MVSA Newsletter

Newsletter of the Midwest Victorian Studies Association
Number X, July 1987

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Our meeting on "Victorian Scandals" at the Newberry was, I hear from all sides, a huge success. The papers were diverse, lively, and rich with ideas, and we had, it seems to me, provocative and useful summaries and suggestions for synthesis. We owe special thanks to the Local Arrangements Committee--Julie Codell, Debra Mancoff, and Kris Garrigan--for the fine job they did.

Next year's theme will be "Belief and Unbelief," which can include many ways of thinking about faith (Christian and otherwise), lack of faith, or loss of faith. The meeting will be in Bloomington, where we have, thanks to Mary Burgan's imaginative leadership, many delicious things in store.

Next year will also mark a biennial change in MVSA governance. The terms of two Executive Committee members, Walter Arnstein (History) and Debra Mancoff (Art History), will end, as will that of Executive Secretary Kris Garrigan. In addition, we will be seeking a new Vice-President as Larry Poston moves up to President. If you would like to be considered for any of these posts, please write to me or to Kris.

Until 1988.

--M. Jeanne Peterson

EXECUTIVE SECRETARY'S POSTSCRIPT

One of the pleasures of my job is hearing, as Jeanne does, good things about our annual conferences; many members tell me that MVSA is their favorite professional meeting. This year I received a particularly large number of responses from

newcomers, and one summed up especially well the atmosphere that we try to achieve: "Just a hasty scrawl to tell you how much I enjoyed our conference, and how super a job I think you and yours did. The papers were uniformly thought-provoking and excellent (they nudged me into a couple of new and potentially fruitful ideas)--lots of friendliness, lots of erudition, no pomposity." If you've been meaning to attend MVSA and have never made it, mark your calendar for Bloomington; if you're a regular, bring a friend!

--Kris Garrigan

CALL FOR PAPERS

VICTORIAN BELIEF AND UNBELIEF will be the topic of the Twelfth Annual Meeting of the Midwest Victorian Studies Association, to be held at Indiana University-Bloomington on April 29-30, 1988. The Association welcomes proposals dealing with established religion and the challenges or alternatives to it; sacred music, art, and architecture; and the general nature of spiritual and moral commitment in Victorian British. Eight-to-ten page papers or two-page abstracts should be sent no later than November 5, 1987 to Kristine Ottesen Garrigan, MVSA Executive Secretary, Department of English, DePaul University, 802 West Belden, Chicago, IL 60614.

TREASURY REPORT

Balance on hand, July 1, 1986		$ 1,378.29
Income		
Dues	$ 1,403.00	
Annual meeting registration fees	1,437.00	
Donations		
Individuals	174.00	
DePaul University	300.00	
Interest	91.69	
		$ 3,405.69
Expenditures		
Printing and duplication	$ 602.35	
Supplies	63.66	
Word processing services for directory	130.00	
Annual meeting expenses	1,345.56	
Postage	318.80	
Bank service charges	4.75	
Miscellaneous	56.33	
		$ 2,521.45
Balance on hand, July 1, 1987*		$ 2,262.53

*Account payable to DePaul University on July 10, 1987 for reimbursement of costs of major mailings: $288.52 for duplication, $232.20 for postage.

Many thanks to these members, whose 1986-87 donations helped to subsidize graduate student and speaker registrations at our 1987 Annual Meeting: Robert Hallissey, Lowell Satre, Virginia Grossman, Walter Arnstein, Betsy Cogger Rezelman, Harland Nelson, Jonathan Hill, Nicholas Temperley, Susan Dean, Beth Kalikoff, Steve Elwell, Julie Codell, Jeanne Peterson, John Reed, William Morgan, Martha Vicinus, Bill Burgan, Carol Bastian, Debra Mancoff, Robert Colby, Joan Corwin, Jane Stedman, Mary Burgan, Robin Sheets, John C. Hawley, John Clubbe, David Itzkowitz, and Joanne Lukitsh. We also thank DePaul University for its generous support in underwriting day to day expenses of the organization and providing secretarial assistance.

ABSTRACTS FROM THE ELEVENTH ANNUAL MEETING

OPENING SESSION: "Disorder in the Court"

"Come, Substantial Damages!"

Jane W. Stedman
Department of English
Roosevelt University

In 1884, Miss Fortescue, an actress appearing in Gilbert and Sullivan opera at the Savoy Theatre, sued Lord Garmoyle for breach of promise in what was considered one of the great scandals of the decade although it was a social, not a sexual scandal. When they had become engaged in mid-1883, the comic and theatrical press made great play with the fact that Miss Fortescue was currently playing a fairy who marries a peer (Iolanthe). She was very pretty; came from a respectable, though bankrupt, family; and according to Sullivan was very intelligent and an "emancipist." Lord Garmoyle was the son of Earl Cairns, a leading member of the Conservative Party, twice Lord Chancellor, and a Low Churchman of unusual fervour, for whom the stage was anathema. At the request of Lord Garmoyle, a suggestion very likely originating with his parents, Miss Fortescue and her younger sister both left the stage.

After six months, Lord Garmoyle, acting, he said, on the advice of friends, suddenly broke the engagement, whereupon Miss Fortescue, encouraged by W.S. Gilbert, sued him for breach of promise. Lord Garmoyle left for the Orient, and the weeklies which had sprung to Miss Fortescue's defense now became unsympathetic. When she returned to the stage in a revival of Gilbert's drama, Dan'l Druce, not a few critics were hostile to her, although admitting her beauty and clear enunciation. She had no talent, they wrote; she was stiff and mechanical; she was coining her own notoriety. To some critics she offered a way of covertly attacking Gilbert, who had chosen and coached her for the role. To others, she offered a rather transparent screen for attacks on Lillie Langtry, the "society beauty" and amateur, who had recently gone on the stage.

The leading theatrical paper, The Era, mounted a particularly vicious anti-Fortescue, and in due course, anti-Gilbert campaign. Patently it feared that Miss Fortescue's notoriety gave the stage a bad image, morally speaking, an image which the Victorian theatre continously attempted to avoid or dispel. Most of the other theatrical periodicals also came full circle from commiseration with to condemnation of Miss Fortescue when she behaved like an "emancipist" and not like a blighted flower, drooping in the seclusion they had suggested.

When her case was finally heard in late November 1884, it proved an anti-climax. No witnesses were called; the absent Lord Garmoyle did not contest it; she was awarded £10,000 damages, and Lord Garmoyle admitted that her conduct had always been that of an English gentlewoman.

After this Miss Fortescue toured the provinces, America, and even South Africa for years at the head of her own company, with an occasional London engagement. Her repertory included a number of plays by Gilbert, who continued to assist her in theatrical matters and in whose new play, The Fortune Hunter, she appeared in 1897. Here, the merchant's daughter heroine, the caddish son, and the aristocratic parents recall the relationships of 1883-84. A year later, Miss Fortescue's story, but with a happy romantic ending, was used in Pinero's play, Trelawny of the "Wells" where an actress loves the grandson of a puritanical former Lord Chancellor and is taken off the stage to be "sanitised." In Pinero's plot, the young man himself becomes an actor.

After the turn of the century Miss Fortescue occasionally played in social comedies at London theatres. She was a duchess in plays by Pinero and Hankin, an acknowledged actress of the grand dame roles she never filled in off-stage life.

Wrongful Confinement: The Ultimate Argument for Proper Female Decorum

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Although The Trade in Lunacy, William Parry-Jones' study of private madhouses in England during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, acknowledges that instances of wrongful confinement did occur, it concludes that the public's recurrent fear that sane people could easily be certified insane was not justified by the facts. Nevertheless, the threat of wrongful confinement remained a significant obsession of the Victorian public. Public anxiety centered on two issues: the technical ease with which a person could be legally incarcerated in a madhouse and the arbitrary medical basis for diagnosing insanity. Of particular interest to the twentieth-century mind is the second of these issues since Victorian women who successfully protested their wrongful confinement are frequently found to have been certified insane as punishment for mere social deviance--in other words, for unacceptable female behavior.

In the 1860 best-seller The Woman in White, sensational interest centers on the exchange of identities between the sane Laura Fairlie and the deranged Anne Catherick. Actually, there is considerable doubt about the extent to which Anne's commitment to an asylum is justifiable. Although she is clearly feeble-minded, her freedom is curtailed only after she expresses an unwomanly defiance of male authority. Similarly, although the obvious reason for Laura's wrongful confinement is her husband's greed, the more subtle reason is her sudden rejection of wifely docility.

The equation of sanity with acceptable passive feminine behavior is made even clearer in two notorious real-life cases of wrongful confinement. In 1858, the novelist Edward Bulwer-Lytton committed his estranged, but sane, wife to a very genteel and expensive private asylum. Lady Lytton and her friends were able to arouse such a public outcry against her wrongful confinement that her husband

arranged for her release after three weeks, but only after she had agreed to leave the country. In 1878, Georgina Weldon renewed the public's fear of wrongful confinement. Besides publishing a book, The History of My Orphanage; or The Outpourings of an Alleged Lunatic, which clearly emphasizes that certification as a lunatic was the punishment that her independent conduct elicited from an angry spouse, Weldon successfully sued the doctor who was to have overseen her confinement for libel, assault, wrongful arrest, false imprisonment, and trespass.

The use of madhouses as a punishment for unacceptable behavior is not new. In the early 1700s, Daniel Defoe charged that they often served as receptacles for unwanted wives. What was new and significantly more alarming in the nineteenth century's abuse of the lunacy laws with respect to women was that it was sanctioned by the medical profession. That such literary and historical cases exist is not surprising in light of the fact that Elaine Showalter has shown that "in presenting textbook cases of female insanity, doctors usually described women who were disobedient, rebellious, or in open protest against the female role" and "An independent will could be regarded as a form of female deviance dangerously close to mental illness and nearly as subversive as adultery." In other words, lunacy--both in fact and in fiction--became another stick with which a paternalistic society could enforce proper womanly decorum.

The Demand For Divorce in Victorian Society, 1858-1868

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The 1857 Divorce Act was narrowly framed to preserve the sanctity of the marriage tie. Those interested in legal reform wished to eliminate the anomalies associated with Parliamentary divorce, but no one wanted to threaten the institution of marriage by making divorce too easy. As a consequence, the newly-created court sat only in London, administered a procedure that invariably incurred substantial costs for litigants, and rigorously enforced a statute that recognized only a wife's adultery or a husband's adultery compounded by some other marital crime (bigamy, cruelty, desertion, incest) as grounds for divorce.

Expense thus barred the poor, and publicity intimidated the respectable. Who, then, would take advantage of the opportunity to divorce? Not surprisingly, the Divorce Court apparently became the province of the aristocratic and the bohemian, to the horror and entertainment of the public who avidly followed the press reports of the Court's proceedings. Based on newspaper accounts and the Law Reports, the view that divorce served only the margins of Victorian society has stood largely unchallenged until the present day.

This paper systematically examines the social basis of the demand for divorce during the first decade of the Divorce Court's existence. The analysis utilized a one in ten sample of the divorce petitions filed between 1858 and 1868. These files, housed in the Public Records Office and open to the researcher subject to a 75 year rule, include information about the particulars of the suit and its progress, the course of the marriage and its breakdown, and the occupation and economic resources of the spouses.

An analysis of these cases demonstrates that the demand for divorce actually had a much broader social base than that popularly ascribed to Victorian society. The extra expense associated with initiating a suit in London certainly did handicap those who lived outside the southeast, but the middle classes and the lower middle classes of London and the home counties provided the bulk of these unhappy litigants. The scandals of divorce that so entertained the Victorians did not fairly represent the mundane reality that the Divorce Court actually dealt with in its day-to-day proceedings, but instead served to disguise the extent to which marital unhappiness could threaten the homes of the respectable and the disreputable alike.

SECOND SESSION: "The Woman Question--and Questionable Women"

The "Ghastly Ring of Prophetesses": Charles Kingsley and Women's Education

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Santa Clara University

In his parish, Charles Kingsley encountered many young women who were, in his opinion, wasting their minds and their lives by occupying themselves with few interests beyond the attainment of a husband. Meanwhile, much of the nation was crying out for teachers who might help usher in the age symbolized by the Great Exhibition. In mid-century, therefore, Kingsley helped F.D. Maurice and David Laing establish Queen's College in London, and he became an instructor in English literature. This move was seen in some quarters as dangerous and revolutionary: there was no telling, after all, what an educated woman might do.

After teaching only one course, Kingsley withdrew from the faculty. This was blamed on nervous exhaustion, a condition to which he frequently fell prey, but it was also an early expression of his disillusionment with single young women who not only stopped worrying about marriage, but who also rejected the preordained role of governess. Although he initially rejected the Quarterly Review's fears regarding Queen's College, Kingsley soon enough criticized and caricatured in his novels educated women who sought true independence in Victorian society.

In turn, women's advocates like Emily Davies and Barbara Bodichon were cautious in their praise of Kingsley's efforts on behalf of women's education. For several decades he remained convinced that a certain kind of education should be tolerated for women of the middle classes, but it was to be pragmatic and not turn them against an ultimately subservient role to men. John Stuart Mill and even Maurice worried over this increasingly obvious reactionary tendency in Kingsley, but could not change it. For all his early concern that young women were limiting their options, an older Kingsley yearned for the kind of woman he had married: an apparently contented helpmate whose education was supervised by a moderately liberated husband. Ironically, she is the one who introduced him to the writings of Carlyle and Maurice, upon whom all his subsequent works depend. He explicitly recognized the intellectual debt he owed her, but seems to have felt secure in that recognition because she was also a married lady.

Sex and the Victorian Actress

Tracy C. Davis
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Queen's University

The theatre's ability to disturb middle-class norms, and particularly to challenge sexual norms, did not diminish during the Victorian period. Society focused on the actress as an attractive trap for unwary males, as a flamboyant woman similar to prostitutes in nocturnal habits, as an economically fragile and therefore sexually susceptible woman, and as a flagrant and proud violator of woman's prescribed domestic sphere. Some nineteenth-century commentators also located their sense of unease in conventions of theatrical performance. The costumes, gestures, and formal arrangement of actresses on stage predictably evoked a sexual response from male spectators, suggesting that a coherent erotic system was in operation.

Spectators' ability to recognize and interpret these erotic encodings depended on their familiarity with other, more explicit, sexual contexts. Research into collections of Victorian erotica reveals that the theatre in general and actresses in particular appear frequently in English publications of 1838-1910. High-class and mass-produced material both convey an image of female performers as lascivious sex-seekers; they also encourage (by their selection and juxtaposition of otherwise unlike images) the perception that "respectable" actresses are synonymous with prostitutes, erotic paintings, and fetishistic pornography.

Depictions of actresses in erotic books and serials help to verify the existence of a male sexual sub-culture that perceived more in actresses' performances than either actresses or women spectators were aware of. Male spectators exerted hegemonic control over the activity of "looking" at theatre, just as they traditionally possess "the Look" in art and film. Actresses' function as the senders of erotically stimulating messages is confirmed and reinforced by the behavior, ideology, and literature of imagistically-gendered receptors.

The Multifaceted Image of the "New Woman" --Enemy of Social Order

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Between 1894 and 1900 the scandal of the New Woman was a widely publicized, heatedly debated issue in England. "New Woman" was a specific term used by writers to designate women demanding latch-keys, a university education, and the right to find meaningful work. The New Woman also supposedly questioned the traditional values of marriage and motherhood. In this respect, she was considered by many to be an enemy of the social order. This paper centers specifically on the term New Woman to study how the phrase was used and how she was perceived. The term was originally coined by the novelist and publicist Sarah Grand in 1894, who used the phrase in positive terms to describe a modern, progressive, intelligent woman. Ironically, though, Grand's original image was transformed into myriad opposing images by the popular press. By presenting the full range of contemporary usages of the term New Woman, this paper shows how the phrase was used for varied purposes in a wide array of contexts, from the approving to the scandalized. This paper argues that the term New Woman never developed a distinct identity, a sustained image. Consequently, this paper takes issue with scholars today who assume the

term New Woman to have had a single, consistent identity. The monolithic construct of New Woman in current research does not correspond to the term's original currency. A careful examination of the popular literature during this period suggests that New Woman was more a prominent phrase of the antifeminist cant of the mid-and late-nineties in England than a coherent identity-label for a group of women.

This paper surveys the functions for which the phrase New Woman was employed to serve and argues that the term was was a rhetorical device to avoid addressing the substantive issues of the woman's movement in the 1890s. The phrase New Woman was used as part of a strategy to trivialize the significance of advanced women's views; the term allowed a writer to pursue an ad feminum argument and dwell on superficialities such as physical appearance and personality quirks. Even more important, the New Woman image generated extremely negative associations that could operate to prevent any woman from looking on the woman's movement favorably. Ugliness, pseudo-masculinity, nervous hysteria, and sexual frustration are typical character traits directly connected to the New Woman. The lonely unhappiness of embittered spinsterhood attends much of the New Woman literature as subtext. In short, the term was for many writers a powerful progaganda tool with which to warn women of a mythical social disease. The New Woman scandal is a study in the power of labeling and stereotyping.

By reviewing the full field of references to New Woman in such journals as Cornhill's, Blackwood's, Quarterly Review, Fortnightly Review, Punch, Nineteenth Century, Saturday Review, The Englishwomen's Review, and North American Review, this paper weighs the full rhetorical freight of this term and thus gauges the anxiety and fear surrounding the issue of women's social rights. By emphasizing how multi-faceted and how confused a term New Woman was in popular literature, the paper also sheds light on the complexities of the woman's movement during the 1890s and further helps to explain why so many progressive women sought to disassociate themselves from this term.

THIRD SESSION: "(In)decorous Portraits"

George Eliot and the Journalists: Making the Mistress Moral

Teresa Mangum
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University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

The tensions between George Eliot's public status as England's greatest literary moralist and her private position as Henry Lewes' partner in adultery were never more clearly enunciated than in periodical reviews of The Life of George Eliot As Related in Her Letters and Journals, a heavily edited collection compiled by her husband, John Walter Cross. Published in 1885, this volume produced a flurry of literary notices which remain, like the expurgated letters themselves, masterpieces of obfuscation.

In this paper, I begin by detailing the history of George Henry Lewes' and Mary Ann Evans' courtship. I then discuss the discursive doubling which allowed reviewers at once to moralize

about and to make moral the life of George Eliot. In Blackwoods Edinburgh Magazine, The Fortnightly Review, and the Contemporary Review, among others, the reviewers labored to justify this domestic and literary relationship. Though Eliot considered herself Lewes' wife, even five years after her death the journalists balked at calling the Lewes/Eliot liaison a "marriage." Instead, the reviewers used various strategies to describe the relationship. In several essays the Leweses "union" becomes proof of her womanhood, which itself becomes an antidote to her imposing and intimidatingly "masculine" intellect. Other reviewers dramatize their defense or damnation by reading the Lewes-Evans romance between the lines of Cross's unyieldingly respectable prose. Finally, many reviewers conclude by arguing that whatever the means, Eliot's novels are an end that sufficiently justifies any irregularities. All of the critics eventually ask how Mary Ann Evans's immorality qualifies, explains, ennobles, or dismisses the novels of the sometimes ponderously moral George Eliot. In any case, the portions of the review devoted to their relationship are often strained, vapid, clumsy, and weak with the effort of not saying.

By contrast, the same journalists turned a moral lens on the novels themselves, and the very questions that could not be asked of Eliot's life were demanded of her novels. The reviewers carefully scrutinized the choices of her characters, particularly her female characters, for moral improprieties. Hetty Sorrel and Maggie Tulliver receive particular attention while the corventional heroines who marry are praised in one aphorism after another.

I conclude by discussing Eliot's assumption of various names throughout her career, including "Mrs. Lewes." Though her critics read her self-naming as an inexcusable act of defiance or a deliberate falsehood, I show that from her childhood years, self-naming provided Eliot with a powerful means of marking beginnings and endings in her life, of acknowledging changes in herself and in her relationships, and of comprehending the complex and original combination of roles she assumed in a culture that offered only one completely acceptable role to respectable women. Thus self-naming becomes an act of assertion and integration rather than ostentation or dependence and this act allows Evans-Eliot-Lewes-Cross to escape the boundaries of mistress or morals that the Victorian readers and reviewers repeatedly imposed upon her.

The Decorum of Froude's Carlyle Biography: Early Reviewers' Reactions

D. J. Trela
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Pan American University

Although Thomas Carlyle wanted no biography of himself written, he realized accounts of his life were inevitable and so gave his friend James Anthony Froude access to and the authority to use his and his wife's letters and papers. Froude's biographical and editorial method was to tell all, to practice no reserve. His procedure was somewhat unusual in a period of frequent suppression of unpleasant

details or even of matter considered private and unfit for the public. Froude names names, places, and dates, and strongly criticizes Carlyle as a husband.

The response to these revelations was varied. Opinion was almost evenly divided between those who objected to private details being made public and those who either did not object or positively endorsed the procedure. Reviewers who agreed with Froude's assessment of Carlyle usually agreed with his methods while most who disagreed with his interpretation disliked his methods. Froude's own integrity as an author was, with some justice, seriously questioned by those reviewers who knew the Carlyles well, since their observation of the couple led them to form a happier conclusion regarding their marriage. The controversy over Froude's writings certainly reflects Carlyle's own controversial life and writings as well as the strikingly opposed biographical theories current in late Victorian England.

Julia Margaret Cameron and the "Ennoblement" of Photographic Portraiture

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University of Chicago

Julia Margaret Cameron's (1815-1879) reputation as a photographer has been founded largely upon her portraits, both for the identities of her subjects and the distinctive photographic means she used to represent them. The subjects of Cameron's portraits were the men of mark of mid-Victorian England: Alfred Tennyson, John Herschel, Thomas Carlyle, Edward Eyre, Charles Darwin, Robert Browning and others. Cameron's distinctive use of focus, lighting, and composition has been understood by twentieth-century historians as an effort to connect her photographs to non-photographic visual representations such as the portrait paintings of George Watts, her friend and artistic advisor. Cameron's "ennoblement" of photographic portraiture pertains, however, to contemporary developments in photographic portraiture, and was undertaken to set a standard of decorum threatened by the proliferation and diversification of the practice of photography in the early 1860's, most notably carte de visite portraits. Cartes were an international fad, which emphasized costume and studio setting, and were criticized in some circles as vulgar, literal, and leveling, produced by photographers with insufficient appreciation of social distinctions.

Cameron, a member of the "intellectual aristocracy," pursued the "ennoblement" of photography with determination, idealism, ambition, and freedom from the need to make a living from her work. Her use of focus to manipulate form in space and her use of large negatives to take heads to the scale of life were understood by her audience as a transformation of the photographic process itself. Profile poses, references to old master paintings, and typology required the viewer to consider the portrait photograph as the product of the idea of the photographer, not as the representation of information. Comparisons of Cameron photographs of Henry Taylor, Alfred Tennyson, Julia Duckworth Stephen, and Thomas Carlyle with contemporary photographs demonstrate Cameron's means of "ennobling" photographic portraiture. Cameron's portrait subjects were friends, associates, and members of her circle. Commercial photographers bitterly resented her easy access to sitters (a great advantage in the lucrative business of photographic portraits of the famous) as well as the reviews she secured in prominent journals such as the Athenaeum.

The initial controversy which Cameron's technique provoked among professionals abated as they realized her work lacked broad appeal. Cameron's photography was predicated upon a consensus of value which denied the uses and audiences served by contemporary photographic portraiture; her approach survived as a style, not as a standard of decorum.

FOURTH SESSION: "The Wages of Sin: Reaction and Retribution"

"Scandal of the Age:" Infanticide and Illegitimacy in Victorian Britain

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In 1844, Thomas Wakley, an MP and coroner, announced that "child murder was going on to a frightful, to an enormous, a perfectly incredible extent." Wakley was one of a number of Victorians who pointed to a growing problem with infanticide. Like many of his contemporaries, Wakley associated infanticide with illegitimacy and identified the most common victims of this crime as illegitimate infants. The mothers of these unwanted infants supposedly murdered their babies rather than face the shame of unmarried motherhood. High levels of infant mortality, particularly among illegitimate infants, seemed to support these charges that murder was a common response to illegitimacy.

While the extent of Victorian concern about infanticide is obvious, the frequency and nature of the crime itself are much less easily determined. Only a small fraction of the illegitimate infants born each year were identified as murder victims, though they did make up an alarmingly high proportion of all homicides. An examination of the cases of the women accused of infant murder also suggests that infanticide was far from a simple response to illegitimate motherhood.

The sessions papers of the Central Criminal Court in London for twelve sample years between 1839 and 1906 produced forty-two cases in which unmarried mothers were charged with the murder of their illegitimate infants. These cases involved two distinct patterns of alleged child murder. Nearly 70 percent of the women were accused of murdering newborn infants. The remaining cases involved the murder of infants ranging in age from a few days to several years old. While the second group of murders varied widely in circumstances and assumed motives, the neonaticides followed a similar pattern. The mothers had given birth alone and had concealed the birth and death of their infants by hiding the bodies. The deaths were discovered when the body was found or when the woman's changed appearance or medical problems revealed her recent delivery. Although they were brought to trial, the accused neonaticides were seldom convicted of murder.

These London infanticide cases cast doubt on the idea that infanticide was a common response to unmarried motherhood. First, the cases were few in number and not always clearly murders. Second, the majority of these alleged infanticides hinged on very unusual circumstances. The woman had concealed her pregnancy from friends, employers, and family and had delivered her infant alone and unaided. Victorian identification of the prevalence of infanticide may have represented not so much a recognition of the problem of infant murder as a response to illegitimacy.

Infanticide provided a convenient explanation of high mortality among illegitimate infants that ignored the effects of poverty, limited opportunity, and lack of effective services. Also, infanticide was only one of a number of dire fates commonly associated with conceiving an illegitimate child. All unmarried mothers were thought to face a life of inescapable degradation and crime. Such identification of the dangers of a fall from virtue isolated the unmarried mother and reinforced the unacceptabliity of her offense against propriety and the family.

Gambling, Scandal, and the National Anti-Gambling League

David Itzkowitz
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Macalester College

The National Anti-Gambling League, which was founded in 1890, was a late addition to the forces of Victorian moral reform. Although it characterized gambling as "the great evil," which ranked second only to intemperance in "filling our prisons, our poorhouses, and our lunatic asylums," it found that few contemporaries were willing to view gambling as being anything like the great social problem that they presented it as. The League never numbered more than a few people among its active members and was only able to raise a tiny fraction of the money that was generated by the temperance movement, with whose work it always liked to compare its own.

The League's opposition to gambling was complete. No form of betting was too great or too small to come within its view. It opposed equally the racecourse activities of such public figures as Lord Rosebery, the petty gambling of children, and speculative trading on the stock exchange. The League's major objection towards gambling was that the act of betting was itself sinful or depraved for it appealed to the worst instincts of humankind. On the one hand, the bettor was appealing to a form of "unreason" and on the other hand, he was giving in to selfishness and a desire to profit from the loss of others.

The major public appeal of the League, however, was more limited. The emotional impact in the League's publications was made through stories meant to show that gambling, no matter how harmless it looked, was inevitably the first step along the road to crime, misery, and death. Further, though the league opposed all kinds of betting, it devoted the greatest part of its efforts to attacking what it called "the vile system of professional betting" -- that is, the commercialized mass-betting industry centered on horseracing, a new development in the Victorian period and one which flourished from about the middle of the nineteenth century.

Ironically, many who participated in the new gambling industry shared attitudes of the League's members. They usually risked no more money than they could afford to lose and, rather than throwing themselves upon fate, attempted as much as possible to rationally calculate the outcomes of their bets. Although there were some whose gambling activities more closely approximated the behavior described in League propaganda, they were often wealthy upper-class people like the members of the crowd that surrounded the Prince of Wales. For much of the nineteenth century, middle- and working class gamblers were "Victorians," every bit as much as the moralists who opposed them.

Homosexual Scandal and Compulsory Heterosexuality in the 1890's

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This paper focuses on four scandals: first, the Wilde trials; secondly, the scandals attending passage of the 1885 Act under which he was subsequently charged; third, the literary scandal attending publication of The Picture of Dorian Gray in 1890; and last, the scandal associated with the appearance of Thomas Hardy's Jude the Obscure in book form in November, 1895, six months after the trials. The paper combines three elements: social and political history, a modicum of literary criticism, and a certain amount of gossip (this last a proper subject of inquiry in the study of scandal). These elements are framed in an argument, both historical and theoretical, about a crisis of masculinity in late Victorian male homosocial institutions. The crisis makes explicable the extraordinary events and rhetoric of scandal in the 1890s. Finally, by including Jude the Obscure I have been able to touch as well upon the subject of female homosexuality as another contested ground in the construction of gender in the late Victorian period.

Victorian Scandals: Some Theoretical Considerations

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Each paper in this conference narrates the historical facts and the controversies surrounding a "scandal" in the Victorian period. The purpose of my discussion will be to suggest interconnections among the papers and to examine the phenomemon of Victorian "scandal" from the viewpoint of contemporary critical theory.

At least eight of the presentations focus on scandals involving women and, more generally, the issue of sexual difference. Here, a deconstructive approach to the representation of the feminine in discourse is especially helpful, as is the emphasis in Marxist-oriented feminism on the socio-economic aspect of gender roles.

A second group of papers focuses on the intervention of the law in the private lives of Victorians. Michel Foucault's theory of the relation between sexuality and power, discourse and knowledge, is particularly illuminating. The psychoanalytic view of Victorian culture as "repressive," popularized by Steven Marcus, and most recently by Peter Gay, will be considered in relation to Foucault's revisionary hypothesis.

A third set of papers concerns the role of the Victorian press in the production of "scandal." Analysis of the rhetorical strategies in sample discourse from the newspapers and periodicals as well as in literature suggests that metaphor plays an important ideological role in "scandal." The study of "Victorian scandals" requires an interdisciplinary methodology. Moreover, "scandal" itself is a slippery term, carrying an implicit ideology which scholars should be critically aware of.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

1987 Meeting, Midwest Conference on British Studies

The Midwest Conference on British Studies will hold its annual conference at Loyola University of Chicago on October 23-24. The Program Chair is Carla H. Hay, Department of History, Marquette University, Milwaukee, WI 53233.

Second Annual Conference on Medievalism

Studies in Medievalism will sponsor the Second Annual Conference on Medievalism at the University of Notre Dame, October 8-10. Address inquiries to Leslie J. Workman, Editor, Studies in Medievalism, 520 College Avenue, Holland, MI 49423

Call for Papers: Humor In Art

Beloit College Occasional Papers, volume II, will address the subject of humor in the arts throughout history. Send essays (limit 25 pages including footnotes) with illustrations for consideration to Debra N. Mancoff, Department of Art History, Beloit College, WI 53511. Deadline: October 30, 1987.