VICTORIAN STUDIES ASSOCIATION

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NEWS AND QUERIES

W.J.Keith (University College, University of Toronto) has recently published *The Jefferies Canon* (Petton Books [Bedwells Heath, Boars Hill, Oxford, 0X1 5JE] £4.50 from the publishers including packing and postage). This pamphlet tackles the evidence for and against seventy-four essays published in Victorian periodicals that have been attributed to Richard Jefferies without full documentary evidence. For more information, contact the author.

Jean O'Grady (Northrop Frye Centre, Victoria College, University of Toronto) is now assistant editor of the Collected Works of Northrop Frye. Her "More Egyptian Correspondence" will appear in the Spring 1996 issue of *Victorian Periodical Review.*

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CONFERENCE NOTES

The VSAO spring conference for 1996 will be held at Ryerson Polytechnical University (Oakham House) on Saturday the 13th of April, from 10:00 am to 4:30 pm. As usual there will be two speakers, one from Ontario and one from outside, and as usual there will be morning coffee, sherry, lunch, and a bar in the late afternoon. After lunch there will be a short business meeting and then our customary Victorian entertainment. People who attended last year's performance will remember a powerful and controversial performance of a reading, by John Huston, from *Oliver Twist.* John Huston has been invited to return, and to offer another interpretation from nineteenth-century literature.

The primary attractions, however, are the two speakers. Susan Casteras, who will speak in the afternoon, is Curator of Paintings at the Yale Centre for British Art. When I spoke to her a couple of weeks ago, she was just arranging an exhibition of paintings from the Grosvenor Gallery in London, and her excitement about the exhibition is revealed in the title of her talk: "The Grosvenor Gallery: A Palace of Aesthetes." She promises to show us not only the building and the paintings, but images from the surrounding culture that reveal the ways in which Pre-Raphaelite challenges to Victorian canons of beauty were received. There will be slides! The morning speaker will be Jock Galloway, a historical geographer at the University of Toronto and Victoria College, whose title is "The Price of a Good Cup of Tea: The Sugar Industry in the Victorian Era."

Registration forms were sent to members in mid-March. For information about registration, please telephone 585-4478. people who arrive without registration may attend but cannot be guaranteed lunch.

Leslie Howsam
VSAO President
Department of History
University of Windsor

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VICTORIANA ON THE INTERNET: In addition to VICTORIA, there are listservs devoted to specific authors and closely related periods. MASSR-L is devoted to Romanticism, MODBRITS to twentieth-century British literature. There are listservs devoted to Dickens, Trollope, the three Brontës, and Wilde; HOUNDS-L is related to Sherlock Holmes. NVSA-L is the list for the Northeast Victorian Studies Association; SHARP-L for the Society for the history of Authorship, Reading and Publishing.

On the Worldwide Web, the VICTORIAN WEB contains thousands of documents on many Victorian authors, as well as cultural, social and literary topics. The Victorian Women Writers Project, supported by Indiana University, is an electronic collection of texts by British women writers of the late Victorian period. There are web sites devoted to Dickens, Gaskell, Gilbert and Sullivan, Morris and the Kelmscott Press, D.G.Rossetti, and so forth. The Northeast Victorian Studies Association, SHARP, Victorian Poetry and Nineteenth Century Studies all have home pages. There are guides to the British National Register of Archives and the newspaper archives at the British Library.

"Victorians in Cyberspace" is a free pamphlet describing Web sites of interest to Victorianists. Contact Mark Samuels Lasner, William Morris Society, 1870 Wyoming Ave., NW #101, Washington D.C. 20009. Or contact Lenore Beaky at:
bellg@cunyvm.cuny.edu.

Lenore Beaky

* * *

The NEW YORK STATE ASSOCIATION OF EUROPEAN HISTORIANS solicits papers or panel proposals by 15 April 1996 for its annual meeting, September 27-28, 1996, at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point. Contact Jim Valone, Canisius College, 2001 Main Street, Buffalo NY 14208-1098.
Valone@canisius.edu.

"WHEN MONEY TALKED (AND HOW): VICTORIAN NEGOTIATIONS" is the topic for the Victorians Institute conference, October 18-19 at the University of Virginia. Proposals on money in Victorian history, literature and culture: its substance and theory, omnipresence and invisibility, glamour and filth. One-to-two page proposals for 15-20 minute presentations by May 15, 1996 to Herbert Tucker, Department of English, Bryan Hall 219, University of Virginia, Charlottesville, VA 22903.
Tucker@virginia.edu.

The MID-ATLANTICK POPULAR CULTURE/AMERICAN CULTURE ASSOCIATION CONFERENCE, November 1-3, 1996, in Philadelphia. Papers and proposals on the topic of popular elements in British and American Victorian literature and culture, and twentieth-century uses of Victorian themes, motifs, styles and ideas are invited. By June 1, to Richard Currie, Department of English, College of Staten Island, 2800 Victory Boulevard, Staten Island, NY 10314.
RCurrie508@aol.com.

CUNY VICTORIAN CONFERENCE, "Rethinking Victorian Poetry," at the Graduate Center, City University of New York, 33 West 42nd Street, New York City, May 3, 1996. Speakers include Isobel Armstrong, Steven Dillon, Dorothy Mermin, Yopie Prins, Christopher Ricks.
Contact Anne Humpherys
humphery@lcvax.lehman.cuny.edu
or Gerhard Joseph at the Graduate Center.
gerhard@lcvax.lehman.cuny.edu.

THE SOCIETY FOR THE STUDY OF NINETEENTH-CENTURY IRELAND, "Ideology and Ireland in the Nineteenth Century," at University College, Galway, Ireland, June 28-30, 1996. Plenary speaker will be Terry Eagleton.
Contact Tadhg Foley
t.p.foley@ucg.ie
or Sean Ryder, Department of English, University College, Galway, Ireland.
sean.ryder@ucg.ie

"Ruskin in the 1870s," a one-day seminar at TRINITY COLLEGE, OXFORD, July 6, 1996. Speakers include Nicholas Shrimpton, Dinah Birch, Francis O'Gorman, Paul Tucker and Donato Levi. Contact Dinah Birch, Trinity College, Oxford, OX1 3BH.
Dinah.birch@trinity.ox.ac.uk.

DICKENS FELLOWSHIP INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE, July 18-23, 1996 in Portsmouth, UK. Contact Susan Healey, Academic Development Centre, University of Portsmouth, University House, Winston Churchill Avenue, Portsmouth, P01 2UP, U.K.

1996 DICKENS UNIVERSE, July 28 - August 3, 1996, focusing on "Dickens' Christmas Books." University of California at Santa Cruz. Speakers include Murray Baumgarten, H.M. Daleski, Robert Patten, Joseph Childers and David Parker. University of California at Santa Cruz, The Dickens Project, 1156 High Street, Santa Cruz, CA 95064.

SHARP, July 18-21, 1996, Worcester, MA. American Antiquarian Society, 185 Salisbury St., Worcester MA 0169-1634.

THOMAS HARDY SOCIETY, July 27 - August 3, 1996 in Dorchester, England. Contact Robert Schweik, English, SUNY College at Fredonia, Fredonia, NY 14063. Schweik@fredonia.edu.

GARLAND TO PUBLISH LITERATURE AND SOCIETY SERIES. Literature and Society in Victorian England is the title of an ongoing series of scholarly books with Sally Mitchell as general editor. Garland is seeking manuscripts reflecting interdisciplinary research. The editor will publish about six titles a year and is eager to hear from scholars whose work is in progress or near completion. Inquiries should include a letter or proposal which describes the book's topic, audience, special features, length, date of anticipated completion, and position in its field. Also a brief c.v., and an abstract of five pages. Sally Mitchell, English, Temple University, Philadelphia PA 19122. smitch@vm.temple.edu.

IN MEMORIAM: James Munro Cameron 1910 – 1995

The death of James Cameron on 14 December 1995 will be deeply regretted by all members of the Association and, indeed, by a far wider circle of friends, students, and readers on both sides of the Atlantic.

Born in Manchester on 14 November 1910, James in 1928 won a scholarship to Balliol College—where he took his degree in Philosophy, Politics, and Economics instead of in English as he had originally intended. His early teaching career was in adult education departments at Southampton, Leicester, and Leeds, but in 1947 he began his long association with the Leeds University philosophy department, initially as lecturer, finally (1960-67) as professor and department head. In 1967 he became professor of philosophy at the new University of Kent at Canterbury and master of one of the first two colleges in its planned collegiate system, and so found himself in a difficult adminstrative position during the turbulence of 1968 and the immediately succeeding years. Following his retirement from Kent in 1971 he was invited to the position of University of St Michael's College Professor in the University of Toronto, and taught there, happily and successfully, from 1971 to 1978, mostly in English and comparative literature but also in philosophy and religious studies.

This breadth of interests and of expertise was a distinctive feature of James's entire career. A Marxist in the 1930s, he converted to Roman Catholicism during the war years, and his subsequent writings were largely devoted to probing and pondering the many intersections—historical and contemporary—of philosophy, politics, theology, and literature: he was especially at home in the Victorian period, and it seems in retrospect almost inevitable that John Henry Newman should have become so central to his work and thought. In *Scrutiny of Marxism* (1948) James effectively repudiated the politics of his younger days, and in his influential *Images of Authority* (1964), based on his Terry Lectures at Yale, he intensively explored past, present, and potential relationships between Church and State. On the other hand, most of the essays collected in *The Night Battle* (1962) focused upon literary texts and issues, and his Toronto friends and students will well remember how the richness and extraordinary specificity of his literary knowledge would pervade his discussions even of ostensibly non-literary topics. It was during his Toronto years that he became widely famous for his elegant and incisive contributions to the *New York Review of Books,* and many will yet recall the sense of occasion that surrounded his delivery in 1978 of the series of lectures later published as *On the Idea of a University.*

After his retirement James and his devoted wife Vera moved to London, Ontario, where his son Mark was teaching at Western. But Mark and Vera both died of cancer within a few months of each other in late 1984 and early 1985, and James returned alone to Toronto, profoundly bereft but nonetheless remarkably successful in constructing a renewed life for himself within the context of St Michael's College and of his other Toronto associations and friendships. His two-year presidency of the Victorian Studies Association fell within this latter period (his memorable lecture on "Dickens and the Angels" was of earlier date), as did the publication of *Nuclear Catholics* (1989), a gathering of his *New York Review of Books* essays. Nothing gave him more satisfaction in his later years, however, than the publication

of *The Music Is in the Sadness* (1988), the long-awaited first book-length selection of the dense and powerful poems he had been publishing over so many years in the *Times Literary Supplement* and other magazines and circulating in Christmas cards to his friends.

As James grew weaker over the last two or three years of his life the cards stopped coming, and James himself was less often to be seen at St Michael's or elsewhere. But the integrity of his personality never diminished, nor did he ever lose his special aptitude for friendship, his capacity to gain and keep the admiration and affection of so many, of all ages, who came within his orbit. We were fortunate to have had him among us for so many years, and in our sadness at his passing we have at least the satisfaction of knowing (as his daughter Bridget reminded us at his memorial Mass) that he was happy to be here, in Canada and in Toronto, and never regretted that decision to emigrate he so remarkably made in his sixty-first year.

Michael Millgate

* * * * *

When James Munro Cameron died on December 14, 1995, the Victorian Studies Association of Ontario lost a staunch supporter, and the intellectual community at large lost a magnificent defender of humane learning. His monograph on *The Idea of a University Today,* which many of us heard in lecture form, is still a superb example of its genre. Although he was a scholar of immense erudition and sharp accuracy of judgement, James Cameron lacked any trace of vanity or self-importance. When he mingled with members of the Association at its annual conferences or exchanged ideas with us over sherry, it was easy to forget that we were in the presence of a scholar of world reputation.

Intimidating only in his austere clerical appearance and in the trenchancy of his intellect, James Cameron went out of his way to cultivate the companionship and intellectual stimulus of junior scholars. I remember poring over his articles on Wittgenstein, Simone Weil, Jonathan Bishop, and Nietzsche in *The New York Review of Books,* then finding something puzzling or challenging to ask him about these authors the next time we met. It was clear that he had great reserves of learning, and that what he wrote in his reviews was only a small portion of the ideas he had to discuss and share with his friends. Although new abysses of ignorance kept opening up for me whenever I talked with him at any length, he always seemed to value a younger colleague's wayward search for truth. However ill informed a scholar's opinion might be, it always seemed to matter to James Cameron. Having praised in a review the architectonic power of Frye's *The Great Code,* he wanted to know—to my great surprise—if I thought his high opinion of the book was justified.

With a few well chosen words Cameron could give a new shape and direction to a scholar's research. When explaining to him during the early '80s how I was reexamining the thought of the British Idealists T. H. Green and John and Edward Caird in an effort to establish a new context for Victorian poetics, my heart sank when he smiled at me ironically then gave me one of his scholastic looks of pure skepticism. He thought that one British Idealist, F.H.Bradley, towered over all the others, and that I should start and end by reading him. In neglecting Bradley's contribution, as I soon discovered, I had forgotten to set in place the keystone of the arch. My whole project had to be redesigned.

All Victorian scholars are indebted to James Cameron's luminous essays in *The Night Battle* (1962), to his monograph on Newman for the British Council (1956), and to his later

study, *John Henry Newman and the Tractarian Movement* (1985). I realize in retrospect, however, that like many of his colleagues I learned most about Newman from casual asides in James Cameron's conversations. After I queried him on one occasion about Newman's famous distinction between notional and real assent, James said that in his opinion Newman's *Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent* was overvalued, and that I would be better advised to spend time on more original earlier works like the *Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine* and the incomparable Oxford sermons. That advice—along with James's own pioneer essay on Newman and Hume—transformed my understanding. It led me to see that Newman's theory of dogma in his sermons is indebted, ironically, to the antidogmatic Hume, the skeptic he keeps attacking, but to whom he seems to owe, perhaps unconsciously, the influential distinction between a mere fugitive *impression* of a truth and an *idea* of it that can be fully stabilized and transmitted only as a doctrine.

For a scholar of his stature James Cameron was also unfailingly generous to his colleagues. Once, when he realized I was at an impasse in an academic project I had undertaken, he called me at home to suggest some approaches I might try. He could, of course, be disarminly blunt. When he momentarily forgot Fredric Jameson's name, he referred to this upcoming critic disdainfully as a brash young Marxist—an oddly dismissive label, I felt, considering James's own early leanings.

But to those James Cameron knew he could be unexpectedly kind. One day I met him in the street and mentioned casually that I was on my way to the doctor's office. He expressed immediate concern, and—dissatisfied with my offhand answer—would not let me go until I assured him there was nothing wrong with my health. Later when I did become temporarily ill, James wanted me to know that his father had suffered from the same disorder after returning unscathed from action in the First World War, and that he had recovered with only minor residual effects.

Any university in the world would have been refreshed by James Cameron's original thinking, enhanced by his cultivated taste, and graced by his learning. It was the Association's good fortune that for more than two decades James Cameron chose to make St. Michael's College and the University of Toronto his intellectual home. Many of us in the Association knew James first as a formidable literary scholar, theologian, and philosopher. Later we came to know him as a humanist of great wit and feeling, and finally as a friend. It is the friend I shall miss the most.

David Shaw

* * * * *

It was one of the small ironies of James Cameron's career as a university professor both in England and in Canada that although he loved poetry, he seldom had the opportunity to teach it. When I visited him during the past few years, there were very few occasions on which he didn't take the long walk from his leather chair to the poetry book case by the door to find a book of poems. The cause was often enough my ignorance of a poem he had recited from memory to illustrate a point; when his "You know that one, don't you?" received a negative answer, the volume would appear and we would take turns reading a selection dictated by his memory. He had a particular weakness for what he sometimes called "bad" Victoriana, with R.H.Barnham's *The Ingoldsby Legends* at one end of the spectrum and Swinburne's "The Triumph of Time" at the other. More often he liked to linger over his favourite authors, both their more famous poems ("This may be the last time I'll ever read 'The World'" he once chortled) as well as less well known lyrics that had an image or a line

or even an adjective he remembered. (Of all the letters he received over two decades responding to his pieces for *The New York Review of Books,* the one that probably gave him the most pleasure was from a stranger who wrote to tell him how much he admired the precision of his adjectives.)

As one could predict on the basis of his lyrics in *The Music in the Sadness,* he liked poems with a formal and intellectual "thew and sinew," and, to take one example, he always praised Empson's poetry (and criticism) and could recite "It is the pain, it is the pain endures" in its entirety. Though he occasionally responded to contemporary poems when he came across them in journals or if I brought them to the apartment, he had a sneaking suspicion that Frost was right about poetry and free verse and nets and tennis. Paul Celan was a crucial exception and the subject of one of his best reviews. Often after I had read a contemporary poem out loud, he would wave his right hand in a characteristic gesture and murmur in his high-pitched voice, "A bit thin, don't you think? And he doesn't do much with language." This would often be followed by the walk to the book case and a counter illustration from Geoffrey Hill, a particular favourite—though I have a hunch that while he admired Hill, he loved Larkin (perhaps the same might be said of his attitude to George Eliot and Charles Dickens?).

One night, after reading Larkin's "Aubade" he chuckled and said, "Now there's a man who knows that we don't 'pass away,' we 'die.'" (He disliked euphemisms and circumlocutions and occasionally joked that he would campaign to restore the noun "buggery" into public discourse.) After his first stroke, he made only one attempt to write a critical piece—it was about Larkin, the letters and the biography. When he realized that he could no longer summon the adjectives at will, he knew it was time to retire the typewriter. (He always composed directly on the typewriter; there were no rough drafts, just a first copy with some additions and deletions in the black ink of his fountain pen.)

He had begun publishing his own poems in the 1950s in *The Critical Quarterly* and, I think, *The Listener*. For reasons he never understood, the muse was especially kind to him in the 1970s and early 80s, and he enjoyed sending two new poems to his friends on the annual Christmas card. It was a particular pleasure and gratification of his retirement years that he was occasionally invited to give a reading and that a publisher brought out a selection of his poems in 1988. When pressed on the allusiveness and occasional obscurity of some of the poems, he would admit that he sometimes out-Empsoned Empson (my phrasing, not his), but he thought foot-notes always a mistake, though on a handful of occasions he resorted to them. Seeing Empson's name on the page reminds me that while James admired him as much as any English critic of the century, he also simply liked the sound of Empson's name in the same way that he found "Kierkegaard" and "Wittgenstein" almost magical, a found poetry of pure sound. Incidentally, together with Newman, the two were touchstones in his thinking, and he probably referred more often, and with greater awe or reverence, to Wittgenstein than to any other philosopher.

We read together for the last time at Wellesley Hospital in November and December. He couldn't speak, but he could indicate a "yes" or a "no" with a single or double squeeze of the hand as I read him titles from *The Norton Anthology of Poetry* to find out what poets and poems he wanted to hear: Herbert, Vaughan, Tennyson, Hopkins, Dickinson and Eliot — the poet he most admired and with whom he probably felt most at home, especially the poems written after conversion. A convert himself, in the early 1940s, he felt that he could read Eliot's post-1927 work in a privileged way, from the inside, as it were.

I also suspect that he had a soft spot for Eliot because the great man had once phoned him out of the blue. It was in the early 1960s when James was chair of the Department of Philosophy at Leeds and had just published a well-received article on Eliot's politics in a book devoted to his work. A few days after the book's appearance, the telephone rang and when James answered, the voice at the other end introduced itself as T.S.Eliot. Eliot had read the book and was calling to tell "Professor Cameron" how much he enjoyed his article. Before hanging up he also invited Professor and Mrs. Cameron to dinner in London. Of all his stories, and he was a wonderful and very funny reconteur, this was one of his favourites.

Since I have recalled James as a lover of poetry and as a poet, perhaps it would be appropriate to end with "Dark Night of Sense," a poem from *The Music is in the Sadness.*

Sam Soleki

Where are they fled, the smells of innocence and safety,
Erasmic Shaving soap and Player's Navy Cut?
Where is the hawthorn, the tarred road, the summer dust?

Where are they gone, the scents of worldliness and danger,
Lilac, cigars, musk, patchouli,
Rank sheets, the peppery smell of girls?

Sickness and age have paid for all, gazing
is sweet and decorous in this decade,
In the summer pride of leaf, arboreal skeleton in winter.

It is fat with usury, this hoard in the eye's cave;
Outside is leaner: the prodigal is home.
And you, knight, equestrian, *écuyer,*

Cavalier, *Ritter,* may take your horn and blow
Blow blow yahoo yahoo and make an end.

* * * * *

IN MEMORIAM: Rea Wilmshurst 1941 – 1996

Rea Wilmshurst died on 22 March 1996, after a year-long struggle with cancer. The denuded aspect of this month's Newsletter is an eloquent testimony to her absence, as for eleven years Rea was responsible for the production of the magazine. In 1986, when she returned as copy-editor after a brief period when production moved to Trent, Rea suggested the use of double columns to increase readability. She worked hard on the layout (no mean feat without a desk-top publishing programme) and introduced apposite illustrations and Victorian printer's ornaments, much improving the Newsletter's appearance. She also cast an eagle eye over the text. As editor I worked with her for more than four years, and I can testify to the fact that she was a sterner task-master than I. Imprecise diction, inconsistencies, and infelicities of all sorts—particularly repetition of words and sounds, for which she had a keen ear—would be "queried" either by a highlighter or by a yellow post-it note. It was a rare article that did not return from her hands bristling with the latter.

These labours on the Newsletter were only one aspect of a life filled with a variety of interests. Rea did not believe in half measures: if she cared about something, she threw herself into it wholeheartedly and gave it the benefit of her legendary skill, speed, and panache. Professionally, she was a mainstay of the Collected Works of John Stuart Mill for many years, and after its completion became an invaluable worker in the project of publishing Coleridge's marginalia. Her private scholarly interest was her edition of the short stories of L.M. Montgomery. Having come across Montgomery's list of her published stories during a visit to Prince Edward Island, she had searched out the originals in magazines of the period, and was publishing them very successfully in thematic volumes such as *Akin to Anne* ("Tales of Other Orphans").

Rea was also a balletomane, who could be seen at successive performances of the same ballet. She supported her passion with generous donations, particularly with scholarships for young dancers whom she considered her adopted children. Sitting down at the computer again for their sake, she put out a newsletter to keep former National Ballet dancers in touch with each other, and transcribed oral interviews with dancers. This consuming interest led her to learn Danish, so that she could appreciate more readily the intricacies of the Bournonville style. With her companion Andy Silber, who shared this interest, she travelled to Denmark to observe the company and even to participate in company classes: for she had studied adult ballet too, and danced up to four times a week, when other activities did not interfere.

Rea's influence survives among all the people she helped, as well as those who loved her company. During her lifetime she typed hundreds of theses and books on the most diverse themes, in each case improving the text, and very often making in the process a life-long friend of the author. Through her facility in letter-writing as well as her outgoing nature, she had a wide circle to mourn her premature passing. We will miss her ready sympathy and salutary little queries, and can only try to live up to her high standards.

Jean O'Grady

* * *

Miss Trevor's Debut at the Lyceum or A Stage in Helen Taylor's Life[1]

Ann Robson
Department of History
Victoria College, University of Toronto

On 14 March 1826, Harriet Hardy, daughter of an irascible surgeon, married, at the age of 18, John Taylor, a young man a few years her senior. In 1827 their first son Herbert was born and in February 1830 their second son Algernon (always called Hadji, sometimes spelled Hadi, in the family). Shortly after Algernon's birth, the Taylors invited their Unitarian minister W.J. Fox to dinner and asked him to bring his friend John Stuart Mill whom they wished to meet. Mill was a prepossessing, slight man of twenty-three, with a reputation for brilliance already established in radical circles. Harriet Taylor and John Stuart Mill were attracted to each other and were soon deeply attached.

In July 1831, following quickly on the heels of the Taylors' second son, a third child Helen was born. When she was still a small child, Harriet and John Taylor, seemingly by mutual consent, established separate homes, Harriet moving with her daughter to a small village on the Thames west of London. She travelled on the continent frequently for her health, always accompanied by Helen. When Harriet Taylor was in England, her sons, who lived for the most part with their father, came to see her, Algernon far more frequently than Herbert. The most constant companionship was between mother and daughter and that relationship was very close. This background helps to explain the unusual venue of the event of central importance to this tale.

Helen Taylor was self-educated with a great deal of encouragement and guidance from her mother. She was fascinated from her earliest days by religion, especially the ritual, and by drama. She often went to the theatre with her mother and she and Algernon wrote dramatic reviews and acted scenes together. Dramatic roles, especially from the great tragedies, were learnt by heart.

Just before Taylor's eighteenth birthday, her father died. Two years later, in April of 1851, Harriet Taylor and John Stuart Mill were married very quietly to avoid stirring the embers of the gossip fired by their twenty-year liaison. The Mills leased a secluded house in Blackheath Park and the nineteen-year-old Helen went perforce to live there. By this time Harriet Mill's diseased lungs had depleted her strength and her daughter was not only companion but also both nurse and housekeeper. Living away from the world, Taylor became, if anything, more obsessed by the theatre than she had been in her adolescence. Her health was suffering and she frequently fainted. Her mother sent her to the doctor, but his ministrations were unsuccessful. By 1856, she had persuaded her mother to let her have voice lessons and Harriet Mill also agreed to some dramatic coaching from Mrs. Fanny Stirling.

Fanny Stirling had had to make her own living from her late teens and through dint of hard work she had in the end reached the top ranks of her profession. Subtle comic characters were her forte. She had played opposite most of the great actors of her time and, most importantly for Helen

Taylor, she knew many of the leading managers both in London and in the provinces. Although her professional life was quite successful, she led a lonely, because unconventional life, with her only child, a daughter, probably illegitimate. Into this life came Helen Taylor, and Fanny Stirling was immediately taken by her and did everything in her not inconsiderable power to launch Taylor on a stage career. Private theatricals were one thing; public theatricals were quite another for a young upper-middle class lady and the daughter of Mrs. John Stuart Mill to boot.

In the autumn of 1856, after what was obviously a brouhaha of monumental proportions,[2] Taylor won her battle to join a provincial theatre company in Newcastle managed by Mr. Davis, an acquaintance of Mrs. Stirling. At the age of twenty-five, she was to leave her mother for the first time (accompanied to begin with by her brother) to attempt to establish herself as an actress. The quarrel had only intensified, certainly not weakened, the emotional interdependency of Taylor and her mother; they wrote to each other every day. Extraordinarily detailed, highly literate and emotionally charged, these letters give an unmatched account of life in the provincial theatre.

The stream of letters starts with Taylor writing in the cab taking Hadji and herself across London to catch the train for Newcastle and the uninterrupted flow makes it possible for this nineteenth-century debut to unfold in the words of the principal participant, but of necessity much shortened here for Taylor wrote for two and three hours at a time.

After a long but cheerful journey, Helen and Algernon arrived in Newcastle "at half-past ten, got into an omnibus and went to are [sic] hotel (called the "Exchange") and went directly to bed." The next morning her trials began:

I went to the Theatre and asked at the stage door for Mr Davis' address, and then went to his house.
Here I was told that he was in bed and had been for a fortnight but I saw a Miss Davis a pleasant ladylike girl, rather shy. Here the news was very bad for she began by saying that she did not think I could act for a fortnight, because the Opera Company will be here next week and then they are going to bring out "Dred"[3] which they expect will last some time. ... She appointed me to meet her at twelve o'clock at the Theatre and told me that I should hear of lodgings at the stage door where they always keep a list. ... At Twelve O'clock I went to the Theatre and saw her again and could get nothing definite from her except the offer of a part in 'Dred' which I did not accept and permission to make use use [*sic*-over the page] of the Theatre for practice which I was very glad of. The Theatre looks quite consequential outside and stands in the principal street of the town and seemed to me as I saw it this morning to be quite as large as Sadler's Wells so I shall need practice to be heard in it.
...
I next set to work to find lodgings, going first to the places I had been told of at the stage door. I found them generally dirty wretched places.... All the lodgings appear to be for Commercial travellers and actors. At last by inquiring about at shops in the town I found a place of quite a different and better sort to any of the others where for a sitting-room on the ground floor and a bedroom (in front) above the drawing room she asked fifteen shillings a week (including also gas and fire in the sitting room) but this does not include any bed for a servant for which she asks 3 shillings a week

> extra. They are clean comfortable cheerful rooms and therefore I have taken them. We are now established, at present in a drawing room untill [sic] the lower room which I am to have is vacant, and it looks so comfortable that I wish my darling was here. We have just had dinner, some rumpsteak, and some tarts which I got at the shop, there is a large bright fire burning and Hadji is lying on the sofa while I console myself by writing to my darling a journal of all my doings.[4]

Sunday she and Hadji went to Mass and then to the Post office, finding it closed having forgotten that this was Scotland and not London. Taylor wrote pages and pages and pages to her mother. The next day she returned to the siege; she may have fainted at home but she was far from faint-hearted when away:

> Afternoon
>
> I have just been to the Theatre and seen Mr Davis who has agreed to have a rehearsal of Macbeth on Wednesday morning that he may see me in Lady Macbeth. He says that he wants a person to act `heavy tragedy' but that he has already two 'novices' as he calls them at Sunderland[5] and does not wish for another. From this I suppose that my chance depends on his thinking well of my acting. ... If he objects to bring out Macbeth, which he still seems to do, I think I should like Constance as well, I have been studying it and think I can make it one of my best parts. I shall go tomorrow morning early to the theatre to try myself in Lady Macbeth and to get accustomed to the theatre.[6]

Nor was she down-hearted; her letters show her thoroughly enjoying her entrée into the theatrical life, despite the setbacks. She was prepared to work very hard, determined to succeed:

> I occupy all the time I can, you may imagine, with trying Lady Macbeth, although I also work somewhat at Constance with my own effects in which I am very well pleased. Hadji says he likes my acting in it better than in Lady Macbeth. I get him to stand up for Macbeth that I may be in the habit of seizing hold of some one and addressing myself to an actual person. This morning a little before nine o'clock I went to the theatre where there were only a few carpenters and women sweeping and dusting, and there I rehearsed Lady Macbeth twice over, and part of Constance. I found myself quite at home upon the stage which gave room and play and I thought also effect to ones [sic] motions; and to my great delight my voice seemed to myself to fill the theatre, and indeed, empty as the theatre was, to be echoed back with great distinctness. Sometimes a woman sweeping stopped to look and a couple of carpenters towards the end stood watching at the back of the stage. But for these I did not care, indeed when I begin to act I am apt to forget everything, even essentials such as being properly heard, in the interest of the part.[7]

What Mr. Davis meant by a "rehearsal" of Macbeth is not quite clear. When Taylor went at the appointed time—indeed, she went twice—she was to be disappointed, because "the stage is so occupied with rehearsals, of which there are four besides mine today, that there has not been time for me yet. I am to go again at four o'clock...." When she returned later in the afternoon, she was finally given her chance; she reported to her mother next day with her usual frankness:

> Yesterday in the afternoon I acted Lady Macbeth before Mr Davis. When I had done he said that he did not think me capable of so difficult a part but thought something slighter would be better to begin with. He thought I should make a good actress with a year or two's practice but that

for a first appearance it would be best to choose a part on whch the play did not entirely depend so that the audience might have something else to attend to if I did not succeed well.... He then said there was a part in a new piece which he wished to bring out (a melodrama in reality) which he thought would suit me.... [I]t seems to me that he wants to make me useful to play what he wants played, but it seems to me also that practice, practice, practice is what I want, that any parts will do to give me knowledge of the stage which I absolutely need to be capable of carrying out all my own ideas in the great parts, and therefore if my dearest can still spare me I cannot do better than act anything he pleases to give me.[8]

But practice before an audience was proving very difficult to get. Mr. Davis, a manager with a living to make, was thinking in terms of audiences and therefore of melodrama and pantomime for the Christmas season:

He now wishes me to act in some afterpiece next week here "just to see how I am with an audience". He has proposed Jane Shore[9] for this purpose which I should like very well, but then he thinks it is perhaps too long, and talks also of a part in some obscure melodrama which I do not know. I am to go again in the evening during the performance that I may hear what he says after asking his son about the length of Jane Shore. So you see dear one I am beginning to have a little of all the tiresome uncertainties and disappointments which one must expect. If he should offer me nothing but indifferent parts in trashy melodramas do you think it would be injudicious to accept them? For myself I would rather take anything because I feel so much the need to get accustomed to the stage. But if I act all sorts of things I ought at least to have constant practice....[10]

After days of waiting on Mr. Davis, including accompanying him to Sunderland where they discussed possibilities with the son, her big break finally came:

Dearest Mama—I have just been to the theatre and seen Mr Alfred Davis the Sunderland manager who says quite decidedly that I am to act Jane Shore at Sunderland next Monday. There are to be two rehearsals, one on Saturday, the other on Monday. He recommends me to fix myself at Sunderland which is as though he thought of giving me more to do. I therefore think I had better go tomorrow to Sunderland and take lodgings and go there on Saturday. .... Jane Shore's dress is fortunately simple to begin with and after the first night I shall see how I get on. Dred has been a complete failure here, a more miserably empty house than that last night can scarcely be possible, and so if I succeed at all in my Jane Shore I shall have a chance of getting other parts. I am busy for every moment I can spare I employ in making myself perfect in the words which I have not looked at for more than four years. Good bye dearest Mama.[11]

Taylor fusses cheerfully as she contemplates the beginning of what she is absolutely convinced will be a bright future:

As to the dress I am so strongly convinced that bright colours are unsuitable that I shall adhere to the black velvet I determined on. I spoke to the Miss Markham who is to play Alicia, or rather she spoke to me about the dress as she wishes to wear blue and was very much relieved on hearing I did not mean to wear it. She seems the most agreeable of the women I have seen about the Theatre and has shown me the dressing room and so on. She says as Mrs Stirling said that I must have a looking glass of

> my own at the Theatre, and so I have bought one here for 6/. I think it is cheap because it is a very good one.
> ....I have been to Rehearsal this morning and got on very well. I feel myself so completely at home the moment I stand on the stage. Very few of the actors knew their parts yet, almost all read them from their books, but I had got mine perfect with the exception of a little mistake at the end. It is completely plunging in medias res for I have never seen the play acted nor read a line of it to any one nor heard any one read or speak a word of it, and it is a very *theatrical* part—I have got to scream to faint and to die on the stage. But all these difficulties only excite me the more—but then they make me know very well that I shall not make any `success' as Mrs S. says. I am merely learning here.[12]

In her next letter her elation is palpable:

> So now my darling Mama I am really on the stage and tolerably successfully too. I cannot tell you darling how I thank you and how happy I am at this achievement of all my wishes. For I think I have only now to persevere and my future question can only be about the amount of success. And now to give you an account of all my yesterday evening from beginning to end. In the first place I must tell you that Miss Markham is a very nice `girl' (in theatrical parlance) open, hearty, goodnatured, and thoroughly friendly to me so that she helped me in everything showing me what she did and giving me her advice. Then too Mrs Davidson seems thoroughly competent and is quite above a mere servant so that between the two I had every possible help and assistance. You see how fortunate I am in everything.
> I had to dress in the public dressing room along with all the others (there were four there besides myself last night) which at first I thought I should dislike very much but which I think in reality was an advantage as it enabled me to see how the others did, expecially as I began so late. Miss Markham acted in the first piece so I saw her whole process of dressing before I began to dress. It would have amused you to see me making myself so comfortable in the midst of all this queer confusion. I took my looking glass...to the Theatre in the morning and went to the Theatre in the evening with my box and Mrs Davidson at 1/2 past six. I had therefore plenty of time to look about me and see what the others did and dress slowly, till past nine when my part began. And to tell you what I wore. I wore the black velvet gown low at the neck and with short sleeves, with the point lace for berthe and trimming to the sleeves. The jet coronet with the large black veil, my hair as I wear it when I do it best at home; the jet girdle, the little ruby cross and chain you gave me at Boulogne, the Genoa gold bracelet on one arm and the Garnet bracelet on the other. The garnet bracelet excited great admiration, I was amused by Mr A. Davis exclaiming "What a beautiful bracelet—those are real garnets." Miss Markham admired the little cross still more than the bracelet.
> The dress was altogether extremely becoming; the audience gave me a good round of applause when I first came on the stage which Mrs Davidson declared was because I looked so well. The audience was a very good one—the gallery which is remakably large, holding I should think quite 500 was densely packed, the pit quite full, and the boxes very tolerably filled. When the play began I went and stood behind the scenes waiting to come on and Mr A. Davis came to me and asked me "how I felt". But I

felt quite cool although everybody all the evening had been asking me "how I felt" and telling me not to be frightened so often that if I had been in the least timid it would have been enough to frighten me but I was in high spirits and all this talk only made me laugh and excited me the more. When I heard my cue I walked quietly on the stage and was not nearly so nervous as I am if I read anything to you. My voice did not tremble at all and in fact I was perfectly at ease. The audience applauded my first appearance and again twice a little in my first scene.[13] But I was told on all hands that I did not speak loud enough. In my second scene I became more excited spoke one speech (the only one in the evening) really well and brought down a good loud hearty burst of applause. In my third scene I had very little to do. In the fourth I acted pretty well, Hadji says better than anywhere else and was again several times applauded. In the last scene which is very difficult I did not act well at all, I was terribly disappointed with myself. however [*sic*] the curtain fell with applause. So that I was more successful than I had any right to expect. For the truth is I acted very badly. Everyone behind the scenes and Hadji in front told me I did not speak loud enough, Miss Markham and Mrs Davidson said not distinctly enough which I believe to be the truth. Then too I had a formal cold declamatory tone and manner. Indeed I have much to learn. All the actors and actresses and Mr Davis (Mr Alfred Davis for his father is ill in bed again) were the most friendly possible and assisted me in every way. In fact as yet I have seen only the bright side of the stage, except indeed in one respect and that is the desperate dirtiness of the stage the dressing room the staircases and indeed every part. It is worse here than at Newcastle and worse at both than I had any idea of. By dirtiness I mean the kind of dirtiness which is destructive to dress rather than that which is disagreeable, the kind which builders and carpenters make. Sawdust and mortar and paste and pitch and paint, and in addition dirt in from the streets off the shoes of the innumerable working people who are in every direction.

After the play I spoke a few words to Mr Alfred Davis who repeated what he has often said about its being so much best for a beginner to play all sorts of parts, to which I told him I was quite ready to do so. He said he thought he could give me something to do pretty often, that he might perhaps arrange for something this week but would let me know this evening. This does not seem as though I should leave here before Christmas. He said that Newcastle was a much better place than here in respect to the audience which here he says is very low and ignorant. He has said the same before and Miss Markham has said the same.[14]

Obviously still on cloud nine, the debutante natters on for several pages more about the clothing she will need to acquire for costumes in her future career. Her brother also reported favourably on this opening night:

Dearest Mama

As you have already heard from herself, Lily made her first appearance on Monday in 'Jane Shore'. There was a good house, and on her first appearance on the stage she was received with a round of applause. The earlier acts, in regard to their effect on the audience, were tolerably successful, her acting being applauded two or three times. During the last act however, the audience exhibited some signs of impatience, caused apparently by the length & mono-

tony of Jane Shore's part in that act, for she has to lie on the ground nearly all the time, bewailing her misery, and this the audience seemed to get tired of, expecially as it was difficult to hear.

So much for the opinion of the audience. As to mine, I thought she showed great self-possession throughout, and my anxiety in this respect was relieved as soon as she appeared. She spoke several of the speeches with considerable effect, and the dumb-acting—the silent expression of feeling—was good, and I thought her acting of the last act, when fainting & dying, excellent. Yet she evidently requires much practice, as was to be supposed. First, it is difficult to hear what she says; and next, the voice sounds monotonous, the whole part seemed to be spoken in the same tone, with little variety or modulation. The same applies to the general action or gestures. There is a stiffness & want of pliancy when on the stage which practice is needed to wear off. But as a whole, & for a first appearance, it appeared to me very successful, & to be of great promise—

I intend to return home in a few days—which day I cannot say till I hear the result of her expedition to Newcastle today; for if (which I scarcely expect) Mr. Davis gives her a 2nd appearance within a few days, I shall wait to see that.[15]

And then came the inevitable letdown, the descent not made any less steep by the need to beg for parts again and by the notice in the local paper:

... LYCEUM[16] THEATRE.— ....Miss Trevor made her first appearance as the heroine in the tragedy of Jane Shore.[17] In the first scene or two she made a tolerably favourable impression, but it was not sustained to the end of the piece. Miss Markham, who seldom fails in all her varied rounds of character, delivered some passages with an exquisite touch of feeling and passion, Mr Orvell, who never fails, went through the part of Gloucester with his usual skill and correctness, and Mr Peel sustained the part assigned him with credit.[18]

The last word on this occasion, as it often was is Harriet Taylor Mill's—she may have lost the war, but she never gave up the battle:

That notion they all have that you must of course be frightened shows what a low class they generally are connected with theatres, as no well bred yound lady would show any, or feel much trepidation on such an occasion & I was sure you would not. There was the same want of savoir vivre in asking you the question continually, as if anything w^{d} make a person timid it w^{d} be doing so as you say.

...

I have been poorly to-day & my side is very painful with writing & I must now leave off[19]

Although Taylor offered to play without pay and stayed in Newcastle for another two weeks before joining her mother in Brighton for Christmas (her mother did not want her to cause gossip by coming home to Blackheath), the Davis's gave her no more parts. After Christmas, Taylor went to Doncaster and then to Glasgow, where she got considerable practice, but her mother's ill-health in February aborted these attempts. It was not until October 1858 that Miss Trevor was able to resume her career in Aberdeen. But Harriet Taylor Mill died on 3 December and Helen Taylor went to care for her stepfather. When Helen Taylor stood by her mother's grave at Avignon, Miss Trevor was laid to rest also.

Notes:

[1]Miss Trevor was the name Helen Taylor adopted in 1856.

[2]"I do not wish to say anything about my feelings or state because I wish you to be wholly uninfluenced by me in all your future proceedings. I would rather die than go through again your reproaches for spoiling your life. Whatever happens let your mode of life be your own free choice henceforth." (Harriet Taylor Mill to Helen Taylor, Monday, 24 November 1856, Mill Taylor Collection, London School of Economics, Vol. LI, item 7.)

[3]*Dred* was an adaptation of Harriet Beecher Stowe's story, the full name of which was *Dred: A Tale of the Great Dismal Swamp*.

[4]Helen Taylor to Harriet Taylor Mill, Saturday, 22 Nov 1856 and Sunday, 23 Nov 1856, LI, 6.

[5]Mr. Alfred Davis had two theatres, the one at Newcastle, which he managed, and one at Sunderland, which his son managed.

[6]Helen Taylor to Harriet Taylor Mill, Monday, 24 Nov 1856, LI, 8.

[7]Helen Taylor to Harriet Taylor Mill [LI 10] Tuesday [25 Nov 1856].

[8]Helen Taylor to Harriet Taylor Mill, Thursday, 27 November, 1856, LI, 13.

[9]*The Tragedy of Jane Shore* by Nicholas Rowe was an immediate success when it first appeared in 1714 despite its slight, if not silly, plot. When the play opens Edward IV has just died and his mistress, Jane Shore, is befriended against Gloster (the future Richard III) by Hastings only to be betrayed by her best friend, Alicia, who is in love with Hastings.

[10]Helen Taylor to Harriet Taylor Mill, Friday, 28 November 1856, LI, 15.

[11]Helen Taylor to Harriet Taylor Mill, Wednesday, 3 December 1856, LI, 24.

[12]Helen Taylor to Harriet Taylor Mill, Saturday, December 6 1856, LI, 30.

[13]Taylor uses "scene" for "act."

[14]Helen Taylor to Harriet Taylor Mill, Tuesday December 9 1856, LI, 34.

[15]Algernon Taylor to Harriet Taylor Mill, Wednesday, December 10 1856, LI, 35.

[16]This is the text of the newspaper cutting Taylor enclosed in her letter.

[17]*Jane Shore* is by Rowe; Miss Trevor does not get top billing even for the after piece.

[18]Helen Taylor to Harriet Taylor Mill, Wednesday, December 10 1856, LI, 36.

[19]Harriet Taylor Mill to Helen Taylor, Wednesday, 10 December 1856, LI, 37.

BOOKS

Gatrell, V.A.C. *The Hanging Tree: Execution and the English People 1770-1868.* Oxford: University Press, 1994, $55.00.

The history of criminal justice has been enriched by this solid, thorough study of a barbaric social phenomenon that survived in England well into the Victorian era. Gatrell explains why.

Mr. Gradgrind would disapprove of his method. We get much more than the facts here. Impelled by disgust and indignation, the author explores some questions that more delicate scholars have hitherto managed to avoid, such as the physiological responses of someone undergoing execution. He does not mince words: the verb "killed," for example, is used interchangeably with "executed" and "hanged." The book contends that "the law killed people who were powerless to prevent that outcome and whose bodies were dissolving in terror" (40).

Public hanging was abolished in England in 1868. But Gatrell demonstrates that social altruism is a fragile construct, dependent on security and prosperity. There is no guarantee that in tough, tense times our own society will not lapse into barbarism — as we know from the "bring back the death penalty" movement.

Readers of this book will be able to imagine in fair detail how a condemned prisoner felt as the hangman did his job. "Watched by thousands, they urinated, defecated, screamed, kicked, fainted, and choked as they died," Gatrell tells us in the preface. On the acquisition of this information, "I was nauseated," he confesses. "Yet I realized that my squeamishness could not be indulged" (vii). He felt compelled to examine and expose the suffering, the cruelty, the arbitrariness, and above all the popular culture behind the death penalty. To know how people in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries felt about it, he had to move in "closer to the choking, pissing, and screaming than taboo, custom, or comfort usually allow" (30).

Gatrell reinstates victims of hanging as human beings. He shows us Marie Antoinette squatting on the pavement in terror as she spied the cart waiting to convey her to the place of execution (38). He documents the attempt of a condemned murder in 1856 to commit suicide the night before his hanging and the subsequent bungling as his badly burned victim desperately resisted the hangman's efforts (606). And there is more. This book is not for the squeamish.

Readers will be able to imagine how spectators as well as victims felt. As the author tells us at the outset, he is at least as interested in deducing public perceptions as in pinning down what actually happened. We learn from him how ordinary people—labourers, artisans, shopkeepers—felt about execution, why they not only permitted but celebrated it. In his investigation, Gatrell scoured government, commercial, literary and visual records for clues. His sources include petitions for mercy, old statistical tables, and ballads and broadsides.

This eclectic book abounds with quotation from the likes of Dickens, Byron, Rousseau, Patmore, Wordsworth, Johnson, Blake, and Fielding. There are illustrations by Gericault, Hogarth, and Rowlandson. There is gossip about judges. The mass of carefully compiled detail is used as a sort of case for the prosecution in a trial of the justice system. Justice, in fact, is shown to be incidental to the system: deterrence and the illusion that society was under control were more pragmatic goals.

The system is convicted. Perhaps there will be an appeal. It seems to me unfair to apply standards of twentieth-century liber-

alism to a period in which such ideas were not current or even acceptable. After social reformers like J.S. Mill, Carlyle, and Dickens began to be listened to, the justice system did change, though admittedly slowly, in line with Gatrell's ideals.

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Stanley Weintraub, *Disraeli: A Biography*. New York: Truman Tally Books / Dutton, 1993. 688 pp. $ 30.00 (cloth).

Of all the Victorian political giants, Benjamin Disraeli would seem an appropriate subject for a new biography. His impeccable style, romantic image and multiple achievements as wit, novelist, Conservative party leader and Prime Minister give him an eternal interest. Disraeli has been well served by biographers. The first major treatment of Disraeli bordered on hagiography–the enormous six volume *Life of Disraeli* (1910-19) by W.F. Monypenny and G.E. Buckle. The modern biography which has set the standard for others to follow is Robert Blake's magisterial *Disraeli* (1966). Since that time, the Disraeli Project at Queen's University has been publishing Disraeli's letters with the fifth volume (covering the period 1848-51) appearing in 1993. Sarah Bradford's biography, *Disraeli* (1982) used the first two volumes of the published Disraeli letters and other previously overlooked English documentation. Jane Ridley's *The Young Disraeli* (1995) is an even more recent offering which examines the early years of Disraeli's life from 1804-46. Other less weighty biographical treatments of Disraeli abound.

In addition to full biographies, there has been a lively series of debates among historians over Disraeli's beliefs and politics. Disraeli's position as the creator of the modern Conservative party platform of patriotism and Empire has been evaluated by E.J. Feuchtwanger in *Disraeli, Democracy and the Tory Party* (1967) and by John Walton in *Disraeli and the Victorian Conservative Party* (1990). His commitment to social reform has been examined by Paul Smith in his book *Disraelian Conservatism and Social Reform* (1967) and has been recently re-evaluated in several articles by P.R. Ghosh and others. His tenure as party leader has been documented by Richard Shannon's *The Age of Disraeli, 1868-1881: the Rise of Tory Democracy* (1992), his volume in the Longman history of the Conservative party as well by Bruce Coleman in his book *Conservatism and the Conservative Party in Nineteenth Century Britain* (1988). Disraeli's political ideas have been examined by John Vincent in Oxford University Press's *Past Masters Series* (1990). In 1995, Anthony Wohl contributed new insights into the virulent anti-Semitism directed against Disraeli as Prime Minister between 1874-80 in an article in the *Journal of British Studies*. The work surrounding this enigmatic figure continues to flourish leaving a host of interesting issues for new biographers to pursue.

The major problem with Stanley Weintraub's recent biography of Disraeli is that he leaves all of these recent debates by the wayside. Weintraub starts from the uncomplicated premise that Disraeli's life was an "adventure" and thus is overwhelmed by the romantic and lyrical side of his subject's life. The bias towards non-political issues and the avoidance of recent historiographical debates presents the reader with a fully human Disraeli–bristling with *bon mots* and sparkling wit but ultimately adding little to our current understanding of this vital nineteenth century figure. Just as champagne is most enjoyable fresh out of the bottle and is far less pleasant the day after, Weintraub's book sparkles fresh off the page but leaves an unsettling feeling after it is finished. This is not to say that Weintraub's effort is entirely wasted. His major contribution is to re-emphasize Disraeli's humanity and the importance of

his Jewish origins. The book's shortcomings are the natural result of its author's approach–a lack of context, overly personalized explanations of complicated events and colourful personal tangents which Weintraub presents as new "biographical lenses."

Weintraub organizes his biography chronologically. There are four main sections centring on the various stages of Disraeli's life: youth and political apprentice (1804-37); "Rebel in the House" (1837-62); player in "The High Game" (1862-74) and autumnal figure in the "Elysian Fields" (1874-81). Weintraub's organization is undeniably elegant, and each chapter within the major sections is titled with a prosaic quotation of Disraeli's. The problem is that the periodization, like the entire biography, is overly romanticized. To label Disraeli a "rebel" as late as 1862 after he had been leader of the Conservative Party in the Commons for 13 years and served in high office twice as Chancellor of the Exchequer, albeit briefly, strains credibility. Similarly, to place Disraeli directly into the Elysian fields in 1874 when he had just won the first Conservative majority since 1841 hardly seems fair. The quote anchoring this section was not even made until Disraeli had been elevated to the House of Lords in 1876 as Earl of Beaconsfield–an event which lies three chapters into the section. Robert Blake's arrangement of Disraeli's life as "Early Years" (1804-46), "Front Bench" (1846-67), and "Top of the Greasy Pole" (1868-81) lacks romance but makes more sense.

Weintraub's romantic style of organization does help emphasize the book's strengths. As a "rebel" and youth, Disraeli's tangled love affairs, financial disasters, evolving political ideas and steady literary output are given full sway. The influence of his literary father is evoked as is his ancestral Judaism and their importance in the formulation of his identity and political philosophy. Weintraub is particularly effective in showing the relentless and steady anti-Semitism which dogged Disraeli at all stages of his career from youth to Prime Minister. Disraeli's triumph over such prejudice is portrayed as the result of his heroic temperament. Weintraub is also successful at showing the importance of his relationship with the wealthy Rothschild family for emotional and sometimes financial support. Disraeli's cultivation of older aristocratic women as benefactresses is also stressed as a key to his rise to the top. Weintraub also gives considerable attention to Disraeli's genuinely happy marriage to the eccentric but loving Mary Anne Wyndham Lewis, whose initial attractions included the money needed to help cover her future husband's substantial debts.

The problem with this romantic image of Disraeli is that he is portrayed as existing in a historiographical void. No effort is made to examine the current historiography, a fact compounded by Weintraub's lack of footnotes and reliance on dated memoirs as the only sources to complement his assiduous cultivation of the original source material. This technique waters down the political and social context in which Disraeli operated. For example, that Disraeli encountered anti-Semitic prejudice throughout his life is undeniable, but Weintraub under-emphasizes other difficulties his background raised among Conservatives including his lack of a landed aristocratic background, his artistic aspirations as a novelist and his initial lack of political experience. In time, these factors would become advantages but this was much less evident during his battles with Peel. Similarly, Weintraub's use of contemporary American observers to provide a new biographical "lens" is far less innovative than the author would like us to believe (408, 452, 590). His use of the Gladstone diaries borders on the puerile. This important source is mined primarily to gather evidence of Gladstone's nocturnal walks through London's streets to "save" prostitutes which adds an unwelcome and unoriginal dimension of prurience to the biography. At one point, Weintraub

describes the "unwittingly masturbatory language" which Gladstone used to justify his "rescue" missions (445). Weintraub over-emphasizes such salacious details and extends them to Disraeli himself. An extremely speculative chapter suggests on uneven and faulty evidence that Disraeli sired an illegitimate daughter with an unknown mother, and had a son with Lady Dorothy Nevill (419-36). Weintraub admits the evidence is "plausible without being conclusive," which is certainly overstating the case (436).

In focusing so strongly on these themes, Weintraub manages to under-emphasize almost every general election fought by Disraeli—surely an odd treatment for a biography of a politician. Disraeli's achievements in office are also given insufficient consideration. His efforts and thoughts about social reform (502-03; 529-31), the Established Church (364-65) and popular imperialism (504-06) are given cursory treatment despite their re-emergence in recent historiography. The sole exception to this systematic neglect is Disraeli's role as a statesman in foreign affairs. Perhaps because they fit his "romantic" image, his role in the purchase of shares in the Suez Canal (540-46), the elevation of Victoria as Empress of India (549-53), the Bulgarian atrocities and the Congress of Berlin (564-98) are given their due attention although once again recent historiography is ignored. Besides neglecting or under-emphasizing key aspects of Disraeli's life, Weintraub makes several factual errors, most notably mislabelling a famous Punch cartoon of Victoria being offered the title of Empress of India by Disraeli in vizier's garb (560).

Overall, Weintraub's book appearing when it does is a disappointment. If its purpose is to entertain and show the romantic side of the life of a famous novelist and adventurer who just happened to become Prime Minister, then it is a qualified success. If it is truly a serious attempt to re-examine a multi-faceted individual - novelist, wit, party leader, political thinker, Prime Minister and statesman, it is a failure. "Life is a masquerade," quotes Weintraub approvingly from his subject. Unfortunately, he took these words too closely to heart when writing this biography. For serious scholars, Blake's work remains unsurpassed.

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Priscilla L. Walton. *Patriarchal Desire and Victorian Discourse: A Lacanian Reading of Anthony Trollope's Palliser Novels*. Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1995.

The much advertised death of grand narratives notwithstanding, the title of Priscilla Walton's new book promises more than local knowledge. The sub-title qualifies the grand design by focusing on Lacanian forms of attention and access to Trollope's Palliser novels, but the book is nonetheless ambitious in its efforts to connect the personal and the political, theory and practice, while engaging with issues of politics and agency in contemporary theory (feminist, psychoanalytic, and poststructuralist) as well as with Trollope's complex relation to the ideological work of patriarchy in the Victorian period.

Drawing first on the *Autobiography* in order to locate Trollope historically, Walton represents Trollope as an outsider (by virtue of his father's financial failure and his problematic identification with his successful mother) driven by class to desire a better place in Victorian society. His prolificness as a writer, in Walton's account, becomes an avenue to the social inside, his social position affording him a privileged view of social inequality. In the following six chapters Walton moves chronologically through each of the six Palliser novels before offering brief concluding remarks. Her readings of the novels, and especially

of their representation of the female characters, focus on the role of contradiction in putting women in their place in the interests of male subjectivity. The Palliser novels, in this reading, function both to naturalize patriarchy and to expose its dependence on women's subordination.

That Trollope has attracted renewed interest in recent years (BBC productions of Barsetshire and Palliser novels as well as four biographies in as many years) seems to Walton a predictable part of the backlash against women in the 1980s and 1990s and efforts to reglamorize the domestic as women's proper sphere. Thus, Trollope's novels make for congenial reading in an all too familiar ideological terrain. Like Elaine Showalter and Kate Flint, Walton sees gender conflict as a function of fear of women's powers and as a bridge between the Victorian period and the later twentieth century. Thus, Walton makes much of the ideological contradictions of Trollope, arguing for his importance "if not for literary then for cultural study" (4). His writings, she claims, can usefully consolidate women's power even as they disclose women's crucial role in traditional social organization.

While many theorists privilege desire, Lacan is "best suited to an explanation of the cultural effects of desire in patriarchal society" consolidated by humanist ideology, because Lacanian psychoanalytic theory "posits the subject as divided and disrupted, already driven by desire to attain the coherence and wholeness it promises. . . . . The power dynamic relies upon the subject's desire for inclusion in order to support the social stratification it engenders. . . . Although the subject desires to fulfil itself, desire, like language, effects only a perpetual deferral" (6-7). Although Walton shares many feminists' disquiet about the exclusion of women from the Lacanian Symbolic, she nevertheless finds Lacan useful in critiquing "an existing structure, if not as a basis for revising that structure" (8). What I find perplexing is the turn to Lacanian psychoanalysis by feminist scholars theorizing questions of agency and politics and making claims for historical specificity ("my reading of Trollope's development is grounded in a specifically Victorian context" [13]). Consistent with Lacan's "A woman is a symptom," Walton argues that "Rather than viewing the female characters [of *Phineas Finn*] as somehow flawed, it is perhaps more useful to perceive them as symptomatic of a flawed system" (52). However, such Lacanian readings deflect attention from the historically changing (and hence changeable) features of the public past, the distinct determining conditions of changing subjectivities, to the structure of the human psyche and an invariable dynamic as determined and determining as the narrative economy it engenders: "an economy of conscious and unconscious systems in various stages of disunity–a text system governed, as Lacan shows, by metaphor" (10).

While Walton's sense of the doubleness of discourse yields some subtle readings of multivalent texts, the interpretation is confined by binary oppositions. Readings of implicit or explicit levels of signification pursue the lack that propels narrative and the political turn of the Palliser novels. She is thus able to reconcile conflicting interpretations of *Can You Forgive Her?*: "Overtly, through its representation of female characters, the novel provides a sympathetic evaluation of the predicament in which Victorian women are placed, as Polhemus and Levine suggest. Covertly, this text works to rationalize and reaffirm the position of women within the Victorian social structure it depicts" (22). Walton identifies unambiguously "the political impetus" and "the motivating force behind Trollope's Palliser Novels" as "located in an effort to disenfranchise women" (4)—before the fact, presumably! And her terms are so generalized and abstract as to obscure the very questions of agency and history that interest her. Not only is patriarchal desire

constructed within a universalist model, but Victorian discourse betokens a singularity (when it does not solidify as "masculinist discourse" [162] or as Trollope's use of language) rather than a complex set of competing and intersecting practices.

Nor is Walton much interested in the modes or conditions of production of texts that shaped the books and their readers. This despite citing Michael Sadleir on *An Autobiography* as a "queer abrupt textbook of the mechanics and economics of novel-writing" (11). There are more interesting stories to be told of Trollope's incredible productivity, his mass production in a range of formats and genres (political, satirical, romantic, comic, etc.) and his engagement with the economics of publication, his titles appearing under the auspices of no fewer than sixteen different publishers and yielding an income rivalled only by Charles Dickens and George Eliot. Arguably too, Trollope is not only a social outsider but in a very real sense part of the social inside in his relation to the Post Office and civil administration as well as in his writing, and its role in the construction of social subjects during the years of the novels' production between 1864 and 1880. History remains a largely unarticulated set of practices underlying texts and the invariably "dominant Victorian cultural dynamic" announced on the book-jacket.

Moreover, Walton's own narrative subscribes to steady progress of a familiar Victorian strain in industrial, scientific, historical, and political discourse. *Phineas Finn,* for example, provides "a more complex examination of the Victorian patriarchal power dynamic than either *An Autobiography* or *Can you Forgive Her?*" (42). Still, Walton is grappling with important issues and she leaves us much to ponder and convey down other roads not taken here.

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Athena Vrettos. *Somatic Fictions: Imagining Illness in Victorian Culture.* Stanford University Press, 1995. 250 pp.

With the skill of a consummate pathologist, Vrettos painstakingly dissects nineteenth-century British and American fiction, diaries, medical treatises, and health advice manuals in order to focus on the centrality of illness. Each sliver of text is placed under a microscope and looked at until Vrettos sees what she wants to see. New meanings are discovered, and interpreted by Vrettos to give credence to her analysis of the "complex interaction between ... medical theory and narrative discourse" (13) and the way they challenged and shaped stereotypes of gender, class and race. According to Vrettos, the Victorian middle classes controlled their world "through a process of physiological and pathological definition" (2), and only she has the evidence to prove it. In presenting the evidence Vrettos encounters problems, as did the Victorians.

The introduction is extremely detailed and prepares the reader for what is to come. Each point Vrettos makes is smashed home with the force of iron against bone. In examining the historical assumptions and contemporary systems of belief that imbued the Victorians and caused them to give social meaning to sickness and health, narrative becomes "a crucial component of cultural history" (2) for Vrettos. At this point I too began to have problems: surely Vrettos is stating the obvious. Vrettos has set herself a near impossible research project, but help is at hand. The theories of Michel Foucault assist, as do all those impressive "specialists" cited in the thirty-four pages of notes accompanying the text.

Chapter 1, titled "Body Language and the Poetics of Illness," focusses on the human body as text and opens with an interesting quotation from Herbert Spencer, concerning the abilities of the female, not only to disguise her feelings but also to interpret

"the natural language of feeling" (19). Vrettos describes the focus of the chapter as "the gendering of body language, exploring disputes over the legibility or illegibility of the female body and women's ability to produce and interpret somatic texts" (14). Whereas Spencer is easy to read and understand, Vrettos does nothing but obfuscate as she arduously tries to transform fiction to fact and vice versa. After a detailed analysis of Spencer's views and those of influential medical men of the period, the emphasis shifts to the works of Alcott, Gaskell and Charlotte Brontë and their references to somatic communication.

Chapter 2, "From Neurosis to Narrative," examines how perceived disjunctions between body and mind (as in the case of nervous disease) inspired a renewed faith in language as a means of reconstructing the self" (15). Using the diary of Alice James, along with novels by Charlotte Brontë and George Eliot, Vrettos tries to prove that those suffering from nervous disorders were perhaps trying to explain the effect of spiritual and supernatural events by means of personal symptoms. Although the idea seemed far-fetched to me, Vrettos is convincing.

Chapter 3, "Neuromimesis and the Medical Gaze," focuses on what Victorian doctors (all male) recognized as the neurotic imitation of disease. Vrettos argues that this condition served to exclude women from the medical profession, because according to men, they were unable to distance themselves either clinically or emotionally. Victorian sickroom scenes as depicted by George du Maurier, Harriet Beecher Stowe and George Eliot are used to substantiate the argument. In this chapter, Vrettos presents her evidence well and her interpretations are logical. Consequently the pace picks up and the reader's flagging interest in what Vrettos has to say is renewed.

Chapter 4, "The National Health," emphasizes health rather than disease, and I concur with the view shared by many Victorians, "that the pursuit of health constituted an act of patriotism" (124) both at home, for the privileged healthy, and abroad, for the savages who were "fortunate" to be infected by the patriotic and imperial white male Victorians. Sir Duncan Gibb of the London Anthropological Society idealised the capacious chest that could expand to fit the expanses of Britain's empire [which] matched his vision of a country that flexed its physical and political muscles in unison (124). Vrettos takes this one step further, the lungs become quite literally a measure of nationalistic inspiration, helping to construct a somatic fiction by which fitness and empire were conceptually and ideologically linked (124). After reading this I was confronted by a vision consisting of the millions of smoke-filled lungs that are to be found in Britain today. What would Gibb have made of them? I found Chapter 4 by far the most entertaining and readable. It moves between the lush green playing fields of England and the vast frontiers of the British empire, as Vrettos details the Victorian obsessions of health and the ideal of "muscular Christianity." The idea that national identity was a reflection of those citizens, fit in mind and body, is a recurring theme in Victorian fiction. Physical fitness, intellectual superiority, and biological destiny appear in the works of Meredith, Haggard, Conrad, and even Stoker, whose protagonist Dracula is contrasted with Haggard's Ayesha: Vrettos cleverly uses them as "appropriate symbols for an era obsessed with bodily measurement and evolutionary survival" (155). In her introduction Vrettos informs the reader that the questions addressed in each of the four chapters frequently overlap and double back on themselves. This serves as an accurate warning and should be heeded. Although this is a very thorough book I found it dense, full of self-important verbosity, with points stuck in chloresterol-choked arterial passages. The antidote prescribed is to be found in chapter 3: "what Lucy Snowe and Caroline Hel-

stone...needed...[was] a good long walk" (131). As I stayed with Vrettos to the end, reading the conclusion and final notes, I was reminded of the following, "[t]o respond to a narrative emotionally or physically may produce illness; conversely to be ill is to produce narrative" (2), and as my head throbbed I began to write this review.

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Bernard Semmel. *George Eliot and the Politics of National Inheritance.* Oxford University Press, 1994. pp. 168. Paper, $25.50 cdn.

Bernard Semmel has written a fine book about the intellectual influences shaping George Eliot's novels. The work is especially valuable for all of us who could not, if asked by students, have said more than ten words about David Friedrich Strauss and Ludwig Feuerbach et al., and who, rightly, eschew the reading of encyclopaedias of philosophy as being close to reading resumes of the plots of operas. George Eliot and the Politics of National Inheritance pulls together the ideas that determined mid- nineteenth-century idealism, by focussing on one (not very coherent) thinker. One may not agree with all Semmel's interpretations and conclusions about Eliot's writings, but one's disagreement will be much better informed.

Semmel stresses the tradition to which Eliot's novels belonged:

> Needing to earn money, Eliot chose to write romances–mostly historical romances–which Victorian readers were eager to buy. The novels of... Sir Walter Scott, and...Edward Bulwer-Lytton, had proved immensely popular. Eliot herself was among Scott's admirers. She wrote a friend that "I worship Scott so devoutly," and Lewes declared that "Scott is to her an almost sacred name" (p. 4).

This quotation illustrates two of the great strengths of Semmel's book: his constant emphasis on context and his impressive bolstering of his statements with convincing excerpts from Eliot's letters, books and friends.

A third strength is the clarity of his focus. His theme and his conclusion are clearly laid before the reader:

> In this study I am concerned with Eliot's political imagination–with her politics of inheritance–which, I will argue, was an aspect of what may be called her moral imagination. Eliot's efforts to convert Scott's romances to her own purposes led her to conclusions concerning society, religion, and politics not too different from Scott's liberal-conservative compromise, at bottom a decision not to discard the inherited food of the national past while attempting to shed its clinging evil. In such a compromise lay difficulties from which she could never entirely extricate herself (p. 19).

To extricate herself from these difficulties, Eliot would have had, among other things, to have extricated herself from her Positivist friends, who had shown a rare loyalty when she left home and church, and especially when she moved in with Lewes. Her radical free-thinking days were in fact quite short but her friendships were long and prevented her denying positivism even when she came to feel the chill of the brave new utopias. She remained faithful to an ill-defined religion of humanity but the inheritance of family and national traditions were paramount in her beliefs, and indeed the more important to her the more her religious inheritance disintegrated.

Chapter by chapter and novel by novel, Semmel traces these themes. In Chapter 1, he discusses the centrality in *The Mill on the Floss, Silas Marner* and *Felix Holt* of the theme of inheritance and the disinherited. In Chapter 2 (for me the most valuable

chapter) Semmel confronts the perennial problems of free will and determinism or necessarianism. A closely controlled discussion interweaves the thought of Strauss, Feuerbach, Spinoza, Hegel, W.H. Riehl, Calvin, Comte, Burke, Carlyle, Coleridge, Mill, Bentham, Disraeli, H. T. Buckle, "Janet's Repentance," *Adam Bede, Middlemarch, Daniel Deronda,* and various of Eliot's articles, into about as whole a cloth as I am ever likely to be wrapped in. This tour de force is only twenty-five pages long. Chapter 3, "The Positivist Novel", concentrating mostly on *Adam Bede, Felix Holt,* and *Romola,* not only threw considerable light on these works but also did much to relieve me of having any longer to try to understand the logic holding the English positivists, their ideas and their actions together. There was very little, if any.

The final chapters explore the politics of national inheritance and compromise in the great late novels, *Middlemarch* and *Daniel Deronda,* and also disinheritance, especially in Eliot's one dramatic work, *The Spanish Gypsy.* These last chapters contained the only discussion that I found unconvincing and a little disrupting: the question whether Eliot thought she herself had Jewish blood seems to me to be irrelevant to her sympathetic treatment of those whose problem of tradition was heightened by their having a nation but no country.

Throughout these extended discussions, Semmel never loses his focus; his conclusion echoes his introduction:

> Eliot, as well as some liberals such as Mill and Spencer, was prepared to see great value in the inherited national tradition that many liberals, no less than the Positivists, were willing to discard.... She favoured an invigorating cultural diversity over the regimented uniformity that characterized the utopias of the nineteenth-century's political prophets. And consequently she chose to stress that part of her beliefs that was most overlooked by her circle and the liberal reading public that constituted her principal audience. In doing so she became one of the more sensitive and articulate exponents of the social-conservative politics of tradition—and of the politics of national inheritance (p. 143).

Inevitably in a complex argument packed into one hundred and sixty-eight pages there are some elisions; given more space, her "liberal reading public" and her "social-conservative politics of tradition" might not have appeared so closely juxtaposed.

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Revising the Mythology: Juliet Barker on the Brontës: Juliet Barker. *The Brontës.* Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1994. 1003 pp. Paper, $20.00

Juliet Barker's recent history of the Brontë family is notable in several ways. It discusses concurrently the biographies of writers who have in the past been treated separately or hierarchically and so makes possible a serious attempt to consider the remarkable confluence of talent in the family. It revises traditional stereotypes of the three sisters, and, more significantly, it rehabilitates the reputations of both Patrick and Branwell Brontë by presenting clear cases for their achievements.

Yet despite Barker's improvement in historical methodology, the biography ultimately remains faithful to the assumptions and tastes of its main predecessor, Winifred Gérin's *Charlotte Brontë: the Evolution of Genius,* and of the Brontë Society and its aficionados. With love of picturesque parish churches, local lore and domestic detail, and suppositions about the private thoughts of family members, this thousand-paged book still refers the artistic achievement of the family to thinly-veiled autobiography with scant considera-

tion of intellectual, aesthetic or artistic issues. It is sprightly written, but we are still waiting for a *biographia literaria* of the Brontës.

Barker, a medieval historian and former curator of the Brontë Parsonage Museum, states her intention to redress the methodological weaknesses of previous biographies and to dispel unwarranted stereotypes about the family members; for the most part, she uses primary historical documents such as newspapers, census reports, parish registers, and manuscripts where possible. Commendably, she carefully avoids relying upon publications clouded by their association with the forger T.J. Wise and the proprietary businessman Clement Shorter.

Barker is thus able to provide an admirable account of the exceptional labours of Patrick Brontë, through his onerous parish responsibilities, his heterodox social activism, his engagement in political and church controversies, and his newspaper polemics. A keen intellect who followed not only politics but scientific and medical discoveries (these Barker slights), Patrick was also an enlightened educator. It is to him as the primary teacher of his children that we need to look as we consider the constellation of remarkable talent in his household. Barker points out, for instance, how his daughters' novels display a highly unusual (for women) familiarity with Greek and Latin. Her evidence shows to a father striving to provide a wealth of opportunities for his children to think critically and analytically and to experience art in many forms. Only now are these points becoming central tenets in public education in Ontario.

Barker also demonstrates a long-overdue respect for Branwell's accomplishments. She has found thirteen poems published in the *Halifax Guardian* (five years before his sisters published their *Poems*), a propensity for political activism, and a probable illegitimate child. She highlights his translations of Horace's *Odes,* which are deserving of critical attention in their own right, and she has convincingly refuted previous depictions of him as a thoroughly besotted wastrel. The man who was burned in effigy after an election was clearly not the drug-addled alcoholic he is most often remembered to be.

Barker's depiction of the Haworth community also provides a much-needed revision. It stands in sharp contrast to the rude, rustic hinterland in Elizabeth Gaskell's masterpiece, *The Life of Charlotte Brontë*. Gaskell was anxious to excuse those elements in the novels which were said to scandalize polite society in southern England. Consequently, Gaskell demonized the community in order to exonerate Charlotte, and this has led to a denigrated appreciation of the Brontës' cultural environment. Barker identifies many music concerts and art exhibits, both through major church organ recitals, public performances by such renown performers as Paganini and Johann Strauss (whose orchestra included Franz Liszt and Felix Mendelssohn), the Philharmonic Societies in Haworth and Keighley, and clear access to the Leeds art world–all a far cry from the incivilities, eccentricities, boorishness and blood sports which Gaskell patronizingly recounted. (Questioning the merit of such productions is irrelevant; in the early education of the imagination, it is the frequency and variety of experiences which are important.) It is, however, a pity that Barker does not make the connection between this education of the imagination and the Brontë genius when she discusses their writing or selects material for the biography.

At the other extreme of human production, Barker's description of the water and sanitation system in Haworth–no sewers, few covered drains, surface water mixing with the wastes of households and privies in open gutters down the streets–leads to the sober recognition that the Brontë bereavements, however horrifying, were not unusual or extreme for the time or the com-

munity; Barker reports that "forty-one per cent of children died before reaching their sixth birthday and the average age at death was twenty-five" (96). She does not, however, consider how this grim social reality connects with one of the hallmarks of the Brontë mythology, the sentimental exorcism of victimage.

Readers who are wedded to St. Charlotte of Perpetual Sufferance will take umbrage at Barker's portrayal of Charlotte; the judgmental tone, however, is simply a function of the moral imperative in traditional Brontë biography. The facts Barker marshalls clearly show an elder sister who wielded great influence and even control over her siblings' lives and who probably rightfully stands condemned for destroying her sisters' manuscripts. It is a salutary lesson to understand Charlotte as an ambitious woman. Barker is, however, less successful in delineating Ann and Emily in terms which do justice to their literary achievements. The absence of any reference to Elizabeth Langland's groundbreaking biography of Ann, *Ann Brontë: The Other One* (1989), is a serious oversight which suggests how closely Barker is herself enmeshed in the traditional approach. Her references include only those works which fall within the fold of the Brontë Society.

Despite the significant discoveries, then, at heart, this biography simply reworks with greater consistency of method previous assumptions about the family. Like Gérin before her, Barker often fictionalizes where no evidence exists. For instance, when we are told that Patrick, initially unable to obtain a curate, "must have been doubly grateful to visiting clergyman friends" (216), or, "In handing over his daughters into Madame Heger's care, Patrick must have felt a certain satisfaction in the arrangements" (381), we are in the realm of fiction, the biographer consciously trying to create sympathy and empathy for a character; no historical evidence is adduced to support these suppositions about Patrick's thoughts.

Furthermore, Barker still falls prey to the autobiographical fallacy, despite her protests against autobiographical dredging as crudely subjective. The achievement of the Brontë novels as art is the paradoxical tension between two contradictory features: the thoroughness with which they realize Coleridge's aesthetic standard, the "willing suspension of disbelief," and a concurrent, subtle undercutting of that standard, in order to stimulate readers' critical reading faculties. Barker and the traditionalists need to heed Charlotte's reprimand to George Henry Lewes, when he cautioned her to restrict her writing to personal experience only: "... is not the real experience of each individual very limited?"

Barker tells us that Elizabeth Hastings, the heroine of the Angrian juvenilia, was endowed, like Jane Eyre, with many of Charlotte's own characteristics (299). We are told that Charlotte "recalled her own first impressions of Belgium through the eyes of her narrator, William Crimsworth" (379). Barker should compare the passage to the impressions of Belgium given by Sterne's Sentimental Traveller. Jane Eyre's declaration of equality allows Charlotte "Through the medium of her creation ... to at last [be] able to articulate all the pent-up emotion which had been fermenting in her soul" (511). The discovery of Caroline's long-lost mother in *Shirley* is discussed only in terms of the early deaths of the Brontës' mother, Maria Branwell, and then of the elder daughters, Maria and Elizabeth Brontë. And quite astoundingly Barker uses the same quotation which Winnifred Gérin used in her biography to characterise an event in Charlotte's life; both biographers quote Lucy Snowe's passage of the English channel in *Villette* to theorise an equally frightening passage for Charlotte herself (410). Barker's note does attribute the comparison to Gérin, but it stands as only one of the most astonishing

ways in which this biography lives symbiotically with traditional Brontë studies.

There are, then, many reasons for welcoming yet another Brontë biography. Juliet Barker deserves much commendation for her fine, painstaking scholarship into the murky depths of Brontë mythology. But she is not critic enough; she does not reevaluate the aesthetic or ideological assumptions of that mythology. Perhaps if this book breathed some sense of recent critical controversies over literary production–one need not ascribe to any of our current literary theories to appreciate how they have expanded the horizons of literary study–a truly seminal biography would have been possible.

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