

Victorian Studies Association Newsletter



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THE VICTORIAN STUDIES ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

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EDITORIAL

Members of the Victorian Studies Association of Ontario will be pleased to hear that Bruce Kinzer, of the Mill Project, will take over as Editor of the Newsletter this spring. Assembly, printing, and mailing of the Newsletter will continue to be done at Guelph.

As we packed up the Newsletter archives, ready to return them to Toronto, we cast a rather sentimental glance over the earlier issues. Publication began with the circulation of answers to a questionnaire posed in 1967. Announcements to work-in-progress, publications, and research interests had come in from Carleton, Guelph, Lakehead, Laurentian, McMaster, Queen's, Toronto, Western, and York; in answer to such encouragement a mimeographed newsletter began to appear, edited by Edgar Wright and F. A. Peake. Gradually, the Newsletter features emerged: lists of periodical holdings at Ontario Universities; news of branch meetings; summaries of conference papers; theses in preparation; queries; "Victorian Notes" (brief research-based articles); illustrated features; and finally book reviews. Editorial direction passed to Jane Millgate and Robin Biswa, next to W. J. Keith and then to Ann Robson.

We have enjoyed our two-year turn at the pleasant editorial work of sustaining the Victorian Newsletter; and now, dropping a Victorian tear and heaving a Victorian sigh, we pass this Victorian bundle on to its next guardian.

FORTHCOMING

The Victorian Studies Association of Ontario Annual Conference will be held at Glendon College, Toronto, on Saturday, 12 April, commencing at 9:30 a.m. with registration.

The lectures will feature F.S.L. Lyons (Trinity College, Dublin), "Yeats and Victorian Ireland," and William Whitla (York University), "William Morris's 'Huge Mass of Reading'".

NEWS OF MEMBERS

Kristin Brady (Illinois) delivered a paper, "Hawthorne's 'home-feeling with the past': A Basis for Romance" to the Nineteenth-Century American Literature section at the Northeast MLA conference held in New Bedford, Mass., in March.

W. J. Keith (Toronto) has an article "A Regional Approach to Hardy's Fiction" in Dale Kramer, ed., Critical Approaches of Thomas Hardy. London: Macmillan, 1979.

Anne Skabaruicki (Lafayette College) has an article "Annandale Evangelist and Scotch Voltaire: Carlyle's Reminiscences of Edward Irving and Francis Jeffrey," in Scotia: American-Canadian Journal of Scottish Studies Vol. 4: April, 1980.

Christina Duff Stewart (Book Selector for Graduate Research in English and Drama, U of T Library) has provided the introduction and biographical notes for Ann Taylor Gilbert's Album. New York: Garland Press, 1979. pp. xxxiv, 689. (This item corrects an incorrect one which appeared in the Fall issue-Eds.)

Alan Thomas (Scarborough) gave a public lecture on "Early Photography of The Canadian Indian" at the Toronto Historical Photography Society meeting held at the Bathurst St. Library, Toronto, in September.

TORONTO GROUP

At the second of the Toronto group meetings of the 1979-80 season, held at Michael and Jane Millgate's on Thursday, 6 December, Rache Lovat Dickson spoke on "A Victorian Publishing House: Macmillans". Fascinating as the history of Macmillans was in itself, it was made doubly so by the mass of anecdotal material Lovat Dickson proved to have at his fingertips and especially by his reminiscences of the firm as it was when he first joined it in the 1930s--when the sons of the original partners were still alive and the building and its modes of operation were still redolent of Victorian days.

The third and last meeting of the Toronto group during the 1979-80 academic year was held at Jack and Ann Robson's on Wednesday, 6 February. This was one of those meetings when everyone is asked to read the same text in advance and discussion is opened by two people from different disciplines. On this occasion the book was Kipling's Kim and the speakers Henry Auster and Archie Thornton. The ensuing discussion was an extremely lively one, but while everyone seemed enthusiastic about the experience of re-reading the novel itself, there was little agreement as to the precise nature of its virtues or of its bearing (if any) upon the political realities of its day.

BOOK REVIEWS

By Bruce L. Kinzer (J. S. Mill Project)

The Discipline of Popular Government: Lord Salisbury's Domestic Statecraft 1881-1902, by Peter Marsh; pp. 373. Hassocks, Sussex: Harvester Press; Atlantic Highlands, New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1979.

Both W. E. Gladstone and Lord Salisbury began their political careers as uncompromising high Tories. Gladstone's high Toryism, however, was of a romantic character. As he became increasingly aware of some fundamental realities of nineteenth-century society, and of Liberalism's ability to satisfy his need for a politics of idealism, Gladstone abandoned the Toryism of his young manhood. Not so Lord Salisbury, whose high Toryism had nothing of the romantic about it. Based upon an unshakable conviction that the interests of the propertied and of the nation were one and the same, Salisbury's Toryism rested on a granite-like foundation not susceptible to the influences that corroded Gladstone's. When in power he could not apply the rigid adherence to principle characteristic of his years as an independent Tory in the Lower House, but Salisbury remained firmly committed to the preservation of the power and privileges of the propertied, whose insecurity in the face of an advancing democracy tied them ever more closely to the fortunes of the Conservative party.

Prime Minister for thirteen and a half years, a man of powerful intellect and formidable wit, of a cynical and pessimistic cast of mind, Salisbury, until recently, has been unjustifiably neglected by historians. Apart from Lady Gwendolyn Cecil's remarkable four-volume unfinished biography of her father, and A. L. Kennedy's not altogether satisfactory modern biography, little work of any consequence on Salisbury appeared before the 1960s. Within the last two decades, however, much good work has been done. In 1964 J. A. S. Grenville's excellent study of Salisbury's foreign policy was published. Three years later came Michael Pinto-Duschinsky's short but stimulating examination of Salisbury's political thought, a work based largely on Salisbury's numerous contributions to the Quarterly Review and Saturday Review. A selection from Salisbury's articles in the Quarterly, edited by Paul Smith, whose superb introduction to the articles itself constitutes a major scholarly contribution, appeared in 1972. And now we have Peter Marsh's very important study of Salisbury's domestic politics, The Discipline of Popular Government.

As the title indicates, the theme of Marsh's book concerns

Salisbury's efforts to curb and restrain the excesses he feared would emerge from the movement towards democracy in Britain. If the dominance of his party during the last fifteen years of Victoria's reign be taken as a measure of success, Salisbury had reason to congratulate himself, something he seems rarely if ever to have done. That achievement can in part be attributed to the steadiness with which Salisbury pursued his own essentially negative objectives, but it was also the result, as Marsh amply demonstrates, of his willingness to discipline his own impulses, when giving them vent might have produced the sort of confrontation with popular opinion that he wished to avoid. Experience of leadership and office bred in Salisbury an appreciation of the role of compromise in the resolution of conflict. Marsh's analysis, striking in its depth and richness, brings out in considerable detail the character of that experience, its effects on Salisbury, and Salisbury's impact on the fortunes of his party and country.

With an impressive command of his sources and a sure grasp of the high politics of late-Victorian Britain, Marsh elucidates the various phases and aspects of Salisbury's career during the last two decades of Victoria's reign. Circumstances compelled Salisbury to share the leadership with Sir Stafford Northcote in the years between Disraeli's death in 1881 and the fall of Gladstone's government in 1885, and Marsh deftly brings out the difficulties this arrangement posed for Salisbury, and the means by which he secured recognition as sole leader of the party. Accepting the thesis elaborated by Cooke and Vincent in The Governing Passion concerning Salisbury's response to Gladstone's conversion to Home Rule, Marsh shows how Salisbury used the issue to consolidate his own authority within the party and to enhance the Tories' electoral prospects. The internal power struggle with the formidable Randolph Churchill, a struggle in which the brilliant but unstable Churchill fell victim to his own impetuosity and to Salisbury's shrewd manoeuvrings, is ably depicted and assessed. Marsh breaks important ground in his examination of the parliamentary and extra-parliamentary organization of the Conservative party in the period after the 1884 Reform Act, a subject in which Salisbury, judging from Marsh's account, took a keen interest. The nature of the alliance with the liberal Unionists, the advantage taken by Salisbury of his years in opposition during Gladstone's third ministry, the electoral victories of 1895 and 1900, the failure of Salisbury and his colleagues to respond constructively to the challenges of an altered political, social, and international context at the turn of the century - all these matters are perceptively and judiciously dealt with by Marsh.

Of course not all readers will find the book persuasive in every respect. One may legitimately question the validity

of Marsh's contention, for example, that there was substance as well as style in Disraelian Tory Democracy. But it is the cogent argument, acute insights, and forceful analysis that remain with the reader. The following passage may give some indication of the quality and subtlety of that analysis. "There was . . . a fine but revealing difference between Salisbury's maintenance of the Union and his maintenance of the Empire. His crusade against Home Rule had led him to excesses, particularly in his treatment of Parnell, which did not bespeak an entirely easy conscience: there was, if anything, more utility than conviction to his defence of the Union. There was more conviction than utility to his maintenance of the Empire. True to character, the very restraints with which he asserted the interests of Empire testified to this deeper commitment, particularly when his restraint cost him the confidence of his Cabinet and of previously ardent supporters." (p. 276.)

As for Salisbury himself, what emerges most clearly from Marsh's study is the extraordinary service performed by an image that very imperfectly reflected reality. An aristocrat from one of England's great landed families who led his party and the country from the House of Lords, a statesman of international stature, a man whose physique and visage conveyed gravity and solidity, and whose manner of speech was generally marked by great clarity and detachment, Salisbury gave the impression of being above the political struggle engaged in by social and intellectual inferiors. In fact, he was very much a political animal, one who did not lack the calculation and ruthlessness associated with the breed. His triumph over Churchill, his exploitation of the Home Rule issue, his involvement in The Times' effort to discredit Parnell, his advice to the Queen in 1894 (when he was out of office) to dissolve parliament should Rosebery press his attack upon the House of Lords - such episodes in Salisbury's career reveal a man not indifferent to personal political advantage. His image, however, combined with extreme good fortune and ambiguity of circumstance, generally enabled Salisbury to avoid identification with unsavoury political conduct, and to escape unscathed the consequences of poor political judgements. It is to Marsh's credit that we now understand much better the importance of the image and its relation to the reality.

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By Robert C. Schweik (State University College, Fredonia, N.Y.)

Jane Millgate, editor. Editing Nineteenth-Century Fiction: Papers Given at the Thirteenth Annual Conference on Editorial Problems, University of Toronto, 4-5 November 1977. Garland Publishing. 128 pp. \$17.00.

Editing Nineteenth-Century Fiction continues the fine tradition

of the earlier published papers of the Toronto editorial conferences--i.e., it exhibits editorial minds at work in that arena where the abstractions of editing theory are confronted by the concrete complexities editors face when grappling with the history of the transmission of literary texts and attempting to present those texts in forms suitable for particular audiences. In fact, it is the problems involved in establishing authoritative texts which have generated the most interest among scholarly editors, while the differing practical needs of particular audiences have rarely attracted more than perfunctory attention. It is refreshing, then, to find that the leading paper in this volume, by Sylvère Monod, deals precisely with the problem of adjusting the apparatus of scholarly editions to the needs of different groups of readers. But, although concerned primarily with this practical editorial problem, Professor Monod nevertheless clearly relates it to such broader issues as those involved in the adoption of a copy-text and makes, I think, what amounts to an excellent case for the application of the principle of parsimony to copy-text selection.

It is this dual concern with editing theory and editorial practice which characterizes all the essays in this volume. In his discussion of the transmission of the text of Hardy's novels, for example, Michael Millgate shows dramatically that relevant editorial information may lurk in such unexpected places as a cheap papercover edition of Far from the Madding Crowd in which Hardy incorporated corrections not embodied in any later printings of his works. Although the bulk of Millgate's essay is devoted to exhibiting the complex textual history of the "Wessex" edition of Hardy's works, it ranges over such questions as the possible claims of earlier as opposed to later authorial intentions and the ways in which an editor's aesthetic judgement may bear upon his textual decisions.

What is perhaps most notable about the essays in this volume is that they continue to chip away aggressively at some of the more dogmatic assumptions which underlie editions produced under the aegis of the CEAA--so much so that Jane Millgate's introduction ends with assurances that, in spite of what had been written, the ideal represented by the CEAA editions is still a valuable one. True. But it would be fair to say, however, that the authors of the papers in this volume cannot be accused of having striven officiously to keep the CEAA ideal alive. Thus, the assumption that the scholarly editor's task is to produce a critical text representing an author's "final deliberate intention" is sharply challenged by Peter Shillingsburg, who, after cogently arguing that Thackeray's post-publication revisions often weakened rather than strengthened his works, concludes that as editor he will opt for

providing readers with the novels in a form which represents Thackeray's first rather than later intentions; similarly, Clive Thomason, in a discussion of the problems of editing Zola's novels, argues that they require the application of a more modern textual theory than now exists--one which would consider the manuscript, the serial text, and the first edition as independent documents--and in doing so, of course, he deliberately challenges the assumption that such elements are parts of a progression toward an ideal final text.

It is particularly appropriate, then, that in the final essay in this volume, Hershel Parker provides a scholarly coup-de-grâce to the editorial dogma that "last is best," and, in doing so, he lays the blame for its persistence in scholarly editing on the "academic philistines" who have blindly dogmatized the ideas of W. W. Greg. What he provides in the body of his essay is a chamber of editorial horrors where undue reverence for authors' supposed final intentions has led the editors of such prestigious series as the Ohio State edition of Hawthorne and the Virginia edition of Crane to sometimes produce mangled and aesthetically weakened texts, if not simple nonsense. And his discussion of the problems inherent in failing to analyze fully the implications of the word intention is compellingly illustrated with reference to textual cruxes faced by editors of forthcoming volumes in the Iowa-California Twain edition. Professor Parker's conclusion, in which he argues that what is now needed is much more thought about the complexities of authorial intention--sophisticated thought of the kind found in G. Thomas Tanselle's essay on "The Editorial Problem of Final Authorial Intention" and thought informed by familiarity with current speech-act theory and psycholinguistics--seems to me to be precisely the right closing emphasis for the volume. In fact, if nothing more resulted than the kind of studies Parker asks for, that alone, I think, would more than justify its publication.

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By Anne M. Skabarnicki (Lafayette College, Easton, Pennsylvania)

George P. Landow, ed. Approaches to Victorian Autobiography.
Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1979.

Perhaps even more so than the Romantics, the Victorians loved to write about themselves; and no student of the period can ignore the wealth of memoirs, reminiscences, and autobiographies that they produced in such abundance. Yet until quite recently, literary scholars have been content to regard Victorian autobiography as little more than source material for the study of fiction and poetry, directing almost no critical attention to the autobiographies themselves. All this has begun to change

in the last few years with the virtual explosion of new interest in "self" among critics of all periods and persuasions. But some important problems await solution. We need, for example, to define more precisely the boundaries of the genre, to develop practical methods for analyzing all its varieties, and to agree upon a critical vocabulary for discussing works that are in some ways "self-representational" without being full-dress autobiographies.

Obviously no one work could answer all these needs. But the present collection of sixteen essays by diverse hands does show that a number of critics are moving in the right direction. Anyone reading it through will certainly come away with a clearer understanding of the problems that confront a modern reader trying to discover just what the Victorians were up to when they produced for public inspection some versions of their private selves.

In his long and wide-ranging introduction to the volume, George Landow sketches some of the preliminary historical and theoretical problems. Offering an eclectic overview of the intellectual developments that may have given rise to the peculiarly "double" character of Victorian autobiography (at once public and private), Landow proceeds to draw together the insights of his contributors and extends them with examples of his own. In fact, some readers might decide that the most valuable part of the introduction is not the historical overview or the abstract theorizing, both of which tend at times to be somewhat simplistic, but rather Landow's own concrete examples, especially those in his extended discussion of Herbert Spencer.

At the same time, however, the theoretical point that the account of Spencer is meant to establish exemplifies just the sort of overschematization that can too easily vitiate theorizing in this vein. Landow quotes an impressive number of passages from Spencer's autobiography in which the author confesses his inability to remember a particular event in detail and then, in order to document it more precisely, must quote his own letters and diaries. The leap from these indisputable (and interesting) facts to a general theory of Victorian self-representation, however, needs some justification. Here, as elsewhere in the collection, the critic seems to attribute to the Victorians his own insights about the implications of their autobiographical method. Spencer's practice is supposed to illustrate the "Victorian recognition of how elusive--and perhaps illusory--the self can be." His habit of admitting forgetfulness "forces his reader to encounter [the] basic paradox" of "continuity in discontinuity"--namely that the autobiographer sees his earlier selves as discontinuous with later ones. The

difficulty here arises with "recognition" and "forces." Spencer never explicitly articulates anything like the paradoxical insights that Landow attributes to him; any "forcing" must be the result of the interpretive process. And "recognition" presupposes a conscious intent that is never demonstrated, and probably could not be.

Perhaps the problem here arises from the difficulties inherent in any attempt to develop a new critical idiom for a relatively unexplored literary territory. The theorist must forever guard against the danger of mistaking his own elegant formulations for proven facts: repeated often enough, words can take on the appearance of things. At its worst, this sort of mistake leads to the empty but impressive verbalisms that mar some of the oracular productions of French structuralism and its Anglo-American cousins. In a puzzling essay on Ruskin's Praeterita included in this collection, for example, one avowed disciple of Jacques Lacan too often delivers herself of Delphic pronouncements that at best hopelessly confuse the process of interpretation with the alleged workings of Ruskin's own "consciousness." We learn, for example, that

In Ruskin, rustic, Rose (flower, unenjoyed woman), Mont Rose..., R appears as a typographical character and a typology of psychic structures of disappointed desire. The letter interknits conscious statements with repressed ones (mounting Rose) until planes of signification "slide" insatiably from one to the other and become "empty," unable to fill the void, achieve a Word, the only Word: the plural "I."

Even a sympathetic reader attuned to an idiom that customarily substitutes wordplay and metaphor for textual fact might wonder where precisely all this sliding and interknitting is going on, how an innocent letter has become a "typology," and how "planes" could do anything "insatiably." An unsympathetic one might ask whether in fact "the void" is entirely "in Ruskin." Michael Ryan's essay, "A Grammatology of Assent: Cardinal Newman's Apologia Pro Vita Sua," announces its debt to Derrida in the title; but it shows that an intelligent use of structuralism need not obscure otherwise interesting insights. Yet Ryan might well have arrived at his quite valid and fresh points about Newman's personal mythology without involving Derrida's "oppositions" at all.

Happily, most of the other contributors avoid such pitfalls. Landow has grouped the essays in three parts. Those in the first part focus on some large theoretical questions. Using well-chosen examples from Tennyson, Arnold, Browning, and Ruskin, Elizabeth K. Helsinger persuasively argues that Victorian autobiographers gradually replaced Wordsworth's image of life as a single-minded pilgrimage with "views of fruitful landscapes

or remembered experiences" or with divisions of the self into "multiple characters" (p.24). While Professor Helsinger looks only at England, Phyllis Grosskurth turns to the Continent and suggests some of the reasons that the Victorians ignored as a model that most self-revelatory of autobiographers, Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Howard Helsinger examines the various ways that autobiographers such as Trollope, Darwin, Spenser, Mill, Newman, and Gosse defend their own claims to credibility and discovers a "shift" in the concept of the self from "an object of description" or a "scientific fact" to an "imaginative creation" (p. 62). The myths of imaginative retrospect are also the concern of Lu Ann Walther, who concludes that accounts of childhood in Victorian autobiography are historically inaccurate (if culturally revealing) because they tend to be either Edenically "idyllic" or infernally harsh.

The most interesting essays in Part Two, which is devoted to individual autobiographers (Ruskin, Newman, Mrs. Oliphant, Elizabeth Missing Sewell, and John Butler Yeats), not only reveal the autobiographer's personal myths but also consider the role played by the audience in shaping those myths.

Finally, the essays of Part Three deal primarily with works that represent the self in some ways but are not strictly autobiographies--what Landow places under the heading of "autobiographicality." Some examples are the autobiographical novels of Butler and Gissing and the ostensibly non-fictional prose of Carlyle and Arnold. All the essays here seem to offer valuable insights into specific works and the personal myths of specific writers as well as presenting a variety of critical approaches. But I think the most exciting essays are those that deal with works not usually considered autobiographical. Linda Peterson, for instance, explores the ways in which biblical typology provides the framework for Browning's poetry of artistic vocation; Frederic Kirchlof gives a fascinating account of William Morris' Icelandic Journals as "anti-autobiography"; and Mutlu Konuk Blasing shows how Henry James recreated his own life in his Prefaces.

Even at their weakest, the essays in this collection testify to the vigor and diversity of contemporary approaches to Victorian writings about the self. At their best, they should give fresh impetus to the study of what may turn out to be the era's most characteristic form.