Problem Novels

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INTRODUCTION

1. As Goodlad herself writes: “Foucault’s account of the Panopticon becomes, in effect, precisely the kind of flawed Marxist analysis he sought to avoid: an Althusserian-like theory in which reified ‘Ideological State Apparatuses’ (such as the Panopticon) directly dominate through subject constitution” (Victorian 11). And Ruth offers an interesting analysis of the current state of affairs of Victorian studies post-Foucault in her 2006 Novel Professions.

2. Thomas’s work, along with Amanda Anderson’s and Lauren Goodlad’s, is one of the most frequently cited examples of the recuperation of liberal agency. For an interesting response to Anderson’s and Thomas’s recuperation of liberalism, see Elaine Hadley’s “On a Darkling Plain.”

3. I think one problem is that recent critiques of Foucault have tended to focus almost exclusively on Discipline and Punish, which, although extraordinarily influential in Victorian studies, was by no means the only important text. The History of Sexuality and The Birth of the Clinic in particular have been foundational, and in both of these Foucault is careful to avoid characterizing disciplinary power as totalizing or reified.

4. See also Winifred Hughes’s The Maniac in the Cellar.

5. In his 2003 article “Resist Me, You Sweet Resistible You,” Kincaid remarks: “Resistance is conceptualized nowadays within the metaphysics of power and has no currency outside that fashionable and gratuitous paranoia” (1326). Chow makes a similar point in her 2002 article “The Interruption of Referentiality,” in which she writes: “An awareness of historical asymmetries of power, aggression, social antagonism, inequality of representation, and their like cannot simply be accomplished through an adherence to the nebulous concept of resistance and opposition” (185).

6. I am following a number of excellent studies over the past two and a half decades that have addressed real and figurative readers: Kate Flint’s The Woman Reader, Patrick Brantlinger’s The Reading Lesson, Ann Cvetkovich’s Mixed Feelings, Audrey Jaffe’s Scenes of Sympathy, Laurie Langbauer’s Novels of Everyday
Life, Anita Levy’s Reproductive Urges, Terry Lovell’s Consuming Fiction, Jennifer Phegley’s Educating the Proper Woman Reader, Garrett Stewart’s Dear Reader, John Sutherland’s Victorian Fiction, and Nicola Diane Thompson’s Reviewing Sex are just a few. I consider my own work as taking up Kate Flint’s point in The Woman Reader that “the practice of reading, at once pointing inwards and outwards, to the psychological and the socio-cultural, is an ideal site for the examination of Victorian … and contemporary preoccupations: bodies, minds, and texts” (330).

7. A random selection of current books and book reviews, for instance, will show critics referring to scholarly projects in language much akin to the sensation/detective genre. For example, Ian Duncan’s 2004 review of Patrick Brantlinger’s Dark Vanishings: Discourse on the Extinction of Primitive Races says that Brantlinger “traces the early nineteenth-century consolidation of extinction discourse” (110). Similarly, Melissa Valiska Gregory writes in a 2004 review: “Kate Lawson and Lynn Shakinovsky investigate the obscure trace evidence of … physical cruelty in The Marked Body” (689). Likewise, Ann McClintock conceives of Victorian imperialism this way in her 1995 book Imperial Leather: “Knowledge of the unknown world was mapped as a metaphysics of gender violence … In these fantasies, the world is feminized and spatially spread for male exploration, then reassembled and deployed in the interests of massive imperial power” (23).

8. Adams is referring here to Karen Chase and Michael Levenson’s The Spectacle of Intimacy.


11. This is the launching point for Anderson’s very elegant analysis, The Powers of Distance. Anderson moves beyond this critique of Foucauldian criticism to an unequivocal endorsement of critical detachment, or “reflective reason,” within a model of procedural democracy that I find less convincing than her diagnosis of the blind spots in current critical theory. See The Way We Argue Now (2006).

12. See chapter 1 of Anderson’s The Way We Argue Now, which also appeared in Social Text 54 (1998).

13. See Mary Lyndon Shanley’s Feminism, Marriage, and the Law in Victorian England, 1850–1895 for a good history of the Divorce, Infant Custody, and Married Women’s Property acts. See also Tim Dolin’s Mistress of the House. Susan Hamilton’s collection “Criminals, Idiots, Women and Minors” offers a nice selection of primary texts and an introduction to women’s involvement in the debates surrounding the issues grouped under the rubric of the “Woman Question.”
“The readers who are excited by the sensational lure of [the novels’] mysteries are provided with experiences of affect that are ultimately regulated and controlled” (7). See also, for example, Anthea Trodd’s Domestic Crime in the Victorian Novel, in which she writes: “The narrative [of Lady Audley’s Secret] is largely presented from Robert’s point of view, and like Basil is a masculine inquiry into the mystery of domesticity. Robert, who initially endorses the domestic ideal Lady Audley so brilliantly impersonates, gradually discovers the sinister secrets which lie behind her realisation of this ideal” (105).

2. As Foucault asserts in Discipline and Punish: “Disciplinary power … is exercised through its invisibility; at the same time it imposes on those whom it subjects a principle of compulsory visibility. In discipline it is the subjects who have to be seen. Their visibility assures the hold of the power that is being exercised over them. It is the fact of being constantly seen, of being able to always be seen, that maintains the disciplined individual in his subjection” (187).

3. I want to distinguish this from the role of the “suffering woman” that Ann Cvetkovich describes in Mixed Feelings as the heroine’s passive submission to pain that is then converted into a sensationalized (eroticized) spectacle for the reader’s delectation (100). For example, in East Lynne by Mrs. Henry Wood, Lady Isabel’s pain becomes the reader’s pleasure; she herself experiences no pleasure in it and, indeed, is powerless to avoid it. The conversion of pain to pleasure—in this model—is more a function of experiencing a sadistic enjoyment of someone else’s unwilling suffering than it is of identifying with the self-designated sufferer. Conversely, the suffering in both No Name and Armadale is not only articulated, but is also often self-inflicted and deliberate.

4. See, for example Leo Bersani’s account of the “shattering” of the self through masochism in The Freudian Body, or Carol Siegel’s Male Masochism.

5. For a good critique of the problems in feminist theory with masochism, see Lynda Hart’s analysis in Between the Body and the Flesh. See also Marianne Noble’s The Masochistic Pleasures of Sentimental Literature. Noble’s analysis of the eroticism of language in sentimental literature does an excellent job of addressing how, precisely, these texts participate in the production and proliferation of masochistic fantasies. However, she also tends to focus on female masochism as submission (albeit willing or at least complicit) to a specifically heterosexual, masculine, dominant regime.

6. F. Scott Scribner, in his article “Masochism and the Modern Ethical Ideal (1788–1887),” makes an interesting argument about what the masochistic contract does by turning away from the moral absolutism of Kantian ethics: “The masochistic contract offers an ethics insofar as it is an reenactment of the social contract, that refuses the totalizing gesture of the universal, while nevertheless offering a sensual ideal, grounded in the uniqueness of the situation and secured through the freely chosen law of the contract. Masoch’s fiction is an intervention that affirms the particularity of an individual incarnation of an ideal as a model of social interaction, rather than the universality of the ‘law’ or the ‘Good’” (79).

7. For a fascinating explication of Maine’s Ancient Law in relation to Victorian sexual exchange see Kathy Psomiades’s “Heterosexual Exchange and Other Victorian Fictions,” in which she describes Maine’s distinction between primitive society and “contemporary” Victorian society: “The world of individuals,
property, and contract that allows both capitalism and civilization to exist has a ‘before’ marked by the absence of all its distinguishing features. The primitive world is stationary, rather than progressive; one in which goods and people stay put, rather than circulate; a world of the group, rather than the individual; of the family, rather than the territorial state; of the unwritten law that is the parent’s word, rather than the written law” (100).

8. In this I directly disagree with Massé, who writes: “Critics of the sublime school often find that a woman’s suffering ‘stands for’ something else. As a feminist, I do not entertain this hypothesis or find it entertaining. When a woman is hurt … the damage is not originally self-imposed: we must acknowledge that someone else strikes the first blow” (3).

9. Deborah Wynne offers a comprehensive examination of sensation novels, their serial publication, and critical reception in *The Sensation Novel and the Victorian Family Magazine*. See also Flint.

10. See, for example, Gesa Stedman’s *Stemming the Torrent* for a discussion of the complicated articulations of the mind-body connection in Victorian psychological discourse. See also Athena Vrettos, Rebecca Stern, Jenny Bourne Taylor, Sally Shuttleworth, Ann Cvetkovich, Evelyn Ender, and Jane Wood. This is by no means a complete list. Most interestingly, in his 2004 article “Wave Theories and Affective Physiologies,” Nicholas Dames suggests that nineteenth-century discussions of novel-reading convey a complex theory that “in its combination of physiological investigation with literary analysis, presents us with a vanished interdisciplinary formation, as well as an approach to the novel that might have renewed interest today as a precursor to an interdisciplinary theory of the reader, particularly the novel-reader” (207).

11. See Karen Odden’s article “‘Reading Coolly’ in *John Marchmont’s Legacy*” for an interesting account of how one sensation author imagined women reading simultaneously in two modes: “one in which she empathetically engages with the characters, and the other, in which she sustains self-awareness about herself as a reader” (23).

12. Ruskin differentiates between “the good book of the hour,” in which group of pleasant and mildly useful texts the novel belongs, and the “good book of all time,” in which the “greats” like Milton and Dante fall (32). The “good books of all time” are, of course, the ones to which one should submit oneself most thoroughly.

13. For an interesting account of the strangeness of Ruskin’s rhetoric in *Sesame and Lilies*, see Seth Koven’s “How the Victorians Read *Sesame and Lilies*.” See also Elizabeth Helsinger’s essay “Authority and the Pleasures of Reading,” in which she notes that the submission to the text that Ruskin promotes is not passive acquiescence, but rather a “complex mixture of obedience and freedom” (116).

14. Neither *No Name* nor *Armadale* have received the critical attention of *The Woman in White* or *The Moonstone*, but critics who do address them describe them in superlative terms (most convoluted, most perverse, most radical, etc.). Deirdre David, for example, contends in “Rewriting the Male Plot in Wilkie Collins’s *No Name* (1862)” that “no [other] Collins novel … so interestingly conflates resistance to dominant aesthetic and sexual ideologies as *No Name*” (34), although she also claims, rather inexplicably, that this resistance means that the novel “rattles...
no nerves with sensational excitement” (35). Jenny Bourne Taylor, who reads the novel within discourses of evolution and psychology, does acknowledge the novel’s sensationalism, remarking that as “Collins’s most explicit treatment of the formation of social identity and of the cultural construction of femininity outside and inside the family,” No Name “is a story of ‘perversity.’ … It is also a perverse story” (132).

15. Think, for example, of the suspicious reticence of The Moonstone’s heroine, Rachel Verinder, in regard to the disappearance of the diamond.

16. Magdalen’s parents have pretended to be married while Mr. Vanstone is still married to a terrible, degenerate woman in Canada, so both Magdalen and her sister, Norah, are illegitimate. But when the first wife dies, while the daughters are in their teens, the parents marry immediately, unfortunately without realizing that this demands they make new wills so that the illegitimate daughters will not be disinherited. They both die before they can rectify their mistake.

17. Critics have tended to argue that the heroines of sensation novels are morally suspect, citing as the primary example Lady Audley. It seems to me, however, that at no time in the novel is she the heroine or protagonist. Rather, the amateur sleuth Robert Audley is the hero, and Lady Audley is the fascinating villainess. This may seem like a minor distinction, but it is crucial to understanding Collins’s experimentation with the form of the sensation novel in his portrayal of Magdalen.

18. Indeed, under the law of coverture, this “death wish” was not just a psychological metaphor but a legal reality.

19. Magdalen, eager to marry Frank, sends her father on a last-minute trip to his lawyer to arrange her marriage settlement, and he is killed in an accident en route.

20. Caroline Reitz offers an interesting analysis of this vexed history of colonial violence and guilt in her article “Colonial ‘Guilt.’”

21. Interestingly, Victorian treatises on masochism suggested that schoolroom beatings could become “erotic flagellation,” which would then produce in the beaten boys the desire to masturbate or, worse, the propensity for masochism in later life.

22. For an interesting discussion of the various significances with which Victorian culture imbued the racially ambiguous figure of the gypsy, see Deborah Epstein Nord’s “‘Marks of Race.’”

23. She disappears somewhere in the middle of the third book and never shows up again in person.

CHAPTER 2

1. See, for example, Henry James’s review of The Belton Estate: “Mr. Trollope is a good observer; but he is literally nothing else … All his incidents are, if we may so express it, empirical. He has seen and heard every act and every speech that appears in his pages” (258).

2. For a detailed account of James’s treatment of Trollope, see Elsie Michie’s “The Odd Couple.” See also Kincaid, The Novels of Anthony Trollope.
3. Trollope repeats these sentiments in *An Autobiography*, in his lectures “On the Higher Education of Women” (1868), and in his essay “On English Prose Fiction as a Rational Amusement” (1870). Although he was no great fan of Ruskin, this language also echoes Ruskin’s criticism of the public in “Of Kings’ Treasuries” for not recognizing that books are worth more than “munching and sparkling” (50)—that is, reading is not the same as consuming commodities like food and jewelry.

4. See also Andrew Miller’s *Novels Behind Glass*, Rachel Bowlby’s *Just Looking*, and Terry Lovell’s *Consuming Fiction*, among others.

5. The special issue includes essays by Timothy Alborn, David Iztkowitz, Audrey Jaffe, Donna Loftus, and Mary Poovey.

6. This is a position that Mary Poovey elucidates in the introduction to her anthology, *The Financial System in Nineteenth-Century Britain*: “First, the lack of readily available information means that every piece of writing about finance in this period was an attempt to understand and interpret something that was only partially visible and constantly in a state of change. This means, in turn, that we should not read selections included here as straightforward descriptions. Even the entries taken from dictionaries, like McCulloch’s *Dictionary of Commerce and Commercial Navigation*, need to be read as interpretive descriptions, which are informed both by their authors’ proximity to existing sources of information and by their own theoretical and political positions on issues that were often highly controversial and imperfectly understood” (4–5).


8. Similarly, much of the recent criticism exploring speculation and gambling casts the financial figure—Melmotte of Trollope’s *The Way We Live Now*—being the unexample—as the bogeyman of the realist novel. See, for example, J. Jeffrey Franklin’s “The Victorian Discourse of Gambling” and his *Serious Play*, or Audrey Jaffe’s “Trollope in the Stock Market.”

9. In her book *Nineteenth-Century Literary Realism: Through the Looking Glass*, Katherine Kearns describes this kind of (psycho)analytical approach to Victorian realism: “Critics and marketing strategies … may thus promote realism as both fictional and true all at once: like the madman, incompetent as regards the really real, whatever the hermeneutic integrity of its visions, while, again like the madman, unimpeachable in its communication of a historical reality. Thus we see the paperback edition of *Adam Bede* using a fragment from the critical preface by Stephen Gill as promotion copy: ‘Reading the novel,’ says the cover, ‘is a process of learning simultaneously about the world of Adam Bede and the world of *Adam Bede.*’ In this marketing strategy, fictional realism shares a space with texts produced within the asylum … Realism is said to tell a (historical) truth despite itself even as it does not tell the truth” (7).

10. See Mary Poovey’s introduction to *The Financial System in Nineteenth-Century Britain* for a good description of the legislation in the middle decades (1844–1862) that facilitated the growth of joint stock companies and individual investors (16–17).
11. David Itzkowitz, in his article “Fair Enterprise or Extravagant Speculation,” offers a fascinating account of the rhetorical constructions of “legitimate” investing vs. morally suspect “speculation,” which, he argues, became increasingly legitimized as it lost its connections to gambling in the latter decades of the nineteenth century. See also Audrey Jaffe’s “Trollope in the Stock Market” for a discussion of the rhetorical distinction between investment and speculation.

12. For an interesting discussion of women and the stock market, see Andrew Miller’s article “Subjectivity Ltd.”

13. Trollope’s paradoxical adherence to formal resolution and irresolution has been the crux of critical attention both from critics like Deborah Denenholz Morse and Jane Nardin, who want to consider how sympathetic or misogynist his portrayal of “real” women is, and from critics like Laurie Langbauer and Patrick Brantlinger who want to define the limits of his realism. As Morse notes, Trollope alters the “narrative conventions that embody the conventional view that feminine fulfillment lies only in love and marriage. The structure of the romantic courtship plot is broken in every novel, and there are elements that qualify the perfect closure in each novel’s comic resolution” (3). See also George Levine’s The Realistic Imagination, James Kincaid’s The Novels of Anthony Trollope, and Christopher Herbert’s “Trollope and the Fixity of Self,” among many others, for accounts of the narrative tension in Trollope’s novels.

14. In her 1854 English Laws for Women in the Nineteenth Century, a pamphlet calling for legislative reform, Norton compares her situation to the case of a slave in Ohio who sued his owner when the owner, who had contracted with the slave to allow him to buy his freedom, rescinded the contract after the money was paid:

The case was argued with much ability; but at the close of the argument the judge decided for Mr Patton against Sam Norris, on this principle, that by the law of Kentucky “a slave cannot make a contract, nor can he have monies of his own.” The contract, therefore, was null and void; and the money, though received and expended by the master, could not be held legally to have been paid … I find, in the slave law of Kentucky, an exact parallel of the law of England for its married women; and in this passage in the life of the poor slave Sam Norris, an exact counterpart of what has lately occurred in my own.

I, too, had a contract. My husband being desirous to raise money settled on me and my sons, to employ on his separate estate, and requiring my consent in writing before that could be done, gave me in exchange for such consent a written contract drawn up by a lawyer, and signed by that lawyer and himself. When he had obtained and employed the money he was desirous to raise, like Mr Patton of Virginia he resolved to “rescind the contract.” When I, like the slave Norris, endeavoured to struggle against this gross breach of faith,—I was informed that by the law of England, “a married woman could not make a contract, or have monies of her own.” (19)

15. As is probably familiar to most readers, Cobbe is responding, as did numerous others (most famously W. R. Greg), to the 1851 census, which created a huge stir by showing a surfeit of single women in England. Greg’s solution was to “export” single women to the colonies where there were more single
men. Trollope himself alludes to the problem in his 1868 lecture “On the Higher Education of Women”: “It does not go smoothly with you all. There is not quite enough of money, not quite enough of feminine occupation,—not quite enough, perhaps, of husbands: and therefore … you are all to be thrown into the labour market, and hustle and tustle for your bread amidst the rivalry of men. I do not myself think that you can improve your chances in life that way” (76).

16. This is a plot that recurs in different permutations in many Trollope novels, including The Belton Estate and The Prime Minister.

17. Critics have suggested that Miss Todd is, in fact, modeled after Frances Power Cobbe.

18. Can You Forgive Her? received quite a bit of positive praise from critics, even though, as Henry James notes in a review for the Nation, it includes “a certain amount of that inconceivably vulgar love-making between middle-aged persons by which ‘Miss Mackenzie’ was distinguished” (249). But even critics who applauded Trollope’s portrayal of Lady Glencora and Plantagenet Palliser found Alice Vavasor hard to take.

19. Ironically, Henry James in his review of Can You Forgive Her? complains that George is not sensational enough, and having undertaken to represent a desperate character, Trollope should have gone all the way and had him kill someone or himself. (249–53)

20. We can gauge the magnitude of the tragedy threatened because a very similar one comes to fruition in The Prime Minister when Emily Wharton is not prevented from throwing herself away on Ferdinand Lopez, and only his eventual suicide (after his political and financial ruin) saves her and her family from permanent disgrace.

CHAPTER 3

1. McGlamery also offers an interesting Bakhtinian account of Meredith’s difficult, yet instructive, preface in Diana of the Crossways in her article “In His Beginning, His Ends.” See also Judith Wilt’s The Readable People of George Meredith, a sensitive and generous reading of Meredith in relation to his readers.

2. For example, Carolyn Williams writes in “Natural Selection and Narrative Form in The Egoist”: “Darwinism works as the touchstone of the novel’s dramatic irony when it is falsely understood by the central character, the male Egoist Willoughby Patterne, and … the true working of natural selection appears as a principle of narrative form, organizing the novel’s plot, character development, and figurative language” (55). Williams offers one of the best and most detailed accounts of The Egoist’s Darwinism. Jonathan Smith and Patricia O’Hara also offer good explications of evolutionary rhetoric in the novel.

3. This is the gist of McGlamery’s article “In His Beginnings, His Ends.”

4. Caroline Norton was a renowned beauty and wit, a successful novelist and poet with influential friends in government and fashionable society. In 1826 she married George Norton, who was, by all accounts, an unintelligent, impecunious, and abusive husband. Their much-publicized custody, property, and divorce disputes began in 1836 when George Norton took their three sons from her. Under the law Caroline had no right to her children. George brought
a charge of “criminal conversation” against Caroline’s friend Lord Melbourne. Lord Melbourne won the case, which exonerated Caroline of wrongdoing, but she lost custody of her children. And, under the current law, she was unable to sue for divorce. She mounted a campaign to give mothers custodial rights to their children, writing the pamphlet *A Plain Letter to the Lord Chancellor on the Infant Custody Bill* (1839), and the Infant Custody Act was passed in 1839. George and Caroline continued to have property disputes—she attempting to retain rights to her property and he attempting to eschew responsibility for her debts—over the next fourteen years. In a second lawsuit in 1853 George again cited Lord Melbourne’s relationship with Caroline and won his freedom from financial responsibility for her debts. Caroline turned her attention to campaigning for revisions to the marriage and divorce laws. She wrote the pamphlets *English Laws for Women in the Nineteenth Century* (1854) and *A Letter to the Queen on Lord Chancellor Cranworth’s Marriage and Divorce Bill* (1855). Caroline, unlike Meredith’s heroine, was not able to remarry until after George died in 1877, when she was sixty-nine years old, and although this marriage to her longtime friend Sir William Stirling-Maxwell probably was happy, she was in poor health and died after only a few months. For a more-detailed discussion of the marriage laws and Caroline’s campaigns to reform them, see Mary Shanley’s *Feminism, Marriage, and the Law in Victorian England, 1850–1895*. See also Tim Dolin’s *Mistress of the House*.

5. As such, the anxiety is one already inherent in Darwin’s own accounts of sexual selection. Darwin’s position on sexual selection in humans is notoriously slippery; he seems at times to argue that Woman in civilization no longer has the prerogative of choice, but at other times he maintains that civilized Woman has more freedom than her savage counterpart, and yet again he claims that savage Woman has more freedom to choose her mate than is at first apparent. However, vacillations notwithstanding, Darwin defines sexual selection thus in *Descent of Man*: “The sexual struggle is of two kinds; in the one it is between the individuals of the same sex, generally the male sex, in order to drive away or kill their rivals, the females remaining passive; whilst in the other, the struggle is likewise between the individuals of the same sex, in order to excite or charm those of the opposite sex, generally the females, which no longer remain passive, but select the more agreeable partners” (398).

I am indebted to Gillian Beer’s *Darwin’s Plots* for its groundbreaking discussion of the nuances of Darwin’s theory of sexual selection. Rosemary Jann also offers an excellent account of Darwin’s complicated rhetoric. As she explains: “By shifting his definition of instinctual sexual behavior in animals, he could project a version of the modern patriarchal family back across the border between animal and man. But this rhetorical move left him unable fully to explain what had subverted the sexual prerogatives of female animals or had produced the ‘unnatural’ behavior of the earliest savage cultures. The result was a narrative implicitly fragmented into rival discourses of continuity and rupture, progression and regression” (289).

6. This kind of dichotomy is perhaps most famously articulated by Andreas Huyssen in *After the Great Divide*, and although he himself problematizes the dichotomy, it is one that continues to inform discussions of the shift from Victorian to modern.
7. Woolf’s essay collections feature dozens of essays that implicitly, and often explicitly, consider the question of “how to read.” Aside from the obvious “How Should One Read a Book?,” other essays such as “Reading,“ “Hours in a Library,” “The Art of Fiction,” and “Modern Fiction” (not to mention “The Novels of George Meredith” and “On Re-Reading Meredith”) also speak seemingly to a readership that is not so “highbrow” as to be unable to benefit from instruction. Alison Pease offers a fascinating discussion of modernist articulations of the ethical dimensions of “the education of aesthetic reception” in “Readers with Bodies” (93).

8. Garrett Stewart remarks of Meredith’s theory of Comedy that it “implies—in a teleological paradox—that true Comedy can only exist in the kind of highly evolved society that only true Comedy can help bring to maturity” (286).

9. As Amanda Anderson notes in The Powers of Distance: “Arnold saw the project of ethnology as subordinate to the larger, normative project of ideal culture for the individual, for the nation, and for humanity as a whole. The attempt to build the project of culture upon the findings of ethnology in fact stands at the heart of … Culture and Anarchy” (103–4). See also George Stocking’s essay “Arnold, Tylor, and the Uses of Invention,” in which he finds more similarities between Arnold and cultural anthropologist E. B. Tylor than are immediately visible, in that culture exists on a continuum for Tylor, such that it reaches its “full flowering” in civilization (as opposed to savagery or barbarism, earlier stages on the continuum). Thus, the “data” of European civilization are inherently superior to the data of a barbarous (non-European) society. See also Vincent Pecora’s article “Arnoldian Ethnology” for an interesting rereading of Arnold’s ethnographic tendencies.

10. For a good overview of eugenics in England and how Galton fits into the movement, see Peter Morton’s The Vital Science.

11. Amanda Anderson argues, for example, that Arnold’s emphasis on the study of perfection becomes a paradoxical insistence on what she calls “embodied universality,” a particularized, “self-authorized” version of selfless and transcendent detachment. This emphasis on the particularized universal leads Anderson to suggest a reconsideration of Arnold in relation to Pater and Wilde—not antagonistic, as it is generally read, but similarly concerned with subjective experience. Regina Gagnier posits a similar claim in her article “The Law of Progress and the Ironies of Individualism in the Nineteenth Century,” in which she argues that a shift in economic paradigms from a reproduction- and distribution-based model to one based on consumption and an “economics of choice, preference, and Taste” (325) parallels the shift in literary movements from the “high-Victorian [novel] plot of social relations” to the “individualism, psychologism, and subjectivism” (315) of Aestheticism. Gagnier offers a socio-economic explanation for modernism’s retreat from the marketplace and the social realm. Richard Kaye in The Flirt’s Tragedy makes a similar argument, with Darwin rather than Arnold as the starting point of his Victorian-to-modern trajectory. He posits not just that “sexual selection’s emergence as a scientific argument coincided with the rise of Paterian aestheticism,” but that “Darwin’s theory of male self-fashioning in The Descent provided an inadvertent basis for [the] Wildean credo … of sexuality emancipated from ‘purposeful’ predilections” (91–92).
12. Margaret Oliphant notes this dynamic, with bitter irony, in her 1880 review of *The Egoist*: “The author of *The Egoist* holds an exceptional position in literature. He is not a favourite with the multitude, but if that is any compensation, he is a favourite with people who are supposed to know much better than the multitude. His works come before us rarely; but when they do come, there is a little tremor of expectation in the air. The critics pull themselves up, the demigods of the newspapers are all on the alert. It is understood that here is something which, though in all probability caviare to the general, it will be a creditable thing, and a point in a man’s favour to admire. Like Mr Rossetti’s pictures, there is a certain ignorance, a certain want of capacity involved in the absence of appreciation. Not to know Mr Meredith is to argue yourself unknown” (236). This rhetorical dynamic is also ably described by Bill Bell in relation to Matthew Arnold in his article “Beyond the Death of the Author.”

13. The language here is important. The “cultivation of aristocracy” plays with the two (of many) meanings of “culture”: “good breeding” as in the refinement that comes of a high degree of civilization, and “good breeding” as in the judicious management of domestic animals—which are, in fact, at odds with one another. Clearly, the novel’s portrayal of Willoughby suggests that both the refinement of culture and the process of sexual selection are thwarted by the cultivation of the aristocracy; Willoughby will indeed void the guarantee for the “noblest race of men to come.”

14. Ann Cvetkovich says of *East Lynne* in *Mixed Feelings*: “*East Lynne* transforms a narrative of female transgression into a lavish story about female suffering, a suffering that seems to exceed any moral or didactic requirement that the heroine be punished for her sins” (100).

15. My own rhetorical use of “we” may seem intrusive here, but it is, I would suggest, precisely this uncomfortable inclusiveness that Meredith seeks to impose on his readers.


17. Robert Polhemus’s reading of *The Egoist* in *The Comic Faith* does justice to the complexity and self-reflexivity of Meredith’s idea of Comedy, which involves a “comic dialectic of egoism: his optimism, his belief in progress, and his challenge to each of us who reads it. We must ‘consider’ the egoist ‘indulgently,’ since he is part of us and we of him; we can’t escape our kinship except by lying or obtuseness” (208).

18. Certainly from her inception onward Diana has inspired critical readings that seek to account for her psychological inconsistencies. Why does she marry Augustus Warwick? Why does she betray Dacier’s political secret to the Press? As Mary Sturge Gretton writes in her 1907 study of Meredith’s work: “The events and psychology of the book appear to us, not only not interwoven, but spun of materials so different in texture that they could not combine” (268). See Dolin, Boumelha, Beer, and McGlamery for contemporary examples. It is not my intention to enter into the debate here.

19. Vernon, imagining Clara wet with the rain, “clasp[s] the visionary little feet to warm them on his breast” (321). And after he finds her and takes her to the inn beside the train station to dry her shoes and stockings and makes her drink some of his hot brandy and water, Clara thinks of her exciting position:
“They were to drink out of the same glass; and she was to drink some of the infamous mixture; and she was in a kind of hotel alone with him; and he was drenched in running after her;—all this came of breaking loose for an hour” (326).

20. The relationship between Emma and Diana (or as Emma calls Diana, “her Tony”) is emotionally intense and physically and verbally effusive, well beyond typical Victorian representations of female platonic relationships in novels, although the sisters’ relationship in Christina Rossetti’s “Goblin Market,” with its overabundance of fruit juice and kissing, is close, as is the vampiric relationship in Sheridan Le Fanu’s *Carmilla*. Boumelha addresses the complex relationship.

21. See, for example, Gillian Beer’s *Meredith: A Change of Masks* and also Harvey Kerpneck’s 1963 note “George Meredith, Sun-Worshipper, and Diana’s Redworth.”

1. One should observe that when Robert meets Clara Talboys, George’s sister, hers becomes the hand that commands him to investigate, but these particular passages occur before he meets her.

2. At this moment in the novel, the reader too reinvests in Robert Audley’s serious work. The numbered list of clues is by now a common device of the detective story; the narrative pause allows the reader to make sure that he or she is tuned into the mystery thus far, in possession of all information necessary to solving it, and willing to continue reading. Indeed, one might say that the reader’s pleasure is fueled by the painful seriousness with which Robert approaches his task. One imagines that *Lady Audley’s Secret* would not engage its readers as effectively (and affectively) if Robert’s pleasure in his “pitiless” investigation superseded his angst and not the other way around.