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EDITORIAL REMARKS

I am very happy to take over, from Jean O'Grady, the honour of editing the *Victorian Studies Association of Ontario Newsletter*. Dr. O'Grady established a standard difficult to match. She has been tactful as well as vigorous in her pursuit of articles and book reviews, and she has been very skilful at matching the reviewer to the book. During her term, the *Newsletter* could be relied upon to appear twice a year, without delay, and to provide news of colleagues and of Victorian events, important reviews, and interesting articles. Dr. O'Grady has served the Victorian Studies Association not just the past four-and-a-half years as editor, but for eight years altogether, having been Secretary-Treasurer immediately before her appointment as *Newsletter* editor. And her appearance in the present issue as a reviewer demonstrates that the association continues.

NEWS AND QUERIES

ELEGANT EDITIONS—ASPECTS OF VICTORIAN BOOK DESIGN is in progress from 19 January to 31 March at the Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library at the University of Toronto. "Elegant Editions" is an exhibition of books selected from the Ruari McLean Collection of Victorian Book Design and Colour Printing in the Robertson Davies Library at Massey College by Marie Elena Korey. A scholarly catalogue (also elegant) has been published and is available at the exhibition for \$20.00.

THE JUVENILIA PRESS is an enterprise that combines scholarship with pedagogy. It is designed to publish editions of early works by known writers, in a simple and engaging format, with exacting scholarly standards, and with student involvement. Authors of current volumes include Jane Austen at 13 and 16 (*Jack & Alice* and "*Amelia Webster*" and "*The Three Sisters*"), Charlotte Brontë at 13 (*The Twelve Adventurers: A Romance*), and Lady Mary Pierrepont (later Wortley Montagu) at 14 (*Indamora to Lindamira*). Authors of volumes in progress include Evelyn Waugh, George Eliot and Jane Austen. For further information, contact Juliet McMaster, Department of English, University of Alberta, Edmonton, Alta., Canada T6G 2E5.

J. P. ELLENS (Redeemer College, Ancaster) has published *Religious Routes to Gladstonian Liberalism: The Church Rate Conflict in England and Wales 1832-1868* (Penn State Press, 1994).

JEAN O'GRADY gave a talk entitled "Margaret Addison and Annesley Hall" on 7 March in the Victoria College Lecture Series DAVID SHAW (Victoria College, University of Toronto) has published *Elegy and Paradox: Testing the Conventions* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994), and "Elegy and Theory: Is Historical and Critical Knowledge Possible?," *Modern Language Quarterly* (1994), vol. 55, 1-16.

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CONFERENCE NOTES

The 1995 Victorian Studies Association Conference will be held on Saturday 8 April in the Oakham Lounge at Ryerson. (Registration begins at 9:30 a.m.) Michael Millgate, University Professor Emeritus of the University of Toronto, is our first speaker and will address us on the subject of Hardy and his wives. The title of his talk is "Reader, we married him: Emma, Florence, and Thomas Hardy." The author of many well-known biographical, editorial and critical works on Hardy and Faulkner, Professor Millgate has most recently published *Testamentary Acts: Browning, Tennyson, James, Hardy* (Oxford, 1992) and *Thomas Hardy's "Studies, specimens &c." notebook* (Oxford, 1994). His edition of the letters of Florence and Emma Hardy is forthcoming. In the afternoon, Stefan Collini, Reader in Intellectual History and English Literature, and Fellow of Clare Hall, Cambridge, will give a paper entitled, "After Arnold: the literary critic as social critic." Professor Collini has written extensively about intellectual life in Britain in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Among his recent publications are *Public Moralists: Political Thought and Intellectual Life in Britain 1850-1930* (Oxford, 1991) and *Matthew Arnold: A Critical Portrait* (Clarendon Paperbacks, 1994). There will as usual be a break between the morning and afternoon sessions for sherry, lunch, the annual general meeting, and entertainment. This year we are to be entertained by John Huston, a Toronto actor who has given widely-acclaimed impersonations of Dickens impersonating himself.

Jill Matus
President, VSAO

A CONFERENCE ON "CONTEXTS OF VICTORIAN SCIENCE" will be held from Friday 19 May to Sunday 21 May at York University. Scheduled speakers at present

include Alison Winter, Martin Fichman, James Paradis, Evelleen Richards, Joan Richards, Margaret Schabas, Harriet Ritvo, Paul Fayter, Douglas Lorimer, Ann Shteir, James Moore, Bernard Lightman, Simon Schaffer, Jennifer Tucker, Graeme Gooday, Bruce Hunt, Richard Jarrell, Jane Camerini, Frank Turner, Barbara Gates, and George Levine. The conference will focus on the social and cultural contexts of science in England from about 1830 to 1900, especially as they shaped definitions of knowledge, the practice of science, and the communication of science to diverse audiences. To obtain a brochure with further information contact Professor Bernard Lightman, S932 Ross, Office of the Dean of Arts, York University, 4700 Keele Street, North York, Ontario M3J 1P3 (e-mail: Lightman@vm2.yorku.ca).

THE VICTORIAN STUDIES ASSOCIATION OF WESTERN CANADA holds its twenty-fourth annual meeting at the University of Saskatchewan at Saskatoon, 28-30 September 1995. Guest speakers will be Dr. Mary Poovey, Professor of English at Princeton University, and Dr. Deborah Cherry, Senior Lecturer in the History of Art, University of Manchester. For further information contact Dr. Joy Dixon, Secretary-Treasurer VSAWC, Department of History, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, B.C. V6T 1R9.

THE RESEARCH SOCIETY FOR VICTORIAN PERIODICALS will hold its annual conference at Old College, University of Edinburgh, 11-13 July 1995. It will be an interdisciplinary conference on the role of nineteenth-century media in the construction of cultural identity. Issues to be discussed include: the metropolitan and the provincial; the local and the national; paradigms of reading the press; research methodologies and resources. For further information contact Dr. Laurel Brake, Centre for Extra-Mural Studies, Birkbeck College, 26 Russell Square, London WC1B 5DQ.

* * *

Two Old Women Who Cut a Sorry Figure: A Rejected Footnote

John M. Robson
University Professor Emeritus

Working on my *Marriage or Celibacy? A Victorian Dilemma*, which centres on a series of letters and leaders in the *Daily Telegraph* in 1868, I paused over the remark in a letter of 6 July from *A Few True Girls of the Period*, that no extended comment was necessary on "the two old women who have cut such a sorry figure in the eyes of the public lately, who shall here be nameless." That to any dedicated footnoter is an irresistible challenge, and I trotted happily down the road that led to Jane Lyon and Mary Tucker Borradaile, whose sorry figures have been lost to the public eye since then. There may have been other candidates for the epithet, but these are what I found—and they fit the bill. The resulting note, however, was too bulky by modern standards of relevant concision to be included in my book, and I, wishing to brighten the public eye slightly, offer it to you here.

In fact, Jane Lyon is not quite lost to memory, though even those learned in Browning matters might have forgotten her name. It appears in biographical literature in chapter titles, "Lyon v. Home" and "Daniel in the Lyon's Den," that may have given enough clue: Daniel Home is the original, you may recall, of Robert Browning's "Mr. Sludge, the Medium," whose charms might have made Elizabeth Barrett Browning cut a sorry public figure.

The chapter titles appear in two biographies of Daniel Dunglas Home, Horace Wyndham's *Mr. Sludge, the Medium, Being the Life and Adventures of Daniel*

Dunglas Home (London: Bles, 1937), and Jean Burton's *Heyday of a Wizard: Daniel Home the Medium* (London: Harrap, 1948). A lesser and less cheerful account of Jane Lyon is to be found in *D. D. Home: His Life and Mission* (London: Trübner, 1888), 250–74, by Mme Dunglas Home, the medium's second wife, who, like his first, was a Russian (minor) aristocrat.

Home (1833–86), born near Edinburgh (where the name is pronounced "Hume" or "Hoom"), and brought up in the U.S., returned to the U.K. in 1855, and then spent four years in Europe, marrying Alexandrina de Kroll in St. Petersburg before returning to London to practise his craft. His wife had died before he was set up in the early 1860s as "resident secretary" of the Spiritual Athenaeum, 22 Sloane St. (where, coincidentally, Cagliostro had once lived). Some time in 1866 he met Jane Lyon, a widow, who sought communication with her dead husband, Charles. His spirit, speaking through the medium of Home, persuaded her "to adopt Home as her son and place him in a position of independence suitable to his rank in life as her adopted son" (*The Times*, 22 April, 1868, p. 10). As a result, she transferred to him stock in the amount of £30,000, and arranged mortgage securities for another £30,000 between October 1866 and January 1867, and by deed poll in December 1866 he assumed the name D. D. Home Lyon.

But other voices were heard, and in June 1867, Lyon filed a bill in Chancery, charging "extortion and undue influence." Home was arrested, but freed when he deposited in Court of Chancery a deed of

gift covering the whole £60,000. The trial came on in April 1868, with the result that she recovered her money, but had to pay costs. (Hume restored his financial health by public readings à la Dickens, and remarried in 1871.) The ten-day trial was very newsworthy, being reported under headings such as "Daniel and the Lyon" and "Daniel in the Lyon's Den" (see *The Times*, 22 Apr. to 2 May 1868). Wyndham remarks (172) that the trial was a better "draw" than the other noted events of the time, the trial of Governor Eyre and the Fenian outrages; admission to the court was by ticket only, and queues formed early.

And the public eye remained focussed on the pair, for Lyon v. Home immediately became Home v. Lyon, in which Home tried unsuccessfully to recover jewels and clothing he said he had given Lyon (*The Times*, 20 and 21 July 1868). So in early July, Jane Lyon was in the minds of readers of the *Daily Telegraph* such as *A Few True Girls of the Period*.

As in that case, so in that of Mary Tucker Borradaile, the other person involved is better remembered, and it might be that *A Few True Girls of the Period* were also alluding to Borradaile's then notorious antagonist, Sarah Rachel Levenson, known as Madame Rachel, for they both cut sorry figures. Their connection was known to newspaper readers at the time because Mrs. Borradaile had been jailed for a debt of £15 to Mme Rachel, and the latter had accused two men of assaulting her and her daughter Leonti, "enamellers' of 50 Maddox St.," in connection with the debt. (In that dismissed case the magistrate had expressed the opinion that Rachel was, on her own evidence, mad.) (See *The Times*, 10, 17, and 27 June, 1868.)

Just how sorry their behaviour had been emerged in the trial in September of that year, whose details would make "silly" a better adjective than "sorry," and which excited fervid journalistic attention. Any-

one interested in these little explored aspects of high Victorian life will find delight in an anonymous shilling pamphlet that merits reprinting, *The Extraordinary Life and Trial of Madame Rachel at the Central Criminal Court, Old Bailey, London, on the 22, 23, 24, and 25 September, 1868* (London, [1868]).

Born in 1806, daughter of "a great humorist" called Russell, Rachel grew up to marry one Jacob Moses, who unfortunately was lost at sea in 1859 homeward bound from Australia (with or without her is not known by me), and later married her present husband, one Phillip Levison or Levenson (many of the names in this tale are given in various forms). Some years earlier, she and her family (numerous, but the relations are left uncertain in the account) had been struck with fever, and her head was shaved, causing her great distress because "her fine flowing locks were truly beautiful." A doctor gave her a "receipe" for growing it back. It worked; she got the recipe from him—and thus began her celebrated career of "cheating old age out of its rights" by restoring hair, colouring grey hair, removing wrinkles, and making women, in the title words of the pamphlet she published in 1863, *Beautiful For Ever* (price 2s 6d). (Many of the secrets are revealed in the pamphlet mentioned above.) She invited "all ladies who have become wall-flowers to place themselves under her hands," promising to "remove all personal defects, put a bloom on old visages, so as to make them look young again as in their youthful days, and thus manufacture antiquated belles into charming juveniles—pretty girls scarcely out of their teens."

Evidently fitting the bill, to her shop came Mary Tucker Borradaile, widow and daughter of military men, with a small pension, plus £3-4,000 in funds and an estate; some jewellery, etc. On her own evidence, after her husband of twenty-five years died in 1861, Borradaile, who had

lived in Cheltenham, wandered around the Paddington area looking for lodging, getting arrested for debt four times in the process. Introduced to Rachel in 1864, she became interested in the shop's services in 1866, at which time Rachel asked her for £1000, which she refused to give. However Rachel then said that Lord Ranelagh, an Irish peer, had seen and become enamoured of her.¹ She in turn became so enamoured that (as she admitted) she took a picture of Ranelagh to bed with her, and resolved to become "beautiful for ever," initially paying £200, and finally becoming penniless through costs of goods and services. Several fond letters from Ranelagh were produced in court as demonstrating his pretended infatuation, which was the result, according to Rachel's testimony, of "his lordship having seen her in a bath," and then becoming "intimate with her." When she was unable to fulfill her financial engagements Rachel swore an application that put Borradaile in prison, from whence she was released by "virtually handing over her pension to Rachel for the remainder of her life." Later it was revealed that Borradaile had initiated an action against Rachel in Queen's Bench, but had not proceeded with it. Now, however, urged by friends, she had brought Rachel to court for fraud. Exactly what had happened was mysterious to many, and remains so to me, so I proceed by way of questions.

What about the baths? Borradaile reported that Rachel suggested she take a bath just after she first saw Lord Ranelagh, the implication being that he then saw all of her. She took that allegedly rejuvenating bath and many others, but in her view all she got for her money was some soap and powders. "Madame Rachel may be clever with respect to the skin, but she never did much for me. (Laughter [in the Court].)"

What about the letters which, signed "William," had been published in *The Times* before the trial? Rachel, according

to Borradaile, had arranged that her marriage to Lord Ranelagh would be by proxy, and that all courtship was to be by letter. Rachel suggested that the name "William Edwardes" (Borradaile's maiden name) be used in the correspondence instead of Ranelagh, and indeed she began to receive letters a fortnight after she paid the money "William" needed. When she complained about the bad spelling, Rachel said that Lord Ranelagh had broken his arm and so "had to employ an uneducated amanuensis." In court, many ridiculous letters signed by Borradaile were read out, with evident (and successful) intent to make her appear ridiculous; she claimed they all were written at Rachel's dictation, only corrections of grammar being hers.²

Rather than try to make a coherent tale out of the rest of the confused evidence, I shall supply only a few details not to lessen the mystery but to justify my epithet "silly."

Who made up the Rachel household? One unnamed daughter told Borradaile that she was 50, though Rachel had said "she herself was 30." "I cannot tell you," said Borradaile, "whether that was a young lady who said she was past 50 'they are so made up.' (A laugh.) Miss Leonti, her granddaughter, is a young woman." In later evidence, Rachel Levenson, the eldest child, presumably the one referred to by Borradaile, identified Leonti as her younger sister, 20 or 21 years old, there being seven children in all, the youngest unaccountably aged three. Leonti, on cross-examination, said her father was alive, though not living with them: "he and mamma are not on very good terms."

Who was the supposed paramour? In Borradaile's initial examination, it was said that Lord Ranelagh's true name as was Thomas Heron Jones, but no more was said of that—though the correspondent was once alluded to as "Tommy" as was the young milliner's friend mentioned in

note 1. Joseph Haynes, an apparently shady solicitor Borradaile met through Rachel, said Rachel told him that Borradaile's money went to Captain William Edwardes, Borradaile's cousin, whom she was to marry. However, in the witness box Colonel William Edwards (who had just been promoted), a "distant connection" of Borradaile's, denied having communicated with her in 1866 (when the key letters were written), or having received money from Haynes or anyone connected with Borradaile. When Lord Ranelagh was called, he blandly admitted that he had met Borradaile twice, once when introduced at Madame Rachel's, but denied any intention of marrying her; he knew nothing of the "William" who signed the letters, which were, so far as he was concerned, entirely false.

Who wrote the letters? Borradaile admitted writing, at Rachel's dictation, some of those addressed to "William," but only after Rachel had given her whisky: "I had never taken whisky before, and have never since." And all receipts for money given by her to Rachel were forgeries. Rachel, according to Haynes' testimony, confirmed by her daughter Rachel, could not read or write. Leonti usually wrote letters for her mother. That Rachel the younger and Leonti "managed" their mother's business and wrote the advertising pamphlets led the defence attorney, Digby Seymour, to point out that whatever might be said against the prisoner, she had given her children a good education. Leonti, however, denied writing the letters to "William"—indeed she, like her sister, knew no William but their shopboy. Enter, via the prosecution, one James Minton, a youth, assistant to a linen draper, who claimed, referring to notes he had made at the time, to having been employed by Rachel to write letters at her dictation. Both sisters admitted knowing and disliking Minton, but denied his having been employed in any capacity by the family. It was established, however, that

the paper of the forged letters had the same watermark as that used in Rachel's establishment. The defence, in attempting to discredit Minton, mentioned that a detective had been hired by the prosecution who fraudulently obtained Minton's notes of his activities, and claimed that the watermark was a very common one, found even on the letterhead of the solicitor for the defence (seemingly not a good point for the defence to make).

Surely another Irishman, probably an adventurer, is necessary to the plot? How about Thomas William O'Keefe, who entered the newspaper account when Borradaile averred that not she, but a Fenian called O'Keefe—it was hinted that he had some relations with the notorious "head centre" Stephens—had suggested that the present criminal prosecution be brought? During the examination of Minton, who admitted knowing O'Keefe, there was mention of an earlier rumour that Borradaile had lived either with O'Keefe or one of his sons. (Throughout the defence had tried to insinuate that Borradaile was not only silly but loose.) Called to the stand, O'Keefe denied any improper connection with Borradaile, and ruled out his sons as valid co-respondents. But he was quite willing to admit what he saw as proper connections with her as well as with some of the prosecution's witnesses. Having a letter of introduction, he met her the previous year when she was staying at a respectable address in Paris—why either of them was there the record does not show. Hearing her story, he thought she could recover her money only through criminal proceedings, and persuaded her to return to London, and hence this case began. He was not unfamiliar with such matters: "Some 15 years ago I was tried in this court for obtaining money from a lady under a promise of marriage. I was found guilty by the jury, but the learned Recorder discharged me on my own recognizances, and shortly afterwards the lady made a confession on

oath that her charge was not true. [A voice in court—"That's not true.]" The letter of introduction was given him by Miss Sarah Sutton, who while corroborating O'Keefe's story identified herself on the stand as "in the literary profession," and who evidently met Borradaile in the Whitecross Street debtors' prison.

Was the trial a success? Undoubtedly for the press. In addition to daily coverage of its five-day progress, it invited lengthy leading articles in *The Times*, the *Daily Telegraph*, the *Daily News*, the *Morning Post*, the *Star*, the *Morning Advertiser*, the *Express*, the *Pall Mall Gazette*, and the *Saturday Review*. Certainly among their readers were the "considerable part" of the crowd in the court "composed of ladies," some of whom must have been interested in such of Rachel's wares as "The Magnetic Dew of Sahara and the Jordan Water, purchased with rights from the Government of Morocco" for removing wrinkles, "Arabian Baths for enamelling the face," and "Souvenir de Mariage" for no declared purpose. Much was made of these products in the cross-examination. A large proportion of the crowd were likely seeking more information about the premises of her "small shop," which were described, though a suggestion that the jury make an excursion to examine them was denied. The flamboyant Digby Seymour played on this interest in his opening statement for the defence, where he complained that the public press was portraying the prisoner "as a person allowing her house to be used for interviews between ladies and gentlemen, and herself promoting those interviews by all the means in her power, and sharing with one of the persons carrying on the interviews the profits of the transaction. There were certainly places of that kind in London, but then the bulk of them all was called by a less savoury name than that of a 'perfumer's shop.'"

And Seymour was good value for money. On one day the proceedings halted because

he was "physically unable to proceed further," and his final summation, which went on during two days for 8 hours and 5 minutes, was met at the end by "some applause ... at once suppressed" by the Court.

How did it end? After Commissioner Kerr summed up, the jury took only fifteen minutes to return a verdict of guilty. Then Kerr, after a strong criticism of Rachel, condemned her to penal servitude for five years; it was reported that the "prisoner fainted on hearing the sentence."

The daily and weekly press were of various opinions about the verdict, some holding that the judgment, though morally correct, was legally flawed because the evidence was so vague and contradictory, but more taking the line of the *Daily Telegraph* that while "from enamelling complexions to picking oakum is indeed a cruel punishment," it is "light compared with the offence. ... The conviction of this miserable creature, who trafficked in the vanity of women, and the passions of men, is a boon to the community at large." As the *Express* said, "The folly of her dupes and the amusement derived from laughing at their weaknesses are apt to blind people to the villainous nature of her calling, and to lead them to gloss over the dark deeds transacted in the Bond-street shop."

But was she guilty as charged? Devotees of the genre may well conclude with Rachel, who intervened uninvited, after the judgment but before the sentence made her senseless, to say, "that which is known as the Bond-street mystery will remain a Bond-street mystery still."

And those who have read thus far will be pleased to know that not only *A Few True Girls of the Period* connected the two sorry old women. In opening its case, "The prosecution admitted at once that Mrs. Borradaile was a weak, credulous, foolish, and vain woman, but, then, she was not the only weak and credulous woman in the

world. The jury had doubtless all heard lately of the celebrated Chancery case of 'Lyon v. Home,' the plaintiff in which believed that Home could communicate with the spirit of her deceased husband in the other world."

And those looking for material for their next novel may pick up a hint from the *Saturday Review*: "To have invented all the details of these letters to Mrs. Borradaile would have done credit to any fictionist. We much question whether many French writers of slippery and scrofulous novels have the skill to do it ...; here is sensation and plot quite as thrilling as *Lady Audley's Secret*, with situations and morals nearly as offensive as those which the purveyors, foreign and domestic, of fornicating literature commonly venture upon."

Notes:

¹One footnote not to be here rejected. This notorious peer had recently been in court, having charged Louisa Gould with

assaulting him on Piccadilly—knocking his hat off his head and his cigar out of his mouth, and threatening to knock out his teeth—when he refused to give the 7s 6d she said he owed her. The newspaper account indicates that they knew one another well, and reports that she said, when accosting him, that "she was a milliner and had two little milliners at home, and asked him if he would like to see them." That was not his only recorded offence. One of the letters read in court referred to a report in the *Daily Telegraph* (late in 1867) that he ("poor Tommy" in the letter) had been fined 20s for smoking a cigar in a railway carriage.

²Another matter demanding a footnote. Borradaile was a spirited witness, saying: "She [Rachel] is a wicked and vile woman, and you (addressing Mr. Digby Seymour [the defence counsel] are bad too." To which the bench retorted: "Content yourself with simply answering the questions." Hearing such abuse the "prisoner here gave an hysterical sigh, and was allowed to leave the court for a few minutes" (33).



BOOKS

J. Hillis Miller. *Illustration*. Essays in Art and Culture. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992. 168 pp. 45 illustrations. \$35.00 U.S.

In a familiar but remarkable moment in "The Nature of Gothic" John Ruskin imagines "the variegated mosaic of the world's surface that a bird sees in its migration." Held aloft by the powerful beats of his luxuriant prose, the speaker-aviator soars from the Mediterranean's "great peacefulness of light" to the broad wastes of gloomy purple and "irregular and grisly islands ... tormented by furious pulses of contending tide" that constitute the northern reaches of Europe (E. T. Cook and A. Wedderburn, *The Works of John Ruskin*, Vol. 10 (London: George Allen, 1904), 186-7).

The relevance of Ruskin's aerial survey in *The Stones of Venice* to Miller's enterprise in *Illustration* must stand for the moment as figurative, or rather, to borrow from Miller's own critical constellation, as an "inaugural performative" for this review. Ruskin the art historian and social critic holds a pivotal place in Miller's recent book, which examines the relationship of nineteenth-century text and design against the briskly (re)evolving field of contemporary cultural studies. For Miller, the frequent emphases in Ruskin's work on the materiality of aesthetic representation is "consonant with the assumptions of those cultural critics who see the making or using of any cultural artefact as an active and constitutive part of the life of that culture" (79). Much of *Illustration* is given over to working out the proofs—in effect the cultural long division—for such dramatic equations between the visual and literary productions of a finite group of artists, and a burgeoning field Lata Mani has called "a location where the new politics of difference ... can combine and

be articulated in all their dazzling plurality" (Lana Mati, "Cultural Theory, Colonial Texts: Reading Eyewitness Accounts of Widow Burning," *Cultural Studies*, ed. Lawrence Grossberg et al. (London: Routledge, 1992), 392).

Not surprisingly, *Illustration* is divided into two sections: part one offers a rapid overview of cultural studies which seeks to define the scope and impact of an intellectually distinct, although necessarily various area of current humanities research; part two examines the respective capacities of word and image through related discussions of Dickens, Heidegger, Hegel, Ruskin, Goethe, and Turner. The result is a swift migration over the terrain of contemporary scholarship that sees the critic arrowing away from the fierce, albeit bracing, shores of cultural studies, towards the warmth of John William Mallord Turner's painted sunshine.

Miller's examination of the persistent presuppositions of a "diffuse, heterogeneous and not yet firmly institutionalized" field (13), offers the reader a rough political panorama of cultural studies. Fundamentally, cultural studies assume that a work of art—or more ecumenically a "cultural artefact"—is best understood if the material, social, class, economic, technological, and gender circumstances of its production and dissemination are taken into account in its interpretation. To displace the work from the subject position of its maker, Miller states, is to place us in danger of sentimentalizing or aestheticizing the work, although Miller later concludes that the "irreducible heterogeneity" of works of art cannot be solely accounted for by context (however comprehensively described), but rather has "something to do with constraints on the way signs work."

Although Miller appreciates the broad theoretical intentions of cultural studies, and even applauds a political agenda that carries its rejection of canonical forms, disci-

plinary divisions, and cultural marginalization into institutional reform, he sees the field as irrevocably riven by a series of critical paradoxes or "aporias". He identifies the first of these fault-lines through a surprisingly limp re-reading of "Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," from which he borrows Benjamin's aesthetic criterion to register the effects of digital reproduction on recent scholarship. The "electronic book"—an interactive, multi-media, multi-authored form—is singled out as a compelling technological embodiment of the interdisciplinary, anti-canonical direction of cultural studies research. While the electronic book admittedly offers new possibilities for assemblage and intellectual juxtaposition, Miller fears that such projects may inadvertently perpetuate outmoded ideological paradigms of historical or contextual explication.

This concern over the perpetuation of limiting hierarchies of knowledge is carried to cultural studies' investigation of linguistic and ethnic identity. Miller sees a "double and contradictory orientation" in the respective treatment of dominant and subordinate cultures in the field, the former dismantled through theoretical analysis, the latter treated in a "celebratory ... preservative, archival" fashion. He warns that these activities may end in the replication of the very political orders cultural students would contest. He carefully distinguishes between the performative and the cognitive aspects of cultural analysis, noting that while knowledge of disempowered cultures may be practically and politically governed, the performative dimensions of cultural studies cannot be predicted or interpreted from a proscribed position.

By slow stages, Miller moves on to critical procedures for interpreting multi-media works, procedures which allow the critic to avoid "essentializing and hierarchizing tendencies" and emphasize the performative act of reading. Miller's statements on the inaugural responsibility of the cul-

tural critic are a stern prelude to what is finally revealed in the book's second half—a series of unpolemical, semiotic interpretations of a number of familiar aesthetic and commercial case-histories. Following the work of Michael Steig, Miller discusses the collaboration between Dickens and his *Pickwick* illustrator "Phiz", noting the artist's enriching divergences from the literal surface of Dickens's narrative. John Turner's luminous deployment of literary allusion is explored through readings of *Ulysses Deriding Polyphemous* and *Regulus*. In a more sustained analysis, Miller examines Turner's use and representation of light in *The 'Sun of Venice' Going to Sea* (1843).

While this material is pleasantly discussed by a critic with an eye for compositional detail, the result is not sufficiently dynamic to confirm Miller's initial statements on cultural studies. The associations he draws between the issues raised by contemporary interpretation and reformulation of culture and the nineteenth-century art which defines his rhetorical field, remain oblique.

C. S. Matheson
Department of English
University of Windsor

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Lynn Zastoupil. *John Stuart Mill and India*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1994. 280 pp.; \$39.50 U.S.

John Stuart Mill worked for the East India Company for 35 years, drawing up some 1700 of the dispatches by which the Company directed the administrators of India on matters as diverse as the deposition of the Raja of Sattara and the disabilities of native Christians. Hitherto these dispatches have played only a small part in the study of an otherwise exhaustively-analyzed life. The publication in 1990 of a finding list of the dispatches in Mill's *Collected Works* helped to change this, pro-

viding an overview of the largely unexplored territory; and now Zastoupil's book opens up a well-constructed highway—down which scores of graduate students may journey and run up an infrastructure.

Zastoupil's argument is that, far from being mere paid employment as generally believed, and as implied by Mill's reticence over India in the *Autobiography* and elsewhere, the East India Company work was integrated with the rest of Mill's intellectual development. In Indian affairs, as in his wider concerns, Mill moved from the utilitarian position inculcated by his father, through a period of revolt in which he absorbed conservative and romantic counter-notions, to a more inclusive Benthamism. Moreover, Zastoupil argues, there was reciprocal traffic between east and west, with the experience of eastern administration (if not eastern ideas themselves) testing and influencing the development of Mill's theories.

Most successful in upholding this thesis is the chapter on education, in which Zastoupil shows the results of Mill's absorption of Coleridgean and traditionalist notions after his mental crisis. In a well-known dispatch of 1836 Mill argued against the complete anglicizing of Indian education, stressing the need to uphold the traditionally-educated élite, and showing a new respect for native institutions. Zastoupil very persuasively develops parallels with Mill's writings in the '30s on such subjects as endowments, the clerisy, and the dangers of mass commercial society; and he plausibly suggests that the work of the orientalist H. H. Wilson may have influenced the development of these ideas. Since the education dispatch was never sent to India—for it totally contradicted the policy favoured by the Board of Control—one might conclude that Mill learned from the experience the impossibility of pushing his own agenda, and resigned himself to being a spokesman for official views. But Zastoupil shows that by

and large the policies in the dispatches are Mill's own. He does this partly by analyzing comments on his position at the EIC scattered through Mill's letters, but chiefly through a painstaking study of the documentary evidence: the successive drafts of the dispatches as they passed from Court to Board, the trail of emendations, insertions, deletions, and re-insertions, and the attached memos and dissents. Any verbal discussion between Mill and the Chairs as to general approach is of course unrecoverable; but the evidence suggests that, within the limits of the possible determined by such discussion, Mill espoused positions consonant with his developing beliefs and upheld them vigorously.

The central chapters of the book study some of Mill's dispatches to the princely states, nominally independent kingdoms over which the Company exerted varying amounts of control. According to James Mill and the early John Stuart, these were barbarous régimes which should be swept away forthwith and replaced with rational, western-type institutions. Zastoupil points to two distinct changes in John Mill's approach. In the '30s, he came to appreciate the point of view of the "empire of opinion" school of more conservative Indian administrators, who stressed the need to work through native régimes that had the respect of the people and had grown up in response to local conditions. In dispatches of 1837 on (after the death of his father), Mill generally supported their policy of indirect rule rather than annexation of conquered states. In the '40s, however, he retreated from these views, just as, in the words of the *Autobiography*, he "turned back from what there had been of excess in my reaction against Benthamism." Once again he favoured direct, reforming rule: he approved of nearly all the annexations carried out by Lord Dalhousie (Governor-General 1843–56).

Again Zastoupil does an excellent job of tying Mill's change in the '30s to his gener-

al intellectual development, as seen in his thoughts about national character, the historical imagination, and the organic development of institutions. He is less successful, perhaps, in showing that Mill's final position represents a synthesis, since the main element of retained conservatism is said to be Mill's recommending the "village" system (in which revenue settlements were made with whole villages, taken to be ancient Indian communities). But the village system was also favoured by utilitarians, as it bypassed landed élites and fostered peasant proprietorship; its pragmatic success was probably the main reason for its support by both sides.

In general, though, Zastoupil's arguments are persuasive. He unfolds his case logically, clearly, and without jargon, using anticipation and recapitulation even to the point of tedium in his concern for his reader's understanding; and there is an engaging honesty, not unlike Mill's own, in his recognition of possible counter-arguments. One would have welcomed a map of India to complement the text, and a note on the transliteration of Indian names (whereby Mill's Oudh and the *Imperial Gazetteer's* Oude becomes Awadh). More importantly, one must stress that this is only one paradigm, and a comparatively simple one, to apply to a vast body of material. Such shorter studies as have appeared to date have not generally found such a close connection between Mill's ideas and his imperial endeavours, and it remains to be seen whether dispatches on other subjects bear out Zastoupil's thesis. But this study is a splendid start, and will undoubtedly be a point of reference for many years. May it find a place in the pack of every elephant that lumbers into the interior.

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Felicia Bonaparte. *The Gypsy-Bachelor of Manchester: The Life of Mrs. Gaskell's Demon*. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1992.

Intriguing though the title and the idea that Mrs. Gaskell had a "demon" are, Felicia Bonaparte's biographical-critical study leaves the reader with more questions than answers. Her project, she states, is "to examine Elizabeth Gaskell's life and fiction as one continuous metaphoric text" (2), to reveal a "rebellious" and "subversive subtext" in which Gaskell "conceals the secrets that explain her fiction ... and encodes the secrets that explain her life" (8). Recent feminist considerations of Gaskell have "taken us in the right direction" in exposing certain "moments of insurrection" in otherwise conventional texts, but Bonaparte proposes to go further in "reading" Gaskell in terms of her demon.

This demon is made of the passions Elizabeth Gaskell denied in creating "Mrs. Gaskell" (153); the demon is Mrs. Gaskell's antithesis. Where she is the ideal woman, the demon is the unideal man; where Mrs. Gaskell is pacific, the demon accepts violence as a natural expression of political frustration; where Mrs. Gaskell is to all appearances the Victorian "angel in the house," the demon is permitted to range freely outside the prison of Victorian femininity, expressing the rage, frustration, ambition, and desires denied to the conventional counterpart. Bonaparte gleans evidence of the existence of this demon from an impressive reading of the fiction, letters, and biographies of Elizabeth Gaskell, and the sheer force of the number of supporting details presented goes a long way in convincing the reader of the premise. Yet her dependence upon details within Gaskell's fictional works to prove suppositions about Gaskell's "inner existence" seems to involve a methodological slippage that is not adequately justified in the introduction.

The methodological challenges of such a project are to some extent addressed in the opening chapter: any psychological inference drawn from biographical material is "at best only an inspired guess," she states, and a biographer is, to some degree "engaged in making fictions" (12). Yet this does not justify the attempt to derive facts concerning an individual biography from the subject's fictional writings. Bonaparte writes that "I have not, in my 'reading' of Gaskell, been committed to any school, either critical or psychological," and yet there are many places where psychoanalytic theory would strengthen and clarify her argument. For instance, when she speaks of the impact of Elizabeth Gaskell's early parental losses, her mother dying when she was thirteen months and her father leaving her not long after, the theoretical writings of Julia Kristeva or Nancy Chodorow would be useful in elucidating her speculative point that "all her life [Gaskell] felt certain that she was unworthy of love" (26). Object-relations theorists offer clinical evidence which would support her suggestion that "Gaskell may have felt responsible, in after years, for her mother's death" (26). Without theoretical grounding, the speculations seem at times arbitrary. Her evidence, instead, is that "Most of the daughters in her fiction, although the reasons are vague and general, feel guilty when their mothers die" (15).

The logic of the book's organization is difficult. Since Gaskell's inner existence did not develop through time in a chronological sequence, Bonaparte's study "ignores the chronology of Gaskell's works," following instead "a sequence that suggested the progression of an argument" (13). This sequence, however, is not delineated in the introduction, nor do the cryptic chapter headings guide the reader through this sequence. The chapters, seemingly, are organized around thematic movements: the first, "Alone! Alone!" looks at Gaskell's first eighteen years, formative years for both her and her demon, which

emerged as a response to being "unloved, rejected, exiled and abandoned" (31). The second, "Undine," examines her marriage to William Gaskell in light of this early deprivation, the creation of "Mrs. Gaskell" being a strategy to earn through goodness the love she had lost. The cost of creating Mrs. Gaskell, though, is the suppression of her demonic self.

The middle section of the book, in chapters called "Men Do, Women Are," "It Must Be a Fine Thing to Be a Man," and "Men Do What Women Are," examines the issue of gender in Gaskell's life and writing. While the reader may not argue with Bonaparte's statement that "the characteristics Gaskell designates as especially male or female are for her not necessarily embodied in a man or a woman" (152), it does not seem particularly useful to then categorize her characters, settings, and even novels under the designations "female men" and "male women." Deborah Jenkyns of *Cranford* is a "male woman," while Peter Jenkyns is a "female man." France is gendered male (demonic), England female; *Cranford* is female, Milton/ Manchester male; *North and South* is primarily a male novel, while *Cranford* is clearly female, and so forth.

The final chapters explore the demonic nature of the profession of writing itself, how Gaskell's conflict between her domestic obligations and her career as writer is another expression of the conflict between herself and her demon. Charlotte Brontë becomes for Gaskell an embodiment of the demon, and her *Life of Charlotte Brontë* provided its author a way of writing out some of her own projected needs. While this is a fruitful approach to this work, the reader is left puzzled by the meaning of such statements as, *The Life of Charlotte Brontë* is less a biography than an autobiography" (232), an assertion that does not seem logical.

Bonaparte's approach to Gaskell is particularly suggestive in interpreting the

social and political novels. Having in the first chapters established her belief that Gaskell's early loss of parental love created an ineradicable deprivation, Bonaparte demonstrates how Gaskell then projects this into her fictional characters. In her industrial novels, for example, Gaskell resolves class conflict through love, paternalistic love of ruling classes for workers. Though undoubtedly Gaskell knows that love will not solve the real problems of class conflict, her "demon" projects its own need for love onto the workers. The study is also very strong on the short fiction of Elizabeth Gaskell, generally overlooked in Gaskell studies. If there are times when the general thesis of the Bonaparte's study gives us pause, the individual readings of Gaskell's texts are original and provocative.

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Versatile Victorian: Selected Critical Writings of George Henry Lewes. Ed. Rosemary Ashton. London: Bristol Classical Press (Gerald Duckworth and Company), 1992. £25.

"What should we do with a leader of the opposition in the seventh month of her pregnancy? or a general in chief who at the opening of a campaign was 'doing as well could be expected'? or a chief justice with twins?"

Perhaps the last man we would guess to be the author of these words is George Henry Lewes, the ideal husband in all but marriage certificate of Marian Evans, whose august career as the novelist George Eliot he first encouraged and astutely promoted until his death. Acting very much as her agent as well as adviser and protector, Lewes did much to create the sibylline mystique that grew up around her as she became successful, and

he himself when he wrote of her did so in unabashedly reverential tones. Though only two years older than she, years before they met in October 1851 Lewes was already a prolific writer and well known journalist and a prominent figure among the liberal and respectably radical movements on the mid-Victorian cultural scene. Like John Stuart Mill, whom he regarded as one of his peers, he could be counted on to take up the enlightened and progressive position on all issues, including the rights of women. His liberalism was the product of an inquiring temperament and tolerant outlook that he expressed in tireless, fluent, informed, and judicious analyses of the questions as well as books of the day. Not politically active himself, he was a sharp and close student of politics as an arena in which the clash of party interests, personalities, and ideas marked the state of the broad human struggle for change (see, for example, his scathing dismissal in 1849 of Disraeli as a politician and author, included in this volume, and his awareness in 1866 of the historic significance of the meeting of the First International in Geneva that Rosemary Ashton notes in her Introduction, 22). Despite a distinctly conventional concern to find "earnestness" and "wholesome morality" in books and writers (as well as "passion" and "imagination" and "truth"), Lewes comes across today as a kind of Victorian modernist (witness, for example, his confident dismissal of Matthew Arnold's lament for the lost certainties of the ancients and his ungrudging support of Macaulay's affirmation of history as a story of social progress). His free-thinking leanings were confirmed early by thoughtful enthusiasm for Comte's positivism (which never wavered despite increased reservations in time), serious interest in science and unqualified commitment to scientific method and the ideal of objective analysis, and wide reading not only in literature—French and German as well as Greek, Latin, and Italian—but also philosophy and natural and

social science. As Ashton says in the introduction to her very useful compilation: "Wherever scholars of nineteenth-century intellectual life have probed, looking for intelligent responses in matters literary, philosophical, historical, or scientific, they have come across G. H. Lewes" (2).

But no thinker is immune to gaps, whether seeming or real, between theory and practice, and even those who challenge the commonplaces of their time in far more daring and systematic fashion than Lewes did, will, according to one of our own commonplaces, be found in many ways creatures of that time. Together with his progressive ideas and critical spirit, Lewes carried with him many of the mundane assumptions of a middle class Victorian intellectual and—need one add?—a male one at that. His ability to quote in other languages than English without offering translations is a mark of his time that flatters both the writer and his readers while underlining an inescapably elitist element in the discourse in which they were engaged. The argument in 1878 against the popular resistance to science, however sensible, well intentioned, and still valid, may nowadays at first lose something of its force by such an illustration as this:

Science demands exactness, and this demand irritates the vulgar mind. The impatience with which your cook listens to your advice that she should measure and not guess the quantities (advice you can never get her to follow), is but the same movement which rouses your resistance when anyone desires to test your opinions by weighing the evidence, or endeavours to show that your traditional beliefs rest on no verifiable observations. (319)

(One should note, however, before going further, how reminiscent such a statement is in perspective, tone, and strategy

of the "editorial" manner of George Eliot, especially, I think, in *Middlemarch*, where the narrative persona is no more than nominally masculine. If Lewes is to be charged with a slight stain of "sexism" as well as "classism", one may as well recognize how thoroughly "normal" he is in the basic assumptions and experiences that he shares with his middle class readers, male and female. In this case, the "traditional beliefs" of which he speaks can be said to rest on "verifiable observations" of experience common to them—and frequently echoed even in the increasingly egalitarian century to follow by liberal intellectuals like Virginia Woolf, for example, complaining about the difficulty of finding good domestic help.)

The rhetorical questions with which this review begins do not come from any of the selections included in *Versatile Victorian* but are cited in the editor's account of Lewes' reactions to Charlotte Brontë's novels and the ensuing correspondence between them. They are found in what Ashton justly calls "rather too rough a notice" of *Shirley* in the *Edinburgh Review* in January 1850" (18). Having three years earlier welcomed *Jane Eyre* with such eagerness that he wrote "Miss Brontë to tell her of the delight with which her book had filled me" even before writing his review for *Fraser's Magazine*, Lewes in contrast found "*Shirley* not a 'pleasant' book, but one of 'over-masculine vigour' amounting even to 'coarseness.'" Though praising the author's power in certain passages, he ends by exhorting Charlotte Brontë to aim at a gracefulness in her writing more "suitable to her sex and more likely to allow her to 'take the rank within her reach'" (18). Later, complimenting Mrs Gaskell on *The Life of Charlotte Brontë*, he protested that his "main argument" had not been "disrespectful to women"; and Ashton sympathetically suggests that at the time of the *Shirley* review, with its uncharacteristically ponderous jocularly about motherhood as an obvious impedi-

ment to full vocational equality for women, Lewes must have been distracted by the fact that his wife and the mother of his three sons "was six months pregnant with her first child by Thornton Hunt." (She notes as well that Charlotte Brontë, who reacted fiercely to Lewes' patronizing criticism, was at the same time grieving over the recent deaths of her brother and two sisters—"So one unhappy person wounds another.") One may remark too that if we take his objections to *Shirley* together with his almost unstinting praise of *Jane Eyre* and *Villette* in 1853 (as well as his admiration of George Sand and Jane Austen) we can see him not so much as conventionally sexist but rather as believing in the Victorian version of *l'écriture féminin*. As Ashton says, Lewes was certainly "far ahead ... in his critical sense" of other reviewers of Brontë. In 1850 he had in any case not yet met Marian Evans (who herself cherished the notion of an essential difference between the sexes) and, like the young Dr Lydgate early in *Middlemarch*, had still something to learn about women.

Reading the selections in this volume one is repeatedly struck, especially in the later theoretical, philosophical, and scientific pieces, by the affinity of views and cross fertilization of ideas between Lewes and George Eliot. I am especially fascinated by the difference in tone and judgment between Lewes' first enthusiastic reaction to Dickens in 1837 and the more comprehensive and ambivalent appraisal of Dickens' genius in 1872. Though characteristically professing to set other critics right by defining the correct grounds for weighing the novelist's strengths and defects, he denies Dickens many of the qualities (for example, "philosophy and feeling such as a metaphysician would be proud to have developed with the same nicety and fidelity of observation," 61) that as a young man of twenty a quarter of a century earlier he had delightedly welcomed in his near contemporary. I can't help thinking that the contrast is not simply the result of mature

reflection on a career rendered complete by Dickens' death; Lewes' life with Marian Evans, the intellectual collaboration that they enjoyed, and his nurturing of her very different talent that did not just rival Dickens but in effect challenged his sort of fiction—these factors may well lie behind what I read, unlike Ashton, as a largely negative assessment of a novelist he had celebrated on the basis of only the *Sketches*, *Pickwick*, and *Oliver Twist* as an original master (see, for example, page 58).

Rosemary Ashton describes "the chief characteristics of this selection" of mostly previously uncollected pieces as displaying "Lewes' consistency of view and purpose" and his "extraordinary range of interest and ability" (24). The unpleasantness over *Shirley* and more dramatically the serious reservations voiced in his maturity about Dickens may be seen as interesting but minor deviations in what is indeed a remarkably consistent intellectual career. Lewes is always interesting and lively; as a reviewer of contemporary literature his judgment is as at least as sure as R. H. Hutton's and surer than Arnold's, and his versatility is far greater. But an acute reviewer does not necessarily make a great critic, and as a critic Lewes lacks Arnold's authority, elegance, and subtlety. I find something fussy and pedantic, something hectoring and pseudo-magisterial in his writing even when agreeing with him and admiring his intentions, seriousness, and intelligence. Nevertheless, his interest to Victorianists is indisputable, and we should be grateful to have at last easy access to his work. Although the book for the price is not especially well produced, the proofreading has been careless, and the editing cursory (there is a woeful lack of helpful annotation), these defects are outweighed by the contents and by the Introduction, which is excellent.

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Anne Taylor. *Annie Besant: A Biography*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993. \$68.95.

Any biography of Annie Besant is bound to be a good read; her richly varied radical life which led her from High Anglicanism to Secularism to Theosophy, from liberalism to socialism, and from motherhood in a small parish in England to isolation in a dark prison in India, prevents any study of her life from being less than interesting no matter what the skills of the biographer. For this very reason Besant's life story has not escaped biographers; the story has been told with varying degrees of success several times over many decades, and no doubt there will be more to come. The most recent of these publishings comes from the pen of writer/journalist Anne Taylor.

Taylor's *Annie Besant: A Biography* has the great advantage of being considerably shorter and yet equally as informative as the widely recognized definitive work on Besant, Arthur H. Nethercot's two-volume work *The First Five Lives of Annie Besant* (1961) and *The Last Four Lives of Annie Besant* (1963). At the same time it exceeds the possibilities of Rosemary Dinnage's simply titled *Annie Besant* (1986) which, although thorough and analytical, is too short to be a complete biography.

Taylor provides a thoroughly researched narrative of Besant's fascinating life which includes not only a detailed examination of all the movements in which she took an active interest but also the people—usually men—who played an important role in her life. Under Taylor's microscope Besant eventually surfaces as an egotistical thrill-seeker, too proud, too stubborn and too self-interested to see beyond her own unending quest for power in radical circles. Taylor rather grudgingly admits that she probably did, indeed, possess a sincere and powerful desire to change conditions among the

lower classes and to help the poor, which was, from the beginning of her life to the end, the motivating interest in all causes she embraced. Thus while she did genuinely wish to assist London's poor, Taylor suggests in this biography that Besant might do so only on her conditions; only if she could be the leading star of the current cause, and only if she could be credited, empowered, and admired for her work, would she take the cause under her wing.

Closely associated with this conviction is the supposition that Besant, who was always connected with a different man for each of her causes, used these men not only for their ideas and knowledge, but also because she believed them to be in love with her as she was, as Taylor states, "always susceptible to men who acknowledged her intellect" (47). There are few historians who would not admit that Annie Besant had an over-active ego and a considerable desire for universal admiration.



And, it is likely that she did believe many of the men in her life to be in love with her. Some of them probably were. However, the notion that this was her only reason for associating herself with these men—for her own vanity—excludes a wider and more historically important possibility: as a radical woman in a male-dominated, patriarchal society, it was very difficult to get people to listen to you; having a man of similar conviction at your side often helped a woman get heard.

This then, leads us to the main problem in Taylor's biography of Besant, and indeed in all biographies of her to date: Besant is not acknowledged, or studied, as an important political figure in nineteenth-century Victorian history. Moreover, the fact that she was a woman who cut this political figure, in a man's political world, has also failed to be addressed. Besant, as a woman, went to trial to establish a woman's right to the use of birth control, the result of which was the loss of custody of her children; Besant, as a woman, helped lead a demonstration in support of free speech, a privilege which women were barely permitted in the first place; Besant, as a woman, led a strike for female factory workers to put an end to abusive working conditions and to gain labour rights for women; as a woman she wrote treatises on the political status of women and on patriarchal marriage laws, and as a woman she sat on the London School Board and fought to ensure that children were provided with food every day. And while it is true that Besant never associated herself with organized feminism, the fact that there was an increasingly viable women's movement developing throughout Besant's life—one which she could not help but acknowledge herself—is a matter that should be given some careful consideration.

Thus in this biography Taylor gives more attention to the question of the men in her life and how they affected her; it may be a

more worthy question to ask how Besant affected these men, and others, and patriarchal Victorian society in general. We know, through Taylor's exhaustive research and thorough narration, what Annie Besant accomplished in her long life. What we need to analyze now is the extent to which her status as a politically active woman in Victorian society was inspired by her gender, and if feminism played any part in it at all. Undoubtedly she suffered as a woman at the hands of this society; it might be interesting to know to what extent this motivated her.

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Linda Dowling. *Hellenism and Homosexuality in Victorian Oxford*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1994. 173 pp.

Linda Dowling's expertly crafted and beautifully written study of Victorian Oxford serves as a brilliant example of how Foucauldian discourse analysis, when done well, might shed considerable light on our understanding of the past. This impressive volume of cultural history establishes with clarity the manner in which the study of ancient Greece in the reformed university and, more specifically, the discourse of Victorian Hellenism made possible the emergence of a homosexual counterdiscourse which served to legitimate male love in the nineteenth century. Dowling's contribution to scholarship is not an isolated one but rather can be located in several distinct areas; intellectual/literary history, the history of homosexuality, and the history of Oxford in the Victorian era. While indeed strong in the first two instances, her work falls short as an analysis of the complex institution and cultural system that was the University of Oxford.

Dowling proceeds with her analysis by examining the work of several prominent

Oxford figures. The familiar careers of Oscar Wilde, John Addington Symonds, Walter Pater, Benjamin Jowett and Lord Alfred Douglas occupy a central position in her assessment of Oxford reform, Hellenism, and the emergence of homosexuality as a positive social identity. Her reading of their work and literary legacy is informed most profoundly by recent developments in gender theory, gay history and "queer" studies, and historicist criticism.

Dowling begins and ends with the infamous life of Oscar Wilde. His trial in 1895 for "gross indecency" with another "male person" represents for the author a crucial point in the development of a series of discourses which, she contends, came to serve as a moral justification for idealized (spiritual and intellectual) male love. The evolution of these discourses remains Dowling's primary concern. In part, she argues, the emergence of Hellenism must be viewed within the context of broader national concerns. Misgivings about the prominence of Britain and its strength as a nation prompted writers and educators alike to search for ideals which might offer the promise of cultural transformation and regeneration. In the eighteenth century, Dowling asserts, a discourse of classical republicanism with its attendant ideal of virtue embodied in the selfless warrior was used to combat a perception that the nation was somehow enfeebled by luxury, corruption, effeminacy, and selfishness. By the nineteenth century this discourse became somewhat inadequate in the face of "the actual conditions imposed upon Britain by industrial modernity" (36). Dowling believes that it is at this point that Victorian liberalism and Hellenism merged to form a new discourse of national regeneration and cultural transformation which could be readily manipulated and transmitted to the Victorian civic elite.

Liberal tenets as expressed in the work of J. S. Mill among others occupy a central

position in Dowling's analysis. Within the liberal ideals of progress, independence, diversity, individuality and energy, Dowling argues, the antidote for the stagnation and uniformity which threatened modern society could be found. Ancient Greece within this perspective came to be seen by Victorian liberals, and especially intellectuals at Oxford, as "the earliest embodiment of an enlightened rational progressiveness" (59). As a departure from the traditional recourse to religion in the face of modernity, displayed most prominently for Dowling in the Tractarians, this more secular ideal appeared as a distinctive feature of the curricular, statutory, and administrative reforms which occurred at the University of Oxford during the 1850s and 1860s.

The most visible proponent of Oxford reform, known for his faith in Greek studies as a vehicle for modern progressive thought and preparation for a life of national and imperial service, was Benjamin Jowett of Balliol College. Building on a precedent of intense tutorial relationships between teacher and student and spiritual friendship between men established by the Tractarians, Jowett applied the historicist methods of the Germanic Hellenists to his teaching of the works of Plato and in so doing allowed for a more positive depiction of the paiderastic ethos of ancient Greece to emerge (95). This, combined with the ideals of diversity and individuality, would lead Oxford students like Pater and Symonds, and later Wilde and Douglas, to carry the implications of these ideas further by producing a homosexual code or counterdiscourse which operated in the "perilously equivocal space between Platonic relations and spiritual procreancy on the one hand, and Greek love and the Socratic corruption of youth on the other" (103). The ramifications of Oxford's promotion of Hellenism then led, in Dowling's analysis, to the emergence of a justification for "pure" male love which went far beyond the intentions of reformers like Jowett.

Despite opposition, criticism, resistance, and setbacks (like the Wilde trial) it also precipitated in fin de siècle England the emergence of a modern homosexual identity which found a prominent voice in the idealized discourses of Hellenism.

Dowling's book is a complex one and full of far too many nuances to be easily summarized in a brief review. The basic argument is generally sustained with skill and precision. Clearly, the strongest contribution here is the author's analysis of some of Oxford's most prominent products. As an exploration of a distinctive literary tradition and its implications for the triumph of the Hellenistic ideal in the Oxford curriculum as well as the emergence of an identity which might be explicitly labelled as homosexuality it is particularly convincing.

As intellectual history it has two implications. Firstly, there is Dowling's point about the relationship between Hellenism and the ideal of national or imperial leadership as it was envisioned by the liberal reformers of the Oxford colleges—the first side of her discursive equation. To explore the possibilities of this fully she might have pursued more thoroughly the rather significant implications of her research for the study of national identity and its relationship to ideas about masculinity and femininity. The other side of her discursive equation represents perhaps this book's greatest contribution. In exploring the emergence of a homosexual counterdiscourse which is here identified as an unintended but quite natural extension of the liberal Hellenism espoused by Oxford reformers, Dowling adds immeasurably to our understanding of the intellectual foundations of a contemporary homosexual identity and "gay" politics. As an intellectual history of homosexuality, *Hellenism and Homosexuality* fills a significant chasm in the relatively new and expanding field of gay history by pointing further to the explanatory power of social constructionism as a theory. It also, however,

raises significant questions. To what extent can this counterdiscourse be seen as affecting other classes in society? Attempts to illustrate how these ideas were popularized and disseminated are generally unsuccessful even when Dowling points to the dramatic gesture of applause in court for Wilde's impassioned defence of the "love that dare not speak its name." Furthermore, and this is a suggestion for further research rather than a criticism of Dowling per se, can a similar counterdiscourse be found as a legitimization for lesbianism? If not, what factors inhibited its development?

As a history of Oxford, Dowling's study is perhaps at its weakest. Assumptions about relations between dons and students, male and female undergraduates, and students and the curriculum border on the simplistic and tend to misrepresent the complexities of this institution. The aesthetes never represented more than a minority in an undergraduate student body of multiple masculinities. In many ways, Dowling's counterdiscourse of homosexuality not only emerged within the context of Oxford Hellenism but also as one of the many discourses of masculinity at work in Oxford culture. Dowling's work as a piece of gender history also tends to fall a little short as an analysis of masculinity and its crucial relationship to its essential "other"—femininity.

Many of these questions and criticisms highlight the openness of this field rather than pointing to significant deficiencies in Dowling's impressive work. "Should have" and "could have" often appear in critiques of work deemed to be pioneering and must not be taken as a reluctance to recommend a book. Rarely does a work point to so many potential areas of research or raise so many thought-provoking questions. From the perspective of an historian of Oxford and Cambridge, *Hellenism and Homosexuality in Victorian Oxford* achieves much as an exercise in interdis-

ciplinary scholarship and serves to introduce a dimension to the study of Oxford University culture sorely in need of further exploration.

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David Gilmour. *Curzon*. London: John Murray, 1994. 684 pp. \$50.00.

In these intensely egalitarian times it has become fashionable to dismiss George Nathaniel Curzon as one of the faded bastions of Victorian and Edwardian imperialism, a figure of such surpassing self-importance that he makes the rest of his class look like Franciscans. Forgotten or glossed over are Curzon's solid achievements as Viceroy and Foreign Secretary, Chancellor of Oxford University, President of the Royal Geographical Society, and almost forty years of dedicated public service. For the most part the famous undergraduate gibe about a "most superior person" has served as Curzon's epitaph since his death in 1925, so it comes as no surprise that his posthumous image has emerged as a kind of supercilious anachronism—a high priest of pomposity.

To a certain degree this is undeniable. In her autobiography Margot Asquith wrote cuttingly of her former friend's "enamelled self-assurance," while a long line of colleagues and subordinates suffered from Curzon's chronic inability to manage people. By turns charming and irritable, self-depreciating and fantastically arrogant, he died virtually friendless, and it was this unpredictable streak in his nature, one feels, which went a long way to denying him the premiership following Bonar Law's retirement in 1923, peer or no peer.

Now, in the first truly full-length biography since Lord Ronaldshay's official *Life*, David Gilmour has succeeded in

restoring Lord Curzon's credentials as one of the most outstanding and complex of the late Victorian statesmen. Given extraordinary cooperation by Curzon's surviving daughter, Lady Alexandra Metcalfe, and virtually unrestricted access to his papers, Gilmour has managed to maintain a delicate balancing act between his subject's many contradictions, alternating consternation and regard in equal measure.

From early life, George Nathaniel Curzon seemed destined for greatness. Following a brilliant academic career at Eton and Balliol he rose rapidly in the Conservative Party to serve successively as Salisbury's Undersecretary of State for India and Foreign Affairs before becoming, at thirty-nine, Viceroy of India.

Thereafter, his career was beset by controversy and disappointment. He resigned the viceroyalty over a relatively minor issue over the Commander-in-Chief's role in India, and later disagreements with Lloyd George marred his role in the Cabinet both during and after the War.

All these famous episodes Gilmour reiterates with precision and clarity, but his major achievement is in delving into Curzon's personal life more than any other biographer, and then delineating how this often coloured his actions. He reminds us gently that Curzon, in addition to maintaining a Victorian mind-set far into the twentieth century (seen especially in his relations with women and his own children), also spent his entire adult life in often excruciating pain from a spinal curvature and other ailments. This, Gilmour intimates, may have impaired his judgment at crucial moments and exacerbated his faults beyond their actual worth.

Gilmour's own judgments are nothing if not prudent. Like most historians he takes the Viceroy's side in the famous dispute with Kitchener, but feels that Balfour and

the King were correct in their choice of Baldwin as Prime Minister. Curzon's democratic instincts were never particularly well developed, and he was emphatically not the man to lead Britain in the post-war era. Gilmour rightly praises Curzon's inassailable sense of justice and duty in India, but notes that he considered the Indians themselves to be perpetual school-children, sorely in need of British guidance and protection. His dismissal of the embryonic nationalist movement was both inept and appalling short-sighted.

Gilmour does not deny Curzon's essential greatness, but is understandably perplexed that a man of such talents should not have had a greater impact than he did. It is almost as if he were incapable of

proceeding in a moderate fashion: everything, from his work habits to his oratory to his quarrels, had a dangerously outsize quality to it which tended to obscure his better aspects, such as the simple and gracious Remembrance Day service which was almost entirely his own invention.

Nevertheless, the author never loses sight of the fact that Curzon was a figure of exceptional abilities who, in Asquith's words, "pursued high ambitions by none but worthy means." Whatever his shortcomings and eccentricities, he was an extraordinary and on occasions, yes, even superior, public figure.

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