suggests that Rossetti was sexually abused by her father when she was twelve or thirteen years old. Through a symptomatic reading of Rossetti's works, Marsh argues that key recurring images in Rossetti's verse and prose hint at "suppressed sexual trauma" (258).

Death, dying, ghosts, monsters, dream/nightmares, and secrets pervade Rossetti's work. Marsh contends that the recurring imagery indicates unconscious disclosure of incest; Rossetti's secrets are secrets that even she does not know (260). Although the victim of abuse represses these memories, according to Marsh, "repetitive intrusions nearly always occur, with an involuntary compulsive tendency towards repetition of some aspects of the trauma. . . . These repetitions include nightmares, hallucinations, unbidden images and obsessive ideas; panic attacks and weeping episodes; or re-enactments of some disguised aspect of the trauma in gesture, movement or artistic production" (262). Other symptoms include "chronic depression . . . guilt, low self-esteem and feelings of powerlessness. Attempts at self-mutilation are common and suicidal feelings are frequent" (261-62). Clearly, Rossetti's work contains nightmares, hallucinations, unbidden images and obsessive ideas, but these indicators cannot be, in themselves, reason enough to diagnose incest.[2]

Marsh understands that she needs more than Gothic imagery to support her contention, so she turns to the details of Rossetti's life for further evidence. Gabriele, Rossetti's father, was a respected professor, "the chair of Italian at Kings College London," for much of Rossetti's childhood (21). His scholarly work, however, became progressively more obscure, even bizarre. Coincidentally, his health began to decline as his colleagues seriously began to question his work. By 1843 his career was over, and he suffered an emotional and physical collapse (35-41). Early in 1844 both Rossetti's older sister and her mother became governesses to replace Professor Rossetti's lost income. Since her brothers were already away at school, Rossetti was left at home, alone for much of the day, to care for her severely depressed invalid father (43). Thus, according to Marsh, the Rossetti family situation provided the catalyst for sexual abuse. A man suddenly bereft of the power and prestige he once enjoyed preys on his vulnerable daughter for emotional and physical comfort (259). Rossetti's own mental breakdown in 1845; her teenage self-mutilation—she ripped her arm with scissors—her drastic personality change; and her guilt-ridden obsession with religion are not, for Marsh, mere coincidences (55-64). She admits, "incest can only be inferred, not proved, for direct evidence is lacking" (260). But, she argues, most cases of incest are extremely difficult to prove and sexual abuse certainly "offers a convincing explanation of the dark and disturbed aspects of [Rossetti's] inner life" (260). Having made the suggestion, however, Marsh invokes the presumed incest to explain segments of Rossetti's life and writing. For example, Rossetti's work with young prostitutes and her concern for the prevention of cruelty to animals are said probably to be the results of her incest experience (520). As well, later works, such as *Sing-Song*, *Speaking Likenesses*, and *Letter and Spirit*, indicate her use of writing to heal herself psychologically (422-5, 507-8).

Marsh's thesis is well-argued. Unlike Packer, she does not invoke her own inferences to explain every poem Rossetti wrote, but like Packer she reads through the work to the life. Marsh relies heavily on the theories of artistic production advanced by Alice Miller, a psychoanalyst frequently cited by literary critics. For example, D. L. Macdonald refers to Miller's theories in his examination of Byron's sexual abuse, as does Louise deSalvo in her exploration into how incest affected Virginia Woolf's life and work. Miller argues that some children are more sensitive to suffering than others and that these children often develop into adults who creatively express their early trauma (*Thou* 245, 249-50; *Untouched* 73). Miller's method, however, differs from Marsh's. Miller does not read a text, conclude on the basis of certain image patterns that the author was abused, and then marshal the evidence to argue that abuse *possibly* occurred. Rather, Miller searches for direct evidence of abuse or trauma before asserting that specific childhood events are reenacted in the literary text. In contrast to Marsh, Miller does not identify particular

[1] Georgina Battiscombe in *Christina Rossetti* (1965) was one of the first critics to discuss the difficulties with Packer's Rossetti-Scott hypothesis. She also examined Packer's methodology at length in her own biography of Rossetti published in 1981.

[2] Recently the concept of repressed memory has been seriously questioned. Some psychologists are arguing that this type of repression is so rare as to be practically non-existent. See Gorman, Loftus and Ketcham, and Showalter.

images—for example, ghosts, blood, death, and monsters—and then argue that these configurations are common to incest survivors. Instead, she notes how various themes and techniques convey impressions of suffering. Simply put, if Miller finds no substantiating information, she does not assume that abuse informs the work: circumstantial evidence is not enough.[3] In light of Miller's method, then, Marsh's connection of Rossetti's imagery to incest is problematic in that there is no other corroborating evidence for sexual abuse. Furthermore, Marsh omits a key element of Miller's approach, that of linking the specific nature of the abuse or trauma to the artistic production. Miller analyzes a number of literary works and paintings to demonstrate that, in every instance, the repression is reenacted in ways parallel to the abuse. For example, the paintings of Käthe Kollwitz contain numerous images of death, mothers, and children because her mother was obsessed with her children who had died, and refused to participate in the lives of her surviving children (*Untouched* 19-35). Friedrich Nietzsche's mother's, aunts', and grandmother's fanatical devotion to religion and their rigorous attempts to force Nietzsche into a life of religious piety resulted in his misogyny and rejection of societal values (*Untouched* 73-133). Franz Kafka's reactions to his parent's neglect can be seen, for example, in Gregor Samsa's "defenselessness, impotence, muteness, and isolation" in "The Metamorphosis," and the "credulity, naïveté, and trust of a child who is the victim of an insane system of child-rearing" in "In the Penal Colony" (*Thou* 281-89). With Miller's work in mind, we should ask how ghosts and death relate to Rossetti's incest. Marsh is unable to explain what aspects of Rossetti's abuse are evident in her imagery patterns because Marsh has no specific information concerning any actual abuse. She can only speculate that the incest was a "form of mutual masturbation" (260).[4]

Even though Marsh's method is suspect, she does point to an intriguing pattern of recurring themes and images. Is there any explanation other than incest for the ghosts, dreams, nightmares, death, dying, and secrets that recur so frequently in Rossetti's work? Since Marsh specifically refers to, among others, "A Nightmare" as indicative of Rossetti's abuse, a careful examination of this poem is in order.[5]

Rossetti published a ten-line portion of "A Nightmare" in her devotional work *Time Flies* with the title "A Castle-Builder's World." After her death, her brother William discovered another fragment of the poem in one of her manuscripts. He published it in his 1896 collection of her poetry with the following explanation: "In my sister's note-book this composition begins on p. 25, and ends on p. 27; the intermediate leaf has been torn out. Mere scrap as it is, I should be sorry to lose it quite" (383). The fragment read:

> I have a friend in ghostland—
> Early found, ah me how early lost!—
> Blood-red seaweeds drip along that coastland
> By the strong sea wrenched and tossed.
>
> . . . .
>
> If I wake he rides me like a nightmare:
> I feel my hair stand up, my body creep:
> Without light I see a blasting sight there,
> See a secret I must keep.

In an examination of the publication history of the poem, H. B. de Groot remarks, "The fragment has always been a tantalizing mystery for Christina's biographers and critics. Thus T. B. Swann wrote in a book published in 1960: 'Can the destruction of page 26 mean that the poem dealt with an incident in Christina's life so painful that even the record of it on paper was intolerable?'" (48). Packer, naturally, identifies the incident as Rossetti's love for Scott (112). Since Packer wrote her book, the complete poem, including the passage from *Time Flies*, has been discovered in another Rossetti manuscript auctioned at Sotheby's in 1970. In lines 5 to 26 of the complete version, the speaker describes ghostland as a place of "unended twilight," as a "watery misty place" where "indistinguished hazy ghosts abound" (7, 10, 17). Even so Marsh regards the poem as evidence of incest (257-58).

I will provide another explanation for the striking imagery in this poem. Henry Fuseli exhibited his well-known painting, "The Nightmare," at the Royal Academy in London during the spring of 1782. It met with such rave reviews that "engravings of it were published in the same year and quickly spread its fame all over Europe" (Powell 17). The painting became so popular that cartoonists frequently made use of it for personal and political satires, and went on using it for decades afterwards" (17). Sigmund Freud had a copy of it hanging in his Vienna apartment although he never referred to it in his published works (15). In England, "over-familiarity with Fuseli's nightmare image through caricatures and prints led to its devaluation in the later nineteenth century—to such popular travesties as the lithograph of 'The Racing Nightmare,' after a painting by A. C. Havell, published in 1891" (94). After the painting's enthusiastic reception, Fuseli painted a number of variants, but the original painting depicts a sleeping woman who is lying on a bed with her head and arms thrown back over the edge in a gesture not only of exhaustion, but also of sexual submission. On her chest sits

[3]Only once, as indicated by my research, does Miller seem to deviate from this method. When she discusses Samuel Beckett in *Thou Shalt Not Be Aware*, she discounts his description of his happy childhood because his work so powerfully demonstrates abuse. She does, however, base her claim on the evidence that Beckett's mother daily "forced [him] to examine his conscience because [she] hoped this would bring about a religious awakening" (249). Although Beckett does not realize his mother's actions were abusive, Miller demonstrates that his experience revealed itself as abuse in Beckett's work (249-50).

[4]Marsh also refers to Denise J. Gelinas's article "Persisting Negative Effects of Incest." Much of this essay describes the typical family relational pattern that allows incest to occur. Briefly, the mother, who was also abused as a child, abdicates her parental responsibilities. Consequently, her oldest daughter is forced to fill the vacated role and become mother to the other children and wife to the husband, her father. According to Marsh's own account of Rossetti's childhood, this familial pattern does not describe Rossetti's situation.

[5]In an article that appeared in 1996, Marsh again discusses "A Nightmare." She makes no mention of Rossetti's possible sexual abuse, but instead argues that the "unseen incubus" in the poem is a common Romantic image and thus an indication of Romantic influence in Rossetti's work (27). She does not refer to Fuseli's painting.

what art critics refer to as an "incubus." At the other end of the bed, over the woman's feet, a horse rears its head through the drapery. Its nostrils are flaring, its jaw is slightly suspended, and its eyes glow in the darkness. Given her close ties to the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, Rossetti must have been aware of this painting. Not only does the title of her poem suggest an allusion to the painting, but the speaker's description of a ghostly presence that hovers and alternately compels and rides her, causing her "hair [to] stand up, [and her] body [to] creep" (38), is clearly Rossetti's revisioning of Fuseli's "The Nightmare."[6]

Patricia Laurence, who discusses Virginia Woolf's strategies of silence in *The Reading of Silence*, refers to "The Nightmare" as an early example of the way in which women's bodies speak (129). Although she does not elaborate in regard to Fuseli's painting, her reference to the painting is clearly based on eighteenth-century explanations for nightmares. Powell records Samuel Johnson's definition of "nightmare" as "a morbid oppression in the night, resembling the pressure of weight upon the breast" (49-50). Powell also cites a passage from Sir John Floyer, an eighteenth-century physician, who preferred the term "incubus" to "nightmare": "The incubus is an inflation of the membranes of the stomach, which hinders the motion of the diaphragm, lungs, and pulse, with a sense of weight oppressing the breast" (50). Thus, the horse is not the nightmare, but is rather, as Powell points out, an addition to the painting, intended, no doubt, as a visual pun on the word (59). Fuseli's painting, then, is a visual representation of what the sleeping woman is experiencing physiologically. The incubus on her chest figures the oppressive weight she feels. Both the horse and the phallic incubus are sexual symbols and the woman's expression and posture do suggest ravishment, which adds credence to Susan Wolstenholme's discussion of the painting as an example of the objectification of women (39-43). Nevertheless, the painting also suggests the woman's unspoken mental experience. Laurence contends that Woolf's exploration of the dream state "adds to our cultural definitions of women, fashioning new modes of subjectivity in which we, as readers, are invited 'to consult our own minds' . . . . In portraying the dreaming mind of a woman, Woolf begins to dissolve the boundaries that enforce oppressive hierarchies like that of 'Man Thinking' and defining what woman is" (124).

In her own way, Rossetti, too, is dissolving boundaries. Her speaker paints Fuseli's picture verbally and in doing so voices what is happening in her mind. An oppressive weight, the incubus, is riding her "like a nightmare" (37). Rossetti may or may not have been aware of the sexually charged language she was using, but why must her use of that language imply that she had intimate sexual knowledge? Of course, the speaker in "A Nightmare" claims she sees "a secret [she] must keep," but is that secret incest, or is it the secret of the female poet's mind, which draws upon other works of art to construct one of her own? Wolstenholme sees the woman in Fuseli's painting as "object of representation"; Marsh reads Rossetti's poem as a discourse of repressed memory. I contend that neither explanation is adequate. Rossetti's concern is not the sexual female body, but rather the mental processes of the poet. Her poem demonstrates how the creative imagination of the woman artist is impressed by and in turn transforms the aesthetic traditions exemplified in specific works by male artists.

It could be argued that Rossetti's attraction to images such as those found in Fuseli's painting is itself an indication of sexual abuse; perhaps she was attracted to these images precisely because she found them somehow suggestive of her own experience. But in the absence of corroborating evidence, I regard such an argument as being less than persuasive. One could also contend that the examples of symptomatic reading I have referred to are all found in biographies and that biographers are expected to draw connections between the life and the work. I find it disturbing, however, that symptomatic readings, damaging as they are in the biographies, are by no means limited to that field of study. The history of Rossetti scholarship indicates that there is a persistent tendency to read Rossetti autobiographically and symptomatically no matter what theoretical approach may be favored at the time.

Germaine Greer provides one of the more recent examples of this type of criticism.[7] In *Slip-Shod Sibyls: Recognition, Rejection and the Woman Poet* (1995), Greer claims that the secret to Rossetti's poetry is not her relationships with Collinson or Cayley, not her love for William Bell Scott, not her experience of sexual abuse, but is, instead, the unfulfilled love she felt for her brother Gabriel. As with the biographers I have discussed, Greer's theory is founded on nothing other than her symptomatic reading of Rossetti's poetry. Even more amazing is Greer's tendency to confuse the persona with the person. For example, she states, "One of the recurrent aspects of the love that racks so many of Rossetti's personae is that it dare not speak its name. . . it seems to me rather that she chose a male persona in order to utter the truth about her own complex feelings about sexual passion and about her brother" (370). Clearly, Greer assumes that the speaking voice of the poetry and Rossetti are one and the same.

Bell, Thomas, Packer, Marsh, and Greer, in one way or another, all share the Victorian assumption that Rossetti must have experienced some form of sexual intimacy in order to write, convincingly, poetry of passion and longing. Their arguments also imply that women, Rossetti in particular, lack the imaginative capacity to express what they have not experienced.[8] Bell et al. seem not even to take seriously the possibility that a woman with literary ability might study other works of art or previous literary traditions and then draw upon that aesthetic in the service of her own art. Critics such as these perpetuate Victorian assumptions about women, for example, that they are experiential and emotional rather than imaginative and intelligent. No critic that I am aware of has

[6]I am indebted to Patricia Srebrnik for bringing Fuseli's painting to my attention.

[7]For other late twentieth-century examples of symptomatic critical reading see Shaw and Schad.

[8]In her examination of the hysterical narrative and its relationship to recovered memory syndrome, Elaine Showalter briefly discusses Marsh's allegation of Rossetti's sexual abuse and concludes, "Apparently some feminist literary critics still find it hard to accept that women can have cruel fantasies or visions, even though they live outwardly pious lives" (90).

suggested that Fuseli was sexually abused or frustrated; why, then, is it necessary to assume this regarding Rossetti?

I suggest that readers who are interested in the way a writer's life intersects with her work explore the personae that writer constructs. In doing so, though, we must ensure that we do not fall into the same trap that Greer does in assuming that the persona is the person. Persona criticism, as theorized by Cheryl Walker, connects an author to her work through a persona that is informed by a number of "cultural and literary" voices which may or may not include the author's life and may even contradict what we know about her ("Persona Criticism" 114). Although it may be entertaining to speculate about the personal life of the author, I believe such speculations are rarely of any use to the literary critic. They contribute neither to our understanding of specific texts, nor to our understanding of women authors in general. Indeed, the assumptions involved in symptomatic speculations often serve to reinforce patriarchal values rather than to resist them. I encourage future readers to examine Rossetti's work, not as a record of her life, but as a record of the culture in which she lived and worked. Doing so will open up new perspectives not only on Rossetti's work, but also on the work of other women writers who were struggling with the same constraints to speech as she was.

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Mrs. Sparsit, Sir Thomas Lawrence and *Coriolanus*

Rodney Stenning Edgecombe

When Dickens first introduces us to Mrs. Sparsit in *Hard Times*, he stresses her connection with the landed gentry, and modulates almost immediately to her Roman appearance:

> That bereaved lady, fifteen years older than he, fell presently at deadly feud with her only relative, Lady Scadgers; and, partly to spite her ladyship, and partly to maintain herself, went out at a salary. And here she was now, in her elderly days, with the Coriolanian style of nose and the dense black eyebrows which had captivated Sparsit, making Mr. Bounderby's tea as he took breakfast. (43)

That reference to Lady Scadgers is important for the social range of the novel, since Mrs. Sparsit, with Harthouse (a half slurred allusion to "hothouse"), represents the cult of "good family" in the pattern of futility and inaction to which the novel reduces the government of England. Later, during the composition of *Little Dorrit*, Dickens would cite that "tuft-hunting" (*Letters* 7: 523) as a chief source of the country's social woes, and, in that novel, would palimpsestically develop the character of Gowan out of Harthouse, and Mrs. General out of Mrs. Sparsit, whom she resembles in her salaried gentility. The sylleptic motive behind her seeking employment from Bounderby—necessity and spite—is what probably brought Coriolanus to mind in the first instance, since that Roman also became a vengeful exile as a result of plebeian displeasure—and, once to mind, Dickens no doubt chose to develop the allusion as an image of patrician disdain for social forces that, even so, dictate patrician adjustment to themselves. The exile of Coriolanus to the hearth of Tullus Aufidius thus to some extent parallels the translation of Mrs. Sparsit to Bounderby's, where her function is simply to bestow the glamour of destitute aristocracy on middle-class wealth—an age-old transaction that is supposed to have saved Britain from violent revolution. To that extent she also duplicates the conscription of Harthouse to the Utilitarian cause:

> The Gradgrind party wanted assistance in cutting the throats of the Graces. They went about recruiting; and where could they enlist recruits more hopefully, than among the fine gentlemen who, having found out everything to be worth nothing, were equally ready for anything?
>
> Moreover, the healthy spirits who had mounted to his sublime height were attractive to many of the Gradgrind school. They liked fine gentlemen; they pretended that they did not, but they did. (124)

That symmetry reinforces the range of Dickens's indictment in the novel, since every class is thus made a participant in the social evils he documents. Otherwise useless gentlemen confer glamour on, and thus sanctify, the mismanaging energy and intransigence of the middle class that finances the industrial machine.

Shifra Hochberg has argued that "the specific reference to Coriolanian as the exemplar of Roman features has a special relevance to the industrial theme of Dickens's novel" (33), an argument with which I have no quarrel, but then goes on to claim that the "conflict between the weavers and Mr. Bounderby, for instance, functions thematically in *Hard Times* in the same way as does the conflict between the plebs and the Roman aristocracy in Shakespeare's play" (34), a claim that I find rather more contentious, since I don't believe that Mr Bounderby's invective about turtle soup and venison "is reminiscent, functionally, of Coriolanus' anger at the plebs demand for corn at low prices" (34). Bounderby is not an exemplar of patrician contempt—that is the role of the genteel ornament to his hearth—but rather of ungenerous class-betrayal. He is the unsympathetic version of a figure upon which *Bleak House* had offered an entirely different take in the Iron Master, viz., the declassé working man made good through his own energy. Throughout *Hard Times*, the Coriolanian allusions are specifically reserved for Mrs. Sparsit, as indeed they were for the aristocracy in *Bleak House* where, we are told, "On these national occasions, dancing may be a patriotic service; and Volumnia is constantly seen hopping about, for the good of an ungrateful and unpensioning country" (*Bleak House* 565). There Dickens lays the Coriolanian outlook bare through the antonomasia of *Volumnia* Dedlock. Both she and Mrs. Sparsit expect to be maintained in or at their social niches and hearths, their genteel inactivity subsidized by a society in which "the dust on antique time" should "lie unswept," and "mountainous error be too highly heap'd / For truth to o'er-peer" (*Coriolanus* 186).

If Mrs. Sparsit's primary function in the novel is thus to exemplify the ruling class's culpable indifference to, and ignorance of, the workers, it remains to be determined why Dickens subjects her eyebrows to such unrelenting metonymy, since Shakespeare never once mentions those of Coriolanus, nor indeed his nose. (Eyebrows seem to have struck him chiefly for their mock-heroic possibilities, perhaps because they seldom—if ever—feature in Elizabethan blazons, and he makes them the butt of jokes in *As You Like It* and *The Winter's Tale*.) I would guess that in the case of Mrs. Sparsit, Dickens was prompted to his metonym either consciously or unconsciously by the idea of "superciliousness," which describes Mrs. Sparsit's attitude to the working class and which derives, of course, from the Latin *cilium* (eyebrow). However, something more tangible than a buried etymological pun must have prompted the recurrence to eyebrows he persistently describes as being black and dense.

This something, I would argue, is a portrait, ***Philip Kemble as Coriolanus at the Hearth of Tullus Aufidius***, painted by Sir Thomas Lawrence in 1798. Currently in the Guildhall Gallery, it was exhibited three times during Dickens's lifetime, and twice before the composition of *Hard Times*. On the latter occasions (1845 and 1848), the exhibitor was the British Institution for Promoting the Fine Arts in the United Kingdom (Garlick 216), which we know Dickens was in the habit of patronizing. (In a letter written to Maclise in 1844, he mentions having seen the artist's view of Venice at a British Institution Exhibition two years before.) And, in the unlikely event that he hadn't seen the original, he could as easily have known it through R. M. Meadows's stipple engraving made in 1805. That he was familiar with the work of Lawrence is attested by a simile in *Little Dorrit* where Tite Barnacle seems "to have been sitting for his portrait to Sir Thomas Lawrence all the days of his life" (111), and by a jocular letter of 1854, where he modulates, in the style of Flora Finching's free association, from Sir Thomas Lawrence through Sir David Wilkie to Wilkie Collins, where knighted painters provide the first ficelle, and the name "Wilkie" the second (7: 238).

Turning to the Lawrence portrait in question, we find Kemble has black eyes (Mrs. Sparsit has black eyes—205), a Roman nose (and so does she) and dense black eyebrows—all of them details that would have explicitly carried over into the engraving (if that indeed was Dickens's source). The subject's expression might be described as a compound of con-

tempt and petulance and dignity, and vividly brings to mind Leigh Hunt's description—written in 1815—of his icy deportment on stage. It is a description that Dickens, given his interest in the theatre and his friendship with Hunt, might well have read:

> Of the Roman cast in his person and features, well read in the drama, and of a temperament perhaps to turn everything coolly about in his mind, he has a remarkable air of self-possession, and never fails to look, walk, and deliver his blank verse, with an effect which to some is curious, to more is imposing, and to all, in a certain degree, striking. But the want of the real grandeur of genius is to be detected in that leisurely detail, that syllabical slowness of enunciation, that frigid reservation of himself for particular passages—that general preference, in short, for effect rather than expression, and that want of all genial impulse and extemporaneousness which have been the actual grounds of his success with his admirers, and have imposed upon them, just as mere gravity does upon people in general.
>
> * * *
>
> With the same solemn deliberation and the same loftiness of aspect, he has issued his commands, divided a word into two syllables, and taken out his pocket handkerchief. He is always in a dress of ceremony. He feels, as it were in externals, and speaks in hyphens.
>
> On the other hand, the same faults, of style that prevent him from being a great general tragedian, particularly in characters of sensibility and variety, are of assistance to him in certain parts of loftiness and austerity which he has almost exclusively made his own. Of this description are *Coriolanus*, and the misanthropic character of *Penruddock* in the *Wheel of Fortune*. (103-04)

It is precisely upon such mannered loftiness and self-conscious formality that Mrs. Sparsit prides herself as when "conscious . . . she shed a feminine, not to say also aristocratic grace upon the office" (112). One is tempted to believe that Hunt might have provided a scintilla of inspiration for Dickens's characterization of the matron, one begotten upon the Lawrence picture, if not by the essay above, then at least by conversational reminiscences of Kemble as Coriolanus that Dickens would have been eager to compare with his own of Macready in the role. There is additional evidence—albeit very faint and subliminal—that Dickens had Lawrence in mind when imagining Mrs. Sparsit, for at a later point of the narrative, he tells us there were "occasions when in looking at him she was involuntarily moved to shake her head, as who would say, 'Alas poor Yorick'" (186). Is it wholly coincidental that Lawrence also painted Kemble as Hamlet, with the skull of Yorick in his hand?

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Books Received

Bashford, Bruce. *Oscar Wilde: The Critic as Humanist*. Madison, Teaneck, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson UP; London: Associated UPs, 1999. Pp. 197. $36.00. "My purpose in this study is to exhibit Wilde's capacity for thought. I discuss his works in two takes, as it were. The first half of my study treats the short story 'The Portrait of Mr. W. H.,' the dialogues 'The Decay of Lying' and 'The Critic as Artist,' and the prison letter known as *De Profundis*, as texts that, whatever else they do, set forth theories. By this I mean that they present developed, coherent answers to important questions: in the case of the short story, for instance, to the question, what makes an interpretation convincing? In the second half, I examine Wilde's early essay 'The Rise of Historical Criticism' and the two dialogues as what I believe they are: expressions of humanism. Since there is no useful definition of 'humanism' ready to hand, this section begins with a proposal for defining the term. The application I then make to Wilde's works continues my effort to bring into view his agility as a thinker. It does so by showing how he reconciles the traditional tenets of humanism with intellectual commitments not obviously compatible with those tenets" (11).

Berry, Laura C. *The Child, The State, and the Victorian Novel*. Victorian Literature and Culture Series. Charlottesville & London: UP of Virginia, 1999. Pp. x + 199. $32.50 "This book examines the intense nineteenth-century fascination with victimized children to show how novels and reform writings authoritatively reorganize ideas of self and society as narratives of childhood distress. I examine the links among subjectivity as represented through the victimized child, Victorian projects of social reform, and the articulation of the state. Representing childhood as endangered is instrumental to nineteenth-century debates about stratifications among individuals, and also negotiations between the private self and the broader demands of social life and institutions in England. The child victim's omnipresence, as well as the details of the discrete narratives in which he or she appears, allows a critical way of understanding the self to seem natural and at times inevitable. Portraying the Victorian child as a victim enables the imagining of a version of selfhood in which a subject may be taken as self-determining and individualized, but inextricably (and simultaneously) dependent upon social formations, especially institutions, outside the self. Children in distress can be seen, in this context, as *little citizens*—persons whose sovereignty as selves is secured by their unformed and innocent status as children, but whose relation to the social realm is made necessary by the fact of their endangerment" (3-4).

Button, Marilyn Demarest and Toni Reed, eds. *The Foreign Woman in British Literature: Exotics, Aliens, and Outsiders*. Contributions in Women's Studies, Number 171. Westport, CT & London: Greenwood P, 1999. Pp. xix + 201. $57.95. Contents: "Preface"; Marilyn Demarest Button, "Introduction"; Frank P. Riga, "Dismantling Traditionalist Gender Roles: A Exotic Counter-World in Byron's *Don Juan*"; John Greenfield, "Transforming the Stereotype: Exotic Women in Shelley's *Alastor* and *The Witch of Atlas*"; Eleanor Harrington-Austin, "'Asia Loves Prometheus': Asian Women and Shelley's Macropolitics"; Eve W. Stoddard, "A Genealogy of Ruths: From Alien Harvester to Fallen Woman in Nineteenth-Century England"; Andrea O'Reilly Herrera, "Imagining a Self between a Husband or a Wall: Charlotte Brontë's *Villette*"; Maureen Thum, "Challenging Traditionalist Gender Rules: The Exotic Woman as Critical Observer in Elizabeth Barrett Browning's *Aurora Leigh*"; Laurel Erickson, "'In Short, She Is an Angel; and I Am—': Odd Women and Same-Sex Desire in Wilkie Collins's *Woman in White*"; Oliver Lovesey, "Tigresses, Tinsel Madonnas, and Citizens of the World: The 'Other' Woman in George Eliot's Fiction"; Ode S. Ogede, "Phantoms Mistaken for a Human Face: Race and the Construction of the African Woman's Identity in Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*"; Karl Henzy, "The Foreign Woman Is a Man: Gender Reversal in D. H. Lawrence's Fiction"; Celia Esplugas, "Gypsy Women in English Life and Literature"; Mary Matthew, "'Our Many Larval Selves': Durrell's Livia and the Cross-Cultural Signal"; Marilyn Demarest Button, "A Losing Tradition: The Exotic Female of Anita Brookner's Early Fiction."

Campbell, Matthew. *Rhythm and Will in Victorian Poetry*. Cambridge Studies in Nineteenth-Century Literature and Culture 22. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1999. Pp. xiv + 272. $59.95. "The habit of listening to the rhythms of poetry has passed from the skills imparted to many students and scholars of poetry alike. Consequently, I have attempted to scan the rhythms of the poems discussed in this book with a methodology derived from the classical model which 'the book talk of prosodists' has declared to be a limited means of describing the dominantly accentual-syllabic rhythms of English poetry. Despite the anxieties of Tennyson, who greatly desired the introduction of a system of notation which would fix his sonic intentions in print, or the consistent prosodic theorising of Hopkins, the classical model of scansion was the one in which the poets discussed in this book described their own verse [xi]. . . . [T]his is a study of the *rhythm of will* as marked mainly in the work of only four major Victorian poets, Alfred Tennyson, Robert Browning, Gerard Manley Hopkins and Thomas Hardy. It touches on contemporary and Victorian prosodic theory and practice where necessary, as it also attempts to provide some historical basis for what might be meant by 'will' in this period. But this is a book about poetic form and its relation to the concern that the poets considered here show with decision, action and event. It seeks to describe how, in lyric, narrative, dramatic and elegaic forms, these poets construct versions of a Victorian self which is shown acting through a medium which can analyse motive in deliberation, purpose and intention, and out to decision, action and event" (xii).

Chandra, Subhash, ed. *Thomas Hardy: A Collection of Critical Essays*. New Delhi: Prestige Books, 1999. Pp. 175. Rs. 400. Includes Subhash Chandra, "Thomas Hardy: Then and Now"; Judith Bryant Wittenberg, "Early Hardy Novels and the Fictional Eye"; K. B. Razdan, "The Incongruous and the Inevitable: Hardy's Vision of Life in His Major Novels"; G. R. Taneja, "Hardy's Rustics Reconsidered"; Judith Bryant Wittenberg, "Angles of Vision and Questions of Gender in *Far from the Madding Crowd*"; Lewis Horne, "Passion and Flood in *Far from the Madding Crowd*"; Arti Mathur, "'Misreadings' of Self: Eustacia Vye in *The Return of the Native*"; V. P. Sharma, "The Role of the Heath in *The Return of the Native*"; Leonora Epstein, "Sale and Sacrament: The Wife Auction in *The Mayor of Casterbridge*"; Suman Bala and Subhash Chandra, "Hardy's Concept of Tragedy as Reflected in *The Mayor of Casterbridge*"; Charlotte Bonica, "Nature and Paganism in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*"; Ramon Saldivar, "*Jude the Obscure*: Reading and the Spirit of the Law"; Geoffrey Harvey, "Hardy's Poetry of Transcendence"; Deepshikha Kotwal, "Love in the Poetry of Thomas Hardy"; William E. Buckler, "'The Thing Signified' in *The Dynasts*: A Speculation."

Dolin, Kieran. *Fiction and the Law: Legal Discourse in Victorian and Modernist Literature*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1999. Pp. vii + 234. $54.95. "The extent to which the interaction of fiction and the law from Scott to Forster can by composed into a single movement from affirmation to critque is the ultimate question of this book" (20). Works analyzed include *The Heart of Midlothian; Bleak House; Orley Farm; Billy Budd, Sailor; Lord Jim; A Passage to India*.

Feltes, Norman N. *This Side of Heaven: Determining the Donnelly Murders, 1880*. Toronto, Buffalo, London: U of Toronto P, 1999. Pp. xvii + 208. $40.00, £30.00. "The following account is simply a bare-bones re-rendering of the story [of the murder of the five members of the Donnelly family in the township of Biddulph, near Lucan, Ontario, in 1880] as I understand it. . . . As I explain below, my own book rearranges or re-places this tale in the history of Ontario and Canada in the nineteenth century, according to the particular understandings of that history that I share with other marxists, and other historians, presenting a different idea of that story, and of 'story'" (xii).

Franklin, J. Jeffrey. *Serious Play: The Cultural Form of the Nineteenth-Century Realist Novel*. Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 1999. Pp. vi + 250. $37.50, £28.50. "I chose finally to focus the current study on Victorian conceptions of play within three . . . areas: gambling, theatricality, and aesthetic theory. Considered collectively, they provide a multifaceted introduction to nineteenth-century British liberal-intellectual modes of thinking about, writing about, and living play" (2).

Freeman, Michael. *Railways and the Victorian Imagination*. New Haven & London: Yale UP, 1999. Pp. [viii] + 264. $39.95. "The time is . . . long overdue for a new portrait of the railway at a critical turning-point in the history of society. With such a goal in mind, this book is structured in eight chapters. All are concerned with different aspects of the railway as cultural metaphor and with what have been called 'Illuminations' or 'Moments of Vision.'. . . Chapter One has as its focus the 'death of the old order.' . . . Chapter Two explores the railway's intellectual context more explicitly. . . . Chapter Three has capital as its central focus. . . . The urban realm forms the subject of Chapter Four. . . . Chapter Five examines the relationship between railways and territory. . . . A startling feature of the Victorian railway as a large-scale capital project of the machine age was its dependence on old-fashioned muscle power for its construction (Chapter Six). . . . Chapter Seven considers the railways in relation to the continuation and reproduction of social life and, more particularly, to education. . . . The final chapter of the book focuses specifically on artistic interpretations of the railway" (19-24). There are 135 black and white illustrations, 150 in color. A beautiful book.

Glancy, Ruth. *Student Companion to Charles Dickens*. Student Companions to Classic Writers. Westport, CT & London: Greenwood P, 1999. Pp. viii + 166. $29.95. Contents: "The Life of Charles Dickens," "Literary Heritage," "The Early Novels from *The Pickwick Papers* (1837) to *Martin Chuzzlewit* (1844)," "*Oliver Twist* (1838)," "The Christmas Books and Christmas Stories (1843-1867)," "*David Copperfield* (1850)," "*Hard Times* (1854)," "*A Tale of Two Cities* (1859)," "*Great Expectations* (1861)," "The Other Novels from *Dombey and Son* (1848) to *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* (1870)," "Bibliography," "Index."

Glavin, John. *After Dickens: Reading, Adaptation and Performance*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1999. Pp. xiii + 226. $54.95. "*After Dickens* has turned out to be, despite its academic credentials, in many ways a playwright's book. . . . It's not just that the book's three parts insist on developing suspiciously like a script: set-up, flashback, and resolution. . . . I get to that stage through three sets of paired chapters. We move from Dickens's exemplary resistance toward theatre (Set-up), through an attempt to recreate what performance means in a shame-based psyche and culture (Flashback), to end with a pair of adaptations that transgress and transform their originals (Resolution)" (8).

Guy, Josephine M., ed. *The Victorian Age: An Anthology of Sources and Documents*. London & New York: Routledge, 1998. Pp. vii + 632. $150.00; Can. $225.00. The text is divided into 4 sections—"Defining Society: Ethics, Economics and Politics"; "Science and Religion"; "Art and Culture"; "Sex and Gender"—authors from whom there are selections include: Jeremy Bentham, John Stuart Mill, John Grote, Robert Owen, Herbert Spencer, David Ricardo, Walter Bagehot, William Stanley Jevons, Henry Mayers Hyndman, Carlyle, Arnold, William Morris, Lyell, Darwin, T. H. Huxley, Samuel Wilberforce, Benjamin Jowett, John William Colenso, Ruskin, Swinburne, Pater, Wilde, Arthur Symons, Max Nordau, William John Courthope, William Acton, Havelock Ellis, Sarah Stickney Ellis, Edward Carpenter, and John Addington Symonds. Includes an intro., notes, and an index.

Houston, Gail Turley. *Royalties: The Queen and Victorian Writers*. Victorian Literature and Culture Series. Charlottesville & London: UP of Virginia, 1999. Pp. xii + 192 $32.50. "In chapter 1, assuming the connection between political and literary representations, I examine the anomalous ways the queen regnant was represented in legal texts and compare these with Victoria's own hybrid construction of her legally constituted identity. Chapter 2 lays the groundwork for studying the historical construction of British writers and their monarch as antagonists competing over the right to represent the nation. To a great extent, the Victorian writer's gender became a marker of the right to wear the laurel crown. With this in mind, I look at how contemporary writers represented Queen Victoria and examine some of the ways in which her reign both undermined and supported the British gendering of professional authority. Chapters 3 through 5 focus on the exchanges between Victoria and three specific writers, Charles Dickens, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, and Margaret Oliphant. Dickens, Barrett Browning, and Oliphant all picture—and attempt to consolidate—their trade by both explicitly and subliminally comparing their profession with the monarch's. Likewise, in her exchanges with these authors, Victoria either minimizes the value of the writer's trade, or, with a mixture of shrewdness and naiveté, directs the professional author's attention to her own published writings" (4). Includes a bibliography.

Hughes, Linda K. and Michael Lund. *Victorian Publishing and Mrs. Gaskell's Work*. Victorian Literature and Culture Series. Charlottesville & London: UP of Virginia, 1999. Pp. x + 201. $32.50. "We explore the serial structure of her last novel, *Wives and Daughters* (1864-66), in chapter 1 to found our study on the more practical, nuts and bolts business of publishing practices in her time. In chapter 2 we contrast the early *Mary Barton* (1848) with the late *Sylvia's Lovers* (1863) in order to specify how over the course of her career she developed the voice of narrative authority that enabled her to choose among established publishers . . . in presenting her work to a wide audience. In chapter 3 we show how social documents define and restrict human identity in 'Lizzie Leigh' (1850), *Ruth* (1853), and *Cranford* (1851-53); yet with these works of her own Gaskell reconceived the body of 'the fallen woman' in ways no other Victorian author attempted. In chapter 4 we document in more detail the innovative and subversive narratives she wrought on the material ground of Victorian publishing through her well-known industrial novel *North and South* (1854-55). In that work Gaskell offered alternative patterns for installment publication that, though frustrating such influential figures as her frequent editor Charles Dickens, had designs made more visible by new tenets of literary theory. And in our final chapter we argue that, in *The Life of Charlotte Brontë* (1857), the one work whose reputation has remained high from her own time to the present, she not only reshaped the public memory of a friend and fellow author but also established a new role for herself and other women in the Victorian present and the modern future" (7).

Kammen, Michael. *American Culture American Tastes: Social Change and the 20th Century*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1999. Pp. xxvii + 320. $30.00. "This book is essentially an extended essay about changing views of leisure and American preferences concerning its growing array of uses. It also examines perceptions of popular and mass culture in the United States during the past century" (xiii).

Kipling, Rudyard. *The Letters of Rudyard Kipling: Vol. 4 1911-1919*. Ed. Thomas Pinney. Iowa City: U of Iowa P, 1999. Pp. x + 609. $62.95. There are some 350 letters in this volume to more than 100 correspondents, including Stanley Baldwin, Henry James, Brander Matthews, Theodore Roosevelt, George Saintsbury.

Klages, Mary. *Woeful Afflictions: Disability and Sentimentality in Victorian America*. Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 1999. Pp. 250. $36.50, £27.50. "This study expands the ideas offered by recent scholars on embodiment, identity, and sentimentality by locating disability as sets of cultural meanings defined and articulated in two main public areas in nineteenth-century American culture: the reports of professional institutions founded for the protective care and education of the disabled, focusing on the segregated schools formed in the antebellum period for the education of the deaf and the blind, and the pages of domestic and popular cultural representations, in fiction, biography, and autobiography, of people with disabilities" (5-6).

Krebs, Paula M. *Gender, Race, and the Writing of Empire: Public Discourse and the Boer War*. Cambridge Studies in Nineteenth-Century Literature and Culture 23. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1999. Pp. xii + 205. $59.95. "The Boer War, which lost its place in public memory in Britain after the more sweeping tragedy of the Great War, still has much to teach us about the workings of imperialism in an empire that was at the turn of the century struggling with new understandings about race, about the identity of 'the public,' and about gender. . . . 'The last of the gentleman's wars' changed the rules of war, confusing the categories of combatant and non-combatant, and introducing such concepts as the concentration camp system and the wholesale burning of farms and personal property. Public discourse in Britain about the Boer War helped to remake the public image of war itself. All public writing in Britain about the war had to work with changing notions of gender and race within an ideology of imperialism. Whether its medium was Blue-book, newspaper, essay, or poetry, the public discourse on the Boer War examined in this volume carries a recognition that not even an imperial war could produce what was being demanded of public officials, military leaders, and literary figures alike—a single, coherent, workable notion of a British Empire" (178).

Lenard, Mary. *Preaching Pity: Dickens, Gaskell, and Sentimentalism in Victorian Culture*. Studies in Nineteenth-Century British Literature Vol. 11. New York etc: Peter Lang, 1999. Pp. viii + 157. $43.95. "This book has important implications, both for Victorian studies and for feminist criticism. First, it investigates a largely unrecognized, but culturally important,

tradition; in the process, the project productively expands our understanding of nineteenth-century culture by looking at previously overlooked writers, texts, and literary practices.

"I have therefore made a point of dealing extensively with more obscure writers in this book, such as [Charlotte Elizabeth] Tonna and [Frances] Trollope, in order to suggest their significance. I have, however, concentrated on writers who are more or less canonical. This concentration is intended to demonstrate the important cultural influence of sentimentalist social reform fiction on 'mainstream' literary figures and in order to show how these authors' use of sentimentalist conventions affected their literary reception" ([135]).

Oražem, Claudia. *Political Economy and Fiction in the Early Works of Harriet Martineau.* Anglo-American Studies 16. Frankfurt am Main, etc.: Peter Lang, 1999. Pp. 212. $35.95 paper. "This thesis concentrates chiefly on Martineau's fiction of the early 1830s: three separate, but related series of didactic tales, namely the *Illustrations of Political Economy, Poor Laws and Paupers Illustrated* and the *Illustrations of Taxation.* In the previous decade she had published two stories dealing with socio-economic topics, *The Rioters* (1827) and *The Turn-Out* (1829). Two further exercises in the same mode were added in the mid-1840s; *Dawn Island, A Tale* (1845) and *Forest and Game Law Tales* (1845-46).

Persoon, James. *Modern British Poetry 1900-1939.* Twayne Critical History of Poetry Studies. New York: Twayne, 1999. Pp. xvi + 207. $32.00. "This study, as part of a series, is limited to the years 1900-1939 and to British authors. Ezra Pound and T. S. Eliot, as Americans, and W. B. Yeats, as an Irishman, are excluded. Thomas Hardy, as an important nineteenth-century figure, is likewise treated in detail in a different volume. . . . I have focused greater attention on lesser-known poets, sometimes not even very good poets, for what they tell us about this 40-year period. Poets behind Hardy, Yeats, and Eliot—in reputation more than in skill—have inherited much of the attention: Wilfrid Owen, Edward Thomas, Robert Graves, D. H. Lawrence, H. D., Edith Sitwell, Stevie Smith, W. H. Auden, Dylan Thomas, Edwin Muir, Louis MacNeice. Poets with damaged reputations occupy more space than they would normally receive in a more canonical survey: Alfred Austin and Henry Newbolt, Arthur Symons and Rudyard Kipling, Rupert Brooke and Frances Cornford, Wilfrid Gibson and W. H. Davies, Siegfried Sassoon and Richard Aldington, Osbert Sitwell and Charlotte Mew, Eleanor Farjeon and Anna Wickham, David Jones and Vernon Watkins, Basil Bunting and Hugh MacDiarmid" (vii). Includes a chronology, selected bibliography, and index.

Shaw, W. David. *Origins of the Monologue: The Hidden God.* Toronto, Buffalo & London: U of Toronto P, 1999. Pp. xii + 250. $50.00, £32.00. "I show how the author of dramatic monologues is created in the image of this protean god ['the God of nineteenth-century agnostic theology, the Kantian God of Sir William Hamilton, H. L. Mansel, and T. H. Huxley, who hides behind such logically contradictory attributes as the Absolute, the Infinite, and a First Cause'], a magician of negative capability described by one Victorian critic, W. J. Fox, as 'a transmigrating Vishnu.' My book is the first to trace the rise of the monologue to the dangerous legacy of agnostic theology and the first to link the enigmatic poet behind the masks to nineteenth-century theories of Socrates' *agnostos theos* or unknown God" ([1]).

Smith, Elton E. and Robert Haas, eds. *The Haunted Mind: The Supernatural in Victorian Literature.* Latham, MD & London: Scarecrow P, 1999. Pp. xiv + 138. $35.00. Contents: Elton E. Smith and Robert Haas, "Introduction: Victorian Literature and the Shifting Use of the Supernatural"; Elton E. Smith, "Winged Ghosts: Alfred Lord Tennyson and the Return of the Mystical"; Harry Stone, "*A Christmas Carol*: Giving Nursery Tales a Higher Form"; Kath Filmer, "The Specter of the Self in *Frankenstein* and *Great Expectations*"; Roger C. Schlobin, "Danger and Compulsion in *The Wind in the Willows*, or Toad and Hyde Together at Last"; Tammis Elise Thomas, "Masquerade Liberties and Female Power in Le Fanu's *Carmilla*"; Elaine Showalter, "Dr. Jekyll's Closet"; E. M. G. Smith, "Kipling's Key to the Haunted Chamber"; Nancy Jane Tyson, "Caliban in a Glass: Autoscopic Vision in *The Picture of Dorian Gray*"; Elton E. Smith, "Pedophiles amidst Looming Portentousness: Henry James's *The Turn of the Screw*."

Thormählen, Marianne. *The Brontës and Religion.* Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1999. Pp. x + 287. $59.95. "This book examines the treatment of religion in the Brontë novels from four fundamental perspectives: the denominational angle; the doctrinal dimensions; the ethical issues; and the roles and duties of clergymen. The first perspective is relevant to Evangelicalism, Dissent and Roman Catholicism as related to the Brontë's and their writings; this discussion is headed by a review of the forces and conceptions which shaped the spiritual climate of the home they were born into. The second section of the book addresses the theological issues raised by the novels, above all that of salvation versus damnation and the underlying question of Divine love and the Atonement of Christ. The third section looks at the ways in which the novels deal with the moral obligations of Christians, to one another and, crucially, to their selves as God-created beings. Next, in the first chapter of section IV, the pastoral functions of vicars and curates are scrutinised, including their week-day obligations to their parishioners as well as their demeanour in their churches. Finally, points raised in the previous sections are brought to bear on the most intriguing clergyman in the Brontë fiction: the man whose confident anticipation of a heavenly crown forms the conclusion of one of the best-loved novels in the English language" (4-5).

White, Chris, ed. *Nineteenth-Century Writings on Homosexuality: A Sourcebook.* London & New York: Routledge, 1999. Pp. xi + 374. $80.00, Can. $120.00 cloth, $24.99, Can. $37.99 paper. There are 134 entries from 1810 to 1929 included under chapters titled "The Mute Sin," "Law," "Science," "Modes of Defence," "Love," "Sex." Includes an intro., notes, select bibliog., index.

Victorian Group News

Announcements

English Literary Studies seeks quality submissions for its annual monograph series. *ELS* publishes peer-reviewed monographs (usual length 45,000-60,000 words) on the literatures written in English. The Series is open to a wide range of methodologies, and it considers for publication a variety of scholarly work: bibliographies, scholarly editions, and historical and critical studies of significant authors, texts, and issues. For further information write the Editor, *English Literary Studies*, Department of English, University of Victoria, P. O. Box 3070, Victoria, B.C. V8W 3W1, Canada or see our Guidelines for Prospective Contributors at http://www.engl.uvic.ca/els/contributors.html.

The Martineau Society in collaboration with Harris-Manchester College, Oxford University, announces its celebration honoring the centenary of James Martineau's death. The annual conference will be held 15-18 August, 2000 at the college. Inquiries should be directed to Mr. Alan J. Middleton, 49 Mayfield Avenue, Grove, Wantage, Oxon OX12 7ND UK. E-mail alan@ajmidd.demon.co.uk. The Martineau Society aims to promote scholarship on the work of Harriet Martineau and James Martineau, who, in their respective fields, advocated the principle of freedom of conscience throughout the nineteenth century. http://www.hmc.ox.ac.uk/Martineau Soc/martineausoc.htm.

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