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TECHNOLOGIES OF CULTURE:
SELF-HELP AND MASCULINITY IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY BRITAIN

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate School
of the Ohio State University

By
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ABSTRACT

In this dissertation I explore the cultural program of "self-help" in nineteenth-century novels and essays in order to elaborate the ways in which the ideal of self-culture became an internal process of character-building which was applied first to working-class males and then to Victorian society as a whole. My premise is that the influential Arnoldian articulation of culture (the foundation of institutionalized literary study) gradually came to be established through the social technology of Self-help, a technology which emerged in popular conduct manuals claiming to transcend class barriers. The chapters entitled "Technologies of Culture" (Parts One and Two), combine readings of Elizabeth Gaskell's North and South, Dinah Mulock Craik's John Halifax, Gentleman, Arnold's Culture and Anarchy, and the "self-help" sermons of Charles Kingsley, working through the lens of Foucault's Discipline and Punish and his essays on governmentality in order to demonstrate that Victorian Self-help produced a further refinement of Foucaultian disciplinary techniques. I argue that Self-help and its various incarnations in the mid-Victorian period adapted elements of the eighteenth-century cult of domesticity to forge a new, specifically masculine character-ideal which promised individual cultural capital.

Chapter Four, "Narratives of Improvement," considers Dickens's Bleak House and Great Expectations alongside popular magazine fiction as illustrations of masculine agency derived through aesthetic self-development. This section highlights the numerous complications which arose in writing the lives of the social climbers who subscribed to Smiles's philosophy of success—the narrative disjunctions and displacements necessary to uncover the secret that beneath a ragged exterior beats the heart of a "true" gentleman; the parallels between delinquency and excessive ambition; the intertwining of self-narratives with narratives of criminality.
The final section, "Narratives of Ressentiment," focuses on the anxieties about masculinity which were triggered in the gradual process of the internalization of bourgeois culture and the increasing opposition of a masculine high cultural norm to a supposedly corrupt and effeminate bourgeois sphere. Here I examine works which explicitly rehearse, but also counter, the Smilesian Self-help paradigm—novels which offer an aesthetic education as the road to improvement but inevitably prove that such a solution is doomed to fail, foundering on the lack of adequate "masculine" attributes on the part of enfeebled protagonists and on the inherent contradictions in late-Victorian views of culture itself. Of particular interest in this vein are such proto-modernist texts as George Gissing's *Born in Exile* and *The Odd Women*. Fredric Jameson's characterization of Gissing as the quintessential novelist of Nietzschean ressentiment is called upon, and I further propose that *The Genealogy of Morals* constitutes another influential version of late-Victorian self-help, reading Gissing and Nietzsche together as examples of the fin de siecle male sentimental and, as a result, suggesting important revisions to the standard trajectory of literary modernism. In its attention to gender, as well as in its attempt to situate the development of what Ian Hunter terms the "ethical work ethic" of Self-help in relation to nineteenth-century class conflict, my project differs from Chris Baldick's Gramscian account of the rise of literary study and from the genealogy recently put forward by Hunter. Returning "culture" to the political context of the nineteenth century ultimately leads me to argue that the institutional legacy it has left for contemporary literary and cultural studies remains contaminated by the masculinist tendencies which came to be crystallized in much British high modernism.
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

"We are a prosperous community, Mr. Jarndyce, a very prosperous community. We are a great country, Mr. Jardyce, we are a very great country. This is a great system, Mr. Jarndyce, and would you wish a great country to have a little system? Now, really, really!"

He said this at the stair-head, gently moving his right hand as if it were a silver trowel with which to spread the cement of his words on the structure of the system and consolidate it for a thousand ages.

— Bleak House (1853)

One of our most treasured modern cultural myths is the belief in the possibility of upward mobility. In this country especially, the myth of meritocracy retains a firm hold: a recent Time magazine poll reports that an amazing 91% of young United States citizens, and 82% of older Americans, agree with the statement, "If I just work hard enough, I will eventually achieve what I want." While the wages of working Americans have fallen steadily, the gap between the rich and the poor continues to

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widen, and the wealthiest 1% of the population now controls 40% of the nation's financial assets (and the wealthiest 5% of U.S. families currently own 72.5% of the financial assets)—in other words, although economic indicators point to a serious trend of downward mobility, the power of the myth that each individual is the master of his fate apparently remains undiminished. This remarkably hardy notion seems to grow stronger with every increase in its distance from achievable reality; even our current forms of apostasy and rebellion ('slackerdom,' lotto-playing, and, of course, crime) reflect its hold on our culture in their jettisoning of the promises of delayed gratification rather than the belief in merit itself.

The allegiance to meritocracy is, of course, of recent origin, a product of the ideological and conceptual changes wrought by the ascendancy of the middle classes. Despite numerous historical differences, it is tempting to sketch a few points of connection between the contemporary postindustrial U.S. and industrializing Britain, the society which first faced the inevitable capitalist cycles of expansion and contraction. Britain's status in the mid-Victorian period as the wealthiest country in the world and the greatest military power certainly evokes a general sense of recognition. The struggle to defeat the insurgent Chartist call for democracy had forged a new ruling bloc formed from the ranks of both the aristocracy and the rising bourgeoisie, a bloc heavily influenced by an evangelical Christianity which tended to support the expansion of capitalist enterprises as doing God's will. What historian

\[\text{2 For an in-depth statistical picture of the recent transfer of wealth, see J. Kroby,}\]
\[\text{Inequality, Power, and Development: The Task of Political Sociology (New Jersey:}\]
\[\text{Humanities Press, 1997) especially pages 37, 45.}\]
Harold Perkin calls the nineteenth-century entrepreneurial spirit sought to challenge traditional aristocratic practices of patronage and endowment, crediting the forces of capital and the free market with the power to sweep away all corruption, stagnation, and inefficiency. The results of marketplace competition might seem harsh in local instances, but overall its workings would prove universally beneficial; the prevailing ethos regarded the individual accumulation of wealth as indivisible from the national good: "those who best served the interest of the whole best promoted their own interest." The figure of the innovative entrepreneurial capitalist, the "lynchpin of this society," became a new kind of national hero, the poster-boy of progress, the noble risk-taker engineering momentous technological and historical change.

Nineteenth-century popular culture accordingly reflected the growing interest in the lifestyles of the rich and famous, detailing the conspicuous consumption of the new wealthy and modeling styles of consumption for the rest of the population. Raymond Williams describes the outpouring of mid-century magazine fiction which openly bolstered the values and interests of the expanding industrial bourgeoisie. These were stories which transferred "their interest from birth to wealth, from inherited position to self-made position":

the aristocrat who had seemed the natural figure for romance was beginning to be affected, in a certain category of fiction, by the new bourgeois ethic of self-making and self-help. Indeed a strong emphasis on work, as distinct from play, carried with it, actually as one of the main incentives of this class of fiction, a

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clear diagnosis of poverty directly related to lack of personal effort or indeed to some positive vice.4

The Victorians wanted to be convinced that they lived in a modern and relatively meritocratic society with unprecedented possibilities for upward mobility. The advocacy of self-making and the corresponding diagnosis of poverty as 'lack of personal effort' was one topic conservatives and liberals could agree on, as middle-class Victorians of all political stripes embraced these notions as cherished elements of their national identity. For John Stuart Mill, writing in 1869, the potential for individual social mobility represents one of the most salient aspects of modernity itself:

For, what is the peculiar character of the modern world—the difference which chiefly distinguishes modern institutions, modern social ideas, modern life itself, from those of times long past? It is, that human beings are no longer born to their place in life, and chained down by an inexpressible bond to the place they are born to, but are free to employ their faculties, and such favourable chances as offer, to achieve the lot which may appear to them most desirable.5

George Eliot's philosophizing narrator in The Mill on the Floss (1860) poses a similar rhetorical question, taking a moment to speculate that the progressive impulse might be a distinctively British characteristic: "is not the striving for something better and better in our surroundings, the grand characteristic that distinguishes the man from the brute—or, to satisfy more scrupulous accuracy of definition, that distinguishes the


British man from the foreign brute?" (p. 164). Lord Palmerston, a conservative Whig, also claimed these forward-moving energies for England. In a famous speech before Parliament in 1850, he offered a ringing, if paradoxical, account of an upward trend always somehow contained within a framework of social stability, a kind of gradually rising tide on which all—all who really desired to do so—could float:

> We have shown the example of a nation, in which every class in society accepts with cheerfulness the lot which Providence has assigned to it; while at the same time every individual of each class is constantly striving to raise himself in the social scale—not by injustice and wrong, not by violence and illegality, but by preserving good conduct...

By the 1850's, upward mobility is a favorite story which the British middle-class tells itself about itself with increasing frequency. The rags-to-riches saga, with its accompanying litany of the rewards of hard work, perseverance, and thrift, is always more at the center of the bourgeois self-image than what had now become the far more common scenario, that of being born into the middle class. Yet to be quintessentially middle-class one must demonstrate this capacity for striving, this desire for desire.

The same disjunction between the myth of upward mobility and its reality, while not perhaps as thoroughly entrenched as in our own day, is also observable in the Victorian period. Historians differ somewhat as to the degree, but most concur that nineteenth-century Britain witnessed an expansion of the middle classes, particularly its professional sectors, from about 14% of the population in 1841 to 22%

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in 1901. However, this increase in the number of middle-class occupations also coincided with an unprecedented increase in the disparity between rich and poor, with the result that by the twentieth century England had become a virtual plutocracy--while in 1803 the top 2% of the population controlled about 20% of the national income, in 1867 this percent had risen to around 40%; by 1911 the top 1% of the Edwardian population owned a dramatic 69% of the national capital. Observers also agree that inequalities widened within, as well as between, classes. Apparently merit as a basis for an uneven distribution of socioeconomic rewards requires continual demonstration, a requirement which opened the way to ever more complex levels of credentialling and professionalization and thus to more complex levels of social status. Perkin argues that there was in fact a general contraction of opportunities for social mobility during the mid-Victorian age, a contraction exacerbated by declining educational opportunities for manual workers and their children. In his assessment, greater inequality at all levels of income distribution was the inevitable result of a society in which the few possessed of resources or special talents "enjoyed unprecedented opportunities for increasing their incomes, while the many were forced by their lack of these and by their own increasing numbers to sell their services in a buyer's market" (p. 417). He concludes that during this period "upward mobility for the working class was probably at its nadir, and could scarcely provide adequate compensation for the poverty and

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inequality of entrepreneurial society" (p. 425-427).

What changed far more noticeably than the amount of actual interclass mobility was the proliferation of narratives which idealized such mobility. These narratives appeared in a variety of forms—in sermons, in biographies of self-made men, in magazine literature, in the classic novels of nineteenth-century realism, and in debates over popular education, including the promotion of the fledgling academic discipline of literary study. As the realist novel concretized depictions of social climbing, the emerging discourse of literary culture promised access to higher spheres, holding out the suggestion that knowledge could offer material and political as well as spiritual benefits. The remarkable prevalence in Victorian fiction of mysterious inheritances and displaced noble children ultimately restored to comfortable homes speaks to the deep ambivalence of a society in which the creation of money was both admired and still frequently regarded as vulgar in comparison to landed wealth.

As Fredric Jameson writes, "the production of aesthetic or narrative form is to be seen as an ideological act in its own right, inventing imaginary or formal 'solutions' to unresolvable social contradictions." ⁹ Mid-nineteenth-century narratives were called upon to address at least two such contradictions: the gap between the expectation of upward mobility and the actual contraction of options for the lower middle and working classes, and the unevenness and unpredictability of social mobility in a more or less meritocratic system. According to Immanuel Wallerstein, the bourgeois edifice

of meritocracy is in some respects ideologically more fragile than the aristocratic structure it eventually supplanted; merit is, after all, a highly subjective category. If in a professional, salaried bourgeoisie we have careers open to talent, someone must inevitably sort out the more from the less talented; this decision, Wallerstein emphasizes, "when it is made among narrow ranges of difference, is a political decision." Further, he notes, that since "too many (not too few) people have merit (at least enough merit to be a member of the new middle classes) the triage, has to be, when all is said and done, a bit arbitrary." This inevitable element of arbitrariness leaves such systems with a perpetual legitimation issue, if not exactly a crisis:

The problem with this final avatar of bourgeois privilege, the meritocratic system—the problem, that is, from the point of view of the bourgeoisie—is that it is the least (not the most) defensible, because its basis is the thinnest. The oppressed may swallow being ruled by and giving reward to those who are to the manner born. But being ruled by and giving reward to people whose only asserted claim (and that a dubious one) is that they are smarter, that is too much to swallow. The veil can more readily be pierced; the exploitation becomes more transparent (p. 106).

Whether or not one fully agrees with this—and to some extent 'defensibility' seems beside the point in the face of a system which seems to be operating, at the moment, quite effectively—Wallerstein's comments corroborate Gramscian analyses which assume the importance of cultural mechanisms in securing widespread consent to the ineluctably political nature of sorting and decision-making. However, concentrating upon its points of vulnerability, Wallerstein does not acknowledge the resilience of meritocracy, its built-in tendency to direct people inward, toward perpetual self-

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examination—"what is wrong with me?", "why aren't I good enough?"—rather than outward, towards structural critique.

If one were to search for forms of nineteenth-century popular culture which disseminated values conducive to an ostensibly meritocratic society, a logical place to turn would be to the writings of Samuel Smiles. Smiles's 1859 popular bestseller *Self-Help* dispensed Protestant homilies about the rewards of self-discipline and perseverance through inspirational anecdotes about self-made men. The former editor of a radical newspaper and a one-time Chartist sympathizer, the convulsions of the hungry forties convinced Smiles that the notoriously non-religious working classes needed some kind of meaningful personal philosophy, and he offered his self-help doctrine as an alternative to the more disruptive option of socialism. A recent biography of Smiles records his ambitions for self-help philosophy to be "nothing less than a complete and unified secular religion" which sought to confront "the central problem of the Industrial Revolution."^{11} Victorian self-help, in contrast to the still-explooding multitude of versions in the contemporary U.S., was aimed specifically at the male members of the working class in an attempt to instill habits of industriousness and to motivate working-men to undertake their own behavioral

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reformation. Smiles believed that "whatever is done for men or classes, to a certain extent takes away the stimulus and necessity of doing for themselves....reforms can only be effected by means of individual action, economy, and self-denial; by better habits, rather than by greater rights." For the eminently practical Smiles, better habits would almost inevitably lead to success; the better the habits, the more successful their practitioner. As Smiles advised, "Every youth should be made to feel that his happiness and well-doing in life must necessarily rely mainly on himself and the exercise of his own energies....All may not rise equally, yet each, on the whole, very much according to his deserts" (p. 298). This rise was usually to be accomplished, not through formal education (which was still largely unavailable, as there were few state schools at this time), but specifically through an informal program of self-education in exemplary works and in the classics, both of which were expected to inculcate moral fiber. Smiles's heartening biographies would guide others to the path of success: "the brave and inspiring life of one man lights a flame in the minds of others of like faculties and impulse; and where there is equally vigorous effort, like distinction and success will almost surely follow" (p. 407). And when distinction and success remain elusive, he will not tolerate complaints: "to go about whining and bemoaning our pitiful lot because we fail in achieving that success in life...is the mark of a small, sour mind" (p. 364).

Despite self-help's dubious record in terms of furthering actual social mobility,

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12 Samuel Smiles, Self-Help: With Illustrations of Character, Conduct, and Perseverance (Chicago: Belford, Clarke, & Co., 1881) p. 21-22. All references are to this edition unless otherwise noted.
Despite self-help's dubious record in terms of furthering actual social mobility, the Smilesian myth of the self-made man proved to be more tremendously popular and longer-lived than Smiles could ever have predicted. For Harold Perkin, it ranks among the most effective instruments of propaganda "ever developed by any class to justify itself and seduce others to its own ideal":

It was a real myth, in that it had a sufficient basis in fact—as Samuel Smiles's Lives of the Engineers from James Brindley to George Stephenson bears witness—to make it eminently plausible, while remaining utterly fictitious as a sociological explanation of the entrepreneurs as a class. The number of industrialists even in the Industrial Revolution who began without capital or connections of any kind was a minute fraction of the whole, yet 'what some men are all without difficulty might be' was an argument which overwhelmed statistics and made the self-made man to the nineteenth-century what the football pool winner is to the twentieth (p. 225).

Although Smiles himself did not promise that hard work would automatically lead to wealth or social advance, his inspirational stories and recommendations for the 'visualization' of success soon generated an entire line of guides for how to flourish in business. Smiles was certainly an influential force, if not the most influential, in the development of what Asa Briggs calls "a kind of businessmen's romantic movement" (p. 14). His legacy remains more potent in the United States than in Britain, and he is often credited as the progenitor of the U.S. genre of entrepreneurial how-to books launched by Dale Carnegie's How to Win Friends and Influence People (1936), C.E. Popplestone's Every Man a Winner (1936), and Norman Vincent Peale's The Power of Positive Thinking (1955), as well as of Horatio Alger's optimistic tales of paper-boys and street urchins who rise in the world on the strength of their own efforts. In the late twentieth century, the appetite for motivational works appears to be far from
satiated. As Smiles had discovered, motivational culture is mysteriously addictive—the idealism fostered by motivational works can apparently only be satisfied by more injections of positive thinking.

Only a few years ago, Fredric Jameson could describe the figure of the businessman as the untouched and untouchable 'Other' of the fledgling discipline of cultural studies. This is now changing, and cultural critics have finally been embarking upon a much-needed critical examination of corporate discourses. However, there has as yet been no concerted effort to compare nineteenth and twentieth-century renditions of self-help, to consider the role played by self-help in the transition from an economy centered on production to an economy centered on consumption. Such a study could well be revealing, both in its breaks as well as in its continuities. Where Victorian self-help tended to promote delayed gratification and self-denial, the necessity of work over play, in the attempt to habituate workers to the monotony of wage labor, in general today's self-help is more directed towards developing an ethos of self-fulfillment, corresponding to the needs of a more consumer-oriented economy. The conscious stimulation of desires and an end to repression are the motifs of the moment. Many cultural observers have also registered a more aggressive entrepreneurialism coming to the fore; as David Harvey reflects in

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The Condition of Postmodemity, entrepreneurial values have now infiltrated realms as
diverse as "urban governance, the growth of informal sector production, labour market
organization, research and development, and it has even reached into the nether
corners of academic, literary, and artistic life." 14 Perhaps the most dramatic conceptual
shift has been the move away from the vision of capital as the natural reward for years
of thriftiness and perseverance to the more accessible "human capital" which
theoretically lies within every individual. Now the individual is encouraged to invest
in himself, to make himself marketable, to 'diversify,' to speculate, to take risks. No
more passive and downtrodden proletarians with only their labor-power to sell--we are
all (at least potentially) the privileged possessors of human capital. Homo economicus
has become an entrepreneur managing the micro-business of his own self. 15

A related development is the recent self-conscious 'anti-establishment' or
'alternative' posturing current in advertising and in corporate-speak. Manufactured
rebellion runs rampant as advertisers try to capture the unpredictable attention of
consumers and bosses try to put some pizazz into the Protestant work ethic. Thomas
Frank argues that sixties countercultural gestures have been mainstreamed into the
official aesthetic of consumer society: "Above all rebellion consists of a sort of

171.

15 For some brief but intriguing speculations as to the political results of this
entrepreneurial logic of the self, see Colin Gordon, "Governmental Rationality: An
Introduction," The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality, Burchell, Gordon, and
Miller, eds. (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1991), in which Gordon links the notion of
one's life as one's own personal enterprise to the "unexpected acceptability" of renewed
mass employment in the west (p. 44).

Recent trends in managerial theory advocate creativity over drudgery, flexibility over rigidity, initiative over obedience, and informality over more traditional hierarchical arrangements. Some of the most popular self-help titles of the past decade include Tom Peters's \textit{Thriving on Chaos: Handbook for a Management Revolution} (1987); \textit{Liberation Management: Necessary Disorganization for the Nanosecond Nineties} (1992); \textit{The Tom Peters Seminar: Crazy Times Call for Crazy Organizations} (1994); and \textit{The Pursuit of Wow! Every Person's Guide to Topsy-Turvy Times} (1994), as well as Thomas Moore's extremely successful line which promise to reconcile the worldly accumulation of wealth with the nurturing of the 'soul.' Such examples show corporate discourse branching out to find more immediate, affective means of intertwining company interests and personal identifications.

While Smiles paid lip-service to the "want of confidence, and consequently the want of promptitude in action" (p. 356), his main targets lay elsewhere, in the personal vices which rendered a worker unproductive. In contrast, American self-help works to eliminate a more generalized negativity. This has taken on particularly psychological, even therapeutic dimensions, as the chronic anxieties around status and achievement endemic to pseudomeritocratic societies pose a continual problem--but at the same
time, of course, an 'opportunity'— for an entrepreneurial society. Now the lack of financial viability can be attributed to inhibitions around the making of money, to a 'fear of success,' thus calling for antidotes to such 'success-phobias' and pernicious self-sabotage. Skepticism, pessimism, and under-confidence constantly threaten the self-made man's positive outlook, yet their inevitable recurrence ensures a limitless market for the motivational works which always promise to banish them anew.

Indeed, the unspoken first premise of all self-help messages is a concession of the feeling of inadequacy: Self-help says, "you think you're not good enough, but you are"; "you think you can't do it, but you can"; "you think you don't deserve to be wealthy, but you do"; thus implanting the very crises which it claims to address and assuage.

And of course the latest wave of entrepreneurial guides continue to hold out the promise that anyone can be a success. Like Smilesian self-help, these new managerial doctrines work through the principle of exemplarity, featuring, as Nikolas Rose observes,

a range of individual portraits of the successful entrepreneur, the high achiever, the peak performer in sport and arts as much as in industry. The entrepreneur, it seems, was actually quite like us: we could all be entrepreneurially successful, we could all learn to be self-realizing, if we learned the skills of self-presentation, self-direction, and self-management. One must cultivate the image of a winner...¹⁷

To some extent, then, contemporary self-help's rhetoric of entrepreneurship distorts Smiles's own emphasis, which was decidedly on the development of character

rather than wealth. However, to the degree that current texts suggest that money will follow reforms in daily habits, and that they affirm that potentially contradictory social roles can be brought into harmony (Do What You Love, The Money Will Follow and Don't Worry, Make Money are just two of many 'nineties titles which make this claim), they, too, are descendants of Samuel Smiles. Both Victorian self-help and our own more psychologized versions reveal an acute sensitivity to the ways the vicissitudes of capitalism evoke a deep need for personal reinforcement and reassurance. The exalted language of entrepreneurship functions both to provide a rationale for the ongoing consolidation of wealth and to promise hope and future fulfillment for those mortals being left out in the cold. Thomas Frank refers to motivational culture as "the public mythology of our economic order," "the folklore of power"; clearly, the endurance of this folklore can be at least partly attributed to the real social and financial insecurities endemic to a competitive system. The present deluge and diversification is the predictable outcome for a genre which breeds exponentially during periods of downsizing and diminishing prospects. The greater the

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18 Both tendencies are readily demonstrated in Matt Roth's trenchant essay, "Dreams Incorporated," in The Baffler 10, which includes this wry personal response to corporate predictions of future economic trends: "On the one hand, as a customer I'd be awesomely empowered--whole industries would rise and fall according to the butterfly effect generated by tiny shifts in consumer taste. But as a worker I'd be downgraded...I'd have to eschew 'third party' union representation, sacrifice guaranteed benefits, dispense with government protections and forego lifelong employment; instead, I'd accumulate 'human capital' to sell in an open labor market. Of course, 'change' would repeatedly render that arduously amassed human capital obsolete in the space of a nonosecond, after which I was to uncomplainingly set about accumulating more. This was called 'becoming adaptable'" (p. 43).

actual risk of failure, the more important the appearance of success, and thus, one could speculate, the more addictive self-help becomes.

Critics such as Nikolas Rose and Christopher Newfield have, perhaps surprisingly, attempted to read in the corporate pursuit of 'wow' the potential for new kinds of utopian projects. Newfield, for example, recommends mining the libertarian impulses of Peters' corporate philosophy for the left ("If radical self-management is so great for business, why shouldn't it be good for popular government?" (p. 39)) and insists that proposing alternatives to corporate culture requires the incorporation of "the pleasure principle" currently circulating in business literature (p. 37). Although less than sanguine about the results, Evan Watkins points to the egalitarian gestures within consumerism: "the field of consumption is itself universalizing to the extent that it both encourages and promises the realization of endlessly rising social expectations in the performative capital of consumer practices." And Roger Burbach has recently suggested that the marked trend toward cottage enterprises and petty entrepreneurship could be working to swell the ranks of the alienated and "actual or potential antagonists of transnational capital." However tantalizing the prospect of masses of Amway and Mary Kay salespeople manning the barricades as the revolutionary

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20 Christopher Newfield, "Corporate Pleasures for a Corporate Planet," Social Text 44; 13:3 (Fall-Winter 1995): p. 31-44; see also Nikolas Rose, Governing the Soul: The Shaping of the Private Self, p. 115.


subjects of the twenty-first century, it would seem that at least for now, individuals continue to be interpellated into the marketplace and its logics more or less effectively, to the detriment of communal or collectivist solutions.

Motivational culture is not purely confined to the art of the deal, and another important Smilesian offshoot can be found current educational discourse, a discourse which has, as Harvey notes, largely been refigured as a quest for individual human capital. The student has been replaced by the mini-entrepreneur accumulating human capital as insurance against change in a changeable world. Contemporary defenses of the humanities and the liberal arts which used to rely the nineteenth-century language of moral character (As Watkins observes, a college diploma testified—"however vaguely—to "character," to a capacity for self-discipline and the shouldering of responsibility"), now frequently lapse into the prevailing language of investment and returns. Here entrepreneurship meets high culture and one can obtain, or sustain, one's competitive edge through a facility with discourses previously available only to a cultured few, purchasable in a conveniently predigested form for speedy, painless consumption. One major manifestation of this trend is the surge of guides which market the acquisition of cultural capital, epitomized by E.D. Hirsch's popular Cultural Literacy series. While Newsweek columns by George Will bemoan the moral decline of America and our national loss of "social cement," Hirsch proposes to remedy the situation with his detailed program for the consolidation and distribution of a core

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American culture. As Barbara Hemmnstein Smith, among others, has pointed out, becoming "culturally literate" hints at the entrance to elite circles which will follow the cultivation of inner depths.\textsuperscript{24} The nineteenth-century view that the refinements of culture will automatically yield personal empowerment can also be tracked in works such as William Bennett's \textit{Book of Virtues} and in the Great Books courses on tape (delivered by SuperTeachers) advertised in such publications as The \textit{New York Times Book Review}. A recent article in \textit{Harper's Magazine} similarly declares that exposing the neglected underclass to the icons of classical Greece will endow the poor with the critical tools necessary to raise themselves out of poverty.\textsuperscript{25} In all of these examples we can detect a familiar nostalgia for a supposedly less fragmented society, as well as the hope that high culture can be proffered as a talisman to ward off the negative effects of pervasive socio-economic inequality. And the belief that exposure to high culture makes one a more virtuous and disciplined person, rather than, as Katha Pollitt puts it, "the ordinary run of humanity with a bigger vocabulary"\textsuperscript{26} continues to legitimate individual social and economic rewards.

The important work of Raymond Williams provides a salutary corrective to such hyperbole. His conclusion to \textit{Culture and Society} (1958) addresses the need for


intellectuals to look beyond narrow constructions of literacy and culture, constructions which have historically subjugated and excluded working-class knowledge and experience. In this pioneering study of cultural materialism he authorizes "culture," not as a superstructural phenomenon, but as a semi-autonomous discourse defined in the nineteenth century: "It might be said, indeed, that the questions now concentrated in the meanings of the word culture are questions directly raised by the great historical changes which the changes in industry, democracy and class, in their own way, represent." This discourse of culture, becomes, for Williams, a record of continuing reactions to changes in social and political life, "a special kind of map by means of which the nature of the changes can be explored."^27 Culture and Society pursues this discourse of culture primarily through a progressive middle-class British literary tradition which arose in response to the atomizing effects of the industrial revolution, singling out certain British writers--Coleridge, Carlyle, Dickens, Arnold, and T.S. Eliot, among others--who created a utopian ideal for industrialized society to live up to. Yet as Bruce Robbins observes, Williams here suggests that both ordinary culture and 'the best that has been known and thought' belonged to a common heritage of opposition: "Thus a tradition of romantic anticapitalism became visible which could be assimilated, despite the actual opinions of Burke, Arnold, Eliot, and Leavis, to the values of the left."^28

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The limitations of *Culture and Society* have by this time been thoroughly rehearsed.²⁹ For most critics, Williams's early work is, despite his best intentions, simply 'over-literary.' As Stuart Hall notes, Williams's interlocutors have taken him to task for the many 'absent traditions' in the book: "no French Revolution or popular radicalism, or sociology, the lack of an international perspective and of Marx. Finding what *Culture and Society* left out has become, over the years, something of an intellectual game."³⁰ Post-structuralists express concern that Williams relies too heavily on a naive concept of 'lived experience' at the expense of structural and ideological forces, criticizing the way that 'lived experience' is "counterposed to all forms of mediation...or else mediation is seen as part of a process of historical decline."³¹ Williams himself later came to regard *Culture and Society* as "first-stage radicalism." Certainly his narrative contains a danger of developing into an alternative version of a core curriculum, what we might now see as a kind of self-help for British leftists.

Even so, the conclusion of *Culture and Society* represents a marked departure from the 'over-literariness' of the preceeding chapters. I would like to call particular


attention to a late passage which opens up a way to conceptualize upward mobility narratives across high and low cultural forms. Here Williams identifies and condemns the bourgeois metaphor of the "ladder," the idea that the exceptional individual can be singled out and helped without the disruption of the unequal structures of society as a whole:

It has been one of the forms of service to provide such a ladder, in industry, in education and elsewhere. And many working-class leaders, men in fact who have used the ladder, have been dazzled by this alternative to solidarity. Yet the ladder is a perfect symbol of the bourgeois idea of society, because, while undoubtedly it offers the opportunity to climb, it is a device which can only be used individually: you go up the ladder alone...(p. 331).

For Williams, any social system rooted in the promise of individual upward mobility is subject to two serious criticisms: "first, that it weakens the principle of common betterment, which ought to be an absolute value; second, that it sweetens the poison of hierarchy, in particular by offering the hierarchy of merit as a thing different in kind from the hierarchy of money or of birth" (p. 331). Williams opposes the nineteenth-century ideal of 'service' to the inclusive notion of solidarity, and argues instead for a more equal distribution of resources:

Take the ladder image away, and interest is returned to...the making of a common educational provision; to the work for equity in material distribution; to the process of shaping a tradition, a community of experience, which is always a selective organization of past and present...The ladder, which is a substitute for all these things, must be understood in all its implications; and it is important that the growing number who have had the ladder stamped on their brows should interpret it to themselves and to their own people, whom, as a class, it could greatly harm. For in the end, on any reckoning, the ladder will never do; it is the product of a divided society, and will fall with it (p. 332).

Not merely a recurrent theme, this trope of the ladder can be found through much Victorian fiction and philosophy, including the works we have already mentioned.
The endorsement of this individualistic road to upward mobility became a hallmark of bourgeois identity. What Williams refers to as the metaphor of the ladder is essentially what I locate as the master-narrative of self-help, a narrative obviously being deployed more widely, and in a wider array, than ever before. Indeed, it seems highly probable that the more 'in service' we are--in other words, the less control we have over the conditions of our work--the more we rely on motivational prosthetics.

Consequently, while the focus of this project will remain on the nineteenth century, it also, I hope, bears some relevance to our own strange days equally characterized by motivational hyperactivity and millenial paranoia. I agree with Williams that our seductive faith in ladder-like narratives of upward mobility, currently being documented by *Time Magazine*, has been purchased at a price--and that price is the abandonment of collective visions in favor of the chimerical pursuit of individual self-transformation. In the nineteenth century this occurred through a gradual delinking of upward mobility narratives from the categories of class on the way to a new myth of meritocracy where all were 'equal' in terms of opportunity. We have now replaced the classic nineteenth-century paradigm of workers and capitalists with the notion that everyone can be a consumer just as everyone can be an entrepreneur; that is, everyone can potentially share in the dynamism of an infinitely expandable economy. Equality has been redefined as a theoretical equality of access to consumption as opposed to meaningful political representation or a redistribution of wealth. Now, of course, we are all 'winners.'
The following study is not a traditional history of nineteenth-century self-help nor a sociological examination of its impact but rather, primarily a literary analysis, an attempt to trace its manifestations across many different kinds of texts. Smiles has already received frequent nods as a representative figure on the Victorian scene—a number of critics have drawn upon Smiles's writings to contextualize their literary studies, and his self-help philosophy has often been taken, as by Perkin, as a pure distillation of bourgeois ideology. However, while nineteenth-century self-help in its Smilesian version has been reasonably well-studied from the point of view of social history, it has yet to be taken up by so-called 'new historicists' who assume that accounts of historical events are subject to the same effects of textuality as literary productions, and who therefore question easy distinctions between text and context, 'literary' and 'factual' narratives.

At this date, the most fully developed 'new historicist' challenge to Marxist and Marxian narratives of culture has been the Foucaultian genealogy produced by Ian Hunter's Culture and Government. Whereas Smilesian self-help uses the extra-

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institutional venues of popular culture and the spread of working-class literacy to preach moral self-management, Hunter identifies a similar type of moral management being exercised through the institutional practices of nineteenth-century popular schooling. Hunter zeroes in on pedagogical techniques, finding in the discipline of English literature as taught to schoolchildren a key apparatus for the cultivation of a certain self-regulating subjectivity. Here creative self-expression is both prized and subjected to correction by a teacher who serves as ethical exemplar as well as instructor, disciplinarian and gatekeeper. For Hunter, the 'ethical work ethic' communicated through the teaching of English offered a highly successful means by which new social norms "could surface inside the formation of the individual conscience." Hunter differentiates between 'the moral machinery' of popular education, "aimed, as Foucault puts it, at the 'normalisation of the population',' and the tradition of romantic anticapitalism Williams celebrates in Culture and Society. Attacking Williams for replicating the very elitism he derides, Hunter maintains that the influence of the 'Culture and Society' tradition has been vastly overestimated, being adopted voluntarily only by a minority of individuals "seeking to shape exemplary lives" (Culture and Government p. 75). He proposes instead that the expansion of the

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technology of literary culture renders what was once the province of a small elite into "a discipline of self-formation for a large cross-section of the educated population."\(^{34}\)

Hunter provides many insights as to how the entrepreneurial ideals of self-making come to be conjoined with the discourse of high culture inside of institutional settings, yet his views remain problematic on several counts. First, he finds the motivations for the implementations of these new technologies to be ultimately "irreducible to any notion of class location."\(^{35}\) Hunter's utter dismissal of the role of popular education in ascribing class status ignores the overtly stated goals of Victorian educators and social reformers (education was expected to "mitigate social conflict") and the ways in which these pedagogical technologies were employed to perpetuate a myth of meritocracy which unquestionably consolidated the interests of the bourgeoisie. In his zeal to criticize Marxist-derived models which rely on ideological constructions of 'scientific truth' vs 'false consciousness,' Hunter seems unable to condemn or even to recognize the notably less-than-democratic results of so-called 'popular' education. But for Hunter, the technologies of state-sponsored schooling "do not take the form of an ideological misrepresentation of real social improvement," they are such an improvement:

They are present as a quite material ethical technology actually able to raise the cultural level of whole populations--to achieve near-universal literacy, for example--through the normative formation of personal attributes...the social

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\(^{35}\) Ian Hunter, "Setting Limits to Culture," New Formations 4 (Spring 1988): p. 120.
normativity which we find in the ethical discipline of literary education is not a
disguised politics to be unmasked with the recovery of true community. It
represents a directly ethical and aesthetic exercise of power (Culture and
Government p. 268-9).

While this might describe what educators hope for in their more optimistic moments,
at the very least, Hunter must concede that this ethical technology has not always been
employed fairly. The exercise of power he describes does not seem to have had much
effect in countering the vast social and economic gulfs which plagued nineteenth-

century England—a society in which an increase in literacy apparently corresponded to
a decrease in economic equality.

Also, while an important strand of self-help technology can certainly be traced,
as Hunter does, through the pedagogical techniques of public education, I would
contend that the growing availability of this discourse made the demarcation of an elite
version of aesthetic self-fashioning all the more imperative. With the spread of self-
help, there came to be all the greater desire for an exclusive strain of cultural
discourse which held itself above popular variants of self-improvement. Finally,
Hunter avoids the issue of gender, implicitly assuming the maleness of ethical
pedagogues (certainly questionable in terms of elementary education) and never
considering the possible connections between historical constructions of masculinity
and the ethical exemplars of which he speaks.

In its attention to gender, as well as in its attempt to resituate the development
of a masculine 'ethical work ethic' of self-help in relation to the history of nineteenth-
century class conflict, the following study differs from such justly well-known
accounts as Raymond Williams's Culture and Society, Jurgen Habermas's narrative of
the fall out of the public sphere, Chris Baldick's Marxist version in *The Social Mission of English Criticism* and the Foucaultian genealogy of Hunter's *Culture and Government*. Rather, I address the means by which nineteenth-century self-culture sought to distinguish itself from related forms of self-fashioning espoused by the eighteenth-century cult of domesticity, to represent itself as a male preserve against the incursion of feminism and female influence. My project traces the historical trajectory through which self-culture's assumptions of deep subjectivity, self-mastery, and withdrawal from the world—in particular, a world framed as rapidly becoming overly domesticated—found their troubled embodiment in Hunter's 'ethical athlete,' the man of letters, and then in the alienated modernist artist.

In my detailing of the ways the master-narrative of self-help produces certain narrative expectations and emplots particular textual outcomes, I have found the work of Fredric Jameson especially helpful. Self-help provides an instructive example of Jameson's category of the 'ideologeme,' which he defines as "the smallest intelligible unit of the essentially antagonistic collective discourses of social classes" (76); a discursive entity which combines elements of, and mediates between, ideologies in the abstract and narrative materials themselves. The ideologeme, for Jameson, is a peculiarly "amphibious formation" whose essential characteristic may be its ability to emerge as a "conceptual or belief system, an abstract value, an opinion or prejudice, or as a protonarrative, a kind of ultimate class fantasy about the 'collective characters' which are the classes in opposition....as a construct it must be susceptible to both a conceptual description and a narrative manifestation all at once" (p. 87). He further
clarifies that the ideologeme can take on "the finished appearance of a philosophical system on the one hand, or that of a cultural text on the other." The Political Unconscious advocates the undertaking of a "reconstruction and inventory" of the ideologemes of the past, and Jameson chooses to work on the nineteenth-century ideologeme of ressentiment, devoting a chapter to the structure of ressentiment in the early novels of George Gissing, to which I will soon return. Following Jameson's lead, this dissertation divides the discourse of self-help into two distinct ideologemes: that of self-help itself—what Williams terms "the ladder"—and ressentiment—the projection of "bad character"—both of which can be seen to function as ideological belief structures in a highly class-conscious society and as staples of Victorian narrative.

As James Eli Adams ably demonstrates in his recent Dandies and Desert Saints: Styles of Victorian Masculinity, the self-made Victorian gentleman models desire carefully controlled; the managed, carefully-displayed persona which emits an aura of authoritative disinterestedness. In stark contrast, the working-class male belongs to the caste which cannot manage itself, which must be taught discipline and the value of productive labor. Working-class males in Victorian prose are frequently represented as driven purely by desire; Gareth Stedman Jones notes that the terms 'working classes' or toiling masses' signified irreligion, intemperance, improvidence or immorality. Indeed, it was difficult...to discover where the 'working classes' ended and
where the 'dangerous classes' began. The issue of what exactly working-class men, who are taken to represent the working class as a whole, really do desire, and really should desire, is, as we will see, a major topic of debate throughout the mid-Victorian period, and plays an extremely significant role in circumscribing the limits of 'culture.' Working-class desire is always what stands outside the social and cannot be fully assimilated; by middle-class standards, its very existence proof that 'culture' has not been achieved. The question of exactly how best to channel the potentially anarchic energies of working-class men therefore becomes one of the central political preoccupations of the age, and self-cultivation is offered as the uniquely transformative agent which has the potential to convert raw 'working-classness' into middle-class culture.

We will observe the ways that Victorian texts frequently bring to bear a humanizing female power against the working classes who lack the proper attitude toward the cult of womanhood and must be instructed in respect for its virtues. We will also explore the deeply held belief that domestic ideology can be planted within the laboring classes through the process of reading exemplary texts. In this second paradigm, that of Smilesian self-help, essential 'working-classness' is rewritten as the desire to live according to middle-class values and opposed to the notion that the masses are inherently brutish and destructive. To be represented within middle-class

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discourse, working-class subjectivity must be either replaced by middle-class domestic virtues in the process which I refer to as self-help, or else essentialized and discredited entirely. This latter strategy is needed because of the potential of self-help, if taken seriously, to undermine and even remove the rationale for the persistence of social hierarchies in an ostensibly meritocratic system.

What we find is that the 'natural' superiority encoded in class privilege is nearly always reasserted as a matter of individual character. By this logic working-class desire originates in an evil nature, jealousy, or resentment—conveniently and eloquently articulated as Nietzsche's "theory" of ressentiment in The Genealogy of Morals (1887). While The Genealogy attempts to expose the ways in which ethics have been used as the legitimation for structures of power, 'good' and 'evil' are here replaced by a binary of active and reactive which none the less clearly marks a system of value: the non-reactive condition of inwardness signifies the morally superior state in Nietzschean philosophy. According to Nietzsche,

> this invariable looking outward instead of inward, is a fundamental feature of rancor...all its action is reaction....the rancorous person is neither truthful nor ingenious nor honest and forthright with himself....he is expert in silence, in long memory, in waiting, in provisional self-deprecation, and in self-humiliation.  

Any non-autonomous or reactive action, however effective and however justified, is for Nietzsche of a lower order than the actions of the powerful: "The active man, the attacker and overreacher, is still a hundred steps closer to justice than the reactive

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one...It is an historical fact that the aggressive man, being stronger, bolder, and nobler, has at all times had the better view, the clearer conscience on his side" (p. 207). The reactive state can be read as one which is insufficiently detached from the pettiness of the world; the resentful one has not attained the philosophical equivalent of fully individuated self-help. Of course no one could be more opposed to the "contaminating" effects of Christianity than Nietzsche, but his ultra-masculinist obsession with the classical warrior ideal, the lone philosopher-scholar crying in the wilderness, and the call for the "pathos of distance" (p. 160), not to mention innumerable glowing references to strength, will, self-discipline, hardness, stamina, and pain, eerily echo Victorian figures like Carlyle and the muscular Christians while it declares war on their normative social agendas.

And, significantly, the Genealogy of Morals, like so much Victorian cultural criticism, ultimately situates value primarily in what will become the familiar abstraction of 'character.' The avowedly elitist Nietzsche begins the genealogy by tracing the etymological connections between the words 'plebian,' 'common,' 'base,' and 'bad': "Here we have an important clue to the actual genealogy of morals" (p. 162). As Robert C. Solomon points out, Nietzsche's emphasis on nobility versus ressentiment attempts "to stress character and virtue...above all else in ethics. An ethics of resentment is an expression of bad character--whatever its principles and their rationalizations." 38 Nietzsche becomes in a sense the metaphysician of self-help: his

influential formulation has bought self-help increased access to the hallowed halls of western philosophy in ways which still hold an amazing currency. His "theory" of ressentiment offers a powerful discursive tool by which the legitimate rage of oppressed majorities can be figured as inauthentic moral states or unhealthy psychological conditions (such as lack of self-esteem, will-power, or a positive attitude) instead of as a chronic symptom of life in pseudomeritocratic societies and even as the prerequisite to revolutionary class consciousness.

I claim that the ideologeme of ressentiment can be read as a logical outgrowth of Victorian self-help: self-help supposedly promotes its subject to a point of privileged disinterestedness, whereas ressentiment names those who fail to achieve this state of disinterestedness. While self-help optimistically promises narratives out of class and class-interest, these promises cannot be universally fulfilled in a capitalist system, and ressentiment offers to resolve this structural contradiction in the form of a counter-narrative into disillusionment, self-deprecation, and ultimately, modernist alienation. Both self-help and ressentiment are widely-deployed methods of embourgeoisment—rhetorical strategies which have taken on a life of their own and which place responsibility for social change on the character of the atomized individual rather than on oppressive social structures. And both have left their mark on contemporary motivational culture.

The two subsequent chapters will consider the development of self-help and its institutionalization in the increasingly autonomous field of 'high' culture; Chapters Four and Five will examine more closely the nature of working-class and petit-bourgeois
desires and their relationship to discourses of domesticity as they were constructed by nineteenth-century novelists. This dissertation begins with three basic assumptions. First, that one of the most effective strategies in the securing of bourgeois legitimacy in the mid-nineteenth century was to differentiate "class" from "class consciousness"--in other words, to reinscribe working-class subjectivity as middle-class subjectivity. Second, because it emerged from a political milieu in which desire itself was often embodied in the masses, and to the extent that its project was to "domesticate" and "decriminalize" such working-class desires, the Victorian novel served as a major disseminator of self-help narratives. And third, that the ultimate impact of Victorian self-help as a social technology was to define aesthetic culture as the prerequisite for participation in the public sphere, and thus to locate its privileges beyond the reach of the vast majority of the population. My ultimate hope is that this project, for all its inevitable limitations, may throw some light on our contemporary trust in the hollow promises of self-help, a faith that shows every sign of growing more intense and more desperate.
CHAPTER 2
TECHNOLOGIES OF CULTURE: PART ONE

"There are in Birmingham at this moment many working men infinitely better versed in Shakespeare and in Milton than the average of fine gentlemen in the days of bought-and-sold dedications and dear books."

--Charles Dickens, Meeting of the Birmingham Society of Artists. 1853

The Power of Taste

Every talent, every feeling, every acquirement; nay, even every tendency towards virtue, was used up as materials for fireworks; the hidden, sacred fire, exhausted itself in sparkle and crackle. They talked about art in a merely sensuous way, dwelling on outside effects, instead of allowing themselves to learn what it has to teach. They lashed themselves up into an enthusiasm about high subjects in company, and never thought about them when they were alone: they squandered their capabilities of appreciation into a mere flow of appropriate words.

--North and South (1854)

The passage is from Elizabeth Gaskell's North and South and these observations are the heroine's: Margaret Hale is not only the archetypal proper Victorian lady, she is also the novel's cultural critic, and here, in terminology which
deliberately recalls genuine inner piety as opposed to its hollow outward show, she
directs a middle-class critique against the fashionable misuse of culture. In this novel,
only the bourgeois Margaret has the power to determine which is the "true"
appreciation of art, which the "mere flow of appropriate words"; only she fully
understands the necessity of the arts and what they have to teach. Her role is to serve
as an embodiment of this knowledge during a time of economic crisis and social
disintegration.

In general, *North and South*, like many other industrial novels of the period,
works to articulate middle-class earnestness to the "hidden, sacred fire" of art and
attempts to wrest "high subjects" away from their aristocratic and frivolous drawing-
room associations. This enterprise is needed, these novels openly assert, to save
British industry from the dire consequences of its own greed; in Gaskell's novel this
point is made quite literally in the dramatic scene in which Margaret throws her body
in front of the arrogant capitalist Mr Thornton, protecting him from his rioting factory
workers. Margaret's physical intercession can in fact stand as an allegory for the
larger project of the industrial novel: "cultural capital" is capital's necessary
supplement, corrective, and preserver.

According to Pierre Bourdieu's formulation, cultural or symbolic capital
circulates independently from strictly moneyed forms of capital, and often functions to
disguise or distort the latter's operations:

The denial of economy and of economic interest...thus finds its favorite refuge
in the domain of art and culture, the site of pure consumption--of money, of
course, but also of time convertible into money. The world of art, a sacred
island systematically and ostentatiously opposed to the profane, everyday world
of production, a sanctuary for gratuitous, disinterested activity in a universe
given over to money and self-interest, offers, like theology in a past epoch, an
imaginary anthropology obtained by denial of all the negations really brought
about by the economy.¹

In *North and South*, not only is the aesthetic shown to be ruled by the language
of political economy—it can be "squandered" and "used up"—but, more importantly,
economic success requires a strong dose of the refinements of aesthetic sensibility.
The novel traces the process by which Margaret parlays her feminine sensitivity to the
aesthetic into much-needed cultural capital. While the accumulation of moneyed
capital was strictly male territory, the display and distribution of cultural capital in the
mid-nineteenth-century was often entrusted to middle-class women—as wives and
mothers, as conduct-book writers, and as novelists like Gaskell herself. Middle-class
womanhood, armed with little more than taste, discernment, and an instinct for
propriety, was granted the cultural authority to discipline the ineffectual aristocracy (of
which Carlyle so often complained), the selfish shortsightedness of the emergent
capitalists, and even the violent impulses of the proletariat. *North and South* registers
class and regional conflicts only to subsume them into the romantic marriage of
opposites represented by Margaret and Mr Thornton, a marriage which optimistically
ushers in an era of 'kinder, gentler' industrial capitalism. Margaret Hale's mediating
influence proves little short of miraculous; by the end of the novel, regional prejudices
have eased, long-standing class hatreds are healing, even deep-rooted spiritual
differences are temporarily set aside: "Margaret the Churchwoman, her father the

¹ Pierre Bourdieu, "Structures, Habitus, Power: Basis for a Theory of Symbolic
Dissenter, Higgins the Infidel, knelt down together. It did them no harm" (p. 297).

Such utopian scenarios of social harmony are common enough in early and mid-nineteenth-century fiction, where bourgeois domesticity and the women who represent it claim a unique kind of civilizing power, a power often used, as we have seen, to conceal or mystify the deepening fractures of an industrializing society. One of the most influential theoretical approaches to Victorian studies in recent years explores this process of mystification as it occurred in and through the domestic novel, and offers the theory that middle-class hegemony was solidified through operations of power which seemed removed from the political and the economic because they behaved in "specifically female ways." In her 1987 work, Desire and Domestic Fiction: A Political History of the Novel, Nancy Armstrong connects our modern idea of aesthetic or "high" culture to the construction of an interiorized female subjectivity developed specifically through women's writing. Her book explores the rise of self-regulating female models of selfhood in the eighteenth century, proposing that "written representations of the self allowed the modern individual to become an economic and psychological reality" and that in this respect, the "modern individual was first and foremost a woman." In other words, writing by and for middle-class women helped to forge a distinctly new form of subjectivity focused on interiority and achieved moral qualities as opposed to a self defined primarily through the fixed qualities of social class. In Armstrong's narrative, the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries saw the

beginnings of a new "curriculum" for women, codified in the hundreds of popular conduct books of the time and based largely on the virtues of reading exemplary texts. This new discourse promised to make middle-class women desirable to men of a superior rank and in fact more desirable than women who had only their own rank and fortune to recommend them. The curriculum aimed at producing a woman whose value resided chiefly in her femaleness rather than in traditional signs of status, a woman who possessed psychological depth... (p. 19-20).

Armstrong cites Richardson's *Pamela* and the novels of Jane Austen as fictions which exemplify upward mobility attained purely through force of character. This idea of a female subjectivity which was defined primarily by adherence to propriety rather than class status took hold, and, Armstrong claims, by the end of the eighteenth century educators like the Edgeworths determined that the program originally aimed at producing marriageable middle-class daughters "offered a form of social control that could apply to boys just as well as to girls. And by the mid-nineteenth century, the government was figuring out how to administer much the same program on a mass basis" (p. 21). Armstrong argues that these educational technologies contributed to the foundations of the national curriculum in England, a curriculum centered around the study of literature and the humanizing powers of a timeless and universalized aesthetics as taught by literature. This new "rhetoric of reform... distinguished itself from political matters to establish a specialized domain of culture where apolitical truths could be told" (p. 21).

Although Armstrong does not mention Matthew Arnold, perhaps the most representative figure for the genesis of literary study in English, his authoritative
definition of a "disinterested" standard of cultural criticism by which to evaluate artistic products should be seen as a crucial moment in this trajectory. It is by now a commonplace that Arnold's work sought to replace the waning hold of nineteenth-century Christianity with the social cement of "culture." Arnold's seminal essay, *Culture and Anarchy* (1868), explicitly aligns culture and Christianity, while ultimately subordinating the latter to the former:

> in determining generally in what human perfection consists, religion comes to a conclusion identical with that which culture,—culture seeking the determination of this question through all the voices of human experience which have been heard upon it, of art, science, poetry, philosophy, history, as well as of religion, in order to give a greater fulness and certainty to its solution,—likewise reaches.¹

Arnold continues, "Religion says: The kingdom of God is within you; and culture, in like manner, places human perfection in an internal condition." Most fully epitomized by Hellenic art and philosophy (with some reference to classics of the English and German literary traditions) Arnoldian culture is both personal and national: he argues for the social necessity of self-cultivation according to Hellenic models, along with a centralized role for the state, as the one power which most fully represents the "right reason" of the nation, the expression of "our best self, which is not manifold, and vulgar, and unstable, and contentious, and ever-varying, but one, and noble, and secure, and peaceful." A society of like-minded people could be constituted, Arnold hoped, through national institutions which implemented his educational program, a program we might now term "cultural literacy." This program was particularly

necessary for the British middle classes, whose ranks were swelling with industrialists, entrepreneurs, evangelicals, and utilitarian social reformers, all of whom suffered from "aesthetical weakness" (p. 199), "a defect in delicacy of perception" (p. 182) and therefore needed to be made alive to "finer shades of feeling" (p. 183). As critics as otherwise distinct as Chris Baldick and Franklin Court have agreed, Arnold assumed that "culture," based on the quest for perfection, and joined with a new, absolute center of authority, would effectively counter the immediate threats of political anarchy and cultural pluralism. As critics as otherwise distinct as Chris Baldick and Franklin Court have agreed, Arnold assumed that "culture," based on the quest for perfection, and joined with a new, absolute center of authority, would effectively counter the immediate threats of political anarchy and cultural pluralism. As critics as otherwise distinct as Chris Baldick and Franklin Court have agreed, Arnold assumed that "culture," based on the quest for perfection, and joined with a new, absolute center of authority, would effectively counter the immediate threats of political anarchy and cultural pluralism.4

In a move which has had tremendous consequences for the humanities, Arnold fought to promote the study of literature, not merely for its own sake, but as the most effective conduit of the normalizing values of "culture" against the various alternatives of classics, philology, or "useful knowledge." In Schools and Universities on the Continent (1867), he maintains that "the number of persons with aptitudes for being

4 Franklin E. Court, Institutionalizing English Literature: The Culture and Politics of Literary Study, 1750-1900 (Stanford: Stanford U P, 1992) p. 110. See also related discussions of the centrality of Arnold to the institutionalization of literary study in Chris Baldick's important work, The Social Mission of English Criticism, 1848-1932 (Oxford: Oxford U P, 1983); in Terry Eagleton's chapter "The Rise of English" in Literary Theory: An Introduction (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1983); and in Eagleton's The Function of Criticism: from the Spectator to Post structuralism (London: Verso, 1984). A much less 'Arnoldian' account is offered by Brian Doyle in England and Englishness (London: Routledge, 1989). Both Doyle and Terry Lovell, in her Consuming Fiction (London: Verso, 1987), attempt to factor in the impact of gender on the new profession of English. Hunter's Culture and Government contests the Baldick-Eagleton narrative and its focus on Arnold, arguing that particular pre-existing pedagogical apparatuses in local grammar schools emphasized a disciplinary form which "made Matthew Arnold possible, not the other way around." Hunter insists that "we must look instead to a series of piecemeal historical changes through which the literary text was able to emerge as the privileged support of the supervisory techniques...first invested in the playground" (p. 21). See also Hunter, pp. 113-120.
carried to vital knowledge by the literary, or historical, or philosophical, or artistic sense...is infinitely greater than the number of those whose aptitudes are for composition and philology. Arnold shared the assumptions of his contemporary Walter Bagehot, who argued that scientific knowledge, useful though it might be, paled in comparison to literature as a vehicle for social betterment: "The heart and passions of men are moved by things more within their attainment...by the real actual existence of love, and hope, and character, and by the real literature which takes in its spirit, and which is in some sense its undefecated essence." And as Raymond Williams has pointed out, Arnoldian culture ambitiously seeks not merely to improve literary sensibilities but all aspects of the self in the name of social progress: Culture "is not merely the development of 'literary culture,' but of 'all sides of humanity...it is, and must be, essentially general" (Culture and Society p. 115). The discipline of literary studies, almost from its inception, conceived of its sphere in enormously broad terms, encompassing ethics and politics as much as aesthetics. The stated goal was to inculcate an idea of culture defined simultaneously as "aesthetic excellence" and a "standard of individual behavior." By the end of the nineteenth century, this mission had successfully been institutionalized in universities and schools, and literature had become what Althusser would later designate an ideological state apparatus. From Arnold to the present day, the dual assumptions that the acquisition of a certain kind


of literary culture would make one a better, more "well-rounded" human being, and a more responsible citizen, have never been left behind.

By the time Arnold had become the "apostle of culture" (his own term from *Culture and Anarchy*) the elaborate program of self-improvement which Armstrong describes as offering to produce the ideal middle-class woman had been incorporated into a male master-discourse of aesthetics and handed over to the state. Qualities previously characterized as "feminine" came to be appropriated, redefined, and institutionalized by the male cultural elite. Armstrong's history, although it registers this transition, does not fully explain how such a transition occurred. Further, as Catherine Gallagher discusses in *The Industrial Reformation of English Fiction*, domestic ideology tended to end just where the topic of men's roles began; while writers of conduct books and magazine fiction provided detailed instructions of how mothers and wives might go about 'humanizing' men, "they were very vague in describing just how these humanized men should go about changing the larger society." A significant gap remains, both historical and theoretical, between culture as domestic self-cultivation in the service of upward mobility and culture as a state apparatus, between a discursive operation which constructed and defined the personal, the interior, and the feminine, and a universalizing discourse tied to a nationalist ideology. Nor does Armstrong discuss the disjunction, inherent in Arnoldian thought, between culture as a process leading toward internal perfection and culture as a

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standard of aesthetic excellence, a contradiction which can be related to its dual inheritance of both female conduct literature and male classical models.

Armstrong’s version of the gradually widening influence of the domestic ideal, provocative as it is, leaves some very large territory uncharted, as her work does not address questions of how this vehicle of self-formation applied to males. In fact, while much attention has been paid to the complex construction of Victorian femininity and its role in shaping the spatialized public/private dichotomy which characterizes the bourgeois social sphere, only recently have critics begun to acknowledge the contradictory impulses within the masculinities of this period. Yet from the middle of the nineteenth century through the First World War, a remarkably wide variety of texts— from the writings of social and religious reformers, such as

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Carlyle, Kingsley, F.D. Maurice, and Ruskin, the essays of traditional university intellectuals such as Newman, Arnold and Pater, the novels of George Gissing, George Meredith and Thomas Hardy, and the popular adventure stories of Robert Louis Stevenson, Rider Haggard, Rudyard Kipling, and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle—express enormous anxiety about what exactly constitutes "manliness," and by the end of the century there exists the overt belief that British masculinity has become too domesticated and is in a state of crisis. If Armstrong is right about the domestic woman serving as something of a model for the ideal middle-class subject, representative of the appropriate measure of sensibility and self-regulation, then, I would argue, the appeal of the properly disciplined and submissive self had to be wrested away from its associations with feminine sensitivity and feminine weakness. Further, Armstrong does not offer much detail about the specific historical conditions under which these shifts took place; how culture came to be represented, simultaneously, as "the best of the best," as a normative and prescriptive operation, a national life, and even a generalized conception of social life as a whole.

Central to my analysis is the idea that culture, as it was constructed in the nineteenth century, became synonymous with "self-culture" and therefore intrinsically narrative in character. For the Arnold of Culture and Anarchy, just as the highest form of religious practice meant religion "as a force of inward persuasion acting on the soul, and not a force of outward constraint acting on the body," so culture itself must be absorbed as a kind of permanent conscience or superego: "Thought and knowledge, as we have said before, is eminently something individual, and of our
own; the more we possess it strictly of our own, the more power it has on us. Man
worships best, therefore, with the community; he philosophizes best alone" (p. 170-71. emphasis mine). "Culture" in this sense can best be strived for through the creative emulation of high examples as opposed to a slavish following of externally-imposed rules. Despite his obvious ambivalence, Arnold repeatedly leans towards the Hellenic "spontaneity of consciousness" against a too-rigid Hebraism, the exception being the enlightened Hebraism which aims at self-conquest "not by obedience to the letter of a law, but by conformity to the image of a self-sacrificing example" (p. 136). And in his essay "Democracy," (1862) Arnold concedes that "the pinnacle of culture will never be reached"; however, "to adapt themselves honestly and rationally to its laws, is perhaps the nearest approach to perfection of which men and nations are capable" (p. 35, Mixed Essays).

The process of self-development requires continual adaptation to the indeterminate but universal "laws" of right reason and aesthetic culture. This regimen is for Arnold an ideal state of being and at the same time "the nearest approach to perfection" possible, as 'Culture' can never be fully achieved. Ian Hunter perceptively remarks that "the fact that this process has no end--in either sense of the word--" is for its advocates a sign of its true ethical superiority: "To have an end would reduce the aesthetic experience to the status of an instrument wielded for certain rational purposes, thus depriving it of completeness" (p. 354, "Aesthetics and Cultural Studies"). While for many of Arnold's critics, this vagueness and elusiveness at the heart of the Arnoldian narrative proved politically "disabling"; I would argue that, to
the contrary, this very vagueness allows its flexible deployment for a range of developmental projects which demand self-discipline in pursuit of a higher goal." As Patrick Joyce writes, to be part of the story of "culture" is to be "drawn into subjectivity in a particularly compelling way, as an agent of history and not as its object."10

The following attempts an account of how a variety of masculine types came to be linked across shifting class identities by the concept of culture defined in such terms; how shared faith in the idea of continuing self-improvement united the disparate groups which came to consider themselves middle-class, or aspired to do so; how its feminine genealogy returned to disturb the masculinity of self-culture; how narratives (novelistic and otherwise) which offer the consolations of culture in place of more immediate political or economic power became, and remain, intrinsic to bourgeois hegemony. Very specific questions arise: what kinds of complications ensued in the gradual transformation of a feminized form of cultural capital into a universalized version founded on an appreciation of Victorian Hellenism? By what mechanisms did educators, novelists and critics overcome or incorporate self-culture's feminine

9 Terry Eagleton, Criticism and Ideology: A Study in Marxist Literary Theory (New York: Verso, 1978) p. 105. To support his point, Eagleton quotes Fredric Harrison's famous critique of Arnold: "There is harmony, but no system; instinct, but no logic; eternal growth, but no maturity; everlasting movement, and nothing acquiesced in; perpetual opening of all questions, and answering of none; infinite possibilities of everything; the becoming all things, the being nothing." My stance would be that these vague infinite possibilities, far from being a problem for Arnoldian humanism, in fact register its strength.

connotations of sensibility and psychological depth? How did the literary curriculum establish a carefully policed domain of high culture which pretended to be beyond gender but which, at the same time, relied upon an inescapably gendered rhetoric? And how did the nineteenth-century articulation of culture operate to limit and direct potential critiques of capitalism, and to contain the revolutionary threat so feared by liberals and conservatives alike?

Self-help

My hypothesis is that the Victorian ideology of Self-help offered itself as the appropriately masculine process through which such cultural capital could be produced. The discourse of self-help merged with other influential movements of the

11 I would like to emphasize at the outset that I am defining self-help very specifically in terms of its popularized mid-Victorian incarnation as a predominantly middle-class formation. I am not alluding to various groups—the Corresponding Societies, friendly societies, mutual improvement societies, debating societies, cooperative movements, and numerous 'self-helping' organizations—which developed among the artisan and laboring classes themselves, and which were based, not on the notion of individual self-advancement but on communal ideals of working class solidarity; in Raymond Williams's words, "the principle of common betterment" (See Culture and Society p. 331). The fascinating story of the formation of these incarnations of genuine working-class self-improvement has most definitively been presented in E.P. Thompson's classic study, The Making of the English Working Class (New York: Vintage, 1966); this history is continued through the century in Eric Hopkins's Working-class Self-help in Nineteenth-Century England: Responses to Industrialization (New York: St Martin's P, 1995). Harold Perkin also offers an invaluable account of the political impact of these various movements in The Origin of Modern English Society.
period such as the campaign for a more "muscular Christianity" and the institutionalization of the discipline of English Literature. By deeming literary study an acceptably male pursuit, self-help served as a mediating discourse which transferred notions of female virtue and propriety to male "character" and eventually to statist, as well as to what Foucault would term micropolitical models of control. It is my contention that self-help presented powerful narratives of legitimation for aspiring males which largely came to supplant the ideology of the domestic as the requisite mystification of nineteenth-century capitalism.

Self-help, as popularized by its chief architect, the Scottish doctor Samuel Smiles, in his 1859 best-seller of the same name, was originally directed at the moral reform of working-class males. Self-help, as the very name implies, describes a trajectory which does not require formal training and circumvents the traditional elite universities. As Richard Altick writes, Smiles "kept alive and flourishing in the Victorian mind the conviction that book-learning, prudently used...was the key to success." For Smiles, well-directed reading offered "a source of the greatest pleasure and self-improvement...exercis[ing] a gentle coercion, with the most beneficial results, over the whole tenor of a man's character and conduct" (p. 363). In Altick's brief history of the Victorian self-made reader, he recounts the origins of this type in a Romantic adulation of the low-born "natural" poet-philosopher and its subsequent adoption by middle-class utilitarian reformers (p. 241-42). The roots of the self-help

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movement can also be found in the expansion of low-church influence, the widely-respected Carlylean 'gospel of work,' and the spread of working-class literacy, especially through the efforts of such institutions as the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge, the Mechanics' Institutes and the Working Men's Colleges. The phenomenal sales of Smiles's *Self-help, Character, Thrift, Life of George Stephenson* and *Lives of the Engineers--Self-help* alone sold 55,000 copies by 1863; *The Life of George Stephenson* 25,500 by the same year (Altick, p. 388, 390)—give some indication of the popularity of his self-help message, and Smiles's works soon spawned an entire genre which included such titles as *Self-Made Men, Small Beginnings, or The Way to Get On, What the World Wants, or Hints on Self-Help, and Biography of Self-Taught Men.*

Smiles's career in self-improvement began in 1845 in an inspirational address to working-men in Leeds, later published as a pamphlet called *The Education of the Working Classes,* and eventually enlarged into *Self-help, With Illustrations of Character, Conduct, and Perseverance.* In his original speech, his point is to insist on the importance of education for its own sake, not as a route to rank and riches:

> I would not have anyone here think that, because I have mentioned individuals who have raised themselves by self-education from poverty to social eminence and even wealth, these are the chief marks to be aimed at. That would be a

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13 Altick provides a highly relevant account of the history of the Mechanics' Institutes, a history which in many ways parallels and intersects with the history of Victorian self-help, in his chapter "The Mechanics' Institutes and After" in *The English Common Reader.* p. 188-212.

great fallacy. Knowledge is of itself one of the highest enjoyments.\textsuperscript{15}

However, by the time of Self-help, Smiles revised his earlier formula, suggesting that education alone is not enough: "That character is power, is true in a much higher sense than that knowledge is power" (p. 419). Book-learning may be important, but even more so is the labor which goes into acquiring it; education without effort and self-discipline does not constitute an authentic Smilesian training for middle-class success. As he comments in Self-help, "a man perfects himself more by work than by reading" (p. 26), conceding now that "it is possible that at this day we may even exaggerate the importance of literary culture" (p. 359). Far more interested in the cultivation of certain kinds of subjectivity than in the distribution of knowledge per se, Smiles argued that formal schooling cannot hope to rival the satisfactions of self-culture. Institutions of learning, however useful and worthy of support, may even have an negative effect if they take away from the diligence vital to character-building: "We are apt to imagine that because we possess many libraries, institutes, and museums, we are making great progress": but, he cautions, "such facilities may as often be a hindrance as a help to individual self-culture of the highest kind" (p. 359).

Knowledge-as-inspiration could, however, be transmitted from individual writer to individual reader through Smiles's conveniently-packaged biographical anecdotes. Like most Protestant reformers of his day, Smiles subscribed to the inherently improving effects of exemplary narratives: "The chief use of biography consists in the

\textsuperscript{15} quoted in Christopher Clausen, "How to Join the Middle Classes With the Help of Dr Smiles and Mrs Beeton," \textit{The American Scholar} 62:3 (1993) p. 407.
noble models of character in which it abounds.... Hence a book containing the life of a true man is full of precious seed. Such a book never ceases to exercise an elevating and ennobling influence" (p. 404). Self-help is therefore readily accessible and, in a sense, democratic; any literate person can theoretically enjoy the abundant benefits of self-culture, which, according to Smiles, can uplift and brighten even the most impoverished conditions:

We can elevate the condition of labor by allying it to noble thoughts, which confer a grace upon the lowliest as well as the highest rank. For no matter how poor or humble a man may be, the great thinker of this and other days may come in and sit down with him, and be his companion for a time, though his dwelling be the meanest hut (p. 363).

Smiles used his biographical stories to celebrate economic independence and to convince working-men that such independence was just around the corner if they become better-behaved citizens with more regular habits. Affirming such old chestnuts as Socrates' "Let him that would move the world move first himself," and producing innumerable new chestnuts of his own, his was a fundamentally optimistic philosophy, designed to glorify individual effort, however abstractly conceived. While keeping one's nose to the grindstone might seem like tedious drudgery, for Smiles, self-improvement was rather a heroic contribution to the national cause: "even the humblest person, who sets before his fellows an example of industry, sobriety, and upright honesty of purpose in life, has a present as well as future influence upon the well-being of his country" (p. 26). The intimate connection between the individual and the national is enforced repeatedly in such maxims as "It is the repetition of little acts which constitute not only the sum of human character, but which determines the
character of nations" (p. 301). As the mettle of nations is tested through conflict, so is the character of individuals. In its encouragement of the qualities of resoluteness and perseverance, even the disadvantages of poverty have a bright side:

Riches and ease, it is perfectly clear, are not necessary for man's highest culture....Indeed, so far from poverty being a misfortune, it may, by vigorous self-help, be converted into a blessing: rousing a man to that struggle with the world in which, though some may purchase ease by degradation, the right-minded and true-hearted find strength, confidence and triumph (p. 39-40).

For Smiles, this strength purchased through trial is "character," and character is the "crown and glory of life," "the noblest possession of a man, constituting a rank in itself, and an estate in general good will; dignifying every station, and exalting every position in society" (p. 416). Smiles deliberately de-emphasized the traditional English criteria of gentility which depended upon hereditary rank, as self-help narratives prove again and again that a true gentleman is not necessarily a man of genteel origins but rather a man whose inner law is 'rectitude.' According to Smiles, "the brave and gentle character may be found under the humblest garb":

Riches and rank have no necessary connection with genuine gentlemanly qualities. The poor man may be a true gentleman--in spirit and in daily life. He may be honest, truthful, upright, polite, temperate, courageous, self-respecting, and self-helping--that is, be a true gentleman (p. 434).

The crystallization of the concept that gentlemen make themselves marks a pivotal moment in the history of bourgeois hegemony, as the middle classes successfully wrested this figure away from the landed aristocracy and reinterpreted it according to a Protestant ideology which valued good works over noble birth. Many critics have pointed to the significance of Smiles's attempt to redefine the ambiguous
Victorian category of the gentleman. As Robin Gilmour writes, "the Victorians themselves were, if not confused, then at least much more uncertain than their grandfathers had been about what constituted a gentleman...this uncertainty, which made definition difficult, was an important part of the appeal which gentlemanly status held for outsiders hoping to attain it."

While Smiles, like Gaskell, advocated the cultivation of taste and the aesthetic sensibility, his was a limited and practical aesthetics, far more concerned with the presentation of particular standards than the pursuit of beauty. Smiles tended to put his trust in perseverance over genius, assuming that artistic accomplishments relied upon the former rather than the latter. As Asa Briggs notes, Smiles's interest in Shakespeare "stopped short of an appreciation of Shakespeare's art: 'He prospered in business,' wrote Smiles of Shakespeare, 'and retired with a competency to his native town'" ("Centenary Introduction" p. 28). In a piece entitled "The Art of Life," published anonymously in 1850 but attributed to Smiles, we find passages which declare that "the art of life can be practiced, and its best results obtained, with comparatively small money means. It is not wealth that gives the true zest to life, but appreciation, reflection, taste, and culture." Taste is here explicitly equated with the

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17 Robin Gilmour, The Idea of the Gentleman, p. 3.
display of cleanliness and wholesome living:

    Even the lot of poverty is sweetened by taste. It selects the healthiest, cleanest
neighbourhood, where the air is pure and the streets are cleansed. You see, at
a glance, by the sanded door-step, and the window-panes without a speck,
perhaps blooming roses or geraniums shining through them, that the tenant
within, however so poor, knows the art of making the best of his lot.\textsuperscript{18}

Perhaps most remarkable is the way Smiles deliberately overlooks the intensive labor
necessary to maintain those sanded door-steps and clean windows; labor nearly always,
during this period, performed by servants. But the larger point is that the possession
of taste in fact makes economic improvement gratuititous.

    As should perhaps be obvious, Smiles's self-help philosophy reiterates most of
the Protestant virtues recommended in earlier conduct books aimed at middle-class
women. The Smilesian model similarly endows the domestic sphere with powerful
moral weight; self-help begins at home, the "most important school of character"
(Character, p. 31). Typical passages from Self-help reveal the imprint of domestic
ideology in their emphasis on turning one's attention to one's immediate surroundings:
"The common life of every day...affords ample opportunity for acquiring experience of
the best kind; and its most beaten paths provide the true worker with abundant scope
for effort and room for self-improvement" (p. 119). And we can take Smiles's interest
in 'taste' as yet another indication of the extent to which Self-Help was mobilizing the
established discourse of domesticity. Female "virtue" is renamed "character" and the
previously feminized discourse of conduct becomes a tool for the formation of a

\textsuperscript{18} "The Art of Life," Eliza Cook's Journal Dec 14, 1850. p. 103-04. reprinted in
English Popular Culture--1819-1851, ed. Louis James (New York: Columbia U P,
conscientious working-class male. What proved so effective for women will presumably work for the lower classes. An endlessly recurring theme of nineteenth-century novels, as many critics have noted, is that self-regulation leads to social advance and happiness.¹⁹ Such regulation, of course, often turns out to be a matter of establishing one's moral equality before submitting oneself to the authority of a social superior. In the Victorian novel, as Armstrong comments, the female heroine typically puts herself under the control of a male, usually of a higher class; whereas, according to the female fantasy, virtuous behavior brings the middle-class woman a man to care for her, "character" buys the self-helping laborer his own independent establishment, usually sealed by the acquisition of a socially superior wife. Self-help holds out the blessings of self-culture as a substitute for wealth, while frequently hinting that prosperity may follow exemplary conduct; in other words, that cultural capital may literally be converted into moneyed capital.

One of the most potentially radical elements of self-help is therefore its emphasis on the performance of class—the point is that whatever one's original station in life, one can learn to master the outward trappings of gentlemanliness, and self-help will offer a step-by-step guide. Even the humblest workman should invest in himself, work on developing his cultural capital. This is, of course, a premise of much wider applicability than the promise of actual wealth, functioning as it does to separate

¹⁹ Armstrong p. 91. For an extended discussion of the ways in which the capacity for repression was used by the Victorians to evoke interiority, see John Kucich, Repression in Victorian Fiction: Charlotte Bronte, George Eliot, and Charles Dickens (Berkeley: U of California P, 1987) especially pp 252-54.
wealth (or birth) as the marker of status from the acquisition of cultural capital. Smiles made no claims that self-cultivation automatically produced worldly success—he even warns aspiring self-helpers not to treat knowledge as a marketable commodity or a mere means of "getting past others" (p. 364). However, this warning was often belied by his rhetoric, which is, as Gilmour notes, thoroughly "soaked with the vocabulary of investment" (p. 100). Smilesian phrases such as "Character is itself a fortune" (p. 318), "It is the diligent hand and head alone that maketh rich" (p. 39), "Win hearts...and you have all men's hearts and purses" (p. 426), and his choice of examples, which, as he himself acknowledged, were nearly all men of fame and fortune, allowed self-help to be rapidly bastardized into the promise that monetary success would reward the truly persevering.

Yet another complication of the Smilesian narrative was that the allure of the traditional aristocracy did not give way, and the end result of self-improvement, even in Smiles's own biographical accounts, was far more often accession to the title of "gentleman" in the old sense rather than the new. As Gilmour explains, the self-cultured workman must be elevated out of the working class, as proof of success means exchanging his low identity for a higher one:

the self-helper can only be accepted as a gentleman when he has achieved the tangible certificates of rank to validate the inner character he has acquired by Smilesian self-culture—the carriage, the estate, the acceptance by county society....success is measured in terms of breaking into the traditional heirarchy (p. 102).

Ironically, a vigorous work ethic propels a man out of the sphere in which he is defined by his relation to production and into a sphere in which he can give himself
over to leisure and consumption. This means, of course, living off the labor of others. Thus 'character' is only made fully manifest when one has reached a social position where one no longer has to work to demonstrate its existence. The ideal of self-help consequently risks the rejection of the same ennobling toil it supposedly celebrates, and along with this it courts a host of traditional vices: greed, vanity, triviality, a taste for luxury. According to Gilmour, "while gentlemanly status offered respectability and independence within the traditional social hierarchy, at the same time it challenged the dignity of the work which made the new industrial society possible." He continues,

It was this conflict, more than anything else, which explains why the early and mid-Victorian period saw such an anxious debate about the idea of the gentleman, and why the debate was so ambiguous and inconclusive, producing so many conflicting images of true gentlemanliness. The conflict lies behind, on the one hand, the assertion of men like Ruskin and Samuel Smiles that, in Ruskin's words, "Gentlemen have to learn that it is no part of their duty or privilege to live on other people's toil" (Works, Vol VII, p. 344); and, on the other, the uneasy Victorian fascination with the figure of the dandy, the perfectly useless man who makes of his uselessness and disdain for work an exquisite style (p. 7).

This dilemma around the proprieties of labor was one long faced by the promulgators of the Protestant work ethic; if steady productivity inevitably leads to the accumulation of wealth, the accumulation of wealth may well lead to a love of indulgence for its own sake. "Gold comes in at one door, and Grace is driven out at another," one Methodist minister declared in 1866.20 Or, as Weber quotes Wesley on this paradox:

I fear, wherever riches have increased, the essence of religion has decreased in the same proportion. Therefore I do not see how it is possible, in the nature of

20 quoted in Perkin, p. 356.
things, for any revival of true religion to continue long. For religion must necessarily produce both industry and frugality, and these cannot but produce riches. But as riches increase, so will pride, anger, and love of the world in all its branches..."21

Weber famously theorizes that the existing discourse of Protestant asceticism alleviates this unstable condition by convincing the bourgeois businessman that God has chosen him in particular, that the unequal distribution of goods is a special dispensation by Divine Providence. At the same time, the treatment of labor "as a calling" became as characteristic of the worker as the corresponding attitude of the businessman towards his calling of acquisition (p. 179). Thus the capitalist is provided with a workforce of "sober, conscientious, and unusually industrious workmen, who cling to their work as to a life purpose willed by God" (p. 177). Weber echoes Marx’s comments that capitalism promotes an ascetic ideal for both the employer and the worker: the capitalist too must practice self-denial and delayed gratification, which will then bring the reward of profit. The science of political economy is, for Marx, the science of "denial, of want, of thrift, of saving": a science of asceticism: "its true ideal is the ascetic but extortionate miser and the ascetic but productive slave."22

Smiles’s contribution, at the historical moment when faith in Divine Providence seemed to be ebbing, was to secularize these Protestant ideals, detaching the Protestant emphasis on self-examination and the self-fashioned life from its religious roots.


Smiles anchors manhood in a Crusoe-like dream of economic self-sufficiency and control over one's own labor. This corresponds to his exalted portrait of the entrepreneurial capitalist as civilizations's benefactor; Smiles asserts that the capitalist earns his high place in society through his superior ability to practice self-discipline:

We have said that thrift began with civilization; we might almost have said that thrift produced civilization. Thrift produces capital, and capital is the conserved result of labor. The capitalist is merely a man who does not spend all that is earned by work. But a large proportion of men do not provide for the future. They do not remember the past. They think only of the present....The thriftless man has no share in the progress of the world....To be thriftless is enough to deprive one of all manly spirit and virtue.\(^{23}\)

In this way Smiles brings the middle-class appropriation of labor, and the resulting accumulation of wealth, in line with his idealistic vision of meritocracy--capitalist accumulation is by definition differentiated from extortionate means. However, despite his natural thriftiness, worldly temptations will always threaten the integrity of the businessman: "It must be admitted," Smiles concedes, "that trade tries character perhaps more severely than other pursuit in life. It puts to the severest tests honesty, self-denial, justice, and truthfulness." In fact, businessmen able to resist corruption are compared to "soldiers who prove their courage amidst the fire and perils of battle (p. 317). And, in a typical Calvinist move, Smiles declares money to be the external token of otherwise invisible internal development: "rightly earned, it [money] is the representative of patient industry and untiring effort, of temptation resisted, and hope rewarded; and rightly used, it affords indications of prudence, fore-thought and self-

denial—the true basis of manly character" (p. 295). Here the circularity of Smiles's 'philosophy' again becomes evident as 'manly character' is repeatedly signified by the accumulation of wealth; character, supposedly rooted in extra-economic moral qualities, is nevertheless only made visible by economic success.

Character Flaws

"Character," as used by Smiles, and generally by Victorian writers, stands for both the basis for a particular way of life and the result of a particular way of life. There is, of course, a deep contradiction between character as a narrative process and character as a pre-existing condition. Much of the confusion within Self-help rests on the ambiguous dual construction of this term, defined diachronically through an extended period of self-examination and trial and also imagined to stand outside of time, outside of the fluctuations of social identities. Moreover, nineteenth-century narratives of social mobility, in promising to produce gentlemen, inevitably threatened to take the 'simple' and make them complicated, to take 'natural' men and make them less, or even 'un-natural.' In Dandies and Desert Saints, James Adams explores a number of mid-century styles of manliness, all of which display concerns around the disjuncture between gentlemanliness as character and gentlemanliness as performance. As Adams observes, Victorian obsessions with secrecy were "manifold and powerfully overdetermined," and the same gentlemanly reserve which marks superior self-control
can also raise suspicions, as it has the potential to harbor "hidden designs" and "ungentlemanly secrets."  

Samuel Smiles acknowledges this possibility, and feels compelled to assert that gentlemanliness does not necessarily entail disingenuousness or deception; that gentlemanliness does not have to come at the expense of Victorian manliness. In the last chapter of *Self-Help* we find a recurring call for the moral consistency which defines a 'true' gentleman: "Always endeavor to be really what you would wish to appear," Smiles commands, adding, "the true character acts rightly, whether in secret or in the sight of men" (p. 421-22). And Smiles often stresses the many pragmatic advantages of the gentlemanly performance: "The cultivation of manner--though in excess it is foppish or foolish--is highly necessary in a person who has occasion to negotiate with others on matters of business" (p. 427).

The more complex self-help narratives surfacing in the novels of the period tended to respond to these concerns around the secrecy and reserve involved in the pursuit of gentlemanliness in several ways. One of the most common strategies is displacement; by displacing the questionable ambitions of the self-made man on to a less savory character, the deserving self-helper advances in spite of his own abundant humility. Another tendency is to rely on trustworthy first-person or omniscient

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24 James Eli Adams, p. 13-14. Adams's extremely helpful study traces the ways in which this interiorized, disciplined masculine subjectivity "is defined (at least in principle) apart from...traditional economic and social norms; hence its recurrent association with eager social mobility, which Dickens so insistently caricatured in characters like Uriah Heep. Yet Dickens's portraits suggest how powerfully programs of masculine self-fashioning may arouse the pervasive suspicion of hidden designs."
narrators who simply insist to the reader that the self-helper is and always has been incapable of subterfuge. Often the same novel will resort to both strategies.

The tactic of displacement is exemplified by George Meredith's 1860 comedy of manners, *Evan Harrington, or, He Would Be a Gentleman*. Evan Harrington's miraculous change of fortune from penniless tailor to landed gentleman is ultimately accomplished via his marriage to the impetuous and wealthy Rose Jocelyn of Beckley Court. The story opens with the death of Evan's father, the Great Mel, in life a lowly tailor, although an exceptionally charismatic tailor with something of a reputation as a Regency buck. His death, and the ensuing state of indebtedness to which his family has been left, calls the young Evan back from Portugal, where he is being educated in accordance with the wishes of his older sister Louisa. A chip off the old block, the enterprising Louisa Harrington has managed to transform herself into the cosmopolitan Countess de Saldar, and her life's passion is to conceal her lowly origins and elevate herself in English society. This requires hauling her hapless brother up with her, despite his protests and his stubborn insistence that he return to the family business, no matter how demeaning, in order to repay his father's debts. But Evan's honesty proves to be no match for his sister's duplicity, and much of the humor of the tale lies in the Countess's elaborate maneuverings which ensure the Harrington siblings' invasion and conquest of Beckley Court. After many comic twists, turns, mishaps and misunderstandings, the Countess's dream comes true and Evan and Rose are married and live happily ever after in genteel bliss. The comic plot neutralizes any potential disruption of the social order by laying the blame on the absurd figure of the
Countess, with assistance from the willful and besotted Rose, thus allowing the young protagonist to escape the taint of overweening ambition. The following passage is one of many which refer to the Countess and Rose as a pair of military strategists campaigning on Evan's behalf:

Now the two Generals—Rose Jocelyn and the Countess de Saldar—had brought matters to this pass: and from the two tactical extremes: the former by openness and dash; the latter by sublety...I will not be so bold as to state which of the two I think right. Good and evil work together in this world. If the Countess had not woven the tangle, and gained Evan time, Rose would never have seen his blood,—never would have had her spirit hurried out of all shows and forms and habits of thought....The two Generals were quite antagonistic, but no two, in perfect ignorance of one another's proceedings, ever worked so harmoniously toward the main result (p. 304).

The second approach to narrating the story of the aspiring gentleman can be observed in a novel many critics have linked to Smiles's Self-Help—Dinah Mulock Craik's *John Halifax, Gentleman* (1857), an enormously popular saga about a self-educated tanner's apprentice. One of the first works to have a tradesman as a hero, Mulock's object is to "confirm the Protestant ethic by showing that the virtues that lead to heaven also bring success on earth."²⁵ Throughout all his trials and tribulations on the way to gentlemanly status, John Halifax remains true to his humble beginnings. Upon his marriage to a local gentlewoman, he announces, "We mean to be two living essays on the Advantages of Poverty. We are not going to be afraid of it or ashamed of it...We consider that our respectability lies solely in our two selves" (p. 228). After all, he comments, "It isn't the trade that signifies--it's the man" (p. 121).

John Halifax's self-making in fact makes him into a male version of the ideal

domestic woman. His worth is described in distinctively Armstrongian terms: "his true dignity lay in himself and his own personal character, independent of any exterior" (p. 373). For John, like the Angel in the House, "duty begins at home" (p. 475), and this is where he is generally depicted, surrounded by loving wife and children. The narrator takes pains to defend John Halifax's exceptional capacity for love and, especially, tenderness—"a quality different from kindliness, affectionateness, or benevolence; a quality which can exist only in strong, deep, and undemonstrative natures, and therefore, in its perfection, is seldomer found in women than in men." As the narrator informs us, "John Halifax had it, more than anyone, woman or man, that I ever knew" (p. 26).

These extraordinary nurturing qualities are dramatized, as well as narrated, through the central relationship of the novel—the close friendship between the novel's hero and the invalid Phineas Fletcher, who delivers the story of John Halifax's well-deserved rise. John and Phineas maintain a lifelong comradeship consciously modelled upon David and Jonathan, the Biblical models of male loyalty. The novel contains several episodes where the strength of John's Christian love, as well as of his muscles, is shown to advantage as he nurses, rescues or defends the feeble Phineas. Differing from previously popularized types such as the stoic but dull laborer, the romanticized 'natural' peasant, and the enterprising but too-narrowly-pragmatic captain of industry (which Smiles himself was often accused of fostering), this gentle gentleman embodies the Smilesian lesson of the superiority of character over birth—although, significantly, Craik's novel remains conflicted about this issue in its hints of
John's 'lost' genteel origins: Halifax's father is described as "a gentleman and a scholar."

The narrator's affectionate portrayal of his intimate friend highlights Halifax's unselfconscious goodness, and at the same time reveals the existence of hidden depths below the layer of gentlemanly reserve:

His face had that charm, perhaps the greatest, certainly the most lasting, either in women or men--of infinite variety. You were always finding out something—an expression strange as tender, or the track of a swift, brilliant thought, or an indication of feeling different from, perhaps deeper than, anything which had appeared before. When you believed you had learned it line by line, it would startle you by a phase quite new, and beautiful as new. True, it had its reticences, its sacred disguises, its noble powers of silence and self-control. It was a fair-written, open book; only, to read it clearly, you must come from its own country and understand the same language (p. 107).

Phineas's insistence that he can read John's face "like a book" offers the assurance that gentlemanly reticences and disguises can in fact be deciphered, if only "by those from its own country." His narration also emphasizes the subtleties of John Halifax's character otherwise unavailable to the reader in a novel compelled to privilege its hero's rather monotonous qualities of moral steadfastness. We are repeatedly assured that John's character, like a good book, is an endlessly fascinating one, inexhaustible in its potential insights. While its 'noble powers of silence and self-control' ensure that its lessons are immediately available only to the narrator, he represents the kind of perceptive but discreet reader we must learn to be.

This narrative tactic also functions, deliberately or not, to make John Halifax the explicit object of desire. And the choice of a "feminized" narrator libidinously invested in John Halifax allows for many passages which meditate upon the sexual
appeal of this sensitive self-made man. ("He looked extremely well today—handsome, I was about to write; but John was never, even in his youth, "handsome" (p. 107)). While to modern eyes these scenes appear homoerotic (as would Phineas's admitted jealousy of John Halifax's wife), this use of a male narrator may have worked to distance the novel from the more open eroticism of the sensation novels then just emerging, novels frequently criticized for the inappropriately "fleshly" and unfeminine desires their female narrators were revealing. One Blackwood's reviewer tellingly insisted that if such sensational tales were written "from the man's point of view, [their] openness would at least be less repulsive."

Phineas's effeminacy provides a convenient contrast to John Halifax's otherwise perhaps questionably domesticated masculinity. As John Halifax displays all the desirable qualities of the domestic woman, domesticity becomes the novel's solution to the vexed question of the appropriate social destination for the self-made workman. Once "made," John no longer needs to be portrayed at his workplace; while his sensibilities have always seemed too refined for the tannery, his social upturn allows the novel's shift to a pastoral setting where he can give himself over to family life. Such intense manly tenderness apparently cannot find safe expression outside of the domestic sphere. Halifax's withdrawal into this enclosed familial space becomes so pronounced that one contemporary critic remarks on the novel's severe "agoraphobic" tendency, its increasingly neurotic suspicion of what Phineas refers to as the "wide, 

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dangerous world." But this "agoraphobia" is itself highly significant, as it points to the limited narrative options available to the authors of self-help novels.

One of the most famous definitions of a gentleman in the mid-Victorian period can be found in Discourse VIII of Newman's *The Idea of a University* (1852), in which Newman endorses a domesticated manliness somewhat akin to that idealized by Mulock Craik. Newman particularly stresses the values of patience, kindness, and consideration for others: "it is almost a definition of a gentleman to say he is one who never inflicts pain." Interestingly, in passages like the following, acquiring civilized manners means acquiring what is cast as a desirable feminine sensitivity: The true gentleman is "a friend of religious toleration...not only because his philosophy has taught him to look on all forms of faith with an impartial eye, but also from the gentleness and effeminacy of feeling, which is the attendant on civilization" (p. 160).

While civilized manners and the cultivated character, are, for Newman, obviously the product of freedom from labor rather than being defined through labor, both John Halifax and Newman's gentleman belong to the same place—the home. The gentleman's qualities are mirrored by the same bourgeois parlor in which they can best be displayed:

> His benefits may be considered as parallel to what are called comforts or conveniences in arrangements of a personal nature: like an easy chair or a

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good fire, which do their part in dispelling cold and fatigue, though nature provides both means of rest and animal heat without them. The true gentleman in like manner carefully avoids whatever may cause a jar or a jolt in the minds of those with whom he is cast;—all clashing of opinion, or collision of feeling, all restraint, or suspicion, or gloom, or resentment, his great concern being to make every one at their ease and at home (p. 159).

While for John Halifax, home is where the heart is, in Newman's passage, the figure of the gentleman seems to radiate a "haven in a heartless world" by his very being. Despite the social and religious divisions between Craik's self-educated Protestant tanner and the Anglo-Catholic man of letters, both reflect the influence of the eighteenth-century domestic ideologists. Such domestic gentlemanliness implicitly justifies its role in the expropriation of surplus value through the emotional and aesthetic benefits the gentleman provides. And this direct association of gentlemanliness with the security of the bourgeois home clearly points to the endurance of domesticity as a symbolic space for masculine development and renewal.

The formation of this new standard of masculinity--not too effete but not too coarse, gentle, sensitive, well-read, temperate, able to mix in any company--is one of the major cultural shifts of the mid-Victorian period. In John Halifax, Gentleman, as in much nineteenth century prose, the most natural synonym for "character" is "manliness": these words are often employed interchangeably. As Gilmour remarks, "manliness" was unquestionably one of the era's most commonly-used terms of praise, connoting integrity, openness, directness, and sincerity (p. 18). And yet Victorian manliness retains a quality of precariousness and instability, as it idealizes a very reticent openness, a cautious and indirect directness, a publically performed sincerity. Terry Lovell has speculated that a certain vagueness characterizes all cultural
discourses of masculinity since, unlike femininity, masculinity is not contained by either biology or heterosexual relationships. Begetting children, for example, is neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition of manliness, "which has no single common denominator" (p. 121). In some ways the success of Smiles's program may have raised the stakes for nineteenth-century masculinity--by linking manliness and self-help, defining manhood as the ideal of economic independence, it contributed to the creation of expectations which could not be universally met and increased the likelihood that economic difficulties would be interpreted as evidence of insufficient virility.
CHAPTER 3

TECHNOLOGIES OF CULTURE: PART TWO

And still we must labor on, for the work of self-culture is never finished.

—Samuel Smiles, Self-help (1859)

The Expansion of Self-Help

The degree to which Smilesian self-help was ever actually practiced is impossible to ascertain; what does seem clear is that "book-learning as the key to success" was advocated not only by conduct manuals, supporters of working-class literacy, Lord Brougham’s "Useful Knowledge" movement, and organizations like the evangelically-oriented Society for the Diffusion of Pure Literature among the People, but both derived from and spread through numerous popular novels of the period. Beginning in the late forties, a spate of novels touched on self-help themes: In addition to John Halifax, Gentleman, the energetic self-made entrepreneur appears in
the character of Robert Moore in *Shirley* (1849) and of Rouncewell in *Bleak House* (1852-53). This figure is soon being satirized as the ludicrous Bounderby in *Hard Times* (1854) and the drunken Roger Scatcherd in Trollope’s *Dr Thorne* (1858). The motif of the lowborn youth whose acquired refinement paves the way to social success appears in Dickens’s *Great Expectations* (1860-61), Meredith’s *Evan Harrington* (1860), and Edward Bulwer-Lytton’s *My Novel* (1853). A Smilesian dedication to manual labors proves its own reward for Adam Bede (1859) and for *Middlemarch*’s Caleb Garth (1869-72). Humble autodidacts content to remain in their allotted sphere of life are represented in Elizabeth Gaskell’s *Mary Barton* (1848), Charles Kingsley’s *Alton Locke* (1850) and George Eliot’s *Felix Holt, the Radical* (1866). As Kingsley explained the moral of his novel, "the working man who tries to get on, to desert his class and rise above it, enters into a lie, and leaves God’s path for his own--with consequences..."\(^1\)

Perhaps the fullest portrayal of the Smilesian self-help ethos occurs in George Eliot’s *Felix Holt*, in which the self-respecting workman of the title illustrates the principle that useful knowledge and upstanding character will eventually do more to advance the cause of the working classes than mere political representation. Reforming oneself, the novel tells us, is a far more pressing project than reforming English voting laws. Felix Holt insists repeatedly that "If there’s anything our people want convincing of, it is, that there’s some dignity and happiness for a man other than

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changing his station" (p. 557)—a direct echo of such Self-Help nuggets as "Prudence, frugality, and good management...furnish a more effectual remedy for the evils of life than any Reform Bill that ever passed the Houses of Parliament" (p. 15, Briggs ed.).

Felix's goal is to remind the working classes of the inadequacies within themselves which must be looked to before they can expect the right to enter the public sphere. For this, he is rewarded with a real 'lady' (who turns down a real 'gentleman' in favor of the rough-hewn Felix) and domestic bliss, if not with a coach and horses. At the novel's conclusion, the passage of the First Reform Bill has proved to have had little impact on general social ills, but a new, more practical Felix rises from the ashes of the naive idealism of the past, pointing a better way to progress: "a young Felix, who has a great deal more science than his father, but not much more money" (p. 606).

Felix Holt became such a compelling character that Eliot was persuaded by the editor of Blackwood's to bring her fictional creation back to life as a propagandistic vehicle in the Address to Working Men, by Felix Holt. Here 'Felix' mouths the view that the working classes desperately need to be taught to honor their betters, not because their 'betters' are morally superior, but because it is the aristocracy which acts as the guardian of the arts and culture. Eliot's conclusions about art appreciation for the masses were decidedly pessimistic; in her view, priceless national treasures and traditions were being jeopardized by the possible extension of the franchise. 'Felix' insists that what the workers cannot understand they must nevertheless learn to respect. When The Address appeared in Blackwood's in December of 1867, editor John Blackwood is reported to have commented, "I wish the poor fellows were capable of
appreciating it. If they were we would be all right." But of course their supposed
lack of discrimination was for Eliot and Blackwood the nature of the problem.
Catherine Gallagher has observed that Felix effectively embodies the Arnoldian ideal
of the 'best self': "Felix's politics consist solely of the recommendation of culture, and
the culture he recommends is one that develops, by teaching disinterested habits of
mind, an autonomous political self in everyone, a self fit to serve as the basis for the
state."  

Felix Holt and The Address denote perfect examples of the mid-Victorian
blurring of novelistic and non-fictional modes; here the fictional and the non-fictional,
the biographical and the pseudo-biographical, cooperate almost indistinguishably in the
overarching project of moral improvement. The similarities between such exemplary
figures as Eliot's workman, come to life to lecture on the refining powers of art, and
Gaskell's domestic art critic Margaret Hale are not hard to see. And the figure of the
middle-class woman and the self-helper were linked in another significant way—as the
bulk of the readership of such uplifting and improving novels. Throughout the century
middle-class women made up the largest part of the novel-reading public, with
working-class men joining them at increasing rates. From the late eighteenth-century
on, religious leaders and cultural critics regularly decried the novel-reading habits of
both leisured women and the masses. Smiles himself warns potential self-helpers

2 quoted in Appendix to Felix Holt, The Radical, ed. Peter Coveney

3 Gallagher, p. 248. Also see Williams's section on Felix Holt in Culture and
Society for a similar discussion.
away from novels, as an overindulgence in "fictitious feelings" can lead to "even a sound mind being perverted or benumbed" (p. 366). (Not to mention what such an indulgence could do to unsound minds and the naturally susceptible.) Ruskin's oft-quoted lecture, "Of King's Treasuries," delivered at the opening of the Manchester Public Library in 1865, supplies many examples which make the Smilesian argument that a man will be known, not by his social origins, but by the literary company he keeps: "Will you go and gossip with your housemaid or your stable-boy, when you may talk with queens and kings?" For Ruskin, as for Smiles, one's choice of reading material signifies one's truest self: "by your aristocracy of companionship there your own inherent aristocracy will be assuredly tested....Do you deserve to enter?"4

Despite such admonitions, popular fiction became an important route by which self-help philosophy spread throughout the emerging literate populations of Victorian England. As Laurel Brake remarks, it was those "deprived of access to higher, classical education, women and working men, who were among the most avid readers of English literature."5 And both women and working-class men were targeted for "improvement" by progressive middle-class educators as the arriviste discipline of literary study attempted to justify its existence. Reiterating the Smilesian faith that with knowledge came resignation to one's lot in life, contemporary arguments for the

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teaching of arts and literature to males of the laboring classes openly announced the mitigation of social tension as their chief goal. More accessible than the notoriously difficult study of the Classics, the new field known as English Literature was specifically called upon to be an agent of interclass communication. F.D. Maurice declared that his Working Men's College was founded in the hope that through its educational work, "class may be united to class, not by necessity only, but by generous duties and common sympathies." And, to exemplify the Victorian belief in the wondrously civilizing effects of reading literature, Baldick quotes H.G. Robinson, "On the Use of English Classical Literature in the Work of Education," from Macmillan's Magazine in 1860:

Assuredly then among the liberal arts that so humanise, standard literature occupies the first place. If anything will take the coarseness and vulgarity out of a soul, it must be refined images and elevated sentiments. As a clown will instinctively tread lightly and feel ashamed of his hob-nailed shoes in a lady's boudoir, so a vulgar mind may, by converse with minds of high culture, be brought to see and deplore the contrast between itself and them, and to make an earnest effort to put off its vulgarity (p. 66).

In this passage, Smiles's "great thinker of this and other days" works not through readerly companionship so much as by the instilling of class shame. The acquisition of knowledge requires an admission of lack and a genuflection to bourgeois values. The practice of self-help in many ways parallels the process of self-formation earlier

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6 Chris Baldick's The Social Mission of English Literature provides the most in-depth discussion of this topic.

7 quoted in Baldick, p. 63. It is worth noting that F.D. Maurice was also directly involved in the founding of Queen's College, the first teacher-training college for women, in 1848.
manifested by the lady: it becomes a way for the working-class "clown" to
demonstrate the proper degree of sensibility and depth of feeling; to show that he is
really middle-class at heart, and therefore deserves middle-class privileges.

**Between the Panoptic and the Governmental**

This process of "being brought to see and deplore the contrast between itself
and them" directly echoes the techniques of the carceral detailed by Michel Foucault
in *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. Foucault makes the now well-
known argument that the nineteenth century witnessed a radical restructuring in the
exercise and dissemination of power. Power comes to be exerted not through the
"majestic rituals of sovereignty or the great apparatuses of the state" but through the
new bureaucratic institutions of the prison, the hospital, the asylum, the factory, and
the school. Disciplinary technologies such as precise spatialization, repetitive
exercises, and incessant normative evaluation establish a more efficient mode of
regulating the subject. The point is to forge a "docile body" which may be "subjected,
used, transformed, improved." While these technologies were often specifically arms
of state apparatuses aimed at controlling various segments of the population, Foucault-
in passages which have too-often been overlooked--equally emphasizes the immediate

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8 Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan
practical value of such modes of discipline to the rising forces of industrial capital. As the new methods of administration arose simultaneously with industrialization of production, the two cannot realistically be separated: "it would not have been possible to solve the problem of the accumulation of men without the growth of an apparatus of production capable of both sustaining them and using them: conversely, the techniques that made the cumulative multiplicity of men useful accelerated the accumulation of capital" (p. 220-21).

The neo-structuralist model of subjectivity presented by the Foucault of *Discipline and Punish* attempts to allow for the establishing of complex linkages between technologies aimed at the calculated administration of individual subjects and the modes of production which called for, and relied upon, such methods of calculation. This architecture of power works to maintain order and predictability during a period of rapid and potentially chaotic modernization:

Discipline fixes; it arrests or regulates movements; it clears up confusion; it dissipates compact groupings of individuals wandering about the country in unpredictable ways; it establishes calculated distributions. It must also master all the forces that are formed from the very constitution of an organized multiplicity; it must neutralize the effects of counter-power that spring from them and which form a resistance to the power that wishes to dominate it:

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9 Foucault is, however, notoriously difficult to pin down on the exact causal relations between the realm of the economic and the realm of the discursive; while he clearly seeks to take into account their intersections, he ultimately seems to imply that the system of subjection is the prior condition: "This political investment of the body is bound up, in accordance with complex reciprocal relations, with its economic use; it is largely as a force of production that the body is invested with relations of power and domination; but, on the other hand, its constitution as labour power is possible only if it is caught up in a system of subjection (in which need is also a political instrument meticulously prepared, calculated, and used); the body becomes a useful force only if it is both a productive body and a subjected body." p. 25-26.
agitations, revolts, spontaneous organizations, coalitions—anything that may establish horizontal conjunctions. Hence the fact that the disciplines use procedures of partitioning and verticality (p. 219-20).

These new administrative technologies move in creative as well as repressive directions in their construction of ever more precise specifications of individuality in the service of expanding capitalist production. Such tactics worked through a panoptic scrutiny of behavior: "the disciplinary institution secreted a machinery of control that functioned like a microscope of conduct" (p. 173). This machinery of control manufactures delinquents, chronic offenders who require constant supervision and intermittent correction, and who become the objects of various juridical and medical interventions, manipulated "for the profit and power of the dominant class" (p. 280).

For Foucault, disciplinary techniques are never more innovative than at historical moments when it becomes vital to manage populations, a process which requires a detailed and statistical knowledge of populations to be managed. His later work focuses on such informed and specialized strategies for the regulation of whole populations, and complicates his original view of disciplinary society, addressing the roughly parallel historical movement toward what he termed "governmentality."¹⁰

Foucault's concept of the governmental encompasses not only institutions and agencies of government, agencies which ultimately operate via coercion, but a wide array of extra-institutional methods by which the conduct of individuals and groups might be organized and directed: "to govern, in this sense, is to structure the possible field of

action for others." (His projected title for the book which would collect his last years' lectures was in fact The Government of One's Self and Others.) Defining governmentality as "the conduct of conduct," Foucault stresses his deliberate choice of the latter term, with its dual implications of "leading others" and "a way of behaving within a more or less open field of possibilities." This governmental emphasis on conduct seems to be the logical extension of the attention given to that ostensibly self-determined inner space—conscience, psyche, soul—described in Discipline and Punish as the "effect and instrument of a political anatomy"; "the prison of the body" (p. 30).

As Smilesian Self-help declares, its goal is to get the working-class individual to police himself; and as such, it represents a refinement of penitentiary technique in that it addresses its object not merely as a laborer but as a man aspiring to a fuller humanity. The intention is clearly to forestall coalitions, collectivism and horizontal conjunctions such as trade-unionism and self-helping societies in their earlier incarnations, replacing them with vertical, ladder-like narratives of self-development. Thus Smiles's biographical writings operate "positively" to model the well-regulated subject by the "turning of real lives into writing," which as Foucault explains becomes an important strategy of disciplinary power:

For a long time ordinary individuality—the everyday individuality of everybody—remained below the threshold of description....The disciplinary methods reversed this relation, lowered the threshold of describable individuality and made of this description a means of control and a method of domination. It is

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no longer a monument for future memory, but a document for possible use....(p. 191-92).

Biographical knowledge offers an efficient technique for "correcting individual lives," Foucault notes, "because it establishes the 'criminal' as existing before the crime and even outside it....What the written life must pinpoint is the "criminal's affinity with his crime" (p. 252-53). This accumulation of biographical knowledge gradually leads to an ever more complex ethnography of criminality and delinquency on the one hand, and an influx of self-help manuals and how-to-succeed guides on the other.

Smiles's rendition of the self-helping workman follows much the same pattern as the construction of the delinquent, and in fact becomes its positive counterpart: the authentic self-helper must be distinguished from his more ordinary brethren; he must become a type, which can then be classified and multiplied; varying degrees of success within the social structure are inscribed, not as a factor of social position, but of character carefully displayed through a "moral accounting." The biographical mode of Smilesian self-help not only endows the self-helping industrialist with heroic qualities and epic significance but verifies that the self-helper was, from the start, capable of achieving greatness. Writing the life of the self-helper reveals his "true" gentility—beneath the ragged clothes beats the heart of a real gentleman. The moral is that the interior is not coincident with the exterior, at least until the end of the story offers a reassuring placement of people into their appropriate social slots. At the same time, as in the case of Evan Harrington and John Halifax, Gentleman, this narrative typically requires an insistence that the prolonged mismatch has not involved calculated
deception on the part of the male protagonist; self-help distinguishes legitimate from illegitimate—criminal—means of 'getting on.'

Self-help thus belongs more to the realm of the governmental than the strictly carceral. While the delinquent and the self-helper frequently emerge from the same milieu, the boundaries of the former type are much more finite and precise. The spatial element of panoptic architecture grants a localized and material dimension to power which manifestations of the governmental do not require. And one either becomes a criminal or not; whereas the greater degree of narrativity involved in self-help means that one can never really stop striving for and performing "gentlemanliness," a gentlemanliness continually displayed through proper consumption as well as proper conduct. Ambiguous goals like the achievement of "culture" and "gentlemanliness" are never permanently established but must always be demonstrated anew.

However, in the same way that the technologies of the carceral expounded by Foucault establish a determinate category of delinquency, such technologies also function to produce categories of subjects—the bad student, the lazy workman—who lack sufficient will to succeed and must be prevented, minimized, or taken account of by governmental means. Just as the prison system creates and names delinquents who ensure the need for juridical institutions of correction, self-help ensures that there will always be those who fail to correct themselves and who require another dose of Smilesian medicine. The carceral model allows us to see that self-help, far from
rendering state and social intervention unnecessary, in fact offers it permanent justification.

Further, Smilesian self-help separates productive subjects from non-productive ones; those with the 'right' attitude from those with dangerous tendencies. Relegating non-productive types to the margins, self-help stigmatizes them, designates them the opposite of the healthy and the cheerful, and begins the process of pathologizing them. A reaction to self-help sets in after those who continually fall outside of standardized narratives of upward mobility begin to gather momentum and become types of their own. Three particularly influential identities deliberately resistant to the norms decreed by Victorian self-help surface as "reverse-discourses" by the end of the century: the effete aristocratic dilettante has spawned the type of the disdainful aesthete; the drunken intemperate workman has become the addict, the chronic alcoholic; and early modernist writings soon present their version of the unclassed and disaffected anti-hero who belongs to no particular place and is bound by no clear social allegiances.

Self-help originated out of the political turmoil of the first part of the nineteenth century as a way to provide skilled but docile male bodies for the industrial labor force in a period before the development of a nationalized system of education. In its open attack on the paternalistic, aristocratic mode of noblesse oblige as the primary dynamic of class interaction in a new bourgeois age, self-help made a persuasive case that meritocracy had indeed arrived. The moment of Smilesian Self-help and the literature of improvement was thus a pivotal one in the history of
industrial capitalism. As Herbert Marcuse notes in "The Affirmative Character of Culture," attention to inward development became a useful technique of domination when all available forces had to be mobilized against a real transformation of social existence: "that soul is of the essence makes a good slogan when only power is of the essence." However, self-culture almost immediately became incorporated into other contemporary movements working to promote certain kinds of 'deep' masculine subjectivity.

Technologies of Masculinity: Ascetics, Eccentrics, Athletes

The conceptual vagueness surrounding the bourgeois "gentleman" in the mid-Victorian period yielded a multiplicity of self-help narratives, as the term could potentially signify a respectable artisan, an Oxbridge graduate, a bureaucrat, a captain of industry, or a county squire—the very open-endedness of the category implied a range of male identities no longer strictly bound by class but defined by shared aspirations. As Wallerstein suggests, the meritocratic logic involved in the restructuring of gentlemanliness faced the chronic challenge of defending the shifting parameters of upward mobility, of proving that upward mobility was not, in fact, arbitrary. In most self-help narratives, therefore, the accession to gentlemanliness entails authorizing the privilege through some extended process of character-

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apprenticeship. Narratives of self-culture often include a period of trial and contemplation through which the aspirant can demonstrate spiritual growth. This crucial testing period, where the wheat was supposedly sorted out from the chaff, offered an ostensible policing of the entry into this relatively heterogeneous new class, rapidly becoming what Eve Sedgwick calls the "flagship class of English high capitalism." She writes:

In order to maintain the illusion of equality, or at any rate of meritocratic pseudoequality, within the class of gentlemen, and at the same time to justify the magnification of distinctions within the class, it clearly made sense to envision a long, complicated period of individual psychic testing and preparation...This protracted, baffling narrative of the self, a direct forerunner of the twentieth century Oedipal narrative, enabled the process of social and vocational sorting to occur under the less invidious shape of different rates of individual maturation.\(^{13}\)

Yet this trial period of "psychic testing" poses formal problems of its own—a recurring narrative dilemma faced by the apologists of self-help becomes the demonstration that sufficient growth has really taken place. How to make the invisible visible? How to formally conclude the potentially infinite narrative of the self? Moreover, tensions surface in male narratives of character-development which do not appear in female versions, as women, after all, remain permanent dependents; in effect, children. But how long should a man be subject to the influence of others before he has shown himself ready to be self-sufficient? How does a male disciple know when it is time to become a master? Where does charismatic inspiration end and undue influence begin?

Where is the line between too much self-help—too much independence—and not enough?

These tensions are of course never resolved; we have seen that for Samuel Smiles money serves as the outward marker of character; in Craik's novel, the depths of John Halifax's inscrutable face must simply be interpreted for us. Another possible solution to the problem of the elusiveness of character is posed by Charles Kingsley through the regimes of manly testing encompassed by his so-called "muscular Christianity." As David Newsome sums up the agenda of what came to be known as muscular Christianity (Kingsley's preferred term was "manly Christianity"), it encompassed "the duty of patriotism; the moral and physical beauty of athleticism; the salutary effects of Spartan habits and discipline; the cultivation of all that is masculine and the expulsion of all that is effeminate, un-English and excessively intellectual."¹⁴ James Adams remarks that the ideals of muscular Christianity "codify a crucial shift in Victorian conceptions of masculinity, through which an earlier paradigm of spiritual discipline gave way to a celebration of unreflective bodily vigor" (p. 17). In the writings of the muscular Christians, gender becomes a shorthand for character, and the depths which would otherwise escape detection are written on the masculine body. In general, Kingsley's project had the effect of incorporating the popular discourse of self-help into the program of muscular Christianity, taking what had been a secular

philosophy of self-culture and reuniting it with Protestant belief, while purging it of its feminine past.

For Kingsley, the Protestant advocacy of an individual believer's direct and unmediated relationship to God is closely entwined with his ideal of a self-sufficient English masculinity. His 1867 sermon entitled "Self-Help" deliberately sets out to re-Christianize this contemporary secular idiom. The sermon opens with the passage from John in which Christ warns his apostles that he must soon abandon them: "It is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you." Kingsley then asks the rhetorical question, "how can it be expedient, or useful, or profitable, for any human being that Christ should go away from them?" He explains (predictably) that Christ's absence is necessary in order for the apostles to develop and test the free will which characterizes true men. The apostles needed to learn to do right not "from fear of punishment but of their own heart and will" (p. 257). They had to learn, "as we all have to learn, self-help, self-governance, self-determination" (p. 253). According to Kingsley, the absence of this parental figure leads to a richer, more internalized knowledge of his teachings: "though our old teachers were parted from us, yet they were with us still...we remembered their words more vividly, we understood their meaning more fully and deeply, now that they were parted, than we did when they were with us" (p. 255-6).

This narrative of self-help works via the inspiration of a charismatic presence—described in the rather nurturing-sounding epithets of "the Comforter" and "the Encourager"—but Kingsley’s emphasis falls on the eventual transcendence of this charismatic mediator. Any mentor-figure in this model, however necessary in the short term, is dangerous to the supposed autonomy of manliness if relied upon for too long. Kingsley here provides his audience with a Christian analogue for the attainment of subjectivity in a panoptic world, a world in which the subject must accommodate himself to scrutiny and learn to practice self-discipline. In Foucaultian terms, self-culture works through its exercise over 'free' subjects, allowing the subject to prove that external surveillance is no longer necessary because surveillance has been fully internalized.

Such Christian self-help, can also be read as a code for the surpassing of domestic influences in the quest for an independent masculinity, as Kingsley's motivational sermon draws our attention to the ultimate solitariness of this self-helping individual. This isolated condition seems to be the state to which the virile male must, unfortunately, reconcile himself in this fallen modern world. According to Adams, a recurring theme in nineteenth-century writings on manliness was a suspicion of the superficiality of social life. Victorian earnestness, "as it dwells in deep subjectivity, defined in antagonism to the "surfaces" of life...tends to be a very lonely discipline...If earnestness is to find collective embodiment, it can only be as a community hidden or withdrawn from the larger society" (p. 61). As he comments, this antagonism to the "surfaces" of life is at the same time a direct challenge to what was sometimes
perceived to be the "sway of domesticity" (p. 64). Thus the many nineteenth-century representations of all-male enclaves and chaste brotherhoods which emphasize a strict ascetic discipline, from Carlyle's idyllic monastery in *Past and Present*, to the calls for the revival of chivalric cults, the adventure literature of colonial exploration, to the hierarchical testing grounds of the military, the universities and the public schools.

Asceticism is of course not only connected with bodily testing and a removal of the self from the world but with the cultivation of spirituality and inner knowledge. The ascetic condition of "dissociated sensibility" is described by Ian Hunter as a central feature of the technology of aesthetic philosophy in the service of forming ethical subjects. In Hunter's words, an "ethic of withdrawal" supplies a means by which "individuals set themselves apart from 'ordinary' existence and conduct themselves as subjects of a heightened form of being" ("Aesthetics and Cultural Studies" p. 168). The claim to the attainment of deeper wisdom, deeper spirituality, and to objectivity itself is established through the presentation of this detached philosophical attitude.

Amyas Leigh, the conquering hero of Kingsley's runaway bestseller *Westward Ho!* (1855), presents a vision of the ideal "manly Christian," and as such his ascetic practices tend towards violence against himself. Amyas offers a far more physical example of gentlemanliness than the Smilesian entrepreneur, the thoroughly domesticated John Halifax, or the well-mannered denizen of the drawing room envisaged by Kingsley's theological enemy, Cardinal Newman. The novel contrasts Amyas's vigorous training to mere booklearning—"any pert monitor in a national
school might have had a hearty laugh at him" (p. 8-9)---instead, Amyas is renown for
his extraordinary strength and for his reputation as a fighter, "in which brutal habit he
took much delight" (p. 10). He is prone to "occasional outbursts of fierceness," one of
which culminates in his knocking his old schoolmaster unconscious with a slate, a
symbolic gesture much appreciated by his godfather, who, as it turns out, once did the
same to his schoolmaster (p. 30-31). Amyas, the narrator tells us, operates through
instinct and impulse, "doing the right thing without thinking about it," rather than
"trying to be good with all his might and main, according to certain approved methods
and rules, which he has got by heart" (p. 57). This 'natural' education has taught him
to "speak the truth and draw the bow," to endure pain "cheerfully," and to believe that
it is the finest thing in the world to be a gentleman, "by which word he had been
taught to understand the careful habit of causing needless pain to no human being,
poor or rich, and in taking pride in giving up his own pleasure for the sake of those
who were weaker than himself (p. 9). Indeed, Kingsley's description betrays a
suspicions of the same complex interiority which Craik goes to such pains to relate:
Amyas "was not, saving for his good looks, by any means what would be called
nowadays an 'interesting' youth, still less a 'highly educated' one" (p. 8). Kingsley's
gentleman is defined by bodily strength, stamina and a capacity for self-renunciation.
Yet, paradoxically, this very tradition of the chivalrous protection of the weak has
apparently meant the constriction of English masculinity, as too few outlets now
remain for the kind of heroism that muscular Christianity wants to encourage.
Kingsley's historical novels are rife with his nostalgia for a less protective era than his
own; he invariably turns to England's glorious past as an imaginary landscape for the testing of appropriately physical manliness. As J.A. Mangan observes, Kingsley's manly Christianity was ultimately more obsessed with proving manliness than with promoting Christianity. Mangan usefully points to the many connections between muscular Christianity and the tenets of its secular contemporary, social Darwinism, as both 'philosophies' relied on the central precept of "strength through struggle." The Prelude to Kingsley's 1866 novel *Hereward the Wake* opens with a classic Spencerian argument lamenting the enfeebling tendencies of civilization:

In the savage struggle for life, none but the strongest, healthiest, cunningest, have a chance of living, prospering, and propagating their race. In the civilized state, on the contrary, the weaklest and the silliest, protected by law, religion, and humanity, have chance likewise, and transmit to their offspring their own weakliness or silliness (p. 5).

While Cardinal Newman insists that a gentleman cause no pain, Kingsley's novels revel in the endurance of pain, dramatizing scenes of floggings, physical deprivation, sacrifice, and self-flagellation. In *Westward Ho!*, for example, we learn that although Amyas's schoolmaster has been morally dulled by his many years of license to "inflict pain at will on those weaker than himself," this dynamic is in fact morally "healthful" for his victims: "doubtless, flogging is the best of all punishments, being not only the shortest, but also a mere bodily and animal, and not, like most of our new-fangled 'humane' punishments, a spiritual and fiendish torture" (p. 28).

Cruelty may be detrimental to the spiritual development of the cruel, but the narrator

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assures us of its fortunate tendency to encourage "self-control and command of temper" in the sufferer. Thus, while yielding to the control of another might seem like a relinquishing of autonomy, in fact it becomes a means by which to construct this autonomy. Kingsley's recommendation of a particularly physical version of manly ascesis, what James Adams refers to as "an ascetic practice of virtuoso self-regulation" (p 111), depends, as Adams notes, upon strength in the service of greater self-punishment: "Ultimately, then, bodily vigor is most important to Kingsleyan heroism not as an end in itself, but to the extent that it enables a man to endure greater chastisements of emotional and physical suffering" (p. 136). Many critics have detected a decidedly masochistic strain in muscular Christianity; clearly, in Kingsley, a penchant for masochism is linked to a higher state of self-governance—to, in other words, character. On this point Adams helpfully quotes Reik—"By ordering his own punishment, the masochist has made himself the master of his destiny"—and speculates that "it may be that ascetic constructions of masculinity owe much of their appeal to precisely this fantasy of autonomy in the face of discipline" (p. 147). We note that this equation of superior physical with moral strength leaves women out, or places them in another realm altogether.

17 For detailed commentary on Kingsley's own flirtations with the erotics of ascetic practices, and on the "powerfully masochistic impulses" in his novels, which dramatize, in Adams's words, "an unusually violent oscillation of desire and restraint" (p. 110), see the chapter "Imagining the Science of Renunciation: Manhood and Abasement in Kingsley and Tennyson," in Dandies and Desert Saints. Also John Maynard's very thorough chapter on Kingsley, "Sexual Christianity: Charles Kingsley's Via Media," in Victorian Discourses on Sexuality and Religion (Cambridge: Cambridge U P, 1993).
Kingsley's admiration for virile prowess and stamina at times led him to idealize men of the working class as simple, natural embodiments of manly character in the rough. An anecdote he relates in 1848 in the midst of the Chartist turbulence illustrates his inclination to eroticize the proletarian male, as well as recounting his early hopes for the working classes' potential receptivity to the pleasures of 'culture.' For Kingsley, a chance exchange of appreciative glances unites two strangers from opposite sides of the social divide:

I never felt this [the need for self-sacrifice, patriotism, and brotherly love] more strongly than some six months ago, as I was looking in the windows of a splendid curiosity shop in Oxford Street, at a case of hummingbirds. I was gloating over the beauty of those feathered jewels. . . . my brain grew dizzy between pleasure and thought; and, as always happens when one is most innocently delighted, 'I turned to share the joy,' as Wordsworth says; and next to me stood a huge, brawny coal-heaver, in his shovel hat, and white stockings and high-lows, gazing at the humming birds as earnestly as myself. As I turned he turned, and I saw a bright manly face, with a broad, soot grimed forehead, from under which a pair of keen flashing eyes gleamed wondering, smiling sympathy into mine. In that moment we felt ourselves friends. If we had been Frenchmen, we should, I suppose, have rushed into each other's arms and 'fraternised' on the spot. As we were a pair of dumb, awkward Englishmen, we only gazed half a half-minute, staring into each other's eyes, with a delightful feeling of understanding each other.  

This delightful sharing of manly sympathy and 'fraternite' in the galvanizing presence of the aesthetic teaches Kingsley the lesson that "beautiful things were beautiful alike to the coal-heaver and the parson." Like Mrs Gaskell, Kingsley presents a universal discourse of aesthetics as evidence of the brotherhood of man. However, the aesthetic

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experience is here divorced from any domestic associations and instead linked to, and heightened by, a specifically male homoeroticism.

The figurative withdrawal from the society of women so frequently affirmed by Kingsley seems to have brought on certain complications, as he clearly felt the need to differentiate his fiercely English brand of self-flagellating asceticism from the practices of the suspiciously celibate and foreign-tinged Tractarians. If Kingsley's sermon on Self-Help provides insight into the contradictory ideal of masculine individuation, his literary criticism demonstrates the way that this ideal is constantly threatened by effeminate influences. A particularly elaborate example of how standards of manliness were translated into the criticism of the period can be found in Kingsley's "Thoughts on Shelley and Byron," which appeared in Fraser's in 1853. In Kingsley's literary criticism, poets' lives become, alternatively, cautionary tales or inspirational self-help narratives along Smilesian lines. Here Kingsley targets "the prevailing epidemic" of the popular taste for Shelley and the spasmodic school. "The private sipping of eau-de-cologne...has increased mightily of late; and so has the reading of Shelley. It is not surprising." Kingsley worries that "the lazy, the frivolous, the feverish, the discontented" will continue to find their spokesman in Shelley, and that this "chronic disease" will be taken for "a new kind of health."

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His main object in "Thoughts on Shelley and Byron" is therefore to insist that the poetic character, far from being marked by Romantic individualism, has throughout history been a model of self-regulation and social conformity:

All great poets, till Shelley and Byron, as far as we can discern, have been men especially free from eccentricities; careful not merely of the chivalries and the respectabilities, but also of the courtesies and the petty conventionalities, of the age in which they lived....It is not a question of rank and fashion, but of good feeling, common sense, unselfishness (p. 56).

A real poet, Kingsley claims, should be "content to be like his neighbors in outward matters, in order that he may make them like himself in inward ones." Eccentricity in any form equals selfishness, and, even more dangerously, inadequate English manliness: "The brain may be large, but the manhood, the 'virtus,' is small, where such things are allowed, much more where they are gloried in" (p. 56). True Christian masculinity generally means blending in rather than standing out. Yet it is clear that the same anti-social leanings which stimulate and prove appropriate manliness must be continually scrutinized for an unhealthy solipsism, self-indulgence, or eccentricity--there is often too little to choose between the 'eccentric' and the 'ascetic.'

Kingsley's fascination with physical manifestations of manliness lead him to theorize that the literary merits of Byron and Shelley can be extrapolated from each writer's poetic "gender." Thus Byron is a man's man and Shelley, sadly, a woman in a man's body; this is established by the use of a well-known passage from Tennyson's "Locksley Hall": Shelley's passions--the passions of "the lesser man"--compared to Byron's are "As moonlight unto sunlight, and as water unto wine." With few references to their actual writings (with the perhaps telling exception of "Stanzas
"Written in Dejection," which he reads as Shelley's confession of his own innumerable shortcomings), Kingsley anchors his critique in the poets' personal habits. Byron's natural boldness is epitomized by his affection for strong liquor, while Shelley's 'peevishness' is deduced from his vegetarianism and dislike of alcohol. Byron may have had his faults, Kingsley concedes, but his essential normality cannot be questioned; Byron's "artistic good taste, his classical polish, his sound shrewd sense, his hatred of cant, his insight into humbug above all," stand out and even become the very sins for which he is condemned by the new generation, described in somewhat hysterical prose as those "mesmerising, table-turning, spirit-rapping, spiritualising, Romanticising youths who read Shelley in secret" (p. 43). In fact, Kingsley informs us, if Byron had lived longer, he would very likely have settled down and reformed himself into "a gallant English gentleman." However, this could never have been the case with the effusive and unreserved Shelley, as Shelley's very nature was "utterly womanish":

Not merely his weak points, but his strong ones, are those of a woman. Tender and pitiful as a woman; and yet, when angry, shrieking, railing, hysterical as a woman. The physical distaste for meat and fermented liquors, coupled with the hankering after physical horrors, are especially feminine (p. 47).  

Marred by his lack of "anything like inductive reasoning," Shelley's whole life "was a denial of external law, and a substitution in its place of internal sentiment."

20 Alan Sinfield's The Wilde Century also draws upon this quote to support his larger point that nineteenth-century literary culture "depends upon an effeminacy which it also needs to disavow." Sinfield notes that "we know now that Byron had sexual relations with both women and men; the point is not what he did or didn't do but the need for literary culture to set boundaries between itself and the unacceptably effeminate" (p. 87).
Unlike the atheist Shelley, Byron at least acknowledges the "absolute and eternal law in the heart of man which sophistries of his own or of other beings may make him forget, deny, blaspheme; but which exists externally" (p. 45). The spontaneity and anti-intellectualism so laudable in the warlike Amyas Leigh are here condemned in the effeminate Shelley, while Byron proves redeemable because of his supposed willingness to submit to the dictates of paternal law. If we recall Reik ("By ordering his own punishment, the masochist has made himself the master of his destiny") we see that Kingsley's Byron displays the ennobling self-abasement which makes him a model of muscular Christianity; however, in Kingsley's logic Shelley's 'feminine' nature renders it impossible for him to draw upon the character-building energies of male masochism.

But the tactic of forcing the lives of poets into exemplary narratives is needed in the first place because nineteenth-century poets, like the domestic woman, work primarily via influence and example. As Bruce Haley explains, the qualities of the artist's character were supposedly transformed into the work of art, and the artist's "own nature so directly becomes the nature of the work, that its forcefulness, thus implanted, must transfer itself to the audience."\textsuperscript{21} The character of artists and writers is a constant preoccupation of Victorian criticism, which often takes the form of psychobiographical examples of the noble lives of poets. Chris Baldick notes that early Lecturers in English Literature were content to defend the value of their subject

within such terms of 'contact' with great minds, concentrating attention on "Great Authors considered as higher personalities" (p. 74).

Reading for, and teaching, "character" meant reading for the masculine, as "character" was inseparable from concepts of healthy masculine decisiveness and exertion. Kingsley's writing is typical of Victorian criticism in that it metes out its highest praise with such gender-coded terms as "firmness," "muscularity," "grasp," "mastery," "power," "wholeness of perception," and, of course, "manliness." Obviously, the standard established was one in which supposedly masculine qualities were prized; the ideal cultural product was described with the same adjectives as the ideal man, because each was seen as somehow inhering in the other. As we have seen in 'Thoughts on Shelley and Byron," the manliness of a text (or its lack thereof) is presumeably always on display. And Haley and others have amply documented the endless equations set up by Victorian writers and critics between virility, strength, and creative genius. "The greatest poetry," Leslie Stephen wrote, "like the highest morality, is the product of a thoroughly healthy mind" (quoted in Haley, p. 47).

Indeed, "health" itself was synonymous with manly vigor. Mens sana in corpore sano was after all one of the slogans of the era, and one with a dubious application to the "hysterical" or "nervous" female physique. (As Geraldine Jewsbury so obligingly wrote, the female body was "liable to collapses, eclipses, failures of power."\(^{22}\))

Women's texts were considered vulnerable to the same unfortunate conditions as their

too-delicate bodies. Women, it was argued, simply did not have the power to think abstractly, and the critical faculty was regarded as the exclusive property of males. In one of many possible examples, Romney Leigh in Elizabeth Barrett Browning's *Aurora Leigh* (1853-56) declares, "You [women] generalize/Oh, nothing--not even grief!" and continues,

...The human race  
To you means, such a child, or such a man,  
You saw one morning waiting in the cold,  
Beside that gate, perhaps. You gather up  
A few such cases, and when strong sometimes  
Will write of factories and of slaves, as if  
Your father were a negro, and your son  
A spinner in the mills. All's yours and you,  
All, coloured with your blood, or otherwise  
Just nothing to you....  
We get no Christ from you,--and verily  
We shall not get a poet, in my mind.²³

Feminine sensitivity and keenness of observation may be all very well at home, but cannot be extended effectively to the larger world. Tied to the immediate, the local, and the subjective, women's texts are rarely worth ranking with the "Greats."

Kingsley's reinterpretation of self-help ignores any promises of social mobility, implicit or explicit, focusing on the issue of moral development and linking it to a process of physical development which can be visibly registered on the masculine body. If the Protestant discourse of asceticism in the form of thrift helps to resolve the contradictions of capitalist accumulation, the masochistic advocacy of

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ascetic practices in the writings of the muscular Christians works to negotiate--and perpetuate--ongoing male anxieties around weakness and effeminacy. Routines of self-denial construct a hypothetical distance from domestic and domestic influences. For the muscular Christians, mere booklearning is not enough—it must be supplemented with rigorous militaristic training—however, books do offer a valuable window on the heroic manliness of England's days of yore. Reading may provide entry to this exclusively masculine space, but it must of course be the right reading, only "the best that has been thought and said in the world."

**Culture and Governance**

As we see in Kingsley's self-help sermon, Christ's followers need to be deprived of his presence in order to demonstrate their dedication to his teachings; similarly, the self-help narrative of reading one's way to culture involves a familial engagement with the influence of great works in order to demonstrate a self-regulating subjectivity. Reading and the spiritual presence of Christ both serve as agents which direct narratives of masculine psychic testing. In Smiles's version, the inspirational intermediary is not Christ but book-learning itself: the "great thinker of this and other days" who sits down with the self-helping workman, and who will be "his companion for a time, though his dwelling be the meanest hut." Book-learning may seem to be
an end in itself (as may money), but is really better put to use as an extension of one’s own powers, a means of building character and implanting the appropriate ambitions. The program of self-help proposes informal book-learning as a replacement for rank in the quest for mediating agents which enable men extend their material grasp; self-help supplies the narrative by which a number of possible mediators—money, politics, religion, traditional university training—are proven less effective than one’s own bootstraps.

But such self-improvement is of course, of a particularly directed kind. This emphasis on the regulation of individual conduct, this splicing together of free will with normalizing attitudes and practices, moves us into the realm of Foucault’s governmental, where there is, as Nikolas Rose notes, no opposition "between individualisation and socialisation." Rose points out that governmental practices govern through freedom, to the extent that they seek to "invent the conditions in which subjects themselves would enact the responsibilities that comprised their liberties: individuals would have to be equipped with a moral agency that would shape their conduct within a space that was necessarily indeterminate." 24

Where Kingsley’s adaptation of self-help strives for a technology of the appropriately masculine individual, Arnold’s famous Culture and Anarchy works to bring the wider governmental possibilities inherent in the discourse of self-culture to the fore, arguing for self-culture as the key to a more harmonious and better conducted

polity. As *Culture and Anarchy* makes clear, culture's first and loudest demand was political quiescence on the part of the working class and its allies; Arnold's project is to adapt the mid-Victorian narrative of self-culture to manage capitalism on the verge of crisis. That the 1860's were a moment when, as Marcuse would say, power was quite overtly of the essence was not in question at the time—both Eliot's *Felix Holt* and Arnold's *Culture and Anarchy* were written specifically in the context of debate over the second Reform Bill, passed in 1867 (the same year, incidentally, that *Volume One of Das Kapital* was published). Arnold personally witnessed the Hyde Park riots in July of 1866, and *Culture and Anarchy* is unmistakably stamped by his horrified reaction to the social unrest of the period. His response is more tempered in his earlier essay "Democracy," where he characterizes the democratic impulse largely as the inevitable result of the natural human need for the expansion of faculties, but *Culture and Anarchy* paints a very different picture. Here Arnold's fear that democratic rule would spiral downward to anarchy triggered the production of his influential argument for culture as the only mediating agent capable of rising above separate class interests and the "roug"her and courser movements going on around us" (p. 73). Patrick Brantlinger comments on the way that "Culture" became a measuring stick of the fitness of the working class for political responsibility: "One stood for or against a new reform bill, depending partly on one's definition of culture and on one's belief as to whether those who were to be enfranchised had enough of it or not."²⁵ It

seems worth recalling that a substantial part of *Culture and Anarchy* is given over to explanations of why the working class needs culture rather than political representation:

Those who know their besetting faults, those who have watched them and listened to them...will agree that the idea which culture sets before us of perfection...is an idea which the new democracy [Arnold's term for the proletariat] needs far more than the idea of the blessedness of the franchise, or the wonderfulness of its own industrial performances (p. 65).

For those who did not know of the "besetting faults" of the laboring classes, Arnold was more than willing to explain them. In his view, they were twofold: a minority of the skilled working classes were being lead astray by the middle-class Philistines above them into collective self-help and trade unionism in the name of short-term material interests rather than eternal ones: meanwhile, the majority posed a serious threat to the forces of law and order on which true culture, in Arnold's view, depended. The Populace was beginning to show a disturbing tendency to "assert an Englishman's heaven-born privilege of doing as he likes, and is beginning to perplex us by marching where it likes, meeting where it likes, bawling what it likes, breaking what it likes" (p. 105). Note the transferral from the national "he"--the Englishman--to the amorphous and ungendered "it" of the Populace as well as the rapid equation of political demonstration with 'bawling' and 'breaking.' Yet there is worse to come, as it turns out that the Populace is not only comprised of actual "roughs" and "rowdies" but for Arnold represents "rowdyism" incarnate:

every time that we snatch up a vehement opinion in ignorance and passion, every time that we long to crush an adversary by sheer violence, every time that we are envious, every time that we are brutal, every time that we adore
mere power or success...every time that we trample savagely upon the fallen—
he has found in his own bosom the eternal spirit of the Populace...(p. 107)

Here the psychological traits of envy and brutality supposedly endemic to the working
class are extracted from any possible historical reasons for their existence. And the
conclusion of the first edition of *Culture and Anarchy* contains a telling passage,
removed from the 1875 edition, in which Arnold's conviction that democracy was
merely a polite term for anarchy emerges in its rawest form. Quoting his famous
father, Arnold dictates the appropriate measures for members of the Populace who give
reign to their natural instincts: 'As for rioting, the old Roman way of dealing with that
is always the right one: flog the rank and file, and fling the ring-leaders from the
Tarpeian rock!' And this opinion we can never forsake..." (p. 203). Although Arnold's
recommendations for cultural progress have been taken by later generations of literary
humanists as an account of how to reinstall the classical public sphere of the
eighteenth century, its emergence as an alternative to democracy precisely at a time
when democracy was becoming a more tangible possibility can hardly be
overemphasized. What *Culture and Anarchy* actually proposes, in Terry Eagleton's
memorable phrase, is "not the public sphere but a means of defense against the actual
Victorian public" (*Function of Criticism* p. 64).

And perhaps more significant, because its impact was to prove more durable,
than Arnold's blatant class prejudice was his intention to pre-empt the category of
class altogether under the false ideal of universal equality and the quest for
disinterested truth. As Baldick reminds us, Arnold effectively renders the very concept
of "class" meaningless when he treats social classes as if they had no distinct interests
when it is precisely their interests and the conflicts between them which define them as classes in the first place: "The method of 'disinterestedness' gives each class a tribal nickname (Barbarian, Philistine, Populace) and then reduces social conflict to a series of imperfections within each tribe's soul, thus bypassing the question of their social relations" (p. 35-36). Arnold's point is that the limitations of class can in fact be superceded by the exceptionally cultured: "Natures with this bent [for seeking perfection] emerge in all classes...And this bent always tends to take them out of their class, and to make their distinguishing characteristic not their Barbarianism or their Philistinism, but their humanity." (p. 108). Culture and Anarchy conveniently works to substitute the satisfactions of "culture" in the place of political engagement, as Arnold is very clear that the truly cultivated man should not divert himself with "public life and direct political action" (p. 207) but rather give himself over to disinterested observation and contemplation.

Yet Arnold is not unconcerned with the views of skeptics who question the rewards of cultural capital, or, as he puts it, "sweetness and light." Culture and Anarchy begins with Arnold's anxious disavowal of the perceived "feminine" implications of culture. Conceding apologetically that "the believers in action...call us effeminate" (p. 212), his first task is to defend culture from accusations that it is "frivolous and useless." In the section "Doing As One Likes," Arnold acknowledges the criticism that culture "is said to be a religion proposing parmaceti, or some scented salve or other, as a cure for human miseries; a religion breathing a spirit of cultivated inaction" (p. 72). Hellenic culture clearly walks a fine line between the appropriate
incorporation of the feminine and a succumbing to its supposed impracticality and other-worldliness. Perhaps with Kingsley's muscular Christianity in mind, Arnold's essay chooses to endow the Hellenic, as opposed to the Hebraic, with an overarching knowledge of feminine nature. In contrast, the Semitic legacy is portrayed as a tradition boorishly indifferent to feminine sources of inspiration:

Who, I say, will believe, when he really considers the matter, that where the feminine nature, the feminine ideal, and our relations to them, are brought into the question, the delicate and apprehensive genius of the Indo-European race, the race which invented the Muses, and chivalry, and the Madonna, is to find its last word on this question in the institutions of a Semitic people, whose wisest king had seven hundred wives and three hundred concubines? (p. 184).

The internalized Hellenic "spontaneity of consciousness" proves to be the most direct inheritor of the self-regulation modeled by the cult of domesticity. And one can readily trace analogies between the function of Arnoldian "high" culture and the Victorian reverence for the domestic sphere which lend credence to Armstrong's speculation that the new literary curriculum absorbed the program of female character-formation. In Arnold's vision, high culture operates as a countervailing force to "low" and pernicious elements of society: ignorance, vulgarity and violence (as we have seen, usually represented by the working class) and crass materialism (epitomized by the middle-class "philistines"). The cultural sphere functions as a metaphoric "home," a space apart where the cruel and dehumanizing realities of industrial capitalism cannot enter, and a sanctuary in which one can safely express one's inner self. Hellenic culture, with its ally, the state, serves as a refuge from the dreaded "multitudinousness" which threatens to engulf and overwhelm the modern male subject.
As we have seen, in the nineteenth century those without educational or cultural capital were barred from political representation on the very grounds that they lacked cultural capital. Attaining cultural capital was constructed as an exercise of habitual self-regulation and self-control, and this testing process is of course potentially infinite. Arnold's basic position can best be stated as taken from Coleridge: "He alone is entitled to a share in government of all who has learned to govern himself." Compare to Smiles: "It may be of comparatively little consequence how a man is governed from without, whilst everything depends upon how he governs himself from within" (p. 36 Briggs ed.). Or to Ruskin: "all literature and all education are only useful so far as they tend to confirm this calm, beneficent, and therefore kingly power--first, over ourselves, and, through ourselves, over all around us..." (Sesame and Lilies p. 70). However, over the course of the century the standards for what constitutes true culture continue to shift as more potential self-helpers aspire to literacy and classical learning. Partly in response to the growing populations of self-made readers, Arnoldian self-help works to support the construction of a category of the culturally inept who lack the fortitude for self-improvement and the capacity for self-governance. The lack of culture can then be labeled a moral failing as its acquisition is a moral achievement; a matter, above all, of discipline.

My overall argument in this section depends on the idea that Arnold's classic statement of the liberal humanist tradition can be read as a more sophisticated version

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of the mechanistic, 'Philistine' self-helping attitude he despises: it is self-help aimed at
disciplining Victorian society as a whole and subjecting it to the authority of a
carefully-trained cultural elite closely allied with the interests and goals of the state.
"Book-learning as the key to success" thus became 'governmental' in both the
Foucaultian and the more traditional senses of the term, as self-help was transmuted
into a political prescription used to head off the threat of a more egalitarian society.
Mid-Victorian texts from Self-help to Felix Holt to Culture and Anarchy suggest that
this Janus-faced narrative of self-culture was in fact being called upon to manage the
conflicts inherent to an expanding capitalist economy. Marcuse sums up:

Culture means not so much a better world as a nobler one: a world to be
brought about not through the overthrow of the material order of life but
through events in the individual's soul....Culture belongs not to him who
comprehends the truths of humanity as a battle cry, but to him in whom they
have become a posture which leads to a mode of proper behavior: exhibiting
harmony and reflectiveness even in daily routine. Culture speaks of the dignity
of "man" without concerning itself with a concretely more dignified status for
men...Its realm is essentially a realm of the soul (p. 103).

As calls for democracy increased throughout the century, this elevated realm of the
"soul," in theory attainable by all, in actuality became ever more elusive.

The promise of upward mobility through the acquisition of cultural capital has
only very recently begun to wane in power, and Arnoldian defenses of self-culture
persist into our own day. While such technologies certainly have the potential for use
by members of any class, their advocacy remains inextricably tied to the project of
bourgeois consolidation, as self-help technologies are an intrinsic feature, perhaps the
defining feature, of the narrative of middle-classness itself. To most fully achieve
middle-class status, one must have come, originally, from somewhere else. One must
have pulled oneself up with one's own bootstraps, one must have been tested—if not literally, then metaphorically. Arnold extends and complicates this middle-class narrative by ensuring that sectors of the middle-class who had previously held only a tangential relation to this narrative, such as the 'philistines,' must also pursue the necessary work of self-development and engage in the endless process of self-culture. After Arnold, even the middle classes are not middle-class enough.

**The Gospel of Art**

*Culture and Anarchy* marks the historical realization of Marcuse's bourgeois Culture, and precisely exemplifies what Bourdieu has described as "the imaginary anthropology obtained by denial of all the negations really brought about by the economy." Arnold's relatively successful endeavor to combine practical politics with an idealist self-fashioning can be taken as evidence that literary culture in England was by then at a fairly advanced stage in the process of constituting itself, in Bourdieu's terms, as a self-contained field with its own internal classifications, standards, and demands. Bourdieu hypothesizes that the greater the autonomy of a particular field, the more those entering such fields will be oriented towards non-political and non-monetary ends, that is, the more they will have a 'specific interest in
Certainly writers of this period seeking cultural capital willingly adopted the ethos of 'art for art's sake' while success in popular or economic terms increasingly tended to discredit artists and to place aesthetic quality at risk. A modernist aesthetic developed which valorized form over content, ambiguity over closure, the specialist over the amateur, and the original over the derivative or commodified, and, of course, the strong sense of an ironic detachment from society cultivated by the professed followers of the Aesthetic movement.

In Bourdieu's calculus, therefore, by the late nineteenth-century an inverse relation has obtained between symbolic capital and moneyed capital due to the relative autonomy of the artistic field. Similarly, Raymond Williams seeks to return the artistic field to its prior infrastructural conditioning, pointing out that the degree of relative autonomy obtained by any field is itself already largely congruent with the demands of the prevailing social bloc. He notes that certain art forms or certain kinds of scholarship are granted autonomy only "because they are already internally directed to the reproduction of this order, in its most general terms, or internally directed at least not to contradict or challenge it."

The process of the construction of the autonomy of culture also involved a wholehearted rejection of culture's domestic legacy—there was a distinctly gendered dimension to the establishing of a literary field under the justification of 'art for art's

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sake.' Gaye Tuchman and Nina E. Fortin, in *Edging Women Out: Victorian Novelists, Publishers, and Social Change*, produce an invaluable sociological study documenting the actual decrease in the number of published British female novelists during the course of the nineteenth century. During this period, writing by women was accepted for publication less often and was shunted into "popular" and "low" rather than "high art" categories. As more men gained control over literary organs and institutions, women increasingly turned to other ways of making a living. For Tuchman and Fortin, the 1880's and the 1890's marked the decades in which the novel was being actively redefined as a masculine genre, and by the early part of the twentieth century, "the period of institutionalization," men's hold on the "high" culture novel had become firmly established. These two transitions, "in the prestige of novel writing and the gender distribution of lauded novelists--were related processes, constituting complementary elements in a classic confrontation between men and women in the same white-collar occupation."*30*

The process of "edging women out" meant the evolution and enforcement of a masculinist critical standard by which high cultural offerings could be judged, a process which can be detected in the writings of mid-Victorian critics like Kingsley. Elaine Showalter notes the striking reversal of critical favor toward female novelists

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*29* Tuchman and Fortin's numbers and some of their findings, although not their overall conclusions, have recently been challenged by Ellen Miller Casey's "Edging Women Out? Reviews of Women Novelist in the *Atheneum*, 1860-1890," *Victorian Studies* (Winter 1996) p. 151-171.

which had occurred by the eighteen-nineties. The latter part of the century saw male professional jealousies erupting in widespread critical abuse of "women's emasculating effect" on what had been almost quintessentially feminine terrain: "By the 1890's, women novelists were viewed as shriveled prudes whose influence hindered a virile masculine genre." A passage from Walter Pater's 1894 essay *Plato and Platonism* illustrates the narrowing parameters of this restrictive masculinist aesthetic at the fin de siècle:

Manliness in art, what can it be, as distinct from that which in opposition to it must be called the feminine quality there,—what but a full consciousness of what one does, of art itself in the work of art, tenacity of intuition and consequent purpose, the spirit of construction as opposed to what is literally incoherent or ready to fall to pieces, and, in opposition to what is hysteric or works at random, the maintenance of a standard" (p. 280-81).

Here Pater prefigures a host of manifestos of literary modernism, including the Futurists, the Imagists, the Vorticists, among others, in his anxiety over the contaminating 'softness' and 'formlessness' of female art, and his effort to police the boundary between high and low culture through a rhetoric of gender.

In the early and mid-Victorian period it was quite possible to conceive of high culture as an extension of the domestic and the useful--to regard the marriage of Margaret and Mr Thornton, or Jane Eyre and Rochester, as a happy merger of male economic power and female taste and moral refinement. However, by the end of the century such metaphoric constructions are rare, and the modern artist assumes a decisively oppositional stance toward a 'feminized' and degraded bourgeois sphere and

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the mass culture it so characteristically consumes. The gap between cultural capital and capital can no longer be so easily sutured, and, what is more important, its suturing is no longer perceived as desirable. Cultural capital—at least on the surface—directly opposes itself to the making of money. By the time George Bernard Shaw skewers the self-aggrandizing bourgeois hypocrisy concealed by both the "Gospel of Art" and the "Gospel of Getting On," in *Mrs Warren's Profession* (1893), the historical moment in which the two 'gospels' can be figured as mutually reinforcing in any simple way has clearly passed. As Vivie Warren declares at the end of the play: "let us have no more of that horrible cant...if there are really only those two gospels in the world, we had better all kill ourselves; for the same taint is in both, through and through."33


CHAPTER 4
NARRATIVES OF IMPROVEMENT: NOVELISTIC SELF-HELP
IN HOWITT AND DICKENS

It was an important moment. The old partners of the spectacle of punishment, the body and blood, gave way. A new character came on the scene, masked. It was the end of a certain kind of tragedy: comedy began, with shadow play, faceless voices, im palpable entities.

--Foucault, Discipline and Punish

Liberation Management: "The Last of a Long Line"

The happiest home is that where the discipline is most perfect, and yet where it is least felt.

--Samuel Smiles, Self-Help (1859)

In The Industrial Reformation of English Fiction, Catherine Gallagher constructs a poetics of the nineteenth-century ideologies of domesticity and paternalism, ideologies which offer competing models for the resolution of class conflict throughout the politically turbulent 1840's and 1850's. Defining domesticity, as Armstrong does, as the belief that families, under the sway of morally superior women, "exert a salutary influence on the moral realm by spiritually regenerating
individual men" (p. 118), she associates its narrative manifestations with the figure of
metonymy; a common rhetorical tactic of nineteenth-century fiction is to regard the
family as metonymically embodying the moral values of larger society. Gallagher
distinguishes this from the metaphoric strategy of society-as-family produced by
paternalistic ideologies--defined as those which assume that society could be
regenerated by the duplication of the benevolent heirarchy of the patriarchal family:
"If employers would act like wise fathers and workers like dutiful children,
antagonistic class interests would disappear, along with the extreme poverty and the
class separation that accompanied early industrialism" (p. 117). She further notes that
the concept of "family" in this period becomes somewhat amorphous, coming to
absorb everything that capitalist society is not: "For social paternalists and domestic
ideologues alike, it serves as a residual category that includes incompatible elements"
(p. 121).

Gallagher comments that both the ideology of domesticity and the ideology of
paternalism contain a fundamental paradox: society can be made analogous to the
family only to the extent that the family as a category is kept rigorously isolated from
society. Therefore, whether social problems are metaphorically or metonymically
displaced onto the personal sphere in industrial narratives, the form of their
substitution often destroys the very rationale for that substitution (p. 121). She offers
the example of Hard Times, in which, as she claims, the novel's solution is not only
private, it is anti-social: "when they begin to act like a family, the Gradgrinds become
a clan whose interests oppose those of the society at large" (p. 121). We have seen a
similar trajectory in a self-help novel like *John Halifax, Gentleman*, in which the novel retreats into a particularly reclusive version of the family. In demonstrating the perfection of John Halifax's domestic order, the novel loses hope for, and even interest in, the troubled larger world which originally called forth the need for such domestic exemplars.

By the late forties and throughout the fifties, an ideological hybrid developed in reformist fiction which combined both ideological formations. Self-help narratives can be characterized as one central and extremely successful manifestation of this ideological combination. In general, the literature of self-help tends to absorb domestic ideology in its attempt to reconfigure society along more paternalistic lines, to, in effect, shape workers into good children, and males of all classes into self-regulating and politically quiescent citizens. Book-learning takes over from feminine influence as the moral guide which the male subject should submit to and be shaped by. Male clergymen, critics, and great writers from the past, as well as other male self的帮助, serve as charismatic sources of inspiration. Importantly, most versions of mid nineteenth-century self-help take place largely outside of and at times even against the family. Self help tends to argue that the way to worldly success is through the cultivation of domestic virtues, but apart from actual women; it implicitly challenges the claims of domestic ideologists that women are in fact the best representatives of those virtues. Gallagher observes that "all varieties of social paternalism nurtured the cult of domesticity in the middle decades of the century, the two ideologies finding perhaps their most complete joint expression in John Ruskin's *Sesame and Lilies*" (p. 116).
Certainly Smiles himself demonstrated numerous conservative sentiments with regard to women's roles: he adhered to the Ruskinite view that men and women naturally belonged to separate spheres, he opposed female suffrage, and criticized the "outcries of women who protest against their womanhood, and wildly strain to throw off their most lovable characteristics" (quoted in Travers p. 287). For Smiles, the domestic realm is in fact far too important to be conceded to women, as here we have the breeding ground of all the virtues of self-help:

The nation comes from the nursery. Public opinion is for the most part the outgrowth of the home, and the best philanthropy comes from the fireside...From this little central spot, the human sympathies may extend in an ever-widening circle, until the world is embraced for though true philanthropy, like charity, begins at home, assuredly it does not end there (p. 394).

Smiles is very definite that this applies to men as well: "The man whose affections are quickened by home-life does not confine his sympathies within that comparatively narrow sphere. His love enlarges in the family, and through the family it expands into the world (Happy Homes, p. 566).

Recent critics of the nineteenth-century novel have written a great deal on the construction of the family as a symbolic territory of seeming liberty and privacy which does not need require external regulation because it so effectively polices itself. In

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The Novel and the Police. D.A. Miller writes that novelistic treatments of the carceral "worked to secure the difference between, on the one hand, a confined, institutional space in which power is violently exercised on collectivized subjects, and on the other, a space of "liberal society," generally determined as a free, private, and individual domain and practically specified as the family" (Miller, p. 58-59). The family does not therefore merely present an alternative to the economic realm sphere governed by the entrepreneurial spirit and subject to the indifferent laws of political economy, but is, or should be, equally removed from such the bureaucratic interventions of the state. In this line of thinking, the family signifies an imaginary space which remains impervious to panopticism, the better to facilitate and internalize panoptic mechanisms of surveillance. "After all, Miller argues, "what brought carceral institutions into being in the first place were lapses in the proper management of the family" ( p. 59). The narrativization of domesticity can be understood as the construction of alternatives to more strictly regulated and monitored social space, while paternalist narratives work through the refiguring of the entire social order along the lines of a smoothly-functioning, self-monitoring family. In the literature of Self-help, this latter tendency is most perhaps common. In the following sections I will examine the dynamics of these narrative structures in a simple children's story and in what is often considered to be the most complex of all Victorian novels--Bleak House, in part to demonstrate that despite their abundant points of difference, the same ideologeme of self-help can be seen to underlie both.
"The Last of a Long Line" (1850) by the popular writer and reformer William Howitt, offers a clear and even crude example of a paternalist narrative. This was but one of many stories the Howitts wrote for Dickens's new magazine, Household Words. William and his wife Mary were frequent contributors, having been solicited by Dickens as like minds: he asked them for "stories with such a general purpose in them as we all three have in all we do."¹ "The Last of a Long Line" illustrates the triumphant coming of a progressive industrialism which supplants both the outmoded feudal aristocracy and the conservative class of Tory manufacturers. Like John Halifax, Gentleman, this tale allegorizes the industrial revolution so as to naturalize the power of the mid-Victorian industrial bourgeoisie. Howitt's allegory writes the decline of the old order and the rise of the new in definitively evolutionary terms and links these to the ironclad laws of political economy: circulation is opposed to stagnation, the open to the closed, and the adaptive hybrid to the purebred in the story's celebration of the innumerable benefits of free trade.

From the first we realize that Sir Roger Rockville, the last of the old aristocratic family of the Rockvilles, is now long superannuated: "he was a specimen of human nature degenerated, retrograded from the divine to the bestial (p. 67): the logical result of the traditional Rockville insistence that "no vulgar vigor from the rich heap of ordinary human nature should infuse a new force of intellect into their race." The Rockvilles have all that any ancient English family could want: "The Rockvilles

had no need to study at school—why should they? They did not want to get on. The Rockvilles did not aspire to distinction for talent in the world—why should they? They had a large estate. So the Rockville soul, unused from generation to generation, grew

Fine by degrees and spiritually less,
till it tapered off into nothing" (p. 45).

As the narrator informs us, such things as the Rockvilles wear out: "The American Indians and the Australian nations wear out: they are not progressive, and as Nature abhors a vacuum, she does not forget the vacuum wherever it may be, whether in a hot desert, or in a cold and stately Rockville" (p. 41-42). Here, in a typically social Darwinist move, class conflict is displaced onto the forces of Nature. A decadent social order is compared to "primitive" or "pre-modern" cultures (which were of course actively being exterminated rather than refusing to reproduce or "get on"): neither the decadent nor the primitive has sufficient drive to inherit the earth.

The growing population of the nearby town of Great Stockington begins to overflow onto the Rockville estate, but the proud Rockvilles demand that they retain exclusive rights to their property. A bitter land dispute ensues between Sir Roger Rockville and the Stockingtonians who have been trying to hunt on his grounds and fish in his rivers. Sir Roger, never open to new ways, now becomes monomanically possessive of his lands, "perpetually haunted with the idea that poachers were after his game, that trespassers were in his woods." He is ultimately punished for his obsession when a party of poachers finishes him off: "thus ignominiously terminated the long line of the Rockvilles" (p. 68).
Parallel to the line of the Rockvilles is the clan of the Degs, hereditary paupers, accustomed to living off parish charity from time immemorial. The line of the Degs is particularly subject to Malthusian principles: "But a pure and unmixed class of this kind does not die out like an aristocratic stereotype. It increases and multiplies. The lower the grade, the more prolific." The Degs threaten to become the most formidable clan in Great Stockington; however, we learn that "there is so much virtue even in evils, that one not rarely cures another. War, the great evil, cleared the town of Degs" (p. 75). Into the vacuum left by the Napoleonic Wars and the demise of the Rockvilles comes Jane, the widow of a soldier Deg, a good working-woman from a faraway town. Unlike the Great Stockington Degs, Jane refuses to accept charity and is determined to work for her living. Jane Deg disdains the ways of her slovenly in-laws, and brings up her child, Simon, away from their bad influence. She also refuses to marry again, resolving to "live for her boy" (p. 86). Simon becomes a classic example of the Victorian self-made man as he grows up under the tender care of his mother and a neighboring artisan-shoemaker, the Romantic pastoral-poet type, who teaches him to read, to do arithmetic, to cultivate his sensibilities, and to appreciate the beauty of nature.

The rest of the tale is the story of Simon's social rise—his refined speech and manners soon bring him to the attention of the local manufacturer and banker, Mr Spires, who employs him in his counting house and teaches him the business. When he is twenty-two, Mr Spires offers him a share in the concern. Yet their opinions as to management prove very different, Mr Spires being "a staunch tory of the staunch
old school. He was for Church and King, and for things remaining forever as they had been," while Simon, a liberal, strives for "the improvement of the people," and their admission to many privileges" (p. 92). The partnership comes to an abrupt end when Simon presumes to ask for the hand of Mr Spires's daughter, and the proud and wealthy man recoils in horror at the thought of his daughter marrying the son of a lowly Deg. So Simon goes to a rival house of business, years pass, he grows wealthy, and he begins to institute his many plans for social reform:

He was on all occasions the advocate of the people...He had bought a large tract on one side of the town; and intensely fond of the country and flowers himself, he had divided this into gardens, built little summer-houses on them, and let them to the artisans. In his factory he had introduced order, cleanliness, and ventilation. He had set up a school for the children in the evenings, with a reading-room and a conversation-room for the work-people, and encouraged them to bring their families there, and enjoy music, books, and lectures. Accordingly, he was the idol of the people, and the horror of the old school of manufacturers (p. 94).

The rivalry between the two approaches—the old, authoritarian way, and the new, improving one grows more heated until, in the midst of some election violence, the gallant young Simon risks his own life to rescue his old employer from a rampaging crowd. After this chivalrous act the two are reconciled and Simon is finally allowed to marry the woman of his choice, thereby becoming the wealthiest man in the town. Twenty-five years later, the popular Simon, now an even more popular mayor, is officially knighted and adopts all of the trappings of nobility, including the aristocratic name of Degge, a coat of arms, and of course, the empty Rockville estate. He immediately opens up the grounds to public strolling, fishing and picnicking, restores the house and gardens, and fills them with "works of art and literature, paintings,
statuary, books, and articles of antiquity, including rich armor and precious works in ivory and gold" (p. 101).

At the end of the story, the moral is clear that the unfettered forces of nature and free trade will inevitably produce the best kind of society, a society run like a family. Sir Simon, The First of a New Line, looks down from his "lofty eyrie" and surveys his domain, the rapidly-expanding industrial town of Great Stockington:

There he senses no haunts of crowded enemies to himself or any man. No upstarts, nor envious opponents, but a vast family of human beings, all toiling for the good of their families and their country. All advancing, some faster, some slower, to a better education, better social condition, a better conception of the principles of art and commerce, and a clearer recognition of their rights and their duties, and a more cheering faith in the upward tendency of humanity.

Looking on this interesting scene from his distant and quiet home, Sir Simon sees what blessings flow—and how deeply he feels them in his own case—from a free circulation, not only of trade, but of human relations. How this corrects mischiefs, moral and physical, of false systems and rusty prejudices;—and he ponders on schemes of no ordinary beauty and beneficence yet to reach his beloved town through them (p. 104-105).

We note that in this new world, all is open, not only to the forces of economic circulation, but to the benevolent surveillance of Sir Simon from his "distant" home. This panoptic scene emphasizes the ways in which the reorganization of social space has meant a much closer and more efficient control of the population. The transition from the private and guarded to the public and free has turned Great Stockington into a carceral machine. Simon's "hands-off" approach to parenting makes for a smoothly-run organization; his combination of the promotion of individual self-monitoring and the familial bonds of loyalty has proved entirely effective in halting criminality in Great Stockington. Poachers are now unknown in the groves of Rockville:
First, nobody would like to annoy the good Sir Simon: secondly, game is not very numerous there [I will resist the environmentalist reading]; thirdly, there is no fun in killing it where there is no resistance; and fourthly, it is vastly more abundant in other proprietor’s demesnes, and it is fun to kill it there, where it is jealously watched, and there is a chance of a good spree with the keepers (104).

The story assumes that the human impulse to transgress has not been eradicated—it has merely been channelled elsewhere, kept out of Great Stockington by the visibility of its topography and the openness of its ethos. While certain demarcated spaces can be efficiently controlled by the implantation of a conscious sense of responsibility; outside spaces, monitored by less benevolent fathers, must still be policed by force.

Without the activation of the family metaphor, one could just as easily see this carceral situation as the complete centralization of political and economic power in the hands of the monopolist Sir Simon. But "The Last of a Long Line" casts its history lesson as a lesson in parenting, as the two bad fathers, the hardened Sir Roger Rockville and the overly proud Mr Spires, prove too parochial, too resistant to change. The enlightened capitalist, molded by the virtuous example of his mother, best understands the wants and needs of his children. Domestic influence makes its mark, as Simon’s mother is, in a sense, the true founder of the "new line," her chaste and conscientious self-regulation serves as the original model for the modern system based on the ideal of free circulation. Yet she remains a minor figure in a story set in the larger extradomestic world, a story which seeks to demonstrate the positive impact of the correct kind of paternal supervision. The narrator pays fitting sentimental tribute to her memory in the text’s conclusion, as the very last sentence shows Sir Simon
placing a tombstone on his mother's grave: "This stone is erected in honor of the best of Mothers by the most grateful of sons" (p. 106).

The Habits of Highly Effective But Not Too Ambitious People: Bleak House

When all the world is old, lad,
And all the trees are brown:
And all the sport is stale, lad,
And all the wheels run down:
Creep home and take your place there,
The spent and maimed among:
God grant you find one face there
You loved when all was young.

--Charles Kingsley, The Water-Babies (1863)

The ideologies of domesticity and paternalism, as Gallagher notes, can be found in their purest form in such magazine fiction or novels like John Halifax, Gentleman: however, they clearly shape more complex and generically mixed texts as well. Where Howitt's "The Last of a Long Line" offers a straightforward narrative of paternalism, with a last nod to the domestic, Dickens's Bleak House ultimately coheres, to the extent that it can ever be said to approach any such thing through all of its sprawling subplots, via its thematic endorsement of domestic values. The ruling logic of the domestic narrative requires that the power of mother love be recognized and that the outside world ultimately be rejected in favor of the exemplary home. Dickens's novel is part of a mid-Victorian cultural movement from an ideal of class relations based on a model of the expansion of the feminine realm, in which the loving
family gradually widens its sphere of influence, to a masculinized version like that of Smilesian self-help, in which aspiring males voluntarily adopt such domestic norms and influences. In other words, its territory is the overlap between familial influence and the various ways in which males willingly adapt themselves to a more bureaucratized and administered society.

Esther's first-person narrative tells the classic story of a virtuous woman whose virtue is rewarded, and is interspersed with third-person omniscient narration which essentially recounts the same allegory as Howitt's paternalist tale—the coming of a progressive industrial order and the decline of a now-outdated aristocracy. From the first we are informed that the fashionable world of the Dedlocks is "a deadened world, and its growth is sometimes unhealthy for want of air" (p. 24); the concluding words of the omniscient narration describe the near-total abandonment of the Dedlock manor at Chesney Wold to "darkness and vacancy" (p. 877). The solidity, spaciousness, and "repose" of Chesney Wold—akin to the repose of death—are explicitly opposed to the "restlessness" of the new society, which, as Marx noted around the same time, is busy severing feudal bonds, disrupting long-established hierarchies, separating families, and subordinating all to scheduling and timetables. The novel's overall impression of the coming industrial society is not a utopian one, but the force of the coming order cannot be denied. A deep ambivalence toward the entrepreneurial spirit leads this text to a rapprochement with domesticity in its advocacy of moderated ambition and cautious and gradual progress.
Bleak House builds the metonymic implications of domestic ideology into its very structure, in its use of dual narratives. According to Gallagher, domesticity, even more than paternalism, is rife with potential for contradiction in its strict separation of the domestic and social spheres. The ideology of domesticity teaches social reform, but is also "used to preach acceptance of public strife. The ideology must simply be accepted as a contradictory system, at once associating and disassociating the spheres of public and private life" (p. 118). The much-discussed technique of dual narration, with its personalized domestic narrative alongside a third-person historical account, can be regarded as symptomatic of inherent contradictions within the model of domestic power. While it is tempting to regard Esther's narrative as an acknowledgment of the limitations of the scope of historical allegory, I am reading the choice of dual narrators as a sign that domestic ideology often requires a supplement to illustrate the ways in which its effects are being felt in the larger world. Whereas D.A. Miller titles his compelling chapter on Bleak House, "Discipline in Different Voices," it is worth noting that this is specifically a domestic model of discipline, based upon the organic example of philanthropic practice illustrated by Esther Summerson. Esther's narrative sets forth a classic instance of the softening powers of the domestic woman, as we see all of the main characters in the novel gradually come under her benevolent influence. This "pattern young lady" educates all around her though her, but "gradually" and "naturally":

I said, more particularly, that I was not sure of my qualifications...That I had much to learn myself, before I could teach others...For these reasons I thought it best to be as useful as I could, and to render what kind services I could to
those immediately about me, and to try to let that circle of duty gradually and
naturally expand itself (p. 119).

Audrey Jaffe has stressed the relationship between Victorian gender ideology and
Esther's contradictory and self-effacing ideal of selfhood: "Esther ends as 'the doctor's
wife,' all the while insisting upon her tangential status. Where the construction of the
social self always requires denial, the Victorian angelic ideal takes denial as its
principle, making even a fiction of fulfillment difficult to maintain" (p. 148-49). This
usefully directs our attention to the way that first-person narratives of improvement,
when related by women, run into problems of self-authorization and rely on elaborate
strategies of disavowal which male narratives do not need to employ. Yet,
interestingly, both of Bleak House's narrators conclude their elaborate recountings with
a focus on 'tangential' and unambitious characters--Esther, who has, despite her
denials, of course always been central to her own story, and George Rouncewell, the
son of the housekeeper of Chesney Wold.

Over the course of the narrative, we learn that the young George ran away
from his family to become a soldier and has never gone back; for the duration of the
novel, he ekes out a bare living running a shooting-gallery in London. Toward the
novel's end, a touching reunion is arranged between the Prodigal George and his still-
devoted mother by his friends the Bagnets, whereupon he returns, at long last, to the
now depleted world of his childhood and rediscovers the strength of family ties. The
novel thus presents the reader with two different exemplars of domestic discipline, one
female, one male--the self-regulating, self-effacing Esther, and the ex-soldier who
willingly resubmits himself to a discipline which could be described both as domestic and as a kind of degraded paternal order.

The moribund Dedlocks (unlike the Rockvilles) can safely become objects of nostalgia once they have lost their power: the implication at the end of the novel is that George can do worse than to take up a loyal position in the Dedlock "household brigade." The allegory of the progressive bourgeoisie must be readjusted to fit the ideology of domesticity, and obvious problems appear, as Gallagher might have predicted, between the need for characters to prove themselves in the world as well as to maintain the proper respect for the home. These conflicts are partly resolved in the novel by the fact that there are two Rouncewell brothers, the ambitious older Rouncewell, who ventures out into the world and, having conquered his corner of it, remains there, and the younger, George, who describes himself as "self-unmade." but whose narrative of self-unmaking leads him home. Ultimately, this domestic novel's sympathies lie with the younger brother, the mother's favorite. However, it is George's failure as a self-helper, his inability to 'get on' in the world, that eventually renders him an appropriate inhabitant of his mother's domestic domain, a domain which is also the autumnal Chesney Wold, now described as a ruined paradise, an overgrown garden, a place past its prime.

The 'agoraphobia' of the conclusion of John Halifax, Gentleman is here moderated by the appeal of nostalgia as two staple nineteenth-century narratives converge: the narrative of the Prodigal son and the narrative of the fall of the once-proud aristocracy. Thus the good-hearted George, the domesticated man and failed
self-helper, becomes the spiritual inheritor of Chesney Wold and England's pastoral past. If, as Christina Crosby generalizes in *The Ends of History: Victorians and 'the Woman Question'* , women are often regarded as repositories of anti-progressive or traditional values, and women themselves are conceived of as the "unhistorical other of history" in much nineteenth-century thought, then this novel's domestic allegiances are manifest in its final retreat from the forces of progress and modernity rapidly overtaking England. The novel terminates in multiple locations—the family, the pastoral, Bleak House itself—all of which delineate self-contained and feminized spaces. Every narrative in *Bleak House*, that is, seems to stage a return home.

Despite this, the novel tends to express a degree of admiration, albeit somewhat grudgingly, for its self-made industrialist Rouncewell. Indeed, Robin Gilmour asserts that this text is one in which Dickens "most closely aligns himself with self-help virtues," the one in which he was "most in sympathy with the progressive momentum of what he called in *Bleak House* 'the moving age', against the 'perpetual stoppage' (ch. 12) of the moribund, tradition-ridden elements in mid-Victorian life" (p. 108). While clearly we are meant to appreciate the impressive accomplishments of Rouncewell's Great Stockington-like industrial town, his house, his bank, his factory, and his educational ambitions for his children, at the same time we are also shown the ugliness and darkness of this smoky world. A continuous discourse of the 'natural' vs the 'unnatural' is called into play to explain the novel's preference for George

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Rouncewell over his brother. Rouncewell appears worthy of respect (he had been "a mild youth, and very persevering" (p. 99)), yet he is also portrayed as somewhat inflexible and driven by a certain defensive pride. The ironmaster's "strong Saxon face" presents "a picture of resolution and perseverance" (p. 405), however, he suffers from a 'hardening' like the hardness of his iron domain, especially in comparison to the more easy-going George. The narrator tells us: "The brothers are very like each other, sitting face to face; but a certain massive simplicity and absence of usage in the ways of the world is all on the trooper's side" (p. 852). George stands for hearty, uncomplicated, out-of-door-loving manliness: unfortunately such natural manliness is apparently not sufficiently self-regulating. George tells his brother, "Everything about you is in perfect order and discipline; everything about me requires to be kept so" (p. 853). His earlier need for military discipline is thus easily exchanged for the paternalist regulation of Chesney Wold. George describes himself as a "weed" and it is clear that there is no room for weeds in Rouncewell's perfectly groomed industrial town (p. 840-41). The novel seems to be making the case that land must be set aside for 'weeds': England needs to preserve its dimishing green spaces in the face of the ongoing bricking up and cementing of the countryside: "Preparations are afoot. measurements are made, ground is staked out" (p. 748).

Rouncewell is both juxtaposed to and paired with his ostensible opposite, Sir Leicester Dedlock. The novel ridicules Sir Leicester's fears of Rouncewell's 'Wat Tylerism' and the 'opening of the floodgates,' and the absurdity of his class prejudice is magnified times ten in the paranoia of his frivolous cousin Volumnia--who is "as
eloquent upon the theme as if there were a general rising in the north of England to obtain her rouge-pot and pearl necklace” (p. 410). Yet once he has been chastened by loss and scandal, the aged Sir Leicester's exhibition of grace under pressure reveals his genuinely noble nature. Dedlock’s gallant shielding of the erring Lady Dedlock, his "generous conquest of his own wrong," are described as "simply honorable, manly, and true." His refusal to denounce his wife is interpreted by the narrator as a token of the manly chivalry which marks a true gentleman; in typical Smilesian fashion, this version of gentility is maintained across traditional definitions of rank, as these worthy qualities "can be found in the commonest mechanic," as well as in "the best-born gentleman. In such a light both aspire alike, both rise alike, both children of the dust shine equally" (p. 797).

Rouncewell and Dedlock come face to face in only one scene, which, seemingly arranged for the sole purpose of contrasting the emergent and the defensively entrenched, creates the impression that different as the characters are, both suffer from similar faults of pride and hardening of the will. The interview culminates in Sir Leicester's indignant question to Rouncewell: "do you draw a parallel between Chesney Wold and a--" Here he resists a disposition to choke, "a factory?" (p. 407). Although another narrative poke at Sir Leicester, the novel itself parallels the unnatural darkness and "airlessness" of the two worlds--one too closed, one too smoke-filled to permit healthy circulation--and the unyielding tendencies of the men these worlds have produced. If Sir Leicester is too proud to bother, Rouncewell is simply too busy to take the time to sympathize with his fellow human beings. In this replay of the motif
of the bad father, both aristocrat and manufacturer again prove overly driven to assert their own authority and the narrative consequently pushes them aside in favor of more open-minded characters.

While George Rouncewell's affable ineffectiveness must simply be given room, Esther's soft policing is emulated by her male counterparts Allen Woodcourt and, more especially, Jarndyce. Jarndyce proves his own selflessness and capacity for manly chivalry when he withdraws his own claims to Esther's hand, realizing that he must give way to Woodcourt for the sake of both of their happinesses. Jarndyce is himself a fountain of Smilesian self-help cliches—"I believe the best man has the best chance" (p. 819); "We will look before we leap" (p. 246); and his abundant advice to Richard Carstone on the importance of constancy "in every kind of effort": "If you entertain the supposition that any real success, in great things or in small, ever was or could be, ever will or can be, wrested from Fortune by fits and starts, leave that wrong idea here" (p. 193-94). It is Jarndyce who, in describing his ideal man, articulates the male ideal the novel seeks to inscribe: a man "whose hopes and aims may sometimes lie above the ordinary level, but to whom the ordinary level will be high enough after all if it should prove to be a way of usefulness and good service leading to no other" (p. 818). This potentially contradictory notion of the ambitious--but not too ambitious--constitutes the male counterpart to Esther's humble philanthropic goals. The "pattern" characters want to 'get on,' to make a difference, but are at the same time resigned to whatever life brings them and therefore not liable to chronic dissatisfaction or resentment. Too much desire, too much drive, too much self-help, leads to the
mechanistic over-efficiency of a Rouncewell or the sinister and secretive plotting of a Tulkinghorn. It could also potentially involve a rejection of the ordinary, the sphere of familial influence, the sphere which *Bleak House* works so hard to affirm.

And, of course, this qualified sense of useful ambition is directly critical of the wildly unrealistic expectations of characters like Richard Carstone—permanently "unsettled," Richard disdains "the monotony of application" (p. 244) and seeks to bypass work altogether. The sensible Jarndyce blames an upbringing in the long shadow of Chancery for Richard's "indecision of character," asserting that it "has engendered or confirmed in him a habit of putting off--and trusting to this, that, and the other chance, without knowing what chance--and dismissing everything as unsettled, uncertain, and confused" (p. 181). Esther holds Richard's properly genteel education equally culpable: through Esther, the novel satirizes the way that the social requirements of gentlemanliness predispose young men to an aimless, instead of a productive, life:

He had been eight years at a public school and had learnt, I understood, to make Latin verses of several sorts in the most admirable manner...He had been adapted to the verses and had learnt the art of making them to such perfection that if he had remained at school until he was of age, I suppose he could only have gone on making them over and over again unless he had enlarged his education by forgetting how to do it. Still, although I had no doubt that they were very beautiful, and very improving, and very sufficient for a great many purposes of life...I did doubt whether Richard would not have profited by some one studying him a little, instead of his studying them quite so much (p. 181).

The way that Richard's insipid training has contributed to his terminal aversion to a career perfectly exemplifies the conflict between gentlemanly aspirations and the Protestant work ethic which we have already encountered in Chapter Two. As Eve
Sedgwick describes this inevitable flaw in the mid-Victorian narrative of
gentlemanliness:

Unlike title, wealth, or land, the terms that defined the gentleman were not
clearly and simply hereditary but had somehow to be earned by being a
particular kind of person who spent time and money in particular ways. But
the early prerequisites for membership in this powerful but nebulous class--to
speak with a certain accent, to spend years translating Latin and Greek, to leave
family and the society of women--all made one unfit for any other form of
work, long before they entitled one to chance one's fortune actively in the
ruling class (Between Men, p. 177).

Richard's situation also prefigures Pip's dilemma in Great Expectations, where Dickens
takes up this conflict in much more detail.

While Richard Carstone goes from bad to worse, Esther laments that "the
uncertainties and delays of the Chancery suit had imparted to his nature something of
the careless spirit of a gamester who felt that he was part of a great gaming system"
(p. 239-40). Richard's gaming violates the work ethic and the novel's principle of
self-regulation, as well as wounding Ada, his saintly wife, and destroying what should
be their domestic bliss. He therefore calls down upon himself the particularly harsh
punishment of death. One of the novel's chief objections to the inefficiency of
Chancery is that it erodes any faith in the bourgeois idea of meritocracy: producing
instead gamblers, lottery-players, procrastinators, fortune-hunters, and aimless
dreamers. As a character who expects to become wealthy without expending any
ennobling effort, Richard threatens to expose the underlying arbitrariness of the
pseudomeritocratic system. The novel must prove him wrong, portray him as a victim
locked in the merciless grip of the Chancery suit, but there is of course a way in
which this gamester attitude appropriately reveals the true chanciness of bourgeois self-making.

Like Howitt's tale, *Bleak House* can be read as hinging on the operations of panopticism, illustrating the maintenance of social control through the construction of specific zones of delinquency which facilitate surveillance. Bourgeois zones usually remain free from interference while the slums like Tom-All-Alone's are marked off from the rest of society and perpetually invaded by social reformers, philanthropists, and police. Miller theorizes that the novel both enacts panoptic power in the overarching symbolic presence of Chancery and suggests its alternative in the family of Jarndyce, Ada, and Esther, which, he asserts, constitutes a "domestic retreat to which the institutional, social space of the court [of Chancery] can then be contrasted" (p. 63). But this opposition is never absolute, the zones are never impermeable or mutually exclusive, and this very indeterminacy is what grants the carceral system its effectiveness. Miller continues,

The bar of separation and even opposition that it draws between the public and private spheres is now buttressed, now breached, firm and frail by turns. On one hand, Chancery is a total system of domination, engendering resistances whose mere inversions or duplications of its injunctions only entrench its power more deeply. On the other hand, Chancery's domination seems to increase precisely at the point where one elects to erect bulwarks against it such as Esther's *Bleak House*...We cannot too strongly insist that these "paradoxes" are not merely confusions or historical contradictions that tug and pull at a text helpless to regulate them, but rather productive ambiguities that facilitate the disposition, functioning and promotions of certain ideological effects...(p. 80-81).

A key scene in Chapter VIII in which Esther and Ada are forced to accompany the overzealous Mrs Pardiggle on her philanthropic rounds enacts this process of
surveillance and offers a critique of the disguised will to power which underlies the wrong kind of philanthropic impulse. Esther observes that "Mrs Pardiggle...pulled out a good book as if it were a constable's staff and took the whole family into custody. I mean religious custody, of course." The bricklayer's response is indicative of the resentment of the poor in the face of such unwanted incursions:

"I wants a end of these liberties took with my place. I wants an end of being drawed like a badger. Now you're a-going to poll-pry and question according to custom--I know what you're a-going to be up to. Well! You haven't got no occasion to be up to it...An't my place dirty? Yes, it is dirty--it's nat'rally dirty, and it's nat'rally unwholesome; and we've had five dirty and unwholesome children, as is all dead infants, and so much the better for them, and for us besides. Have I read the little book wot you left? No, I an't read the little book wot you left. There an't nobody here as knows how to read it; and if there wos, it wouldn't be suitable to me. It's a book fit for a babby, and I'm not a babby..." (p. 122)

Esther's narration makes clear that the impoverished condition of the nameless working-class family exposes them to Mrs Pardiggle's desire for control and self-importance. And again, a discourse of organicism and naturalness is employed, as 'natural' dirt becomes preferable to Mrs Pardiggle's unnatural, unfeminine ambitions, her "much too businesslike and systematic" predations. The working-class women being visited prove more womanly than Mrs Pardiggle could ever be: Esther particularly admires their dedication to their children--an arena in which Mrs Pardiggle and her fellow reformer Mrs Jellyby fall noticeably short. And she appreciates their sisterly bonds and capacity for sympathy, commenting, "I thought it very touching to see these two women, coarse and shabby and beaten, so united: to see what they could be to one another" (p. 124). A middle-class ideal of Victorian femininity is naturalized across classes, and women who spend too much time outside the home are
portrayed as hardened and unfeminine in their shocking disregard for what should be
every woman's first priority. In contrast to Mrs Pardiggle, Esther and Ada monitor
others through their exemplary "compassion and gentleness." If any force is to cross
the "iron barrier" of class difference, in Bleak House, as in North and South, it would
seem to be the power of female sympathy, but a female sympathy which remains
appropriately modest in its goals: "We both felt painfully sensible that between us and
these people there was an iron barrier which could not be removed by our new friend.
By whom and how it could be removed, we did not know, but we knew that" (p. 123).

Moments after Esther delivers this speech, the bricklayer's child suddenly takes
a turn for the worse and dies on the spot. The narrative then shifts to a description of
Ada's lovely tearstained face--to the pure and sympathetic sadness which has been
triggered by the sight of the dead baby. Both Richard and Esther spontaneously sigh
(as they often do throughout the novel at the presence of Ada). "How beautiful it
was!" Their response--and the novel's--serves to deflect attention from the appalling
facts of working-class infant mortality, focusing instead on the sentimental spectacle of
female tears. The brief glimpse at these miserable conditions generates the anxious
desire for the safe, clean, middle-class home and the reassuring presence of the
idealized blond Angel in the House who metonymically evokes this space. Righteous
working-class anger at intrusions ("I wants a end of these liberties took with my
place") is translated into a longing for a space where such liberties cannot be taken.
The sordid tableau of working-class life is incorporated into the novel primarily in
order to cultivate the sensibilities of the middle-class observer; moreover, such "visits"
must be safely isolated and contained by a quick return to the self-regulating bourgeois world.

Dickens's novel famously struggles to expose the horrors of Victorian poverty and to dramatize the proximity of the wealthy to the poor. Yet _Bleak House_ generally delineates classed spaces and borders in order to suggest their susceptibility to dissolution through the miraculous powers of sympathy. In the examples of the bricklayer's cottage, or the equal ability of high and low to display manly chivalry, such boundaries can be rewritten across idealized middle-class norms of gender. In other passages, barriers fall before a vague, well-meaning liberal humanism. Here the omniscient narrator asks rhetorically:

> What connexion can there have been between the place in Lincolnshire, the house in town, the Mercury in powder, and the whereabout of Jo the outlaw with the broom, who had that distant ray of light upon him when he swept the church-yard-step? What connexion can there have been between many people in the innumerable histories of the world who, from opposite sides of great gulfs have, been very curiously brought together! (p. 232)

We can see that the use Dickens makes of Tom-All-Alone's and its inhabitants is ultimately not so different from Mrs Pardiggle's, and that such scenes provide an opportunity to express liberal concern but also ample liberal self-congratulation. The barriers which the prejudiced and narrow like Sir Leicester believe to be insuperable class divides are in this novel reconstructed along what seem to be meritocratic lines, primarily between those who, as Miller notes, are insulated from the police and from spying busybodies and those who are not; those whose self-discipline protects them and those who lack such discipline. We have moved from the category
of class to a more slippery category of the deserving according to the particular qualifications established through middle-class family life.

Thus the novel's seriously proposed solution to the dire conditions it so vividly depicts in the bricklayer's cottage and in the slum Tom-All-Alone's remains Esther's domestic philanthropic practice and that of her male avatars, all of whom represent an appropriately localized, immediate sphere of ambition. This definition of course works to reinstate a more generalized Pardiggle-like view: if everyone were as self-regulating as Esther and Woodcourt, the exemplary domestic woman and the caring young doctor, then squalor and poverty could not exist. I would suggest that Bleak House must go to such lengths to ridicule Mrs Pardiggle because the novel itself operates in much the same way and on the same basic assumptions. Bleak House takes great pleasure in skewering "telescopic philanthropy." only to put forth its own more subtle domestic version. Therefore, despite the fact that it openly questions social injustices and the arbitrariness of class divisions (and the fact that it includes interesting glimpses of working-class resistance, such as the bricklayer's resentment or Krook's refusal to be taught to read), Bleak House ends up reinscribing this same iron barrier which it often hopes to overcome via the power of sympathy.

Bleak House is of course not a monolithic entity--its sprawling complexity, its dual narrators, its zoo of eccentrics make it impossible to sum up in any simple way. Alongside its abundant interest in the processes of male self-making, gaps and fractures remain between the its construction of the domestic sphere and the larger world in which men must act, contradictions which cannot be fully resolved even
within the novel's own preferred terms of a moderated level of male ambition.

Gridley's rage, Richard's 'gambling,' Skimpole's amoral aestheticism, even

Rouncewell's hyper-efficiency--all point to the limits of domestic influence: the
benevolent power of the exemplary family proves ineffectual against such adamant
refusals to be ruled by self-scrutiny and conscience. The carceral reach of liberal
society may, as Miller suggests, seek to be as all-pervasive as the fog, palpable if not
visible, yet in Bleak House all has not fallen under Chancery's--nor Esther's--sway. In
contrast, the later Great Expectations offers no such 'outside.'

Unleashing the Delinquent Within: Great Expectations and the Limits of Self-Help

Vidocq: Wherever you get a lot of workers, sir, you'll get a lot of bad characters.

Minister: I sometimes think you see that if I took one of them as an example and set
up a wheel by the factory gate--

Vidocq: Not a wheel sir, a card index box. We'll have the bad characters in a box.
You'll see. You can trust the rest. And the police will live so close to that criminal
class, take informers from it, know it like itself, so every time someone reaches for a
gold coin, wham, he's hit in the face.

Minister: I regret the disappearance of the thumbscrew. But that's the nostalgia of an
old man.

Pierre: A golden age. Crime will be eliminated.

Vidocq: Not entirely eliminated, no. It is my profession.

The bourgeoisie had invented for itself a new pleasure, which it has still far from outgrown...


The new pleasure Foucault is referring to is crime fiction, and in this section I intend to sketch out, however roughly, a brief reading of *Great Expectations* which highlights the novel's participation in this addictive bourgeois leisure activity.

Interestingly, a moment in Pip's narrative parodies this very indulgence:

There was a group assembled round the fire at the Three Jolly Bargemen, attentive to Mr Wopsle as he read the newspaper aloud. Of that group I was one...A highly popular murder had been committed, and Mr Wopsle was imbrued with blood to the eyebrows. He gloated over every abhorrant adjective in the description, and identified himself with every witness at the Inquest. He faintly moaned, "I am done for," as the victim, and he barbarously bellowed, "I'll serve you out," as the murderer...The coroner, in Mr Wopsle's hands, became Timon of Athens; the beadle, Coriolanus. He enjoyed himself thoroughly, and we all enjoyed ourselves, and were delightfully comfortable. In this cozy state of mind we came to the verdict Wilful Murder (p. 136-37).

In the nineteenth century, the 'highly popular' subject of crime became a cultural staple, leading to an explosion of what Foucault describes as a general 'literature of criminality,' which included newspaper accounts, Penny Dreadfuls, the detective novel, movements for legal reforms, and, later in the century, writings on criminology and criminal psychology. This outpouring of discourse around the topic of crime served to idealize criminals as well as to villify them; moreover, it brought home the point that an ever-present criminality menaced the social body as a whole: "The collective fear of crime, the obsession with this danger which seems to be an inseparable part of society itself, are thus perpetually inscribed in each individual
consciousness." The definition of what constituted criminal behavior was undergoing an alteration—the romantic highwayman and the fierce Jacobin were giving way to the chronic delinquent as the focus shifted from illegal acts to the psychology and sociology of the criminal and his milieu. The assumption prevailed that crime emerges almost solely from the dregs of society: "crime is not a potentiality that interests or passions have inscribed in the hearts of men... it is almost exclusively committed by a certain social class... 'almost all from the bottom rank of the social order'" (Discipline and Punish p. 275). Foucault speculates that crime stories provided a successful route through which new constructions of crime and delinquency were disseminated, as popular crime fiction becomes a means by which delinquency can be portrayed "both as very close and quite alien, a perpetual threat to everyday life, but extremely distant in its origin and motives, both everyday and exotic in the milieu in which it takes place" (Discipline p. 286).

Discipline and Punish provides a genealogy of the delinquent, the target of various new mechanisms of social control, and the occasion for new knowledges and articulations of power to come to the fore. Identifying, categorizing, and separating out the delinquent from the rest of his social world became a major project of emerging disciplines in the social sciences and new discourses of urban and criminal expertise. These processes for sorting out the redeemable working poor from the

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intractable criminal element were, however, never decisive or complete, and resulted in fact in a protracted surveillance for both groups:

Erecting the barrier to separate delinquents from all the lower strata of the population from which they sprang and with which they have remained linked has been a difficult task, especially no doubt in urban milieux. It has been a long and arduous undertaking. It has involved the use of the general principles of the 'moralization' of the poorer classes that elsewhere has had such a crucial importance both from an economic and a political point of view....More specific methods were used to maintain the hostility of the poorer classes to delinquents (the use of ex-convicts as informers, police spies, strike-breakers or thugs)....Workers' action was regularly accused of being animated, if not manipulated, by mere criminals....In short, a whole tactic of confusion aimed at maintaining a permanent state of conflict (Discipline p. 285-86).

Two figures, both taken from life, stand out in this ongoing transferral from generalized illegality to the concept of the delinquent as a distinct type: Vidocq, the daring criminal turned detective, and Lacenaire, the celebrity criminal who makes crime an art. Author of the popular Memoirs, Eugene Francois Vidocq (1775-1857) comes to represent the interchangeability of, and the blurred lines between, the police and the criminal element as they mutually inhabit the delinquent milieu. "Vidocq marks the moment when delinquency, detached from other illegalities, was invested by power and turned inside out," writes Foucault. "It was then that the direct, institutional coupling of police and delinquency took place: the disturbing moment when criminality becomes one of the mechanisms of power" (Discipline p. 283). His counterpart in the 'normalization' of the criminal type is Lacenaire, the refined bourgeois or petty bourgeois lawbreaker who embodies the fantasy of crime as a safe outlet for transgressive impulses. Catering to the desires of the bored bourgeoisie, he is in fact the product of their cravings for sensational mock-rebel heroes. The real-life
Lacenaire was a petty thief with poetic pretensions who was embraced and feted by the Paris bourgeoisie of his day. If Lacenaire had been born a generation earlier, Foucault claims, he would have been "a revolutionary, a Jacobin, a regicide: had he been a contemporary of Robespierre, his rejection of the law would have taken a directly political form. Born in 1800...his character bears the trace of these possibilities; but they took the form of theft, murder and denunciation" (Discipline p. 284). For his bourgeois audience, therefore, "Lacenaire is a reassuring figure."

In Great Expectations, the Vidocq figure is of course Jaggers, the powerful lawyer with the intimate knowledge of crime (his law-office is located adjacent to Newgate), and the only man in London who does not fear its predations. In Pip's description, Jaggers has "an air of authority not to be disputed, and with a manner expressive of knowing something secret about every one of us that would effectually do for each individual if he chose to disclose it" (p. 139). As Pam Morris notes, his total inscrutability, combined with a terrorizing reputation for clairvoyance, constructs him as the very personification of the panopticon state....the power he represents extends beyond those actually guilty of crime. The coercively forensic style of his character discourse persistently insinuates access to guilty personal secrets, and thus imposes self-perception of a guilty, criminal subjectivity upon all those he interpellates.5

While Magwich, brought up to be "a warmint," "hardened" from an early age, fits every requirement of a delinquent, Compeyson, the mysterious gentleman-forger forever plotting behind the scenes might seem to be the closest this novel comes to portraying a Lacenaire. However, building upon Julian Moynahan's argument in his

well-known essay, "The Hero's Guilt: The Case of Great Expectations," I argue that it is Pip himself who functions for the mid-Victorian bourgeoisie as Lacenaire did for the French. Moynahan is not the first to discuss the novel's obsessive overdetermination of Pip's guilt, but his essay offers the most fully worked-out Freudian explanation for the preponderance of criminality in this text. Moynahan reads Great Expectations as Dickens's "profound analysis" of the immoral elements in the dream of self-making, enacted through the novel's psychic split between the 'good' would-be gentleman, Pip, and his dark double, the sinister Orlick. Moynahan proposes that the less attractive side of Pip's ambitions are deflected on to Orlick, who acts out Pip's unconscious aggressions, hostilities, and frustrations. His reading honeys in on the famous scene at the lime-kiln, in which Orlick "presents himself [to Pip] as a monstrous caricature of the tender-minded hero, insisting that they are two of a kind with the same ends, pursued through similarly predatory and criminal means." For Moynahan, the text has not one central character but a dyad--"we might call it Pip-Orlick" (p. 80-81)-- which allows its fascination with violence and criminality to ultimately be displaced from the hero onto a melodramatic villain.

Yet one does not have to look as far as the unconscious' of the novel to find evidence of Pip's criminal associations. Clearly a large part of Pip's interest as a character lies in his complex but transgressive identification with figure of the convict, Magwich, who functions variously as antagonist, patron, father-figure, and partner in

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crime, as well as being the vehicle for Pip's moral redemption. Pip and Magwich are equally the objects of surveillance, both hunted down by vengeful forces, both, at times, fearful of the reach of the law. In one of many possible examples, Pip recounts how often he thought, "with something allied to shame," of his "companionship with the fugitive whom I had once seen limping among those graves" (p. 148). Taken together as another instance of narrative doubling, Pip and Magwich constitute the revolutionary potential of illegality and its diversion into petty criminality on the one hand, and self-lacerating guilt on the other; a guilt closely related to criminal desires, or rather, to desires which have been criminalized.

Therefore, there are really two related pairings in the novel--the Pip-Magwich dyad, which lives on the level of the narrative's conscious mind, so to speak, and the Pip-Orlick dyad which haunts its unconscious. The careful parallels between Pip and Magwich which the novel spends so much time establishing work to make the novel's critique of injustice (discussed below) effective; however, they also make it possible for Magwich to be sacrificed in the service of Pip's moral reformation. Magwich's death conveniently enables Pip's new middle-class self to be freed from this burden of criminality and enter into a proper (although never really narrated) bourgeois life which begins, appropriately enough, with the setting up of a schedule for debt repayment. Pip is then a Lacenaire-figure, but a Lacenaire who gets a second chance and becomes a respectable bourgeois. The scapegoating of the criminal side of the dyad allows Pip, and through Pip, the reader, to undergo an exciting flirtation with
crime, a process which involves both sympathetic identification with, and a horrified
denunciation of the criminal on the way to a certain level of comfort.

The novel clearly undertakes a condemnation of the unjust, class-biased
structure of Victorian society, a structure which forces the poor into criminality but
then punishes them for it. Jaggers makes this point explicitly to Pip when he is
explaining his seemingly uncharacteristic decision to rescue the child Estella. The
court scene detailed by Magwitch illustrates the different versions of justice which exist
for gentlemen and for delinquents. And Magwitch serves as the prime example of one
for whom self-discipline and hard work are not enough—although reformed morally, in
the eyes of the novel, he remains a criminal in the eyes of the society. The Smilesian
goal of self-improvement is also problematized through the fact that Magwitch is of
course the novel's only example of a genuine self-made man. And the novel
periodically satirizes self-help platitudes, as in Herbert's blithe assumptions that
success is always just around the corner: "Then the time comes," said Herbert, "when
you see you opening. And you go in, and you swoop upon it and you make your
capital, and there you are! When you have once made your capital, you have nothing
to do but employ it" (180). But of course Herbert and Pip both rely on Magwich's
patronage, even though they don't realize it at the time, and their later success can be
traced to the cultural capital dearly purchased by a convict in Australia.

Critics remain divided as to whether this is a novel of self-actualization and
moral redemption, or whether the novel merely parodies such ambitions. Reading this
novel as a self-help narrative requires a determination of exactly what Pip is perceived
to be guilty of, and if he ever successfully absolves himself of that guilt. Q.D.
Leavis's view directly opposes Moynahan's, as she claims that Pip is not guilty at all—
that he serves as the novel's moral exemplar and that Great Expectations tells of a
"successful progress toward spiritual freedom." Pam Morris believes Pip is only
guilty of internalized class shame, "the ineradicable social guilt of those born poor" (p.
111). Anny Sadrin similarly argues that Pip's guilty pangs are the product of his
"unconscious ambivalence" about rising in the world, but, like many critics, traces his
genuine moral failings to the moment when, under the baneful influence of Satis
House, "his rightful ambitions are altered into the desire to become a 'gentleman'." It
is at this point, she observes, that Pip "loses the support of his author's mouthpieces.
On receiving his confidence, Biddy reacts disapprovingly: 'I wouldn't, if I was you.'"
She concludes that the guilt Pip feels should be laid at the door of society at large: "If
violence and repression are the price genteel society as to pay for its security and for
its prosperity, Pip who by now is a gentleman and wishes to remain one, has no
choice but to accept it, but he must take the 'soiling consciousness' into the
bargain....His idea of gentility is henceforth tainted and contaminated..." (p. 72).

This latter perspective is fairly widely held; more recent critics have also been
busy uncovering anachronistic 'post-structuralist' and antihumanist elements in Great

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7 Q.D. Leavis, and F.R. Leavis, Dickens the Novelist (New York: Pantheon, 1970) p. 287.
Expectations, rewriting Dickens as a Foucaultian avant le lettre. According to Jeremy Tambling,

Whatever liberalism affects the book—as in the 'poor dreams' that nearly save Mr Jaggers in spite of himself, or in the way that Pip seems to enjoy a reasonable bourgeois existence in the Eastern Branch of Herbert's firm—is not central: the book has little faith in human nature considered as a Romantic, spontaneous and creative thing: no sense that the issues it addresses may be met by the middle-class values that commonly sustain the nineteenth-century novel.\(^9\)

Yet Tambling here overlooks the fact that, as Foucault notes, middle-class liberal attitudes toward crime are reproduced through (among other technologies) crime fiction's inscription of delinquency, a process by which crime is kept both exotic and ordinary, a manageable threat to the social order. Tambling does not acknowledge the ways that popular narratives of crime and scandal work to fill the bourgeois conscience with safe transgressions, harmless yearnings, and containable sins. And to the extent that this novel courts crime fiction, it participates in the same cultural work. Yet ample evidence exists that the traditional Victorian narrative of upward mobility is not the novel's point, and is not even particularly interesting to a novel in which the hero's indissoluble ties to criminality are the real focus. Pip's narrative seems at first to be a straightforward bildungsroman, a mere matter of traversing social geography, of leaving the backward country town for the modern city, but the fact that Pip is both delinquent and self-help hero means that he is never fully free to define himself, that

his subjectivity is always a product of carceral mechanisms, always the result of panoptic scrutiny and its consequent guilt and self-consciousness. In this he seems particularly modern.

The difference between authorized and unauthorized social climbing is often, as we have seen, narratively translated into a matter of openly expressed vs. displaced desire--the agent of change in the upward mobility narrative is usually someone other than the self-maker himself. Great Expectations is no exception. Indeed, it is noteworthy for the number and range of characters Pip's 'self-making' is displaced onto: his desire for Estella, Miss Havisham's and Magwich's perverse revenge fantasies, his sister's cruelty, Orlick's ressentiment, Jagger's omniscience. And, as Edward Said has recognized, there is a telling spatial displacement at the heart of Pip's narrative which similarly works to relieve Pip of guilt and accountability.

While the spatial organization (North/South, Bleak House/Tom-All-Alone's) of Bleak House creates topographical zones where different and often competing value-systems can be observed, these zones are all but absent from Great Expectations. The first person confessional narrative centers us firmly in the delinquent milieu and allows for very little sense of this mapping of alternative social terrain. The only mapping which does remain possible is, significantly, colonial. According to Said,

An accurate reading of Great Expectations must note that after Magwich's delinquency is expiated, so to speak...Pip himself collapses and is revived in two explicitly positive ways. A new Pip appears, less laden than the old Pip with the chains of the past--he is glimpsed in the form of a child, also called Pip; and the old Pip takes on a new career with his boyhood friend Herbert Pocket, this time not as an idle gentleman but as a hardworking trader in the
East, where Britain's other colonies offer a sort of normality that Australia never could. Thus the lines are here drawn between a hazily-defined colonial territory still available for self-making and the metropole which is not, and between the sinister penal colony of Australia and the productive colony of Egypt. Genuine moral renewal and embourgeoisement take place off-stage, as it were, in the undescribed and indescribable colonial periphery. There is a strong sense in this novel that England has become too claustrophobic, too overrun by the elaborate social pretensions of the Finches of the Grove and their ilk on the one hand (the 'carrot'), and too closely policed by Jaggers and his forces on the other (the 'stick'). In fact, panopticism is everywhere, and everyone is under surveillance. Wemmick's carefully maintained little Britain can be seen as an attempt to carve out an island in the midst of carceral London, a separate space which allows for the illusion of a limited amount of private and unpoliced feeling.

Despite the last remnants of the pastoral in the world of the Joe's forge, corruption and violence are as ubiquitous in this novel as the thorough police penetration seems removed from any semblence of real justice. Neither the family nor the pastoral countryside offer a satisfactory sanctuary; there exists no appropriate final destination for this dark, ambivalent narrative of self-help and criminality. As this late Dickens novel moves to remap the country/city polarity as carceral metropole vs unimaginable colonial periphery, we are beginning to approach the limits of Victorian

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self-help. The unbridgeable gap between Pip's expectations and the harsh realities of his world leads *Great Expectations* to conclude on a very modern note of anomie and disillusionment—a disillusionment which will be taken up again in the final chapter.
CHAPTER 5

NARRATIVES OF RESENTIMENT:  MASCULINITY AND MODERNISM
IN THE LATER WORKS OF GISSING AND NIETZSCHE

What happens when a certain foreclosure of love becomes the condition of possibility for social existence? Does this not produce a sociality afflicted by melancholia, a sociality in which loss cannot be grieved because it cannot be recognized as loss, because what is lost never had any entitlement to existence?

—Judith Butler. The Psychic Life of Power

Contra Ressentiment

[from Anti-Darwin] "The species do not grow in perfection: the weak prevail over the strong again and again, for they are the great majority--and they are also more intelligent. Darwin forgot the spirit (that is English!) the weak have more spirit. One must need spirit to acquire spirit; one loses it when one no longer needs it. Whoever has strength dispenses with spirit...It will be noted that by "spirit" I mean care, patience, cunning, simulation, great self-control, and everything that is mimicry (the latter includes a great deal of so-called virtue).

--Nietzsche, Twilight of the Idols (1888)

While we have been tracing the diffusion of self-help in the mid-nineteenth-century, we will now turn to the path by which Victorian self-help became reconfigured as literary modernism. To illustrate this process I am drawing upon the
works of George Gissing, whose literary output exemplifies the ambivalences and contradictions generated by the conjunction of self-help and late nineteenth-century feminism. My opening assumption in this chapter is that the later works of Nietzsche and the novels of George Gissing reflect and repackage the ideologeme of ressentiment, which as Fredric Jameson asserts in The Political Unconscious, appears frequently in novels, novelistic discourse, and social and political tracts of this period. I am attempting to read both Nietzsche and Gissing as examples of the fin de siècle male sentimental, and a close look at Nietzsche's Genealogy of Morals (1887) and Gissing's novel Born in Exile (1893) will allow us to deconstruct this prevailing mode of male sentimentality, a mode which becomes indistinguishable from certain strains of high modernism. I will argue that this modernist aesthetic relies heavily on the cultivation of a sense of victimization at the hands of women, in other words, a specifically male form of ressentiment.

It is important at the outset to distinguish Jameson's concept of ressentiment as ideologeme or protonarrative available for a range of cultural adaptations from the emotion of resentment. The latter may or may not be a legitimate feeling or response, depending on one's own point of view; one person's querulousness is another's righteous indignation--the point here is that resentment is, inevitably, in the eye of the beholder. I presume that resentment itself exists as politically neutral, having been used to effect by both left and right, the hegemonic and the counter-hegemonic. While the articulation of resentment towards injustice is probably an essential aspect of a pre-revolutionary consciousness, resentment can (and is currently) also be mobilized as a
diversionary tactic. The main point is that any dehistoricized, decontextualized indictment of resentment tells us little about its validity.

In his chapter on ressentiment in *The Political Unconscious*, Jameson suggests that Gissing's "social problem" novels of the 1880's, novels which focus considerable attention on the daily struggles of working class life, provide a space for questioning the interested nature of the Nietzschean "theory of ressentiment" and identifying its influential ideological effects. Jameson sees Gissing's naturalist experiments—*Workers in the Dawn, The Unclassed, Thyrza, Demos*, and *The Nether World*—as imaginative responses to the formal problem which Lukacs describes as the crisis of narrative totality. In their ostensible documentation of the life of the lower orders or "the nether world," Gissing's naturalist narratives produce specialized maps of urban social geography, offering this ethnographic mapping as a substitute for the totalizing realist frameworks which have now come to seem less feasible or less conceivable.

However, as Jameson observes, these demarcated social zones "become interesting for the novelist only when they are intersected by characters from the other class, by class interlopers and refugees, defectors or missionaries" (p. 197). And, what needs to be emphasized, according to Jameson, is that the naturalist "solution" to the loss of totality is itself part of the problem: "the crisis of the social totality is the result of the same phenomena--reification, social fragmentation, the division of labor, Taylorization--which dictate the terms of the naturalist organizational strategy" (p. 190).

The end result, in Jameson's analysis, is that Gissing's early novels at first work to activate readerly resentment against the upper classes on behalf of the oppressed
masses, but ultimately prove "scientifically" that fundamental changes in the social structure are futile because of the twisted motives on the part of those attempting to implement radical upheaval. Demos offers perhaps the best example of this dialectic of ressentiment: here the working-class protagonist Richard Mutimer is shown to be dishonorable towards women and to his own class—in breaking his long-established engagement with a workgirl to marry above his station, he reinforces the assumption that nobility of nature belongs to the hereditary aristocracy. The narrator informs us that Mutimer is simply "not capable if love in the highest sense," and that "the fatal defect in working people is absence of imagination" (p. 134). These character flaws set in motion the chain of events which will ultimately destroy him, along with his successful (but, significantly, ugly and disfiguring to the pastoral landscape) socialist project. Novels such as Demos therefore generate both a desire for a more democratic society and to provide a seemingly factual explanation in the inherent moral instability of the proletariat for why it cannot be sustained.

Jameson claims that these naturalist texts allow us to read the Nietzschean "theory" of ressentiment as "itself little more than an expression of annoyance at seemingly gratuitous lower-class agitation, at the apparently quite unnecessary rocking of the social boat," and concludes that "the theory of ressentiment, wherever it appears, will always itself be the expression and the production of ressentiment (p. 202). In other words, this relocation of the revolutionary impulses in the petty and the personal is itself a sign of the resentment of the privileged--an indication that upper class resentments are merely being projected on to the lower class. Ressentiment for
Jameson comes to mean a particular form of projection across power differentials, a situation in which the rage of the relatively powerful is turned upon the powerless. This psychic reflex allows the powerful to continue to claim moral superiority and to cast themselves as the more deeply victimized and aggrieved party.

Yet Jameson’s own constructions of “the powerful” require further scrutiny, as the analytic choices he makes revolve solely around class interests, the boundaries of which are simply taken to be self-evident. While Jameson does comment in passing that class conflict in Gissing’s later work is largely rewritten “in terms of sexual differentiation and the ‘woman question’” (p. 204), this does not adequately account for the ways in which class resentments are enacted in tandem with a strong sense of masculine resentment against women. In fact, toward the end of the century, certain petit bourgeois and working-class male subjectivities, including the influential type of the alienated intellectual, are specifically defined against a ‘feminized’ upper middle class. Again taking Gissing as a test case, Gissing’s first novel, Workers in the Dawn, deploys the figure of the middle-class woman to metonymically represent middle class existence as a whole, as well as to signify ‘culture’ itself. The class resentments in Gissing’s novels are (as in Great Expectations) bound up with idealized portrayals of inaccessible womanhood, an ideal both fetishized and resented by his aspiring male

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1 Similarly, Jameson refers to Gissing’s reliance on the popular Victorian sense of renunciation in his working class characters, without appearing to notice that all the examples he includes are female (Thyrza, Jane Snowden, Clara Hewitt), a fact which naturalizes their surrender of various ambitions (Thyrza’s social ambitions are never strong to begin with, and emerge only from love of Egremont, for example) in ways not as available to male characters with a wider range of possible actions in the world.
protagonists. In this sense, male anxieties about upward mobility become inseparable from, and even constituted by, late nineteenth-century constructions of gender.

My larger contention here is that Nietzsche's "theory of ressentiment" constitutes a later and more advanced stage of nineteenth-century self-help. While self-help affirms the possibility of success by working positively to construct exemplary identities, ressentiment becomes its negative aspect— the narrative rationalization of failure. Self-help claims to produce well-adapted members of bourgeois society who have achieved success through upstanding character; ressentiment locates failure in a crucial lack of character— in the pettiness, vindictiveness or dishonorable nature of the rancorous one. Smilesian Self-help depends upon a cheerful and willing resignation to one's allotted place in society, and yet, one of the effects of Smilesian Self-culture— to the extent that it accomplished its aims of promoting the desire to 'get on'— was to create chronic dissatisfaction as the diffusion of classical education manufactured increasing numbers of highly-trained individuals with no real outlet for their talents. As Walter Bagehot wrote in 1857, quoting Lord Stowell, "If you provide a larger amount of highly cultivated talent than there is a demand for, the surplus is very likely to turn sour" ("Lord Brougham" p. 120).

As Lord Stowell predicted, a growing number of "surplus" petit-bourgeois intellectuals, men like Gissing himself, began to congeal into what Raymond Williams calls "dissident fractions," opposed to the influx of mass culture, the commodification of modern life, and the perceived vulgarity and philistinism of the late-Victorian
bourgeoisie. As the newly self-cultured ran up against the limits of the Victorian social structure, the potentially populist side of Smilesian self-help was contained by the psychologizing mechanisms of ressentiment. A resentful attitude, an ax to grind, was evidence that the resentful one, incapable of disinterestedness, was unfit for the highest spheres. While self-help began as a way to inspire and regulate male laborers, ressentiment offers a convenient counter-narrative of social immobility. The projective construct of ressentiment can easily encompass a variety of "resentful ones" and eventually becomes available to describe an entire "culture of complaint."

The point of Self-help was after all to encourage the creation of traditional intellectuals in the Gramscian sense, to head off the potential threats posed by organic working-class and petit-bourgeois intellectuals; however, when this new category of traditional intellectuals emerged from lower class backgrounds, they existed in the highly anomalous condition of defining their own identities and their own claim to privilege by virtue of their rejection of their own class and community. At the same time, as we have seen, the Victorian compromise between the upper-middle classes and the hereditary aristocracy ensured that the path to upward mobility remained a difficult one throughout the century—the persistence of aristocratic privilege and cultural influence directly contradicted the bourgeois ideology of meritocracy. John Goode, one of Gissing's best critics, points out that by the late nineteenth century, intellectuals like Gissing (as well as his many intellectual protagonists) face the
dilemma of becoming self-made men in a world in which self-making is losing its earlier aura of respectibility.²

It therefore seems unsurprising that these thwarted self-helper tended to develop an acute sense of social dislocation and a detached and cynical view of modern life. Gissing’s own failed idealism, and his subsequent retreat into a sharply defined elitism, has been well-documented by biographers and critics. Jacob Korg offers a telling real-life anecdote, related by Gissing to a friend, which illustrates the novelist’s overt refusal of the dream of the universalizing powers of the aesthetic:

Standing on Battersea Bridge one evening, Gissing was admiring the Thames gleaming with glorious colors in the sunset when he noticed a workman near him enjoying the spectacle. Like Kingsley, Gissing was delighted to imagine that the poor man had the sensibility to respond to the beauty of the scene. But the man only turned to him with the disappointing remark, 'Throws up an eap of mud, don't she?'³

John Sloan offers a partial defense of such snobbery: to Sloan, the "defensive dream of passivity and inner withdrawal" which became the refuge of Gissing’s generation of self-cultured intellectuals constitutes "an authentic response to the trauma of inauthenticity."⁴ While the cultivation of this ethic of withdrawal can perhaps be regarded as an articulation of a limited kind of resistance, it seems more useful to read


this defensive dream as John Goode suggests—as an exposure of the precariousness of the boundaries of late nineteenth-century literary culture. For Goode, one of the major strengths of Gissing's work, with its accompanying aesthetic of "ironic aloofness" or "exotic reportage" (p. 92), is that the class underpinnings of 'civilisation' are never mystified (p. 46). Goode notes that it is precisely because these 'civilised' privileges have proved so elusive that Gissing becomes possessive of them. As he cautions, "It is all very well for critics, who mostly have the security of a class position, to find this tiresome, but this is only to judge Gissing from within a class-based moralism" (p. 46-47). In other words, to dismiss such ressentiment as merely personal defensiveness is to overlook the historical conditions which have produced it.

Before exploring the "theory of ressentiment" in practice we should first return to the source, the ethics of resentment as elaborated in Nietzsche's On The Genealogy of Morals. The Genealogy provides a detailed analysis of what Nietzsche calls 'reactive forces,' chiefly figured in the forms of ressentiment, bad conscience, and ascetism, and sets out to trace the major manifestations of these forces. For Nietzsche, ressentiment represents the driving power in Western history, the chief motivation of the weak and oppressed who have gradually succeeded in overthrowing or outnumbering the strong, replacing "aristocratic" and noble Classical regimes. Again we are back to Bourdieu's "imaginary anthropology" which establishes typologies divorced from economic mechanisms, as Nietzsche's aristocrats and slaves, like Arnold's Philistines and Barbarians, exist as generalized personality types rather than as social classes in any Marxian sense. And like Gissing's naturalist fictions, although
in a very different genre, Nietzsche's imaginary anthropology can be read as yet another quasi-scientific narrativization of anger against the disaffected.

The Genealogy is only a small part genealogy: it is, in Robert Solomon's words, "a psychological diagnosis" which includes a "very condensed and rather mythic account of the history and evolution of morals, but the heart of that account is a psychological hypothesis concerning the motives and mechanisms underlying that history and evolution" ("One Hundred Years of Ressentiment" p. 96). For Nietzsche, modernity is characterized by the predicament that the vital and self-affirming are everywhere under siege by the sickly and resentful. The main thrust of The Genealogy calls for a liberation of the late nineteenth-century individual from the entrenched contamination of these reactive forces which, through the spread of "slave" moralities have eviscerated man's real nature: "We moderns have a millenial heritage of conscience-vivisection and cruelty to the animals in ourselves" (p. 228-9). Praising the ancient Greeks for their ability to "keep bad conscience at a distance" (p. 227), he contrasts life-affirming Greek individualism with "slavish" or servile and inferior Judeo-Christian moral systems stressing forgiveness, pity, egalitarianism, and especially, guilt.

As Solomon notes, the ultimate effect of the Genealogy relies on an a priori equation of 'noble' in the sense of superior breeding or good blood with 'noble' in the sense of describing virtue, and a corresponding equation of 'plebian' and 'base': thus an ethics of resentment "represents a bad character, whatever its principles and their rationalizations" (p. 101). Certainly Nietzsche's crucial distinction between negative
"slave ethics" and positive "aristocratic ethics" centers around the originary autonomy of the ethical agent: "All truly noble morality grows out of triumphant self-affirmation...such values grow and act spontaneously, seeking out their contraries only to affirm themselves even more gratefully and delightedly." By definition opposed to the self-sufficient nature of the actions of the powerful, slave ethics are compensatory, derivative, contingent:

The "wellborn" [of the Greek aristocracy] really felt that they were also the "happy." They did not have to construct their happiness factitiously by looking at their enemies, as all rancorous men are wont to do...all this stands in utter contrast to what is called happiness among the impotent and oppressed, who are full of bottled-up aggressions. Their happiness is purely passive and takes the form of drugged tranquility, stretching and yawning, peace, "sabbath" and emotional slackness...the rancorous person is neither truthful nor ingenuous nor honest and forthright with himself. His soul squints; his mind loves hide-outs, secret paths, and back doors...he is an expert in silence, in long memory, in waiting, in provisional self-depreciation, and in self-humiliation. A race of such men will, in the end, inevitably be cleverer than a race of aristocrats, and it will honor sharp-wittedness to a much greater degree, i.e., as an absolutely vital condition for its existence (p. 171-72).

Though ressentiment may, Nietzsche admits, be intelligent, creative, patient, and though often effective, it is forever marked by its origin as lesser, inauthentic, ignoble; no matter what the content or the justification of the act, any "reaction" is less valued than any free, autonomous "action." This emphasis on naturalness and spontaneity leads Nietzsche to locate ethics ultimately in the body itself, and the nineteenth century "ethical athlete" finds its fullest Nietzschean realization in the visibly trained and tested muscular body of the twentieth century cult of athleticism.

Two distinct Nietzschean heroes emerge: the ascetic philosopher, trained in the management of instinct, and the hypervirile Nietzschean superman, who expresses
instinct unreservedly. Taking the existing concept of essentialized types still further, Nietzsche employs a traditional nineteenth-century language of self-denial and bodily discipline, on the one hand, as in his qualified endorsement of the ascetic ideal, and on the other, a Romantic faith in natural instinct—he writes, "all that is good is instinct—and hence easy, necessary, free" (Twilight of the Idols p. 494). While the two modes—asceticism and free indulgence—might at first seem dramatically opposed, they are in fact linked by the weight Nietzsche places upon them as potential sources of resistance to the effects of modern ressentiment. The ascetic and the superman share a relationship to authenticity which is otherwise crowded out by the vulgarities and conformities of contemporary life. As Maurizia Boscagli discusses, the athletic male body of the superman "heralded a new version of male subjectivity that wanted to abolish any opposition between inside and outside, interior conscience and exterior will... Nietzsche's superman...represented a subject that did not have to renounce his body in order to gain a self but rather inscribed his selfhood in his musculature."

If Nietzsche's admiration for the superman is unequivocal, his stance on the reactive force of the ascetic ideal is more complex. Ascetism, for Nietzsche, is strategy of power with the potential for both productive and repressive uses. The ascetic, obviously, lays claim to power in his ability to subdue the body through sheer force of will. In the service of the ascetic priest, Nietzsche insists that here we see a

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5 Maurizia Boscagli, *Eye on the Flesh: Fashions of Masculinity in the Early Twentieth Century*, p. 3. For a fuller elaboration of the influence of Nietzschean thought on the construction of British and German masculinities of the early twentieth century, see her chapter, "The Hero and the Typist: Supermen, Office Clerks, and the Petty Bourgeois Body."
"rancor without parallel, the rancor of an insatiable power-drive which would
dominate, not a single aspect of life, but life itself" (p. 253); however, this is decidedly
not the case when asceticism is practiced by the figure of the philosopher-hero: "All
honor to the ascetic ideal insofar as it is honest!" If Nietzsche fiercely attacks the
tendency of the manipulative ascetic priest to sanction and promote "self-discipline, self-surveillance, self-conquest" (p. 265) he assumes that in the case of philosophers,
such disciplinary training is already well underway. For philosophers, as the examples
of those who have come nearest the state of self-mastery, ascetic practices work to
maintain a necessary distance from worldly temptations—a distance which makes
philosophical contemplation possible, as true philosophizing, he assumes, can only
happen apart from the world, never within it. Nietzsche devotes considerable space to
romanticizing this philosophical version of the ascetic life, imagining isolated,
unacCLAIMed thinkers wandering across various solitary landscapes—deserts, forests,
Alpine peaks: "Theirs is the serene asceticism of a divinely winged animal that soars
above life but does not alight on it" (p. 243). Andreas Huyssens describes Nietzsche's
ideal "artist-philosopher-hero" as this ascetic, the "suffering loner who stands in
irreconcilable opposition to modern democracy and its inauthentic culture" (p. 53).

Nietzsche, then, complicates but does not drastically revise the masculine ideal
of an ascetic self-culture we have witnessed in earlier chapters—the echoes of
Kingsley's 'muscular Christian' manliness are particularly loud. Yet for much of the
Genealogy, Nietzsche repeatedly falls back on illustrations of what we would now call
'lifestyle': producing the impression that self-culture is not, after all, a matter of
extended testing so much as the right philosophical attitude. He refers to "the peculiarly withdrawn, anti-sensual, austere attitude of philosophers, which has persisted to this day and has actually come to be seen as the philosophical attitude par excellence" (p. 251). The "bête philosophique" becomes readily identifiable through his peculiar habits: "It is easy to tell a philosopher: he avoids three shiny, loud things--fame, princes, and women" (p. 245). Celibacy is an important feature of this vision of self-culture, symbolic of all ascetic discipline, as we can see by Nietzsche's deliberate conflation of 'continence' and 'sexual continence'--equally counted as the "necessary conditions of strenuous intellectual activity as well one of its natural consequences" (p. 147). And Nietzsche recommends sexual continence, not as a moral or even as a strictly ascetic practice, but as the conservation of intellectual energy, energy which must be hoarded by ethical athletes exactly as bodily strength is hoarded by the more physical kind (p. 246-47).

Much of what we encounter in the Genealogy in its praise for the disciplined self sounds extremely familiar to the reader of Victorian criticism. As in Coleridge, Arnold and Ruskin, sovereignty over oneself is clearly designated as the prerequisite for ruling others:

This autonomous, more than moral individual (the terms autonomous and moral are mutually exclusive) has developed his own, independent, long range will...he has a proud and vigorous consciousness of what he has achieved....Think of how much trust, fear, reverence he inspires (all three fully deserved), and how, having that sovereign rule over himself, he has mastery too over all weaker-willed and less reliable creatures! (p. 191).

This section of The Genealogy attempts to reconfigure the relationship of the individual to society, conflating "society and custom" with the debased mentality of
the herd—defining the emasculated and custom-ridden social, that "bog of morbid
finickiness and moralistic drivel" (p. 199) as what the vigorous male self must rise
above, what he must remain "autonomous" from; "Let us have fresh air...away from
all lunatic asylums and nursing homes of culture! And let us have good company, our
own company! Or solitude, if need be" (p. 261). Solitude or exclusively male
companionship offer a reprieve from a stifling and over-protective modern world, a
world in which life has become too easy, and clearly, too 'feminized.'

Unsurprisingly, the figure of woman emerges as a condensation of
degeneration, disease, and ressentiment; "sick females" are singled out as having
"unrivaled resources for dominating, oppressing, tyrannising. The sick woman spares
nothing dead or alive; she digs up the longest-buried things" (p. 260). Women have a
tendency to dwell on the past, when what is needed are men of the future ("a time
stronger than our effete, self-doubting present"), men for whom "conquest, adventure,
danger, even pain, have become second nature" (p. 229). In Nietzsche's reductive
allegory, the morbid and the feminine stand in the way of all that is vigorous and
masculine. As Boscagli observes, in The Genealogy and Twilight of the Idols,
Nietzsche accomplishes a dramatic reversal of traditional tropes of gender: "instinct,
animality, and the body are now represented as masculine, whereas reason, morality,
and the intellect are put under erasure and associated with feminized figures: priests,
women, slaves, the herd, and the rabble" (p. 80). This move to recuperate the
physicality of the body, and to locate the source of vitality in a specifically
masculinized physicality, obviously works to counter earlier equations of fertility with
the feminine, and, more immediately, the claims of nineteenth-century domestic ideologists arguing for the uniquely civilizing influence of the maternal.

Towards the end of the *Genealogy* we witness the call for new, forward-looking men, men with "minds possessed of a sublime kind of malice, of that self-assured recklessness which is the sign of strong health. What is needed, in short, is just superb health" (p. 229). One wonders exactly how this healthy malice can be distinguished from mere resentful malice, how heroic recklessness can always be separated from a desperate recklessness spurred by the wounds of ressentiment. The only answer seems to be located in the body of the malicious one: malice emitted from non-masculine bodies lacks the possibility of aspiring to the sublime. As the ethical athlete—the humanist critic-philosopher—merges into the physical athlete, physical health is not merely the outward sign of an affirmative ethics, it is such an ethics. Eve Sedgwick contends that Nietzsche made only one mistaken wager with his culture: "the wager that the progress he had painfully made in wresting the explicit bases of his thought inch by inch away from the gravely magnetic axis of good/evil could be most durably guaranteed by battening them to the apparently alternative, scientifically guaranteed axis of health/illness or vitality/morbidity" (Epistemology, p. 178).

This idealized vision of the virile body corresponds to the portrayal of the resentful not merely as unpleasant character types but as effeminate indicators of

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dangerous cultural and racial decline. Examples of this occur throughout The Genealogy and Twilight of the Idols in which Nietzsche cites the proliferation of progressive political movements, along with Christianity, as symptomatic of a creeping feminized degeneration:

When the anarchist, as the mouthpiece of the declining strata of society, demands with a fine indignation what is "right," "justice," and "equal rights" he is merely under the pressure of his own uncultured state [emphasis mine], which cannot comprehend the real reason for his suffering--what it is that he is poor in: life....Complaining is never any good: it stems from weakness. Whether one charges one's misfortune to others or to oneself--the socialist does the former; the Christian, for example, the latter--really makes no difference. The common, and, let us add, the unworthy, thing is that it is supposed to be somebody's fault that one is suffering; in short, that the sufferer prescribes the honey of revenge for himself against his suffering....(Twilight of the Idols, p. 534-5).

It could hardly be made more plain that an increase in this health-affirming "culture" means a decrease in organized resistance to existing social inequities. Yet Nietzsche's own complaining about the complainers is of course registering a complaint--there seems to be no escaping his own involvement in a similarly 'uncultured' state, a state which is equally evidence of a lack of adequate masculine vitality and autonomy.

Like Jameson, Sedgwick turns Nietzschean ressentiment back on Nietzsche himself, commenting that "It is an easy task for anyone instructed by Nietzsche to demonstrate the infusion of his most powerful thought with ressentiment," given the absence of "any comparably psychologized alternative account of human emotion..." (Epistemology, p. 169). Despite its moments of self-parody and ironic self-awareness, The Genealogy is riddled by a ressentiment directed most continously at 'sickly females' and at an unmistakably feminized conception of modern social existence. The
abundance of Nietzsche's own undisciplined emotions represents but one of the many intriguing contradictions (by his own admission, "vacillations and backslidings" (p. 153)) of his later work.

Yet certain aspects of The Genealogy remain difficult to reconcile: the depiction of the philosophic character as both natural and cultivated, the faith in spontaneous self-making with its catalogue of the reactive forces which constantly undermine this possibility, and, perhaps most fundamentally, the essentialist ideal of aristocratic morals with its famous attack on disinterestedness (a "rank absurdity"), Nietzsche's warning to be on guard against "the hollowed philosopher's myth of 'a pure, will-less, painless, timeless knower' and such contradictory notions as 'pure reason,' 'absolute knowledge'" (p. 255). This Nietzschean injunction has perhaps too seldom been applied to Nietzsche himself, although, as Sedgwick notes, the rancorous tirades of his later work invite this very critique. Significantly, his admonition against the pose of disinterestedness is directly followed by the rhetorical question: "to eliminate the will, to suspend the emotions altogether, provided it could be done, surely this would be to castrate the intellect, would it not?" The insistant gendering here is worth calling attention to: the alternatives have now been reconstructed as a fullbodied masculine incorporation of emotion, will, and intellect "on the road to final 'objectivity'" (p. 255), or a castrated--partial, emasculated--naive faith in disinterested knowledge, a cowardly retreat from the multiplicity of truth.

The "theory" of ressentiment lives on; many interpreters and followers of Nietzsche have continued to take the notion of ressentiment quite seriously as a
transhistorical psychological state and to defend it as one of Nietzsche's most valuable contributions to philosophy. However, while Nietzsche's account of ressentiment may (within certain socio-cultural limits) may make provocative psychology, it leads to dangerously abstract and depoliticized history. The basic outline of Nietzsche's influential social diagnosis directly recalls the now-familiar themes of nineteenth-century self-culture, with its celebration of the specialized cultural authority of the

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7 The most influential in terms of constructing links to contemporary poststructuralism is of course Gilles Delueze, in his Nietzsche and Philosophy, trans. Hugh Tomlinson (New York: Columbia U P. 1983). A very different tradition follows in the footsteps of Max Scheler's Ressentiment, which argues that ressentiment is closely tied to the structural possibilities of social mobility, and therefore flourishes particularly among the lower-middle classes. Scheler would seem to be a significant, if largely unacknowledged, influence on Jameson. More recently, the topic of ressentiment has been undergoing something of a revival: see the works of Wendy Brown, especially States of Injury: Power and Freedom In Late Modernity (Princeton: Princeton U P, 1995), in which Brown uses the concept of ressentiment to examine and critique the impetus for contemporary identity politics and the call for multiculturalism. Or, for a reading which seems in some ways diametrically opposite Brown's, see the recent efforts by Elizabeth Grosz, who can be taken, with some qualifications, to represent a strand of contemporary queer theory attempting to use Nietzsche's theory of reactive forces to analyze homophobic and anti-feminist sentiment. For Grosz, "gay and lesbian sexual practices and lifestyles, insofar as they risk a certain stability, a certain social security and ease," can be read as a triumph of active and liberatory forces, opposed to those governed by the regime of compulsory heterosexuality which "reduce a body to what it is rather than what it can become." Elizabeth Grosz, Space, Time, and Perversion: Essays on the Politics of Bodies (New York: Routledge, 1995) p. 214-217.

8 Lukacs provides probably the best known general critique of Nietzsche's 'bourgeois' anti-history in The Historical Novel (London: Merlin, 1962): "Nietzsche relates history to life by invoking the following fact of life: 'All action requires the ability to forget.'...What the university professors in the pay of the bourgeoisie, cowardly hiding behind the masks of objectivity, conceal with embarrassment, Nietzsche here pronounces openly and unashamedly. The historical necessity for the bourgeoisie of his time to falsify the facts of history, increasingly to omit them, appears to Nietzsche a 'profound,' 'eternal,' 'biological' truth of life" (p. 213).
philosopher-hero, the "Hero as the Man of Letters" or "Great Thinker" who exhibits his self-mastery and capacity for abstraction through an ascetic withdrawal from a corrupt and fractured world. The model subject is the one who works first of all on himself, who strives to construct his identity outside of the contingency of class signifiers and who believes social mobility to be achievable purely through force of masculine will. We have already observed the nineteenth-century tendency to characterize the female body as diseased and faulty: the male body as the epitome of health and strength. Nietzschean thought gives these categories an increased weight, but it is itself shaped by these pre-existing assumptions. The theory of ressentiment cannot escape the gendered implications of its discursive formation—in its promotion of spontaneity and detachment, it rehearses the nineteenth-century drama of a male individuation which is based on a breaking free of the dreaded power of domestic influence. Condemning women to the realm of the permanently reactive, female actions are easily reinscribed as tactics of ressentiment, as nostalgic brooding, elaborate self-justification, or the "honey of revenge." Not only less capable of objectivity and abstraction than men, now women and their contaminating social influence signal the degenerative, the morbid; to struggle against expanding female opportunities becomes a noble cause for the race rather than blatant self-interest and succumbing to old prejudices.

And, as Sedgwick and Boscagli emphasize, with the development of eugenic thought around and after the end of the century, "reifications such as "the strong," "the weak," "the nation," "civilization," particular classes, "the race," and even "life" itself"
assume the vitalized anthropomorphic outlines of the individual male body
(Epistemology p. 178). Ressentiment becomes particularly potent in its late nineteenth
century formulations after it has been conjoined to evolutionary theory--creating
medicalized pathologies (most famously, the hysteric, whose body speaks her
resentments) and anthropologized racial types. Whole categories of people are
designated as inherently, even genetically lacking in will-power and thus susceptible to
the corrosive effects of resentment: the working class, Jews, the Irish, 'primitives,'
criminal types, and women in general. When oppositions such as health/morbidity and
progress/devolution are harnessed to late Victorian social conflicts, particularly gender
conflicts, these conflicts attain a new epistemological legitimacy and a philosophical
resonance. However, it should by now be clear that to recast the imperative for self-
development in the biological vocabulary of 'health,' 'life-force,' and 'instinct,' and to
expand this imperative to include ideals of racial or ethical well-being, is not to
contest or critique bourgeois ethics but to bolster them, to grant certain nineteenth-
century cultural phobias a quasi-scientific credibility. In the context of nineteenth-
century self-culture, Nietzsche's Genealogy of Morals in fact emerges as
quintessentially Victorian.
Resenting Woman

If a woman has manly virtues, one feels like running away: if she has no manly virtues, she herself runs away.

--Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols* (1888)

The man of rese sentiments does not know how to and does not want to love, but wants to be loved...He is the impotent, the dyspeptic, the frigid, the insomniac, the slave...He considers it a proof of obvious malice that he is not loved, that he is not fed.

--Gilles Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*

I am taking the first aphorism to sum up, not only the central dilemma of Gissing's novel *Born in Exile*, which will be discussed in detail in the next section, but that of many late nineteenth-century novels of sexual anarchy. When 'manliness' and 'character' have become fully conflated, female character becomes an impossibility, a contradiction in terms. Nietzsche's own overt resentment towards women has of course attracted comment from Walter Kaufmann on, and there have been a number of recent attempts from a range of perspectives to reconsider Nietzschean thought through gender-conscious lenses.9 One finds ample evidence of 'female trouble' in Gissing's

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biography as well. But my goal in this section is not so much to label either figure a Deleuzian "man of ressentiment" (or a Freudian melancholic), as to historicize such male ressentiment and melancholia. To this end, I will examine Gissing's novels on the Woman Question alongside Nietzsche's aphorism from Twilight of the Idols as examples of a peculiar turn-of-the-century masculine defensiveness, a phenomenon which seems to have reached a particularly acute point during this period.

Much Nietzschean misogyny can be seen as an attempt to counter what Nancy Armstrong calls Darwin's "domestication of history" (p. 221) which as she notes emphasizes a decided respect for female desire as the locus and stamp of higher forms of civilization. Armstrong argues that Darwin's conception of social evolution places considerable power in the female and in female agency; according to Armstrong, Darwin "represents primitive culture as not a culture at all because it suppresses female authority." If a lack of respect for female authority characterizes the 'primitive,' then a too-slavish respect for female authority seems, to some, to characterize the most 'modern' societies. And, as she elaborates, this logic makes modern society newly vulnerable to perceived fluctuations in female desire. Modern women who either don't desire males, or who don't actively stimulate male desire,

Huyssens' essay "Mass Culture as Woman"; see also Stephen Heath's remarks in "Joan Riviere and the Masquerade," in Formations of Fantasy ed. Victor Burgin et al. (London: Methuen, 1986) p. 50-51: "The philosopher is fascinated and threatened, seduced and mocked: woman is the vanishing point for which he lacks any true perspective, since the perspective he has guarantees he cannot know her, while the impossibility of knowing her is itself his perspective, women produced as "the woman", das ewig Weibliche, the function of this discourse of mask and behind that which man suspects some hidden danger."
pose the danger of returning so-called advanced societies to a primitive state: "the implication [is] that a female's failure to desire a male will put civilization itself at the mercy of the male's unregulated instincts" (p. 224). Thus the obsessive late-nineteenth-century interest in 'what women want' which culminates, of course, in Freud's infamous question. In Nietzsche's aphorism the problem of female desire is deliberately resituated as a problem of male desire: for Nietzsche and for the resentful Man, the educated, "manly" woman lacks sufficient charms to attract a male. Men experience a 'natural' revulsion to manly women while womanly women coyly evade them: there is no happy answer, and either way, heterosexual male desires are not satisfied. Heterosexuality itself becomes a paradox.

And heterosexuality is truly Luce Irigaray's "homme-sexuality" here as heterosexual sexual attraction, and indeed, the possibility of heterosexuality itself, circles around the presence of phallic "manly virtues." Woman is defined purely by lack as male desire depends on the absence of "manliness" in women--and femininity is rewritten as the absence of manly virtues or their equivalent, "character." Figured in Nietzsche as the opposite of "running away," this version of manliness meshes with Victorian constructions of masculinity as stoic and self-contained. But the aphorism in fact offers men a reason to "run away"--and of course could easily imply that the only truly manly solution is to flee women entirely.

Tracing late nineteenth-century tropes of sentimentality through Nietzsche and Wilde, Eve Sedgwick points to the continuing appeal of male forms of sentiment and ressentiment, which she defines as discourses which take the pathetic male as their
object. Speculating that around the turn of the century the male body replaced the figure of the child and the domestic woman as the focal point of such sentimental discourse, she argues that this trend can be found throughout the fin de siècle and well into the modern period. The emotional current which Sedgwick names "straight male self-pity" was and continues to be celebrated in western culture, all the more so, in her view, for its (supposed) rarity and exceptionality. Her analysis specifically links this "straight male self-pity" to the impact of late nineteenth-century feminism. For Sedgwick,

this straight male self-pity...is associated with, or appealed to in justification of, acts of violence, especially against women....Poised between shame and shamelessness, this regime of heterosexual male self-pity has the projective potency of an open secret....The sacred tears of the heterosexual man: rare and precious liquor...what charm, compared to this chrism of the gratuitous, can reside in the all too predictable tears of women, of gay men, of people with something to cry about?....If these modern images borrow some of their lasting power from the mid-nineteenth century association of sentimentality with the place of women, what their persistence and proliferation dramatize is something new: a change of gears, occupying the period from the 1880's through the First World War, by which the exemplary instance of the sentimental ceases to be a woman per se, but instead becomes the body of a man who...physically dramatizes, embodies for an audience that both desires and cathartically identifies with him, a struggle of masculine identity with emotions or physical stigmata stereotyped as feminine (Epistemology, p. 145-46).

We seem to be in the presence of what could be called a distinctively masculine "structure of feeling." While it would obviously be an vast overgeneralization to reduce all of literary modernism to masculine sentimentality, one is struck by the extreme sense of pathos which dominates many of its most famous texts: Hardy's Jude the Obscure, Joyce's Portrait of the Artist and "The Dead," Somerset Maugham's Of Human Bondage, E.M. Forster's The Longest Journey, T.S. Eliot's "Proofrock" and
"The Waste Land," and the entire oeuvre of D.H. Lawrence and Wyndham Lewis. Nietzsche's lament for the painful "conscience-vivisection" undergone by "our" modern male selves can obviously take up a position here as well.

Often modernism proves its modernity by rejecting the Victorian cult of chivalry towards women; fin de siecle culture is obsessed instead by feminine evil, as female sexuality is unmasked as insatiable, vampiric, or as we will see, gratuitously malicious. While a reaction against sentimental writing, the feminized language of the 'heart,' is one of the unifying directives of the high modernist aesthetic, much literary modernism, as Sedgwick implies, can also be said to be engaging in an appropriation of sentimental modes and conventions. A re-examination of modernism is currently underway in which feminist scholars have been considering the many strategies by which modernism defined itself against a sentimental Victorianism, coded as female-dominated, effete, and sexually repressive, all the while borrowing many of the same tropes in its construction of the male body as the pathetic but emblematic representative of existential alienation and loss. As Gilbert and Gubar declare, "Because until recently the texts in which these [male] characters appear have been


privileged as documents in a history of cultural crisis, the sexual anxieties they
articulate have been seen mainly as metaphors of metaphysical angst."¹²

There is no question that the growing female agitation for educational
opportunity, political representation, and increased sexual freedoms in the late
nineteenth-century triggered a well-documented slew of male reaction and sense of
grievance. Elaine Showalter notes that scarcely an issue of Punch appeared without a
cartoon or parody of New Woman, and scarcely an installment of The Yellow Book
missed the opportunity to offer a cautionary tale about the fatal repercussions of
female independence (Sexual Anarchy p. 41). Women who sought culture and self-
development were caricatured with much greater vehemence than the earnest self-
helping workmen of the earlier part of the century, as fin-de-siecle male writers
constructed their own, often tenuous, professional literary credentials against the
supposedly superficial learning of female amateurs. Interestingly, a widely-read 1895
review of Max Nordau's Degeneration in Blackwood's blames what can be recognized
as the spread of self-help, in its post-Arnoldian version, for the unappealing
phenomenon of the New Woman of the nineties. This sexual aberration is described
thus:

a victim of the universal passion for learning and 'culture,' which when ill-
digested, are apt to cause intellectual dyspepsia. With her head full of all the

¹² Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, No Man's Land: The Place of the Woman
'ologies and 'isms, with sex problems and heredity, and other gleanings from the surgery and the lecture-room, there is no space left for humour...¹³

The article ends with a note of wry optimism, insisting that, despite appearances to the contrary, a "large number of really cultivated people" still exist who oppose such unhealthy tendencies, people who "cling to the old ideals of discipline and duty, of manliness and self-reliance in men, and womanliness in women" (p. 845).

Few authors bemoaned the degenerative impact of popular education and its contribution to the vulgarity of modern existence with the intensity of George Gissing. While his novels of the eighteen-nineties register a variety of responses to the controversial figure of the New Woman, the majority of his writings resonate with Blackwood's stance.¹⁴ The Whirlpool (1897), in its portrayal of the long-suffering house-husband Harvey Rolfe, is probably Gissing's most in-depth treatment of a male victim of the sexual anarchy of the nineties, as well as his most overtly Nietzschean

¹³ Hugh Stutfield, "Tommyrotics," Blackwood's Magazine Vol. 157 (June 1895) p. 836. Stutfield's piece also contains a telling comment about Oscar Wilde, convicted of homosexuality in May: "recent events, which shall be nameless, must surely have opened the eyes even of those who have hitherto been blind to the true inwardness of modern esthetic Hellenism, and perhaps the less said on this subject now the better."

¹⁴ For pertinent discussions of Gissing and his views of the New Woman, see Lloyd Fernando's 'New Women' in the Late Victorian Novel (University Park: Pennsylvania State U P, 1977); Patricia Stubbs' Women and Fiction: Feminism and the Novel 1880-1920 (London: Methuen, 1979); and William Greenslade, Degeneration, Culture, and the Novel 1880-1940 (Cambridge: Cambridge U P, 1994), especially the chapter "Women and the Disease of Civilisation: George Gissing's The Whirlpool." Terry Lovell, in Consuming Fiction (p. 110-118), and Elaine Showalter, in Sexual Anarchy (p. 31-33) also include useful feminist readings of The Odd Women in this context.
work. "The theme is the decay of domestic life among certain classes of people and much stress is laid upon the question of children," Gissing wrote to his friend Eduard Bertz. In this novel, all the unhappinesses of modern marriage, and, in fact, modernity in general, are blamed on the New Woman who refuses to stay at home. As Rolfe takes over the household responsibilities and the care of his strangely too-delicate boy from Alma, his misguided, unstable and drug-addicted wife, disastrously bent on pursuing her musical career, he is left to ponder the woeful deterioration of the relations between sexes. By the end of the novel, Alma has fortuitously killed herself by drug overdose, and Rolfe finds some mixed consolation in the rhetoric of British imperial domination and the reading of Kipling's "Barrack-Room Ballads," which, as he tells another male friend, represents the voice of the reaction of "millions of men, natural men, revolting against the softness and sweetness of civilisation" (p. 449). After all, he says, "Mankind won't stand it much longer. this encroachment of the humane spirit." As John Goode observes, Rolfe retreats into the "degeneracy theme which was common to social Darwinism and to Imperialism--over-civilisation needs to be met by 'a stouter race.' Sport, war and conquest contain the brutal but healthy future" (p. 189).

In the Year of Jubilee (1894) deals somewhat sympathetically with the young and aimless Nancy Lord's search for sexual adventure in the drab, commercialized world of suburbia, a world Gissing described as full of "shams gigantic and

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innumerable.” Here, too, lasting heterosexual satisfaction proves unattainable, but in this novel the victims of female experimentation are not so much put-upon males but the New Women themselves. Nancy ends up an unwed mother after a superficial sexual encounter, while her studious friend Jessica Morgan—"a dolorous image of frustrate sex"—is driven to a complete nervous breakdown through the pursuit of a B.A. degree. While Nancy ultimately finds some meaning and wisdom in the responsibilities of traditional motherhood, Jessica becomes a fanatical member of the Salvation Army. In the logic of the novel, studying for examinations leads to hideous outbreaks of female neurosis: when Jessica returns in the final chapter to lecture Nancy about her sinful ways, her face is "bloodless, all but fleshless," "her crazy malice grotesquely disguised"; the last Nancy sees of Jessica is "her smile of rancorous compassion" as she goes forth into the rain (p. 438, 440). The novel makes it clear that the first version of New Woman is at least not as unattractive as the second. Entitled in manuscript "A Girl's Wild Oats," then renamed "Miss Lord of Camberwell"; the eventual change was the result of the publisher's opinion that "the public was growing tired of the 'woman question.'"17

The Odd Women (1893) explores a number of heterosexual pairings, ranging from the severely compromising to the utterly intolerable. The narrator informs us that true domestic happiness, of the old-fashioned sort, is rare, and therefore "only to be

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touched, if touched at all, with the very gentlest irony" (p. 176). Gissing's most famous and thorough fictionalized representation of the New Woman, this novel generally treats middle-class female ambitions with seriousness and respect, but here this respect only serves to make the rift between the male and the female characters seem the more poignant and irreconcilable. By the nineties, it is generally conceded that women can be self helpers too, but, as the quote from Blackwood's shows, always at the risk of becoming objects of ridicule.

The Odd Women takes up the implications of female self-help, focusing on a group of female reformers who run a trade school for "odd" women which prepares them for low paying clerical jobs. The school is based on the same premises as the Mechanics' Institutes, emphasizing financial independence, the value of hard work, and especially, advancement through the demonstration of self-discipline and sexual restraint. As in In the Year of Jubilee, the novel works to sort out the more palatable versions of New Womenhood from the humorless and unsexed overachievers; in this respect, the enterprising but intolerant Rhoda Nunn is pitted against her partner, the more sympathetic Mary Barfoot.

Both Mary and Rhoda fear female sexual passion and weakness in the form of a susceptibility to drink as constant threats to the goals of female self-help, always working to undermine the school's efforts and even the singlemindedness of Rhoda herself. Significantly, Miss Barfoot's school seeks to train only middle-class girls: "In the uneducated classes I have no interest whatsoever," she declares, adding, "I must call them lower, for they are, in every sense...I must keep to my own class" (p. 53).
Rhoda agrees: "As soon as we begin to meddle with uneducated people, all our
schemes and views are unsettled"; the novel leaves unquestioned their position that
there can be no "solidarity of ladies with servant girls" (p. 53). Here class barriers
remain impervious to the inculcation of bourgeois codes of conduct. Female Self-help
has strict limits, limits which not only reveal that the sanctity of mid-Victorian
Ladyhood still endures, but that the middle-class notion of sexual purity on which this
sanctity rests makes the Angel in the House a more fragile construction, more liable to
contamination, by definition, than the porous category of the gentleman.

The novel begins and ends with the tragic story of Monica Madden's marriage
to Edmund Widdowson, characterized as a traditional patriarch and avid devotee of
Ruskin. Monica is a shopgirl who, instead of entering Rhoda and Mary's
establishment, attempts to marry her way out of drudgery only to find that her more
comfortable lower middle-class life has been purchased at the cost of her liberty, and
eventually her very existence. Widdowson takes out his own acute sense of social
inferiority on his wife; a petty clerk "like so many thousands of men" who is daily
subject to a thousand indignities, he in turn becomes a tyrant at home. John Sloan
points out that Widdowson's obsessive domestic control is obviously motivated by a
desire for the authority he lacks in ordinary life (p. 124). As Widdowson's attempts to
dominate Monica drive her away and him to despair, the Ruskinite ideal is mocked by
the more advanced world of the fin de siècle novel, and Victorian ideals of the
sacredness of home and hearth are here effectively unmasked as a cover for petit-
bourgeois male insecurity and frustration. The 'modern' attitude is one of debunking
sentimental myths about women and exploring the hostility towards women that they conceal. And, in a rare moment of self-awareness, Widdowson admits to himself he has no interest in his wife except in her role as a docile, pliable inferior, and that he finds her desire for independence a "perpetual irritation": "I don't know what her thoughts really are, what her intellectual life signifies. And yet I hold her to me with the sternest grasp. If she endeavoured to release herself I should feel capable of killing her" (p. 239).

While this example of Victorian 'chivalry' obviously underscores the necessity of more enlightened forms of sexual relations, the hope of such relations is raised in the novel only to be crushed. A companionate relationship between Rhoda Nunn and the ostensibly modern Everard Barfoot cannot be achieved: as it turns out, Everard, like the old-fashioned Widdowson, cannot overcome his desire to conquer and subdue the independent female characters. His brief courtship of Rhoda turns out to be merely another version of Widdowson's masculine possessiveness, although with even less justification. Everard, too, desires obedience and domestic peace, and this ultimately leads him to seek consolation in the arms of the much younger and more malleable Agnes Brissendon. The 'Odd Women' remain odd as Everard's true home turns out to be with "wealthy and cultured people who seek no prominence, who shrink from contact with the circles known as 'smart,' who possess their souls in quiet freedom. It is a small class, especially distinguished by the charm of its women" (p. 319).
The Odd Women can easily be read as critical of Everard and Widdowson in their lapses into discredited traditional gender prejudices, while the New Women appear to be more in tune with the times, more emblematic of an energetic modernity. Yet, as Elizabeth Langland recognizes, the text also tends to represent feminist struggles as vulgar and pushy in contrast to the insulated traditional world of the Brissendens which Everard eventually opts to join. The pastoral Brissendens mark a refreshing change from the urban female reformers; they are not, after all, "in declared revolt against the order of things, religious, ethical, or social...they did not think it worthwhile to identify themselves with any 'movement': they were content with the unopposed right of liberal criticism" (p. 319). In such nostalgic moments, the text itself falls into Widdowson's position.

Self-help for middle-class women can work, this novel seems to imply, and it may well be useful for modern society--indeed both Rhoda's and Monica's stories demonstrate that it is badly needed--however, female self-help cannot be reconciled with the natural dictates of a heterosexuality shaped by male expectations of a docile femininity. When women are the agents of the narrative of improvement they are, regrettably, no longer womanly enough to attract and hold male sexual desire, and this disturbs the social universe of intelligent men like Everard who do have the potential to enjoy their conversation. New Women end up between a rock and a hard place as,

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metaphoric of the fragmentation and flux of modernity itself, they bear the burden of an understandable male yearning for more tranquil—indeed, more domestic—days.

In Gissing's *Born in Exile* (1892) we see the most sustained exploration of the effects of the impasse in self-help for men and the rise of self-help for middle-class women. Although critics have not done so, *Born in Exile* can logically be read alongside *The Odd Women* and *In the Year of Jubilee* as entering into the contemporary debates around the status of women and the shifting nature of relations between the sexes. This aspect of the novel has received surprisingly little notice: in fact most criticism of *Born in Exile* completely ignores the issues raised by the presence of the New Woman, preferring to focus on the male protagonist's inner turmoil, the nineteenth-century debates over science and religion, or the ambiguous social position of the Victorian intellectual.19 Jacob Korg perhaps set the tone in his influential discussion in *George Gissing: A Critical Biography*, in which he links this novel, not with the "Woman Problem" novels which immediately follow it but with the proto-modernist works of Dostoevsky and Turgenev, as a "novel of ideas" (p. 167-178). It is entirely indicative of the gender biases in the construction of literary modernism that these subgenres are held to be distinct and exclusive categories: the latter aspiring to the universal while the former is relegated to a matter of passing interest in the context of specifically British social history. According to Korg, "*Born in Exile* is an important spiritual document, and the only novel by Gissing that can be

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called European in character." John Goode comments on the novel's "strangely European quality," comparing it to Stendhal's Le Rouge et Le Noir (p. 57), while Charles Swann reads it as an existentialist text, looking ahead to its "accidental 'echoes'" of Sartre. Gissing critics have long registered this text as modernist or proto-modernist; what they have not seen is that this influential version of modernism, far from reflecting some universal crisis of belief, is itself the product of a dissident fraction of intellectuals reconceiving their class marginality as victimization at the hands of emasculating females with too much control over social life.

Korg's high praise acknowledges only one limitation—the novel's chief weakness, in his view, is that, with the exception of the protagonist, "there are no other interesting characters" (p. 177). Taking issue with Korg's reading in particular, I argue that, on the contrary, the host of 'minor' male characters, and the novel's New Women, are in fact quite central to the main preoccupation of the text: the grim prospects for heterosexual courtship and marriage in an era of female emancipation. Because Born in Exile recounts the intractable obstacles faced by a group of male free-thinkers and Bohemians who strive to find socially and intellectually compatible wives, I propose to consider Born in Exile as a male version of the domestic novel, and as yet another entry into the late-Victorian conversation around the Woman Question. Apparently, male marriage dramas are more easily perceived as modernist

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"metaphors of metaphysical angst," while female marriage plots still condemn a work to the quaint, peripheral realm of the "sentimental."

**Gentlemanliness as Masquerade: Born in Exile**

"Many a woman would behave with treacherous malice. It was in her power to expose him, to confound all his schemes....It gratified her, however, to feel that he was at her mercy, and the thought preoccupied her for many days."

--- *Born in Exile* (1892)

Who could conceive of rigorous thought, coming from a woman, that was anything but malice?

--- Luce Irigaray, "Ecce Mulier?" (p. 321)

*Born in Exile* is a novel which consciously works to expose the lie of nineteenth-century self-help but also to displace the emotional force of this failure on to the hero's difficult relations with the novel's flawed female characters. The very title of the novel suggests the self-pitying nature of the protagonist who somewhat histrionically proclaims that "my life has been one of slavery and exile--exile, if you know what I mean by it, from the day of my birth" (p. 477). *Born in Exile* opens and closes with references to men yearning for female attention, and in between follows this same group of socially marginalized male intellectuals on their quest to find appropriate wives. The protagonist of the novel, Godwin Peak, is a quintessentially 'modern' intellectual whose dilemma is that he is attracted only to 'traditional' women. He entertains a desperate desire to join the refined world of the upper classes, a world

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which in this novel is always symbolized by women of the upper classes. When Patricia Alden asserts that Gissing's *Born in Exile* offers "the clearest paradigm of the double bind faced by the upwardly mobile petty bourgeois who can develop himself only by rising but whose rising requires him to compromise his integrity," we see that we have arrived at a point in nineteenth-century history where self-help means access to a sphere so "feminized" that entrance into it precludes authentic versions of masculinity.

At the same time, the novel constructs the deciding factor in the potential redemption of lower-class masculinity as hinging on a particular male's attitude towards bourgeois women. As in Armstrong's reading of Darwin, the difference between a working-class "primitive" and a working-class "self-helper" often turns on their manifestations of respect, even adulation, for women and for female choice. But this respect for women itself leads to a perceived contradiction between full, independent intellectual manhood and acceptance in the now overly-feminized bourgeois sphere. Those men who are fully assimilated into the bourgeoisie are portrayed as intellectually compromised—they have surrendered the quest for scientific or philosophical truth—and yet working-class men who do not respect women and the values of "civilization" are of course lesser and vulgar. The philosopher must remain celibate and apart, but here this notion comes into conflict with the attempt at upward mobility instigated by self-help. These social contradictions lead to formal restrictions

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on the novel itself, as structurally there are no clear narrative options for success. The terms which the novel presents leave no choice but for a true intellectual to be "Odd," and Odd in much the same way that Gissing talks about "Odd Women"--extra, redundant, superfluous "as in a glove."

Few fictional self-helpers can be as unlikeable as the cynical and calculating protagonist of *Born in Exile*. The plot is this: Godwin Peak is named after the famous radical, his petit-bourgeois father's hero, but he despises his low origins and turns against his father's working-class radicalism, setting about a career as a class traitor. He cultivates the trappings of gentlemanliness, learning how to dress, how to speak, and to behave, and then decides to seek entrance to better society through marriage. Believing that attaching himself to a gentlewoman will make him a gentleman, he describes himself as a "plebian" whose highest goal is to catch a lady: his "one supreme desire is to marry a perfectly refined woman" (p. 140). While female domestic novels from earlier in the century typically use the standard plot of an obscure woman marrying her way to fortune and happiness, Peak's attempt to marry his way to the good life is portrayed as a deliberate act of social climbing, motivated by a combination of hatred of his vulgar origins and the desire for the company of like-minded people.

A scholarship boy, Peak grows up to be a man of considerable classical learning, with a corresponding admiration for aristocratic values and traditions. Like the typical Smilesian self-helper, he has absorbed and taken to heart the lessons of Arnoldian humanism that "so far as a man has genius he tends to take himself out of
the category of class altogether, and to become simply a man." Now, considering himself to be "an aristocrat of nature's own making" (p. 41), Peak asserts that he belongs to the upper classes "by right of intellect." Self-help has produced a low-born but highly educated man who is now decidedly dissatisfied with his assigned place in the world, but has no legitimate outlets for his talents. Peak's problem is that he cannot turn his acquisition of culture into cultural capital--and so he specifically turns to acquiring social capital--the traditional female path to influence. His strong sense of intellectual vocation, ambition and habitual self-denial would seem to qualify him for success. The novel describes him as "possessed of many advantages, the complex brain, the fiery heart, passion to desire, and skill in attempting. If with such endowment he could not win the prize which most men claim as a mere matter of course, a wife of social instincts correspondent with his own, he must indeed be luckless" (p. 220).

And yet luckless is what Peak turns out to be. He constructs an elaborate plot of intellectual deception by which he is able to win the confidence of the wealthy and pious Warricombe family, including the friendship of their son Buckland and, more gradually, the love of their daughter Sidwell. An atheist and freethinker like his father, vehemently anti-religion, Peak nevertheless decides to pass himself off as an orthodox Anglican and to become an ordained clergyman in order to gain entrance to the upper echelons of society. Peak has a choice of two women: the elegant Sidwell, his ideal of femininity and hoped-for prize, falls in love with him when she believes that he is a defender of her traditional faith, and still considers marrying him after she
learns the truth, but ultimately decides she cannot leave her secure upper-class life and family obligations to follow him on his uncertain career. In contrast, the independent and educated Marcella Moxey, Peak's intellectual soulmate, cannot attract him despite her loyalty and intelligence, as he finds "emancipated" women "utterly repugnant" (p. 247). Of Marcella, Peak tells his friend Earwaker, "She has not a single feminine charm—not one. I often feel very sorry for her, but I dislike her all the same" (p. 120). He explains to Sidwell that she has no reason to be jealous of Marcella: "She has a man's mind, and I have always thought of her in much the same way as of my male companions" (p. 402). Marcella possesses a remarkable "natural vigour"—and a face of "such intellect and character that, after the first moment, one became indifferent to its lack of feminine beauty" (p. 113). She is described as "unusually endowed with analytic intelligence" (p. 329): Peak himself claims to envy her "powers of abstraction" (p. 117). All of these qualities, so admirable in a male, combine in a female to make her freakish and, as he and his friend Earwaker agree, "an incomplete woman."

Peak is convinced that Sidwell, like himself, shares the "aristocratic temperament" (p. 270); unlike the advanced and active Marcella, Sidwell is ultra-traditional in politics, deeply religious, and very attached to her family. Peak is quite open about his motives for choosing Sidwell; to him the Warricome household is "a rich field of possible conquest" (p. 168), and "the woman throned in his imagination was no individual, but the type of an order" (p. 217). For him Sidwell suggests more completely than any woman he had yet observed, that companionship without which life must to the end taste bitter. His interest in her was not strictly personal; she moved and spoke before him as a typical woman...Here at
last opened to his view that sphere of female society which he had known as remotely existing, the desperate aim of ambition (p. 169).

These views are, at times, parenthetically acknowledged by the novel to be ridiculous and misguided: "(his idealism in this matter [of marriage] was of a crudity which made the strangest contrast with his habits of thought on every other subject)" (p. 219). On this point the narrator manages to construct some ironic distance from the protagonist, but on the subject of Peak's attitude toward Marcella this issue is much less clear. However, much is made throughout the novel of the similarities between Peak and Marcella—they are the resentful ones, the plotters, and both are proud and intolerant loners who are nevertheless exceptionally lonely. While Peak idealizes and dreams of Sidwell, Marcella idealizes and dreams of Peak, offering a mirror-image of his faults and obsessions. Peak's dislike of Marcella is portrayed as another manifestation of his self-loathing; if she is an incomplete woman, there is little doubt that he is equally an incomplete man.

Godwin Peak is eventually unmasked as a very ungentlemanly fraud and mercenary, partly through bad luck and partly through the machinations of the rebuffed Marcella. Horrified by the deception which has been practiced upon them, the Warricombes ensure that the imposter is hounded out of respectable society. Buckland Warricome drops his mask of liberalism and tolerance and reveals his ingrained belief that low-born people lack the capacity for honor. He scoffs, "blood always tells." (p. 380). Publically humiliated, Peak is forced to admit defeat: "He, it was true, belonged to no class whatever, acknowledged no subordination save that of the hierarchy of intelligence, but this could not obscure the fact that his brother sold seeds
across a counter, that his sister had married a haberdasher, that his uncle (notoriously) was somewhere or other supplying the public with cheap repasts" (p. 246). The more significant "truth" here turns out to be, not his own sense of himself but the social facts of his birth. For Peak, as for his working-class father, "his strong impulses toward culture were powerless to obliterate the traces of his rude origins" (p. 30).

When Marcella dies as the result of a freak accident (with typical heroism, she is trying to prevent a man from beating a horse) and leaves all her money to Peak, she provides him with much-needed financial independence, but it comes too late. The most "manly"—most generous, most energetic, most intellectually consistent—character in the novel, Marcella flaunts her moral superiority and financial independence by leaving Peak a legacy which he cannot refuse but will always resent. And Marcella dies not only true in her love for Peak but true to her atheist principles—a marked contrast to Peak's opportunism and hypocrisy. As she is dying she tells her brother, "What I have thought ever since I could study, I think now, and shall to the last moment" (p. 472). Before leaving England forever, Peak again begs Sidwell to marry him now that he can support her but she rejects him, unable to defy her family's wishes. Peak then takes Marcella's money and goes abroad, where he dies, presumably of loneliness. As his friends back in England celebrate their various marriages, they receive word of his solitary, unmourned death. Peak's personal motto, the motto of the Renaissance humanists, *Foris ut moris, intus ut libet* (p. 194) ["Outside as custom would have it; inside as it pleases you"] is proved a false rule to live by. As Patricia Alden explains, "For the unclassed man all avenues toward
harmonious and integrated self-development are effectively closed. Movement up is a fraudulent, self-compromising process...membership in a classless elite proves an unattainable dream" (p. 12).

*Born in Exile* therefore quite explicitly depicts the attempt to escape from the rigid confines of class. Its ultimate message seems to be that lower-class desire, no matter how hard it tries to mimic and mold itself to middle-class expectations, cannot be assimilated into the bourgeois world of ease and culture: thus the fate of the pitiable protagonist offers a forceful condemnation of outmoded and irrational social prejudices. The novel can also be read as a chronicle of Peak's tragic miscalculation: as Goode notes, his worst naivete seems to be "that he turns his back on a new world to fight for a place in an old world in which there is no place for him" (p. 66). Peak would seem to be an classic figure of Nietzschean ressentiment, characterized by all of the traits Nietzsche ascribes to the "weak," and still all of his patience, cunning, and self-discipline prove insufficient to accomplish his aims. He also founders on the "truth" of another Nietzschean aphorism—Peak's goals can only be accomplished through marriage to his ideal woman and she, supremely attractive but remote, lacks the proper amount of "masculine" character and "runs away." For Peak, and often, for the novel itself, Sidwell and Marcella are the symptoms and the cause of his misery: "Of Marcella Moxey he could not think emotionally; indeed she emphasised by her personality the lack which caused his suffering" (p. 169--emphasis mine).

As we have seen, in Nietzschean terms resentment is the feminized state of needing someone else to blame; Deleuze similarly refers to "the dreadful feminine
power of ressentiment: it is not content to denounce crimes and criminals, it wants sinners, people who are responsible" (p. 119). Incompatible with the ideal of masculine self-sufficiency, resentment presents a major stumbling block to the philosophical disinterestness needed to pursue the higher realms of "Culture."

Therefore the novel raises the possibility that Peak's problem is that he has only mastered one half of the culture formula; he has educated and disciplined himself, but he has not achieved that inner harmony which is true self-culture. Quite the opposite: he seethes with envy, discontent and resentment from the novel's beginning until its end. His is a "nature essentially militant" (p. 38): as he tells Sidwell, "My strongest emotions seem to be absorbed in revolt" (p. 404). Godwin's typical response to an imagined slight: "He endured in silence, his heart afire with scornful wrath" (p. 54). David Grylls notes that even his name signifies his resentful tendencies: "pique" certainly seems to be one of his main modes.²²

As an embodiment of this form of Nietzschean ressentiment, his failures can readily be attributed to his pivotal act of intellectual dishonesty, the reactive product of his warped and embittered soul. But Peak's name could also deliberately call forth the Nietzschean man of lofty Alpine realms; his character could with equal plausibility signal the bold, reckless natural aristocrat who rises above mere social convention. Certainly Peak's fierce elitism directly echoes Nietzsche: "I hate the word majority; it is the few, the very few, that have always kept alive whatever of the effectual good we see in the human race. There are individuals who outweigh, in every kind of value,

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generations of ordinary people" (p. 271-72). And Peak's daring masquerade could equally represent the artistic self-making of the Aesthete, the deliberate donning of the mask which tells the truth. The impossibility of telling these figures apart points to the instability inherent in the concept of reSENTIMeNt, the fact that the designation of Nietzschean reSENTIMeNt depends of course on one's particular point of view: or, more specifically, one's social location. The novel openly addresses the fact that "character" in the lower-class person is vulgar social-climbing to the upper-class person.

Smilesian self-culture necessitates a striving which can just as easily be interpreted as the absurd pretension of the vulgar arrIvIste; however, lack of it shows insufficient ambition and appreciation for the values of culture. Gissing's text dramatizes the paradox that "manly" or "noble" virtues--synonomous with character and the drive towards self-development--are only given scope in the upper classes, but only cultivated by those who are not already there.

The mid-Victorian formula "Book-learning as the key to success" is in fact deliberately satirized in Peak's cynical plan of "marketing his brains." This is not Arnoldian or Coleridgean culture, implying personal soul-searching combined with classical learning, but a logical bastardization of such definitions--here culture means nothing more than access to the tranquil world of the leisured classes. The text is rife with examples of sophism," intellectual hypocrisy and the ways that seemingly neutral knowledges in fact rely on social particularisms. Born in Exile reveals a world of emotional cripples and self-deceivers, offering theory upon theory meant to be seen as self-interested rationalization: Martin Warriccombe, Sidwell's father, is engaged in a
wholehearted attempt to reconcile Christianity and modern science, and buries himself in arcane defenses of High Anglicanism in order to justify his own luxurious way of life. His son Buckland plays at liberal politics but falls back upon conservative values when confronted with the threat of the interloper Peak. And Peak's elaborate game of intellectual hypocrisy and self-justification, based on a twisted hatred of his own class, makes him the most avid defender of hereditary rank and privilege: "The well-born fool is very often more sure of my respect," he tells his friend Earwaker. "than the working man who struggles to a fair measure of education" (p. 133).

There are also at least three male characters in Peak's circle of male Bohemians who are involved in forms of self-delusion specifically as a means of avoiding the threat of "Woman qua Woman," as they so charmingly put it, and a large portion of this very 'talky' novel is taken up with their earnest debates on this topic. Earwaker, the radical journalist and organic working-class intellectual, claims to despise all females and has constructed a quasi-evolutionary theory of their intellectual inferiority—women represent "the obstructive element in social history" (p. 139). However, the implication is clear that Earwaker, described as unattractive to women, fears rejection by them and so immerses himself in his books. Christian Moxey spends thirteen years in a mad infatuation for a frivolous married woman who doesn't care for him; Malkin indulges in ludicrous Rousseauian fantasies of educating and molding an unformed girl to suit his own advanced, atheistic tastes. The outcome of the novel reinforces male naivete in every case; for example, the traditional religious wedding at the end of the
novel proves that all Malkin's careful attempts at instructing his bride in new thinking have been in vain.

Of course, the most thoroughly elaborated example of male sexual sophistry in the novel is Peak's own. Sidwell and Marcella are both victims of his obvious definitional double bind—if Sidwell left her aristocratic life, she would cease to be attractive to Peak, as it is what she represents in terms of social status which attracts him in the first place. And while Marcella desires Peak for what he is, she can never attract him because her origins are close enough to his that she does not constitute a social "prize." Women can't win here, of course, and Born in Exile offers ample evidence that for Peak and his friends as for Nietzsche, the chief function of abstractions and aphorisms about Woman qua Woman is a defensive one on the part of the male philosopher. It is not difficult in a novel so concerned with self-interested intellectual poses—the anonymously-published article which turns out to be Peak's undoing is ironically entitled "The New Sophistry"—to read the plethora of male debates around femininity in this novel as more of the same. Gissing's novel repeatedly undercuts any distinct oppositions between Truth and Sophistry as "truth" is inevitably shown to be interested and worldviews are never independent of social needs and desires.

While Marcella is ensconced as the text's most consistent social outlaw, her brother Christian proves to be the most adept of the novel's male characters at negotiating the compromises necessary to modern social life. Like Marcella, Christian is portrayed as somewhat sexually ambiguous; he is described as languid, having little
energy or will, and specifically, as effeminate: "his long, translucent fingers were as sensitive as a girl's"; "He stepped with a peculiar lightness" (p. 113). He lacks the decisive character of his sister who has "ten times as much energy as her brother" (p. 87). While the aimless Christian wastes his youth on a married woman he has foolishly elevated to some kind of chivalric ideal, by the end of the novel he has at last abandoned this dream and replaced it with a more practical one. He marries Janet, a "lady doctor," a kind and sensible woman, depicted as worn out and past beauty but having a "frank, intelligent smile" (p. 498). In his final correspondence to Peak, Christian explains that he has learned to appreciate domestic virtues: "In Janet he found every perfection....Already she had begun to inspire him with a hopeful activity, and to foster the elements of true manliness which he was conscious of possessing, though they had never yet found free play...his language dealt with concretes, with homely satisfactions, with prospects near enough to be soberly examined" (p. 476).

Thus the novel concludes, appropriately enough, given its continuing obsession with the subject, with Buckland's, Moxey's and Malkin's marriages and a general, if somewhat ironic, note of praise for domestic tranquillity. Even the hardened misogynist Earwaker, at the sight of Christian and Janet's domestic bliss, considers a "revision of his philosophy" (p. 498). However, Christian's lassitude and "feminine" characteristics have already marked him as complicit with the softness of domestic life, a life which cannot be an option for either Peak and Marcella as they are too uncompromisingly intellectual, too "manly."
From the opening scene of the novel, Peak's sense of class inferiority is inseparable from anxieties about his masculinity, and his actual material reliance on women—first on his mother, then on the scholarships granted to him by the generous but unfortunately common Lady Whitelaw, and finally on Marcella's unasked-for bequest—instills in him a strong need to emphasize his independence from 'unrefined' women. Significantly, the novel begins with prizegiving day at Whitelaw college and the spectacle of the embarrassed young Peak squirming under the gaze of 'Ladies,' ladies who, much to Peak's chagrin, show more attention to the handsome Chilvers and the well-born Buckland: "No lady offered him her hand or shaped compliments for him with gracious lips" (p. 20). We learn that while Peak does as well or better as his upper-class peers in the sphere of academic competition, he fails dismally in attracting the female approval which has come to validate 'Culture.' This opening scene marks his potential for intellectual authenticity while prefiguring his difficult social path. But an important phase in his psychosexual development occurs when he is able, for the first time, to reverse the gaze and make 'Ladies' the object of spectacle:

He chanced once to be in Hyde Park on the occasion of some public ceremony, and was brought to pause at the edge of a gaping plebian crowd, drawn up to witness the passing of aristocratic vehicles. Close in front of him an open carriage came to a stop; in it sat, or rather reclined, two ladies, old and young. Upon this picture Godwin fixed his eyes with the intensity of fascination; his memory never lost the impress of these ladies' faces. Nothing very noteworthy about them; but to Godwin they conveyed a passionate perception of all that is implied in social superiority. He stood, one of the multitude, of the herd; shoulder to shoulder with boors and pickpockets; and within reach of his hand reposed those two ladies, in Olympian calm, seemingly unaware of the existence of the throng....

They were his equals, those ladies; merely his equals. With such as they he should by right of nature associate. In his rebellion, he could not hate
them. He hated the malodorous rabble who stared insolently at them and who envied their immeasurable remoteness (p. 129).

This becomes the novel's "primal scene," dramatizing the fantasy of class shame which will control Peak's life, a fantasy which acquires strong erotic currents. However, we note that this eroticism is of course constituted by remoteness and distance, a distance, which if closed, would no longer allow for the idealization of these otherwise 'ordinary'-looking women. Here Peak projects his own self-hatred onto the rabble who stare 'insolently'--as opposed to reverently--and who envy upper-class 'remoteness'--as opposed to appreciating it in an aesthetic fashion. This is another point at which the narrative detaches itself from Peak's perspective; as the narrator tells us, "he was preoccupied with the contemplation of qualities which characterize a class....the ideal which possessed him was merely such an assemblage of qualities as would excite the democrat to disdain or fury" (p. 218). But Peak believes that it is the class-marked tendency of his sexuality which singles him out from the herd, and the narrator tends to assume as fact that condescension towards women is the common attitude of the young petit-bourgeois male:

As women, again, he despised these relatives [his mother and aunt]. It is almost impossible for a bright-witted lad born in the lower middle-class to escape this stage of development...Godwin was one of those upon whose awakening intellect is forced a perception of the brain-defect so general in women when they are taught few of life's graces and none of its serious concerns--their paltry prepossessions, their vulgar sequaciousness, their invincible ignorance, their absorption in a petty self...It was Godwin's sincere belief that he held girls, as girls, in abhorrence (p. 37).

The proper respect for women comes gradually, with the acquisition of learning and culture: "In his longing for refined people, he began to modify his sentiments with
regard to the female sex" (p. 51). Eventually this modification becomes the appropriately abject emotion of "humiliation without embitterment" (p. 51-52). Note the unmistakeably masochistic cast to the relationship between the lower-class male and the socially superior female, as Peak's sexuality is indistinguishable from the eroticization of his own acute sense of class inferiority. What the novel terms "erotic madness"--sexual conflict--is here typical only of "refined" masculinity. Peak's self-consciousness about sex and conflicted attitudes toward women become the sign of his "depth," his "sensitivity," his deserving to be part of the bourgeois world. Male masochism comes to be another indicator of authentic taste and discernment. Thus the fact that Earwaker, the working-class radical intellectual, despises women, is seen as a predictable lower-class limitation. While Peak claims that he cannot follow Earwaker's path--Earwaker's world is "essentially womanless"--his own attitude of 'humiliation without bitterness' barely conceals his own similar discomfort with women, his own unconscious resentment of the women he idealizes with such supposed chivalry: "In his rebellion, he could not hate them." But the implication is clear that he must be educated out of this 'natural' petit-bourgeois response.

And what is perhaps most intriguing about Born in Exile is the way that it illuminates the self-interested nature of masculine rationalizations about women but also allows us occasional insights into the double-bind of the newly educated woman of the nineties. In the middle of the novel, the narrator acknowledges that it is Marcella who lives her life in a more complete and utter state of exile than any other character:

The emancipated woman has fewer opportunities of relieving her mind than a man in corresponding position; if her temper be aggressive she must renounce
general society, and, if not content to live alone, ally herself with some group of declared militants. By correspondence, or otherwise, Marcella might have brought herself into connection with women of a sympathetic type, but this connection had never been made. And chiefly because of her acquaintance with Godwin Peak. In him she concentrated her interests; he was the man to whom her heart went forth with every kind of fervour. So long as there remained a hope of moving him to reciprocal feeling she did not care to go in search of female companions....Left to herself, Marcella had but slender support against a grim temptation already beckoning her in nights of sleeplessness. Of the two [she and Christian], her nature was the more tragic. Circumstances aiding, Christian might still forget his melancholy, abandon the whiskey bottle, and pass a lifetime of amiable uxoriousness, varied with scientific enthusiasm. But for Marcella, frustrate in the desire with which every impulse of her being had identified itself, what future could be imagined? (p. 287)

None whatsoever, as it turns out, except as the tainted vehicle for Peak's doomed attempts at social mobility. While there may be a moment of compassion for the lonely, 'frustrate' state of the New Woman, she must still be eliminated from a text which is ultimately the story of the male self-helper's pathetic social marginalization. This passage is a perfect example of what John Goode, in another context, refers to as a typical "Gissing moment"—"a dangerous sympathy with the oppressed met with a pessimism which turns itself into the sentimental endorsement of an oppressive system" (p. 45). Peak's dislike of Marcella is attributed to her sullen and unfeminine character; and, while only she, of all the characters, is permitted a certain degree of lasting intellectual commitment and sincerity, it comes at the expense of femininity. Barely tolerable as a buddy, she is out of the question in terms of a potential romantic interest. And, while it is quite possible to read Peak's loneliness and exile as attaining a certain desperate nobility (as indeed, most critics have done), Marcella's behavior seems merely desperate.
The novel's descriptions of the key scene in which Marcella allows the climactic exposure of Peak's masquerade are worth remarking upon, as Marcella is here painted as something of a sexual predator: "She was leaning forward, her lips slightly parted. Marcella's eyes closed as if a light had flashed before them: she drew a short sigh, and at once seemed to become quite at ease, the smile with which she regarded Warricome expressing a calm interest" (p. 340-41). If Peak's sexuality is constructed as harboring masochistic depths, the only glimpse we have of Marcella's sexual life reveals a barely-concealed sadism; her thwarted libidinal urges manifest themselves in long-awaited revenge as she allows all of Peak's years of elaborate plotting to be undone. Given this, it is easy to read her bequest to Peak as a final gesture of hostility concealed within a seemingly generous impulse--certainly Peak takes it as such. Malice lurks in the assertive figure of the New Woman even when she attempts to repress her true nature, and, like all Nietzschean malice, indicates a particularly effective and sinister form of power.

*Born In Exile* thus ultimately expects a certain readerly empathy with the male hero's impossible situation which includes his understandable repulsion towards New Women. The novel both blames this female figure and domesticates her by bringing a tamer and more likeable version onto the scene in the form of the kind-hearted but asexual 'lady doctor.' In this way the novel repeats the pattern of *In the Year of Jubilee* and *The Odd Women* of working to inscribe acceptable and unacceptable forms of New Womanhood. Mary Barfoot, Nancy Lord, and Janet the doctor all remain within the dictates of the 'feminine' and all are (theoretically at least) possible
objects of male desire—although as we have seen, this male desire can only exist as a matter of resignation and compromise (here intriguingly described as "amiable uxoriousness"). Yet Marcella represents an evolutionary dead end: whereas Peak proves himself capable of attracting the attention of even upper class women, Marcella can attract no one.

To sum up, by the nineties, a major problem faced by the male self-helper is that masculinity itself seems to be incompatible with a middle-class conformity which male writers and critics have diagnosed as the result of too much feminine influence. The scapegoating of the New Woman on the part of petit-bourgeois male intellectuals can be read as a function of the problematic positioning of their own masculinity and the real social humiliations to which they themselves were subject. One of the symptoms—and partial resolutions—of this difficulty is the positing of "erotic madness"—a deep sense of incompatibility with women, with heterosexuality, with marriage. Eccentricity, restlessness, and alienation are called upon to register a protest against entrenched bourgeois conservatism. The "Oddness" of the failed male self-helper becomes the Oddness of the 'pure' but misunderstood male modernist, and this Oddness signals a way to restore and invigorate a sense of fading masculine autonomy. The voice of literary modernism has largely been constructed as that of the exiled and unclassed male outsider; therefore it is unsurprising that literary scholars have tended to regard Born In Exile not in terms of late nineteenth-century gender formations, but in terms of an international or European modernist aesthetic. However, the novel's particular version of male angst in fact relies on a perception of

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exclusion, of falling between worlds, which was the result of a collision between the Victorian mythology of self-help and the historical moment of feminism.

*Born in Exile* can be interpreted, as John Goode does, as an indictment of the social structure in that Peak’s failure can be attributed to the insuperable snobbery of the class he wants to join: in other words, to the gap between the ideology of self-help and the actual rigidity of the British class system. As Goode argues, “It is a class war Peak is fighting, both a war on his exclusion from Olympia, and a war to keep Olympia as a place to aspire to” (p. 69). In this way the novel works, as Jameson notes of earlier Gissing novels, to reveal class prejudice as an exclusionary tactic obviously motivated by a concern to justify existing economic privilege, yet at the same time, the character flaws which result from a thwarted life are often deployed as plot devices which have the end result of defending the inevitability of social inequities. Like *Demos* or *Thyrza*, this text can therefore be understood in terms of narrative forms which ultimately allow for the projection of upper class resentments against aspiring but morally bankrupt petit-bourgeois, although in the case of *Born In Exile*, its sympathies seem to remain more on the side of the ‘unclassed’ petit-bourgeois intellectual portrayed as out of step--in some ways tragically ahead, in others, tragically behind--with his times. Jameson's dialectical reading encompasses both impulses, and allows us to see Gissing’s text as simultaneously constructing and deconstructing *ressentiment*, as an anatomy of the production of bourgeois ideology.

I am reading it as an anatomy of the production of bourgeois gender ideology as well. If, following Jameson's suggestion, the ideologeme of *ressentiment* "can seem
to account in a "psychological" and nonmaterialistic sense for the destructive envy the have-nots feel for the have," then *Born in Exile* enables its own reading not only as a portrayal of upper-class *ressentiment*, but also as a text which underscores the *ressentiment* of the petit-bourgeois male. Peak's resentment of Marcella and her search for acceptance can fairly easily be shown to be another example of the irritation of the relatively privileged in the face of the demands and desires of those pushing against existing social constraints. As such, this novel produces a complex double-movement: it promotes a limited amount of sympathy for female ambitions while still refusing these ambitions full play. Gissing's novel in fact permits an awareness of late nineteenth-century masculine *ressentiment* as an elaborate form of annoyance at women's "unnecessary rocking of the social boat."

Following Lukacs, Jameson describes the late nineteenth-century as the historical period when the advanced state of capitalism, with its ensuing "systematic quantification and rationalization of experience, its instrumental reorganization of the subject" (p. 62), introduced a variety of interpretive themes which dissociated themselves from historical narratives and perspectives and from a view of society as a totality. For Jameson, "The Nietzschean 'transvaluation of all values' constitutes one of many attempts to "project some Archimedean standpoint outside of social life, from which the inner-worldly values of the latter might be abstracted and studied in a kind of experimental or laboratory isolation" (p. 65). The desire for such a project is, as we have noted repeatedly, itself inextricably bound up in highly gendered categories of thought. *Born in Exile* allows us to dissect the masculine ideal of the "pathos of
distance," and serves as an especially vivid portrayal of the futility of the flight from
the weight of social forces into such disembodied abstractions as "Science."
"Philosophy," or "Culture." In its exposure of this particular late-Victorian nexus of
power/knowledge, it usefully returns us to the historical moment which first generated
the "theory of ressentiment."
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