

Victorian Studies Association Newsletter



**Number 34
Fall 1984**

THE VICTORIAN STUDIES ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

Number 34, Fall 1984

Ontario, Canada

Edited for the Victorian Studies Association
of Ontario

Editor: Patricia Morton

The Newsletter receives support from Trent University and
the University of Toronto.

Please send submissions to the Editor,
Dept. of History, Trent University,
Peterborough, Ontario K9J 7B8

C O N T E N T S

Editor's Comments	5
Forthcoming	5
News from Members	6
Communications	7
Lectures	8
Reports of Conferences	8
Report on 1984 Ontario Victorian Studies Conference	9
Article:	
Neil Thornton, "The Taming of London's Commons"	12
Book Reviews:	
Anne Skabarnicki, <u>Thomas Carlyle: A Biography</u> , by Fred Kaplan	29
Richard Rempel, <u>John Maynard Keynes: Hope Betrayed 1883-1920</u> , by Robert Skidelsky	32

EDITOR'S COMMENTS

As I begin my tenure of office as Editor of the VSA Newsletter, I am already indebted to several of you for your generous advice and am pleased to have received News from so many members. I am grateful to the VSA Executive, to the English office of Victoria College for continuing to print and distribute the Newsletter, to Aurora Wait (Trent) who is responsible for the typing, and to Brian Donnellan and Louis Taylor (Trent) for their assistance in designing a new cover. I wish to thank my predecessor, Bruce Kinzer, for leaving the Newsletter in such a healthy condition.

As Editor I hope that with your help the Newsletter will continue to flourish, and also to develop in new directions. In the latter regard I particularly invite not only news on Work on Progress, but also news on GAPS IN WORK IN PROGRESS (with thanks to John Atkin for this suggestion).

In GAPS we may share ideas and areas which come to mind as deserving of further attention than we are able to devote to them in the course of a particular project. We might also solicit information and suggestions from each other regarding voids which seem difficult to fill in our own work in progress. GAPS may of course, be whimsical as well as serious.

Finally, as Editor I would be most pleased to receive your book reviews and articles for publication in the Newsletter. Please share your work and news, and encourage your graduate students to make submissions. (And please do remember to let the Editor know who you are when sending her News and other communications, as one unsigned contribution to this issue must be entered under "Anonymous"). I hope that you can find a few moments to send me your contributions and news before publication of the Spring issue, and would welcome a flood of communications. May I look forward to hearing from you?

Patricia Morton,
History Department,
Trent University

FORTHCOMING

The 1985 Victorian Studies Association of Ontario Annual Conference will be held at Glendon College, Toronto, on Saturday, 13 April. Guest speakers will be Owen Chadwick (Cambridge) and David Shaw (University of Toronto).

NEWS OF MEMBERS

Anonymous (York): One of our members has modestly sent us his or her news unsigned. The Editor hopes in the next issue to be able to name this member who reports that the September Conference of the Western Canada Victorian Studies Association was excellent, and that he/she has published George Borrow: A Bibliographical Study (with A.M. Fraser), St. Paul's Bibliographies, 1984 (also available from the University of Virginia Press)

James Benson (York) informs us that his review of Karen B. Mann, The Language that Makes George Elliot's Fiction (Baltimore and London: 1983) will appear in the Summer or Autumn 1985 issue of Victorian Studies.

Peter Hinchcliffe (St. Jerome's College, Waterloo) read a paper titled "Speech and Silence in In Memorium" at the annual conference of the Victorian Studies Association of Western Canada, September 28, 1984.

Clifford Holland (George Brown College) has had his article on Matthew Arnold's 1884 visit to Canada, entitled "Canada Greeted the Apostle of Culture," published in the Dalhousie Review, Vol. 63, No.2.

Kathleen McCrone (University of Windsor) is now at Clare Hall, Cambridge University as Visiting Scholar. Her article "Play Up! Play Up! and Play the Game: Sport at the Victorian Girls' Public School" was published in the Journal of British Studies, 23 (Spring, 1983). She is now working on her book on Victorian Women and Sport.

Thomas McIntire has been appointed as Associate Professor of History at Trinity College and a member of the Graduate Centre for Religious Studies at the University of Toronto. His teaching includes seminars on nineteenth-century European religion and society, including Victorian Britain.

Jane Millgate (Toronto) has published Walter Scott: The Making of the Novelist, University of Toronto Press, and Edinburgh University Press, 1984.

Michael Moore (Wilfrid Laurier University) gave a paper, "'Schooled at forepangs': The Metaphysic of Hopkins's Darkest Dublin Poems" at the recent international Hopkins Conference held in Dublin, Ireland. He has also co-edited (with John S. North) a collection of essays, Vital Candle: Victorian and Modern Bearings in Gerard Manley Hopkins (University of Waterloo Press, 1984).

Deryck Schreuder (University of Sydney, N.S.W.) has kindly promised to contribute a paper to the Newsletter on "Gladstone in Australia." We shall look forward to hearing from our overseas member.

John Stubbs (Waterloo) is Director of the Waterloo project undertaking the computerization of the Oxford English Dictionary. As he observes, "the O.E.D. was a monument to Victorian scholarship and, as a source, it is much underestimated by historians." We look forward to further news of this project from him.

COMMUNICATIONS

Jill Shefrin sends us the following news of current and forthcoming exhibitions at the Osborne Collection of Early Children's Books, Toronto Public Library:

Exhibitions

September - October 1984

"MUSIC HAS CHARMS TO SOOTH A SAVAGE BREAST".

(Nineteenth and twentieth-century juvenile music books and stories and verse about music.)

November - December 1984

SEASON'S GREETINGS : A VICTORIAN CHRISTMAS.

Victorian Christmas cards and books.

January - February 1985

SCANDINAVIAN FOLKLORE.

Illustrated editions of folk tales and mythology to mark the centenary of the death of P.C. Asbjornsen who, with J.E. Moe, wrote Popular Tales from the Norse.

Dr. Anne Skabarnicki informs us that subscriptions to the Carlyle Newsletter (published once a year) are now \$12 U.S. or \$15 Canadian for three issues, and may be sent to her at the Department of English, R.M.C., Kingston, Ontario. The Carlyle Newsletter has also published four Carlyle Pamphlets:

Carlyle and the Rectorial Election of 1865, ed. K.J. Fielding and Heather Henderson;

COMMUNICATIONS (cont.)

Ruskin for Rector, the Edinburgh Rectorial Election of 1868,
by T.J. Johnstone;

Scott, Carlyle and Democracy, A Centenary Lecture;
by John Clive;

A Centenary Bibliography of Carlyle Studies, Supplement I:
1975-80 by R.W. Dillon.

LECTURES

James R. Moore, author of The Post Darwinian Controversies, and Lecturer in History of Science and Technology at the Open University, will deliver a lecture "Engines of Empire, Energies of Extinction: Reflections on the Crisis of Faith" at Victoria College, University of Toronto, the evening of November 9, 1984. The lecture is open to the public.

REPORTS OF CONFERENCES

Michael Moore (Wilfrid Laurier) reports that the July 1984 centenary conference Gerard Manley Hopkins in Ireland, held in Dublin, featured participants from eleven countries. Canada and Ontario were represented by Lionel Adey (Victoria), John Ferns (McMaster), Joaquin Kuin (St. Michael's), Norman MacKenzie (Queen's), and Michael Moore (Wilfrid Laurier). The five-day program included many papers of interdisciplinary interest (the social, political, economic, educational, and religious background of Dublin in the eighties) as well as presentations on nearly every aspect of Hopkins's professional and literary work during his Irish years (1884-89). Tours, music, a dramatic performance (Peter Gale's "Hopkins!"), poetry readings (by Seamus Heaney and Philip Dacey), and other pleasures complemented one of the most intensive and congenial academic gatherings in years. Plans to publish the proceedings are almost finalized.

REPORT ON 1984 ONTARIO VICTORIAN STUDIES CONFERENCE

The 1984 Conference met at Glendon College, Toronto, on 7 April.

In the morning Professor U.C. Knoepfmacher presented a paper entitled "Gravity-in-Lightness: Lewis Carroll and George MacDonald on Growth and Death." In introducing this paper from his forthcoming book, Professor Knoepfmacher explained that he hopes to revise the usual view of children's and adult's literature as separate and polarized genres seen in terms respectively of lightness and gravity - a view leading many literary theorists to reject fiction for the "immature" reader. He observed that the Victorians would not have made such a clear-cut distinction, and that much Victorian "adult" literature contained the same elements of fantasy and fun which was more openly expressed in literature for children. At the same time, "children's books" expressed elements of grownup realism and gravity, and of adjustment to life and death. It was not only the "Alice" books which appealed to both children and adults.

The characteristic Victorian assimilation of realism and romance, imbued with a particularly intense sense of the double consciousness of adult and child, links the literature of Lewis Carroll and George MacDonald. The creative partnership between Carroll and MacDonald grew after they met in 1859.

Carroll became an "uncle" figure in the large MacDonald family, and through his close and warm interaction with the MacDonald children and their reception of his manuscripts, he grew in self-confidence and powers of expression. In the context of illness and death in the MacDonald family his fiction also took on an element of gravity in its ambivalence about the natural world of growth associated with childhood - in its sense of precariousness and limitations.

Similarly, MacDonald grew from his association with Carroll in his insight into the reliance of intuition upon an imagination rooted in the suspension of disbelief. In an "adult" novel such as MacDonald's Adela Cathcart the fairy tales became a means of reviving Adela's capacity for wonder in order to dispel her ennui. MacDonald found the blending of adult and child audiences more problematic than did Carroll, and turned to appeal to an audience primarily composed of children, as in At the Back of the North Wind (1871). His hope, however, to write for the "child-like" of all ages was strengthened and enriched by his association with Carroll. Both valued the ability of adults to be "child-like", as distinguished from "childish," and were concerned with the arrest of human development - with the adult who had lost the capacity for imagination and nostalgia for magic, and the child who craved the worldly knowledge and forbidden fruit of adulthood. In their writing, both exploited the sense of tension between the child's suspension of disbelief and the adult's sense of limits.

Professor Knoepfmacher suggested that Carroll expressed these themes in his photographs of the MacDonald family. During the lively

discussion which followed, several interpretations of the photographs provided were advanced by the Conference participants - reminding the Editor of MacDonald's advice that fairy tales at least, may be read with the happy understanding that while one person may read a particular meaning and truth into a tale, someone else may find another meaning and truth in the same story. Professor Knoepfmacher's delightful paper clearly stimulated not only the interest, but also the imaginative capacities of the participants.

The Conference then adjourned for lunch and to enjoy a Victorian Entertainment which presented Victorian attitudes to children particularly in song and verse.

In the afternoon Professor Albert Tucker (Glendon-York) spoke on "The Victorian Liberal State and the Problem of Military Power."

In introducing his paper, Professor Tucker pointed out that the scholars of British military institutions are often type-cast as "military historians," and that military institutions are seen as largely irrelevant in the context of social history. The very word "military" goes unmentioned in the indexes of major history texts. Yet we should not assume that the Victorians shared this indifference, and might well benefit as social historians by exploring their views on the military in the Victorian Liberal state.

Professor Tucker referred to Lord Brougham to exemplify early nineteenth-century suspicions of the military presence and antipathy to military display. He observed that by the mid-nineteenth century, however, Tennyson's poems lauded the Army, and that when the Poet Laureate was presented with an honorary degree it was two prominent military men, Sir George de Lacy Evans and Sir John Burgoyne, who escorted him in the ceremonial procession. It would seem, therefore, that the Army had become more visible and its place more secure. Its presence as a central institution seemed assumed and accepted.

Several historians have addressed the roots and results of this apparent attitudinal change to some extent. In a Liberal State at War, for example, Olive Anderson argued that the crisis of the Crimean War challenged traditional attitudes to such institutions as the Army, and promoted substantial interest in the military and its reform. However, Professor Tucker argued that the evidence does not support a picture emphasizing dramatic change in the Crimean era, since substantial change for the Army was not effected until the 1870's. Therefore, he asked why, in spite of the War and the growth of liberalism, military reform did not come about more quickly.

In answering this question he emphasized that the Victorian acceptance of the Army was embedded in the traditional valuation of the historic achievement of the supremacy of civil over military authority and of the constitutional guarantees of this supremacy. In this

context, for example, the slowness with which the Victorian professional ideal influenced the Army officership becomes more understandable. The persistent identification of the officer with the gentleman reflected a view of the amateur officer as an independent who could think and act for himself and who would provide a safeguard against formation of a military class. The local ties and moral qualities associated with the gentleman would also promote this desirable independence.

Similarly in this context the system of Purchase of commissions could be defended against would-be reformers by arguing that selection of officers on the basis of merit could lend itself to nepotism and political favouritism, whereas Purchase preserved a non-partisan Army and non-partisanship was essential in light of the historic usage of the Army in Civil War.

The persistent failure to introduce a conscript system on the continental model is also best seen in terms of the continuity of traditional attitudes within the Victorian Liberal state. Reliance on the voluntary system of recruitment means that the Army continued to be largely composed of an agricultural class of men who, it could be argued, were in need of the discipline of flogging to keep them in line, particularly in light of the semi-policing function of the Army in support of the local authorities. Therefore, in spite of the liberal attacks on such punishments, reforms in this and other areas of military life came only very gradually.

Professor Tucker also discussed the impulses forwarding reform, but argued persuasively that studies emphasizing the democratization of the military in the Crimean era fail to recognize that the continuity of attitudes more than balanced the pace of reform associated with liberalism. The War in itself did little to change these attitudes which, simultaneously, promoted acceptance of the Army as a safe institution in the Liberal State.

Having worked in this field, as a social historian of a military institution, the Editor found herself deeply fascinated by Professor Tucker's paper. The vigour and scope of the discussion which followed showed that she was not alone.

The Conference closed with the annual business meeting of the Victorian Studies Association and election of the current Executive, composed of Ann Robson as President; Trevor Levere as past-President; Patricia Morton, Newsletter Editor; Mary O'Connor, Secretary-Treasurer; and Albert Tucker, Richard Helmstadter, and Merrill Distad.

Article

THE TAMING OF LONDON'S COMMONS

by Neil Thornton (University of Adelaide, South Australia)

Let us not be satisfied with the liberation of Egypt, or the subjugation of Malta, but let us subdue Finchley Common; let us conquer Hounslow Heath; let us compel Epping Forest to submit to the yoke of improvement.¹

This bellicose cry from Sir John Sinclair in 1803 (during his eight year absence from the presidency of the Board of Agriculture) was part of a general, though not unanimous, chorus of condemnation of commons and wastes. In 1795 Sinclair had equated common lands with "that barbarous state of society, when men were strangers to any higher occupation than those of hunters and shepherds".² The hostile attitude of the Board of Agriculture itself was expressed in its county surveys. Peter Foot's report on Middlesex (1794) stated that waste lands were a "nuisance to the public" and should be enclosed because they offered little assistance to the poor. A subsequent survey of the same county by John Middleton (1798; second edition, 1807) disparaged commons as "the constant rendezvous of gipsies, strollers and other loose persons...the constant resort of footpads and highwaymen".³

Hounslow Heath and Finchley Common had particularly bad reputations arising from their strategic location along major approaches to London. Robert Southey's fictional Spanish tourist commented on Hounslow Heath at the turn of the century:

This heath is infamous for the robberies which are committed upon it, at all hours of the day and night, though travellers and stage-coaches are continually passing; the banditti are chiefly horsemen, who strike across with their booty into one of the roads which intersect it in every direction, and easily escape pursuit; an additional reason for enclosing the waste.⁴

Hounslow Heath and Finchley Common were vanquished by enclosures early in the nineteenth century but Epping Forest, despite a narrow escape, was rescued and thrown open to the public during the 1870s. It was one of the major victories for those fighting to preserve

commons. By the end of the following decade, the public had gained access to most metropolitan commons. The process varied according to circumstances in each locality. Commons were wastes of manors, owned by the lords of the manors but subject to various rights held by the free and copyhold tenants. If all parties agreed that a common should be dedicated to the public, the machinery was in place after the 1866 Metropolitan Commons Act to bring this about. If there were disagreements, generally expensive, frequently lengthy, and often bitter litigation was the necessary prelude to the public's securing untrammelled access. In most cases the Metropolitan Board of Works assumed responsibility for management, but local bodies of conservators were another device, and in a few other cases, notably Epping Forest, the City of London took control.

By the end of the nineteenth century these metropolitan commons bore little resemblance to the Hounslow Heath which shocked Southey's traveller. Most had been subdued, if not in the sense that Sinclair meant, at least to a level of respectability that met with middle-class approval. In the twentieth century many large urban parks have acquired reputations as sinister as those which clung to eighteenth century commons. The Victorians, however, viewed parks and open spaces as instruments of moral improvement. They were healthy alternatives to the pub and other debilitating pastimes. Furthermore, they were more amenable to supervision.⁵ Commons, on the other hand, had links with pre-industrial England where they had been, among other things, the village playgrounds. Their preservation was not a signal to resurrect the rowdier popular pastimes of the eighteenth century. One can, perhaps, stretch an analogy and suggest that commons were the natural-world equivalent to the working class: both had to be divested of unruly and threatening elements before winning acceptance from a middle-class, urban society. It is generally recognized that the working class became more integrated into British society during the second half of the nineteenth century, even if debate persists over the exact nature of that integration. Gareth Stedman Jones emphasizes the importance of entertainment in weakening the political ambitions of the working class while Peter Bailey believes that the working class appeared to conform to middle-class expectations as a strategy to secure concessions from their social superiors. Hugh Cunningham also comments on the perception by the working class that capitalism was not particularly vulnerable; as a consequence the goal became to obtain the best bargain within the system.⁶ Increased leisure time was one of the benefits sought, sometimes in preference to higher wages.⁷ Before commons could take pride of place as urban amenities, the behavior of those who used them, notably members of the working class, had to be controlled. As part of this process, topographical surgery was performed, removing some of the wilder features, and giving some commons an uncomfortable resemblance to parks. This paper examines attitudes towards open spaces, particularly in London, and the perceived use of these both for good and for ill.

The Board of Agriculture notwithstanding, there were, of course, voices that spoke out against enclosures. Indeed, Arthur Young, Secretary to the Board, and an early advocate of enclosures, concluded in 1801 that in "nineteen out of twenty Inclosure Bills the poor (had been) injured".⁸ William Cobbett was an implacable opponent of enclosures. As unattractive as he found Hounslow Heath, its enclosure was, in his eyes, a "fresh robbery of villages, hamlets, and farm labourers' buildings and abodes".⁹ Elsewhere he claimed that a "family reared by the side of a common or forest" was better off than a "family bred in the pestiferous stench of a town".¹⁰

The loss of commons as suppliers of fuel, food, building materials and pasture for the humble cottager was only part of the picture. Their loss as playgrounds affected a wider population including those whose formal links with the manor may have been weak. As early as 1801 Joseph Strutt sounded a warning as regards London:

The general decay of those manly and spirited exercises, which formerly were practised in the vicinity of the metropolis has not arisen from any want of inclination in the people, but from the want of places proper for the purpose: such as in time past had been allotted to them are now covered with buildings, or shut up by enclosures.¹¹

Three decades later a Middlesex magistrate described the changes that had taken place around London to the Select Committee on Public Walks (1833):

Wherever there was an open space to which people could have access they would play, but they are now driven from all...I have witnessed their dissatisfaction at being expelled from field to field, and being deprived of all play-places.¹²

In 1835, J.A. Roebuck published a comparison between the amusements of the aristocracy and those of the "people". The latter were having their commons and greens, on which for generations they had had "the right of playing cricket or bowls or of dancing" taken away.¹³ Three years later the comment was made that "football seems to have almost gone out of use with the inclosure of wastes and commons".¹⁴

The early Victorians took small steps to ameliorate the effects of enclosures on surrounding populations. An Act of 1836 (6 & 7 Will. IV, cap. 115) stipulated that commons within a certain distance of London should not be enclosed but, by itself, it could not provide adequate protection. In 1837 Joseph Hume persuaded the House of

Commons to pass a resolution calling for "open spaces sufficient for purposes of exercise and recreation for the neighbouring population" to be set aside when an enclosure took place. Two years later substantially the same motion was introduced by D.W. Harvey who noted that the previous measure had been "laxly looked after".¹⁵ The important General Enclosure Act of 1845 contained a section safeguarding village greens, and one providing for the allotment of a certain number of acres for recreation depending on the size of the population affected. The village greens could, however, be included in the recreation allotments. Allotments were also to be made for gardens for the labouring poor. (8 & 9 Vict., cap. 118, sec. 15, 30 and 31) In fact, as later statistics would demonstrate, these provisions too had been laxly looked after.¹⁶

The social evils of cities, exacerbated by shocks of the magnitude of the cholera epidemic of 1832, began to receive attention from middle-class reformers and politicians in the second quarter of the century. Included in the analysis was an assessment of the harm caused by a lack of open spaces.

One of the most alarming consequences was a resort to alcohol. R.A. Slaney, one of the earliest campaigners for public walks and recreation grounds, told the House of Commons in 1833: "At present the poor workman in the large manufacturing towns was actually forced into the public house, there being no other place for him to amuse himself in".¹⁷ Edwin Chadwick, testifying before the 1834 Select Committee on Drunkenness, called for "public parks and zoos, museums and theatres" to lure people away from the pub. He further stated:

I have heard very strong representations of the mischiefs of the stoppage of footpaths and ancient walks, as contributing, with the extensive and indiscriminate inclosure of commons which were play-grounds, to drive the labouring classes to the public house.¹⁸

That excess drinking was one consequence of the lack of facilities for exercise and recreation was self-evident to most observers. William Bardwell, in *Healthy Homes* (1854) lamented that the London workman, unlike his Parisian counterpart who had access to broad boulevards, had no places for recreation "but the tap-rooms, the penny theatre or the obscurer haunts of misery and crime". He called for legislation to preserve Lincoln's Inn Fields (an issue at the time), to widen thoroughfares, and to expand and preserve commons. Lincoln's Inn Fields were still an issue four years later when a correspondent to the *Times* urged the owners to open them to the poor during the summer:

The ginshops at present stand in the way of all who are labouring in this crowded neighbourhood for the physical, moral and spiritual improvement of the poor. Why not try some counter-attraction -if not this year, at least next summer?¹⁹

(The Fields were not opened to the public until 1894 although restricted access had been granted earlier.)

Charles Kingsley thought it would be more productive to take the town-dweller into the countryside than to create patches of country in the city. He proposed the erection of large blocks of workers' accommodation on new sites which would be surrounded by open fields. This reconstructed medieval idea would break the link between drunkenness and bad air and housing.²⁰

The connection continued to be made as pleas for more effective action by government gathered strength. An address to the 1867 meeting of the National Association for the Promotion of Social Sciences by the Medical Officer of Health for Paddington dressed up the language somewhat, but delivered the same message:

Men crave for bodily and mental relaxation and excitement, but, for want of beneficial means for gratifying this craving, are obliged to resort to artificial stimulants, hence the corrupting influence of drinking habits felt in every section of the community.

The speaker called for more public money to be spent on playgrounds, gymnasia, public baths and libraries.²¹

Strutt's depiction of the decline of "manly...exercises" touched a spot that would remain sensitive throughout the century. In 1824 Leigh Hunt was writing in the Examiner of the need for the English to set aside grounds for the "purpose of restoring the manly games of their ancestors". Many Young Englanders admired the hardiness of the pre-industrial peasant, and Lord John Manners, for one, argued in A Plea for National Holy-Days (1842) that a restoration of traditional recreations was desirable to arrest the physical deterioration of the lower classes.²²

A middle-class interpretation of this sentiment is provided in an article in the local Hackney paper which presents an idealized account of the use of a common. Hackney Downs is described as a "village green" in the city. A summer's day begins with early risers taking their morning constitucionals before breakfast. They are followed later in the morning by children and their nurses who, being women "must talk". Around noon juvenile cricketers appear to play their "games of manliness" followed by grown men and their cricket clubs. On Saturdays, the whole Downs is filled with cricketers:

O cricket! In every one of thy phases we must apostrophize thee. Within thy spheres no vice can be engendered, and not even gambling finds a place...Ennobling cricket; England may well be proud of thee.²³

One wonders how often such harmonious scenes were played out. Perhaps the nurses were driven off by errant cricket balls. Certainly the Metropolitan Board of Works had to devise rules to ensure that games were played away from footpaths. In 1878, six years after the above account had been penned, the site was home to less morally uplifting scenes judging from the correspondent who complained that it was

disgraceful that gentlemen cannot go during the evening after dusk near the Downs without being pestered by women and also that ladies cannot walk without being spoken to and insulted by filthy fellows.²⁴

The creation of parks rather than the preservation of commons was the initial response to the pressure for more open spaces. Northern industrial cities, where the need was most acute, led the way. The design of the park at Birkenhead, opened in 1847, was the first to give explicit recognition to the use of parks as places for playing games. This pattern continued in Manchester and elsewhere.²⁵ Edwin Chadwick had praised London's parks as providing opportunities for recreation which were superior to "pleasures that (were) expensive, demoralizing, and injurious to the health".²⁶ Despite their considerable acreage, the parks in London were concentrated in the West End leaving some of the most crowded areas of the region quite destitute of open spaces.

The two major creations in London during the early Victorian period were Victoria and Battersea Parks. (Regent's Park was opened to the public in the early 1840s, but it had not been designed as a public park. Nash, however, had redesigned St. James's Park in 1828 as a public park, perhaps the first in England.²⁷) The Bill authorizing Victoria Park passed in 1842; work began in 1844, and the park opened, unfinished, in 1845. That some 20,000 people visited the uncompleted park on one day in 1846 testifies to the hunger for open spaces in the east end.²⁸ Parliamentary approval for Battersea Park was given in 1846 but work did not get underway until 1854. The siting of Victoria Park had rid the area of a place of disrepute, Bonner's Field.²⁹ Similarly, Battersea Park provided a welcomed transformation of Battersea Fields which the Times recalled in 1857 were on their way to becoming the "future moral and physical plague spot of the metropolis".³⁰ Walter Besant "shivered" when he remembered the Fields from his youth: they were "low, flat, damp, and...treeless...at no time of the year would the Battersea Fields look anything but dreary".³¹ Some of the less

desirable characters drifted to nearby open spaces such as Kennington Comon (made into a park in 1852) and Clapham Common.

Observers expressed approval of the moral metamorphosis wrought by Victoria Park:

Many a man whom I was accustomed to see passing the Sunday in utter idleness, smoking at his door in his shirt sleeves, unwashed and unshaven, now dresses himself as neatly and cleanly as he is able, and with his wife or children is seen walking in the park on the Sunday evening.³²

Formerly the whole neighbourhood was terrified in the early part of every week by weavers and others hunting bullocks through the streets, but now that a park has been made for them and rational amusements provided they are much altered for the better.³³

Later in the century Battersea Park was dubbed the "great Sunday lounge of various subdivisions in the community, from the head clerk down to the junior porter".³⁴

H.J. Dyos remarked that Victorian parks were "above all expressions of good manners".³⁵ There were sceptics, however, who doubted whether the lower classes would express good manners once inside the parks. Others were more optimistic. In 1833 Slaney expected that public walks would have a beneficial influence by promoting inter-class contact:

A man walking out with his family among his neighbours of different ranks, will naturally be desirous to be properly clothed and that his wife should be also; but this desire duly directed and controlled, is found by experience to be of the most powerful effect in promoting Civilisation and exciting industry.³⁶

George Godwin, reporting on the experimental opening of the Temple gardens declared that it was

worthy of notice that the most orderly conduct has been observed, and no damage done, although many children have been admitted, to either grass or flowers. In the weekdays...all persons decently dressed, with or without children are admitted, and none have complained of noise or inconvenience.

Godwin acknowledged, however, that children of the very poor probably stayed away from parks because the "ill-clad (were) often looked at with suspicion".³⁷

Not that the broad open lawns could be expected to instil model behavior on their own. The police were a useful adjunct here, as they were an increasing presence in many facets of working-class life.³⁸ Letters to the Times complaining of disorderly or criminal behavior on the parks of London often cited "a few extra policemen" as the required remedy.³⁹

Because they were private property, commons presented less straightforward dilemmas for those wishing to control offensive activity. The history of the preservation of commons is often told as the story of concerned middle-class activists rescuing these lands from greedy landlords, heartless builders and rapacious railway-men for the benefit of the poor. While there were conflicts between commoners and lords of the manors which resembled this pattern, an equally strong incentive was to purify physically and morally declining open spaces and turn them into (or retain them as) pleasant environments which enhanced the neighbourhood and boosted property values. Even after a common was placed under the authority of the Metropolitan Board of Works, inhabitants continued to push for greater surveillance or for more extensive alterations.

In some cases local committees had formed to care for their common long before any hint of schemes for turning them over to local authorities had arisen. The wealthy inhabitants of Clapham organized in the mid-eighteenth century and carried out a number of improvements. Nonetheless nuisances such as fairs continued to offend.⁴⁰ In 1836 their successors negotiated leases for the manorial rights of the two lords of the manor and managed the common until the Metropolitan Board assumed control in 1877. The lengthy transfer spurred impatient demands that something be done about the "objectionable practices" such as donkey racing and obscene language which were injurious to the "morals of the young" and annoying to the "respectable inhabitants".⁴¹ Similarly, on much smaller Peckham Rye Common a committee leased and managed the common, supported by contributions (approximately £100 a year) from the area. They hoped that the Metropolitan Board would be able to provide stronger supervision, and instanced their inability to prevent a fair on the common as proof of their relative impotence.⁴²

Complaints about nuisances on Wimbledon Common led the lord of the manor, Earl Spencer, to propose a scheme by which 700 of its 1000 acres would be enclosed to form a park while the remaining acres would be sold to provide money to compensate the commoners for their rights. But opposition arose from the outset among those who resented any suggestion of a park or fencing, and who doubted whether the nuisances were as severe as originally suggested.⁴³ The issue went to Parliament and was the spur behind the 1866 Metropolitan Commons Act.

Detractions of various sorts were also to be found on Wandsworth Common; among them were prisoners released from Wandsworth Jail and untended gravel pits which filled with water. A witness before the Select Committee on Metropolitan Open Spaces (1865) described how he had found the body of a man who had drowned in such a pit.⁴⁴

Gypsies seem to have been almost universally disliked and mistrusted, and their removal from a common was, for many, a prerequisite to that common becoming respectable. The Wandsworth District Board of Works received complaints about their presence on Tooting Beck Common in the mid-1860s, but having limited powers, could only request the police and lord of the manor to remove them. Their dispersal one year was no guarantee that they would stay away the next.⁴⁵ One witness before the Select Committee admitted that he liked gypsies and did not find them a nuisance. This was probably a minority view. Earl Spencer's steward told the same Committee: "It is generally supposed to be the normal state of a gipsy to make a nuisance of himself".⁴⁶ The keeper employed by the Metropolitan Board on Tooting Beck reported that he had had "some trouble and strong opposition" from the gipsy community there. Another resident wrote that the gypsies "worry people for water, rob their gardens and destroy the Common".⁴⁷ Gypsies appeared on many of the metropolitan commons and usually faced the same type of hostility. In Hackney they were accused of running a cock-shy game using two groups such that one could always warn the other of the approach of a keeper. The Board authorized their keeper to patrol in street clothes.⁴⁸ The Times had recognized that if any group could establish a right to a common based on long usage, it would be the gypsies, but, overall people were not prepared to extend sympathy to them.⁴⁹

As often as not it was elements in the local population and not itinerants who incited middle-class indignation. The Fulham Board of Works, hopeful that the 1865 Parliamentary Committee would produce results, made a blanket condemnation of the "disgraceful purposes to which the Commons and open spaces of the Manor of Fulham are subjected".⁵⁰ A Blackheath deputation waited upon the Metropolitan Board of Works in 1869 with a claim that the Heath was "rapidly being destroyed by the number of costermongers and others who almost constantly took possession of it". Furthermore "there was no adequate police control over the rough characters...whose language was of the most foul and disgusting character".⁵¹

Many residents of Shepherd's Bush had wanted their common to be converted into a proper park (contrary to the sentiments in most places) and continued to lobby the Board to adopt this suggestion after the Board acquired the Common in 1871. Despite the by-laws which were introduced proscribing a great variety of activity, it was believed that a park would be more decorous. One resident wrote that the situation was so bad that "houses fronting the Common have been obliged to keep the blinds down".⁵² Ten residents appended

their signatures to the following complaint which exemplifies the increasing discomfort of rustic survivals in the town:

We the undersigned...beg to lay before you the following facts:- During the week Donkeys of both sexes--varying in number from 12 to 16 assemble...for the purpose of grazing and for hire; during the day acts of a truly disgusting character are committed by these animals under our windows in sight of our wives and daughters --We beg also to state that this is a great public thoroughfare--...Ladies in carriages, Mothers accompanied by their daughters--ladies, schools, nursery maids--all are to be seen in vast numbers...within a few feet of where these truly disgusting exhibitions occur.⁵³

These letters were more than recitals by offended moralists. As mentioned, property values were perceived to be at risk if commons were allowed to get out of hand. A businessman at Shepherd's Bush, writing five years after the above letter, describes the type of behavior--committed by people this time--that his class disliked:

I am required by owners and tenants of houses in Park Villas, Shepherd's Bush Green to draw your attention to the abuse of the use of the portion of the Common recently re-opened to the public, the abuse consisting in the accumulation of paper lying about, the congregation of dirty unshod children, men bringing cans of beer on to the Green and there drinking it and lying about sprawling in a state of more than semi-drunkenness. Girls turning heels up over the railings of the common and exposing their persons thereby indecently, and tramps actually lousing themselves on the seats.

As I write there are now men lying about full length asleep, and dirty ragged boys with scarcely an article of clothing kicking their heels up within 13 yards of the drawing room windows of houses occupied by tenants paying £75 per annum rental. These are sights in no way calculated to keep the place as a resort for respectable people or to save property in the immediate neighbourhood from the natural result of such sights: namely to drive away a good tenantry.⁵⁴

Another black spot was London Fields, Hackney. A letter to the local newspaper in 1868 declared that the disgraceful scenes "were enough

to make any one believe they were living amongst Goths and Vandals, rather than in the midst of a civilized community".⁵⁵ After the Metropolitan Board had undertaken extensive improvements, a resident of one of the large houses warned that they would not succeed "when hundreds of dirty children are allowed...to infest the Fields, to climb the trees and walk on the palings...the noise and the worry are horrible".⁵⁶

Commons around London had long been resorted to for the hiring of ponies and donkeys,⁵⁷ while wealthier citizens had used them as riding and grazing grounds for their own horses. The keeper at Tooting reported that the common was a "favourite resort of the Gentry for their morning and evening rides".⁵⁸ Riding was, however, destructive of the surface and the first instinct of the Metropolitan Board was to ban it completely or to restrict it to designated areas (often specially constructed rides). At Tooting the equestrians successfully fought this policy and won the right to ride over the entire surface until 1884.⁵⁹ The intrusion of horse-less middle-class residents doomed the policy. In nearby Clapham, the Board's decision in 1880 not to extend facilities for equestrians was described as welcome news to "thousands".⁶⁰

Respectable opinion on horse riding may have divided between those who owned horses and those who did not, but it was united in disapproval of donkey and pony riding by their social inferiors. Thirty-four residents of Blackheath signed a petition to the Metropolitan Board against a new donkey stand:

Even from our very houses we and our families will be compelled to witness and listen to that disgraceful conduct, and frightful language, which appear to be inseparable from the pursuit of Donkey driving...An ever increasing crowd of the lowest characters will be constantly assembled in the neighbourhood of the Stand, and that which has hitherto been a comparatively quiet part of the Heath will become such a scene of riot and confusion, that we foresee that many of the residents will be compelled to leave their houses, and that a serious depreciation in the value of property must inevitably ensue.⁶¹

At Hampstead, over 400 people signed a petition instigated by the vicar against the practice of donkey hiring on Sundays. They objected to the employment of men and boys on the Sabbath, the profanity that accompanied the "cruel beating" of the animals, and the "disgusting scenes" caused by "females falling off the donkeys".⁶²

To curtail abuses, the Board adopted a system of licencing those who let animals for hire on the commons under its control. The RSPCA

credited the innovation with reducing the level of cruelty and it had the further benefit of establishing uniform charges.⁶³

A similar remedy was applied to laundresses on Hampstead Heath and Blackheath. Opposition on this issue was bifurcated as the nuisance value had to be weighed against the need for clothes to be dried. A correspondent might write to the Times complaining that the laundresses had appropriated some of the prettiest sections of Hampstead Heath,⁶⁴ but at Blackheath the laundresses secured many supporters. Their main detractors were tradespeople worried about the effect of laundry drying across from their shops. They perhaps overstated their case by raising the spectre of the laundresses "asserting their rights" and excluding the public from parts of the heath. By issuing annual licences to those who could demonstrate that they had used the heaths for their trade, and by refusing to grant the privilege to new laundresses, the Board allowed attrition to solve the problem. When the Board ceased its operations in 1888-89 there were seven laundresses remaining on Hampstead Heath (14 licences had been issued in 1877) and three on Blackheath (13 had been granted in 1874).⁶⁵

Appeals for stricter controls over the commons both in the sense of regulating behavior and tending the surface never completely died. Nonetheless the standard of conduct hardly represented a serious crisis. The Board's keepers seem to have been effective despite occasional outbreaks of petty corruption among their ranks. They were instructed to relax the by-laws on Bank Holidays but the result was the opposite of chaos. Reports by the keepers invariably describe the large crowds as well-behaved with only minor infractions of the rules (often gambling). On the other hand these activities remained somewhat short of the standard hoped for by the promoters of rational recreation. But in 1878 W.S. Jevons looked sympathetically on the poor at play:

Witness the Bank Holiday on Hampstead Heath,
where the best fun of the young men and women
consists in squirting at each other with those
detestable metal pipes which some base genius
has invented.

He felt that they had been ill-served by a society that had suppressed popular amusements. The people had forgotten how to amuse themselves and consequently acted with "senseless vulgarity" when let loose in the fresh air.⁶⁶ By the last decades of the nineteenth century the working class had not become poorer clones of the middle-class but neither were they a potential source of revolution.

Though mindful of the distinction between commons and parks, the Metropolitan Board of Works sowed grass, planted trees, and built paths on their new acquisitions. Furze and gorse were thinned to reduce the risk of fire, or, as at Clapham, to prevent nuisances

arising from the want of closets and urinals".⁶⁷ Commons gained an affinity with parks more binding than that which bound the working and middle classes but the differences remained. A lecture by a Clapham antiquary in 1885 captures the sense of what was jettisoned when the commons were "subdued" and what survived. He is describing Clapham Common:

The goose is gone, and the gorse is going to-- the turf is worn away, and looks brown and thread bare; yet it is a noble expanse, rescued from the invading bricks and mortar which surround it.

The ditches are filled up, and their line can no longer be traced, although it once formed frontiers of contending parishes. The ponds are circumscribed with posts and rails. The many notice-boards, threatening pains and penalties against offenders, somewhat repress the free spirit of the place; but the life-giving air cannot be confined, as it blows fresh and free it fills the lungs of many youthful athletes, who gain new life in their healthy pastime.⁶⁸

Neil Thornton
University of Adelaide
South Australia

Notes

1. Quoted by Michael Robbins, Middlesex (London: Collins, 1953), p. 7.
2. Quoted by J.L. Hammond and Barbara Hammond, The Village Labourer (London: Longman, 1978; orig. publ. 1911), pp.8-9.
3. Peter Foot, General View of the Agriculture of the County of Middlesex with Observations on their Improvement (London: John Nichols, 1794), pp. 30, 86; Robbins, pp. 124-25.
4. Robert Southey, Letters from England (London: The Cresset Press, 1951; orig. publ. 1807), pp. 44-45.
5. M.J. Daunton, House and Home in the Victorian City (London: Edward Arnold, 1983), p. 14.
6. Gareth Stedman Jones, "Working-class Culture and Working-class Politics in London, 1870-1900; Notes on the Remaking of a Working Class", Journal of Social History, 7 (1974), pp. 460-508; Peter Bailey, Leisure and Class in Victorian England (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978), pp. 178-80; Hugh Cunningham, Leisure in the Industrial Revolution, c.1780-c. 1880 (London: Croom Helm, 1980), pp. 140, 185-87.
7. John Myerscough, "The Recent History of the use of Leisure Time", in Ian Appleton (ed.), Leisure Research and Policy (Edinburgh and London: Scottish Academic Press, 1975), pp. 6-9.
8. Hammonds, p. 46.
9. William Cobbett, Rural Rides, 1821-32, Pitt Cobbett (ed.), (London: Reeves and Turner, 1885), Vol. I, p. 161.
10. Alice Chandler, A Dream of Order: The Medieval Ideal in Nineteenth Century English Literature (Lincoln: The University of Nebraska Press, 1970), p. 65.
11. Quoted by Cunningham, p. 81.
12. Robert W. Malcolmson, Popular Recreations in English Society, 1700-1850 (Cambridge University Press, 1973), p. 110.
13. J.A. Roebuck, "On the Amusements of the Aristocracy and of the People"., in Pamphlets for the People (London, 1835), pp.1-15.
14. James Walvin, Leisure and Society, 1830-1950 (London: Longman, 1978), p. 84.

15. 3 Hansard 37: 162-64, H.C., 9 March 1837;
3 Hansard 47: 470, H.C., 23 April 1839 (Quoted by Cunningham,
p. 93.
16. Times, 28 July 1870; 21 April 1876.
17. Quoted by Malcolmson, p. 171.
18. George F. Chadwick, The Park and the Town (London: The
Architectural Press, 1966), p. 51; Cunningham, p. 81.
19. William Bardwell, Healthy Homes (London, 1854), pp. 45-50; The
Times, 8 July 1858.
20. Charles Kingsley, "Great Cities and Their Influence for Good and
Evil", lecture delivered 5 Oct. 1857 in Sanitary and Social
Lectures and Essays (London: Macmillan and Company, 1880), pp.
194-95, 201, 215-16.
21. William Hardwicke, "Recreations of the Working Classes",
Transactions of the National Association for the Promotion of
Social Science (1867), pp. 472-73.
22. Examiner, 12 September 1824, p. 578; Chandler, pp. 158, 162-63.
23. Hackney and Kingsland Gazette, 24 July 1872.
24. Hackney and Kingsland Gazette, 27 March 1878.
25. Allan J. Patmore, Land and Leisure in England and Wales (Newton
Abbot: David and Charles, 1970), p. 34; Cunningham, p. 95.
26. Edwin Chadwick, Report on the sanitary Condition of the Labouring
Population of Great Britain (1842), M.W. Flinn (ed.), (Edinburgh
University Press, 1965), p. 336.
27. Patmore, p. 33.
28. G.F. Chadwick, The Park and the Town pp. 112, 121-22.
29. Albert Fein, "Victoria Park: Its Origins and History", East
London Papers, 5, 2 (1962), p. 83.
30. Times, 26 December 1857.
31. Walter Besant, South London (London: Chjatto and Windus, 1899),
p. 303.
32. Times, 7 September 1847.
33. Times, 11 September 1851.

34. T.H.S. Escott, England: Its People, Polity and Pursuits, new and revised edition (London: Chapman and Hall, 1885), p. 540.
35. H.J. Dyos, Exploring the Urgan Past, David Cannadine and David Reeder (eds.), (Cambridge University Press, 1982), p. 61. (Orig. publ. in 1969 as "Some Historical Reflections on the Quality of Urban Life".)
36. Quoted by Bailey, p. 41.
37. George Godwin, Town Swamps and Social Bridges (Leicester University Press, 1972; orig. publ. 1859), pp. 92-93.
38. Jennifer Davis, "A Poor Man's System of Justice: The London Police Courts in the Second Half of the Nineteenth Century", Historical Journal, 27 (1984), p. 317;
M.J. Daunton, "Public Place and Private Space. The Victorian City and the Working-class Household", in Derek Fraser and Anthony Sutcliffe (eds.), The Pursuit of Urban History (London: Edward Arnold, 1983), pp. 222-23.
39. Times, 7 August 1847; 18 February 1851; 15 March 1855 and elsewhere.
40. J.M.H. Burgess, The Chronicles of Clapham (London: The Ramsden Press, 1929), pp. 29-30, 34.
41. Times, 20 May 1876.
42. Parl. Papers, Second Report from the Select Committee on Open Spaces (Metropolis), p. 446, H.C., 1865 (355), VIII, qq. 3229-36.
43. "Statement and Report of the Acting Committee, appointed at the suggestion of Earl Spencer, to consider the proposed Scheme", Further Papers and Proceedings relating to the Proposed Enclosure of Wimbledon Common (12 January 1865), pp. 10-12 (British Library 10347. ee. 35/4)
44. Select Committee on Open Spaces, p. 398, q. 1918; p. 397, q. 1893.
45. Battersea Local History Library, Wandsworth District Board of Works, Minutes, 29 June 1864; 5 June 1867; 19 June 1867; 6 May 1868.
46. Select Committee on Open Spaces, p. 398, q. 1918; p. 538, q. 5814.
47. Greater London Record Office. Metropolitan Board of Works. Parks, Commons, and Open Spaces Committee, Minutes (hereafter MBW), 983, 17 December 1873, pp. 428-30.

48. MBW 987, 16 May 1877, pp. 691-92.
49. Times, 11 April 1865.
50. Hammersmith Archives, FBW/4, para. 11, 5 April 1865.
51. Times, 11 April 1869.
52. MBW 982, 21 May 1873, pp. 439-42.
53. MBW 1003 (Papers), 18 June 1873.
54. MBW 1008 (Papers), 26 July 1878.
55. Hackney and Kingsland Gazette, 14 August 1869.
56. MBW 983, 17 December 1873, pp. 428-30.
57. Walter Besant, Fifty Years Ago, Revised edition (London: Chatto and Windus, 1892), pp. 194-95.
58. MBW 983, 17 December 1873, pp. 428-30.
59. MBW 985, 16 December 1874, p. 173; 10 February 1875, pp. 274-75; MBW 995, 5 November 1884, pp. 81-83; 3 December 1884, pp. 126-27.
60. Times, 10 May 1880.
61. MBW 1002 (Papers), 29 May 1872.
62. MBW 980, 14 February 1872, pp. 376-79.
63. Times, 14 April 1873;
MBW 982, 7 May 1873, pp. 365-67.
64. Times, 24 May 1872.
65. MBW 1004 (Papers), 25 February 1874; MBW 987, 2 May 1877, pp. 661-63; MBW 998, 6 February 1889, pp. 664-65; MBW 983, 14 January 1874, pp. 519-20; MBW 997, 8 February 1888, p. 562.
66. W.S. Jevons, "Amusements of the People", in Methods of Social Reform (London: Macmillan and Company, 1883), p. 3.
67. MBW 990, 30 April 1879, pp. 36-46.
68. J.W. Grover, Old Clapham (London: A Bachhoffner, 1887), p. 8.

Thomas Carlyle: A Biography. By Fred Kaplan. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1983. pp. 614.

It is always amazing to me that anyone voluntarily chooses to focus on a Victorian author as prolific and long-lived as Thomas Carlyle: the sheer volume of primary materials alone to be at least skimmed through if not mastered would intimidate even the seasoned scholar. Consequently, this latest biography of Carlyle by Fred Kaplan seems to be a major scholarly achievement. Unlike the monumental four-volume biography completed in 1884 by James Anthony Froude, so long considered the standard one, Kaplan's Thomas Carlyle is much more even handed and objective. Although Kaplan, for example, like Froude provides considerable evidence of Carlyle's egotism and spleen, he also illustrates such positive aspects of Carlyle's personality as his passionate loyalty to others and his superb sense of irony. Yet, unlike Froude's rival biographer D.A. Wilson who produced what G.B. Tennyson describes as "the grand compendium of information about Carlyle" in six volumes "to prove that Carlyle could do no wrong," Kaplan synthesizes his material and presents it in a scrupulously scholarly and logical way.¹ His sources are meticulously annotated; his arrangement of the main facts of Carlyle's life is sensible and clear; and, although his workman-like prose generally lacks the passion and rhetorical colour of Carlyle's detractors or champions, it often has a lucid objectivity that builds an image through the painstaking accretion of fact and detail.

According to his Preface, Kaplan hoped, in emulation of Carlyle himself, to "take risks, both in the shaping and in the expression of his subject's life" and "to put (Carlyle's) life and his assumptions in modern perspective" (p. 11). Yet fortunately, whatever "risks" he may have taken, Kaplan makes Carlyle's life remarkably intelligible to modern readers, without distorting it to the degree that Carlyle's vision of himself distorted that of his subjects. Kaplan piles up the evidence with remarkably little rhetorical coloration and, for the most part, lets the reader draw his own conclusions. Given the violent controversy that has surrounded Carlyle's life, particularly concerning his relationship with his wife, Kaplan seems to have chosen the wisest tactic and handles it quite adroitly. In fact, in the first eight chapters, dealing with the relatively uncontroversial first half of Carlyle's life, the danger is that we will be overwhelmed by the sheer mass of details before we can begin to see any shape to them at all.

If the biography is best where Kaplan lets the facts speak for themselves, it is worst where he self-consciously tries to impart a distinctively modern rhetorical flavour to his prose. Indeed, perhaps the book's major shortcoming is its lack of what might be called stylistic decorum. He occasionally uses such Americanisms as "to author" or "to fantasy" and anachronistic terms such as "taxicab"

for which David Daiches takes him to task in his otherwise laudatory review in the Carlyle Newsletter, No. 5. In addition, Kaplan sometimes relies on a fashionable psychological jargon that belies the superficial methodology behind it and obscures rather than clarifies Carlyle's motivations. Here, for instance, he enlarges on Carlyle's own rather abstract self-assessment:

"Till not very long ago," he wrote to James Johnston, "I imagined my whole duty to consist in thinking and enduring. It now appears that I ought not only to suffer but to act." It seemed to him that the suffering caused by the interaction between personal confusion and cultural imperatives could be decreased by some commitment to and immersion in constructive work--an idea that had antecedents in Classical and Christian culture and that was expressed with special force in the rigorous work imperatives of the Calvinistic world from which Carlyle had emerged. (p. 55)

Carlyle's own statement seems much clearer and more forceful to me than the ostensibly explanatory jargon of "interaction... imperatives...commitment" that follows. And "commitment" in particular is a vogue word to which Kaplan indeed seems overly committed: "his virtues necessitated her commitment to him" (p. 75); "impressed by his...Christian commitment...they made a generous offer" (p. 78).

At times, too, when Kaplan strives to add colour to the narrative, the attempt is strained: "He (Carlyle) dodged noisy locations and avaricious bedbugs" (p. 55); "Only by kissing the ghosts on their shadowy lips could he feel the pressure of his own reality" (p. 268). Such purple patches might not be amiss in Carlyle's own baroque prose; in Kaplan's more workaday style they are slightly embarrassing.

A more substantive error into which Kaplan occasionally falls is to automatically assume something was as stated because Carlyle himself said so. Kaplan makes clear in his Preface that this is not to be primarily a literary-critical biography, and this lack of a more rigorously analytical approach to whatever Carlyle wrote can be misleading. When Kaplan describes Carlyle's writing of the Reminiscences, for example, he appears to accept Carlyle's statement that the biographical anecdotes about Jane Welsh Carlyle noted down by Geraldine Jewsbury were inaccurate in their details "though the 'recognition of the character is generally true and faithful.'" Kaplan concludes:

The subject (of Jane's early life), distorted in its details, rose before him almost as if she (Jane) were still alive; and precisely because of its insufficiency as a portrait Geraldine's account demanded correction and elaboration. (p. 478)

In fact, in the vivid concreteness of their detail--Geraldine had originally taken down the "stories" from Jane herself--, the anecdotes present a wife quite different from the sainted paragon created by Carlyle in his essay. If anything, they irritated him precisely because of their candour about her tough-mindedness and the "trial" and "strain" of her married life.

Another instance of Kaplan's willingness to accept things at face value occurs earlier in his description of The Life of John Sterling, admittedly, although one of Carlyle's most popular works in its day, one of those least subjected to any modern critical analysis. Like many of the contemporary reviewers, still reeling from the shocking violence of the Latter-Day Pamphlets, Kaplan claims that the biography is "muted and quite favorable" to its subject and praises the "beneficent warmth" of "the book as a whole." Although he quotes Carlyle's own description of it as "'a light portrait...of an unimportant but very beautiful, pathetic and rather significant, human life in our century'," he fails to take into account the weight of the adjectives "'unimportant'" and "'pathetic'" that more accurately reflect the brilliantly ruthless undercutting of Sterling's abilities and accomplishments that occurs throughout that volume (p. 373). How many attempts have there been since Carlyle's "beneficent" hatchet job in 1851 to re-evaluate the much wittier, more polished and incisive Sterling's letters or works? And how many critics have managed to free themselves of Carlyle's devastating judgment on his much beloved contemporary?

Fortunately, in assessing Carlyle's actual relations with his contemporaries, Kaplan is much less superficial. Moreover, the book is refreshingly free of an overriding desire to protect the great man or the tender sensibilities of its gentle readers. Kaplan's accounts, for example, of Carlyle's extraordinary liaison with Lady Harriet Ashburton or his appalling treatment of Henry Larkin, a young disciple and hard-working assistant, are wonderfully full and vivid without being either prurient or sensational. In fact, as far as I can recall, many of the details and quotations here do not appear in any of the other biographies I have read.

At the same time, although adequate attention is paid to Jane Welsh, the central focus is always Carlyle himself. Readers of the Carlyles' joint correspondence or the Hansons' biography of Jane, Necessary Evil, may miss the brilliant wit of her acerbic and imaginative letters. Quotations here mainly serve to illuminate some aspect of Carlyle or his relations with her. Yet because he documents the complexity of Carlyle's development and personality so thoroughly, Kaplan does make much about Jane clear: Carlyle's all-pervasive obsession with his work, for example, his complete devotion to his mother, his tormented personality and his explosive temperament may well have undermined the health, determination and self-confidence of a sturdier and less sensitive person than Jane, no matter how devoted. At his best, what Kaplan accomplishes is to demonstrate that Jane's life is clearly more than the cautionary tale of a wife who sacrifices all for her husband's genius and that Carlyle's portrait is infinitely more than the sum of its warts. By

avoiding the pitfalls of partisanship and controversy undermining earlier works as well as much of the too easy psychologizing, narrowness or superficiality marring some more recent efforts, Kaplan has produced a remarkably even handed and scholarly biography that, despite its stylistic infelicities, may well finally supersede Froude's as the standard life of Carlyle.

NOTES

¹G.B. Tennyson, "The Carlyles," in D.J. DeLaura, ed., Victorian Prose: A Guide to Research (New York: Modern Language Association, 1973), p. 46.

Anne M. Skabarnicki,
English and Philosophy,
Royal Military College

Robert Skidelsky, John Maynard Keynes: Hope Betrayed 1883 - 1920, London: Macmillan, 1983. I-XVIII' 1-447.

This volume is of major intellectual significance to all specialists in late Victorian, Edwardian and Great War studies. In what promises to be the most complete and candid biography of Keynes yet written, Skidelsky provides historians of ideas and economics, as well as devotees of Bloomsbury, with provocative theses rendered all the more absorbing by the clarity of his writing and the use of new material. Indeed, this volume will likely join Skidelsky's earlier work on the Second Labour Government as required reading both for upper level undergraduate and graduate students in Modern British Studies.

Dr. Skidelsky's study largely replaces Sir Roy Harrod's official life, published in 1951. Harrod attempted to sanctify Keynes, not only as the central economic thinker of our time, but also as a man of probity and compassion. Given his Victorian proclivity to reveal only the best in Keynes' thought, and particularly in his character, and constrained by Keynes' hovering relatives and friends, Harrod's discreet approach is understandable. Moreover, because of the precarious economic relationship Britain had at the time with a McCartheyite America, Harrod may have been more than personally reluctant to reveal Keynes' profligate homosexual behaviour. After all, Keynes had been the major British economist to negotiate with America in the immediate post-World War II period over the difficulties Atlee's Government faced regarding obligations under Lend-Lease and the need for an American loan.

Skidelsky has corrected many of Harrod's omissions by a very frank exposition of the strengths and weaknesses of Keynes' character, his development at Eton, his complex relationships within the world of the Apostles at Cambridge, and Bloomsbury in London. What we are not given in this volume is a full analysis of Keynes' development as an economist. Certainly Skidelsky's conclusion is largely true: "Keynes' capacity for original economic thought had to be evoked by some practical problems...and...it made little sense for him to invest much intellectual effort in economics before 1914; and the results showed it" (p. 229). Harrod's work however, indicates that Keynes worked harder at economic questions in this period than Skidelsky credits. Keynes' theoretical efforts are evident at the India Office from 1908 to 1911, as Editor of the Economic Journal from 1911 on, and in his Political Economy Club at Cambridge as a Fellow of King's College (see Harrod, pp.144-70, and D.E. Moggridge's John Maynard Keynes, 1976, in the Penguin Modern Masters series, pp. 44-51). Nevertheless, aside from this minor caveat Skidelsky is quite right to state that Keynes devoted most of his intellectual energy before 1914 to work on the Theory of Probability.

What Skidelsky has achieved in masterly fashion is a biography in which the intellectual context is provided for revealing and provocative insights into Keynes' Nonconformist family background. There are fresh observations on the famous concept of the "Victorian Compromise" which was created to give emotional and intellectual solace and stability to those deprived of the security of traditional Christianity by Darwin and others. Skidelsky demonstrates just how the philosophical limitations in the intuitionist/utilitarian marriage constructed by Henry Sidgwick (building upon John Stuart Mill), left the way open for demolition of the attempted union. In the area of social doctrine Alfred Marshall took the lead, while G.E. Moore was the prophet of a "reorganization of personal life" (p.50). The latter, as we all know, provided the gospel for Keynes and the rest of Bloomsbury. In his discussion, Skidelsky deepens Noel Annan's justly celebrated conception of the "intellectual aristocracy" of late Victorian Britain by going beyond the study of successive family alliances. Skidelsky claims that the entry of Nonconformists and women into the ancient universities prevented a struggle between rival elites. Just how these social, legal and intellectual developments effected the evolution of the uniquely British tradition of Dissent is followed in the rest of the book through discussion of Keynes and Bloomsbury as a particular aspect of that tradition.

In his study of Cambridge civilization in the 1890's and of the Edwardian period generally, Skidelsky continues to be rewarding. He is illuminating in his discussion of Marshall's moral earnestness and early form of evolutionary ethics predicated on a better world created by enlightened business men. This concept of progress links Marshall to the New Liberals, particularly J.A. Hobson and Leonard Hobhouse, both of whom went far beyond him in their collectivism. This discussion of the Victorian Compromise is critical in helping to understand why Moore's Principia Ethica so appealed to Keynes and Bloomsbury as a justification for rejecting the Victorian moral imperative to engage in socially useful work.

In reviewing various interpretations of how Bloomsbury took liberties with Moore's ethics to live a life of group exclusiveness, self-absorption and often preciosity, Skidelsky is eminently balanced. In this regard, some comparisons with Bertrand Russell are useful in giving the biography perspective. For example, Skidelsky notes that while Russell, a decade older than the Bloomsbury group, and Leonard Woolf, central to the group, were both Moorites, they did not interpret Principia Ethica as permitting them to withdraw from public issues. As Skidelsky explains the difference: "to the extent that Russell and Woolf were able to busy themselves with problems such as preventing war or ending colonialism they were drawing, no doubt sensibly, on older moralities" (p. 146). Now certainly, from 1914 onwards, Keynes involved himself deeply in economic theory, in Liberal Party programmes and in the promotion of the Arts. But even he, not to mention the rest of Bloomsbury, had "little desire to make contact with the 'mass mind,' little faith in the possibility of a 'common culture'" (p. 249). In fact, in 1904, harking back to Burke along with Moore, his other intellectual mentor, Keynes reflected that "Democracy is still on its trial, but so far it has not disgraced itself..." (p. 156). At almost the same time, Russell was becoming actively engaged in democratic action for women's and adult suffrage, writing two soon to be published manuscripts, "On The Democratic Ideal" and "The Status of Women." Like all the leading Progressives, Russell disapproved of Keynes and Lytton Strachey for what he considered to be their contempt for the multitudes in industrial cultures. Russell assessed Keynes as having "the sharpest and clearest" intellect he had ever known. He also praised Keynes for showing the world that economic depressions were not "acts of God." Nevertheless, he still believed that Keynes' exclusiveness and that of Bloomsbury as a whole was unfortunate, if not inhuman. In anger, Russell claimed that "the generation of Keynes and Lytton (Strachey) did not seek to preserve any kinship with the Philistine. They aimed rather at a life of retirement among fine shades and nice feelings..." (Autobiography, 1967, I, p.86). Is this an unfair judgment? Possibly. We know that Russell resented that Keynes and Strachey converted the Apostles into a largely homosexual group. Even though Russell would later fight for homosexual rights, he did not personally approve of the practice.

An examination of the respective roles of Russell and Keynes during the Great War reveals some interesting contrasts. In some of the best chapters in the book, Skidelsky describes Keynes' growing influence at the Treasury. He also analyzes Keynes' loyalty to Asquith, however misguided, with whom he shared a common, if unrealistic desire to fight the war by subsidies to allies, and not by large armies, and to end the conflict by negotiations. The roots of Keynes' repugnance to Lloyd George arose from differing perceptions about how to conduct and end the war. To this extent his scathing portrait of the Prime Minister at Versailles is foreshadowed in private letters.

Skidelsky shows definitively that Keynes applied for Conscientious Objector status, even when he did not need to do so, given his nationally important position at the Treasury. His motivation was

above all to stop the war, since he was desperately anxious that "the state should not interfere with the lives of his friends" (p. 307). Russell, arguably the most notorious pacifist in Britain, struggled to end the war not just to save his friends, but to preserve civilization. In his mind, the butchery of a German soldier was of as much consequence as that of a British soldier. However limited Keynes' sympathies might have been, he did not sit out the war working on personal projects, or retreat to Garsington, as did most of his male Bloomsbury friends.

In yet another way, Keynes and Bloomsbury may usefully be compared with Russell. Both wished to destroy the sexual repressions which paralyzed the lives of so many Victorians. Russell's efforts may be seen in his Edwardian feminist writings, and in such books as Principles of Social Reconstruction (1916). Skidelsky argues that Keynes and his friends "were not sexual anarchists but rather creators of a new kind of sexual order inherent in a proper concept of the good life" (p. 249). Just how far Russell and Bloomsbury succeeded is open to question. Did they help to unleash forces more destructive of human happiness than they ever imagined? To be sure, near the end of his life Russell was alarmed at what he may have helped to do in bringing about a permissive, undisciplined society. On the personal level, there is no doubt that whatever their lofty aspirations, both Russell and Keynes could be cruel and coarse to those who loved them. But at least Russell's love letters contain passages of extraordinary power, whereas Keynes' letters, at least to his male lovers, are surprisingly jejeune and/or petulant. This is particularly disappointing from one, who, like Russell, became one of the most distinguished stylists of the English language.

Skidelsky leaves us with Keynes in 1920, outraged by what he considered to be the Allied betrayal of civilized hopes by the "Carthaginian" Treaty of Versailles. Here Skidelsky is absolutely right to dismiss the accusation that The Economic Consequences of the Peace (1920) helped to cause the Second World War. Nevertheless, it is symptomatic of Keynes' importance in the interwar period that such a proposition was even maintained.

The great theoretical works of Keynes' life await the next volume or volumes. The quality of this first book leaves us in eager anticipation of what Dr. Skidelsky will have to say for the years from 1920 until Keynes' untimely death in 1946. Skidelsky's scholarly use of sources, many previously unexplored, his intellectual range and power, as well as his stylistic felicity, should result in the definitive biography of arguably the most influential economic theorist of this century.

Richard A. Rempel,
History,
McMaster University