A Victorianist Looks Back: Fluidity vs. Fragmentation

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IN *Middlemarch,* when Mr. Brooke asks Edward Casaubon how he arranges his documents, the pedantic would-be author of "The Key to All Mythologies" replies with a "startled air of effort" that he puts them into "pigeon-holes mostly." Dorothea's uncle is baffled. He complains that his own scattered gatherings became much too "mixed in pigeon-holes: I never know whether a paper is in A or Z." Embarrassed, his niece volunteers to sort out his papers: "I would letter them all, and then make a list of subjects under each letter." Her offer catches Mr. Casaubon's attention. Commending Mr. Brooke for having such "an excellent secretary at hand," he gravely smiles his approval. But the befuddled gentleman whose mind remains full of disconnected "fragments" bluntly rejects Dorothea's offer: "'No, no,' said Mr. Brooke: 'I cannot let young ladies meddle with my documents. Young ladies are too flighty.'"[1]

I begin this retrospective essay with George Eliot not only because I continue to revere her as the John Milton of the nineteenth century but also because she was the very first of the many Victorians whose work I thoroughly studied, taught, and wrote about. I had read *Silas Marner* and *A Tale of Two Cities* in high school. But as a non–English major in college, my exposure to nineteenth-century novels was limited to a senior seminar on Joseph Conrad taught by Ian Watt that had included *Almayer's Folly* (1895). A few years later, when asked to choose a special author for Princeton's PhD exams, I was told that Conrad was much "too recent" to be admitted into the canon. This veto proved to be extremely fruitful. I had already devoured *Adam Bede* and *Middlemarch* in a graduate course taught by E. D. H. Johnson and could now more fully delve into George Eliot's essays, fictions, and poetry. *Daniel Deronda*, which F. R. Leavis wanted to turn into a non-Hebraic novel called "Gwendolen Harleth," now attracted a former refugee child far more than *Nostromo* ever did.[2]

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Canonicity and periodicity were still dominant in the late 1950s. To prepare for their comprehensive exams, graduate students were told to rely on *A Literary History of England*, the 1948 five-part volume edited by Albert C. Baugh with the assistance of four other scholars.[3] Of these parts, the last, longest (and, to my mind, least helpful) was "The Nineteenth Century and After (1798–1939)," edited by Samuel Claggett Chew (1888–1960), a Bryn Mawr professor. Although he allowed Jane Austen a chapter of her own, Chew did not accord the same privilege to the Victorian women writers he placed into communal pigeonholes. If Elizabeth Barrett was granted a mere three pages in a chapter called "The Brownings," Christina Rossetti was subordinated to her brother in "Rossetti and His Circle." Finally, in "Other Novelists of the Mid-Century," Chew found some room for Elizabeth Gaskell and the three Brontës (with closer attention given to Emily than to her sisters). Here, too, he lodged a writer cast as a bluestocking who had lost the "temporary prestige" she once enjoyed to become "little read today."[4] That author was George Eliot, whose works Chew listed before subordinating her to the still "popular and enormously prolific" Margaret Oliphant, "commended by no less an authority than Sir James Barrie."[5]

T. S. Eliot's Arnoldian dicta on what writer was major or minor were still very much in force. But these fixities were also undermined by seemingly irreconcilable modes of scholarship. Many teachers adopted and ardently promoted the close textual readings that Cleanth Brooks and Robert Penn Warren had introduced as a welcome foil to the old philological emphasis. Others, however, questioned the subjectivity of such readings. Only facts mattered because foolproof and irrefutable: How *did* the performance of medieval miracle plays on moving carts differ from their staging on immobile sets? What conclusions might be drawn from the eighteenth-century decrease of the adjectival or adverbial constructions still used so lavishly by Thomas Browne a century earlier? To others, annotating letters or editing previously dispersed essays or even collating textual variants seemed a more valuable (and far safer) task than an indulgence in risky textual interpretations.

But for a third group of scholars such divisions also created the possibility of new amalgams. Given the fertility of the nineteenth century, Romanticists and Victorianists could now validate literary productions by examining them within the wider contexts provided by political history, philosophy, religion, science, and the visual arts. F. R. Leavis had suggested that John Stuart Mill's discussion of Jeremy Bentham and Samuel Taylor Coleridge as binary opposites might become a template

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for future students of the nineteenth century. But backward-looking sages like Thomas Carlyle, John Henry Newman, Matthew Arnold, John Ruskin, and Walter Pater were also acquiring a new importance in the 1960s.

I had called my first book "Allegories of Unbelief," a far better title than the more descriptive one under which it appeared: *Religious Humanism and the Victorian Novel: George Eliot, Walter Pater, and Samuel Butler* (1965). My pairing of *Middlemarch* and *Daniel Deronda* stressed the implications of generic shifts I would trace in a second book on George Eliot's early fictions from "Amos Barton" to *Silas Marner*. Before, however, in an essay called "The Rival Ladies," a cocky graduate student had aligned Mrs. Humphry Ward's *Lady Connie* and Lawrence's *Lady Chatterley's Lover* to argue that Lawrence was mocking his predecessor's nostalgic return to Arnold's and Arthur Hugh Clough's Oxford in a novel she had published during World War I. Aldous Huxley, her nephew and Lawrence's friend, let me know that the connection was plausible but also gently chided me for disrespecting a benign matriarch who, though no George Eliot, had exerted a powerful impact on all who knew her. It was an admonition worth absorbing. Never again did I create rigid antinomies to derogate one text at the expense of another. I would continue to link fictions, poems, and essays throughout my career. But, mindful of William Wordsworth's insistence on finding "similitude in dissimilitude" and unlikeness in likenesses, I avoided the fixities of periodicity and canonicity and became increasingly distrustful of ideological dualisms and the divisive grids imposed on gender and genre.

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In its Spring 1984 issue, the *Victorian Newsletter* printed a trio of retrospective essays by Jerome H. Buckley, George H. Ford, and Elaine Showalter that expanded talks they had given at the Modern Language Association's one hundredth convention in December 1983. Whereas Buckley's and Ford's paired pieces were entitled "Looking Backward—Victorian Poetry and Prose" and "Looking Backward—The Victorian Novel," Showalter pointedly called hers "Looking Forward: American Feminists, Victorian Sages." All three critics seemed guardedly optimistic about the burgeoning future of Victorian studies; Buckley noted that in the 1930s Victorian essayists, read as "ideologues" rather than as artists, had received greater attention than the poets or novelists. Yet by the time a volume of essays proposed by the MLA's Victorian Group in 1939 finally appeared in 1950, well after the ending of World War II,

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its contributions seemed "tentative" and "apologetic."[6] Topics such as "the Victorian sense of humor" or the "educational theories of Thomas Arnold" had become outdated. A new emphasis on alienation and doubt, as well as an interest in "language and style" now "decisively" produced the revalidation of poets such as a Tennyson whom earlier critics had "disdainfully ignored."[7]

George Ford also recalled a time in which "the word 'Victorian'" still aroused hostile responses in "most quarters."[8] Quoting Virginia Woolf's guarded praise of *Middlemarch* as "one of the few English novels written for grown-up people," he genially commented: "Good for *Middlemarch,* of course! But the sentence sounds (does it not?) as if most other Victorian novels are, in effect, kid stuff; . . . this assumption had to be surmounted before we could shift from contempt for the Victorian novel to affectionate respect."[9] That regained respect, Ford maintained, had allowed George Eliot to recuperate her former eminence. Citing the scholar he had chosen to cover Eliot criticism for his 1978 *Guide to Research*, he had already noted that from 1960 to 1974 "more was written about Eliot than in the whole one hundred years between 1859 and 1959"[10] and kindly pitied "poor Knoepflmacher" for having to contend with "much redundant criticism."[11]

Declining to end his essay with predictions about the outcome of battles waged by new theoretical camps, Ford deplored the emergence of "jargon-ridden" discussions "so loaded down with a freight of theoretical apparatus" that their "small points" could become "boring and unintelligible." Like Buckley, however, he ended on a celebratory note: Victorianists, he concluded, were no longer "scholarly hill-billies permanently doomed to eat below the salt at the academic feasting table."[12]

George Eliot was equally prominent in Elaine Showalter's survey of the rich outlets that Victorian texts had offered to women readers and feminist scholars. Her essay's opening stressed the impact that *Daniel Deronda* had on a fugitive Jane Alpert, the leftist bomber who opted "to take the highroad" by turning herself in to the FBI after recalling a powerful passage in that work.[13] Showalter uses Alpert's "passionate identification" with George Eliot's last novel to explain why Victorian studies should have become a home for American woman scholars.[14] She also credits a "shift away from *Middlemarch* to *Daniel Deronda*" that began in the early 1970s for helping situate "feminist criticism within the broader milieu of contemporary literary theory."[15]

Rightly hailing *Woman and the Demon* as "the boldest and most thoroughgoing feminist revision of [patriarchal] Victorian conventions,"[16]

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Showalter recalled Nina Auerbach's self-definition as a female Carlyle: "Like him, I want to recover a new mythos, one in which male and female Victorians alike countered a crisis of faith, and one which may provide women today with an unexpectedly empowering past."[17] She then presented an impressive roster of over thirty female Victorianists and three male critics (Eliot Gilbert, George Levine, and U. C. Knoepflmacher) as contributors to a field that had become more "flexible, liberal, and canonically open" than the "quintessentially masculine" discipline of American studies.[18]

Read today, the testimonies by Buckley, Ford, and Showalter helpfully highlight major shifts in Victorian studies. Still, the three essays are not quite free of rigidities they either retain or reintroduce. Thus, for example, Buckley seems unduly doubtful about Eliot Gilbert's piece on Alfred Lord Tennyson's King Arthur as "female king," an essay that Showalter rightly praised. Moreover, Buckley's generic conjunction of nonfiction prose with poetry remains unexplored, even though Pater's portraits in *The Renaissance* were beginning to be aligned with the dramatic monologues of Robert Browning, while Carlyle's *On Heroes and Hero-Worship* had been likened to the novelistic incursions into sundry pasts by Sir Walter Scott's Victorian imitators. Buckley and Ford also clung to some earlier prejudices. Though claiming that Lytton Strachey's *Eminent Victorians* had launched modernist repudiations of Victorian culture, both writers seem unaware that his satirical portraits are always balanced by an affectionate identification with figures marginalized by a masculinist ideology.[19]

Today, Elaine Showalter's 1984 appraisal of feminist scholarship may strike us as more tentative than her confident reconstructions in the 1977 *A Literature of their Own* had been. In that influential work, she had acknowledged the importance of Carolyn Heilbrun's insistence on a "literary sensibility" that was not "feminine, but androgynous," equally embraced by the female and male writers of the Bloomsbury Group.[20] But she now suggested that feminist critics should not over-affiliate themselves with modes of interpretation introduced by male theorists, fearful that "feminist interests" may become compromised or even "outweighed" by "theoretical concerns drawn from Darwinian determinism, Freud, Lacan, Derrida, and Foucault." Even though the mixture of "gender and genre" stressed by one male Eliot critic may well hold "considerable interest" for feminists, Showalter also insisted that the purity of a criticism of their own could best be preserved by an avoidance of meetings such as those held during the 1980 George Eliot centenary celebrations at which

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feuding "male and female scholars clashed over the ownership" of her "legacy."[21]

At a Philadelphia meeting in which I had talked about gender transpositions in juvenile texts by Victorian women writers, Elaine remarked that the burgeoning field of children's literature might prove to be a hospitable terrain for a male feminist. She was correct. In 1984, the same year in which her "Looking Forward" survey appeared, I was the sole male speaker on the last day of a colloquium on the "Poetics of Gender" held at Columbia University. Beginning with the figure of Scheherazade, the storyteller who so cleverly delays her execution by a misogynist autocrat, I examined the ways in which nineteenth-century women authors reclaimed the female fairy tales that male writers like Giambattista Basile, Charles Perrault, and the Brothers Grimm had appropriated. But my attempt to blend Victorian studies with the new field I had entered was unsuccessful. Although my feminist listeners had taken copious notes, there were no questions until a shy graduate student asked how my discussion of Lewis Carroll might differ from Nina Auerbach's. Since she was not at the conference, I welcomed the opportunity to expound my affinities with the fine feminist who became my friend and collaborator.

As editor of a special issue of *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature* on the theme of "Woman and Nation," Auerbach had asked me to contribute a piece. She liked my ideas for an essay on "E. Nesbit and the Reclamation of the Female Fairy Tale." A few years later, I begged her to coedit a book I had contracted. The title we settled on was half Nina's and half my own: *Forbidden Journeys: Fairy Tales and Fantasies by Victorian Women Writers*. After agreeing on our choice of texts, we produced introductions that blended our authorship so seamlessly that she rightly boasted that no reader would be able to tell who had written which paragraph.

Before that successful blending, however, Nina reexamined a kinship myth that both of us had cherished—namely, that, as she put it, "we tended to think about literary things (and other such academic things) in startlingly similar ways." Our collaboration, she now maintained, would succeed because her lust for fantasy was balanced by my paternal investment in "real children" like those I had fathered. I felt that her characterization was unnecessarily divisive. "The child that grabs me," I told her in one of my long letters, "is the-child-in-the-adult author speaking to the child-in-the-adult reader." Adapting Catherine Earnshaw's words about Heathcliff, I insisted that she was actually truer than I to that inviolable child.

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Nina cherished the allusion. "The idea of me as a Heathcliffian Catherine," she wrote back, "has sent me into paroxysms of wild giggles." And she agreed: "I think I may be austerely childlike in my refusal [to hop on] advantageous merry-go-rounds every one else seems eager to be on." And to reward me even further, she added that she had also cherished the opening section of the Emily Brontë book I was working on: "I love what you do with De Quincey and *Wuthering Heights* and am beating myself [up] for never having thought of the two together." I recalled this typically generous reassertion of our continuing affinities for an April 2017 Philadelphia meeting that mourned the loss of the wonderful scholar/teacher who had so unexpectedly died on February 3 of that year.

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To introduce a note of levity into their "Special Millennial Issue" of December 2000, the editors of *PMLA* featured some academic cartoons. Among these was a two-page comic strip entitled "A Strobe-Light History of the MLA." Starting with a still benign "Philological Pastoralism," the sequence satirized later developments such as T. S. Eliot's "Rule of Canons" in the 1940s and 50s.[22] Yet it also welcomed the "beachheads" secured by feminists in the 1970s and the 1980 formation of a division solely devoted to the study of children's literature. In the panel celebrating that event, Maurice Sendak's Max and a huge Wild Thing brandished a banner that read "KID LIT: IT'S MAGIC" amid a procession of partygoers headed by a fairy godmother and Dorothy with her dog, Toto. The parade included a strutting Mowgli, a somersaulting Wilbur, an airborne Mary Poppins and Peter Pan, as well as a timid rabbit. The bearded



Figure 1. "A Strobe-Light History of the MLA" ("Special Millenial Issue," *PMLA*, December 2000).

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artist inscribed himself, as modestly as Browning's Lippo Lippi, among the revelers whose "empowerment" greatly horrified traditionalists clinging to a crumbling "cannon."[23]

The MLA's validation of children's literature as a field for academic study had been preceded in 1972 by the publication of a volume of essays compiled by the University of Connecticut's Francelia Butler. Initially called *The Great Excluded: Critical Essays on Children's Literature*, this collection was transformed into the first volume of *Children's Literature* (an annual now in its forty-sixth year). The volume's twenty-one mini-essays moved chronologically from "Aesop as Litmus" to twentieth-century texts. Victorians were represented by "Parallels between *Our Mutual Friend* and the Alice Books" as well as by a transhistorical and transnational piece on "Ruskin's *King of the Golden River*, St. George's Guild, and Ruskin, Tennessee," written by the editor.[24] Propelled by Martin Gardner's 1960 *Annotated Alice*, an essay on "Alice Our Contemporary" stressed Lewis Carroll's continued centrality in American culture.[25]

In their attempts to resituate forgotten, marginalized, or undervalued women writers, feminist critics had found a logical place within the study of Victorian literature and culture. But, as Butler's collection of previously "excluded" texts for juvenile listeners and readers showed, the criticism of children's literature demanded an awareness of a wider historical and geographical scope. Indeed, the so-called "golden age of children's books" that flourished in Victorian and Edwardian England had its origins in the eighteenth century's second half, when an audience of middle-class families required readings for their increasingly literate children. This new audience welcomed chapbook adaptations of the first part of *Gulliver's Travels* for their Lilliputian offspring and encouraged the creation of moral tales by authors such as Sarah Trimmer (1741–1810) and Anna Laetitia Barbauld (1743–1825).

The Victorians, however, were the first to pay a great deal of critical attention to children's books. In *A Peculiar Gift* (1976), Lance Salway collected some forty essays published in "popular periodicals" as well as in "the great literary journals of the day" to validate his claim that Victorian culture had regarded books for juveniles as an integral part "of the general body of literature" and hence as worthy of attention as those written for adult readers.[26] Headed by an epigraph from Maria Molesworth, the prolific author of a hundred children's books and a perceptive critic of Hans Christian Andersen and Juliana Horatia Ewing, Salway's selections confirm the extraordinary importance that texts for

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the young held for the Victorian imagination and the sophistication with which they were treated.

Still, despite Salway's 1976 collection or the equally indispensable *Oxford Companion to Children's Literature* edited by Humphrey Carpenter and Mari Prichard in 1984, the nineteenth-century juvenile classics that English departments began to add to their curricula still excluded major authors such as Maria Edgeworth or the brilliant, Austen-like Mrs. Juliana Horatia Ewing. Indeed, male critics who now privileged the fantasies of Lewis Carroll and George MacDonald dismissed moral tales by female authors as being too "didactic." Their creation of a false binary, as Mitzi Myers rightly insisted, hampered "research into a germinal period of children's literature" and forestalled an "informed discussion of broader issues, such as the relation of instruction to delight or of gender to genre or of adult writer to child audience (including the author's own inner child self)."[27]

Myers had welcomed my award-winning 1983 essay on "The Balancing of Child and Adult" and later greeted the publication of the tales Auerbach and I had edited as validating her claims that Edgeworth's "feminized pastorals" provided a template for later women writers who "depicted children within a landscape invested with mythic resonance and moral magic."[28] Among these, Anne Thackeray Ritchie, who edited her father's fictions as well as Edgeworth's tales, certainly stood out. Her witty updating of "old wives tales" already refashioned for the educated young "*femmelles*" who had been Perrault's prime readers was further extended by her "niece" Virginia Stephen. But the two children's books that Virginia Woolf wrote for her nephews, *Nurse Lugton's Curtain* and *The Widow and the Parrot*, were first published in 1982, and the stories her Victorian mother, Julia Duckworth Stephen, had written did not appear until 1987.

Myers's demand that greater attention be paid to the dual child/adult readership of books that many academics still derogated as puerile and regressive led to another collaboration. In 1997, she and I coedited a special issue of *Children's Literature* on "Cross-Writing and the Reconceptualizing of Children's Literature." Mitzi's coinage of "cross-writing" was a much better term than my "balancing" had been in describing the interactive nature of texts created by adult writers who tapped a childhood imagination. Still, both of us felt that closer attention had yet to be paid to the "cross-*reading*" process that such texts demanded from their dual audience. We decided to return to the subject, but after Mitzi's untimely death, that task fell to me. My essay on "Children's Texts

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and the Grown-up Reader" in the *Cambridge Companion to Children's Literature* included letters written to Maurice Sendak by third-graders who had read *Where the Wild Things Are* and listened to the text's transformation into an opera. Perry Nodelman's excellent 2008 *The Hidden Adult*, however, extended the topic. His Derridean notion that the seeming "simplicity" of children's texts merely acts as a "shadow" that obscures "a more complex and more complete understanding of the world" impeded by adult habits of binary thinking would have appealed, I like to think, to Mitzi Myers.[29]

A continued interest in the textual fusions of seeming opposites had led me to a writer whose former reputation, though still harder to redeem than Eliot's, was beginning to rise again. In another award-winning essay on "Kipling's Just-So Partner: The Dead Child as Collaborator and Muse," published in the "cross-writing" issue of 1997, I tried to flesh out an elegiac subtext obscured, and yet conveyed by, the childlike playfulness of word and image that makes *Just So Stories for Little Children* such an enduring masterpiece. An earlier look at Rudyard Kipling's bigendered imagination and more recent discussions of his textual rearrangements and lifelong appropriations of Victorian poets in his verses and fictions still need to be greatly extended, as does a fuller study of his impact on modern writers such as Randall Jarrell and Sendak.[30]

George Ford did not include Rudyard Kipling in his 1978 guide to Victorian fiction. Born in 1865, Kipling's meteoric rise to fame as a short-story writer and poet had reached its highpoint in the 1890s, when he also began to be cherished for charming a vast transatlantic audience of child readers. But the reception of his 1897 "Recessional," written on the occasion of Victoria's Diamond Jubilee, revealed a major split between two contrary adult readerships. Ultraconservative "patriots" hailed his verses as a rebuke of an unspiritual materialism infecting the Queen's empire; liberals and radicals, however, read it as an attack on the excesses of British colonialism. Two years later, as he began to work on *Kim*, a text that, like Mark Twain's *Huckleberry Finn*, can be read by both adolescents and grownups, Kipling lamented that he had become less accepted as a "story-teller and rhymester" because his critics were imposing one-sided readings on "the two meanings" he always had tried to put "into my work."[31]

If George Eliot's fame waned after the carnage of World War I led her readers to question the ideological constructions of the previous century, Kipling's politics already had frayed his reputation by the time he

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received the 1907 Nobel Prize for Literature. Neither his epitaphs for the Great War's fallen soldiers (and for his own son Jack) nor his canny premonitions about the threat of Hitlerism did little to endear him to those who grudgingly admired his versatile imagination. Three years after his death and a few months before the outset of a second world war, W. H. Auden suggested that "Time," which worships "language and forgives / Everyone by whom it lives," might eventually use this "excuse" to pardon "Kipling and his views."[32] But that pardon was hardly imminent. Biographers, editors, and some critics heeded Randall Jarrell's insistence that Kipling's oeuvre could not be bifurcated by being placed into separate "good" and "distasteful" pigeonholes. But despite their efforts and the survival of many of his texts in film and on television, Kipling remained unforgiven. He had yet to survive the obstacles raised by the postcolonialist critics of the 1980s and 90s who condemned him for aestheticizing imperialism and by those who stressed his latent misogyny, racism, and Judeophobia.

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Describing a visit to Dorchester by George Eliot and George Henry Lewes in his 1968 biography of the novelist, Gordon S. Haight indulged a brief fantasy: "What a splendid imaginary conversation a Landor might write between George Eliot and young Thomas Hardy."[33] Like the fictional Mr. Brooke, Walter Savage Landor (1775–1864) remembered meeting Romantics like Robert Southey and Wordsworth yet had lived long enough to be able to recall young Victorians like Marian Evans. But the imaginary portraits he published in periodicals from 1824 to 1853 usually featured the dialogues of paired ancients such as Lucretius and Menander. Landor would hardly have aligned the author of *Adam Bede* with the Dorset native who was only nineteen in the Victorian *anno mirabilis* of 1859.

Rudyard Kipling and George Eliot belonged to generations that were even further apart. Not yet fifteen when George Eliot was buried next to Lewes in 1880, Kipling would become one of Thomas Hardy's pallbearers. The world had changed. As the majordomo of a blissful realm like the "paradise" into which an amiable Sir Walter Scott ushers Jane Austen in Kipling's poem "Jane's Marriage," Landor might wisely have tried to keep Eliot and Kipling apart by housing them in distant wings of his own Hotel "Paradiso." But these two intelligent ghosts would have quickly discovered unexpected affinities. Both had started as journalists before they turned to poetry and fiction, and despite highly

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successful literary careers, both continued to see themselves as exilic outsiders whose verbal constructs tried to repair painful memories of severance and loss.

Kipling, who, according to Randall Jarrell, was the only writer who could "invent a conversation between an animal, a god, and a machine," might have cherished talking to George Eliot.[34] His shade would apologize to her for having misrembered that it was her witty Mrs. Poyser and not Anthony Trollope's Mrs. Proudie who had uttered the memorable sentence about the deficiency of men's "insides" that he quoted in a letter to the mother-substitute he also entrusted with a reconstruction of childhood traumas he dared not show to his parents.[35] To make amends for not crediting *Adam Bede* for that citation, Kipling might even have tried to convince George Eliot that his poem "The Land" was a distant and modest cousin of her Warwickshire pastorals.

Eliot had created her fictional Loamshire rustics as foils to the ever-shifting flux of history. Similarly, Kipling pays tribute to Hobden, a lowly but wise Sussex peasant once called "Hobdenius—a Briton of the Clay" by his Roman overlord.[36] Reappearing in different eras to help a succession of landowners avert a rivulet's overflow, Hobden's transhistorical interventions are more helpful in averting floods than the memory of St. Ogg is in *The Mill on the Floss*. Like Adam Bede or Caleb Garth, this father figure is translated into art by the offspring of a savvy craftsman.

Kipling might also have tried to dangle his last published work of fiction before the woman who never authored the volume on Shakespeare she had been asked to write for a Great British Writers series. In "Proofs of Holy Writ," the native who has returned to his home near the river Avon becomes a self-effacing ghostwriter who translates a portion of Isaiah for the King James Bible. Knowing little Latin, less Greek, and no Hebrew, Kipling's Shakespeare consults the multilingual Ben Jonson but relies on his own shaping powers to capture the sublimity of the prophet studied by Rabbi Ben Ezra as well as by the two Brownings. Would that imaginary portrait of collaborating writers have led the author of *Daniel Deronda* to accept Kipling as her kin? Probably not. But if so, she might have shown him her blank-verse transcription of a Hebrew midrash in her very last poem, "The Death of Moses."

Randall Jarrell called Kipling a "Wandering Jew" because he lived in many places as "an uncomfortable stranger repeating to himself the comforts of earth."[37] Indeed, Kipling endorsed the henpecked but wise King "Suleiman bin Daoud" he orientalized in the last of his *Just So Stories* and cast the princely Kadmiel as a mythic Sephardic wanderer who causes a

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lawless medieval England to adopt the Magna Carta at the end of *Puck of Pook's Hill*. As his poem "The Rabbi's Song" demonstrates, he found it easy to identify himself with such ancients. His irrational loathing of the secular Jews who had succeeded—as he wrongly thought—to find a permanent home in modern Europe stemmed from a jealousy fueled by his own bitter sense of dislocation. Perhaps that alienation provided a bridge between the increasingly estranged great Victorians and their more nihilistic Modernist heirs.

The "Finale" of *Middlemarch* offers a backward-looking pendant for the "Prelude" in which George Eliot had presented a "child-pilgrimage" as a "fit beginning" for Saint Theresa's later "epic life."[38] Childhood is still honored in the novel's "Finale." But the symbiosis of the little brother-sister pair who toddled out of Avila "hand-in-hand" (3) is denied to any "new Theresa" (612). Mary Garth's Middlemarch neighbors assume that a "little book" she wrote for her three boys, "'Stories of Great Men, taken from Plutarch,'" must surely have been written by her university-educated husband (608). Dorothea Ladislaw's son is allowed to play with his cousins and may eventually inherit Mr. Brooke's estate. But, as the wife of an alien outsider, his idealistic mother must remain a "foundress of nothing" (4). Her stream of influence can only be spent in "channels of no great name" (613).

Still, the conclusion to *Middlemarch* was wonderfully rechanneled, fifty-five years later, by another childless woman novelist. "It is finished," says Lily Briscoe before she rolls up her canvas at the end of *To the Lighthouse*. She knows that the portrait of an earthly Madonna and her little son may molder in some attic. But Lily is satisfied. There is no need for her to devise a pre-Raphaelite composition in which a mother and child can sail into a Florentine past. Nor will she mythologize them by adding a saintly ferryman. Aware that Mr. Ramsay cannot cease to bemoan his inability to find pigeonholes for the last eight letters of the alphabet, Lily refuses to join this Casaubon-like patriarch on his trip to the lighthouse. A brother-sister pair who lost their childhood oneness long ago reluctantly join their father. But their water journey is hardly as risky as that undertaken by Tom and Maggie Tulliver.

Next to Lily, an aging bachelor wakes up, still half asleep. Like the dreamer who observed a little girl at the outset of *The Mill on the Floss* and like the dozing Red King at the end of *Through the Looking Glass*, Mr. Carmichael has recalled the dream-child he loved and lost. Unlike Maggie Tulliver, Alice Liddell, or Effie Kipling, however, this dream-child is a boy. Lily identifies herself with this fellow outcast but refuses to

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succumb to his nostalgia. Unlike her creator, she will not drown. Her homage to Mrs. Ramsay as another foundress of nothing can survive in a masterpiece that, like *Middlemarch* or even *Kim*, must be read as a relation about relations. Fluidity matters. Only connect.

Notes

1. Eliot, *Middlemarch*, 3.
2. *Nostromo* had led this Holocaust refugee to hope that he might someday emulate Conrad by creating intellectual constructs in my third language. But my infatuation with the novel's mesmeric prose was undermined by its anti-Semitic portrait of Hirsch, the craven Jew tortured by a despot who resembled the military fascists I had seen in South America.
3. In the index to Baugh's *Literary History*, the names of authors deemed important such as "Eliot, T. S." were bolded, whereas those of "Eliot, George," the three Brontë sisters, Elizabeth Gaskell, and Margaret Oliphant remained unbolded.
4. Chew, "The Nineteenth Century and After," 1378.
5. Chew, 1381.
6. Buckley, "Looking Backward—Victorian Poetry and Prose," 3.
7. Buckley, 2, 1.
8. Ford, "Looking Backward—The Victorian Novel," 3.
9. Ford, 4.
10. Ford, *Victorian Fiction*, 234.
11. Ford, "Looking Backward—The Victorian Novel," 5.
12. Ford, 6.
13. Alpert, *Growing Up Underground*, 355.
14. Showalter, "Looking Forward," 6.
15. Showalter, 8.
16. Showalter, 6.
17. Auerbach, *Woman and the Demon,* 4.
18. Showalter, "Looking Forward," 8.
19. The gender transpositions in *Eminent Victorians* (examined in my *Victorians Reading the Romantics*) create sympathetic foils for the figures Strachey satirizes. The hero of his 1917 book is Florence Nightingale, the female androgyne Queen Victoria preferred to her bungling ministers. Her masculinized portrait is complemented

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by Strachey's sympathetic presentation of Newman and General Gordon as feminized idealists.

20. Showalter, *A Literature of Their Own*, 263. Doubtful about the "balance and command of an emotional range that includes male and female elements," Showalter claimed that androgyny lacked "zest and energy" even though Tennyson's notion that the poetic imagination is preeminently hermaphroditic ("gyno-androus or "andro-gynous") can be applied to many nineteenth-century female fictions.
21. Showalter, "Looking Forward," 8. Since no such clashes occurred at the Canadian and British centennial conferences, Showalter was referring to the divisive meetings held at Rutgers University, where Marxists, Freudians, structuralists, and Aristotelians tangled with each other. In his final critique of the proceedings, Alexander Welsh shrewdly noted that the main division had been between ideologues who eschewed textual analysis and those who, like Auerbach and myself, had based their generalizations on close readings.
22. Knoepflmacher, "A Strobe-Light History of the MLA," 1728.
23. Knoepflmacher, 1729.
24. Butler also wrote a thoughtful preface and provided a second essay on "Death in Children's Literature." Still remembered as an indefatigable civil rights activist, she had fought for desegregation on various battlefronts.
25. Two decades earlier, Chew had treated the *Alice* books as minor but "enduring" and "unique" oddities written by "an eccentric Oxford don to amuse his little girl friends" ("The Nineteenth Century and After," 1334).
26. Salway, *A Peculiar Gift*, 11.
27. Myers, "Romancing the Moral Tale," 98.
28. Myers, 99.
29. Nodelman, *The Hidden Adult*, 206.
30. See my "Kipling as Browning: from Parody to Translation," reprinted in *Victorians Reading the Romantics*, 180–200. Sendak may have known Jarrell's incisive "On Preparing to Read Kipling" before he illustrated his friend's children's books. Still, his conversion of Max into an aggressive wolf-boy who tames "wild things" by staring into their eyes before he joins them in a wordless rumpus surely stemmed from his own childhood reading of the Mowgli and Toomai stories in *The Jungle Books*.
31. Kipling, *Letters II*, 357.
32. Auden, *Poems*, 82.

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33. Haight, *George Eliot*, 305.
34. Jarrell, "On Preparing to Read Kipling," 335.
35. As Thomas Pinney notes in his edition of Kipling's autobiographical writings, the young writer had shared a self-illustrated manuscript of "Baa Baa, Black Sheep" with Mrs. Edmonia Hill, at whose house in Allahabad he had written the story (*Something of Myself*, 135–36). His elevation of this confidante into a literary mentoria resembles his lifelong deference to the many female predecessors, from Aphra Behn (1640–1869) to E. Nesbit (1858–1924), whose work he revered.
36. Kipling, *Poems*, 949.
37. Jarrell, "On Preparing to Read Kipling," 337.
38. Eliot, *Middlemarch*, 3. All subsequent references to this edition are noted parenthetically in the text.

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