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# News and queries

MARCIA ALLENTUCK (City University of New York) gave a paper on William Beckford as patron of artists and collector of art at the annual meeting of the American Society of Eighteenth-Century Studies in Williamsburg, Virginia, in March 1986. At the annual conference of the Research Society for Victorian Periodicals in New York last November she presented a paper on the Scottish Art Review and the New Journalism.

MERRILL DISTAD (Toronto), an active member of VSA (Ontario) since 1972 and a history and medieval biographer at the University of Toronto Library since 1973, is now head of collections at the University of Alberta Libraries.

RICHARD F. GILES (Mohawk College) recently edited a monograph in the International Hopkins Association series. Hopkins among the Poets: Studies in Modern Responses contains twenty-six studies of Hopkins' influence on modern poets.

ALEXANDER M. ROSS (Guelph, retired), author of The Imprint of the Picturesque on Nineteenth-Century British Fiction (see (Books section), presented a paper on language and the picturesque at the conference of the International Association of Professors of English held at the University of York, England, last September.

W. DAVID SHAW (Toronto) is the author of The Lucid Veil: Poetic Truth in the Victorian Age, published this year by the Athlone Press in London and co-published in North America by the University of Wisconsin Press. The book discusses the impact of changing theories of language and

knowledge on Victorian poets and critics. Shaw also recently published an essay on the poetics of Robert Frost and William James in the New England Quarterly, Vol. 19 (1986).

NEVILLE THOMPSON (Western) published Wellington after Waterloo (Routledge and Kegan Paul), a study of the Duke's civilian life, last fall.

EDGAR WRIGHT (Laurentian, retired) is the editor of the Oxford World's Classics edition of Elizabeth Gaskell's Mary Barton published this spring by Oxford University Press.

DOROTHY ZABORSZKY (Laurentian) presented a paper on the feminist party of Canada at a conference of the Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women held last November in Moncton.

"The 'Home Circle': Catharine Parr Traill and Her Sisters" is the subject of an exhibition at the Osborne Collection of the Toronto Public Library during March and April.



# Riddle-de-dee

James Cameron, professor emeritus of English at St. Michael's College, University of Toronto, has agreed to provide the Newsletter with a riddle for each issue, the solution to which is a well-known nursery rhyme. Nursery rhymes being in their hey-day in the Victorian era, our readers should be well equipped to solve these. Here is the inaugural riddle:

The white rose is on the moor,  
The white rose is in the valley,  
And in between the heights and depths  
Is nought but tilly-vally.

Ten thousand virgins once there were  
In mountain and in valley,  
But as for these, no maidens they,  
The rest is tilly-vally.

The clue is in the verse. For

example, "Who Killed Cock Robin?" is the answer to:

Questioned about a murder  
The commonest of the species  
Set parson, clerk and coroner  
To work, with bull the summoner,  
And red the fish's dish is.

Professor Cameron added nursery rhymes to his areas of interest (others are religious themes in the Victorian novel, Tractarianism, George Eliot, and Dickens) in 1982, when he began writing nursery-rhyme riddles for the amusement of his grandchildren and others. He tries to keep within the collections by Iona and Peter Opie, though they do not include the answer to the current riddle.

See page 32 for solution.



# Conference notes

April 11 Conference: FEMINIST APPROACHES TO VICTORIAN STUDIES

Our two speakers will be EILEEN YEO (Lecturer in History, School of Cultural and Community Studies, University of Sussex) and ELAINE SHOWALTER (Professor of English, Princeton University).

EILEEN YEO studied at Brandeis University, the University of Wisconsin, and the University of Sussex. With Stephen Yeo she was joint Fellow in Popular Culture at the Davis Centre, Princeton University. With E.P. Thompson she edited and introduced The Unknown Mayhew: Selections from the Morning Chronicle 1849-1850 (1971); these selections reveal Mayhew in the early stages of the project that would become London Labour and the London Poor, refining his interviewing technique, learning how to sample opinion, responding to queries from the newspaper's readers. In her introductory piece Yeo assesses Mayhew's skills and talents as a social investigator. The next year she completed her University of Sussex doctoral thesis, "Social Science and Social Change: A Social History of Some Aspects of Social Science and Social Investigation in Britain 1830-1890." With Stephen Yeo she edited a collection of articles called Popular Culture and Class Conflict 1590-1914: Explorations in the History of Labour and Leisure (1981), a book about changes in cultural and associational form. Her contribution to the volume was a paper called "Culture and Constraint in Working Class Movements 1830-1855." She has written several articles on Robert Owen and on the Chartists. For several years she has been working on the records of the National Association for the Promotion of Social Science, a group whose

membership included a number of women. She is actively involved in community publishing and people's history.

Linking her various projects is an interest in the methods and assumptions researchers (Victorian and modern) bring to their investigation of society, and a sense that change is the product of struggle, often class struggle. Always she is fascinated by the creativity and energy of the underclass, the disadvantaged, the less privileged, in the conflicts that produce change.

She will be speaking about gender, class, and the Social Science Association 1857-1886.

ELAINE SHOWALTER studied at Bryn Mawr College and the University of California. For many years she taught at Rutgers University. In 1970 she completed her University of California doctoral thesis, "The Double Standard: Criticism of Women Writers in England 1845-1880." The following year she edited both Women's Liberation and Literature, a collection of texts evoking and analyzing women's experience, and, with Carol Ohman, Teaching about Women. Her first major book was A Literature of Their Own: British Women Novelists from Brontë to Lessing (1977), in which she argued that, like that of other literary subcultures, the female literary tradition evolved through three historical phases. She gave these phases names appropriate to her subject, placing the "feminine" in 1840-80, the "feminist" in 1880-1920, and the "female" in 1920-the present. The following year she edited and introduced These Modern Women: Autobiographical Essays from the Twenties, a reprinting of essays from The

Nation 1926-27 in which seventeen women explored the personal sources of their feminism and looked at how their feminist ideals had stood up to the actualities of a woman's life, and three psychologists analyzed these women's choices and speculated about what women might become. Next she edited and contributed to The New Feminist Criticism: Essays on Women, Literature, and Theory (1985). In the same year, her second major book, The Female Malady: Women, Madness, and English Culture 1830-1980, appeared. In this feminist history of psychiatry cum cultural history of madness, she argued that English psychiatry proceeded through three phases: psychiatric Victorianism (1830-70), psychiatric Darwinism (1870-1920), and psychiatric modernism (1920-80). Two years ago she reported that she was working on a literary history of American women writers. Recently she has been speculating about what she thinks of as the crisis in the novel after George Eliot's death in 1880, when, she argues, the shift from "feminine" to "feminist" occurred and there was a parallel shift in attitudes toward madness. She has written many articles and since the 1960s has been involved in setting up women's studies courses.

The guiding force in this career is obvious: retrieving, recognizing, analyzing, making accessible the female tradition in literature, a tradition she sees as springing from the relationships between women writers and their society.

The title of her lecture is "After George Eliot: Daughters and Sons."

Our three panelists, who will briefly consider the implications of Feminist Approaches to Victorian Studies, are HENRY AUSTER (English, University of Toronto), PETER ALLEN (English, University of Toronto), and DONNA ANDREW (History, University of Guelph). I

asked them to characterize their interest and work in the period. Henry Auster says that he is interested in how relations between men and women are represented in fiction, Peter Allen that he is curious about the history of the intellectual establishment and about fiction, Donna Andrew that she is fascinated by such upper-class vices as duelling, gambling and gaming, and suicide.

Judith Skelton Grant  
President



## 1986 RSVP Conference

The annual conference of the Research Society for Victorian Periodicals took place on November 7 and 8, 1986, at the City University of New York. The theme was the new journalism, and Joel Weiner, who had orchestrated the two days, must be highly commended for ensuring that all papers focused on the theme. Indeed the cohesiveness and also the spirit of the conference was illustrated as one paper after another began with references, first to Matthew Arnold's coining of the phrase in his 1887 criticism of the press and then to W.T. Stead's innovative crusading, and the participants delightedly turned the repetitiveness into a running gag.

The sessions, each consisting of two papers, were equally carefully coordinated. There were three on Friday and four on Saturday with no overlapping, so that the conferees could hear all the papers. The morning of the first day was entitled "The Roots of the New Journalism" and the first session was appropriately on pioneers; B.I. Diamond (Georgia State) talked about Frederick Greenwood's campaigns in the Pall Mall Gazette in the 1860s, and Laurel Brake (University College of Wales, Aberystwyth) discussed examples and trends before the flowering of the new journalism in the 1880s. This latter phrase was the title of the third session, in which Harry Schalck (West Chester University) and John Goodbody (The Times) showed that being popular with large headlines did not necessarily mean being amoral, though it was true that the Sun, according to T.P. O'Connor, lost one-third of its readers when the racing season ended and found 300,000 of them when Jack the Ripper started his London one. The session in between was on the new art criticism, with papers by Kate Flint (Mansfield College, Oxford) and a delightful off-the-cuff report by Marcia Allentuck

on the doings of James Mavor with the Scottish Art Review, which led indirectly to his emigration to Canada and founding here a dynasty still influential in our artistic life. Friday concluded with cocktails, a dinner at which John Robson (Toronto) did "Marriage or Celibacy: Letters to the Editor of the Daily Telegraph" in many voices, and, for a fair proportion of the conferees, a nightcap at the Algonquin.

Saturday morning's session was entitled "Tributaries and Streams." Under the first subheading, "Imports and Exports," Alec Jones (University College of Wales, Aberystwyth) showed that the new journalism was not confined to Fleet Street, and Ray Boston (Cardiff) that Stead's desire to use the Pall Mall Gazette to fulfill God's mission to reform England, thus removing the need for the Government, had an influential counterpart in Horace Greeley. The second part of the morning was "Politics and Economics," and both papers were read in the absence of their authors. The chairman of the session, Peter Stanisky (Stanford), read what seemed to me a damning paper on Stead, penned by the great authority on the man, Joseph O. Baylen (Georgia State), in which Stead, far from being the manipulator, was shown to have been the manipulated, and Lord Esher, who as Hartington's secretary had access to confidential cabinet information, to have been the éminence grise behind the articles on Gordon's exploit at Khartoum, the deficiencies of the navy, the Maiden Tribute, the Punjab, and Charles Dilke's divorce, all furthering Esher's own manipulations of the Government. Dean Hopkin's (University College of Wales) paper related the overwhelming financial difficulties to which most of the left-wing papers--the Clarion being the outstanding exception--succumbed in the early twentieth century. The third session on Saturday centred on "Expansion." Both Linda Fritzing



(New York University) and Martha Vogeler (California State, Fullerton) gave papers on foreign correspondents for The Times, the first on Valentine Chirol and the second on Austin Harrison, Frederick's son. The fourth and final Saturday session was devoted to "New Audiences." Rosemary van Arsdel (Puget Sound) amply substantiated her thesis that the new women's periodicals are an excellent source for contemporary social historians thanks to their development of the personal interview, a particularly revealing innovation. James Startt (Valparaiso University) concluded the conference with a rousing defence of the new journalism, centring his argument on that usually instantly

maligned duo, Lord Northcliffe and the Daily Mail, and asserting that they too had their ideals.

The narrow focus of the conference was nothing but an advantage. Instead of departing for home, as I do depressingly often, with a blurred impression that I have learned a lot about a lot, if I could only remember what, I left knowing a great deal more about journalism between 1880 and 1910, its antecedents, its practitioners, its successes, and its failures.

Ann Robson  
History  
University of Toronto



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## In memoriam

HORATIO HENRY LOVAT DICKSON  
30 June 1902 - 2 January 1987

Of the many tributes paid in both Canada and the United Kingdom to the memory of Rache (for Horatio) Lovat Dickson, the most eloquent and moving was the formal notice placed by his family in the columns of the Toronto Globe and Mail: Rache had died on 2 January, it said, "after a short illness, bravely and gallantly borne, and after a long and happy life of adventure and achievement." That seems to get it exactly right: it was indeed a long and happy and adventurous and richly successful life, as Rache's two volumes of autobiography so engagingly demonstrate, and one may perhaps be allowed to find it peculiarly inappropriate that death should have come at all to someone so extraordinarily good at living.

Rache would also have liked--even while laughing it off--that "gallantly borne". His biography of Richard Hillary is everywhere expressive of his admiration for that heroic figure whose remarkable book, The Last Enemy, he had published during the war years, and since all his biographies are in some sense autobiographies too--in that he wrote of people, from H.G. Wells to Grey Owl, whom he had known at first hand--it is easy to see how much he valued friendship and sought to emulate the best qualities of those he most loved. And he in his turn became (all unconsciously, I have no doubt) a model for all those who knew him well enough to appreciate his personal elegance and modesty, his lovely readiness to praise the work of others, his devotion--as author, editor, publisher, reader, listener, conversationalist--for all aspects of that world of words for

and by which he lived, and the astonishing intellectual and emotional energy and appetite that he preserved and radiated to the very end.

It was characteristic of Rache that he should have been so faithful a member of the Victorian Studies Association, even though he never seemed quite to appreciate that we were always at least as eager to listen to what he had to say as to the remarks of the invited speaker of the day. His only formal presentation to the Association, on the firm of Macmillan, was an especially memorable occasion, and while it was impossible ever to think of him as "old" there was nevertheless a special excitement created by his having known so many famous figures whose careers overlapped the final decades of the nineteenth century, and in particular by his having joined the Macmillan house at a time when it was still presided over by the three men--Sir Frederick Macmillan, his brother Maurice, and his cousin George--who had also controlled its late Victorian destinies. Those three senior Macmillans all died within a few months of each other, and it is tempting to see a recurrence (Hardyan even if not historical) of that pattern in the near-coincidence of Rache's death with that of Lord Stockton, the former Harold Macmillan, with whom he had worked as a publisher over many years.

It is hard to be reconciled to Rache's absence. Much as one loved and appreciated him, it's impossible not to feel that one didn't sufficiently show it--just as one never got around to asking him all the questions that one had intended to. It was in some special way very much

to Toronto's credit that Rache and Marguerite should have chosen to make their home here after his retirement from his Macmillan positions, and there is a corresponding satisfaction to be gained from the fact that in his last book, The Museum Makers, he should have treated of a local institution, the Royal Ontario Museum, with so much of his customary authority and verve. Despite the extraordinary calls that The Museum Makers made upon his time and energy, one must earnestly hope that he was able to reserve enough of both to make substantial--that is to say, ultimately publishable--progress with the third volume of his autobiography. After all, he could scarcely have had a better subject.

Michael Millgate  
English  
University of Toronto

#### VERONICA WAUGH

We regret to inform members that Veronica Waugh died suddenly on Wednesday, 12 November 1986. Veronica came to Victoria University in 1964 and operated the printing department there single-handedly. From 1970, almost without interruption, she was responsible for printing our Newsletter. She was a good friend to the Association and unselfishly helped the editors in solving their production problems. The success of the Newsletter is in no small part a result of her care and concern. We shall miss her.

Michael Laine  
English  
Victoria University, Toronto

# Casting phallogentrism loose from its moorings: feminist literary criticism

Kristin Brady  
University of Western Ontario

When Elaine Showalter edited a small anthology of feminist literary texts in 1971, she gave it a title--Women's Liberation and Literature--that already strikes the ear as dated. This is the case not because there is no longer any connection between women's liberation and literature but because the term "women's liberation" is now seen as too confining to describe the whole enterprise of feminism, which includes a concern not only with the cause of equality for women, but also with new ways of perceiving, analyzing, and changing the position of women and other marginalized groups in patriarchal culture. Underlying this concern is the basic assumption that the words "sex," "female," and "male" refer to biological differences, while the words "gender," "feminine," and "masculine" refer to differences that are constructed by and within a culture. The distinction seems an obvious one, but feminist scholarship over the last few decades has begun to expose the dramatic extent to which an identification of sex and gender has created some of the most pernicious forms of female oppression. In the nineteenth century, for example, women were typically perceived in terms of a myth of biological determinism that viewed the functions of the reproductive cycle as symptomatic of an illness causing a weakening of the intellectual faculties or even mental unbalance.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>For some chilling examples of this thinking expressed in nineteenth-century medical documents, see Women from Birth to Death: The Female Life Cycle in Britain, 1830-1914, ed.

Such a view, which has by no means disappeared in the twentieth century, is one of the many assumptions about the "essential nature" of women that have kept members of the female sex in a subordinate position in society. Feminist literary criticism, though it takes many different and sometimes conflicting forms, seeks to analyze the position of women as it is reflected in and perpetuated by literary texts.

This new type of criticism is partly a response to the tendency within the discipline of English for literary texts to be taught from a "masculine" point of view, that is, with the assumption that patriarchal culture and woman's position within it are natural and good. Such a point of view celebrates masculine difference and superiority, and though it may recognize such writers as Jane Austen, Emily Dickinson, or Emily Brontë, it considers them as occupying a smaller sphere than that of male writers--hence the repeated charge that these female authors were unable to depict (as Walter Scott had done, for example) the significant "historical" events surrounding their domestic scenes. Such a condescending attitude to literature by women, the feminist would counter, presumes a narrow and male-centred view of history. The point in such an argument is not to stage a competition over the superiority of "masculine" or "feminine" texts, but to urge a recognition that no work of literature

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Pat Jalland and John Hooper (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities, 1986).

is without its limitations and biases. This means that on many occasions readers may find themselves resisting or questioning the values of sanctified canonical texts. Judith Fetterley, for example, calls her feminist study of American literature The Resisting Reader because she seeks in that book to offer a corrective approach to the one she had always been taught--and which she herself had followed for many years--which defined the tradition of American literature as a body of works that championed the male hero in his aggressive quest of the frontier. Fetterley offers the "woman" reader the opportunity to resist the celebration of a myth that excludes or fears her, while embracing other traditions in American literature that have been dismissed by literary studies as second-rate. Jane Tompkins' work on Harriet Beecher Stowe's Uncle Tom's Cabin is another example of a feminist re-examination of the premises underlying the fixing of canonical texts.

My reference to the "woman" reader ought to be clarified in terms of the distinction already mentioned between sex and gender. Just as these two terms do not have identical meanings, so the "gender" of a reader is not determined by that reader's sex. Most readers, male and female, have, in fact, been taught to read "as men." By the same token, a female or a male can, in Jonathan Culler's terms, "read as a woman" as long as that reader takes sex and gender fully into account. Culler argues that such a feminist reading is not the distorting vision of a specialized interest: "what it does above all is to reverse the usual situation in which the perspective of a male critic is assumed to be sexually neutral, while a feminist reading is seen as a case of special pleading and an attempt to force the text into a predetermined mold" (55). What many feminist studies question, indeed, is

the very idea that there can be an objective or a neutral approach to literature. In these terms, the claim of objectivity or neutrality is itself a political statement, an attempt to give exclusive authority to one's own point of view.

Feminism, in fact, embraces many points of view, and in recent years there have been passionate debates among several of its "schools" of thought. The first type of feminist literary criticism to emerge in any systematic way within the discipline of English Studies is now labelled as the "Anglo-American" school. Its concerns are mainly those of liberal feminism: the establishment of equality for women within the existing system. In terms of literary criticism, this aim translates itself into an attempt to examine closely the "images of women" in literature and to pay new attention to works by women, including those that have been excluded from the canon. This latter concern has led to some of the most important and fruitful results of Anglo-American feminist approaches. Elaine Showalter's A Literature of Their Own: British Women Novelists from Brontë to Lessing (1977) and Nina Baym's Woman's Fiction: A Guide to Novels by and about Women in America, 1820-1870 (1978) are both large pioneering studies--and they have been followed by numerous others--that have resurrected rich traditions of female writing in nineteenth-century England and America. This interest in forgotten published works has also led to a new industry of research in unpublished works and heretofore ignored or secondary forms such as journals, letters, and diaries (this is one of many areas of common ground between feminist literary critics and feminist historians).

In addition to the detective work that has unearthed new texts for literary study, Anglo-American lite-

rary critics have also provided new ways of analyzing literature, and their focus has been on male writers as well as female, on male characters as well as female. Showalter, for example, has written a fine essay on Thomas Hardy's The Mayor of Casterbridge in which she sees Michael Henchard's tragic fate as resulting from his own suppression of his "feminine" self. She suggests that in this novel

Hardy gives the fullest nineteenth-century portrait of a man's inner life. ... Henchard's efforts, first to deny and divorce his passion self, and ultimately to accept and educate it, involve him in a pilgrimage of "unmanning" which is a movement towards both self-discovery and tragic vulnerability. It is in the analysis of this New Man, rather than in the evaluation of Hardy's New Women, that the case for Hardy's feminist sympathies may be argued.

("The Unmanning," 101-2)

One of the major ground-breaking texts of Anglo-American literary criticism is Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar's The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Imagination (1979), a comprehensive study from a feminist perspective of such figures as Jane Austen, Mary Shelley, Emily and Charlotte Brontë, George Eliot, and Emily Dickinson. Gilbert and Gubar begin their book with the question, "Is a pen a metaphorical penis?"(3), and proceed to examine the position of the woman author in a tradition of writing based on images of paternity. Harold Bloom's "anxiety of influence," which views the position of the writer as that of the boy in the Oedipal triangle, is a major focus for Gilbert and Gubar's argument, but they also invoke the long-standing tradition of associating literary activity with the creative acts of God the Father. They suggest that,

in such a tradition, the woman writer is in an anomalous position,

literally and figuratively confined. Enclosed in the architecture of an overwhelmingly male-dominated society, these literary women were also, inevitably, trapped in the specifically literary constructs of what Gertrude Stein was to call "patriarchal poetry." For not only did a nineteenth-century woman writer have to inhabit ancestral mansions (or cottages) owned and built by men, she was also constricted and restricted by the Palaces of Art and Houses of Fiction male writers authored. (xi)

What Gilbert and Gubar seek to define in their book is a female tradition of writing in which images of "enclosure and escape" reflect the trapped position of the woman writer and of the woman in patriarchal society (the "madwoman" of the title is Charlotte Brontë's Bertha Mason, seen as a surrogate for Brontë's own angry self).

Madwoman has a historic place in Anglo-American feminist criticism because it has influenced other literary critics, working in different periods and genres, to examine with renewed seriousness woman writers and works by women. One of these critics is Nina Auerbach, whose book, Woman and the Demon, sees in a positive light the images of entrapment noticed by Gilbert and Gubar. Auerbach traces the development of a nineteenth-century myth of "an explosively mobile, magic woman, who breaks the boundaries of family within which her society restricts her" (1). Looking at works by both men and women in literature and in the visual arts, Auerbach uncovers the subversive power informing some of the stereotypical images of women in Victorian England: the angel, the demon, the old maid, the fallen woman. Though Auerbach is sometimes criticized for celebrating what are in fact images

of oppression, her recognition of the "disruptive spiritual energy" (1) that can accompany such oppression anticipates the work of feminist critics who use the tools of Derridean deconstruction to explore the subversive underside of seemingly "masculine" texts.

It is the school of new French feminism, however, that most directly makes use of deconstruction. Moving away from an analysis of "images of women" in literature--a practice which in their view perpetuates the values of patriarchy by continuing to rely on its methodology--these writers seek to change literary study itself by rejecting both the authority of the author and the idea of fixed meaning. At the heart of this approach are the post-Saussurean theories of Jacques Lacan, who views the human "subject" as basically fragmented and unstable, and of Jacques Derrida, who views the literary text produced by a human subject as analogously unstable, constantly shifting in its meaning and undermining its own attempts to achieve coherence and unity. What is most useful to the feminist in these approaches is Lacan's "non-essentialist" view of the human subject, which rejects all metaphysical definitions of human nature or of men and women: if the human subject does not have an essential identity but is constructed by forces within a culture, then there is the possibility for change.

Lacanian thinking is not without its problems for the feminist critic, however. While the idea of the shifting human subject can be liberating, Lacan's description of sexual difference seems, if not essentialist, at least depressingly predetermining and dependent on the Freudian idea of penis envy. According to Lacan, the human subject--male or female--enters the symbolic order at the inevitable and alienating point when a "lack" has not been satisfied

and so must be compensated for, however imperfectly, by language. The child's psychosexual development then begins to operate during the Oedipal phase, at which point "lack" is perceived in terms of having or not having a penis. From the ensuing castration anxiety comes the abstract formulation of the "phallus"--in Lacan's terms, not the penis, but (like language) the representation of the denial of a lack. The human subject then continually desires this unattainable abstraction signified by the phallus, which cannot be possessed by male or female because it does not exist--because, as Lacan puts it, the phallus is a sham.<sup>2</sup>

Those feminists who make use of Lacan accept the idea of the phallus as an abstraction and argue that one's relationship to this "transcendental signifier" is determined not by biology but by culture. There is a vocal group within psychoanalysis, however, that challenges Lacan's perception of sexual difference as originating in, if not residing in, the experience of penis envy. This group, whose main spokesperson is Luce Irigaray, does not question the basic idea of the unstable human subject but opposes the notion that female sexuality is experienced only in terms of Lacanian lack, only in relation to the male sexual organ. Irigaray examines the experience of the feminine in terms of the female body (the title of her book, Ce sexe qui n'est pas un--in addition to being a pun on the idea that woman does not exist except in relation to man--is a reference to woman's multiple erogenous zones). She then argues for the possibility of "écriture féminine," a kind of writing that is, like woman

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<sup>2</sup>See Jacques Lacan and the école freudienne, Feminine Sexuality, ed. Juliet Mitchell and Jacqueline Rose, trans. Jacqueline Rose (New York: Norton, 1982).

herself, fluid and open-ended--that is not, in other words, like masculine writing, "phallogocentric."

The main difficulty with Irigiray's idea is that it threatens to be, merely with a different emphasis, as essentialist as the most metaphysical definitions of woman. Her strength, however, lies in her rigorous interrogations of the Western philosophical tradition and of Lacanian thinking, as well as in her own analysis of woman's social position. Using Lévi-Strauss's observation that in civilized cultures women are the main commodity for exchange, she offers a Marxist analysis of the positions of women and men in a "hom(m)osexual" culture in which bonds between men are "played out through the bodies of women" and women have value only in relation to other women--and only in terms of their roles as daughters, wives, and mothers (172).

As far as literary criticism is concerned, the difficulty in French feminism is that it does not offer any easily adaptable methodology for analyzing literature. As Showalter has remarked, it "describes a Utopian possibility rather than a literary practice" ("Feminist Criticism in the Wilderness," 249). These theories do offer, however, the possibility of regarding all texts--not just those by women or about women--in a way that may be seen as potentially revolutionary.<sup>3</sup> One way of explaining

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<sup>3</sup>I have not offered a comprehensive picture of new French feminism. See also, for example, the work of Hélène Cixous and Julia Kristeva. For a discussion of the differences among French feminists, see Jane Gallop, Feminism and Psychoanalysis: The Daughter's Seduction (London: Macmillan, 1982). For a general summary of feminist literary criticism, see Toril Moi, Sexual/Textual Politics: Feminist Literary Theory (London and

deconstruction is to suggest that the practitioner of this theory discovers the unconscious expressions of a text as well as its explicit, consciously articulated content; in so doing, the deconstructionist exposes the instability of the most sacrosanct ideas, beliefs, and forms--including those that buttress patriarchal power systems.

It is difficult to find works of feminist literary criticism that entirely escape traditional assumptions or methods. Nor is it necessarily the aim of feminism to suppress completely what culture defines as "masculine." As Irigiray suggests in "The Power of Discourse," the feminist project attempts to

cast phallogocentrism, phallogocriticism,  
loose from its moorings in order to return the masculine to its own language, leaving open the possibility of a different language. Which means that the masculine would no longer be "everything." That it could no longer, all by itself, define, circumscribe, circumscribe, the properties of any thing and everything. That the right to define every value--including the abusive privilege of appropriation--would no longer belong to it.  
(80)

In recent nineteenth-century literary criticism, there are many studies of different sorts that cast phallogocentrism loose from its moorings, and I can mention only a few of these in this short essay. One is Mary Poovey's The Proper Lady and the Woman Writer, which examines the "strategies of indirection and accommodation" discovered by Mary Wollstonecraft, Mary Shelley, and Jane Austen "to make their presence felt in bourgeois society" (xi). Another is Showalter's new book, The Female

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New York: Methuen, 1985).



Malady: Women, Madness and English Culture, 1830-1980, which she describes as "both a feminist history of psychiatry and a cultural history of madness as a female malady" (5). Other cultural studies include a recent collection of essays on The Female Body in Western Culture edited by Susan Rubin Suleiman, and Carroll Smith-Rosenberg's book, Disorderly Conduct: Visions of Gender in Victorian America.

An interesting new feminist angle on narrative criticism involves looking at plots in terms of their assumptions about the nature of men and women. The standard plots of the marriage novel or of the Bildungsroman have certain ideological premises, and feminist critics are interested, not in ideologically correct portrayals of characters or action, but in the tensions that emerge when a conventional plot is either faithfully followed or strategically altered. Rachel Blau DuPlessis, for example, investigates the "invention of strategies that sever the narrative from formerly conventional structures of fiction and consciousness about women," a technique that she calls "writing beyond the ending" (x). Often, plots that have seemed problematic to the traditional critic offer rich material for feminist analysis. Joseph Allen Boone sees the action of Daniel Deronda as indicting "the power structure of society itself" (74), while Mary Jacobus links the ending of The Mill on the Floss with Irigiray's most Utopian essay, "When Our Lips Speak Together": "The necessary utopianism of feminist criticism," she suggests,

may be the attempt to declare what is by saying something else--that "something else" which presses both Irigiray and Eliot to conclude their very different works with an imaginative reaching beyond analytic and realistic modes to the metaphors of unbounded female desire

in which each finds herself as a woman writing. (52)

And the ending of Villette, a novel that did not attract much serious consideration until claimed by feminist criticism, has received fascinating commentary from a number of critics, including Janice Carlisle, Mary Jacobus, Mark Kinkead-Weekes, Judith Lowder Newton, and Brenda Silver.

In the final analysis, one cannot say that feminist literary criticism has brought us very close to any Utopian vision of a society--or even of an academic discipline--free of patriarchal tyranny. The burgeoning industry of feminist criticism has, however, accomplished a few things. Even ten years ago, one risked general ridicule by assuming the label of "feminist." Now--to some extent, at least--the tables have been turned: one risks general censure for not recognizing the importance of feminist studies. And Terry Eagleton, who in 1975 had discovered Marxism but not feminism, would not refer today to Charlotte Brontë's heroines as "girls" (64). Nor would he, I think dismiss Villette as having "neither the courage to be tragic nor to be comic" and as being, "like all of Charlotte's novels, although in its conclusion more obviously than any, ... a kind of middle-ground, a half-measure" (73). Feminist literary criticism has begun to transform the discipline of English.

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# Feminist perspectives in Victorian historiography

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It is largely in the writing of women's history that feminist perspectives are to be found. From any feminist viewpoint, history as traditionally written appears seriously flawed. Its male-centred perspective is seen as reconstructing the past, in Gerda Lerner's words, as "the activities of men ordered by male values."<sup>1</sup> Leaving women invisible or, at most, as domestic, background props to the real action, provides but a partial account of the past that excludes half of humanity. Moreover, such history can be seen as revealing and reinforcing the devaluation and marginalization of women that has underpinned female inequality and male dominance. By presenting man as the measure of significance, such history seems to perpetuate assumptions that gender roles are natural and permanent rather than social constructions. And from the perspective that discourse is power, women's claim to equality in the present entails establishing their equal role in the making of the past.<sup>2</sup>

From these and related criticisms of history as traditionally written, feminist perspectives promote not only the addition of women to the past but also the attempt to reconceptualize the past and redefine historical "significance" beyond areas

traditionally associated with male activities primarily. As Gerda Lerner has noted, such redefinition should begin with the question, "What would history be like if it were seen through the eyes of women and ordered by the values they define?"<sup>3</sup> In short, in Elizabeth Fox-Genovese's words, "Adding women to history is not the same as adding women's history."<sup>4</sup>

The reconceptualization of the past from a woman-centred perspective entails examining woman as an historical agent. But that "women have always made history as much as men have"<sup>5</sup> means that history can no longer be interpreted as something "done to" women. Thus, the earlier feminist "woman-as-oppressed-group" approach to the past seems increasingly outdated. And from this new attention to how women have made and interpreted their own historical experience emerges the revisionism which is so evident in the Victorian women's historiography of today. An example of this is Patricia Branca's Silent Sisterhood.<sup>6</sup>

In her re-examination of the middle-class Victorian woman, Branca begins by challenging the "woman-as-victim" model. She argues that earlier his-

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<sup>1</sup>Gerda Lerner, The Majority Finds Its Past: Placing Women in History (New York: Oxford UP, 1979), 147.

<sup>2</sup>This discussion is based in part upon Lerner's book. For theoretical and methodological discussions, see Signs and Feminist Studies.

<sup>3</sup>Lerner, Majority, 162.

<sup>4</sup>Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, "Placing Women's History in History," New Left Review, No. 133 (May-June 1982), 6.

<sup>5</sup>Lerner, Majority, 166.

<sup>6</sup>Patricia Branca, Silent Sisterhood: Middle-Class Women in the Victorian Home (London: Croom Helm, 1975).

torians have mistakenly, although sympathetically, presented middle-class women as living in accordance with, and therefore as victimized by, the oppressive "perfect lady" ideology. According to Branca, far from being passive, submissive, idle, and decorative in function, these women played an active, assertive, and crucial role in their management of the home and family. They shaped the new technology and other manifestations of modernization in their own interests, and in forwarding their own autonomy, comprised "a silent but significant agent of change."<sup>7</sup> Thus the "perfect lady" was essentially a myth.

Similarly, recent historiography has revised older interpretations of the Victorian cult of female moral virtue, chastity, and asexuality as a successful tool of patriarchal rule. Martha Vicinus, for example, has shown how women could and did transcend this by turning to friendships with other women. In Independent Women, Vicinus finds that female friendships often expressed a passionate, homoerotic element, in a culture which did not yet label such relationships as deviant and pathological. These, she argues, were the bases upon which Victorian single women escaped from the confines of spinsterhood by building female "communities," in the context of such institutions as women's colleges, girls' boarding schools, and slum settlement houses.<sup>8</sup> In and through these communities, the domestic ideology of female guardianship of

morality was transfigured into a rationale for service in the public realm and expression therein of female ambitions for self-assertion and power. Women thereby made not only a place to live outside the home, but also surrogate families. From the female culture they developed evolved the consciousness that underpinned the women's cause movements and suffragism itself. Thus the personal is the political, or at least shapes the political realm. As Vicinus notes as well, these Victorian community builders remained personally convinced of female moral superiority. Hence they were unable to work with early twentieth-century "new women" in revolt against a double standard that used such prescribed female "virtue" to restrain female sexual freedom. The result was the erosion of the independent woman model for female liberation.

Vicinus' attention to the complexity and diversity of feminist expression and consciousness complements Olive Banks' Faces of Feminism, which argues that the various ideologies and groupings of Victorian feminism--evangelical and radical, liberal and equal rights, socialist and Marxist--"held little in common" and were riven by internal contradictions.<sup>9</sup> Certainly these diverse roots remain apparent in today's feminist historiography, in which both controversy and pluralistic perspectives are increasingly in evidence. The latter may be seen, for example, in Elizabeth Roberts' study of working-class women, 1890 to 1940.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>Ibid., 18.

<sup>8</sup>Martha Vicinus, Independent Women: Work and Community for Single Women, 1850-1920 (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1985). See also Sybil Oldfield, Spinsters of This Parish: The Life and Times of F.M. Mayor and Mary Sheepshanks (London: Virago, 1984).

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<sup>9</sup>Olive Banks, Faces of Feminism: A Study of Feminism as a Social Movement (Oxford: Robertson, 1981), 246.

<sup>10</sup>Elizabeth Roberts, A Woman's Place: An Oral History of Working-Class Women, 1890-1940 (New York and Oxford: Blackwell, 1984). For similar perspectives, see Jane Lewis, Women in England, 1870-1950: Sexual

In A Woman's Place, Roberts finds that these women were much more conscious of class injustice than of sexual injustice. She also finds that within the context of working-class culture and values they enjoyed a high status and sense of self-esteem. It was this, rather than any heightened experience of gender oppression, that shaped the distinctive political consciousness of working-class women. The monolithic "suffering sisterhood" concept seems increasingly to have outlived its usefulness in analysis of the history of women.

Studies like A Woman's Place may help to explain the failure of socialist feminism to influence such women. However, from socialist feminist perspectives, this failure is better explained by the economic vulnerability that forced working-class women to rely upon familial and male protection and thus to eschew an ideology which challenged the patriarchal family. We may find this perspective at work in Barbara Taylor's Eve and the New Jerusalem, a study of socialist feminism in the Owenite movement. Since this book is laudatory of Utopian Socialist recognition that a new social order must be built upon the making of a new sexual order, the lesson it presents is that "They failed. We must not."<sup>11</sup> Thus, women's history becomes itself a feminist political activity--a means of envisioning, forwarding, and directing change. As such, it sometimes becomes very much a forum for the ideological battles of today.

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Divisions and Social Change (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1984).

<sup>11</sup>Barbara Taylor, Eve and the New Jerusalem: Socialism and Feminism in the Nineteenth Century (London: Virago, 1983), xvii.

Judith Walkowitz's Prostitution and Victorian Society, for example, speaks directly to today's debate over pornography between pro- and anti-censorship feminists in its strong critique of the repealers of the Contagious Diseases Acts. The latter, directed against those charged with prostitution, were seen and combatted by the repealers as oppressive to all women. Walkowitz lauds their campaign against the Acts, but criticizes them for undermining their feminism by becoming involved in such a "repressive" movement as the turn-of-the-century moral purity campaign for the protection of women and children.<sup>12</sup> Thus women's history may become a strikingly politicized world. It may also sometimes take shape as an oddly isolated world, as observed, for example, by Nina Auerbach.

As Auerbach notes, for example, of the prostitute's world in her Woman and the Demon, the search for "a flexible, open, nonretributive world" seems to lead "contemporary feminists ... [to] deny that the fallen woman existed at all." Therefore, she notes, the prostitute appears in Walkowitz's book as essentially just another Victorian female worker: a "morally purged," "healthy adaptor ... no longer an outcast from society."<sup>13</sup>

Unlike Patricia Branca, Auerbach is not critical of historians' perpetuation of Victorian myths of womanhood

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<sup>12</sup>Judith Walkowitz, Prostitution and Victorian Society: Women, Class and the State (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1980).

<sup>13</sup>Nina Auerbach, Woman and the Demon: The Life of a Victorian Myth (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard UP, 1982), 158-9. See also Sara Delamont and Lorna Duffin, The Nineteenth-Century Woman: Her Cultural and Physical World (London: Croom Helm, 1978).

but rather of feminist scholarship's identification of these only in order to slay them. She argues that reality is inseparable from such culturally constructed beliefs, and therefore "it may be time for feminists to circle back to those 'images' of angels and demons, nuns and whores, whom it seemed so easy and so liberating to kill."<sup>14</sup> Indeed, from her book emerges the culture's vision of woman's "transforming power," since, seen together, these images comprise a myth of female transfiguration which empowered the women they seemed to oppress. As this book suggests, to ignore the vitality of popular myth in the shaping of human behaviour is to truncate both cultural and women's history.

From other perspectives, women's history seems an overly isolated world because overly dismissive of traditional history as irrelevant to the female experience. That is, for example, to redefine "housework" and sexual reproduction as no less significant than paid work and production of goods for market is well and good but, as Joan Wallach Scott has noted, it also seems "to accept the reality of public/private distinctions."<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup>Auerbach, Woman and the Demon, 2-3.

<sup>15</sup>Joan Wallach Scott, "Women in History," Past and Present, No. 101 (Nov. 1982), 156.

And, as Elizabeth Fox-Genovese has noted, "the strategy capitulates to official history's insistence upon the universal claims of female biology."<sup>16</sup> Instead, she argues, women's history must be placed in history. According to Wallach Scott, this may be achieved by examining "what gender and sexual difference have had to do with the workings of power. By doing so historians will both find women and transform political history."<sup>17</sup>

Feminist perspectives, however, lead to no consensus regarding how women's history may be best placed in history. But they do lead to an ever-deepening commitment to history. In Gerda Lerner's words, "by contemplating, in the case of women, the consequences of existing without history, we can renew our faith in and commitment to the work of the professional historian."<sup>18</sup> There seems good cause to view feminist perspectives, and all the controversies they inspire, as a tap-root of the revitalization of Victorian history.

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<sup>16</sup>Fox-Genovese, "Placing Women's History in History," 14.

<sup>17</sup>Wallach Scott, "Women in History," 154.

<sup>18</sup>Gerda Lerner, "The Necessity of History," Journal of American History 69 (1982): 15.



# Books

Linda H. Peterson. Victorian Autobiography: The Tradition of Self-Interpretation. New Haven and London: Yale University Press.

Within the past decade increasing attention has been paid to the hermeneutics of autobiography, the interpretation of a sub-text of omissions and unconscious revelation. In Victorian Autobiography Linda H. Peterson pays generous tribute to critics such as James Olney and Roy Pascal; and in her own stimulating book she offers new modes of scholarly investigation.

Peterson's central argument is that English autobiography has traditionally modelled itself upon the hermeneutic approach of Bunyan's Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners, in which Bunyan experimented with various Biblical texts as parallels for his spiritual Odyssey before settling upon Exodus as the most appropriate model.

Later spiritual autobiographies appropriated the pattern of Exodus for their narrative design, modifying or evading it for their particular purposes. Sartor Resartus is a book that stubbornly resists classification. However, in Peterson's reading of Book Second, she argues persuasively that Teufelsdröckh's wilderness wandering is based on the typological model of the Book of Exodus with the superimposition of the idyllic Sorrows of Werther. Part of the spiritual tension at the heart of the narrator's predicament is his search for generic precedents to provide a hermeneutic of self-understanding, each used to the extent to which they allow the questor freedom to reconstruct himself.

In a discussion of Praeterita Peterson uses a fine critical intelligence to trace Ruskin's tortuous attempts to evade the standard typological model in an effort to maintain a precarious balance between the authenticity of his experience and his desire not to offend the sensibilities of his parents. When he discovered that his mother had stuffed Grace Abounding into his satchel for his first European tour on his own in 1845, he complained: "What made you put that funny book of John Bunyan's in the bag? You know it is not at all in my way." The book continued to haunt him, despite his prefatory comments in Praeterita, which suggest that he intended to take a radically different approach to autobiography. In claiming that he has written only "of what it gives me joy to remember at any length I like," he indicates a firm rejection of the traditional generic demands of spiritual autobiography.

Nevertheless, as Peterson persuasively argues, the only dutiful offering Ruskin could make to his parents was a full-fledged commitment to the spiritual path on which they had set him. The resulting amalgam is intriguing: Abbéville becomes the stage of an earthly journey, a preface not to the celestial city but to Rouen. And how can he convey the process of de-conversion from narrow Evangelicalism to a more expansive aesthetic vision? Ruskin's negotiations with these awkward dilemmas are positively dazzling. Rather than deal directly with his state of mind preceding the crucial Turin episode, he allows old diary entries to muffle the intensity; and to lessen his discomfort, he includes letters from his parents assuring him of the comfort he has



brought them--letters written during a period when they were ignorant of the fact that he had fallen away from his childhood faith. Having paid his filial dues, he felt free to proceed with an account of his emotional upheaval at Turin. Deeply aware of the typology he was circumventing, he transmogrified his experience from providential to personal aesthetic.

Newman, on the other hand, made a clean break with tradition. While there can be no question of the Apolo-  
logia pro Vita Sua's being a spiritual autobiography, Newman discarded Protestant precedents in his concentration on those provided by St. Augustine and by Thomas Scott's The Force of Truth, which had "possessed" him since boyhood. Newman found similarities to his own experience in Scott's conversion, which had been the outcome of extensive reading in the Anglican divines. Newman quite distinctly avoids allusions to exile, exodus, or wilderness wandering, which he replaces with a new hermeneutic on the analogy of ecclesiastical history--more precisely, that of the Monophysite heresy. St. Augustine in turn provides the imagery, especially of the death-bed (Book IV of The Confessions), a state of mind Newman readily recognized.

The absence of autobiographies written by women Peterson explains by the lack of gender models. Apart from diaries and journals, a woman could express her spiritual state only if she chose to write an autobiographical novel such as Jane Eyre. Harriet Martineau's Autobiography was unusual in several respects: it was written by a woman confident of her intellectual stature, who recorded her growth in terms of her Necessarian and Comtian beliefs. As such, it transcended gender-determined patterns of human development.

Gosse's Father and Son receives a rather disappointing critique in

which its eclectic origins are shown as derived more from The Way of All Flesh than any model of avowedly autobiographical purpose. While it may be that "a multiplicity of interpretive systems" gave Gosse greater flexibility in approach, one wishes that Peterson had given it the transfixed attention she accords to Prae-  
terita.

This is an elegant, impressively reflective book which will be a requisite reference work for anyone interested in autobiography as a genre.

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Alexander M. Ross. The Imprint of  
the Picturesque on Nineteenth-Century  
British Fiction. Waterloo, Ont.:  
Wilfrid Laurier University Press,  
1986.

This well-produced slim volume is adorned with 23 happily chosen plates, two of them in colour: a sepia landscape by Gilpin and Constable's "Boat Passing a Lock." Ross learnedly describes what he claims to do, "the imprint of the picturesque on nineteenth-century British fiction." He properly begins by delimiting the definition of the picturesque in the late eighteenth-century aesthetic writings of Gilpin, Price, and Knight, as well as discerning its presence in contemporary artistic practitioners such as Gainsborough. He emphasizes the variety that characterizes the picturesque, as well as the sense of the whole that accompanies it, and the power of association on which it tends to rely, particularly the association with the personal and the historical past. The last Bagehot called "the picturesque growth of centuries" (quoted on p. 70). The nineteenth-century novelists whom Ross chooses to focus

on in the main part of his book are Scott, Charlotte Brontë, Dickens, George Eliot, and Hardy. Scott admitted himself to have been bitten "with the madness of the picturesque" (68) and its uncertain presence is particularly observed in Waverley. Bagehot noted Dickens' "picturesque imagination" (89). Ross convincingly shows the continuing presence of the picturesque throughout the nineteenth century, partly by direct use of the word itself--which seems to have had a sloppy set of connotations; resistant to the definitions within which Ross is seeking to contain it. On the other hand, Ross deploys passages from his authors that illustrate the picturesque, though the term itself may be absent from them. His presentation, though stimulating, thus lacks the rigour of Hans Eichner's comparable treatment of the word "romantic" (1972). For Ross and the authors whom he is studying picturesque passes by what he calls "a kind of metaphorical extension" (36) from landscape not only to painting, drawing, and engraving, but also to architecture (particularly that in ruins), as well as to the description and presentation of "the picturesque in character" (87), including local speech, for example, in Scott, Dickens, and Hardy, as well as in action. The last is illustrated specifically by Scott in his evocation of "the death of the Regent Murray as narrated in Robertson's history" (40), as well as generally in his novels.

A certain straining seems to be inevitably recognizable here, as the pressure on the word "picturesque" shifts from the aesthetic to the social and the ethical. Gilpin had admitted that "moral and picturesque ideas do not always coincide" (113). This straining is already felt in Scott's Waverley as well as in Brontë, where the tension is heightened through the pressure of her own "vagrant instincts" (88). The tension is felt too in Dickens' Old

Curiosity Shop and in Little Dorrit, where, for example, the "picturesque ideas" of Covent Garden contrast with the "miserable children in rags" actually to be found there (99). In A Tale of Two Cities Dickens deliberately seeks to transcend the picturesque, while in Pictures from Italy he seeks to discover "a new picturesque" (110). Eliot particularly felt this tension, which is a fruitful and major theme of Ross's book. For example, in Adam Bede a commentator has shrewdly noticed how "his innocent perception of the picturesque variegation of tree-trunks and boughs gives way to a shattering recognition of Eve with her seducer" (118). Hardy especially and finally, although he inherited the "picturesque vision" (160), in his own words wanted "to see the deeper reality underlying the scenic" (133).

In his final chapter Ross shows how an attempt at retrieval of the picturesque was made by James and more recently by McLuhan and others. This seems to be a vain endeavour as far as the late twentieth century is concerned. The term originated in a period when sensuous contemplation of the natural world was available to a leisured class. We have since passed through the historical phase that George Eliot recognized the challenge of: "picturesque inefficiency is everywhere giving place to spick-and-span new-painted, new-varnished efficiency, which will yield endless diagrams, plans, elevations, and sections, but alas! no pictures. ... The tube-journey can never lend much to picture and narrative; it is as barren as an exclamatory 0" (123). Hardy also appreciated "that progress and picturesqueness do not mingle" (143). For him "an immediate sympathy with the external universe" was less easy than it had been for Hallam's Tennyson (144). In Jude the Obscure especially "the disjunction of human feeling from the external world eliminates the possibility of

picturesque treatment" (153). Yet, as Ross points out, a response to nature is still urgently needed. It has to be on a much wider scale than the picturesque allowed for, as in Gilpin's insistence that "the eye is a mere window" (1). If the desired response occurs, then a version of the picturesque may come to life with it. We are grateful to Ross for reminding us of the power of the picturesque and opening up this possibility of its regeneration to us.

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Lionel Rose. The Massacre of the Innocents: Infanticide in Britain, 1800-1939. London and Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1986.

In a society such as our own, where questions of the care of children focus on the availability of public money and on debate over the difference between day-care and the home, it is striking to be brought up against issues of sinful motherhood, of baby farms and "the fraudulent burial of live-borns as still-borns." Rose makes clear that infanticide in Victorian Britain was more than simply an item in the figures for infant mortality. He studies it instead as a vital component of social history with particular relevance for women's studies. In twenty chapters of varying lengths, covering subjects such as bastardy, midwives and murder, together with legislation and law reform, he establishes an interpretation of infanticide that places the subject clearly in the context of poverty and illegitimacy.

For those in the middle and upper classes, at a time when abortion was so dangerous and morality so strict, illegitimate births could be handled by secrecy, adoption and baby-farms.

Mrs. Chard of Oxford and Mrs. Jagers of London were baby-farmers made notorious by coroners' inquests and newspaper accounts of illegitimate babies of wealthy young women, but male juries concentrated on the symptoms of death rather than on the issue of murder. Juries were more concerned, in the author's words, "to protect the identity of the high-born mother than to make her account for the disposal of her unwanted infant."

Issues of class and gender emerge forcefully from the book. Building on recent studies of poverty and overcrowding, even within marriage the author can point to malnutrition based on ignorance, to negligence, adulterated foods and poisoned "soothers" as causes for the high death-rate of infants under one year old. To these he adds alcoholism—"the most corrosive social disease of the nineteenth century." Parental drunkenness seems to have been directly related to suffocation from overlying. The Registrar General reported in 1890 that inquests into the deaths of babies showed peak figures on Sundays, the day after payday, and ten years later the Medical Officer for the London County Council found that bed-suffocations of babies "increased by 50% during weeks when there was a bank holiday."

Outside of marriage the figures for infanticide were higher and their sources more complex. At mid-century the surplus of women over men was four to five percent, and of these at least 30 percent would remain unmarried. Rose concludes from the 1851 census that probably half the women in mid-Victorian Britain "were unsupported by a husband." The subject of bastardy constituted a whole section of the 1834 Poor Law Report, which in turn was the focus for an article by Ursula Henriques in Past and Present in 1967. Concern for the welfare of illegitimate children and for affiliation and responsibility of fathers

generally rested on the costs of poor relief. Rose draws on this evidence to enquire more incisively into the murder or manslaughter of illegitimate infants.

Their numbers constituted seven per cent of the birth-rate in the 1840s and, if the rate fell after 1845, the absolute number of illegitimate births held at 40,000-44,000. Allowing for a 30 percent underestimate of the total, "it means that up to 65,000 unwanted children were being born each year in mid-Victorian England." What happened to them? Thousands would die before reaching the age of one year. In Glasgow and Manchester the death-rate of illegitimate children was twice that of legitimates, and in St. Giles workhouse 90 percent of new-born infants removed by their mothers to the care of dry-nurses did not live out the year.

The means and the circumstances of death varied from deliberate murder to inducement of disease. Babies might be dropped from bridges or smothered and deposited in privies. Indeed, the author speculates on the increase of baby-dropping stories in the London press of the 1860s that replacement of privies by water-closets and sewers deprived women of a traditional place for secretly disposing of the bodies of dead babies. Because of their location in the more affluent suburbs, female domestic servants were more visible and therefore vulnerable to detection and publicity.

These details of the subject are gruesome enough, but the author treats reform with equal care. The names of reform societies are prominent in the book. In addition to the transactions of the National Association for the Promotion of Social Science and the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, there was the work of the Infant Life

Protection Society, the National Conference for the Unmarried Mother and Her Child, to say nothing of various reports from the Select Committee on Infant Life Protection. Woven into this evidence are the statements and recommendations of reformers such as J.B. Curgenven, who compared the treatment of infanticide in Britain with that in Belgium and Germany.

Mr. Rose's book is altogether an objective, if also a condensed study that should now be a work of reference for every student of nineteenth-century social history. It is marred only by the publisher's insistence on a relentless abbreviation of references and bibliography.

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David Eden. Gilbert and Sullivan: The Creative Conflict. Cranbury, N.J.: Fairleigh Dickenson University Press, 1986.

The Gilbert and Sullivan operas have a place in the literature and music of the English-speaking peoples that is unique in the world of opera. Who wrote the libretti of Offenbach's works in the same genre, or of Johann Strauss' or Lehar's? Such is Gilbert's imprint on his works with Sullivan that he is linked in harness with the composer of the music that has ensured their immortality. Through these (if we have not already read his "Bab Ballads") we see Gilbert as a master of topsy-turvydom, of cynical social commentary, of acid comment and satirical drollery, treating the prosaic in fantastic terms. We have noticed certain habits of thought and dramatic formulae recur in different guises throughout the operas, but this is not unusual. What is unusual is the sado-masochistic character of many of these. David Eden takes us into the dark

recesses of Gilbert's psychological development--"everything known about him can be accommodated within the assumption that the basis of his personal and artistic psychology was sadomasochistic at the infantile level" (82). "The conventional view of Gilbert as a normal if obstreperous man is belied by the entire surviving body of evidence concerning his mind and personality" (82), and Eden has certainly studied all the evidence. He has long been a devotee of Gilbert and Sullivan and long followed the career of teacher of the mentally handicapped. He brings to his study a very thorough knowledge of his subject and meticulously examines every recollection of Gilbert, everything he wrote, correlates, categorizes, and analyzes it with engrossing purpose. He is less extended in the case of Sullivan, whom he also examines, because Sullivan was a more normal genius and of less circumscribed gifts.

It is the study of Gilbert, however, that really fascinates. Eden leans on Freud for his purpose, because Freud's ideas were of Gilbert's time and place (53). We are reminded that Gilbert was capable of hysterical anger, sustained vindictiveness, bullying, mental cruelty, and total selfishness: "The story of his life is to a large degree the story of the way he expressed these characteristics in action" (51).

Central to the thesis is the attribution to Gilbert of "a personality fixated at about the five-year level," which does not imply that his mental powers were other than those of a gifted adult. It seems this is probably traceable to his having fallen in love with a little girl during his infancy. Several eminent writers have reported this experience, and Gilbert's father recorded his own experience of the kind and his next love which, following a classical pattern, was for a matronly laundry-

maid at his boarding school while he was yet a schoolboy. Something of the same is traceable in the son's case. Gilbert tells us, indeed, that like his father--and like Frederic in The Pirates--he fell in love with a much older woman when he was a boy. She indulged his precocious attentions, but her sudden announcement of her impending marriage was a traumatic shock to him. The young Gilbert had loved "purely," his "queen" of "forty-seven" loved carnally--a betrayal of his own innocent love with immense consequences for the entertainment of generations. Hence his penchant for presenting aging females in his works as pathetic, love-lorn characters given to passionate love: he mocked them. Sullivan after a time found it objectionable and, after Katisha in The Mikado, protested against further repetitions of the type.

We have here an erudite, rigorous study of Gilbert, illuminating and sobering. I cannot imagine anyone reading it ever again regarding the famous characters, plots, and lyrics of the Savoy operas in the same innocent, bemused way.

As for Sullivan, we are left as charmed by his legacy as were his friends by his presence in life. With two such disparate and fantastically gifted artists building his fame and fortune, why did D'Oyley Carte not climb down and appease Gilbert in the matter of the carpet quarrel? Why did he oppose "Bab," as Eden would have written, especially when "Bab" had much right on his side, and in effect so kill the goose that laid the golden egg? Some recommendation for an impresario!

A thoughtful reappraisal of Sullivan is timely, although Arthur Jacobs in his recent biography has largely supplied this. Eden, however, has some very cogent observations to make, supported by his great familiarity

with Sullivan's music. As regards the so-called "Creative Conflict," he well illustrates the inspirational function of the librettist in providing the appropriate dramatic and poetic framework for the composer and singable consonants and vowels for the singer. He shows how Sullivan's artistic humility not only gave Gilbert's words unstinted scope but, along with his great musical gifts, provided the force for the artistic unity of the operas. For instance, the love in the lyrics is Sullivan-esque rather than Gilbertian (193). Gilbert's development as a librettist was due to the challenge of Sullivan who, as Bernard Shaw observed, was as good at the end as he was at the beginning, while Gilbert "got worked out." It is also postulated that it was the lack of a gifted, competent librettist of like humility that denied Sullivan the fulfilment of the serious operatic work for which he

shows, in many places here and there in his several oratorios, etc., obvious capacity. His deftness as an orchestrator is certainly undisputed.

There are, as one must expect, some few assertions in Eden's comprehensive study that one suspects may be rather glib--for instance, that Sullivan was thought "unfit to marry into a middle class family." I presume that this is a reference to his early bid for the hand of Rachel Scott Russell. This misleading over-simplification does nothing to endorse the author's rigour. Rachel's own, and her family's difficulty in accepting her proposed marriage to Sullivan was that he had no means nor visible prospect of means with which to maintain a wife. In addition he had little apparent self-discipline or determined purpose to make the most of his facile talent. Rachel did not "demand" the "production of immortal masterpieces." She saw through this requirement a way to achieve her heart's desire as well as the fulfilment of her beloved's great gifts. Her demand for what Eden calls "a reciprocating [sic] rhetoric of sentiment" was associated with her justifiable (and intelligent) fear that her light-hearted lover could not give her the devotion that alone could compensate her for a life in poverty with him. Her family, to make matters more difficult, although in straitened circumstances, had given her a warm and loving home and a first-rate education. I find Eden's use of the term "passionate prig" with respect to Rachel disturbingly shallow, particularly in one who claims insight into the people and mores of the time such as would command



our confidence. But apart from this and one or two other questionable descents into glibness, this is a well wrought and researched book.

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Annegret S. Ogden. The Great American Housewife: From Helpmate to Wage Earner, 1776-1986. Westport, CN: Greenwood Press, 1986.

Until recently, the importance of the housewife's multi-faceted role in the family has been given short shrift not only by family members but by historians of various ilks including feminists who, in representing her as a victim of patriarchal oppression or perpetuator of a cult of domesticity, have underestimated the value of housework and the significance of its main practitioner. In The Great American Housewife, Annegret Ogden, associate librarian in the Bancroft Library at the University of California, Berkeley; attempts to remedy these problems by tracing the history of the housewife during the past 200 years in an effort to establish the origins of lasting trends and to elucidate the housewife's difficult passage from home into the labour force.

On the basis of an examination of letters, diaries, domestic fiction, ladies' magazines, advice manuals, advertisements, and solid historical and social scientific data, Ogden concludes that the housewife has been the victim of a largely false and un-

attainable ideology and that her changing roles have been composed of layer after layer of tasks, responsibilities, and expectations. Each layer the author peels off and examines separately, thus introducing readers to housewives as managers, ladies, saints, sufferers, pioneers, domestic scientists, consumers, supermothers, displaced homemakers, and new pioneers, and to individual women who faced domestic trials with ingenuity and courage. Although her primary subjects are white and middle class, she occasionally contrasts them with non-white, foreign, and poor women, a device which demonstrates effectively the unity and diversity of domestic sisterhood.

The book has eight chapters, each dealing with particular time periods and types of housewives. The first features a case study of Abigail Adams, wife and mother of presidents and prototypical housewife of the late eighteenth century, who acted as a manager, labourer, cook, companion, mother, teacher, nurse, helpmeet, hostess, and housekeeper in large and complicated households, and whose life mirrored the changes in the direction of affluence and security that laid the foundation for the Victorian cult of domesticity.

The second and third chapters deal with the perfect lady of the early and late nineteenth century, whose dilemmas lay in maintaining new upper-middle-class standards while performing the work necessary for running the home and raising children and in coping with the stark contradictions between the ideal of "angel in the house" and the reality of everyday life. It was no wonder, Ogden asserts, that the stress produced took a toll on her mental and physical health. What was remarkable was that a number of women managed to muster the strength, ingenuity, and bravery to look at their surroundings with the eyes of a pioneer.

Such pioneers--in the rural west and the immigrant ghettos of the urban east--are the heroines of Chapter 4. Despite traumatic uprooting, primitive living conditions, and an almost complete lack of control over their environment, economy and bodies, most western women survived unbroken. The lot of their immigrant cousin--poverty, ethnic discrimination, and an endless cycle of work--was in ways even worse; but because she was often forced from the domestic sphere into the labour force by sheer economic necessity, to Ogden she was the forerunner of the wage-earning housewife of today.

Chapters 5-8 concentrate on twentieth-century housewives, who have been progressively more profoundly affected by an impulse towards female independence whether they realized it or not. From about 1900, both single and childless working life represented true alternatives for ambitious women to keeping house for a supporting male. But these new kinds of women were not free of traditional female values. Most eventually married, had children, and stayed home; and those who did were converted into scientific home economists who, in theory at least, could dispatch their domestic responsibilities efficiently and with the same type of results produced by efficiency in the workplace. The advent of labour-saving devices totally transformed their work but in some ways actually increased its amount as well as the pressure on them to do it well and to live up to the expectations of their husbands' social status by acquiring all the new tools appearing on the market. The process turned consuming into a national pastime and a socially approved means of housewifely fulfilment that was only temporarily restrained by the Depression and World War II.

All the while, married women were working in ever larger numbers, but

the notion of working wives was still not validated by society at large. After the war, men reclaimed their jobs, and both sexes demanded a return to old-time domestic virtues. Women who persevered in their careers were called "sexless"; strict distinctions remained between male and female roles; and marriage continued to be considered essential for women's happiness and fulfilment. So the suburban supermother of the 1950s and 1960s hovered over her family nest until it was empty, still dependent on her family's affection and her husband's income.

The trouble was that her self-esteem and emotional stability were not always high, and with increasing frequency she found herself in a state of shock--as the children who had been so carefully tended turned into the anti-establishmentarian rebels of the 1960s and/or she was left alone, without economic skills or resources after her "prince" left her for a younger woman. One of the results, Ogden explains, was the rebellion by women in the 1960s that resulted in the foundation of the modern women's movement. Even traditional housewives who stayed far away from centres of feminist activity could not





but be affected by the feminist argument that sex roles victimized women and denied them the power to control their own destiny by making them economically dependent on their husbands.

During the 1970s and 1980s working wives finally gained respectability because of sheer numbers; the American familial dream was altered away from the family supported by a male breadwinner and female homemaker; and the new feminism resulted in new confidence and new options for millions of women. But women's problems are far from over, Ogden notes, since their need for child care, maternity leaves, better education, higher pay, their own credit ratings, etc., vastly exceeds the supply; and even if they have unions in which both partners work and share housekeeping and child-care responsibilities, they often find themselves doing more than 50 percent and in a state of nervous

exhaustion as a result of trying to excel in multiple roles.

The Great American Housewife is a moving story of the housewife's diversity, oppression, resistance, and achievements. It is a story of the transformation of unrealistic images into more realistic ones, and of domestic drudge into provider. It is also a story of the durability of outworn stereotypes and expectations, and of the elusiveness of equality. Written in an engaging fashion that is more narrative than analytical, the book should appeal to general readers as well as students of history, sociology, and women's studies. That the text is sometimes fragmented and rendered superficial by too numerous sub-titles and sub-divisions is only a minor criticism.

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### Solution to Riddle

The grand old Duke of York,  
He had ten thousand men.  
He marched them up to the top of the hill  
And he marched them down again.  
And when they were up they were up  
And when they were down they were down  
And when they were only half-way up  
They were neither up nor down.