Bulletin of the
Midwest Victorian Studies Association

Summer 1999 Robert Koepp, Editor

MVSA 2000: "Victorian Realities, Victorian Dreams" is the title of the twenty-fourth annual conference of the association, to be held in Urbana-Champaign, Friday to Sunday, March 31st to April 2nd, 2000. The Executive Committee once again has chosen a general theme to encourage proposal submissions on a variety of topics. As usual, the committee encourages proposals which are interdisciplinary in nature and which have broad-based appeal.

The conference title also alludes to one of the meeting's special attractions, a centenary performance of Elgar's *The Dream of Gerontius* by the University of Illinois Orchestra and Chorale. Prior to the performance on Saturday, a session of the conference will be devoted to *Gerontius*, with specially-invited speakers offering critical perspectives on both the music of Elgar and the poetry of Newman. Nicholas Temperley and Walter Arnstein will serve as local arrangements coordinators for the conference.

Paper or panel proposals are due no later than October 15th (a bit sooner this year, since the meeting is scheduled three weeks earlier than usual). Abstracts of no more than two pages should be directed to Robert Koepp--by post, fax, or e-mail--as follows:

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"Anything Under the Victorian Sun," the Spring 1999 conference, was held at the Palmer House Hilton in Chicago on April 23-24. This meeting was marked by the best attendance in recent years, with more than seventy registrants on hand for the proceedings. The open-topic conference format proved successful, resulting a number of excellent presentations on a wide range of subject matter--from needlepoint to friendly societies, from painting to professionalization, from Gladstone to Wilde. (See the abstracts below.)

A Hearty 'Thank You and Best Wishes' to MVSA's immediate Past-President Richard W. Davis for his leadership and service on the Executive Committee. Due to surgery, Richard was not able to attend the April meeting in Chicago. We are happy to report that he has recovered nicely, is doing fine, and is back at his work at the Center for the History of Freedom at Washington University.

A Message from MVSA President Kris Garrigan:

How clever of me to become MVSA's twelfth president in April 1999. Talk about perfect timing . . . .

Our twenty-third annual meeting in Chicago was among the most successful ever. We garnered a record number of paper and panel proposals (a dizzying 162!), prompting us to add two extra sessions to the program, while attendance was the highest and most diverse it has been in recent years. The competition for the Arnstein Prize for Dissertation Research in Victorian

Studies, in its eighth year and now worth an impressive $1,000, drew thirty-six entries, a new high, from candidates throughout the U.S. and Canada; we were delighted that this year's winner, Kristin Brandser of the University of Iowa, was able to attend the conference and tell us about her fascinating interdisciplinary project in law and literature. (See her description, below.) We've also instituted policies designed to attract new scholars with new ideas, especially graduate students, who can enjoy three years' complimentary membership. MVSA is, in the vernacular, on a roll.

That this is so is the result of devoted work by many members, but I want to thank two of them especially. First, Bob Koepp, our new executive secretary, is off to a splendid start, bringing fresh ideas, talents, and energy to this crucial post. His MVSA web page is just one example; be sure to visit it if you haven't yet seen it (or even if you have--Bob updates it regularly). As a former executive secretary myself, I know only too well how demanding this job can be; Bob is handling it with both efficiency and panache. We owe even more thanks, however, to someone whose work is now completed, my immediate predecessor as president, Richard Davis. At a time when MVSA much needed revitalizing, Richard stepped in with imagination and tenacity, articulating his concerns not only thoughtfully and energetically but galvanizing us with his exemplary collegiality. The inspiring results are apparent in the roster of successes above. Unfortunately, owing to surgery in April (from which, thankfully, he is recovering well), Richard could not be present in Chicago to receive our applause, but we look forward to offering an enthusiastic standing round to him next year at Urbana. We hope you will attend and join in.

As I was saying, how clever of me . . . .

Treasurer Julie Melnyk reports that the current balance of the MVSA account is $3186.96, now that all the bills for the past year (including those of the Annual Meeting) have been paid. The **Arnstein Fund** now totals $13,682.25, taking into account a number of new donations. While this is a good-sized fund, it is not yet a large enough endowment to support the goal of maintaining the monetary award of $1000 for the **Arnstein Prize**. Members are asked to consider a donation to the fund in the coming year, with Julie's reminder that contributions are indeed tax-deductible.

Congratulations to Kristin Brandser, winner of the **1999 Arnstein Prize**. In accepting the award at the Chicago meeting, Kristin, a doctoral candidate in English at the University of Iowa, offered the following remarks, providing an explanation of her current research:

I am very honored to be the recipient of this year's Walter L. Arnstein Prize for Dissertation Research. I am about a year from completing my dissertation and it is most encouraging at this time to receive this kind of affirmation of my project.

My dissertation is entitled "In Contempt: Women, Law, and the Victorian Novel." It is a study of legal and literary narratives in the context of specific "chapters" in nineteenth-century British women's legal history. I explore topics such as infanticide, birth control, wrongful confinement, and women in the legal profession and analyze texts ranging from legislative reports and trial transcripts to Gothic, utopian, and New Woman novels.

A central premise of my dissertation is that certain nineteenth-century novels by women performed what today we would call "feminist jurisprudence"; they analyzed and critiqued the law as a patriarchal institution. By providing a space where women's legal stories could be told and read, by calling into question the law's claim to "truth," and by creating new knowledge through the shared tellings of women's lived experiences, it is my contention that novels actually participated in bringing about the many legal reforms that took place in the nineteenth century.

Drawing on the narrative theories of Mikhail Bakhtin and Julia Kristeva, I argue that the novel, by its very form, was particularly suited to a feminist critique of the law. Novels engaged the law in an ongoing and highlighted the oppression of women inherent in legal language. Dialogic play with some of the law's key words for women ("covered," It protected," and "mad") exposed the devastating meanings and significance of these abstract words and concepts when "translated" (as we see in the novels) into the real-life contexts of home, marriage, and motherhood.

A multidisciplinary exploration of how nineteenth-century women represented themselves, my dissertation expands on historical research that has been done on women who fought for legal reforms, while at the same time, breaking new ground with its focus on women as legal advocates in real-life courtrooms, as well as in the legal forum provided by the novel form. In its analysis of many non-canonical novels by women (most of which were very popular in their day), my dissertation also calls into question certain "all-encompassing"theories about the Victorian novel. Studies such as D.A. Miller's *The Novel and the Police* and Edward Said's *Culture and Imperialism*, for example, argue that novels reinforced and policed institutions such as the law. My study re-examines the cultural and political role of the novel in light of "new evidence" that some novels by women were "lawless "--showing contempt for, rather than reinscribing, the law.

I will be spending the month of June in London, researching primarily at the Public Record Office, where I will be able to review original court documents in several trials and proceedings in which women represented themselves in court. I also will be reviewing archival materials at several institutions, including the British Library and the Contemporary Medical Archives Centre. I will be using the Arnstein Prize to help cover my travel expenses.

Again, I just want to say how meaningful it is to me to have been awarded this specifically Victorian prize. Being here in downtown Chicago is really returning to old stomping grounds for me. I went to law school at The University of Chicago and I practiced law for six years right down the street at the First National Bank building. I went back to graduate school because I realized that what I really wanted to do was teach, and as long as I was going to teach, it might as well be what I love--literature. I am very pleased, however, that in my dissertation I have been able to take the best of my old life, the study of law, and use it to enrich my literary studies. Thank you so much for showing this support for my work.

Again, Congratulations Kristin! We wish you the best in your continued efforts and future endeavors.

Another Word of Thanks--and Congratulations-- to MVSA stalwart and former Executive Secretary D.J. Trela. First we thank Dale for his generous contribution this spring of $500 to the **Arnstein Prize** fund. Then we congratulate him on his new position, Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences at the University of Michigan-Flint.

The Ninth Annual Arnstein Prize Competition: Application materials for the **Arnstein Prize** are now available from Prize Committee chair Susan Thach Dean. Susan urges all MVSA members to spread the word about this monetary award for dissertaion researchers. The 9th Arnstein Prize, to be awarded at the 2000 Annual Meeting in Urbana-Champaign, will again be $1,000. For further information, contact Susan by e-mail at **Susan.Dean@colorado.edu**.

Anything Under the Victorian Sun: the Twenty-Third Annual Meeting of the MVSA, Chicago, April 23-24, 1999:

--Abstracts--

Session I: Victorian Spaces

Kristin L. Parkinson, "Slippery Stitches: Victorian Needlework and the Problems of Private Space"

While we are all familiar with the public-private dichotomy so prevalent in nineteenth century discourse, in this paper I move beyond and problematize this ideological distinction by considering the physical spaces within the home - the Victorian division of middle-class domestic space into multiple classed and gendered realms - and how they complicate our notions of the public and private spheres. Drawing on the conceptions of space articulated by. Henri Lefebvre and Daphne Spain, I concentrate my analysis on these spatial divisions and their relation to women's sewing. I expose the Victorian anxiety to limit what types of sewing a middle-class woman could do and where she could do it and the way these limitations challenge traditional notions of the Victorian home as an exclusively private space. In undertaking this analysis, I connect this tension in representations of women, their labor, and physical space to the larger anxiety of the middle class about its own complex position sandwiched between the working and leisure classes. Using the problem of sewing and space as a frame, I analyze how the struggles of the middle class to invent itself in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries resulted in an acute anxiety about what constituted a class and its boundaries.

The comfortable middle-class household had areas devoted to women, to men, to servants, and to children; these divisions also separated the portions of the house where work took place from the areas devoted to the family's leisure activities. Women's sewing, however, challenged this spatial distinction between work and leisure by incorporating elements of both: Women's leisure to practice needlework staked middle-class families' claims to a higher economic and social position while these same women's insistence on performing this work regularly and rigorously emphasized middle-class virtue by distinguishing this class from the idle upper class.Needlework was, for women, both labor and leisure, and this paradox was a source of great anxiety for the middle class.

The culture struggled to resolve this tension by subtly distinguishing between decorative and useful sewing and relegating each to a different space within the house. When called upon to make or mend household items, women worked in the private and female spaces in the house. The Tappit

sisters in Anthony Trollope's *Rachel Ray,* for example, "toiled like slaves" late at night to finish their ball dresses so that they could "walk about like ladies" with their house guests, and in Charlotte Brontë's *Shirley* Caroline Helstone sits in the drawing room when she is embroidering or making items for the charitable basket that circulates in the town but withdraws to her bedroom to make and alter a muslin dress. She argues that she prefers to sew upstairs "to avoid interruption." The interruption she fears has important class connotations: To be seen doing useful sewing undermines the middle-class woman's claim to a privileged social and economic position.

Thus, the culture developed a distinction between public and private types of needlework and the spaces in the home in which they were practiced. The embroidery and charitable work Caroline does and the space in which she does it has different connotations Deborah Cherry in *Painting Women* describes women's decorative needlework as an activity performed "in company," suggesting that this work has a symbolic value contingent upon its visibility. The ornamental work women performed in the more public rooms of the house in the presence of visitors and other members of the household presented a particular image or definition of middle-class women. Their sewing displayed their virtuous industriousness while its ornamental nature suggested that the household was in no way dependent on that labor for its survival. This sewing then becomes a kind of performance, an outward representation of the middle-class woman, that might, in fact, differ from her more private identity.

This distinction, in turn, problematizes our ideas of the Victorian home as an exclusively private space. The need to maintain two different spaces for two different types of women's sewing suggests that the more public rooms of the house acted as an extension of the marketplace and public sphere. The vision of middle-class women presented there was a public persona, designed to disseminate a particular definition of the middle class as wealthy and comfortable yet hardworking and virtuous. That this was a carefully controlled and only partial picture of the middle class lifestyle suggests the anxiety of the middle class about its own identity and place in the social order.

Marjorie Allison, "Barbarians at the Gates: Colonizers and Colonized in Dickens' *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* and Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*"

During the late Victorian period two canonical writers took up the issues of colonialism in their novels while never directly confronting the growing tensions in the empire. Charles Dickens and Oscar Wilde, in *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* and *The Picture of Dorian Gray,* produced texts which both supported and subverted the expanding colonial enterprise. Following the so-called 1857 Indian Mutiny, public discourse and sentiment surrounding India and its place in the empire became increasingly charged and negative. Dickens and Wilde represent in their texts a threat posed by the East that is highly pervasive and disruptive to life within England itself; in their works the corruption and disruption caused by the colonial enterprise and by contact with foreign cultures penetrate and upset the stability of domestic life in England. This disruption of the domestic arena involves more than one space and meaning. In their novels, domestic space can mean the British bedroom and home in general, the metaphorical space of marriage, or the domesticity of the British Islands vis-a-vis foreign lands. At times, the authors deal with all three meanings of domestic space, and even when they do not explicitly invoke all three, the three remain closely and forever linked in the novels.

The authors also endow the colonial enterprise with various meanings and layers. To Dickens and Wilde, to colonize can mean a power struggle between those with and those without power in British society; it can mean to educate and convert "semi-barbarians" to a "civilized" state of being; it can mean to control products and goods for profit without owning them and with relatively little risk or exertion of personal energy; or it can mean appropriating someone else's body for labor, pleasure, or experimentation. As colonization and domestic space become intertwined within these two texts, Dickens and Wilde complicate the supposed threat that India posed to Britain after the Uprising of 1857.

Session II: Modern Masters and New Women

Pamela Gerrish Nunn, "Handmaiden to the Master"

In the wake of the 'lions' of the last two decades of the Victorian period came a troop of allegedly inferior creatures: these were the female artists who, members of the first generation of women to be able to get a satisfactory training in art, thanks to the Slade school and the reactive liberalisation of the South Kensington school and the Royal Academy schools, were inspired by Burne-Jones, Watts, Leighton and Millais to compete on a large scale at the top of the hierarchy of genres, with history painting, literary painting, the nude and allegory. This paper examines their activities and evaluates the critical reception these artists received, suggesting that the appraisals they attracted had more to do with the history of the 'woman question' in Victorian Britain and resistance to women's long-running campaign for equal opportunity (dating from the late 1850s) than with the manifest subjects, styles and levels of excellence in their work. The artists focused on have in only one case so far been the object of any prolonged study but their oeuvres are becoming increasingly evident through feminist research and the vagaries of the auction houses alike. They include Evelyn DeMorgan (1855-1919), Marie Spartali (1843-1927), Henrietta Rae (1859-1928), Annie Swynnerton (1844-1933) and Eleanor Fortescue Brickdale (1872-1945).

David Stewart, "The Return of Godiva and the Foundations of George Frederic Watts' Feminist Nudes"

Godiva is best known today as a sensuous chocolate to be consumed with lingering pleasure. For men in the 19th century, paintings of Godiva usually had the same meaning. They offered up the promise of viewing and savoring female flesh. By 1874, when Watts began painting *The Return of Godiva*, he was well aware of such representations. He painted it to attack male Victorian artists who demeaned Godiva. As Mary Watts wrote, it was painted "as a protest against the many studies of the nude model exhibited under this title." The art critic of *The Academy*, probably Mrs. Pattison, came close to understanding Watts's painting. In 1874 she wrote that its subject is "the cost to the woman herself which such an action as this must have been performed." Watts paints the torture that such women must face. Godiva made it her job to cut taxes, she entered a political sphere defined and controlled by men, and she paid a humiliating price. Mrs. Pattison, who understood Watts's painting, had been his friend since the late 1850's, and she sat next to Mrs. Grote at the first public meeting held in for women's suffrage. She understood what it meant to face public censure while fighting for a just cause.

Watts's pro-feminist painting does not come out of the blue. In 1873, his closest friend was Jane Nassau Senior and, in 1873, she broke the glass ceiling in government jobs for women by being hired as the first woman inspector to report to Parliament. This was a watershed year in the history of women's employment and her friends in the women's movement understood the gravity of her actions, knew her as a supporter of women's rights, and knew her as a supporter of women's suffrage. Upon the death of Senior, Watts wrote a letter, in what can only be described as a fit of anger, to his particularly sexist patron, Charles Rickards; "I have lost a friend who could never be replaced even if I had a long life before me, one in whom I had unbounded confidence, never shaken in the course of friendship very rare during 26 years, Mrs. Nassau Senior, whom I dare say remember taking about with me, who was called by a friend of yours "That Woman" I think when you read the biography of "That Woman" for it is one that will be written that very few canonized saints so well deserved glorification, for all that makes human nature admirable, lovable, & estimable, she had very few equals indeed, & I am certain no superior, it is not too much to say that children yet unborn will have cause to rue this comparative early death."

In 1873 Watts painted portraits of three women's suffrage supporters and painted them for a permanent home in the National Portrait Gallery. They included *John Stuart Mill*, *Charles Wentworth Dilke*, and *James Martineau*. While Mill was sitting to Watts, Millicent Garrett Fawcett came to Little Holland House to observe his progress. John Stuart Mill was the most important man in the women's suffrage movement. and Millicent Garrett Fawcett was its most important woman. As striking a gathering of feminist figures as this sitting was, it was not out of the ordinary for Watts. He had painted Russell Gurney in 1866 while he was preparing to lead the call for women's suffrage in Parliament. Many women's rights supporters were intimate members of the Little Holland House circle, such as Tom Hughes, Jane Nassau Senior. John Simeon. Anne Thackeray, and Henry Taylor, while many others came to sit to Watts or to visit. George Eliot was also a warm friend of Watts's during this period as was William Michael Rossetti. Rossetti was a member of the London Committee for Female Suffrage and was active in supporting the cause for decades to come, even when his art criticism failed to match his politics. Watts's circle was in considerable measure a feminist circle.

Watts's *The Return of Godiva* expresses the powerful meaning that Godiva had for many Victorian women who entered the public sphere. As Dorothy Mermin pointed out in her 1993 book, *Godiva's Ride, Women of Letters in England, 1830-1880*, Lady Godiva was the mid-century feminist ideal for women in England on the cutting edge. For Harriet Martineau, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, and Josephine Butler, Godiva was a role model who inspired courage and self-sacrifice. She was a woman whose self-exposure violated sexual barriers and changed politics. Josephine Butler's essay,

The New Godiva made just this use of Godiva. Watts's *Godiva* is a painting that was begun in the hardest days of the women's rights movement, when women were most savagely attacked for breaking free of their separate sphere. It was a time when the cost to women of independent action was painfully noted and heroically borne by women who Watts knew extremely well such as Jane Senior and Ellice Hopkins. Watts admired these women and complained of women who refused to be less. This painting is a monument to women's heroism, and it was painted at a time when Senior, Hopkins and Butler were sacrificing their lives for women's rights and for the health of poor and sexually exploited children who were slaves to prostitution. Watts had to insure that Godiva sacrificing her body for the good of her sisters, would not become Godiva giving up her body to the pleasure of men. Watts had painted women that way before, but he would not do it again. Here, he employs a treatment of surface and form that obliterates erotic appeal. He cancels out all modeling of Godiva's breasts. She is nude, yes, but in place of sensuality he gives a trowelled, crusty, and unappealing surface of a kind that disgusted his critics. She subjects herself to the full force of British patriarchy against the weight of the many men and many women who would attack her with the scandal and the ridicule of "That Woman." Watts's painting is a monument to the women brave enough to withstand the pain and collapse he witnessed at close hand. Watts's Godiva marks the sacrifice and calls forward feminist martyrs in the spirit of Martineau, Browning, Butler, Hopkins, and Senior. Watts painted *Josephine Butler* for a home in the National Portrait Gallery in 1894 and *She Shall Be Called Woman* for exhibition at the Royal Academy in 1892, but he began his feminist works decades before the 1890's at a time when his best friends were leading the women's rights movement through some of its most difficult days.

Session III: Victorian Men: Shaping Identities

Josef L. Altholz, "How J.H.N. Constructed John Henry Newman"

John Henry Newman was a construct, constructed by John Henry Newman. This statement would be commonplace were it made by a literary writer of postmodern tendencies. It is asserted here by an historian as a simply historical statement, to be demonstrated and documented by the methods of mere history, without benefit of theory. Newman engaged in a lifelong self-construction of what I call a persona of record, a body of written documentation--diaries, autobiographical writings, selected and edited letters, memoranda, and annotations upon all these--comprehensive and unique to him; so unique that the applicability of deconstruction to any historical person of less self-recording habits becomes highly questionable.

An early biographer described Newman as "the most autobiographical of men." Of course any person who writes an autobiography (such as the *Apologia*) has constructed himself at least for that occasion. What is remarkable about Newman is that the autobiographical or self-recording habit began so early, endured so long, developed so extensively and (by editing and annotating) interacted with itself in a highly self-conscious process. His first autobiographical fragment dates from 1812, aged eleven; he added to it through life and wrote several others. Shortly afterward he began to keep a diary, regularly from 1824 to 1879. He began his practice of "cutting up and arranging letters" in 1828, repeating the exercise many times over into the 1870s. His first memorandum, summing up his side of a controversy, is dated 1827; this practice also continued into the 1870s. He repeatedly annotated his diaries and letters. The annotations were often initialed "J.H.N."; if Newman was a construct, we may designate his constructor as J.H.N.

I propose to draw out Newman's autobiographical habits and their consequences in creating a persona of record.

David Fell, Victorian Masculinity and the Un-Making of Homosocial Bonds: The Ideological Work of Domesticity and Teleology in the Victorian Male Hero Novel"

In this study of Victorian masculinity and homosociality, I examine how the cultural force of compulsory male domesticity, and the formal force of narrative teleology, combine to create what is arguably the most anti-homosocial (and perhaps under-recognized) narrative of masculine development within the history of the novel. Moreover, I examine how this narrative, with its emphasis on the failure of primary homosocial bonds, motives and enables a broad constellation of conservative ideological work beyond just that of male gender: such as the normalization of a primarily competitive and ultimately captitalist model of homosocial relations; the solidification of rigid class, ethnic, and national boundaries; and the abjection of homoerotic desire.

My study begins by briefly surveying the construction of homosocial relationships in the male hero novels of periods and nationalities other than Victorian England--such as during the eighteenth and twentieth centuries in England, and the nineteenth century in America--showing how homosocial bonds therein are typically treated as the male hero's most primary, enduring, and valorized relationships. Then I show how the male hero's homosocial bonds in the Victorian novel are, in contrast, almost universally terminated or destroyed by the novels' end: how they culminate in a narrative of failure, particularly in the novels of Dickens, Thackeray, and Eliot.

To begin answering the obvious question this begs--why is there such a universal failure of the homosocial in Victorian male hero novels, and why is it so pervasive during this period?--I investigate the underappreciated force of compulsory domesticity acting upon men during this period. Revising--or complementing--studies of female Victorian domesticity by critics like Mary Poovey and Nancy Armstrong, I read contemporary Victorian tracts, like Greg's *Why Are Women Redundant?*, to show that there is at least as strong a compulsion on Victorian men as on women to marry and lead domestically-ground lives. Then, after showing how this is reflected in the male hero novels of this period--almost all of which culminate in the hero's supremely valorized marriage and/or parenthood--I show how this domestic end motivates the positing and failure of homosocial bondss before then. Drawing on Peter Brooks's *Reading for the Plot*, I show how forces of narrative teleology--evident in the construction of the Victorian male hero's narrative of development--require the positing and failure of likely alternative ends in advance of a teleologically arrived at end: in this case, the positing and failure of the male hero's relationships with non-domestic women, with his birth family, and, almost universally, with other men, before arriving at his end, or telos, of marriage to a domestic woman. I specifically show how this pattern is played out in novels like *David Copperfield*, *The History of Pendennis*, and *Daniel Deronda*. Also, I suggest how the recognition of this pattern importantly revises Eve Sedgwick's account of Victorian homosocial relations, which acknowledges only their rivalrous endings, and not the domestic and teleological motivation of their failure, and thus not the crucial role they play before then in bringing about the hero's domestically culminated narrative of development.

More importantly, I suggest how the positing and failure of homosocial relations enable a much broader constellation of ideological work than Sedgwick recognizes (broader than just the exchange of women on behalf of middle-class formation she cites). I show how this positing and failure enables the demonization of homoerotic desire (in the failure of David Copperfield's bond with Steerforth, and the cessation of Daniel Deronda's bond with Mordecai); the preclusion of cross-class relations and lower-class social mobility, and the insistence on the inevitabiltiy of competitive relations (in the failure of

David's nascent bond with Uriah Heep, and Daniel's bond with Hans Meyrick); and the discrediting of cross-ethnic, cross-national relations (in the failure of Daniel's bond with Hans). In enablingthis work, my study concludes, the domesticity and teleologically motivated failure of the homosocial underlies a broad network of conservative Victorian ideology, much of which crucially depends on its narrative of failure.

Christopher Prom, "Friendly Societies, Private Ritual, and Public Display in the Working Class Community"

In 1827, a Derbyshire miner named James Waterhouse was initiated into the Independent Order of Oddfellows, Manchester Unity. As Waterhouse later recalled the evening:

> I was taken to the Lodge-room door and there blindfolded, then bidden to knock, when I was admitted and led to the centre of the room. There someone said. 'The ponderous chain prepare, the ponderous chain prepare, be ready at the word to bind the victim to the stake. No refuge for the stranger can be found. Here is water on your right, fire on your left, behind you is a yawning gulf, before you sharp pointed instruments of death.'[1]

After being subjected to humiliating rites, including the threat of branding with a red-hot poker, Waterhouse answered several simple questions. Could he swear obedience to the officers of the Lodge? Was lie loyal to King and Country? Could he maintain secrecy about the mysterious goings-on he had just witnessed? So affirming, Waterhouse was then accepted by the "Grand Master" and became part of an organization that represented the largest social movement in Victorian Britain.

Waterhouse had joined a friendly society, an organization whose ostensible purpose was nothing more than providing a rudimentary form of sickness insurance administered locally by working men. More Victorian working men joined friendly societies than any other organization. However, few historians have analyzed who joined friendly societies, at what times, or for what reasons. Nor has much been done to interpret their rituals or set them in the context of the local community. In *Primitive Rebels,* his groundbreaking study of working-class protest, Eric Hobsbawm called friendly society rituals a prime example of "primitivism" and "misplaced ingenuity" in early working-class- protest movements.[2]

However, friendly societies became so popular that by 1905 nearly half of England's adult men belonged to one, and there is little indication that their rituals declined in popularity, although they were "respectablized." Even if friendly society rituals were primitive, they touched the lives of most British working men.

In this 20-minute paper (which is based on dissertation research in hitherto unused friendly society archives) I will argue that friendly societies represent an adaptive, not a primitive, response to the stresses of industrialization. A brief analysis of friendly society membership both nation-wide and in Halifax will show that societies sprung from local conditions and achieved their greatest growth in the late-Victorian period, among the non-skilled, not the skilled. This conclusion, which contradicts previous accounts based on faulty or incomplete statistics, must lead us to reconsider the role that friendly societies played in securing the relative stability which characterized of the mid- and late-Victorian eras.

To this end, I will examine friendly society rituals in more detail, arguing that they provided an outlet for apparently contradictory impulses within working men, their desire for autonomy and their search for accommodation with their masters. Regular friendly society meetings provided working men a private sphere of operation, a place free from both the influence of the middle class and from divisive political struggles among themselves. Ironically, working men used this private sphere to enact rites of dominance and submission, rites which mirrored the relationships they encountered in the factory, shop, or mine. These private rituals become more understandable when viewed as a counterpart to the societies' public events, their parades and summer festivals. In this public arena, friendly societies assiduously courted "honorary" members among the local gentry, merchants, and aldermen; they enacted displays of mutuality, of respect toward these honorary members.

The private and public roles of friendly societies thus illustrate a push and pull between autonomy and accommodation. Examples will be given to illustrate this process before I conclude with a more general argument: this process of mediation between autonomy and accommodation among the unskilled explains the non-revolutionary aspect of working class life better than the traditional explanation, the rise of a labor aristocracy and "trade-union consciousness."

1. Oddfellows Recorder. and Friendly Societies Journal (Manchester), January 1893, 24-25.

2. Eric Hobsbawm, *Primitive Rebels: Studies in Archaic Forms of Social Movement in the 19th and 20th Centuries* (New York: Praeger. 1963), 153.

Session IV: Victorian Professionalization

Timothy J. Wager, "The Treason of the Clerks"

This paper examines late-Victorian and Edwardian literary and cultural representations of the clerk as a shadow figure for the author, bringing to light a deep anxiety over the socioeconomic status of authorship. Throughout the early and mid- 19th century, clerking was an expanding occupation, one through which a young middle class man could pass to higher

stations. During the last quarter of the century, however, it became a dead-end career for the partially-educated lower middle classes: the supply of men and women (to whom the occupation had by then been opened) educated enough to fulfill the tasks of the clerk had exceeded the demand, causing salaries and opportunities to drop precipitously. This period saw the publication of a number of novels and stories about struggling clerks, acknowledging the limited possibilities in this occupation. These novels are rife with clerk characters who turn to authorship in an attempt to escape their stagnant position, or, alternately, with author characters whose lack of success on the marketplace force them to resort to clerking to make a living. The seeming fluidity between the ranks of authors and clerks in these novels demonstrates authors' fears of being perceived as mere clerks to the marketplace, taking the dictation of the public voice.

In response to this fear, many literary authors were working to establish authorship as a professional collective-a self-regulated occupation that requires training-and thus raise their socio-economic status to that enjoyed by doctors, lawyers, architects and others with established professional organizations. The founding of the Society of Authors in 1884 by Sir Walter Besant serves as a historical linchpin in the efforts to professionalize authorship. From its original dozen members at its beginning, the Society's ranks swelled to nearly 2,500 by the turn of the century, including such illustrious members as Oscar Wilde, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, George Meredith and George Gissing. Alongside the organization of the Society of Authors, other signs of the professionalization of authorship included the establishment of the system of literary agents and the boom in literary training manuals. The attempt to professionalize authorship can be seen as an effort to allow for authorial self-determination in the marketplace, without necessitating complete withdrawal from it. With the demand for more and more reading material by the newly-educated lower middle classes, many authors had suffered from a perceived sense of declining status, becoming mere laborers, manufacturing material for the market instead of artists writing to fulfill aesthetic goals. They believed that professionalization offered them the opportunity to escape this decline in status.

Lowly clerk figures appear again and again in novels of the last twenty years of the nineteenth century and the first twenty of the twentieth as emblems of the feared fate of writers in commodity culture-exploited, overworked, underpaid and not in control of their labor or voice. Drawing on a variety of representations of clerks in diverse texts-from novels such as Gissing's *New Grub Street* (1895), Robert Lean's *The Diversions of an Article Clerk (1892)* and the anonymous *The Story of a London Clerk: a faithful narrative faithfully told* (1896) to other publications aimed directly at clerks, such as the journal *The Clerk* (1890) and pamphlets such as "The Commercial Clerk and His Success" (1909)-this paper argues that the widespread appearance of the struggling author-clerk demonstrates a severe anxiety among authors over self determination in the marketplace, an anxiety that the professionalization of authorship was meant to address.

Julie F. Codell, "Righting the Victorian Artist: The Redgraves' *A Century of Painters of the English School*, 1866 and 18890"

The Victorian century experienced an explosion of biographies in multiple forms and perhaps no single area was more revised and shaped by biographies than art history--in general and in art magazines, publishers' series, and biographical dictionaries. These texts shaped notions about art, artists, genius, aesthetic worth and about the intersection of individual productivity, national interests and history. The literature of art produced "art," defined it and shaped its social, economic and political roles. One topic crucial to this shaping and antecedent to it was the "artist," a persona whose production, personality and role as bearer of national character became inseparable from the valuation of art works and of cultural production. As Bourdieu argues, the production of cultural meanings constituting the 'work' is generated by "an unprecedented array of institutions fog recording, preserving and analysing ... the work ... its meaning and value." Commentary functions to "send the work into the past" and ensure its survival. A charismatic ideology defines the art work as spiritual, artists' labor as sacred and art's price as a unique surplus value. As Bourdieu argues, critics' and dealers' discourse about art constitutes art's production.

A *Century of Painters of the English School* by Richard and Samuel Redgrave appeared in *1866* and again, revised, in *1890.* This text attempted a radical transformation of the art historical discourse from artists' biography to a master narrative for a new national art history and a new image of the artist as professional. The Redgraves attempted to eradicate the anecdotal content of their precedessors (Walpole, Cunningham) and to reconstitute art history through a splicing technique borrowed from Victorian fiction and serialized novels. Characterized by unconnected episodes of personality quirks and sensationalistic economic curiosities, the anecdote prevented a unified narrative.-The Redgraves abandoned anecdote and chronology for a serialization which privileged institutional over the individual achievement. Dramatic changes between the two editions reveal how the Redgraves exploited and transformed collective biography into a hegemonic history grounded on their assumptions about style, gender and Englishness. Equally formative of this new biographical history were their ambiguities about priorities among the socio-economic forces of genius, public opinion, connoisseurship, technical knowledge, professional societies and market values.

As texts produce an order, the Redgraves attempted to construct a master narrative out of the discontinuities, fragments, and inconsistencies that defined anecdotal art history. The anecdote appears on the surface to be "the

recording of an event at its most simple and particular level--prior to the interpretive work of the critic, dramatist or novelist" but its narrativity is always already there, juxtaposing discontinuities without linking or synthesizing them. As Clare Colebrook argues, anecdotage is "not a pre-discursive 'real'... it is one of those stories or symbols which can circulate in a culture and gain resonance," thus "enabling a history which is non-linear and sensitive to discontinuities and disturbance" (216), an "enabling" that I will examine.

The anecdote was associated with biography for Victorians. Carlyle linked anecdotes especially to artists' biographies ("Biography," *Selections,* 45-46). The Redgraves' repudiated the "episodic, anecdotal, contingent, exotic, abjected, or simply uncanny" (Hayden White's terms), in favor of an orderly, unified set of meanings, causes, and explanations. I will explore the Redgraves' narrativity in which conflicting binary strands emerge: transhistorical collectivity and individual contributions; professional authority and public taste; market values and qualitative worth. While recognizing these incongruous forces, the Redgraves struggled to synthesize them into a "history." In so doing, they also negotiated larger Victorian conflicts between history and heroism, nationalism and internationalism, and aesthetics and economic "reality"'.

In the end they produced a professional, socially acceptable Victorian artist, a corrective of the desultory 18th-century artist they condemned. The Redgraves were also constructing an authority around the subject of the professionization of artmaking. That this narrative devolved upon the emerging concept of professionalism indexes Victorian artists' new social, national and economic roles.

Laura Fasick, "Affective vs. Scientific: Perceptions of Medical Care in Victorian Culture and Literature"

The nineteenth century witnessed a revolution in many aspects of medical practice and in the perception of medical practitioners. Whereas eighteenth-century culture from Hogarth's prints to George Crabbe's poems abounds in representations of doctors as quacks, abortionists, and cold-blooded dissectionists, Victorian representations of doctors increasingly emphasize their wisdom and warmth. This shift might partly reflect doctors' increasing professionalization as medical training became more standardized and as doctors organized into powerful and respected professional associations. Nurses likewise rose in status as Florence Nightingale helped transform nursing from a disreputable occupation into a career widely perceived as noble and altruistic. Yet simultaneously with the idealized image of doctors and nurses as compassionate care-givers there still existed the fear of medical practitioners as cold-blooded exploiters of the ill. This fear appears in contemporary debates about the potentially corrupting effects of vivisection as well as in novels such as George Eliot's *Middlemarch* (1872) in which the reforming physician Lydgate's scientific curiosity is (inaccurately) interpreted by his poorer patients as an unscrupulous willingness to experiment upon their bodies both in sickness and after death.

In this context it is especially interesting to examine the interplay of the affective and the scientific elements of medical care in Charles Dickens's *Bleak House* (1853), Charles Kingsley's *Two Years Ago*_(1857), and George Eliot's *Middlemarch* (1872). Both Dickens and Kingsley are deeply concerned in their respective novels with the issue of sanitary reform, yet the purely physical **causes and treatment** of disease are slighted in Dickens in favor of an overwhelming emphasis on the compassion and empathy that can make even untrained persons effective medical attendants. By contrast, Kingsley insists that the doctor needs to maintain some emotional detachment from his patient in order to minister effectively to his patient's needs, yet compensates for this medical "coldness" by pairing his brusque Dr. Tom Thurnall with the volunteer nurse Grace Harvey, who amply supplies the affective element that Thurnall lacks.

In George Eliot's *Middlemarch,* written nearly two decades later, the roles of empathy and detachment in a medical career assume a far different form. Lydgate's scientific objectivity, his willingness to approach medicine as an intellectual rather than an affective discipline, are precisely what qualify him to be a great - and greatly beneficent doctor. But Lydgate's potential to do good as a doctor is ruined by a marriage that develops his power of empathy for one individual - his wife - at the expense of his impersonal desire to pursue medical advances. In Lydgate's case, personal sensitivity overcomes professional zeal, and the result is both personal and professional failure.

Session V: Victorian States of Mind

William McKelvy, "'Mr. Gladstone is a problem': Mental Perversions and Social Transformations"

Historians and cultural critics from the Left and the Right have agreed that the most profound ideological transformation in nineteenth-century Britain was the secularization of the state. But there is not much agreement on how, why, or even when secularization took place in Britain. In this paper I show how an understanding of the career and reputation of William Ewart Gladstone offers a chance to answer some of these questions.

Gladstone is a key to the problem of secularization in part because he himself has been such a problematic figure. Gladstone's centrality to Victorian political culture is indisputable, and he has for a long time been considered by many to be *the* representative Victorian. But he has--also for a long time--been considered eccentric. I begin by defining two

traditional responses to the Gladstone problem, what I call psychologizing, extremist responses and historicizing, apologetic responses. In one, a peculiar and unstable Gladstonian turn of mind is emphasized. In the other, the century's unparalleled social and political transformations--particularly liberalization and secularization--are used to explain Gladstone's contradictions and political reversals. 'Me extremist approach to Gladstone which invokes the testimony of his religiously inspired conservatism, I argue, represses the theological rationale of early Victorian politics. With the sympathetic, historicizing approach, on the other hand, secularization itself is granted a dispensation of inevitability, and this diverts attention away from how and why the Victorian polity was desacralized. Keeping both these potential errors in mind, I identify the early and mid 1840s as the time when alternatives to liberal pluralism became truly romantic. Gladstone is indeed a personification of Victorian history, but not because he was in the 1880s the Grand Old Man of Victorian liberalism. Gladstone is a representative Victorian because he became--reluctantly--a liberal in the 1840s.

Having described the liberalization of political culture as both the birthing crisis of the Victorian polity and the first great crisis of Gladstone's long career. I close with a reconsideration of John Stuart Mill's essays on Bentham and Coleridge. In these essays influential voices in nineteenth-century studies ranging from Basil Willey, F. R. Leavis, Raymond Williams, and, most recently, Isobel Armstrong have found a scheme for describing the state of the Victorian mind. I point out how this scheme was invented by Mill in the late 1830s as part of his struggle to liberalize society, to transform it rather than describe it. Comparing the text published in 1840 with the 1859 version cited by Victorianists, I then show how Mill eventually removed Gladstone from one essay in order to cultivate Gladstone's belated conversion to liberalism. For the intellectual history of Victorian Britain, Gladstone's 1859 disappearance from Mill's essay is more important than Gladstone's decision to join the Palmerston Government that same year. Mill's stroke of the pen--though slight--illustrates the powerful forces which compelled the Victorians themselves to repress or distort the ideological struggle of the 1830s and reconstruct a more congenial one in its place, a struggle which would be mis-remembered in various forms as a matter of the mind.

Lisa Rodensky, "'To Fix Our Minds on That Certainty': Minding Consequences in George Eliot's *Adam Bede* and Victorian Criminal Law"

Early on in George Eliot's first novel, *Adam Bede* the cleric Adolphus Irwine, one of the novel's moral guides, is called upon to determine whether we should consider the movements, indeedthe struggles, in the mind of one who succumbs to temptation. Asked by the anxious Arthur Donnithorne -- who already has Hetty Sorrel too much on his mind -- to comment on whether, hypothetically speaking, "a man who struggles against a temptation into which he falls at last [is] as bad as a man who never struggles at all," Irwine delivers one of the more famous moral pronouncements of the novel:

> I pity him, in proportion to his struggles, for they foreshadow the inward suffering which is the worst form of Nemesis. Consequences are unpitying. Our deeds carry their terrible consequences, quite apart from any fluctuations that went before -- consequences that are hardly ever confined to ourselves. And it is best to fix our minds on that certainty, instead of considering what may be the elements of excuse for us.

In this overly emphatic statement of principle in which the word "consequences" appears no less than three times, there is an attempt to fix responsibility, to detach it from what is named first "struggles" and then more restrictedly "fluctuations." Indeed, movements of mind are set "apart" from deeds and, more specifically, the consequences that those deeds carry -- the unmodified (except by "our") "deeds" have a neutrality about them compared to the "terrible consequences." Our deeds carry their consequences as a host carries a plague. Consequences are both intrinsic to and separable from deeds. Here is Eliot giving as a "certainty" that which has not yet happened as against the mere possibility of excuse ("what may be the elements of excuse"). Consequences have a more material existence here, even though they have not yet occurred. While the fluctuations of mind are figured in the past, consequences are situated not in the future tense but in the present. The proleptic pressure Irwine exerts is to recognize consequences in the here and now, to read in the present what will happen in the future, and so echoes the position Eliot herself had taken in her 1851 review of R.W. Mackay's *The Progress of the Intellect*. The chapter in which this passage occurs is full of advice about consequences.

In this paper, I should like to attend to the way Eliot at once asserts and rejects consequences as (to quote the great consequentialist philosopher of our own century G.E. Moore) "the test of right and wrong." In Adam Bede, Eliot both does and does not want the objective fact of consequences to determine responsibility. On the one hand, the narrative method of this early novel elevates the external over the internal. Indeed, the narrator of Adam Bede likens herself to both natural historian and legal witness giving testimony under oath. Both analogies suggest that those elements which are not visible -- states of mind among them -- must be inferred from that which is visible, from acts and consequences. But on the other hand, Eliot also exercises her novel prerogative, for it is particularly in the novel that we need neither bodily motions nor speech to manifest state of mind. The omniscient narrator presumes to produce that to which we have no unmediated

access in ordinary life: the thoughts of another. This formal difference becomes both opportunity and challenge in Eliot's work since it puts her in the position of regarding a desire without the evidence of bodily motions as signs of that desire. It is precisely the explorations of state of mind that destabilize the novel. What begins to develop in *Adam Bede* is a tension between the internal (desires, motives, intents) and the external (act and consequences), a tension which the novel cannot contain. It is a tension which also works its way in and through the Victorian criminal law. In the final part of my paper, I will suggest that it was no coincidence that Eliot imagined these problems in both a moral and a legal context. It was with the analytical jurisprudence of Jeremy Bentham and John Austin in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries that the distinction between act and consequence and the ramifications of that difference were being made explicit. In the legal writing on these matters, consequences both do and do not have a life of their own, whatever our intentions and desires, and nineteenth century jurists, particularly Austin, took up the task of making explicit the possible disjunctions between intents and consequences, desires and consequences. But criminal law jurists were also deeply invested in the connections between minds, acts, and consequences, and that investment turns us from the stability of consequences to the instability of intents. For example, in the space of a single paragraph, the most important Victorian criminal law jurisprudential thinker, James Fitzjames Stephen, slips from the objective to the subjective in explaining the way we impute the state of mind of an accused from the consequences of his acts. "A man," writes Stephen, in his *History of the Criminal Law*, "is held to intend the natural consequences of his act." But no sooner has Stephen stated the maxim than he revises it, for later in the same paragraph he concludes that we determine the intention of the accused "by looking at what must have appeared to him at the time the natural consequence of his conduct." Now a more subjective standard is introduced, for we need to discern what the accused thought would be the natural consequence of his act. What did he foresee? So too is this conflict at issue in the case law of the period. Eliot herself exploits the ambiguities generated by the problems of foreseeability as she later allows Irwine to defend Arthur Donnithorne.

While Eliot through Irwine instructs us early in the novel to fix our minds on consequences, she proceeds to unfix ours and perhaps her own. When Irwine must defend Arthur Donnithorne in response to the accusations of a distraught Adam Bede -- after Hetty has been arrested for infanticide --, Irwine rewrites his earlier sermonette:

> In these cases we sometimes form our judgment on what seems to us strong evidence, and yet, for want of knowing some small fact, our judgment is wrong. But suppose the worst: you have no right to say that the guilt of her crime lies with him, and that he ought to bear the punishment. It is not for us men to apportion the shares of moral guilt and retribution. We find it impossible to avoid mistakes even in determining who has committed a single criminal act, and the problem how far a man is to be held responsible for the unforeseen consequences of his own deed, is one that might well make us tremble to look into it. The evil consequences that may lie folded in a single act of selfish-indulgence is a thought so awful that it ought surely to awaken some feeling less presumptuous than a rash desire to punish. (424)

In every sentence of this passage, Irwine frustrates any attempt at a certainty or a fixity. Note too the way in which one epistemological problem leads into the other. In my talk I will compare the earlier to the later passage. Here are pronouncements to which we need to attend, and yet what our attention to them reveals is the very contradiction that Eliot also submerges. The second pronouncement is much more complex than the first, and I would offer that its complexity arises out of Eliot's struggling to articulate a principle which must account for the unaccountability of the mind. Whereas in Irwine's earlier commentary on consequences the "deed" stood unmodified ("deeds carry their terrible consequences"), in his later pronouncement we get the "single act of selfish-indulgence." Now the act has a state of mind attached to it. The passage is working to set out that which it can't quite pin down. The move away from a consequence-oriented moral view shakes up the writing itself.

Stefanie Pintoff, "The Woman Witness: Legal Narrative and the Feminine Mind in *The Woman in White*"

In Wilkie Collins's novel *The Woman in White,* the mode of narration is structured like a legal trial, and the story is elicited through the testimony of multiple witnesses who are subject to the evidentiary rule against hearsay. The legal model that frames this story is based upon standard trial procedure, but I argue that the novel departs from this model at moments when the feminine mind intersects with the masculine legal world. The character of Marian Halcombe introduces both the traditional model of the female witness and the complexity of the feminine mind. When Marian begins a diary narrative early in the story, she is aware that her written "testimony" may be used for public evidentiary purposes. Marian's representation thus reflects the one way in which the Victorian judicial system officially granted a public voice to women as witnesses. In keeping with this role, Marian at first simply reports information and resists the desire to analyze, evaluate, or act upon it. Yet Collins soon removes the constraints placed upon Marian: he constructs Marian as an unconventional female witness who also performs the "masculine" activities of detective and judge.

Marian's changed role is significant because most representations of the law within this novel are constructed as masculine. Specifically, the process of legal reasoning is associated with Walter Hartright, Mr. Gilmore, Mr. Kyrie, Sir Percival, and even Count Fosco. Women in the novel are disassociated from the law because of their reliance on intuition and their lack of analytical ability; they "constantly act on impulses which they cannot explain even to themselves." Yet, in his representation of the feminine mind's growing engagement with the masculine legal world, Collins shows how Marian's mind becomes adept at blending male and female ways of thinking. Marian repeatedly seeks to influence legal process by invoking the gendered traits of both sexes in her testimony and in her exercise of reasoning, analysis, and inference. As Marian fuses feminine sympathy with a masculine attention to the niceties of the law, the novel both proposes and subverts the superficial alignment of male characters with legal reasoning and female characters with intuition.

Marian's narrative "testimony" fails midway through the novel, however, which raises the question of why her available, authoritative, and viable account is no longer used. The early activity of Marian's character is transgressive, and it culminates when she climbs the rooftop to spy upon Sir Percival and Count Fosco. There. she literally removes her femininity - the white and cumbersome parts of her underclothing. She is immediately "punished" for this activity with a bout of typhoid fever. The narrative structure of transgression followed by punishment represents the policing of masculine and feminine boundaries, both physical and mental. The fever weakens not only her body, but also her mind, it causes a "feverish strain" on all her faculties and prohibits her writing from preserving important evidence (her attempts disintegrate into "illegible fragments"). For the remainder of the novel, Hartright incorporates her testimony into his own. and in so doing, abandons his early pledge to avoid reliance upon hearsay evidence. But although Hartright maintains exclusive management of the story's action and narration in the latter part of the novel (he relegates Marian to the domestic duty of housework), he nonetheless continues to execute Marian's designs. Thus, the feminine mind *succeeds in reaching beyond* the limits imposed on the feminine body. Although Marian's physical activity is restricted in the second part of the novel. her intellectual activity endures through the novel's final scenes; it ultimately provides the basis for an implicit critique of the existing socio-legal order. My reading *of The Woman in White* thus emphasizes the intersections in this novel that link narration., gender. epistemology, and a reconsideration *of* the legal system itself.

Session VI: The Victorian Novel and Narratives of Female Sexuality

Christine DeVine, "Teleology versus Gynaecology: Constructing the Female Nature in Four Novels of the 1860s"

A Victorian woman's place in society was in dispute in the second half of the nineteenth century, and much of the debate, in Parliament and in parlors across England, centered on the female "nature." Despite the use of the word "nature" which was used to describe constructions of women, the image of the respectable middle-class wife had become bifurcated between the sexless, almost disembodied, spiritual being who was the moral guardian of the family, and a being whose role was by definition a sexual one-that of bearer of babies. To reconcile this bifurcation, female sexuality was being explained and contained in medical and conductmanuals as culminating in and being consumed by maternity. A teleology of childbirth wasbeing imposed on the "angel in the house" image as a master narrative.

This paper will look at ways in which four popular novels of the 1860s-Collins' *The Woman in White*, Trollope's *Can You Forgive Her?*, Wood's *East Lynne* and Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret*-enter into this debate, and question or help construct this master narrative for their readers. Collins and Trollope have constructed representations of childlike, almost bodiless female heroines. Though tainted (one with the threat of madness-often associated with promiscuity during this period- the other with adultery), these heroines get caught up in the narrative teleology of childbirth, which fulfills and legitimizes them in the end. Reflecting the middle-class concerns of the 1860s, both authors have also shown childbirth to be a matter of economics, since the young Walter Hartright in *The Woman in White* and the baby Duke of Omnium in *Can You Forgive Her?* are both the means by which the family property is protected.

In the two novels written by women, *East Lynne,* and *Lady Audley's Secret*, the *telos* of childbirth is put into question: in the pages of Braddon and Wood we see what happens after the child/woman heroine becomes a mother. In Braddon's novel Lucy Audley submits to the chain of madness which has been passed down from her grandmother to her mother and which has manifested itself in each case at childbirth. Lady Audley believes she has sucked the madness from her mothers breast, for it is when she gives birth to a child that all her troubles begin In East Lynne, under cover of sanctimonious moralizing, Ellen Wood asks the all important question concerning the female nature. If, as the nineteenth-century medical man E.J. Tilt put it, "it is on account of the ovaries that woman is what she is," then why isn't the role of wife and mother enough for a woman like Isabel Vane, East Lynne's childlike heroine? But after the birth of her three children, Isabel Vane suffers from a general malaise similar to the *maladie de langueur* from which Lucy Audley eventually dies, and it is then that her sexual purity is put in jeopardy. In these female-authored

novels, childbirth is not the metaphor for a woman's fulfillment, the *telos* towards which their lives are working. it is the symbol of all that a woman must bear. In both of these novels, the illusion of the master narrative of childbirth is shattered.

In her very popular *Book of Household Management*, Mrs. Beeton says "Nature, as a general rule, has endowed all female creation with the attributes necessary to that most beautiful and, at the same time, holiest function, --the healthy rearing of offspring" (1025). This seems to be the sentiment that Collins and Trollope are espousing (even though their novels we not uncomplicated by some ambivalence) by the use of childbirth as a *telos* They were helping to reinforce a master narrative which Victorian women could impose on their own lives; they were helping to construct what was considered to be the female "nature." However, Mrs. Beeton at one point in her book refers to the sucking infant as "the baby vampire" (1034), a vivid expression that seems to evoke some of the trouble the heroines of the female-authored novels considered in this paper have encountered after giving birth, undermining this master narrative; in fact, the ineluctable *telos* towards which these two heroines are headed is not legitimization, but death.

Theresa Adams, "Confessing Sex: Broken Engagements and the Critique of Marriage in Anthony Trollope's *The Noble Jilt* and *Can You Forgive Her?*"

A broken engagement is the central crisis in Anthony Trollope's *The Noble Jilt (*1850*),* a play that was never produced, but which later became a novel, *Can You Forgive Her? (1864-5).* In both works, the depiction of the jilt, a term that refers to a person who breaks off a marriage engagement, is informed by mid-nineteenth century breach-of-promise of marriage trials. The subject of these trials was ostensibly the extent to which an engagement was a legally binding contract that generated a set of responsibilities for the two parties that participated in it. However, I argue in my paper that the trials were also about confessing sex and the regulation of sexual behavior. The courtroom privileges such confessions as a way of revealing truth because they bring the secret and private actions of the defendant and plaintiff into a public space. In these trials, the female plaintiff was forced to reveal her sexual secrets in order to collect monetary restitution from the male jilt. Therefore, the confessional subject in these trials is both the subject who speaks the confession, has agency, and addresses the wrongs done to her, and the subject of the confession. who is disempowered by the act of revealing her secrets to the judge (a powerful male authority figure), the jury, and the spectators.

Both *The Noble Jilt* and *Can You Forgive Her?* are set among the upper-middle and aristocratic classes and, unlike the court cases, which considered breach-of-promise as an equity issue, Trollope uses jilting to explore the middle-class ideal of the companionate marriage and women's psychological responses to the marriage promise. In giving us portraits of two conflicted women, Margaret De Wynter and Alice Vavasor, Trollope dramatizes the ways in these women, the jilters instead of the jilted attempt to escape their engagements by appropriating "masculine" arguments about the nature of marriage They claim incompatibility of interests, a popular defense of the male breach-of-promise defendant. At the same time, however, each enacts the role of female plaintiff through her confession of her transgressions and is forgiven by a powerful male figure who judges her behavior and frees her from the implications of sexual taint. Although neither Margaret not Alice is sexually transgressive, their political ambitions and desire to enter the public sphere are threatening to the other characters. As a result, the question of sexual purity, because it is easier to judge and understand, serves to mask their larger sins against the social order. Images of rape and "fallenness" accompany Margaret' s rejection of her fiancé Count Upsel and Alice's acceptance of the man she jilted, John Grey. Both internalize these ideas and insist that they are somehow "polluted" and "shamed" by their (temporary) rejection of the domestic sphere.

Ultimately, the fictional works differ from the trials in that the woman's confession is a blank spot in the text. In order to create the possibility for a viable relationship between John and Alice or Upsel and Margaret, the confession must be elided because them can be no marriage between a penitent and her father confessor. There was no desire to reconcile the two parties in a breach-of-promise case, while Trollope's goal was to resolve the tangled threads of his. marriage plots. However, although the fictional works end with marriage rather than verdicts and cash settlements, they share with the trials a sense of social critique. The real subject of both confessions is the unequal power relationship that constitutes them; Trollope calls at to this dynamic in order to register a critique of John and Upsel that brings a heightened complexity to his use of the marriage plot while the confessions in the breach-of-promise trials revealed that men, because they abandoned women, could not always be counted upon to play the roles of patriarch and protector, and thus challenged Victorian gender roles.

Laura Vorachek, "Instruments of Desire: The Piano as an Icon of Female Sexuality in the Nineteenth Century"

Constructions of English middle-class womanhood arose during the first half of the nineteenth century which helped reify class differences. As Nancy Armstrong contends, the middle-class woman's identity de-emphasized her body in favor of the virtues which made her a good wife--her sexual innocence and moral purity. This bodiless sexuality was problematic, however, given that the middle-class woman's primary role was to marry and bear children. Like the morally and sexually pure middle-class woman, the piano was also a symbol of middle-class economic status and due to their association, became an icon for metonymically expressing the inexpressible--middle-class female sexual desire.

My essay explores the piano's class and gender associations which suggest it functioned within a middle-class ideology that naturalized these distinctions as well as defined women's sexuality. I argue that due to their association, the piano came to embody middle-class female sexuality in the art and literature of the period. For the first half of the century, the figuration followed cultural conceptions of women's sexuality as latent, with men as the agents in originating sexual and sonoral pleasure. In both Jane Austen's *Emma* (1816) and William Makepeace Thackeray's *Vanity Fair* (1847-48). the mysterious gift of a piano signals the desire of unacknowledged suitors, Frank Churchill and William Dobbin, and also provides a means for their objects, Jane Fairfax and Amelia Sedley, to express their respective desire. In each case, the gift is based not only on male desire but also on each woman's economic circumstances thereby highlighting the tenuous hold each has on middle-class status and respectability. The relationship between sexuality and economics suggested in these novels is also depicted in William Holman Hunt's painting *The Awakening Consciousness (1854).* In it, a woman rises from the lap of her aristocratic lover while they sit at the piano, suddenly awakened to the immorality of her situation The painting's narrative detail suggests another narrative-the fallen woman, seduced into sexual activity (as indicated by the man playing her piano) and soon to become a prostitute.

May Caroline Chan, "'I wish they'd let me write the letters after my name as men do': Narrating the (Im)possibility of Lily Dale's Productive Celibacy"

Anthony Trollope's six Barsetshire novels work and rework the marriage plot expected by his contemporary readers, but in the last two works, *The Small House at Allington* and *The Last Chronicle of Harset*, the figure of Lily Dale upsets the conventional closure of this well-loved type of narrative. Since the publication of these works, critics have endeavored to construct satisfactory interpretations for this "female prig" who refuses to marry the devoted and persistent John Fames after being jilted by the faithless Adolphus Crosbie. Interpretations have run the gamut from Juliet McMaster's assessment of Lily Dale as a masochist, to Stephen Wall's sad Jane Nardin's readings of her extreme adherence to accepted toles as the basis for her romantic fall, to Judith Weissman's assertion that Lily revises the *telos* of happiness for upper middle-class women. These highly varied interpretations of Lily Vales course of action emphasize sex and psychology, rather than focusing on narrative and sexual expression. Excepting Weissman these critics display their social and narratological biases toward closure by fixating an Lily's ideas of love and marriage, casting a negative light on her inability to achieve a standard closure (marriage) without considering how Lily's resulting narrative reveals Trollope's (in)ability to construct new forms of womanhood. Weissman's feminist reading of Lily Dale's rejection of standard narratives for community-based emotional fulfillment presents a more positive view of a character who questions the well-worn paths for single women, especially that of the "Old Maid." My paper begins with Weissman's revision of Lily Dale, and probes female agency in a fictional world that threatens one with interpellation into a socially desired narrative, whether the marriage plot or the spinster's fate.

In my discussion of Lily Dale's unique position I suggest it is based in the desire to write her own and identity, a position made tenable by resisting the yoke of a masculine master. Resisting the social pressure to become Mrs. Eames is a rejection of a productive though passionless sexuality. At the same time, her refusal to reengage with Crosbie, whose touch created sexual passion that lived in her memory for years after being jilted, is a rejection of passionate sexuality. Critics discuss these rejections in term of Lily's need to reconcile herself to the loss of romantic ideals, or a few of her sexual response to a false man, but I see Lily's rejection of these avenues for sexual expression as a search for a role that does not exist in Trollope's Barsetshire. Further supporting this idea of a search is her attempt to rewrite the role of the embittered, sexual spinster through community activities and by writing herself into respectable autonomy with the letters "O.M." for "Old Maid" after her name just as men write "B.A." after their names. This sexually awakened young woman wants to make "Old Maid" as honorable and productive as the category of "gentleman." which implies sexual knowledge though the spinster/old maid is expected to remain emotionally and physically virginal. Such awareness would automatically categorize women as "fallen women" weakened by sexual curiosity and desire, but not so in this case. Lily Dale wants to remain celibate, yet aware of herself as a sexual being who can still participate fully in community life. Though she has enough wig to remake herself within the world of Barsetshire, the narrator himself becomes that master who will not allow this re-envisioned feminity to surface and blossom because of his ambivalence toward the elevation of celibate status. Unfortunately for Lily Dale, her success at evading the yoke of masculine control within the novel is ultimately thwarted by the narrator's control over what the reader learns.

Lily Dale constructs an alternate form of domestic happiness and rejects subsequent opportunities for partneringwhich contradicts the novelistic norm for abandoned lovers and places her in an undefined mode of sexuality, an uncharted territory where the sexually awakened female consciously chooses the privately celibate yet publicly productive life. This heroine's desire parallels Trollope's desire for narrative, as he has set up this situation for Lily Dale to define her vision of an Old Maid. Jane Nardin's critique of Trollope's oeuvre, presents an author increasingly concerned with women's roles in a changing Victorian society, yet presents ambivalence and even reluctance towards female agency (Lily Dale being an extreme example); given this analysis we may imagine the author may wish to spin out this tale of the spinster's struggle against conventional narratives.

the end, sending her back to what we are led to believe is a stereotypically attenuated existence in spinsterhood. If we look closely at what leads up to this last view of this atypical single woman we will find that she does not approach celibacy in the usual, novelistic fashion. The narrator struggles to describe this new form of womanhood but the absence of adequate language and narrative as well as supportive social structures social structures leave us with silence, and the resulting history of questions and interpretations caused by this anomalous narrative of a sexualized woman.

Some final notes:

With the mailing of this newsletter, members should receive a copy of the *1999-2000 MVSA Directory*. Since several years have passed since the last printing of a directory, there may well be mistakes, dated information, or omissions. Please send corrections/additions by e-mail to Robert Koepp (rkoepp@hilltop.ic.edu); we will keep working to bring our database of membership information up to date.

Have you visited (or recently revisited) the MVSA website? Take a look at this Internet resource for background on the association, and for the latest information on MVSA activities. You can find the site at **www2.ic.edu/MVSA**.

Anyone who would like to take a more active role in MVSA should contact a member of the Executive Committee. The association is always looking for willing workers. Moreover, any suggestions to the Executive Committee are most welcome. Forward ideas about the Annual Meeting--future themes, preferred locations, special arrangements, and the like--to Kristine Garrigan. Direct comments/suggestions about the format or content of the *Bulletin* or website to Robert Koepp.

This might be a good time to renew your membership. Use the form provided to submit current information for the directory along with your dues check. ☞

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